RACISM IN TRINIDAD

Using the Approach of
Process Oriented Psychology

by

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REMEMBERING THE ORIGINAL PEOPLES OF THESE ISLES

CARIBMAN

Caribman
You think of your race
And despair engraves its name
All over your face
And sorrow leaves a trace
Across the light in your eyes
Down the corner of your lips…..
Caribman
You look at your people
And count the few
Who still bear untouched
The ancestral stamp
Of yellowskin straighthair
Hawkednose almondeyes
And you know for sure
Your race is dying
      Caribman
      Your people leave a print
      On the shores of time
      Memory of your courage and grandeur
      Will linger in the mind of man
      Caribman
      The death of your race
      Will leave an indelible scar
      In the heart of man…..
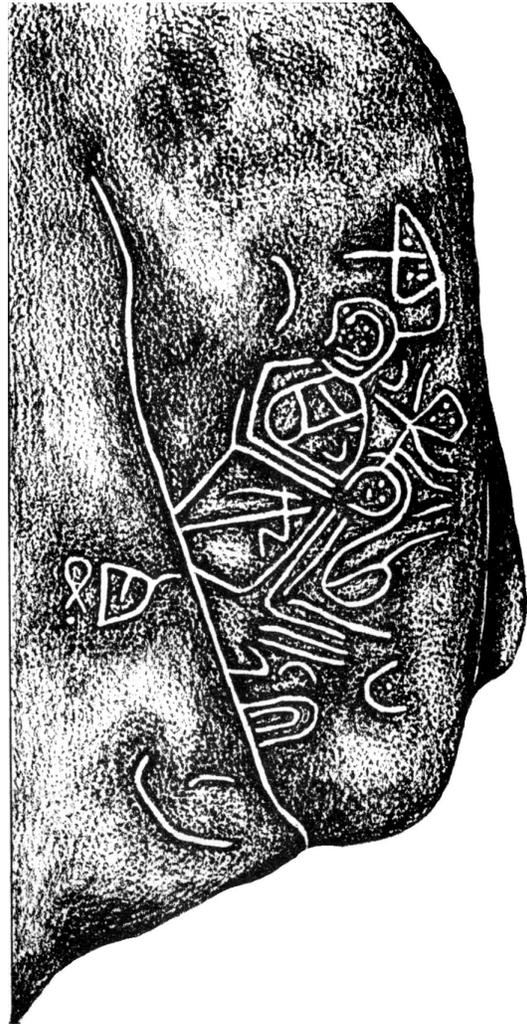
Poem by Gilda Nassief from Dominica

Rock Drawing found at Caurita, East of Maracas
Valley, Northern Range, Trinidad.

C O N T E N T S

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

MAP

INTRODUCTION

TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO, twin islands that make up one Republic. They are the southern most islands in the Caribbean archipelago. I come from these islands.

I have not lived there for thirty-six years but a part of my heart remains there. It is this connection that compels me to attempt to unravel some of the issues of racism that I witnessed and was part of the way I lived from 1941 to 1962 as a white 'French Creole'. The writing of this dissertation is not only to fulfil a requirement for my training in Process Oriented Psychology, but it is also for my own benefit. The benefit will be the unravelling of mixed-up and uncomfortable feelings and memories of thoughtless, unjust, and sometimes downright inhuman behaviour that was part of my everyday life. I see this as a beginning of a journey in healing parts of myself, and hopefully a contribution to addressing racism in Trinidad.

What is Process Oriented Psychology?

Process Oriented Psychology (which I will refer to as Process Work from now on) is a cross-disciplinary approach to individual and collective change. Process Work is a theoretical, observational and practical approach to ongoing events around us and within us. It helps us to notice and appreciate that we are co-creators in our lives and in the communities in which we live. How we react to ourselves and to events around us is vital to its outcome.

Process Work was developed by Dr. Arnold Mindell a physicist and Jungian analyst then based in Zurich. In 1969 he realised that body experiences and symptoms mirror dreams and are meaningful expression of the unconscious. It is applied in the fields of psychotherapy, conflict resolution with groups, institutions and communities around social issues, in organisational development in businesses, in education, the arts, environment and spirituality. It is also a Research Society with centres and researchers in several parts of the world.

I first came in to contact with Process Work through reading Arnold Mindell's book *Dreambody.* Six months later I heard about a seminar that was to take place in London where Arnold Mindell and some of his colleagues would be presenting Process Work. It was an exciting few days learning many new approaches to

working with dreams and body symptoms, but what really struck me was an approach to working with the relationship between the individual and the world.

> "I felt that its emphasis on the political and social context of therapeutic work was crucial to the evolution of therapy and the building of a sustainable world."[1]

At last for me there opened up the possibility of bridging the therapy paradigms that focussed mainly on the individual's process. Now it was possible to work with a perspective and skills that could include not only personal psychology, but the cultural and political contexts. An individual or groups of people are no longer seen in isolation, but in relationship to the specific culture in which they live, and the world.

Going home

I visited Trinidad and Tobago in 1998 from the UK, for the first time after twenty-five years and subsequently made two more trips to research material for this paper. A great deal has changed in the political and racial positions of power, so some of the dynamics to be considered are different to earlier days. However there are still legacies from colonial days, more subtle now but still there, that need to be addressed, as well as the very evident divided loyalties based on ethic allegiance.

In order to address the political and racial dynamics of Trinidad (I will focus on Trinidad, as the issues there are different to Tobago), I will also address my personal legacies from colonial days, the subtle and not so subtle. The patterns of the outer world are reflected in our inner worlds and vice versa. Addressing both inner and outer simultaneously means that the changes, and responsibility for change, does not only get located outside of ourselves. The patterns of relationship between the powerful and less powerful are the same patterns within us as they are out in the world. Changing the patterns inside ourselves changes how we relate to others.

I have struggled with such a personal pattern throughout the writing of this paper, to do with the stereotypical beliefs I have taken on about myself and as a woman. I have had to fight against the inner parts of myself that believe that someone like me can't write; those parts of me that are dominating, overpowering, insensitive and crush my tentative attempts to write. Part of my process has been to 'own' that I am sometimes like that to myself and others, and to engage with both sides – the victim side and the oppressive side. I tend to identify with this interplay of the crushing part and the part that is crushed. This is my primary process in Process Work terms.

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[1] Amy Mindell, Metaskills, The Spiritual Art of Therapy, 1995.20

The secondary process, the more unknown part of myself, is like someone who is freer to take risks and guided by my own thoughts and feelings.

El Dorado

Trinidad is geologically part of the mainland continent of South America but separated from it by eleven miles of sea and river water. Venezuela is clearly seen from the coasts of Trinidad. Tobago, the smaller island, is to the North of Trinidad and geologically belongs to the rest of the archipelago of the Caribbean. The climate is tropical. The area of the two islands is 5,128 square miles.

The aboriginal peoples of these islands no longer exist. The Caribs, Arawaks and Ciboneys. What is left of their existence is very little, a few cave drawings and the names of places that are still in use. Arima, Mucurapo, Chacachacare, Guyaguayare. Their way of life, their culture, their sacred places have been destroyed. Some mixed race people today proudly speak of their racial connection to the aboriginal people.

The spirit of discovery and expansion in Europe in the Fifteenth century brought Columbus to Trinidad in 1498. Around one hundred years later a permanent settlement of Spanish people began. One of my ancestors the Farfans were part of these early settlers and a gravestone marks the spot in St. Joseph, the original capital.

It is one of the privileges of being a white French Creole, that I am able to trace my ancestors. Many people who came from Africa, India, and China as slaves and indentured labourers died leaving no trace, no special place to be visited by their offspring.

The search for gold and the fabled El Dorado brought many people and ships to Trinidad. Sir Walter Raleigh made his first visit to Trinidad in 1595 on such a search. El Dorado and its gold miles were meant to be situated on the banks of the Orinoco river in Guyana on the mainland of South America. Trinidad 'guarded' the entrance to the Orinico and thus became the gateway to El Dorado. El Dorado was never found.

When Columbus first visited Trinidad there were several distinct tribes of Amerindians, Caribs, Ciboneys and Arawaks. Some of the Amerindians were

conquered by the Spanish but many continued to fight and Trinidad remained essentially an Amerindian society up until the 1780s. Some of them were colonised and christianised but there are accounts of them fighting to the end and even killing themselves, jumping off the cliffs rather than give in.

Trinidad remained Spanish for around three hundred years, but invited foreign immigration, namely French Roman Catholics residing in other islands to settle. They came bringing with them 20,000 African slaves as a workforce for their plantations, growing coffee, cocoa and sugar cane. The Africans came from Ghana, Nigeria, Senegal, Dahomey, and Angola. Also with them came the Freed Coloured, those people who were the off-spring of black slaves and their white owners. They also had their slaves, and were allocated land to cultivate. In 1700, Britain challenged the Spanish sovereignty and won. Trinidad became a British colony, governed by Spanish laws, with French as a dominant language and a large African workforce of slaves with their own languages. Later people from India and China came bringing their languages. By the time I was growing up, English was the dominant language although I often heard people speaking, Patois, Spanish and occasionally Hindi and Chinese.

With the Abolition of Slavery in 1807, many of the freed withdrew from full-time labour on the plantations, as they did not want to stay in the employ of their once slave-owners. This caused a shortage of labour for the planters and it was at this time that East Indian immigration began. Over the whole period of Indian immigration (1845-1917) a total of 143,939 people, mainly from provinces along the Ganges river and some from southern India, arrived in Trinidad. The majority were Hindu, the minority Muslim. They came under a system of indentureship, which was an arrangement whereby labourers contracted themselves to work for a stipulated time for another individual for stipulated wages and allowances. They were not slaves but they had no rights. They were entitled to a free return passage to India after a period of about ten years or in lieu of that, if they stayed, a small parcel of land. Many returned but thousands stayed. Their off-springs' rights to their lands were often disputed and ignored because the Catholic mainstream did not recognise their Hindu and Muslim marriages. This is a little known fact to most Trinidadians.

The Portuguese immigrants came from the Azores and Madera, coming after the abolition of slavery, some fleeing economic disaster and others fleeing religious persecution. They were mainly peasants, and the Trinidad census of the late

nineteenth century had a category for Portuguese which was distinct from the Europeans. They were referred to as "Potogee", a derogatory term.

The first Chinese came to Trinidad in 1810. The Punti and the Hakka ethnic groups, and they too came as indentured labourers.
The Syrians and Lebanese came at the end of the 1890s and beginning of 1900s.

People and Politics

This diverse mix of races, cultures and religions is part of the richness and conflict that is part of life in Trinidad in the twenty-first century. These groups of people coming from different roots, with their own customs, dress, food and faith, all foreign to each other, and living on a small island away from their lands of origin. Today all these people identify as citizens of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

The total population of Trinidad and Tobago today is 1.4 million. East Indians make up 43%, Black Africans 41%, Chinese 10%, Syrian and Lebanese 4%, European 1%, and about 25% of the above would be termed mixed race.

Trinidad remained a British colony until 1962, when she gained her independence. The first independent government was a black government, the Peoples National Movement and they remained in power for thirty years. In 1986 a party calling itself the Rainbow party got into power, one of its main political ideologies to move away from politics being ethnically polarised. They lost at the next election and the political power was once again with the black population. In 1994 the first East Indian government came to power.

From 1956 onward the political order in Trinidad and Tobago changed to a formal democracy with equality for all its citizens; one with equal rights of *all* its citizens to be elected as representatives of the people. The 1960s and 1970 brought even greater changes in the political scene but, what we still need to bear in mind, is that structures of the economy were built on an unequal foundation of colonial ideals, and that the new political system does not automatically mean that the inequalities set in place then have all disappeared.

In *Trinidad Ethnicity* we are reminded that ethnic tensions remain today.

> "In Trinidad, ethnicity permeates all the society's social, cultural, political and economic institutions and practices because ethnicity is implicated in the power struggles of everyday life".[2]

As well as the ethnic tensions mentioned above, Trinidad has fundamental problems relating to the structure of the economy, i.e. the relationship between the monetary and industrial systems. I quote from Mary K. King.

> "The major characteristic of our economy is that it is substantially driven by Direct Foreign Investment (DFI). These investments are, in general, in capital intensive plant which provide little steady state employment, and what little it does, it does so at the technical, specialist and professional levels. Further, the greater part of the foreign exchange earnings, the wealth earned by these investments is exported, in fact most of it never enters the country since the majority of the financial transactions are carried out in foreign banks. What stays in the country, what contributes to our GNP, what the local banks and the Central Bank deals in, is largely what is left, what is changed to pay for local goods and services…….The fundamental problem is that little of the savings earned in the country, even that held in the country, is re-invested locally to create jobs."[3]

All voices need to be heard

Most of the white people I spoke with recently said that Trinidad was no longer a racist society and ethnicity was not such an important issues. Most of the black and Indian people I spoke to said that it was still racist.

I will explore the differences in perception and the reasons for those differences. Where and how was I a part of oppressing my fellow Trinidadians because they were of a different race to me?

How did I misuse my rank through my lack of awareness? Did I do so intentionally? Rank is given to us, or not, from the culture in which we live. It is a power that is supported by the culture, a power that says if you are a certain way you are better or more acceptable, be it the colour of your skin, the education you have had, your accent etc. You can earn it or it may be given to you. However you got it, it gives you power in the society in which you live. As I address these issues in myself I feel I am also challenging my family and other French Creoles to look at some of these issues.

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[2] Kevin A Yelvington, Trinidad Ethnicity 1993.1
[3] Caribbean Affairs, Last Quarter 1997.Vol.7No.6.79.80

My writing will contain accounts of events from my last two visits to Trinidad where I met with small groups to discuss racism, as well as events where unexpectedly racism became the issue.   Most of these events were left largely unresolved so I will in my writing 'continue the process' in an attempt to further unravel some of the hot spots and my edges at the time.   Arnold Mindell teaches us that we need to recognise that we ourselves are part of every conflict around us, and that we need self-awareness skills to become part of the solution.[4]

From time to time I will include 'Trini-talk' because it is part of the communication style in Trinidad and Tobago.   It is also brings humour to what I am saying and I enjoy using it.   I also have another more serious reason for including it.   I want to use this as a way of expressing a principle of deep democracy, one which says that all ways of expressing ourselves and ways of being are welcomed.   Minorities are usually expected to adjust their styles to fit in with mainstream. This is oppressive and marginalising.   Deep democracy requires the mainstream to sometimes adjust itself to meet and communicate with less usual ways.

My writing will be influenced by my perceptions as a white French-Creole. It is also influenced by my personal psychology and the special feelings and attitudes that I bring to the way I express myself.   These special feelings and attitudes are called meta-skills. It is important to notice and cultivate meta-skills as they are the qualities that inform and enliven *how* we exercise our skills.

> "As you study and focus upon the subtle feeling level of your work, you become involved in an artistic and spiritual discipline. You transform your deepest beliefs into living reality……"[5]

The sort of concerns that I have for the problems of racism in Trinidad; the hopes and dreams that are 'behind' my explorations will help determine the outcome of this paper.   It is important to be aware of these special feelings and beliefs, because if I am aware of them, I then have the possibility of consciously using these special feelings for the benefit of those around me and the situation as a whole.   One meta-skill I bring to this subject is a love for Trinidad and a heartful imploring to all its people to engage with racism.   Another, is a challenging attitude and belief that to face what is disturbing is often more creative.

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[4] Arnold Mindell, Sitting in the Fire, 1995.18
[5] Amy Mindell, Metalskills, The Spiritual Art of Therapy.1995.15

It is good to have dreams and visions. They are a necessary part of our longing for a better world, but unless these ideals are processed and brought into relationship with other ideas, needs and opinions, then they too can become repressive. A core theory of Process Oriented Psychology is that unless all the parts and voices of a group/country, are represented, then the field of that given group is unable to act wisely.[6]

Aims and hopes

The aim of this dissertation is to introduce ideas of Worldwork and deep democracy as a new approach to exploring racism in Trinidad. Wordwork is a concept and practice in Process Oriented Psychology[7]. Worldwork is usually when small or large groups of people gather together to work on its communities' problems, as well as the tools and skills needed to work in this way. Deep democracy is an essential meta-skill in Worldwork.

> "The tools of worldwork can only succeed with the attitude of deep democracy, that special feeling of belief in the inherent importance of all parts of ourselves and all viewpoints in the world around us."[8]

Applying this approach to the situation in Trinidad will challenge the notion that the current conflicts and difficulties belong only to the African and Indian Trinidadians. The events described will demonstrate this, while offering both theory and examples of possible interventions.

While I hope that this dissertation will be helpful to Process Word students in studying racism, in my heart and mind I have been addressing my fellow Trinidadians. It is therefore my greatest hope that the ideas presented here will lead to some people in Trinidad opening up to new ways of thinking and acting towards the conflicts around race.

It is not a question of proving one way of perceiving against another, but rather a proposal to engage with the troubles from a new perspective. I believe that the theories, skills and meta-skills of Process Word could be of great help in this.

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[6] Arnold Mindell, Leader as a Martial Artist.*An Introduction to Deep Democracy*, 1992.33
[7] Arnold Mindell, see p.22 the nuts and bolts of Worldwork in Sitting in the Fire.1995
[8] Arnold Mindell, The Leader as Martial Artist. *An Introduction to Deep Democracy*, 1992.5

DEVELOPMENT OF RACIST THOUGHT

When we use the term racism today we usually think that it refers to attitudes that permit one race, usually white, to treat someone of another race, usually black or people of colour, in an unjust way.   Another way of defining it would be to say that racism occurs when a dominant or powerful side marginalises a less powerful side. This marginalisation then justifies exploitation and even cruelty. The term racism is a direct, straight-talking way of waking us up to these issues.   Previously other terms like race relations, or inter-racial relationships were used.   Being soft or avoiding the issue is no longer an option.   It is now an issue that we are collectively being forced to address, at least in some parts of the world.

Getting us to the point where we could address the attitudes and practices of racism has a history, a struggle.   Those who have struggled have been mainly people of colour rightly fighting back, refusing to accept the negative projections and value judgements of the white world. Recognising the injustices perpetrated; facing up to the imbedded attitudes that have, and do, create pain and cause cruelty, has been a long road.   For this reason I thought it would be useful to look briefly at some of the historical thinking that developed attitudes of racism.

The theories below are focussed on attitudes to black people and do not address specific issues about other races. Nevertheless, the patterns of thinking are relevant, whichever race is being oppressed.

Classifying and qualifying humans

The science of natural history in Europe began to develop in the seventeenth century with an attempt to understand the world in a way that didn't just come from the bible and the idea that we were all descendants of Adam and Eve. The Adam and Eve theory included people of all colours as belonging to this lineage.   It was thought that something mysterious had happened to diversify humans, but no one really understood how or why.   Then in the seventeenth century there arose new ideas about classifying the natural world into different species.

> "This leads straight to the central problem of racial thought, one that runs through from the seventeenth century (if not earlier) to the present time, and is far from settled yet: What is the nature of species? There is nothing wrong is classifying humans according to their appearance. The problems revolve around the nature of the classes from which a classification is constructed and the significance of the differences between them." [9]

The way in which we think, makes all the difference. Noticing the kinds of questions we are asking. Why do we ask the question, and who is asking the question. These attitudes inform the answer. Asking the question, what is the nature of species is enquiring on a more biological and scientific way. The problem arises when qualitative categories are attributed to these classifications.

Why are people who are black, or brown, or coloured given a status below people who are white? Can we see things now that people of a different time were not able to see? Yes and No.

The observations, measurements and comparisons that were basic to the new eighteenth century sciences were combined with European *value judgements*. Classifying and attributing significance to the difference was done from a white European perspective, which informed the questions being asked, and the conclusions reached. The thinking that developed at the time has since been termed scientific racism. Making a stand against the collective attitudes of any time is extremely difficult as such thinking carried a lot of weight or rank. Most of us go along with accepted ways of thinking - or collective attitudes and beliefs. We get mesmerised by atmospheres generated by the ideas of our times, or groups that we are in and get drawn along rivers of belief unable to take a stand. The problem with accepting this idea is that the injustices around us can go unnoticed and as a result unchanged.

Anyone, at anytime in history has the potential to see and hear injustice and act on it. Having the ability to do that that brings about the most creative changes in our collective and individual lives. Our hearts and bodies tell us when something is not right. But who has the courage to be able to do that? We all need to!

To besides[10], it was not that they (white people) were not able to see, but rather that they were able to *ignore* their racists attitudes and practices. When there is no

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[9] Michael Banton, Racial Theories 1987/94.2

[10] In addition, Cote ce, Cote la, Trinidad and Tobago Dictionary, 1986:150

pressure to notice something, when we ourselves are not the ones suffering, it is easy to ignore. As a white person, in the 50s, 60s and 70s, the situation was not so vastly different. It was not really my problem, I had the privilege of being able to ignore, or forget what I felt and saw. Problems around racism didn't affect my life directly in any detrimental way, quite the opposite I benefited from it. Being white meant I belonged to the top of the racial hierarchy and I enjoyed the privileges that went along with that rank.

Rank and Privilege

Rank is a power that is supported by the culture in which we live. The mainstream of a country or group attributes certain privileges to those who have inherited or acquired certain capacities, dispositions, features, etc. We get rank based on the education we have had, physical beauty, how much money you have, what sort of accent, which religious group you belong to, etc. If you have several of the above you have a lot of privileges, thus rank and power. Rank is not bad. If it is used with awareness it can benefit others, if used unconsciously it is hurtful. But, rank can be assigned to one group or another simply out of prejudice. For example, if you are white in most parts of the world, the colour of your skin gives you rank. I was reminded of this within hours of arriving in Trinidad on my research.

The first morning in Trinidad I had not scheduled in any appointments. I had spent the morning liming[11] in the cafes along the North Western coast with a friend. She dropped me off at the office of another friend who informed me that he had got hold of an Indian man who I wanted to meet to help me with my research and discuss matters of racism in Trinidad. He could see me right away and probably at no other time. I had just come from liming along the coast and was wearing shorts, skimpy top and sandals! I immediately felt anxious as there was no time to change my clothes! How could I have a serious meeting dressed as I was? Would this man take me seriously as a researcher? I desperately wanted to change my clothes in order to make a good impression on him. This was my first meeting on my research journey! I could feel myself begin to panic. I knew I needed to do some inner work and found a quiet spot in the office to sit, closed my eyes and went inside myself. It was then I realised the enormous privilege of being able to change my outside whenever needed, to impress or not. But in that moment I had to go as I was. I could not change my outside. I had to depend on the perception and openness of the man I was meeting to not just judge me because of what covered my body. I felt

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[11] A group of people hanging out with no particular aim.

vulnerable and had a brief experience of what it might be like for a person of colour within cultures that give rank to white skin.   It was a poignant and necessary experience for me as I embarked on my research.

Of course, being white made it OK for me to apologise to the man in question for my lack of appropriate dress and for that to be accepted.   This is rank.

Religion and Military Might

I am sure that some people in all ages thought and felt differently to the collective attitudes or racism at the time but didn't do much about it.   One of the reasons given as an *external* condition of racial thought from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries is stated by Michael Banton as:

> "The first of these conditions must be the power of organised religion to prevent speculation coming to any conclusions which could not be fitted into the monogenetic view of humanity as the descendants of Adam and Eve." [12]

However, further on into the seventeenth century, this conception was threatened by the new ideas arising from discoveries overseas. Banton goes on to say:

> "Contemplating reports about the life of peoples in the newly discovered regions of America, Europeans were bound to ask, "Why are they not like us"?   Trying to identify what was distinctive about these other peoples, Europeans were forced into a new self-consciousness.   They had to ask what was distinctive about themselves and why their own way of life was to be preferred."[13]

Becoming defensive about ourselves and making ourselves better, rather than being curious and interested in the 'other' is still very much part of the way we operate. We have a tendency to put the 'oth er' down in order to support ourselves. As a result people of colour have been struggling against perceptions of themselves from whites for hundreds of years. The position of white people at the top of the racial hierarchy was attributed to their racial characteristics.   What were these characteristics?

  In 1748 the philosopher David Hume in a footnote to his essay *Of National Characters*, stated that since, among the races of the world, only the Negro race had never developed any major civilisation, he suspected that Negroes might be 'naturally inferior to whites'.   This dreadful thought is what black people, and people

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[12] Racial Theories, 1987/94.7
[13] Racial Theories, 1987/94.7

of colour have been fighting against for hundreds of years.   And the fight is still going on.

As Europeans 'discovered' different parts of the world, we took our not only our racists attitudes but our latest technology that was used to fight against peoples who were not able to match our military power. European technology expanded in the middle of the nineteenth century, allowing steamers to travel into the interiors of Asia and Africa carrying cannons.

> "This became a new epoch in the history of racism.   Too many Europeans interpreted military superiority as intellectual and even biological superiority".[14]

Europe in the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries mistook military and technical expertise and superiority as a sort of cultural and spiritual superiority, thereby mistakenly thinking that we were civilised and "they" were not.   Europeans believed in taking its civilised ways to the uncivilised of many parts of the world. This distorted belief allowed us to commit the most uncivilised acts of destruction, humiliation and cruelty without questioning our actions.

> "A British parliamentary commission was set up in 1837 to investigate the causes of the misfortunes that had afflicted the Tasmanians and other native peoples.   The Commission found that Europeans unlawfully took native territories, reduced their numbers and undermined their way of life.   "Gross cruelty and injustice" were the main causes of the natives dying out. As a direct consequence of the Commissions' work the Aborigines Protection Society was formed in 1838 with the aim of putting a stop to the extermination of native peoples."[15]

Has anything changed?

The complexity, depth and beauty of the aboriginal way of life is not respected by most mainstream Australians today.   What is perceived is an uncivilised way of life that is backward and therefore not as good as Western civilisation. In fact most of their land has been taken, with the result that their way of life and culture is largely destroyed.   When they turn to alcohol Europeans blame them for being weak and inadequate. Aborigines, however, could actually teach us so much about practical ecology and a spiritual way of life, and much more, that they have developed over the last *forty thousand years*! Ways of perceiving that most people have very little

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[14] Exterminate all the Brutes" Sven Lindquist: Granta Publications, London 1997.47
[15] Exterminate all the Brutes, Sven Lindquist: Granta Publication,London.1997.124

awareness of, and a way of life that *they* have *sustained* for much, much, longer than any white recorded history.

So what has changed from our eighteenth and nineteenth century way of thinking? A lot of it still seems the same. But thankfully, and almost entirely because black people and people of colour are challenging this cruel and incorrect thin king, white people are being forced to change.

In Trinidad in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, those in power were European, mainly French, in their thinking. A dominant scientist in France at that time was Georges Cuvier. He put great store on the concept of biological *type* and categorised humans into three types. Whites from the region of Mount Caucasus, Yellows from Mount Altai and Blacks from southern face of Mount Atlas. Cuvier represented them as forming a hierarchy with whites at the top and blacks at the bottom. Anatomical differences created the hierarchy. This thinking was embedded in our attitudes in Trinidad. I can remember being instructed in this way of thinking by my father.

Briget Brereton in a chapter entitled *Social organisation in nineteenth century in Trinidad,* speaks about the continued control of economic resources after the end of slavery, and describes how the political, legal and social systems were manipulated to ensure that these resources stayed within the European part of the culture.

> "Social distance could be preserved, hegemony could be reasserted – and here we see the legacy of slavery with special clarity – through a profoundly racist conviction of the superiority of the European 'race' and its civilisation and the irremediable inferiority of Africans and their culture, linked to an obsession with colour and phenotype and with racial 'purity' (defined as the absence of any known African ancestor) as the key index of elite status."[16]

The cultural attitudes I remember growing up in the 1940, 50,60,and 70s were not that dissimilar to those above. I do not think that it was so much for the reasons of ensuring that resources stayed with us as much as a *fear* that we were losing the resources and were hanging on to the rank of our racial origins. These attitudes were demonstrated in the 'ritual' around me being dated by any young man when I was 18 and 19 years. When the young man came to our house to pick me up, he was invited in for a drink. My pare nts, my date and I would sit in the front porch drinking our rum and soda and the conversation would eventually take the direction

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[16] T rinidad Ethnicity, edited by Kevin Yelvington.1993.43

of: "……so your mother was a (the name of family) before she married your father, ..yes I thought so, and your grandmother, yes, she was a………" and so the conversation would go on, in order to establish my dates' racial origins. This aim was never stated of course, it was 'just a way' that we spoke! If my parents found my date's racial origins unacceptable I was told not to go out with this person again. I grumbled about it but I didn't do much more than that. I didn't have the courage to face the consequences, so I went along with the system. It was safer to do so.

Briget Brereton goes on to say:

> "It would not be an exaggeration to state that post-emancipation society in Trinidad was based on racism and sensitivity to colour and shade, even though no formal apartheid system existed and in law all were equal. Institutional discrimination against non-whites existed everywhere. Their private life was a closed world; exclusive social clubs were established and much of white social life was conducted within them and in family gatherings. Interaction with non-whites was confined to stereotyped relationships in which social distance and superiority/inferiority were clearly demarcated."[17]

I would say that this attitude was not only directed towards people of colour but was part of a thinking system that categorised all people, Europeans included, into higher and lower. Wars were raging between the countries in Europe each trying to dominate the other, the immense difference was that all Europeans treated people of colour as the lowest in the hierarchy.

Michael Banton in *Racial Theories* says:

> "In 1844 a medical journal had published an article by Dr. J.C. Nott entitled 'The Mulatto a Hybrid – Probable Extermination of the Two Races If the Whites and Blacks Are Allowed to Intermarry', in which he testified that mulattos did not live so long as members of the parent race."[18]

This may have been normal thinking in the nineteenth century but image the weight that such an idea would carry because it was put forward by someone with a lot of rank, a doctor.

A powerful reinforcement to stop 'inter-marriage' and maintain the purity of the white people. The extermination of the human race being the threat!

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[17] Trinidad Ethnicity, edited by Kevin Yelvington,1993.43
[18] Racial Theories, Michael Banton.1987/94.40 (Note Nott JC and Gliddon G.R. (1854) Type of Mankind: or Ethnological Researches. Philadelphia: Lippincott and London: Trubner

Scientists look for answers

In the 1850's two theories were competing for the truth around why humans were as diverse in appearance and culture as was apparent. One was the Adam and Eve story and the other that the races had always been different and that we had come from different stocks. Darwin (1809-82) subsumed these two theories within a synthesis which explained both change and continuity. The theories about racial type, for example, were confronted by the theory that all organisms *have* descended from common ancestors, and that all species and subspecies were evolving. Things were no longer a given, and constant. Everything was changing and capable of development, but we had all come from a common source. He did, however, have other theories that supported racist attitudes. His idea of inheritance. It was supposed that if two people were to mate, a compromise between parental attributes would occur, so that if one clever person and one stupid person had a child together, then the child would not be able to be as clever as the clever parent. A sort of dilution of cleverness would happen. This became further fuel for the already predominant ideas of white supremacy.

Another example was the theory of natural selection which supported eugenic measures. He praised the wonderful progress of the United States and the character of the people, as the result of natural selection for the more energetic, courageous men from all parts of Europe. He compared them with the declining fertility and likely extinction of savage races with their smaller brains, unable to change their habits when brought into contact with civilisation. By the middle of the nineteenth century, prejudices were given organised form and apparent scientific motivation and conviction.

> "Previously, race had been seen as one of several factors influencing human culture. After Darwin, race became the wholly decisive explanation in far wider circles. Racism was accepted and became a central element in British imperial ideology…….After Darwin, it became accepted to shrug your shoulders at genocide. If you were upset, you were just showing your lack of education. Only some old codgers who had not been able to keep up with progress in natural history protested."[19]

However, the general trend in science began to take a new direction. William C. Boyd, a physical anthropologist in 1950 wrote a book entitled Genetics and the Races of Man.

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[19] Exterminate all the Brutes, Sven Lindqvist, Granta Books, London.1997.130

"The difficulty which we experience in trying to classify man, or any other species, into races is quite different from the problem of classifying organisms into species. Races were more or less genetically open systems whereas species, which did not regularly exchange genes, were genetically closed systems. A race could become a species."

What we had previously called a race was now a,

"population which differs significantly from other human populations in regard to the frequency of one or more of the genes it possesses." [20]

The word race became redundant. As early as 1836 scientists in the field had warned of the confusions that could result from using the word race as a classification.

"Once this was understood, a set of individuals of similar phenotype were better called a subspecies, a class created by shared descent…Were it not that so many members of the general public still thought in terms of race, it would by this time have been possible to dispense with the word" [21]

Perhaps we would have dispensed with the word race, but the attitudes would still be there so we might have spoken of speciesism. Getting the terminology correct is great but unless the prevailing attitudes of categorising people into higher and lower based on European appraisement is addressed, the problem is still there.

Latterly, studies have moved away from assumptions that biological terms are needed to explain race relationships. Ecological, and sociological approaches study people themselves.

In Banton's conclusion he writes.

"The reality is therefore one of two dimensions to ethnic interaction; one that stems from differences of rank and power, another arises from expectations associated with cultural differences. The first is evident in conflicts over material resources, the second in conflicts motivated by group pride." [22]

The two are so inter-linked. I cannot separate the two. The differences in rank and power come from the fact that those in power in the West are mainly white and their expectations of what culture or cultured means is narrow and limited. Along with this limited appreciation of culture, is a lot of economic power, which effects many parts of the world. Those people who have a larger portion of the economic

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[20] Genetics and the Races of Man, William Boyd,1950:198,207.
[21] Racial Theories, Michael Banton,1978/94:96.
[22] Racial Theories, Michael Banton, 1978/94:164

wealth give higher status to certain sorts of ways of being, and this automatically makes other ways of being less valued.

In an attempt to initially describe the physical and cultural differences between human beings 'race' was conceptualised as lineage, or common descent. The fact that people were different had something either to do with God or environmental factors.

Then the term 'race' gets used in a new way.   It gets used as a label for a classification of human species.   When we arrange things in different classes they get put into some sort of hierarchy and thus a ranking system.   So the meaning of the word begins to change.   Further along, the idea of subspecies is used to describe differences in human beings, and a bit later on that, maybe due to genetic variability, mutation, natural selection etc., subspecies could become separate species.

I am grateful to, and honour the amazing achievements of, all the people who over the hundreds of years have worked as scientists to discover and make sense of the world in which we live. I benefit today from all that creativity. But I have to ask what made the people of that time take their thinking in the direction of imaging that some of us might be a separate subspecies because of the difference in colour and culture? This thinking is still in our world today and causes so much grief.

The fear of differences?

Could it be fear? Is difference of another so threatening? When confronted with people who do things differently to us what happens? In my recent experiences of doing a new training which involved new theories, new terminology, I immediately felt disadvantaged.   I had got to the top ranks in my previous training and now here I was again at the bottom. It felt uncomfortable. I felt stupid. People were being kind and welcoming, and there was lots that was exciting and wonderful, but I knew also I felt low ranked, and I didn't like it. I felt disadvantaged.   It was difficult to find the humility to accept that I was among people who knew things I didn't know and that it was OK for me to be in that situation and just be open to learning. Arnold Mindell talks about rank being like a drug.[23]   The more we have of it the more of it we want. It makes us feel so good

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[23] Arnold Mindell, Sitting in the Fire.199549

So, if when I meet an other I do not understand, I might tend to feel threatened by that, and in order to keep myself of a high rank, I will react against the other in a way that makes her less good. As most of us probably do this some of the time, I guess we need to accept it. The problem arises when this attitude has the power of affecting other peoples' lives in a way that is damaging. Knowing that one has rank in any situation needs to become a responsibility so that we do not use it consciously or unconsciously to down those others around us of less rank. The problem is, as Arnold Mindell says:

> "the more you have the less aware you are of how it effects others negatively."[24]

Following the Tao

In Darwin's theory of evolution he says that everything is changing and developing. If he is right that life is constantly evolving, might that mean that classifications are no longer static? If he had followed this way of thinking might he have concluded that no specific species or subspecies would stay at the top of the ranking system. The top rank would change from time to time. Unknown factors would intervene in evolution and species and subspecies would take turns in being the leaders. This is crazy speculation I know, but might it fit with a theory in Process Work, that has its roots in Taoist philosophy?

Arnold Mindell talks about Process Science as something that:

> "appears spontaneously wherever people follow the flow of events as distinct from preconceived notions about how they should go[25]

Following the way along which all things move. Observing how something is unfolding and letting that take the lead or direction we should follow. The opposite is when we 'put something in a box', or 'frame' it. Make it static, classifying it and make that the truth! In order to be able to follow the flow of events and not frame events, we need a 'beginners mind'. Science has evolved and developed because of certain people being able to approach life with a beginners mind, but invariably the new discovery or perception gets framed, classified and we are back in our static thinking about the nature of life.

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[24] Sitting in the Fire.1995:49
[25] Rivers Way, Arnold Mindell: 1985:90

Research into the nature of race moved away from biology and developed into seeing groups of people and cultures in relationship with each other, and their environments. The Social Sciences and Humanities generally continued to qualify and classify skills and preferences. and to connected those skills and preferences to certain races. The status given to skills and preferences are usually based on the Western ranking system. Theories and approaches changed but a thread of racist attitudes persisted. More recently others have challenged this thinking

> "Racial categories and identities have increasingly been analysed as socially constructed, or historically invented, phenomenon. This approach holds that there is no inherent affinity between people sharing a common racial identity; rather, racial identities are seen as historical products which shape social affinities and antipathies, and thereby precipitate various social groupings and boundaries"[26]

In the year 2000, in England and in America attitudes of racism are currently being discussed and many people are working to bring about a change. In England our Metropolitan Police have been accused of institutional racism. Institutional racism is usually covert policies which maintain the subordination of non-white people.

> "…..all processes which, intentionally or not, result in the continued exclusion of a subordinate group………all those activities and practices which are intended to protect the advantages of a dominant group and/or to maintain or widen the unequal position of a subordinate group. In both instances, the dominant and subordinate groups are usually designated by reference to skin colour, that is, as 'whites' and 'blacks' respectively, the corollary being that racism is, by definition, a process effected, intentionally or otherwise, by 'white' people to the disadvantage of 'black' people."[27]

The film industry in America is taking a stand against a film and its director about a film made in 1915 entitled The Birth of a Nation, which depicts,

> "the Ku Klux Klan in a heroic light and African Americans as debauched and savage creatures"[28]

The Director's name D.W. Griffith has been removed from the prestigious award. Some people argue that:

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[26] Trinidad Ethnicity, Daniel A.Segal.1993:81
[27] Racism as a Concept by Robert Miles in Racism, Edited Bulmer & Solomos.1999.351
[28] The Guardian Newspaper, March 11th 2000.

> "Griffith was operating in a different time and climate and should not be dishonoured in this way."

Others argue that to keep his name on the prize would be a:

> "continuing insult to African Americans and a comfort to racists."

As issues of racism are picked up and engaged with today, an all too familiar plea is that 'people were different then', so we should forget about the past and just move on.   Collective attitudes were different in the past and we probably all know how difficult it is for anyone of us to take a stand that goes against the general atmosphere of a time or group.   The problem with this is that the feelings about past injustices are still felt in the present and need to be engaged with because they don't just go away. Acknowledgement and apologies need to be made.

Part of apologising is not accepting the past and putting the record straight. For too long we Europeans have thought of ourselves as bringing civilisation, light and peace into 'dark' places of barbarism.   To ask for apologies today is partly to address the misinformation and facts that were kept hidden as to what actually occurred.   To bring in information that will challenge our past assumptions.   To wonder at how it could happen and to question the thinking that supported such actions.   If we don't question it will, and does continue to happen. To say sorry now is right in order to make sure it doesn't happen again.

Despite legislation in England and America, racism still goes on every day so whether we address the past or the present it is necessary for the changes needed for today.   In Trinidad racism is not so easy to see, as it is embedded in the attitudes and thinking that is part of the mainstream that is now made up mainly of people of African and Indian origin.   These mainstream attitudes need challenging whoever holds them, and the white people, even though in a minority, have a responsibility as the creators of racists' attitudes.   Others believe that only white people are racists.

> "For Wellman, it is a matter of definition that only 'white' people express sentiments and act in ways which are defined as racism. This argument has been endorsed and developed by Katz, who argues not only that 'racism is a White problem in that its development and perpetuation rest with White people, but that racism is a psychological disorder which is 'deeply embedded in White people from a very early age on both a conscious and unconscious level' and which has 'deluded Whites into a false state of superiority that has left them in a pathological and schizophrenic state. Thus the concept of racism refers not only to all actions or inactions, all sentiments and silences, which sustain 'black' subordination, but also to a form of schizophrenia, which all 'white' people 'have' in the sense that it structures the totality

of their experience and being in the world. In sum all 'white' people are universally and inevitably sick with racism."[29]

Most of us have gone along with an idea about the reality and meaning of why we are all different colours. An idea that has been used to exploit and down others.

We have all been in a sort of collective psychosis – believing reality to be one thing when in reality it was not like that at all! We are waking up from a dream – a hurtful dream.

The appreciation and understanding of the error of our perceptions is taking hold and many structural changes are occurring in many parts of the world, but there is still a lot to do.

The feeling level that is mainly in the background needs to be engaged with for us to take the necessary steps forward. We cannot just move forward and ignore the resentments, guilt and rage that some people feel. If we try to do that we will still be avoiding essential problems. Legislation is not enough – we have to meet with each other and process the feelings so that the wounds of racism can begin to heal. This is the next step in our evolution. When we meet together prepared to do just that, is part of what is called Worldwork.

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[29] Robert Miles, Racism as a Concept, in: Racism, Edited by Bulmer & Solomos,1999.353.

WORLDWORK AND INNERWORK

Many of us feel we would like to help the world be a better place but often feel hopeless at doing anything about it. Who am I to help bring about changes? I often feel like a grain of sand compared to the giants of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank with their enormous power to affect people's lives.   Other large organisation world-wide are set up to care for the well-being of the planet and its peoples, from Greenpeace to the United Nations.   What can I do?   Actually, I am as small as a grain of sand compared to them but I can still play a creative part in my everyday life.   After all, the world and life, is everywhere on the planet including wherever I might happen to be, and this is where Worldwork starts.   With me.

Usually, when we talk about Worldwork we are referring to small or large groups of people who gather together for the specific purpose of addressing and working on its communities or world problems.   In a group working within the Worldwork paradigm, we begin by noticing our own personal experiences in response to what is happening around or outside of us, and this is where Innerwork is inseparable from Worldwork. Noticing our inner experiences, and becoming aware as to whether or not we can support what we are experiencing, or whether we are against them.   Do we repress parts of ourselves or can we be democratic about what comes up in us?   Having awareness of these inner processes and the ability to make that useful to the group or field, is an essential requirement of Worldwork.

Field theory says that there is no separation between inside and outside.   A field is felt and sensed as an atmosphere, and affects us all whether we are conscious of it or not.   We are all living in a local and global field that is made up of the physical environment, the people and all the hopes, dreams, fears and emotions whether or not they are made explicit.   As a result, when we get together as a group, the experiences and feelings we have don't only belong to us individually but also belongs to the group as a whole, and vice versa.   Analysing the events of a group into what is personal, and what is collective, or what is happening inside of me or outside of me becomes relative.   It is simultaneously all of it.   It is not static, but

constantly changing. Tracking the changing feelings inside of ourselves as we work with the outer world is a skill to be learned.

This skill is essential because as soon as we attempt to address community or world issues, it will bring up reactions inside of us, and the more we know about our inner attitudes, or problems, around the issue in question, the more able we will be to assist. If I am not able to handle inner tension, I probably will not be able to handle outer tension. I need to know how I react in chaotic or highly emotional situations, if I want to be a Worldworker. If I don't know these things and have no ability to be both in the midst of the disturbance and outside of it, I will become part of the troubles and unable to follow the direction and meaning of the events as they occur. I need to work on how I repress myself or where I am against my highly emotional states in order for me to be creative in such outer situations. To facilitate in such situations we need to have a familiarity with world issues, an awareness of what our reactions are in the moment, as well as a level of detachment and compassion for the whole situation, including ourselves.

Timespirits

Knowing how I am feeling is also important as information as to what is happening *outside* of myself. The way I feel may not only be me, but it may be a role or Timespirit in the field. . Timespirits are energies that can be identified by the role or part they play in the social and environmental setting. They are called Timespirits as they change and evolve when engaged with, as opposed to a role that is static. They are the same the world over.

Arnold Mindell is the originator of the term Timespirit. Through working with conflict in many parts of the world and asking unanswerable questions, he came up with the term.

> To work with a field, we will need a neutral vocabulary to describe events. Tao is a good word but rather vague and general. Spirit would be better, but its connotations are different for everyone. Yin and Yang energies are one way to describe polarizations in a field, but these terms are culturally biased. We could speak simply of polarizations and group roles to describe the structure of fields, but these descriptions are static and do not sufficiently emphasize changes through which each side goes. If we use terms that imply stasis and immobility, then stasis and immobility will occur when we try to facilitate global processes. We need new terms for opposing energies, polarizations, and roles. We need a term that implies that polarizations are not entirely a product of given individuals and groups and that roles

are not static but rather change, escalate, diminish, and even disappear with time. For lack of a better term, I am going to refer to them as Timespirits."[30]

Representing what is going on inside of me may be exactly the information the group needs in order to move on. A certain Timespirit may inhabit me for a moment and then get picked up by someone else. Working in this way is knowing oneself to be both the individual and also a part of the whole, a kind of detachment and fluidity.

I will focus in this section on the aspect of Worldwork that unexpectedly presents itself to us to work on our community problems.   Sometimes we seek out those opportunities and sometimes they seek us out.   Although my skills were lacking in some instances during my weeks of speaking and working with people in Trinidad, becoming engaged with challenging situations, is also a way to learn and develop skills.

We can be engaged in Worldwork when we are at the supermarket, across the fence with our neighbours, or just liming[31] with our friends.   These every-day occasions become Worldwork when we are aware of what is happening around us and inside us, and use this awareness to bring our inner experiences out into the open, with the intention of creating better communities based on principles of deep democracy.   It is knowing that our reactions are an important part to the outcome of events around us. How things turn out is partly due to us and how we react or not.   We are part of the problems around us and part of the solution.

Deep democracy is a belief in the inherent importance of *all points of view* in the world, and within ourselves.   It does not favour peace and co-operation anymore than it does revolution. All manifestations of life, I believe, come from the same source and for that reason are deserving of respect, no matter how different they might seem to us.   It is a willingness to engage with how life meets us, so that the events and people we meet, and the problems they present to us, are exactly what we need to undertake, both for our own growth and for the community in which we live. This attitude opens us up to an exciting and ever-changing way of life, and one that is not always easy, as it brings us very quickly to our edges.

When we get to an edge we recognise it in several ways but often it feels like we are off-balance, or things get confusing, we stumble over our speech, or might giggle or

[30] Arnold Mindell, Leader as Martial Artist.1992.23

[31] A small group of people hanging out together with no particular aim in mind.

laugh even though no one has really made a joke. Edges limit or define our identities, both as individuals and groups or nations. It is a reluctance, or experience of opposition, to identify with what we might consider unacceptable. Edges take us right up to the parts of ourselves that we disavow.

Lunch on the beach

I went to Trinidad to research issues on racism and found that whether or not I was intentionally working on it, IT would find me! Worldwork does not clock on and off. The dreaming field of racism doesn't have boundaries. It is with us wherever we are. As a white person I have the privilege of not having to think about it, but the field had other ideas when I thought I was taking time off.

One weekend while there, I went with a friend to a small hotel on the East coast. It was a place that people went to in order to relax by the sea, swim and walk on the seven miles long beach. We had been there for twenty-four hours. It was lunchtime and lunch was being served on the veranda so that we could stay in our swimsuits while we ate.

There were seven guests for lunch and we were all sat at the same table. Three were from England (besides myself) and three from Trinidad. The man from England was in Trinidad on business to help sort out a problem with a company whose head-office was in England. He was white and so were his wife and father. The other heterosexual couple was from Trinidad and looked white. They were not staying at the hotel but having lunch and spending the day. My friend was a white Trinidadian male.

The atmosphere as we approached the table was a bit subdued and formal for Trinidad. The atmosphere did not quite go along with the setting, and I remember thinking there was something painful around. I soon forgot about it when drinks and food arrived, and got into enjoying my food and being by the sea. Conversation had been intermittent and it seemed that most of us where in quiet states. Someone asked the English man what he was doing and how it was going. At one point he began to talk about the problems he was having with the labour force. The young Trinidad woman next to me said:

"These people like to think they can get something for nothing".

I then said:

"I don't think it is right to lump a whole racial group together in that way".

The Trinidadian woman who was sitting next to me reacted to what I said. She stood up, pushed her chair back, and looking down at me. She screamed that I didn't know what I was saying, that she was an Arab and that she had worked hard all her life and recently had been held up by a black man who stuck a gun in her side and stole from her. She then said she was no longer going to sit at the table and have her afternoon upset. She walked away, her husband joined her and the English man walked to the edge of the veranda and stared out to sea. I looked at the others and mumbled an apology. We were all in shock. I felt quite bazodee[32].

Group Edge:

When the woman said 'these people', we all knew that she meant 'black people'. In such a social setting there would be assumptions about shared attitudes and beliefs about the different racial groups. This would be part of the identity or Primary Process of the group. Usually people in such a group would feel free to make statements like the Arab woman did with the expectation of understanding and support from the other members. My comment went against the assumed group identity or Primary Process. I went over the group edge. My comment challenged the group's identity. The assumed support and understanding was all of a sudden not there. Moments like these are often extremely challenging as in a flash you are moved from a safe and known place into an unknown place. No wonder we were all in shock.

Communication styles and system dynamics

The Arab woman had gone over our edges in her communication style. She was explosive. Previously we were all communicating in quiet voices. If I had been able to go over my edge, with awareness, at that moment, and match her intensity, it may have supported not only her, but a style of communication that was emotional and fiery. The mainstream communication style for that setting, was quiet and considered. On the other hand she had said she didn't want her afternoon disturbed anymore, and signalled strongly by walking away, so it might also have been right to not try and continue the discussion. Mainstream attitudes that side

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[32] Dizzy – in a state of shock.

with particular ways of communication as being best, are oppressive to those of us who have different ways of expressing ourselves. In Worldwork it is important to support all styles of communication

I continued to discuss what had happened with my male friend and he sided with the Arab woman, blamed me for up-setting her and said it was true that I didn't understand. Trying to figure out what had happened by looking at it in a personal way was not helping, so it would be more helpful to address it as a field phenomena or in a shamanic way. Addressing it now with the distance of being back in England, I can ask, what were the spirits of that place and time and what were they asking of us?

There was a tension between certain Timespirits in the field of Trinidad and we were being 'asked' to engage with them. Some of the Timespirits on that occasion were hard workers and lazy scroungers and thieves, aggressors and victims, superior and inferior. Some are mainstream and acceptable others are marginalised. The added problem was the long-term, world-wide attitude of attributing these ways of being as belonging to a particular racial group. I think we were being asked to address something that tends to happen in settings such as the one we were in. A privileged place and one that although I do not think it was a white only hotel, as I do not think that is allowed anymore - the owner of the hotel, was proud of having Carib in her - there was a *feel* to it that carried such an atmosphere. A kind of legacy from the past.

I suspect that most of us there would have identified with being hard workers, and victims of the scroungers and thieves, and in some way superior because of that. That would leave aggressors, scroungers, and thieves as not being present. Those Timespirits were being projected on to the labour force and by implication black people mainly. Another way of describing it would be to say that part of the Primary Process of the group was hard workers and that the aggressors, scroungers and thieves were part of our Secondary Process, the parts we disowned in ourselves. Process Work theory says that because we perceive those Timespirits, and they disturb us, they are part of ourselves that we need to own. It needs to be noted that the description of the Secondary Process is initially from the perspective of the Primary Process. Unravelling aggressors, scroungers and thieves would lead to important processes and awareness that the group disavowed, and needed.

Beginning to identify as a thief, I could say that we were stealing value from black people by projecting 'unacceptable' behaviour on to them and not valuing their difficulties in the situation described by the English man!   I could also say, we were scroungers by getting such good pay for our work. We could afford to spend a day or two hanging out at such a place, whereas others worked as hard as we did and got paid very little.   We scrounge off those who have no other option but to work for very little money in order that some of us have more of the profit!

The woman who got so upset at the table identified herself as an Arab.   In Trinidad most people who come from that part of the world are usually called Syrians.   In her statement I felt she was proud of being an Arab but I suspect that she too had suffered from racism.   The white French Creole population for years did not consider anyone other than Europeans as white and were thus socially excluded in many situations.   The other races in Trinidad, black, Indian, and Chinese, consider Arabs and Syrians as white.   She may have been saying that despite her racial origins and the problems and suffering that may have caused, she had pulled through and got somewhere.! She was proud of her achievements.   She was also suffering from a recent attack from a man with a gun, which must have been very traumatising.

The system of one racial group that had more rank, downing another racial group, was still, however, going on.   In Worldwork the issue of rank is one that we pay special attention to, especially in multi-cultural settings.   Privileges for everyone are not the same, and this needs to be noticed and brought out.   Historically, in Trinidad, privileges were based on the shade of your skin colour and the 'purity' of your blood line.   Although much has changed, there are still legacies that affect people today.

When someone describes another person in Trinidad the language used express this fact.   So you might hear someone talking about another person as a high-brown, or high-red, black, or black-black, light-skinned, clear-skinned, dougla, Trini-white, or white, and many others.

Everyone in Trinidad has developed 'an eye' for such differentiation.   As a young person growing in Trinidad I can remember paying close attention to, not only the shades of skin, but the shape of peoples noses and mouths, as well as the texture of their hair, as this would give clues as to their racial mix.   At the top of the hierarchy was the lightest skin, and straight and wavy hair that was not kinky, or African looking hair.   This hierarchical structure operated within families, black, brown and white.

The lightest skinned children in a black family got preferential treatment. Some black people used to rub their skin with limes in order to try and whiten them! How well you got on in life was partly due to the colour of your skin. Alvin O Thompson refers to this as an 'aristocracy of the skin'[33] The complexity and subtleties of this are described by V. Naipaul, of a Trinidadian in the 1940s and 1950s:

> "On both sides he would have been of mixed race for some generations; he was fair-skinned. He had no particular qualifications, but he didn't think he had done well enough………. he felt he had been discouraged for racial reasons from aiming higher: at the time when he entered the service, the best jobs were reserved for people from England. That was no longer so; but the changes had come too late for Belbenoit. He was famous in the office for being a disappointed man; and people treated his unhappiness like an illness, though it was no secret that Belbenoit (with all his assumptions) felt he hadn't had the treatment due to his *fair* colour, and felt his position in the office was in the nature of a racial disgrace"[34](italic mine)

People in Trinidad today no longer get jobs only because they are white or light-skinned, but also because they are black or Indian. It depends on who the employer is, so the system of privilege is still there and based on racial and ethnic grounds. Another dimension to this are the American and English employers who are attempting to be politically correct and choose people on ethnic grounds in order to be fair and seen to be fair.

A central problem in Trinidad is around a system of one racial group downing another racial group. This pattern of relating involves everyone and the roles and Timespirits can be occupied by anyone. One moment I am the victim and next I am the oppressor. Looking at it this way helps us to move away from blame and to see it as patterns of relating that are stuck and cycling. At the same time it is helpful to look at events in a causal way in an attempt to unravel what happened. Who said what to whom and in what way. Returning to the events at the hotel on the beach we can hold both perspectives in mind.

I would conjecture that the Arab woman had in the past been discriminated against because of her racial origins. Now she was expressing a critical attitude to others based on *their* racial origin. The same energy used against her, she used against others. Then I came in with an intent to stop the downing of black people and in that

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[33] The Haunting Past, 1997:6
[34] V.S. Naipaul, A Way in the World, 1995.23

way to bring attention to that way of thinking.   Besides her personal psychology, what else might have happened to get her so mad?

I had sent a double signal in my message.   Arnold Mindell writes about sending mixed messages:

> "Some of your messages and signals are intended; others are unconscious.   I call intended messages "primary signals," and unintended ones "double signals."…If you are not conscious of your double signals, people's reactions to them are likely to surprise you.   If you know your signals, you will never be surprised by anyone's response." [35]

I was feeling superior to these white people who were being racist in their discussion. The words I used were not very confrontational.   The tone in my voice was the double signal.   She reacted to the tone in my voice.   To express what that tone carried in words would have been to express how much better I thought I was than they were, as I didn't think and talk in a racist way!   My superior tone must have hurt her in way that she had previously been hurt.   I was a white woman putting her down.   We were all being hurtful.   There would have been a way of supporting my intent and the reactions to that, but my meta-skills of deep democracy were not available.   We all got stuck in the system.

There were also other Timespirits around.   Anger, grief, and a sort of helplessness. It was largely in the background and I think it was what was being spoken about when both the Arab woman and my male friend said I didn't understand something. A Timespirit from the white community that is not coming into expression because it is not politically correct and maybe because of guilt and fear.   It is very hard for me to pick it up and represent it.   My primary process here is one identified as I said earlier as a white person who is not racist and my edge is a fear of representing a position that has no right to feel the way it does.   Bringing my deep democracy skills to help me, I know that this part needs a voice too.   Without it, the field will not be able to act wisely, as it is something that is affecting everyone in the background. Bringing it out means that it can be seen, heard, and felt.   It can be given form and identified.   This is often relieving to the field, and it can also bring strong opposing reactions.   It is needed so that all the parts can interact which will allow change to happen.

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[35] Arnold Mndell, Sitting in the Fire, 1995:54

"As white people it has been hard to lose rank. We know we still have rank, although most of the time we don't feel it. We still have quite a lot of economic power, but what we feel more is what we have lost. A lot of us don't feel as though we matter anymore. But this is our country too! We have worked hard. For generations our families worked to build up a country with high standards of education and an infrastructure that worked well. We had dreams for how things would work out for us all. Over the last 30 years we have watched the times when the resources of the country were squandered and the infrastructure nearly collapsed. Actually we miss the old days. This transition has been hard. We feel guilt as well but don't like to think about it. So much has changed in one generation."

The reactions to this, I speculate, might be from rage to possible understanding. What I do know is that whether or not it is made explicit it will affect the field of Trinidad. If it is not brought out it will not get the opportunity to be processed and changed. There is also another aspect that white people in Trinidad use, which is a rank of feeling that they do not need to express these things. It's a kind of arrogance. The importance of bringing these feelings in cannot be overstated. Unexpressed feelings often stop progress being made. The aim in Worldwork is not to transcend rank, but rather to notice where we do have rank and to use it constructively. Picking up our rank in this way can help heal.

Levels of communication

In Worldwork all levels of communication are equal and vitally important. In a group we need to notice not only what people say but *how* people say what they say, the posture of the person talking, as well as how the group moves around or not. The content of what someone is saying is only one source of information. Sensing the atmosphere and feelings around is essential in being aware of the different levels of experience that are occurring.

In Process Work we speak about channels of communication. The channels most often referred to are, visual, auditory, propriception or body feeling, movement, relationship and the world. The information that appears in the sounds that people make, the images and visions that are spoken of, the feelings and body symptoms that someone complains of, the way an individual or group is still or moves, as well disturbances coming from outside of the group are all information that is vital to the group or individual process. The spirits that are around often can find no other way

of expressing themselves, so reveal their messages in these channels. Another way of referring to them would be unconscious dream-like processes.

All the thoughts and feelings that we disavow or try to hide appear in these channels. Having the meta-skill of deep democracy helps in welcoming them and drawing them out, as they are guidance to the next step. Process Work does not have an ideal of how things should be or what outcome would be best, as this attitude would favour one way or one side as opposed to another. Following both our conscious intent as well as the information coming from all the other channels is what leads the way. It is a belief and experience that the total 'field', the spirits of the time and place are wise, and that we would be wise to follow them.

These skills and meta-skills have been applied in many parts of the world with groups as diverse as corporate organisation to spiritual groups. The size of the groups have varied from one thousand participants to small groups and there is an ongoing training in Worldwork that takes places in different cities of the world. At these events people of all walks of life and different races gather together to learn how to apply the skills of deep democracy.

To end this section I quote Arnold Mindell writing about service to the world.

> "Now service to the world will also be a form of Innerwork that sees the connections between inner states and the outer atmosphere. Innerwork becomes Worldwork when you notice how your dreams connect with issues of rank and roles, race, gender, violence, women's rights, war, nuclear threats and ecology. As the healing community itself recuperates from its focus on the individual independent of the world, therapy and politics will come together, both of them committed to the health of the larger political body and the environment"[36]

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[36] Sitting in the Fire, 1995:238

TRINIDAD TODAY

The black female immigration officer asks me what am I here to research.   I had put that down as the purpose of my visit on the form I filled in, for entry to Trinidad.   I told her that I was here to find out if there is racism in Trinidad.   "Of course we are racist. But we find a way of getting along with each other," she replied.

The races that make up Trinidad and Tobago are blacks from different tribes in Africa, Indians and Pakistanis, Chinese and Lebanese, Europeans - French, British, Irish, German, Spanish, Corsican and Portuguese.   Finding a way of getting along has been a necessity for a long time. It is the most multi-racial island in the Caribbean – but *how* do we get along with each other?. Gaining awareness of how the people in Trinidad do this is vital for finding solutions to its racial problems.

Depending on who you speak to will depend on the definition of the problem, or even if there is one.   Newspapers are used as a forum for dialogue and what appears in this form is a conflict between the Indian members of the community and the African members of the community.   Conflicts also appear between the religious groups, based often on ethnic allegiance.   The other races do not usually participate in the dialogue, so the most visible conflict is between the above mentioned two sections of the community.   This is a major problem.   Process Work believes that e ven though the troubles look like they are between the Indian and African communities, the problem belongs to everyone, whichever race you belong to.

A black female clinical psychologist told me that: "We have always been racist. The whites in the '50s and '60s, the blacks in the '70s and '80s, and now the Indians in the 90s.   What changes are the targets and the victims.   It is the entrenched attitude towards each other that needs to change!"

What is this entrenched attitude?   At present one power seems to replace another, with the same kind of power.   The system stays the same!   It seems as though

those who were oppressed by racist attitudes gain power and become oppressors themselves, often without recognising how they are abusing their power.

Trinidad has been dominated by white Eurocentric values for the last four hundred years. In the last thirty years, the values have shifted in some aspects of the culture. Trinidadians are proud and celebrate their unique mix of multi-ethnic, multi-cultural life. Nevertheless it is still very much a part of the western world and it is still this value system that dominates, externally and explicitly through the use of US currency for business transactions - local currency is used for domestic transactions only - as well as less explicit value systems. A pattern of relating based on a system that gives people value depending on their racial origins is what is still troubling the people of Trinidad. This attitude does not only belong to Trinidad but is also a world problem. This inherited way of relating to one another is the same conflict that is being acted out between the Indians and blacks. This is the entrenched attitude that has been a fabric of the society for a very long time.

Trinidad's racial problems look like they are between two majority races. But the problems they are trying to work out and find solutions for, come from patterns of relating, laid down a long time ago, and which are still part of the wider world.

Different perspectives

Most of the white people I spoke to felt that the attitudes of whites to the other races *had* changed. They felt that their previous racist attitudes about socialising and intermarrying were no longer influencing their actions. People of all ethnic backgrounds met socially, belonged to the previously white-only clubs and sometimes married each other. It was now more a matter of class and education that created a divide! But not everyone agrees with that.. So there must be some entrenched attitudes that stay the same and affect how people relate to each other. And are the attitudes of the incoming power- holder coming from the same place? Is there a shared experience of power that keeps the system the same or are there important differences to be appreciated?

An experience shared by all races is that of being controlled by a political power that lies *outside* of the island. There was always someone who was not from the island coming in and filling the top roles of power. The people were white and they were men. This situation lasted until independence in 1962. The difference in the

experience was that the people in power were always white, and this reinforced the structure of whites being superior.

The white French Creoles lost their power, positions and language when the British took over. British people were often snobbish towards the local whites. In addition, other racial groups were coming up economically. Nineteenth century French Creoles began to cling to their power through their ancestry, creating a hierarchy of families competing with each other for the *best* families. This was based on racial purity as power – that some people are better than others depending on their racial origins! This way of thinking was part of my everyday experience growing up, even through no one actually said those words.

"Potogee" in the cupboard

My maternal Grandmother died age ninety-four and it was only then the whole family came to know a secret she had kept from everyone. The secret was that she had Portuguese blood! The Portuguese were at the bottom of the European racial hierarchy as they had come to Trinidad as indentured labourers from the peasant class of Portugal. In a late nineteenth century census of Trinidad there was a separate category for Portuguese as they were not considered worthy of being European. They were referred to as 'potogee'. My grandmother had been orphaned as a small child and was determined to get herself out of the poverty that ensued. As a young woman she knew that getting married into a 'good' family was a way out. Most of her ancestry was French and German and so she traded on that. The French in Trinidad had formed a sort of aristocracy and were often landowners. She met and married a quiet French-origin land-owning gentleman. Her ambitions continued on to her children so that they too could marry into those of European-origin or French Creoles. The secret had to be kept.

This attitude had been passed down many generations. I think it could be called an entrenched attitude.

As events changed and land and power moved out of the control of whites, French Creoles focussed on the power they were losing and not on the power they had relative to the rest of the peoples. I think the implicit attitude was something like: "Who we are as a racial group is better than any of you and we will use our position of power to show you how you should be, and to patronise you. We give the orders and you follow."

I feel sure that not many white Trinidadians would agree with me, but that is how I think it was, and may still be in some situations.   At the least, it is the way some people think in secret.

What might be the entrenched attitudes of black people or Indian people and can they be called racists?

In Process Oriented Psychology only the mainstream can be racist.

> "Racism is in the intentional or unintentional and unconscious use of the mainstream race's political power against another race with less social power.   It is a negative value judgement by those races in the mainstream about people of other races.   This value judgement legitimises exploiting and downing others." [37]

Defining the mainstream in Trinidad is complex. It is a small nation that exists within a larger system that economically and socially dominates the Western world.   It is both part of the mainstream and outside of it as far as its social power in the world goes.   Having been colonised by the Spanish, French and English, mainstream attitudes are part of the mainstream in Trinidad.   The political power changed from being British to independence and becoming a republic.   For thirty years it was dominated by a black government, but currently has an Indian government. Aspects of what is valued by the mainstream has changed and most people in Trini have a pride in their country and in our home-grown language that is a mix or "calaloo"[38] of the multi-ethnic culture, fuh troot![39]

However there are aspects of the mainstream that are the same as Europe and America a nd give higher value to certain ways of being, like the most valued accents – British has a lot of rank – not being over-emotional, and wearing suits!

Using the above definition of racism in the context of Trinidad as an 'entity', separate and on its own from the rest of the world, we could say that the black people, when they had political power, behaved in a racist way towards the Indian population, by having negative value judgements towards them and their culture, and keeping the positions of power in the government for black people. The Indian culture had

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[37] Arnold Mindell, Sitting in the Fire, 1995:151

[38] Blending of unlikely ingredients. John Mendes, Cote ce Cote la, Trinidad and Tobago Dictionary:1986

[39] An endorsement to a statement. John Mendes, Cote ce Cote La: Trinidad and Tobago Dictionary 1986

always been marginalised by the mainstream in Trinidad. Looking at it in the context of the world, we would have to question whether black people can be racist, as their actions and reactions need to be seen as well in relationship to the past and the present world situation.

It is all interconnected

Fritjof Capra in the Web of Life writes about a shift from mechanistic thinking to systems thinking where the relationship between the parts and the whole have been reversed.

> "Cartesian science believed that in any complex system, the behaviour of the whole could be analysed in terms of the properties of its parts. Systems science shows that living systems cannot be understood by analysis. The properties of the parts are not intrinsic properties, but can be understood only within the context of the larger whole……..Ultimately, as quantum physics showed so dramatically – there are no parts at all.   What we call a part is merely *a pattern in an inseparable web of relationships"[40]*

Black people have dominated and marginalised Indian people, but it is still in reaction to legacies of the past, and to a world system that still marginalises and dominates black people today.   The roles and Timespirits of domination, marginalisation, tyrant, victim, based on ethnicity, are still being worked out.   These are the "entrenched attitudes". The behaviour and attitudes of black people towards Indian people is largely in reaction to racists attitudes that they, black people, have endured for a very long time in Trinidad and continue to endure from the Western world.

The expression of black anger and resentment towards whites could not be called racists, for even though the blacks had the political power, the whites still had some economic power, and privileges that remained from being white.

Are the Indians using their political power to legitimise downing others? If they are, then they too will be racists, but I do not think they are doing that. Before coming to power their culture was marginalised, it is now becoming more mainstream.   If they are misusing their power, then they too are struggling with local legacies and current world attitudes to people of colour. The two women I spoke to had a different perception.   They were both black women and must have had experiences that led them to feel the way they did, perhaps suffering from the power of the now Indian government. The psychologist said that she would be returning to the US to live with

her daughter as she felt that at least in the US there is legislation to protect her daughter. Whereas in Trinidad she now saw her young black daughter as having few rights and opportunities. She described the current government as being dominated by Indians who basically looked after their own, as all other governments before them have done. A country divided by ethnic allegiance but trying not to be divided.

She describes the current Prime Minister, who is of Indian origin, as follows:

> "He is acting as though he is still in opposition and not the one in power. For years they have been protective and defensive of themselves and now can't quite take themselves seriously   A lot of black people supported the Indian Prime Minister when he came to power, but he fired every black person in a position of power in state-owned companies, and Civil Service."

A white man responded by saying that the Prime Minister did that because black people were resistant to carrying out instructions

If the Indians were being protective and defensive, why is this? It is because they were a marginalised ethnic group. When they came to Trinidad they settled in the country-side and the blacks moved mainly into the towns. They brought their customs, myths, language, food and religion and lived quite apart from the rest of Trinidad. But why didn't the rest of Trinidad go and find out about them and 'build a bridge' with the Indian newcomers?

I remember seeing their houses and huts, rice-fields, and coloured flags on long poles outside the front of their homes and hearing their music played on loudspeakers. Their temples and mosques were strange and beautiful. As a Catholic I was forbidden to enter their holy places. They remained very much 'other' – a very unknown group, upon which we projected all sorts of negative qualities. They didn't feel Trinidadian like other races did. Whereas a relationship had developed between the French Creoles and African Creoles that at times contained a lot of affection and understanding, the Indian life-style remained largely unknown. The other racial groups, including the Syrians, Lebanese, and to some extent the Chinese developed a more Western oriented life-style and that became normative. This was a cultural arrogance from the Trinidad mainstream towards the Indian population. They were expected to be more like us, there was not much expectation that maybe we might become more like them. Kevin Robbins writing about Turkey

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[40] Fritjof Capra, The Web of Life, 1997.37

and Europe seems relevant to the above, in a paragraph entitled 'A Turk doesn't go to the Opera' he writes:

> "……..how cultural arrogance can turn into cultural hatred. When it is declared that the other is marked by insurmountable particularity, and consequently can never be assimilated (converted) into our culture, then we have the basis of racism. [41]

Perhaps it will be easier to understand the comment of the woman who calls the Indian people protective and defensive and now cannot quite take themselves seriously. Of course they are protective and defensive as they were oppressed by the expectation of having to become more like the mainstream in order to be accepted. This is an abuse of power. The mainstream was made up of white, mixed race and black people. Our collective ideas of what was and was not acceptable, excluded them from being themselves with their clothes, music, customs etc. *Their* power was their togetherness, and their ability to stick to their beliefs, religions and life-style and not be forced into being like the majority Trinidad mainstream. Part of their reaction of "closing in" on themselves was partly due to the way we of the mainstream related to them, forcing them to find strength amongst themselves. The mainstream then criticised them for not being open enough, completely missing the fact that it was not being open to them and *their* culture. This is a misuse of mainstream power. For a marginalised group to become aware of its own power is not so easy, but for the mainstream it should have been easier. Often it is not. From the Trinidad mainstream the Indians were seen as resistant at best, or violent and unpredictable.

Rank and lack of awareness

> "Only when all members of a community grow in awareness of power in themselves and others can true change occur." [42]

The path to discovering power in ourselves and others is not an easy or quick one. It takes commitment and meta-skills of compassion and kindness, and a willingness to step into the unknown. The mainstream in this situation did not have any awareness of its rank and power.

Rank can be described as the sum of our privileges. In every society there is a ranking system which affords those on the top more privileges than those at the bottom. Some privileges are inherited and some are earned. Being white gives a

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[41] Questions of Cultural Identity, edited by Stuart Hall and Paul du Gay:1996.66
[42] Arnold Mindell, Sitting in the Fire 1995.45

person privileges in most parts of the world, - an inherited privilege.   Other high ranking privileges are often education, money, being male and heterosexual.   The patterns of relationship between those of high rank and those with less ran k is similar whichever part of the world it occurs. Major problems are caused when those with rank don't notice the rank they have.

Arnold Mindell writes about some of these problems:

> "The mainstreamers who have, or have had, social power are, obviously powerful.   Not so obviously, they are handicapped.   They are less able to see their higher rank than those who are, or have been, under them. The result of this poor vision is that they can not understand others. This creates stalemates we read about in the news all the time – the stalled, stuttering, ongoing conflicts always present in our world ……"Rank is not inherently bad, and abuse of rank is not inevitable.   When you are aware of your rank, you can use it to your own benefit and the benefit of others as well.   Rank conscious people know that much of their power was inherited and is not shared. They do not look down on less powerful individuals who don't have many things or abilities.   They are humble and yet feel good about themselves, for rank can be a medicine as well as a disease. [43]

How does the white man's response that the Indian Prime Minister fired black people because they were resistant to carrying out instructions, fit in to this?   How come the black people were resistant to carrying out instructions given to them by Indian people?

> "In Trinidad's origins as a colonial society, a system of stratification based on a class-race-colour hierarchy —beginning with slavery and continuing through emancipation and indenture – laid the foundations for a post-colonial society whole hallmark has been ethnic group competition fostered by class inequalities and state control of certain resources." [44]

Indians first became an economic threat to the black people in the 1880s and black people began to build up negative stereotypes of Indians in order to keep them at the bottom of the social class:

> "The outstanding feature of the social structure of Trinidad and Tobago is the dichotomy between Creole and Indian. The term Creole has a distinctive local meaning in Trinidad. It excludes the Indian population, together with the small Syrian, Portuguese, Chinese and Carib minorities. Creoles may be white, brown or black." [45]

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[43] Arnold Mindell. Sitting in the Fire: 1995.50/53
[44] Aisha Khan, Trinidad Ethnicity:1993:186
[45] Colin Clarke, Trinidad Ethnicity, 1993:117

The term Creole has a meaning of a belonging to Trinidad.   Even through there are difficult issues to be addressed between the black, brown and white people, there is a sense a lot of the time, of belonging to a shared culture.

This, however, was not the case in the 1970s when Black Power was very dominant in Trinidad.   Anyone who was not of African origin felt they had been taken over and that Trinidad had become part of Africa.   All other ethnic groups felt irrelevant. Trinidad belonged to the black people, this land was theirs.   The symbols of the success of independence and power were symbols that related to the black population.

For black people it must have been the most wonderful experience after all the years of feeling oppressed to celebrate black and African beauty and pride. The relief and liberation of it, the money that became available and the power that brought.   I think during this time the black population forgot that they shared this land with others and in a sense took possession of Trinidad.   It was a difficult time for anyone who was not black and especially the large Indian population who did not identify with the symbols of liberation and power, and were largely overlooked by not being given jobs in powerful positions.

Having gained power it is hard to give it up.   One of the slogans afte r independence was 'Massa[46] day done!' Black people had taken 'orders' for so long from others, particularly white people, it must have been hard to once again in 1994 to begin to take orders from those who were not black and for years were considered outside the mainstream.   And how difficult for an Indian person to take up the leadership of a country when half the population had an identify that did not include his race and customs. He was like an 'outsider' who now held the reins.

Over the last ten years legislation has changed to include and celebrate most of the ethnic and religious festivals.   Public holidays acknowledge Muslims, Hindus, Christians and the arrival days of Africans and Indians.   The spiritual practices of the Orisha and Shango shamanic religions still remain marginalised.

Primary and Secondary processes

In order to help us understand and unravel the different parts and sides of what is going on, it is helpful to identify the structure of what is happening, and to recognise

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[46] Master

the signals and double -signals of those involved.   In Process Oriented Psychology we do this by identifying the process structure.   The Primary Process is that part which we more easily identify with as part of ourselves, while the Secondary Process is harde r to identify with, or completely disavowed and which we think has nothing to do with us. The edge is the belief that maintains the Primary Process and makes it hard to identify with the Secondary.   We are not necessarily aware of either identification, so it is not a matter of being either conscious or unconscious.   We can be unconscious of both our Primary and Secondary.   Even though we can more easily identify with the Primary Process we are not necessarily conscious of it.   The Secondary process leads the way forward and takes us into the unknown. Mainstream attitudes are the Primary Process of consensus reality.

The Primary Process for Trinidad and Tobago is a multi-racial, multi-religion Republic. The first line of the National Anthem is: "Every clan and race has an equal place".

A generally admired Trinidad calypsonian David Rudder[47] sings about the tensions between the different races and in particular the Indian people and Black people and appeals to us to appreciate our differences, even celebrate them.

> *Once upon a time there was a magic island*
> *Filled with magic people*
> *Let me tell you a story*
> *About their pain and glory, oh yeah*
> *Many rivers flowed to this magic isle*
> *Bringing fear and pain, but also a brand new style*
> *And of all these rivers that shaped this land*
> *Two mighty ones moved, like a sculptor's hand*
> *And today these hands, across the land, they're still landscaping*
> *And there is no doubt they'll work it out, there's no escaping…….*
> *One lovely nation under a groove*
> *The Ganges has met the Nile*
> *Differences there will always be*
> *So that you'll be you and I'll be me*
> *But that's the damned thing self that makes this country sweet*
> *Brother bring your drum, let we start to beat.*

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[47] CD album International Chantuelle by David Rudder. Crosby's Music Centre,P.O.S., Trinidad.

In this Primary Process there is room for everyone – we are a democracy – all are equal whoever you are. In Rudder's song there is something soothing and reassuring. No need to worry, it will be OK. I like the spirit of it but does it support people to *not* get involved in the disturbances around race? I think it probably does. The Primary Process is also expressed by the black woman immigration officer when I arrived by saying "Of course we are racist. But we find a way of getting along with each other". She acknowledges that there is a problem but indicates something like its OK and not anything to worry about.

Identifying the Secondary occurs when we identify the Primary Process, and then notice what disturbs it, or those elements of behaviour that do not go along with the identity of the person, group or nation. So we can say that Trinidad is identified as an all-inclusive, multi-ethnic, forward looking nation, and then we notice that there are disturbances and fights going on between two racial groups that does not look or sound harmonious. In fact it is often harsh and painful for those involved.

The Primary Process as I have identified it is one that says something along the lines that despite our diversity we are all equal and together, as one. Trinidad and Tobago's first black Prime Minister after independence Dr. Eric Williams wrote to the Nation, urging us to stay focussed on our togetherness as we made the transition from a colony to independence. It was important at this time as a young new country.

> "There can be no Mother India, for those whose ancestors came from India. There can be no Mother Africa, for those of African origin, and the Trinidad and Tobago society is a living lie headed for trouble, if it seeks to create the impression or to allow others to act under the delusion that Trinidad and Tobago is an African society. There can be no Mother England and no dual loyalties, there can be no Mother China even if one would agree as to which China is the Mother. And there can be no Mother Lebanon. A nation like an individual can have only one Mother. The only Mother we recognise is Mother Trinidad and Tobago. And Mother cannot discriminate between her children. All must be equal in her eyes."[48]

The Independence of Trinidad and Tobago was founded on a mainstream desire for all of the races to be one, but already in the above speech he seems to be addressing a spirit of disturbance that is asking for different 'Mothers'.

So you could say that indications of where a secondary process is, is already in Dr. Williams speech to the Nation in the 1960s. The multi-ethnic and cultural aspects of

life in Trinidad were a problem then and still are. He notices it and addresses it by his vision of the way forward to have just one Mother. People in Trinidad generally do the same today and believe that if they focus on the positive and what is shared, everything will be OK. This is understandable

So we can guess that the Secondary Process is around having many 'Mothers' and not being dominated by one 'family' system. Separateness, difference, maybe fragmentation would lead the way to finding the Secondary Process. Being able to welcome and unravel disturbances is difficult, and it is within the disturbances themselves that the solutions are to be found.

Lao Tzu a Chinese sage who lived some time in the years 500BC has a helpful and encouraging couple of lines of advice in dealing with such problems:

> "It is by being alive to difficulty that one can avoid it.
> The sage meets with no difficulty. It is because he is alive to it that he meets with no difficulty." [49]

Since it is not always so easy to follow Lao Tzu's advice, it would be helpful to look at what makes it difficult to so. This is to look at what the edges might be to following such good advice. This would be the beliefs that keep us identified with the Primary Process while not allowing the Secondary to express itself.

While I was in Trinidad I noticed that newspapers were giving a lot of coverage to the conflicts and clashes between the Black Trinidadian and the Indian Trinidadian. However whenever I spoke to individuals about this, most people said that it was just the media stirring things up and that it was not really so.

This minimising of events is a way of avoiding what is disturbing. What is disturbing is usually marginalised behaviour. So one edge could be the fear of really addressing how much difference there is between people and the anger and hurt that people would need to engage with. Clinging to an inclusive identity and a pulling together, no matter what, was a matter of survival for a long time. Another edge might be to the fear of a breakdown of the system, revolution, or another coup attempt.

Mainstream attitudes are part of all of us whatever racial group we belong to whatever level of society we are a part of. Often these attitudes are oppressive and

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[48] Eric Williams, History of Trinidad and Tobago,1942.279

hurtful to minorities of all cultures. Mainstream attitudes of the Western world form part of the culture in Trinidad and Tobago. One of these attitudes is that people of colour should stop complaining and harking back to the past injustices and get on with the present.

After all, black people in the recent past and now Indian people in Trinidad and Tobago, have political power, so what good is there in bringing up what life was like forty, one hundred, and two hundred years ago? The problem is that forgetting about the past fosters an attitude of ignoring what feels wrong. Some people still have painful feelings around slavery, indentureship, colonialism and racism. Encouraging people to forget splits off the disturbing feelings and they re-emerges in destructive coups and revolutions. Addressing and acknowledging what felt wrong in the past helps heal the injustices of the past, and creates new patterns and ways of dealing with what feels wrong in the present.

Why is it that, in Trinidad, in 1970, there was a Black Power Revolution, twelve years into a government dominated by black people? And again, in 1990 there was a coup claiming that:

> "blacks are not better off than they were in 1970 and that there was a lack of race-pride and self-reliance, challenging the Catholic hierarchy and prestige denominational schools, stating that a lot of blacks were still dispossessed, economically powerless and discriminated against by the Christian based structures".[50]

The mainstream, in most parts of the world, does not welcome minority protests and disturbances. In fact most individuals do not either. But it seems that unless the mainstream engages with the protests and angry demonstrators, it eventually leads to some form of eruption that becomes more destructive than it would have done, had we been willing to engage, earlier on.

> "If things don't change enough with reform, revolution follows. This is the lesson of history. From the viewpoint of process work, revolution occurs when the governing powers are unaware of rank and of the resulting oppression and they ignore hot spots. Revenge and terrorism follow. Polarities become rigid. The system reaches an edge. Its identity is endangered. It is unable to recognise those who are marginalised – those on the other side of the edge – and forces them into increasingly peripheral, distant and untenable positions. After trying and failing to obtain a transformation of the existing leadership,

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[49] Lao Tzu, Tao Te Ching 1963.133 LXXI
[50] The Black Power Revolution 1970 edited by Selwyn Ryan & Taimoon Stewart, see the Introduction by Selwyn Ryan.

the marginalised group is left with the choice of overthrowing the authorities or submitting and dying internally. Discontent is replaced with apathy, then despair, anger and finally violence and war."[51]

Prior to 1970 there had been many indications of unrest and rebellion. Prior to 1990 indications were that trouble was brewing again. People were killed and much property was destroyed. Might it have been avoided if the mainstream had engaged with the disturbers as people carrying important information for the whole country, instead of minority groups that needed to be contained and controlled? In 1970 one of the major complaints was that the money was still in the hands of the whites both in the island and outside investors. Economic power was not a reality of the average black and Indian person. The government was black but all the structures of the economy were the same as they ever were. Black people were still being ruled by values that did not honour them. These values came from majority white countries, Europe and America. The Black Power revolution of 1970 was an attempt to redress this painful inheritance. In this attempt however, the Black Power movement did not notice the Indian population with its specific issues and needs.

Revolutions and Coups, understandable as they are, usually use the same *quality* of energy to fight the oppressor. They use aggression to fight oppression and aggression. We have all done this for thousands of years. I understand and sympathise with the 1970 Black Power movement and with the Coup of 1990. For the oppressed there usually seems to be no alternative but to resort to violence and most often they see themselves as freedom fighters

> "….violence occurs, in part, because the oppressed cannot defend themselves from the intentional and covert use of mainstream rank."[52]

Mr Khafa Kambon, a black man who was part of the 1970 revolution writes

> "I want to deal with the question of the violence which I think has to be very clearly understood. I am not very sympathetic to the fears that some people might have felt in 1970. I do not believe in trying to make people fearful. But I believe that in the context of this society especially before 1970, dramatic change could not have taken place without instilling fear in certain communities. And if I have to choose between remaining enslaved in some way so that somebody else does not feel fear, and acting aggressively in order to be free, even if it creates fear, I am going to do what it takes for freedom."[53]

[51] Sitting in the Fire, Arnold Mindell, 1995.226
[52] Arnold Mindell, Sitting in the Fire, 1995.78
[53] Khafa Kambon, Retrospecive of the Black Power Revolution in 1970. 1995.375

Powerful and stirring words that I can relate to and agree with momentarily. However it is a fact that in terms of the system of oppressor and victim, it remains the same and a question remains as to whether there is another way. One where the process does not keep cycling.

> "Violence will stop only when you and I are ready to work on it. That entails interrupting our lives to include awareness of the agony of the oppressed."[54]

We need to change the way we react to social unrest and violence. We need to see the way the mainstream oppresses minority groups or points of view. How the unconscious use of rank by the mainstream causes violent reactions. We need to make it personal and see the part we each play in contributing to violence.

A small group meeting

On my visit to Trinidad and Tobago in October 1998, I met up with a group who were interested in addressing ideas and feelings about racism in Trinidad. Before describing the meeting I want to recount a dream that I had while in England just before setting off to Trinidad to do my research. Notice how much the dream is informing me about what eventually happens.

I had been captured by an oppressive regime that existed within the culture that I lived. Almost like a country within a country. Many of us were captured. We were all afraid and experienced the regime as extremely powerful. So powerful that if we made any show of resistance, death was a certainty. They pushed us to our limits – making us endure physical pain and fear to see how we would react. We needed not to react in order to survive. People from outside, from the free world came in and witnessed what was happening. I tried surreptitiously to speak to them to beg for their help in intervening in our terrible situation. I risked my life speaking to them and they too were taking a risk speaking to me.

My white friend Tom[55] arranged for a small group of his friends to gather at his home for an informal discussion on racism in Trinidad and Tobago as a way of assisting me with my research.

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[54] Arnold Mindell, Sitting in the Fire. 1995.87
[55] I have changed the names of all those who attended this gathering.

Racially we were a mixed group, Black, Indian, Mixed race, and White. There were eleven of us. Drinks were served as we arrived, food later on. Earlier on that day I had had a phone call from my friend Tom requesting me <u>not to</u> bring my tape recorder and or to write anything down. There was an Indian man called Roy who felt very uncomfortable about anything being recorded. He would only come if he were assured of this. I agreed to go along with the request but felt squeezed and controlled. Soon after he arrived I brought up the need I had to at least write, and I complained about my terrible memory. Roy became quite agitated and said that he might say something that was not carefully thought out and did not want to be quoted from spontaneous talking. To honour his request I have to point out that what I am about to write may not be precisely what he said, but it is what I can remember.

  His fear was one I could understand. The fear of saying or writing something spontaneous and not quite properly formulated, and having that recorded and being accountable for it. We shared a similar edge. This edge helped structure the entire process that evening. The willingness to go into the unknown with all the fears of getting into trouble and into a mess is an essential ingredient in finding solutions and building community. This I know from my studies and from working in other group situations, but I was stuck at my edge as a facilitator and this affected the whole group.

As my dream stated we were all "captured" by an oppressive regime. An oppression that made us fearful but needing to speak out in order to get help out of a terrible situation.

The subject of racism was difficult for everyone present. How wonderful that as a group we were willing to meet and address our thoughts and feelings about something so potentially painful. Perhaps the whole group shared the same edge. I could have represented the edge to the group by saying something like – "I think in the moment there is a feeling around that we should be very careful about what we say because we are treading on dangerous ground and there could be unexpected landmines that could blow up and hurt some or all of us." Just addressing the edge would have changed the atmosphere and helped us move on. In Process Work we try and stay at the edge of the unknown as this allows something to happen or come in that will often bring us together.

In fact Roy dominated the meeting and I was completely edged out. I was unable to pick up my rank in the situation and no one else could either – I felt very uncomfortable and I am sure others did too. Part of what edged me out was that he

was a professor and spoke using complex language and concepts with great conviction. I began to feel stupid and could barely keep track of what he was saying. He was putting a case for us to understand the experiences of the Indian people of Trinidad.   So much of what he said interested me, experiences that I knew nothing about, and which we needed to hear and he needed to tell.   But he dominated the meeting, and often his tone was harsh and accusing.   We became the oppressed. He was speaking *for* the oppressed but unconsciously oppressed us all.   Why was he doing this and did it feel like that for him?

Roy was making a stand against racism and oppression and in doing so most of the rest of us began to feel victimised.   However, there was something very right about this.   First of all we needed to be reminded or taught what it is like to be oppressed as this is how he, as an Indian, often feels.   In that moment both sides are suffering, and interchangeable.   Roy was both the oppressor and the victim and the rest of us were both victims, and the oppressor.   Something needed to happen to bring about a change.

Someone needed to admit to being a racist and oppressor and until that happened the situation would stay stuck.   No one wanted to own up to being the bad person. We all wanted to stay identified with being good people.   What I needed in that moment was the ability and meta-skill of fluidity. To be both polarised in a role and be able to perceive the whole.   The inseparable web of relationships.   To be simultaneously inside and outside of the roles and polarisation's.   Learning to do this takes training.

Roy and his wife had been the last to arrive and sat near the door. It felt like they were not quite in the room with us. They are Indian people and for around 200 years their home was a land where their culture, language, music etc. was not considered part of the mainstream of Trinidad culture.   Racially and culturally he came from a marginalised group, despite the fact that the current Prime Minister and government was predominantly Indian.   On a feeling level his " Indianess" was oppressed.

Judy, his wife told us about the countless time she has been humiliated when the driver of the public taxi she was riding in, would turn the radio off , with a derogatory comment, when a piece of Indian music was played.   The ridiculing of Indian music was a mainstream attitude.   Despite the fact of Roy's rank as a man and a professor he was suffering from the generations of put-down and humiliation of his race.   He was angry and wanted us to wake up to experiences that he felt we didn't

acknowledge.   At one point a quiet black man was telling us a story that would have reinforced our collective projections about all Indians going out of control, being violent and frightening everyone, with their cutlasses.   Roy would not let him finish his story and shut him up.   Rightfully, he just couldn't stand to listen to those stories anymore, it was just so one‑sided.

I was shut up too, although that was not only because of Roy's dominating attitude. My personal psychology of being dominated by powerful male figures, together with feelings of inadequacy around people who are highly educated, edged me out.   I was not able to pick up my rank as a white person and the person doing the research.   He was also right when he challenged me on not having enough hard statistical information.   It is an area I may need to develop.   My own personal psychology, my inner landscape, was very similar to what was happening in the room.   My mainstream ideas unconsciously agreed with him. I was against myself. The work I needed to do on myself and the work that we needed to do in that room that evening were exactly the same.   Similarly Roy identified as the oppressed, the disenfranchised and did not notice the power he had.   Had I been able to see that at the time, I could have stepped out of my numbed state and noticed that he needed assistance in picking up his power congruently.   Part of his power was the righteous anger he was expressing as an oppressed person, as well as insight into the inadequacies and unconsciousness of those who oppressed him.

Ghosts

Someone mentioned that the Indians were now in power.   Roy said he didn't feel he had any power and that, even though the Indians were in political power, they didn't really have economic power.   He told us that most people thought that Indians had money but in reality as a people they did not have much economic power and therefore were not the people with power.   I then asked: "Who has the power?" There was silence until a high‑red[56] man called Peter said challengingly, "Is there a problem with stating the obvious?   It is the white people of course."   This man went over the group's edge.   The two white men were quiet for a while until Tom spoke. He said that as a white man he didn't think he had any personal power and that a lot of white people no longer felt, and in deed, had no political and little economic power. Arnold Mindell writes about how people who belong to groups who once outranked

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[56] People are often described by their skin colour: HIGH RED – part White, part Black but 'clearer' than Brown‑skin: HIGH BROWN – More white than Black, light skinned: DOUGLA – part Indian and part Black: LIGHT SKINNED,or CLEAR SKINNED Some Black, but more White: TRINI WHITE – Perhaps not all White, behaves like others but skin White.

others want to be treated like individuals once their power is lost.   Tom was expressing this need.

> "One group is hurt and weakened because its members have been socially oppressed; the other is psychologically weak because its members are blind to their social position."[57]

Roy was trying to make us understand the hurt and weakness he and his racial group feel as a result of the years of social oppression.   Tom represented the psychological weakness of the white people, which was our not being able to recognise that, despite our loss of some power and wealth, how much power and rank we still have, just because we are white.

Tom and Steve, the two white men, were largely unaware of their social position and rank in that situation. They identified as part of a marginalised group who has lost their power, and personally no longer have economic power.   They see themselves as they are in the now, and that is their reality.   They were not able to make a connection between the present situation and how it was in the past. The fact is that just being white in Trinidad still gives someone status, the way it does in many parts of the world.   White people probably don't even notice this as we have taken it for granted for many years.   What we notice is what we have lost and not what we still have.   In the group setting above one white man used his social privilege by keeping quiet. Not having to get involved is a privilege.

When Power is a ghost, it means that we can feel that it is around. We suffer from it in some way but it cannot be seen and addressed directly.   No one wanted to identify as the one with the power, as a result we were all reacting to a powerful presence that we knew to be real, but it was not owned and embodied by anyone. It was a ghost!   Power as a ghost was happening in the moment in our small group gathering, and it was also an issue for the country as a whole.   A nation with a Prime Minister and an ethnic group in political power but apparently unable to identify with it, and having a white minority who in the past outranked all other racial groups, but who no longer wanted to be made responsible for their past.

I sensed another ghost around.   One that didn't trust and had lost hope of acknowledgement and change.   I imagine that if it would have been represented that it would have said something like: "We don't trust you – we are afraid of you. No one has ever really acknowledged the truth and I don't think you will either because you are white.   No one is ever accountable.   Who will hear us and take the blame

and hear our pain?   Maybe even say sorry," Actually I do at times feel accountable, and I could have stepped into that role and taken responsibility for listening and apologising.   It is this very sense of responsibility that involves me so much in this issue.

Roy left feeling disappointed and somewhat unheard.   Something had not happened that was important to him.   This was reported the next day to my host Tom.   Roy asked Tom to give me a message that I should be more vigorous in my research and not pay so much attention to peoples' experiences and more to statistics.   He needed us to hear important information - mainly statistical - and obviously felt that he had not got through to us. Statistics have mainstream power to change thinking in our world.   He needed the support of that power in the struggle against the oppression he had had in the past, and was still experiencing.

He did not get us on his side. We couldn't seem to hear him.   We were all reacting to his dominating style. He was talking about how Indians were not really in power but in the moment he was very powerful, although he did not identify with it.   He was sending us a double message but in those situations it is almost impossible not to. As someone who belonged to an oppressed group, he needed to be dominating as a way of trying to get listened to. It didn't entirely work, but it is understandable, and with different facilitation from me it might have worked.

What happens when this occurs? When the role of power is not picked up by anyone in the room and what does this mean in terms of racism in Trinidad?

Without dialogue not a lot can change.   In Process Work we emphasize the importance of all the roles and timespirits being indentified and facilitated to interact with each other.   Arny Mindell talks about wisdom and self-balance becoming wise when all parts are encouraged to express themselves completely.

> "There are several requirements I presently know about, and others still to be discovered, which must be met in order for wisdom to come from the self-balancing attractor.   The first requirement is that we must be able to identify all the various parts and timespirits in a system. The second is that we have to allow them to speak.   All the parts in a field, even those we do not like or those we believe are useless, must be present and supported.   ………Once all the parts are identified, they must be encourage to speak".[58]

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[57] Arnold Mindell , Sitting in the Fire, Page 51.
[58] Arnold Mindell, The Leader as Martial Artist, 1992.33

It is this process itself of identifying all the roles and encouraging dialogue and interaction with awareness that leads to the solutions we are seeking.

When everyone present continues to identify with the victim's side and the complaining side we are talking to someone who is not there!   Why isn't that person/role there? I could have stepped into that role, but I didn't.   In fact, I think it is a very scary role in which you would have to be able to take on the responsibility for the immense injustices that have occurred over time.   A role in which you would need to be able to take the attacks of others and apologise.   It is also a role in which you would need to stand up for the deeds of the powerful ones, not so much to agree with them but maybe to try and understand why those in power acted the way they did.   It is a very difficult role.   Certainly it will need someone/s with a great deal of heartfulness. It is the sort of love that no longer needs to see only one side, and is fluid enough to care about the whole.   These are qualities of eldership.   An elder knows that to take one side, no matter how beautiful or spiritual, is not realistic.   To be angry, or bad, or frightened or wrong are all aspects of life and are as much a part of life as much as the good and beautiful.   An elder has the ability to be free enough to be any of these and none of these and able to help others to do the same.

If I were to dream right now as to how I could have taken up the role of eldership that evening I might first of all have told the Indian woman that yes, it was true that as a child I stupidly used to ridicule Indian music and apologise to her for the hurt that it has caused her.   I would thank Roy for bringing to our attention the fact that there is a lot of misinformation about the lives of Indian people and ask him to teach us more about it. I would also challenge him to notice his power in the moment. I would also have been able to pick up the role of power as a white person and represent it, stating some of the ways in which we still have a lot of power. For instance, just being white in the Western world gives me many privileges, an international rank. In the past, in Trinidad as a white person, I didn't have to consider my education as the only way of getting a job– being white was part of my qualification.

Making such statements would have both eased the atmosphere for some and stirred it up for others, and it would have been a good first step in bringing the role of Power into our group. It would have enabled the group to engage in a dialogue, and to have an opportunity to bring in their feelings in direct relationship to someone who could identify with their power.   I very much hope that such opportunities will present themselves to me in the future.   My own challenge here is to pick up more of my eldership which will enable me to live my dream.

Unexpected kindness

How else could Trinidad and Tobago work on itself and find its secondary process? It would have to be willing to allow its identity as a multi-racial republic to momentarily disintegrate. To listen and respond to all the voices and feelings that do not support that identity. To sit with the pain and anger that no one wants to hear. To allow the unexpected, the unknown to shatter and guide. To find a way to love and respect and welcome the things we fear that might destroy and allow new possibilities of being together to emerge. How hard, how almost impossible, to do the above. It is also my personal process and only with the love and compassion from myself and of others is it possible to contemplate.

We might also notice where the unexpected does happen and our preconception and projections are proven wrong. Noticing where change is happening and recording it is an important step. One such occasion took place one day in Trinidad when I needed to get back to the city from the southern part of the island where I had met with another small group. My only way back was to ride in a 'pirate' taxi. These taxis are very old and take five passengers plus the driver, tightly packed in, driving at high speeds, weaving in and out of the traffic on the highway. I picked up a taxi in a part of Trinidad where white women are not frequently seen. It was teeming with people and I wasn't sure where I was going and so I was feeling vulnerable. Several kind people pointed me towards the taxi I wanted. I was the last to get in, and all the other five passengers were men. No one spoke as we drove off.

About two minutes into our journey on the highway, the taxi pulled off onto the hard-shoulder and the black man in the middle stretched over to the back to close my door which I had not closed properly, and hadn't noticed. Another 5 minutes bombing and weaving down the highway, the black guy in the middle again stretches towards my door and kindly pulls up the window with his hands – there was no handle to wind up and down. The driver had apparently both noticed the sound in the first instance, and in his rear-view mirror had noticed the wind blowing in my face. Without any verbal communication that I was aware of, the driver communicated to the guy in the middle his concern for my well-being and comfort, and the guy in the middle did what was needed. He did it in a way like it was no big deal, he did not relate directly to me, but was kind in the way in which he did it. I was so touched by this kindness. However I was glad to get to my destination as the driving style was the opposite of the kindness in the taxi – it was tough, fast and crazy. My preconceptions and

projections about how black working-class men would relate to me in that sort of situation in Trinidad were shattered.   As a white woman I had rank, but my preconceptions were that in such a situation I would have been treated roughly, and that they might even be aggressive, or at least hostile.   Of course that could have happened – it could happen anywhere in the world – but it didn't.

Those men picked up their rank and power in that situation and were kind to me. I felt so taken care of.   It brings tears to my eyes as I write.   It was completely unexpected and opened up my heart to new possibilities of being together.   All the white women and men I spoke to about the above journey either said they would never take that risk, or were anxious for me.   The people who had taken me to the taxi were Indian and had no worries for me.

What is going on that white people are anxious for me but Indian people were not? Why had I been anxious?   The white people I had spoken to, and I, were reacting from racist attitudes.   We were projecting the parts of ourselves that are dangerous, destructive and immoral on to those black people, whereas those qualities belong to us all whatever race we are.   Exporting our hateful parts on to others in order not to take responsibility for it ourselves is something we all have a tendency to do, but doing this means that others are asked to carry these projections.   What we did in that situation by thinking that those black people might be hateful or rough with me, was in fact how *we as* white people were destructive, in our thoughts towards them. This is a daily, hourly injustice.   If we are willing to notice when events do not go along with our projections and let those unexpected events change us, then we will move towards a truer and more creative way of living with each other.

Double edges

When Roy left the atmosphere changed, and Peter made a joke. He said: "Statistics are like a bikini.   What they reveal is very interesting, but what they cover up is even more interesting." We all laughed and relaxed a bit.   It was very funny but it was also carried a sting.   It was a backlash.   Peter had not felt able to express himself as freely when Roy was there, none of us had.   Roy had gone over *his* edge in his tough, lecturing style but we had not gone over *our* edges in reacting and accusing him of dominating the whole evening.   In the foreground we were acting tolerant and submissive but underneath we were angry at being talked to like that, but were unable to go over the edge and say it to him.   It is no wonder that the following day he phoned Tom to say he was dissatisfied with the meeting. Roy had gone over his

edge, but the rest of us had not.   When this happens the system stays the same and no real change can occur.

> "There are at least two edges in a communication system. These are what I call "double edges". The double edge is the key, in blocked crisis, to letting the water flow again……….If all parties do not go ove r the edge, no one is served."[59]

Sorry Roy for not going over my edge. It would have been more creative if we had taken off our bikinis!   We would have revealed the ghosts, and the situation would have undoubtedly become more difficult, but we might also have left the meeting feeling more satisfied, for unless all the experiences in that room were represented and stood for, no resolution could occur.   However, most people at that meeting were appreciative of the opportunity of beginning to address racial issues, and people spoke of continuing getting together to follow on from where we had got to.

Recent newspaper clippings from Trinidad continue to show conflict between the black community and the Indian community.   White people could use their rank consciously to help heal these ongoing fights, by getting involved too, and acknowledging the part that the white community has in the current conflict, whilst addressing issues from the past that need listening to and healing.

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[59] Arnold Mindell, Sitting in the Fire 1995:208

CONCLUSION

Within the formal and political domain, claims of the existence of biologically inferior and superior races having any reality have largely disappeared. But, racist attitudes still persist.   Its as though we cant let go of them.

From 1945 through to 1967 UNESCO co-ordinated scientists from many parts of the world and issued several statements stipulating the errors of previous times that gave any scientific reality to racism.   People, nonetheless, persist with racist attitudes. Why? I believe that it is the thinking attitudes that allowed scientists in the past to go down that road in the first place, that needs to be addressed.

The attitudes that, on encountering 'others' we begin with assumptions that if they look different, live in a different way, speak in a language we do not understand, then they must be inferior, and we can collect data to prove it.   When these attitudes are used by the mainstream against those with less social power, it becomes racists. Feelings of prejudice towards each other will probably always exist.   For racism to stop we have to notice where we have rank and power and to ensure that this rank and power is not intentionally or unintentionally used against others with less social power.

Some of the dynamics of racism in Trinidad are very specific to it and some are the same as in any other part of the world.   The multi-ethnic people and the historical relationships between them need special understanding and appreciation. The shifts of mainstream power from race to race, and the marginalisation of the Indian culture and some aspects of the black culture.   All of this within the historical context of colonisation, which means that even though political power has shifted from white, to black to Indian, the racists attitudes and practices from the past are still disturbing the present.

> "I believe that in the field of race relations what we are faced with today
> is a test of our professional integrity, of our capacity to pursue an
> objective and systematic programme of sociological study. The area of
> race-relations research is and will continue to be politically sensitive
> and those who work in it will be under continual pressure to confine

themselves to undertaking only those studies or producing only those conclusions which are least disturbing to government." [60]

Most of us shy away from disturbance. As a white person I have the privilege of not getting involved in racists disturbances. Black people and people of colour do not have that privilege. They are disturbed by it every day in many parts of the world.

The disturbances mentioned 'in the media' between African Trinidadians and Indian Trinidadians and the various religious groups are a signal that trouble is brewing. Trinis of all shades and colours and religious persuasions, *the problem belongs to us all*. Not getting involved will keep the situation stuck or even escalate. Wanting the problems to change means seeing yourself as part of the problem and part of the solution, whichever race you belong to. Not being a racist means being willing to notice every day racist's attitudes and behaviour, in yourself and others, and challenging them.

Different forms of racism

> "…..the exposure of nineteenth century racism as a false and politically dangerous doctrine has changed the social context, with the result that explicit assertions that 'race' determines culture either cannot be sustained or are not articulated in the public domain because they are beyond the boundaries of acceptable argument (although they continue to be articulated in the informal domain and have certainly not disappeared). One therefore has the choice of concluding either that racism has disappeared, as Banton and others have done, or that the definition of racism should be revised in order to express the claim that racism is an ideology that takes a number of different forms." [61]

Yes we need to notice and work with the many different forms of racism. It is economic, institutional, national, personal, interpersonal and psychological. Sometimes it is intentional and also unintentional. It shows itself in mainstream preferences for certain styles of communication. It can also be internalised. Noticing the different forms it takes is essential. Sometimes it is obvious and sometimes it can seem just a little thing. All of it is important for it is never just a little thing.

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[60] John Rex, The Concept of Race in Sociological Theory, in :- Racism, edited by Bulmer & Solomos.1999.343

[61] Robert Miles, Racism as a Concept, in: Racism edited by Bulmer & Solomos, 1999.349.

Events in Trinidad show signs of moving towards a deeper democracy. It also shows signs of trouble. It celebrates its diversity in giving a place to most races and religions as public holidays for everyone - this is a relatively new phenomenon. However these formalised structures are only part of what is needed. The anger and conflicts that erupt every now and again between religions and racial groups need to be engaged with by the mainstream and not marginalised 'as just a few extremists' who can be ignored, or feared.

Normal democracy, even though its aim is to give power to the people, ends up giving power to the mainstream. It is this very fact that created the revolution in 1970. Deep democracy means valuing the voices of the minorities, by those in the mainstream.

Process Work has no final solutions and does not seek to provide them. When we think we come to a final solution, we tend to lose our awareness and things get rigid and dogamatised. Awareness is what we need in learning to follow the wisdom of life's continuous teachings. Approaching community troubles through, for example, structure of process, rank and power, and patterns of relationship between people and groups of people, allows us to develop the ability to follow events as they happen and learn what they teach us.

> "There are no permanent solutions to social problems. It is necessary to come together again and again, notice the timespirits and express their intentions. The community we find in this way is more sustainable than temporary solutions to problems."[62]

Process Oriented Psychology teaches us to live and work with the moving ground of life. Changing our attitude to change helps us to do this. It challenges our notion of sustainable community. No longer is peace sided with as opposed to chaos. Chaos may be the very thing we need to lead us toward a deeper peace. Meeting and addressing life as it is, moment by moment. This works if these are a few people who have meta-skills of eldership and who can notice and guide the events and processes, knowing that the solutions to the problems are in the problems themselves. The knowledge that no one situation stays the same, 'After one time is two time'.[63]

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[62] Arnold Mindell, Sitting in the Fire. 1995.86
[63] Conditions are the reverse of what they used to be. Cote ce Cote la, Trinidad and Tobago Dictionary.1986:190

Eldership also frees one from thinking that certain roles are more valuable than others when addressing a given subject. For instance, in the small group I mentioned earlier, there was an Indian Christian nun in our group. Her presence was gentle and loving. Looking back at the way I thought about her in the context of the group was that she probably would not have much to contribute to the dialogue on racism, but would focus only on bringing peace to the group, and would probably dampen conflict. This was not the attitude of an elder. I marginalised her presence by thinking about her in that way. This also teaches me about how I relate to the nun-like qualities in myself when addressing difficult social issues. It might be just what is needed when working with painful issues like racism. Everyone and all points of view, facts and statistics, the feelings and emotions around, or the dreams, visions and prayers of those present are all equally needed.

The meta-skill of eldership is essential as a facilitator. Without it we get stuck in polarizations and become unable to follow the processes that occur. Being such an elder for me, is to come from a deep spiritual place. To sense the mystery of life, and to intuit and sense a guiding and organising spirit that touches and enlivens all of life.

It is not comfortable or easy to address racism but it is a terrible and destructive force in our world. My own journey in writing this has at times seemed impossible. I have had to learn as I went along – making many 'mistakes' along the way. I was told I had a choice of what I could write about for part of my certification in Process Oriented Psychology. I do not feel I ever really had a choice. I had to address racism in Trinidad and my own racism. I could not live with myself unless I at least tried. I had to be willing to be confronted by myself, my teachers, and my colleagues. Neither is this the end, but a beginning, wherever I might be.

I have asked myself over and over again, why is it so hard for white people in particular to admit their racists' attitudes? I believe it is because to do so is to have one's identity as a good and reasonable person smashed. Who I knew myself to be gets obliterated in the admission. In Process Work we would say you can no longer stay in your Primary Process and are challenged to identify with disavowed Secondary processes. I had a painful experience of this in the early stages of writing this dissertation.

I gave a rough draft of my early attempts to one of my tutors to read. His only response was that it was racists! I was so shocked. I reeled in utter confusion.

How could this be?   Everything in me was identified with someone who was addressing and challenging racism. I was devoted to the task.   Every intention I had was to do the total opposite.   I was an anti-racists after all!   The problem was that I was not aware of was my unintentional racism.   I had recorded certain events in Trinidad as I saw it, without noticing that I was doing so from a perspective that did not appreciate the experiences, of black and Indian people.   The way I described it, showed them up in a bad light because I was not able at the time to appreciate the feelings and experiences that had informed their reactions.   I saw and experienced their behaviour from my white perspective and blamed them for their aggressive and dominating ways.   This attitude is so racist – of expecting people to behave in a reasonable way despite their experiences, and to believe that my perspective as a 'reasonable' person to be right.

When white people in Trinidad stay out of the fighting and disturbances they are leaving black and Indian people to sort out problems that originated in European white thinking.   Often, those who are fighting are then blamed for their bad behaviour.   White people absent themselves and then too easily criticise those who are left to deal with racists thinking, without realising that by not getting involved forces others to try and work it out.

I would urge people of all races in Trinidad to get together, in groups, and address these issues. Don't just leave it to some people to write about it in the newspapers. Face to face contact is difficult but more effective in engaging with the human experience level. The stories that have not been told and listened to, needing telling and listening to. The feeling level needs listening to, and appreciating. All the sides and roles need to dialogue.   Even the most challenging and scary issues need interaction. Doing so will be helpful in forming deeper community.   All the individuals and groups I spoke to welcomed the opportunity to do so and talked about needing to do it more.   Don't forget that 'little axe does cut dong big tree'.[64] Hopefully I will be able to join in again, in the not too distant future.

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[64] No hurdle is unsurmountable, Cote ce Cote la, Trinidad and Tobago Dictionary.1986:222

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