

# **WE ARE FAMILY**

Our Journey Through Apartheid

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12/1/2012

*A short story about a mixed race family's experience of institutionalized  
racism in South Africa*

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## **Acknowledgements**

Firstly I want to thank my wonderfully patient and tolerant husband (Jack) and my three amazing children (Élan, Satara and Nikita) for their support, kindness, love and encouragement over the last months. I have been burning the candle at both ends to meet my frenetic schedule of work, family and studies and I know that you often got the short end of the stick. I want to acknowledge and appreciate you all for supporting me on this journey of discovery. I couldn't have done this without you.

To my friends, my sisters, my comrades and my compatriots whom I have sadly neglected, sometimes practiced on and often grappled with in terms of my new thoughts and ideas. I thank you for your faith in me and for holding the space in our relationship to tolerate my schedule and my lack of availability. You are true gifts in every sense of the word. I appreciate your journeying with me thus far.

To my cohort, thank you for being the most amazing companions on this road of self-discovery and spiritual growth. Your friendship, your support and your feedback have all made this the most impressive of learning's. I have learnt more from you than I could have imagined and I appreciate the love and care you have shown me on this journey. I hold you in my heart fondly.

I want to thank all the spirits both inner and outer, dream companions, roles and critics who have emerged, as well as emotions that have surfaced and guided me during the writing of this paper. This was a story long overdue in the telling, I'm glad I had the opportunity to share it.

Last but definitely not least, to my study committee. Stephen for your relentless upholding of Process Work standards and your engaging teaching style, you have been a beacon in my journey since day one. To Ayako for your quiet, acceptance of my more spirited style, for supporting this writing and helping me find my inner peace. To Emetchi for

your warrior spirit which guides you and accepts me in all my passion and force, for your friendship and your sharing. Thanks to all of you for your guidance, feedback, patience and collective wisdoms, your kindness and your ability to push me to new heights. I honour and appreciate your vast knowledge, your phenomenal teaching styles and your continuous encouragement and support. I have learned to love you all in ways that I couldn't have imagined possible. You inspire me to be a great process worker and I hope to continue learning with you in the future.

## **Preface**

This project is largely influenced by narrative inquiry. In narrative inquiry the idea is that we understand and make sense of our world through telling stories about it. As an African, oral history is deeply encoded into my genes, so the telling of my story seemed to be the most natural path of enquiry for this project. I believe that within the stories themselves there is meaning to be found both for the reader and for the writer, hopefully allowing each to find a little something that they've been unknowingly searching for. This method of enquiry appears as I write about my own life experiences, and as I share with you the intertwining stories of my family and my country over a short but eventful period called Apartheid.

In her article "Writing. A Method of Enquiry" Laurel Richardson suggests that writing itself is another method of inquiry, "a way of finding out about yourself and your topic... [it] is also a way of "knowing" – a method of discovery and analysis" (Richardson, 2000). She says that "writing in different ways, we discover new aspects of our topic and our relationship to it". From this viewpoint, my writing of this paper has been a cathartic process as well as a journey of self-discovery. In writing this paper, I felt as if I was pulling the story out of my bones: the process was sometimes inspiring, often sad but always surprisingly illuminating. It has provided me with a much needed channel through which to explore emotions and sentiments long hidden in boxes and tied with bows. My story has emerged through the writing process and has thus become a method of enquiry itself.

In some small part my thesis is also somewhat heuristic in the sense that my own experience has been key to what I have given "meaning" to. Heuristic research is "...a form of phenomenological inquiry that brings to the fore the personal experience and insights of the researcher" (Patton, 2001). I have played a central role in this paper. I have also used my own reflections and memories to interpret events and states of being. Heuristic literally means to discover, and as a strategy of enquiry it allowed me both creativity and fluidity in

my approach. It has also supported my personal connection to the topic, my search for essential meaning in the process, my intuition and my personal understandings of the world I live in. This has made it a perfect method of inquiry for this project.

Process Oriented Psychology sits easily with qualitative, narrative and heuristic research because they share the idea that the observer influences what is happening, because I was able to look through this particular lens and observe with sensitivity the many signals on my path to discovering my purpose for this study.

## **Abstract**

This thesis presents mainly a narrative study, using Process Work tools and methodologies as a lens through which to view the impact of Apartheid on my mixed race family. It addresses in some small measure the various impacts on a family torn apart by institutionalised racism during Apartheid. The story suggests that families are in no small way microcosms and reflections of what is happening in broader society. It attempts to describe how our psychology as individuals is unequivocally tied up with the psychology of our communities and our countries. So what we think is “out there” waiting to be found is more often than not something we have marginalized right “in here,” also waiting to be identified. It also recognises that how by changing any one of these energetic fields one is able to influence the other automatically both for good and for bad.

*The Introduction* provides the reader with the vision for the story to be told and sets the stage for the interplay between historic events and their impact on a family. It describes the writer’s intention and outlines how historical events have a bearing on her personal story.

*South Africa in Context* traces the history of the continent through from ancient times, sharing with the reader about its aboriginal people, the discovery of mineral resources, early colonisation and the establishment of its various provincial settlements. This chapter provides the reader with a wealth of information about the country, its history and its people and uses this information as a backdrop for telling the writer’s personal story.

*A Road Less Travelled* talks about the introduction of Apartheid and the institutionalisation of racism in the country. This chapter deals with issues of ideology and violence and its impact on a nation.

*The Political is Personal* deals with the writer’s personal reflections and experiences of South Africa and how the country’s history is intimately tied into her own history. This chapter deals with the impact of being of mixed race in a country that is supportive of

extreme racism and which institutionalises this belief system to the detriment of its citizens. The writer tells of the impact of Apartheid on her psychology and its broader impact on her family.

*A New Dawn* reflects on the democratic process and the elections in 1994 as well as the process underpinning the change in government. The writer reflects on reconciliation both politically and personally as they are closely tied and at times inseparable in her memory.

*A New Lens a New Life* introduced Process Work as a lens for both reflection and analysis. The reader introduces Process Work philosophy and methods as a mechanism through which she can explain her new perspective on the world.

*Epilogue* allows the writer to bring the reader to present day and shares her insights about family, reconciliation and forgiveness. She brings her journey to a close.

## Introduction

My dream is to tell you a story - in part it is a story about my family, but the story has many other parts to it and presently some are more defined than others and some are still part of my dreaming process. I know that a part of me wants to share, albeit a little self-consciously the pain and sadness of my family as we got torn apart by Apartheid and institutionalised racism, while another part of me wants to share with you the journey of my country from slavery to democracy, a story about a fractured people with “dreams deferred”. Still a different part of me wants to talk to you about racism and its impact on families, communities and our society at large, because racism isn’t just a South African problem, we’ve just owned it more congruently than most. All these parts of me want to share my story in the hope that this will help you to tell your story, maybe as a cathartic healing and maybe because each story plays a role in shifting ever so slightly the field of awareness of the teller and the listener, growing each of us in immeasurable ways to meet our destiny.

Furthermore, I recognise that the bold parts of me feel drawn as always by my activist nature to raise awareness about racism in the world and its detrimental impact on our individual and collective moral fibre, while the more shy parts of me want to tentatively share some of the wisdoms that I have found on my journey through racism towards greater inclusivity and diversity, both personally and politically. As an African, oral history is also core to who I am, so maybe I just want to do some story telling about my family at a difficult juncture in the history of South Arica. Truth be told, I have a myriad of complex and some very simple reasons for telling this story, and I hope that within the context of my hopes and dreams, you will find some value in it. I hope that the mere fact that you have picked this up will mean that you were meant to read it too for reasons only you will know. I hope it meets that need.

Like many stories, this particular story requires a bit of context. I'm not a writer in the conventional sense, so I don't have all the necessary tools to help you understand my meandering story. Suffice to say, I hope that my writing is clear and concise so that you can follow it along its winding pathway. You see, I think that stories like this one often have a complicated history and without a brief understanding of it, the story loses some of its intended depth and essence. Now, it may also be true that all parts of the country's history don't necessarily directly impact the story itself, but you may find it later permeates aspects of the story and gives substance to the events that eventually follow. There might also be a more trivial reason for sharing it with you which may lie in the fact that my great love for my country makes me want to tell you a little bit about it, so that you too can share my dream for an eventual happy ending. Either way, it's worth taking a few steps back and setting the context for you, before I forge ahead and get you into the tale. You see I want to tell you a tale about a family, my family in fact, no more unusual than the average unusual family with characters and personalities, hopes and dreams, secrets and shadows and lives gone awry. Like most families, my family's' story is overlaid with a history that is quite contrary, and it is this history that is the backdrop to events that were to shape the lives of many South Africans, including my family. I come from a mixed race family, which in itself is not that spectacular or exotic, after all so are millions of people around the globe. However, in South Africa, major events were to shape my country and therefore my family and being of mixed race had both significance and a consequence, which still permeates my awareness today. For you to understand its significance, I need to take you on a brief journey back in time, so that you can have a glimpse of the events that were to impact a nation and invariably a great many people.

## **South Africa in Context**

### **The Birthplace of Humanity**

Imagine, just for a moment a scene of wide open spaces, lush savannah and great predators including dinosaurs roaming across vast plains in search of food and shelter. This was the birthplace of the modern human being. South Africa is a veritable archaeological treasure chest. In Maropeng, (which means “returning to the place of our origins”), you will find a world heritage site where over 1000 hominid fossils have been discovered, more than anywhere on earth. Fossils discovered here include the renowned “Mrs. Ples” and “Little foot” estimated to be over 2 million years old (Ackerman B. R., 2001). South Africa continues to yield some of the earliest fossils ever found, making the African continent and our little corner in South Africa the birthplace of modern day humans, who are said to have emerged here about 7 million years ago. The cradle of humankind is home to an area of dolomitic limestone caves which house fossils of ancient plants, animals, and hominids. These caves were carved out of warm shallow seas and coral reefs almost 2 million years ago and have become one of the richest heritage sites in the world (Magnussen & Visser, 2003). These discoveries have resulted in the postulating of new theories about the origins of man, the most plausible theory being that homo sapiens came from Africa and migrated out of the continent about 100 000 years ago and replaced earlier populations of homo erectus in Asia and Neanderthals in Europe. The most important factor separating previous species from hominids of course has been hominids use of stone tools, fire, and language (Toth, 1985). Our heritage sites have unearthed large quantities of archaeological evidence spanning many hundreds of thousands of years. Legend has it that our ancestors in East Africa were able to use and control fire, and that they started to make the first stone tools in Ethiopia and the Rift Valley about 2.6 million years ago.

Consequently, because of the wealth of artefacts uncovered across multiple spheres of life and time, Africa has become synonymous with early civilization. This includes early astronomy or star gazing which was happening in the Nile Valley some 42 000 years ago; 90 000 year old beads and jewellery found in South Africa, as well as the earliest mathematics artefacts found in Swaziland (a tiny country on our border) from 37 000 years ago, and this doesn't even begin to cover artefacts relating to crop cultivation, art, colour blending, and even animal domestication (Holbrook, 2008).

From these ancient beginnings, Homo sapiens, our species, evolved, meaning that all of humanity share my African roots.

### **My Peoples' People**

The first of the ancient tribes to be named in South Africa, according to historical records are the Koisian, not one, but two separate clans called the Hottentots and the Bushmen (or more correctly the Khoikhoi and the San), The Khoikhoi (meaning real people) have lived in Southern African since the 5th century (Andrew, 1990). They have essentially practiced pastoral agriculture and owned Nguni cattle since that time. They were also called Hottentots by the first settlers, a derogatory term used to imitate the sound of their language which has a very distinctive clicking sound. The Khoikhoi travelled from Botswana into South Africa via the Kalahari Desert and found themselves eventually on the Southern and Western coastal tips of the country about 2000 years ago. The Khoikhoi were largely involved in animal husbandry of sheep, cattle, and goats which provided them with a staple diet and allowed them to live in larger groups than the San (Andrew, 1990). Legend and archaeological evidence suggests that they grazed their herds on fertile land across the valleys of the region until the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD when advancing Bantu tribes encroached on their homelands and forced them into more arid areas (Marks, 1972). Their first contact with Europeans was around the 1500's. These encounters were almost always violent,

particularly when the Dutch started to seize their traditional land for farming purposes. Sadly, Koisian numbers dropped significantly when these tribes were exposed to smallpox by the Europeans (Marks, 1972). Over the next 100 years, the Koisian were steadily driven off their land, thus effectively ending their traditional lifestyle.

Around the 1800's the Khoi who were living in the Cape Colony were suffering from discrimination particularly in regard to land ownership. They were eventually given a settlement near the eastern part of the Cape Colony with decent enough fertile land to allow their communities to grow and develop peacefully. Their settlement thrived and attracted other groups to the Cape. Unfortunately, the Khoi kept getting pulled into various armed conflicts on the side of the British against the invading Xhosa tribes mainly because they were well regarded as skilled marksmen, known for their courage and bravery in battle (Marks, 1972).

Unfortunately, discrimination plagued the Khoi, and many of them were forced to leave their settlements to find work as labourers on white farms. They grew resentful and eventually joined forces with the Xhosa in a revolt against the Cape Government. After a rather vicious rebellion and the eventual defeat of the Khoi, the new Cape Governor decreed that all citizens, regardless of colour, had the right to vote in Parliament. He personally was more inclined to meet the Khoi at the polling station than in another armed skirmish (Newton King & Malherbe, 1981). However, this initial attempt at introducing non-racialism was to have a short history, because by the 1880's it became seriously eroded and eventually was completely abolished.

Similarly, the San, who are descendants of our early Stone Age ancestors and the oldest inhabitants of the country, were hunter gatherers. They followed seasonal migration patterns and lived in caves when they needed shelter. The San were often referred to as Bushmen, a Dutch term meaning bandit or outlaw. They earned this name because of their intense and long term battles with early settlers against domination and colonization. They

were and still are greatly admired for their long term survival, their exceptional hunting skills, and wealth of indigenous knowledge. They are incredibly knowledgeable about local plants and herbs which can be used for nutritional, medicinal, mystical and even lethal purposes. San men were always considered unrivalled in their ability to hunt and track animals across vast and assorted terrain. Initially, the San lived peacefully alongside other Nguni tribes and many eventually intermarried. However, the difference in culture made a long term stable liaison impossible, and clashes eventually arose. Unfortunately the San were at a great disadvantage against the Nguni tribes both in numbers and in terms of weapons. This problem was exacerbated by the eventual advance of the Europeans who also had guns and horses. The San numbers decreased significantly over the coming decades as many preferred to be killed in battle than captured and forced into slavery. Colonialism eventually destroyed San culture and communities, mainly because the San were not allowed to roam freely. Also, many white farmers amassed large amounts of cattle whose perpetual grazing destroyed the food sources that the San had lived on for centuries. Later enslavement and mass destruction of their communities forced the San into farm labouring and caused the eventual demise of their earlier identity (Sylvain, 2008).

Despite some level of intermarrying, the Khoi and the San have essentially developed separately. Early European settlers intermarried with the Khoi producing a population called the "Basters" meaning bastard or illegitimate children or now more commonly known as the Griqua people (Ross, 1974). Unfortunately, by the 1900's the remaining Koisans took up arms against the colonial Germans in South West Africa and upwards of 10 000 of them were killed in violent clashes thus further eroding their continued ability to exist as a separate clan. Today, the Koisans have mixed with other Bantu tribes and live in the south west of the continent in an independent country called Namibia, previously, called South West Africa (Schapera, 1930).

Other long term inhabitants of South Africa were Bantu speaking people who gradually moved down from the North many thousands of years before the first Europeans arrived. Interestingly, some archaeological evidence suggests that the Mapungubwe site in the Northern Province of our country shows evidence of a highly sophisticated people trading in gold and ivory with countries like China, Egypt, and India as early as the 12<sup>th</sup> Century. This emphasises both the social and political sophistication of these early clans. In fact, some archaeological evidence found “Chinese celadon shards of the Longquan type, believed to date from the Southern Song dynasty (1127–1279 AD), were excavated in 1934 on Mapungubwe Hill, a 13th Century Iron Age site in the Limpopo valley” (Prinsloo, Wood, Loubser, Verryn, & Tiley, 2005). This would imply a gross misrepresentation of our past and an absolute indictment of many earlier historical accounts by early white settlers about the barbarous nature of the tribes of marauding natives found on our shores. In fact it appears that civilisation was by all accounts very much on track when these settlers arrived.

### **They Came By Ship**

Jan Van Riebeeck, the first Dutch Colonial white man, arrived in South Africa much, much later in 1652 - on instructions from the Dutch East India Company, to build a Fort and a vegetable garden for the benefit of ships passing on the Eastern Trade Route. In 1657, nine other white men decided to remain in South Africa after their contracts with the Dutch East India Company expired – and as night follows day, within five years a further 240 white men arrived on our shores.

Around the same time, the first slaves started to arrive from both Africa and the East. Descendants of these original clans of Koisian, of slaves, and of colonialist are what are today referred to as Coloured people maybe a better descriptor would be people of mixed race. I urge you to keep this little morsel in mind, because as my story unfolds its significance will become more and more apparent.

The colonisers of that time, mainly Dutch, German, and French Huguenots (of Christian decent) started to move east and encounter Xhosa speaking people along their way. Skirmishes and conflicts broke out continuously as evidenced in the Cape Frontier wars of the time. In 1820, about 5000 European soldiers were shipped into the Eastern frontier to support the first settlers and to create a safety buffer between the Europeans and the Xhosa tribes (Guelke, 1988). This strategy worked well enough in terms of its original intention, but living far away from Europe its culture and its norms, these Europeans gradually lost touch with their heritage and culture and the seeds of a new nation were born, these people called themselves the Afrikaner nation. Its people were known simply as the Afrikaner. As history would eventually bear witness, they became a force to be reckoned with, they were tough, hardy, and governed by puritanical Christian beliefs. They considered themselves naturally superior as a race and believed in their destiny as God's chosen people, interestingly the only other group of people other than the Jews who are known to have made a covenant with God.

At this time the Cape Colony was toying with the idea of greater political equality among the races based in part on economic qualifications. However, in real terms this still excluded almost all people of colour. Meanwhile, in Natal a third republic proved ideal for growing sugar cane, so the British imported indentured labour from India to accomplish this task. Despite immense discrimination over many decades and generations, many Indians chose to remain in Natal despite opportunities for later repatriation; this gave rise to the emergence of a significant Indian population in latter day South Africa (Malherbe, 1991).

Predictably, in the late part of 1879 the colonialists became more aggressive in their expansion ideals and continued on their quest to carve out land and territories for their people. However, this encroachment soon reached the attention of the great Zulu King, Cetshwayo, who courageously went into battle against the encroaching white forces and delivered the Zulu kingdom a resounding victory at the battle of

Isandlwana (Thomson, 2007). Unfortunately, Cetshwayo's victory was short-lived. He was defeated the following year, and the Zulu territory was annexed into the white colonial boundaries of the Natal Province.

Around 1834 the British began to emancipate slaves throughout the British Empire. This trans-atlantic quest to free slaves from the shackles of white ownership and human degradation precipitated yet another historic event in South Africa; this was called the Great Trek. Roughly translated this means "the big move", when upward of 12,000 white Afrikaners trekked (moved) into the North and East of the country to escape British colonial rule and what they considered to be the beginnings of new laws that encouraged racial equality or egalitarianism for blacks. The Afrikaners felt that the emancipation of slaves was unacceptable and was being unfairly imposed on them by the British. They were not willing to accept this, so they moved their community in ox wagons further into the interior to avoid British rule (Roos, 1950).

At about the same time, another great Zulu King, Shaka, and his arch nemesis and general in his army, Mzilikazi, each immensely powerful in their own right, went to war with each other over territory. This caused a mass migration (*mfecane*) of many tribes away from the escalating tribal conflict. Mzilikazi forged a trail of blood through the Western Province, killing, maiming, and decimating other tribes on route to establishing his own chiefdom in what is now modern day Zimbabwe (Eldredge, 1992). This unfortunate combination of events (i.e., the Great Trek into the interior and the *mfecane* out of the interior) made the approaching Afrikaners entering the interior think that the land they were occupying was vacant. This view was immediately and violently disputed by the advancing Zulu armies. This is evidenced by the murder of Piet Retief, an Afrikaner trek leader during a negotiation for land with Dingaan, who was also Shaka's brother, Retief's murderer, and Shaka's ultimate successor.

The murder of Piet Retief by Dingaan precipitated the historic Battle of Blood River where the Afrikaners made a public covenant with God before the battle that if they were victorious over the Zulus, they would build a church and forever commemorate the day of their victory. As luck would have it, or maybe the covenant was in fact realised, 470 Afrikaners' defeated 10,000 armed Zulus. Afrikaners' sustained three injuries and not a single death while the Zulus lost almost 3,000 warriors, their spears and shields no match for the musket. Following this historic battle two separate Afrikaner republics were established - namely the Orange Free State and the Transvaal. This event thus heralded the beginning of the end for blacks in South Africa, because by the early 1800's, the little refreshment station in the Cape which was home to the first white settlers had now spread to take up almost all of what is present day South Africa.

### **All Things Precious**

Modern South African history talks about the discovery of Gold and Diamonds around the late 1870's and 1880's, but in fact this is untrue. Mining in South Africa predated any Europeans by many hundreds of years. Mining for gold on the Witwatersrand appeared to be attracting miners from other parts of Africa from as early as the 13<sup>th</sup> century. Iron mining and smelting sites were discovered in the North East province as far back as 1,700 years ago while copper was being mined in the Limpopo Province at least 1,000 years ago (Miller & Desai, 2000). It is however true that commercial mining for gold and diamonds took off with great fervour in the late 1800's together with many other minerals including platinum, chromium, manganese, coal, iron ore, and copper. In fact by the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century South Africa had become one of the largest producers of gold and other minerals in the world. Today, South Africa is home to at least half of the world's known gold reserves: most of which is located on the Rand, which interestingly was once a prehistoric lake. Similarly, our diamond industry dates back to the 1800's as well, when diamonds were discovered in Kimberly and later in Johannesburg, the Free State and on the Atlantic coast. These

discoveries earned us the position of the world's leading producer of quality gems - the mining of which is still controlled and managed today by De Beers, a prestigious white cartel set up by the British explorer Cecil John Rhodes (Carstens, 2001).

Now, it's worth knowing, dear reader, that the mining of gold even today is not an easy job. Gold, as you know occurs in seams imbedded in rock, sometimes more than a mile below the surface. To extract its content, the rock must be blasted, treated, and separated from the gold. This is both a time consuming and very expensive exercise, requiring an endless supply of cheap labour, preferably forced labour considering both the dangers associated with the job and the sheer back breaking effort required to do it (Leys, 1975). Fortunately for mining interests, we in South Africa have always had a huge supply of labour in the shape of strong African men. So naturally, the discovery of precious minerals on our soil precipitated a course of historic events which affected entire tribes. This is a reality which may never have occurred had these riches not been found.

Paul Kruger, a staunch conservative Afrikaner, led a spectacular and much needed economic turnaround in the Transvaal, a province immensely rich in gold reserves. He held strong anti-British sentiments and was very aware that the newcomers, just off the ship and mostly British, who were descending on the gold fields en masse, were a threat to him and his Afrikaans brotherhood. Fuelling Kruger's anxiety, Cecil John Rhodes, the then Prime Minister of the Cape, and champion of mining magnate interests in Africa, led a raid into Johannesburg in an attempt to overthrow Kruger. Fortunately for Kruger, the raid failed dismally, and C.J. Rhodes was forced to resign in humiliation. This created a permanent rift between the white English speaking British and the white Afrikaner settlers, eventually leading to the Anglo Boer War in 1899 (Cammack, 1990).

## **All's fair in Love and War**

During the ensuing Anglo-Boer War, the British contingent was over a half million strong while the Afrikaners' only rallied forces of sixty thousand odd. Unfortunately, Black people were pulled into the conflict on both sides. Initially the Afrikaners' held their ground in Johannesburg but eventually the British forces gained momentum and Johannesburg was captured. Paul Kruger was forced to flee to Europe, leaving behind his Attorney General, Jan Smuts, who sustained and at times intensified his guerrilla war tactics against the British. In response to this low grade guerrilla war, the British established concentration camps in which upwards of 25,000 Afrikaner women and children and 14,000 people of colour were left to die in appalling conditions. This war was eventually won by the British in 1902 (Cammack, 1990).

Interestingly, history tells us that many blacks hoped that the British victory (which they had supported) would ensure racial equality across the three Republics. A black delegation was sent to Britain in 1909 to plead accordingly. However, when the Union was formed in 1910 this was not to be. The ex-Afrikaner republics opted to keep a whites only electorate. Following swiftly on this betrayal of black people, repressive laws to entrench white power come into being under the British; they included The Servant Act, The Job Reservation Act, The Pass Laws, and the famous 1913 Land Act which reserved 90% of the land for whites: less than 10% of the population.

By the time these Acts were passed the African National Congress (ANC) had emerged as a voice for black intellectuals and again led a delegation to Britain to protest against the stealing of the land. Unfortunately, the dye had been cast and the future of black people became even bleaker.

Alongside the struggles of black people, Indians were also being treated abominably. Mahatma Ghandi, then a young lawyer in South Africa, led a mass strike against Indian poll

taxes. His leadership and vision created a legacy of resistance amongst Indians in South Africa (Jefferess, 2008) which lasted through to our attaining our freedom in 1994.

When the First World War started, the anti-British Afrikaners rebelled against joining the war effort. However, the ANC, still hopeful of the British Governments support for blacks, endorsed the war effort. Again unknown numbers of black soldiers were forced into the war and died. As a result of the war, and as a form of reparation, South Africa gained control over the previously held German territory of South West Africa (now Namibia).

Following these international events and further inspired by the workers revolution in Russia at the turn of the century, one million black workers went on strike for better wages, eventually succeeding in their demands by 1920. However, rising costs in the mines and the falling gold price led the Chamber of Mines to begin to allow blacks to do more semi-skilled jobs than before; this resulted in a second strike but this time by white miners. The strike was violently suppressed by the British led government, leading to the eventual ousting of the British Prime Minister and the election of a conservative Afrikaner called Hertzog in his place (Wilson, 2011).

## **A Road Less Travelled**

### **Apartheid Is Born**

The Great Depression of the 1930's had Hertzog's government leading him into a coalition with the British yet again. The outbreak of the Second World War in 1939 also impacted South Africa both politically and economically. The English and Afrikaans speaking whites were divided in their willingness to participate in the War effort, with the Afrikaners supporting the Germans and the English supporting their British allies. This caused the coalition government to split up, and Hertzog resigned as prime minister. A further right wing split in the National party ensued resulting in the rise to power of D.F Malan. His emergence as a new Afrikaans leader resulted in the Afrikaners garnering their strength and eventually coming to power in 1948 with Apartheid as their driving ideology (Moodie, 1975). Interestingly, the Afrikaners were mainly Calvinists and had a moral determinism, professing it was Gods' will to keep race groups apart. Simultaneously, many black people were moving into the urban areas, mainly because tribal chiefs were being forced to pay taxes and the only way for them to do this was to send young men to the mines to earn wages.

This movement of blacks to urban areas created a real fear for the white minority. They feared being swamped and overtaken by the vast majority of blacks in the country. In response to this fear, the 1950's saw an increase in repressive laws. These included the Group Areas Act, rigidly dividing land by race group, ensuring that blacks were kept out of the cities and suburbs and far away from white people's awareness. Pass laws were introduced to restricted the movement of black people between places and petty segregation on busses and in shops became the norm. The chief architects of Apartheid believed that the white man had come here under Gods guidance to take over the grasslands, valleys, and mountains and to create a modern industrial state. This obedience to God's wishes

secured Apartheid a theological space with white Afrikaans churches and religious men, so they went around advocating racial separation and segregation.

In this way, Apartheid created separate development (actually non development) for people of colour and created draconian laws preventing them from having access to their families. The state introduced a migrant labour system, preventing miners from accessing facilities, resources, or opportunities. Eventually, even park benches, post offices, and shops were reserved for whites. Over a period of 40 years, Apartheid continued to create separate areas for people of colour. Their intention was to create impoverished homelands where they could move all black people, so they were both out of sight and out of mind. But separation wasn't enough, the Apartheid regime's intention was to dehumanise, demonise, and defile everything that wasn't white. This included stripping people of their land, their cultural heritage, their religious beliefs, and their traditional tribal systems. People of colour were ground under the heel of an immensely powerful state machine. They were provided with very little or no access to education, healthcare, and social security. This system ensured that power remained in the hands of whites, and that black people were so marginalised and oppressed that they couldn't dream of standing up and taking their place in the world. The destiny of black people was to remain enslaved, bound forever to the whims and wishes of the white man (Villa Vicentio, 2009).

### **We Will Kill and Maim**

Initially resistance seemed futile, but later, particularly when forced removals created huge devastation and separation of families and communities, resistance grew bolder. But the stakes were high, and the Apartheid Government came down harshly when challenged. In 1960, at a demonstration in Sharpeville, 69 people were shot and killed for demonstrating against the State. This marked one of the first mass killings of the Apartheid regime. There was outrage across the world, but this didn't matter, the violence and the repression

continued unabated for the next 34 years. Not only structural violence but violence against individuals marred every corner of the country. Apartheid became the biggest blemish on the face of Africa (Beinart, 1995).

The government reinforced segregation and separate development of black people into ethnic and tribal groups. The ANC campaigned vigorously against the Government, and in 1955 they led a mass march to Kliptown to collect ordinary people's demands for freedom. This resulted in the drafting of the Freedom Charter - a historic document on which South Africa's current constitution is based. Reactions to this event were swift and within no time at all, and 156 leaders and allies of the ANC were charged with high treason. Verwoerd (the Prime Minister at the time) campaigned vigorously to have South Africa removed from the commonwealth and for the establishment of a Republic. In 1961, the Republic of South Africa was established, coinciding nicely with the ANC activating their armed wing Umkhonto we Sizwe in acts of sabotage against it. These acts of sabotage led to the arrest and later life time imprisonment of Mandela, Sisulu, and many others to a place in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean called Robben Island (van Wyk, 2006).

In 1966 Verwoerd was assassinated in Parliament by Dimitri Tsafendas, a Greek Cypriot who was diagnosed with severe paranoid schizophrenia. In his place, John Vorster, an even more politically right wing Prime Minister was elected (Ackerman & Prichard, 2009). Voster's succession to power led to even greater repression and violence, highlighted by the historic youth riots of 1976, where police fired on school children who were protesting against being taught in Afrikaans, the language of the oppressor. These events unleashed a massive flood of violence and repression, which threatened to overwhelm the country and kept it on the brink of war for the next 30 years.

The 1980's were the pinnacle of state sponsored violence, particularly in Natal, where the government sponsored and armed right wing African organisations to go into war with activists campaigning for freedom and democracy. These agent provocateurs were

sponsored by the homeland exchequer and trained by the South African military to go into townships to rape, pillage, burn, and murder civilians. These killing squads were comprised of displaced migrant mineworkers, part of our mineral wealth's unfortunate heritage, to do their dirty work (Johnston, 1996).

### **A War Is Upon Us**

Indeed, it felt like we were hanging on at the very edge, at the very brink, where anything or anyone could push us over into the abyss. It's a strange thing being on the brink of war, because the signals get really mixed up. After all, everyone (who had a voice) agreed that we were not in a war, that the country was fine, and that we were all fine and happily living our lives. For the most part it was true for most white South Africans. Since they were basically cocooned in suburbs, with good jobs, great infrastructure, some wealth, good education, and the pick of any job they wished for, they were definitely not at war. Television, which was introduced into South Africa in 1976, provided very little real news. The Apartheid State was exceptionally talented at keeping everything under a veil of secrecy, where everyone felt drawn into their conspiracy of silence. White South Africa didn't want to know or didn't care about the treatment of its black people, and unless exceptionally curious, it was reasonably easy to ignore the realities a few kilometres away. White people were happy and they were ostensibly very comfortable, living off of the land they had stolen and the lives they had torn apart. For the most part, white South Africans went about their business without a care in the world except for one, the sinister little problem of compulsory conscription to the army for all their sons. But even then, fighting border wars and destabilising neighbouring states was a small price to pay in order to secure the wealth and the comfort that they had come to expect and enjoy as part of their covenant with God.

Black South Africans, in the meantime, were vigorously engaged in all kinds of resistance including campaigning and securing international sanctions against the State for

the systemic violence and oppression of its people. The school boycotts of 1976 began an avalanche of rolling mass action against the state (Khosa, 1995). With the ANC and other political organisations banned, the state machinery became more and more oppressive. Steve Biko, the founder of black consciousness in the country, was harassed, detained, and eventually tortured to death in 1977 for inciting other black people to stand up and fight for their political freedom. Everywhere and at different times, black people were either campaigning against or fleeing from the state machinery of Apartheid. For people of colour we were at war, and 1976 created the impetus for creating a defining moment in the country's history.

This crisis was precipitated by a generation of youth raised under Apartheid, who took to the streets in Soweto on June 16<sup>th</sup> 1976 to protest against the introduction of Afrikaans as a medium of teaching into the township schools. The furore that this invoked for youth was unfathomable for the State to comprehend. Across Soweto, upwards of many thousands of young black children went on rampage against the government. Parents were completely stunned by these events. The police were called in to restore order, 147 were killed, and hundreds more shot with automatic rifles and carbines (Khosa, 1995). These events sparked other uprisings across the country including worker strikes. By the end of 1976, at least 600 people were dead, and countless more imprisoned and tortured. Many believe that 1976 changed the country. The killing of children shifted the debate for many. It was virtually impossible for the world to understand how the army could open fire on 13 year olds who were unarmed and defenceless. People both nationally and internationally were outraged at the kind of men who could let loose hundreds of dogs on school children with placards in their hands (Khosa, 1995). Black people knew what had brought us to this point; we knew that killing children was fair game. It was one more step on the road of atrocities - where white people had no shame and no conscience about what they were doing.

Following the Soweto riots in 1976, and for the following 2 decades, South Africa experienced its darkest hours. We witnessed continuous and sustained housing boycotts, rent boycotts, school boycotts, community uprisings, and worker strikes, all aimed at overthrowing Apartheid and making the country ungovernable. The South African Council of Churches had this to say in a news bulletin. "The Apartheid state used Declarations of Emergency to crack down against opponents at times of heightened resistance. Police could detain anyone for reasons of public safety, without any appeal to the courts. Also, meetings and gatherings could be banned. The first State of Emergency was declared in 1960 right after the Sharpeville Massacre, when the African National Congress and Pan Africanist Congress also were declared illegal. In the wake of the 1976 student uprising, the government widened police powers of detention even without a State of Emergency. By the mid-1980s, a popular uprising was underway, with militants calling for making black communities "ungovernable". A State of Emergency was declared in July 1985 in 36 magisterial districts. Organizations as well as meetings could be banned, and thousands of people were detained. Also, the Commissioner of Police could impose a blanket prohibition on media coverage of the Emergency, and names of people who had been detained could not be revealed. On June 12, 1986, just before the 10th anniversary of the student uprising that started in Soweto, a State of Emergency was declared throughout the country" (United Democratic Front, 1986).

The State responded harshly to these uprisings, and by the mid 1980's the army was sent into the townships regularly to curb the violence and the protests. The President P.W. Botha declared two separate states of emergency, and many thousands of black people were shot, murdered, imprisoned, and tortured.

## **Divide and Rule**

You will remember that racial segregation was not invented by the Afrikaners in 1948. It was already a hallmark of the British Empire and South Africa as a colony bore the brunt of this philosophy from the beginning of their arrival on our shores. The invariable ascent to power of the Afrikaner, steeped in conservative, religious fervour, saw racial segregation further entrenched. Our fate as a country was that it took root, grew, and flourished in the mid part of the century. By 1948, the Afrikaners had won the national elections in the country, and Apartheid became the official philosophy of the time. Slowly but surely, laws were promulgated in the early 1950's to ensure separate development for people of colour. Separate development was not only designed to keep blacks and whites separate but also to keep coloureds separate and to keep black tribes separate. The design of Apartheid was to move each black tribe to a separate Bantustan so that they could self-govern and self-develop. However, this design was fundamentally flawed, because in reality tribes received arid patches of land with no prospects for economic survival, no jobs, no farming, and no investment. Outside of these Bantustans', most Africans lived on the outskirts of the City, and where and when possible they travelled into the City to find low paying, menial jobs to support their families (Christopher, 1990).

Coloureds and Indians were also being moved into separate geographic areas in the late 1940's and early 1950's where they had separate schools, hospitals, and recreational facilities. The overarching idea was that coloureds and Indians also required separate development "opportunities" to support their independence. This parallel development principle was really just an excuse to placate Coloureds and Indians and subdue their threats of unrest by promising them equal opportunities. Many years later in the early 1980's the Apartheid government designed and developed a Tri-cameral Parliament to ensure fundamental exclusions of Coloureds and Indians from real power, and instead provided them with a puppet structure with three chambers in parliament where they had no decision

making rights or authority to make any changes to the laws in the country. Despite some minor support from Coloured and Indian conservatives, this mode of government was vehemently opposed by the majority in these groups (Christopher, 1990).

Slowly Apartheid's grip tightened and began impacting on families, including my own. One of the first pieces of legislation to be passed under Apartheid was the *Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act* in 1949, and the *Immorality Act* of 1950: in effect outlawing mixed race marriages or sex. This was closely followed by the *Population Registration Act* and *The Group Areas Act* in 1950. *The Group Areas Act* decreed that areas be segregated by race, and that groups not included in that race group be forcibly removed from their family homes in places like Sophia Town (in Johannesburg) which was made up of a rich melting pot of races, cultures, and creeds. This area became demarcated for whites only.

Soon, other Apartheid laws were passed, including *Pass Laws 1952*, this prevented the movement of black people across geographical areas. Later *The Land Act 1913*, which demarcated 10% of the land for use by 90% of the population, was enforced more effectively. These laws had a fundamental impact on people of colour because they created separate and inadequate access to social, political, educational, and economic opportunities. Apartheid also had a pettier element to it which included, separate post offices, separate buses and benches, separate shop entrances. Apartheid was insidious and affected every aspect of black people's lives (Savage, 1986).

However, despite the promulgation of various laws relating to racial segregation, race identification and classification remained a complicated matter. The *Population Registration Act 1950* was meant to create greater clarity so that the State could institutionalise racism more effectively. But splitting a nation into predetermined race categories depended on clarity of racial identity, but in many cases it took on arbitrary features. Even the architects of Apartheid recognised that race was purely a construct rather than an essential characteristic, so they used "common sense measures" to assist in the classification of races. The

government set aside identifying racial characteristics such as skin colour, hair texture, facial features, and economic status, to assist in the drawing of these racial boundaries. Other more bizarre features of racial identification included respectability and economic privilege which were also markers for determining the white race (Posel, 2001). Many families, including mine, had to make tough choices about their race classification, based only in part on genetic appearance. Those who were fair skinned opted for white identities which would guarantee them access to economic and political privilege, while those of a darker hue were left with very little if any choices at all.

### **Politics Is about Race and Identity**

However difficult this may be to comprehend, it's nevertheless important to recognise the centrality of race identity in South Africa's history over the last couple of hundred years. It has been the single most identifying characteristic of our history and our trauma as a country and as a people. For this reason I want to give you the reader a quick overview of the four broad racial categories or racial identities in South Africa, all of which have their own history, culture, and origin. Once you have a shared sense of these racial identities, you may better be able to comprehend how and why racial segregation was required in the country, and how it was designed and managed so effectively and efficiently over the last 40 years.

As you now know, whites came to South Africa as settlers into the colonies in late 1652 from either British or Dutch ancestry, (also French and German) making them either English or Dutch speaking. Regardless of this distinction, they were all European in their outlook and ancestry and could trace their families back for many generations to European countries. Additionally, we also have many indigenous Black tribes in South Africa from various parts of the African continent, and they have been here since the recorded history of man as discussed earlier. Thirdly, we have Indians who came to Africa from Madras and

Calcutta in India as indentured labourers in the early 1860's. Initially Indians' were used mainly for agriculture, but soon the labour shortage in Natal necessitated the use of indentured labour for the laying of railways, for coal mining, for planting and harvesting of sugar cane, and eventually, as special servants in hotels, clubs, and wealthy homes. The last of the four groups of course, was a mix of these three other races and were consequently referred to as coloureds or creoles meaning they were mixed race and considered separate from the other races. For the purpose of this story, it's necessary to tell you a little more about what it meant to be of mixed race in South Africa. Like the other three race groups, it has a history of its own, but sadly it's a complicated, humiliating history that no one wanted to own or be identified with, a history of shame and pain, of slavery and rejection, of power misused and people abused.

Essentially, mixed race people or Coloureds came about, because in South Africa, there was a gender discrepancy in the numbers of white males and white females brought into the Cape with the first settlers. History accounts for only a few hundred white women brought to settle whilst many thousands of white men arrived on the shores of the Cape Peninsula. This shortage of white women was compensated for by the concurrent arrival of 15,000 slave women brought to the Cape and used to satisfy the libidos of white men (Erasmus, 2001). At that time, before institutionalised racism, sexual liaisons between lower ranking white men and black women was not just permitted, but it was actively encouraged. At the time, slavery was still the chief source of labour in the country and slaves were being shipped in from Madagascar, Mozambique and Angola, the Indonesian Archipelago, India, and Sri Lanka.

Inevitably, this led to the procreation of Coloureds, who were invariably more valued as slaves and cost more to purchase than other slaves (Worden, 1985). This was probably because they seemed to live for longer periods and considered able to oversee other slaves quite effectively. More recent arguments by popular historian Zimitri Erasmus (2001) imply

that it was their ability to speak the local language and their reluctance to run away and commit crimes of rebellion that made them more valuable. This was probably a consequence of mixed parentage from various countries, making them feel more bound to South Africa their birthplace.

Additionally, even after slavery was abolished, miscegenation, or cross racial procreation was still encouraged as the only way to produce a new supply of labour for the colony. This eccentric mix of indigenous Khoikhoi, slaves, and European (French, Dutch, and English) descendants became known as Coloureds. Consequently, Coloureds see themselves as a separate group, with a separate history, and a separate identity, different from either indigenous black tribes, or their European descendants (Erasmus, 2001). Unfortunately, the reality of the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century meant that shame and hybridity soon reduced this separate identity to one of wickedness. Over time coloured-ness became something sordid and immoral something to shun and disavow, to hide from, always at risk of ridicule and harassment. The abolition of slavery coincided with increased racial stratification, and modern society at that time strongly supported new age views of racial purity. Hence coloureds became objectionable. This puritanical and conservative mind-set resulted in the negating of mixed race relationships and further postulated that sexual intercourse between races produced a hybrid group. Coloureds became something weird and unseemly, in effect a new species apparently degenerate and completely lacking in moral fibre.

By the 1920's, it was clear that there were significant shifts taking place both socially and politically, and perceived threats to white identity and white rule meant that earlier tolerance of inter-racial sex was coming to an end. It seemed inconvenient for white architects of racism to remember earlier times, when sexual intercourse across race lines served their needs rather well. So while Colouredness was on the increase, the polygenesis postulated that this hybrid product was a new species or race with inherently degenerate

qualities. Interestingly, it was particularly women whose sexuality was suspected of being deviant, resulting in coloured women experiencing a very long and continued history of denial. This denial is further demonstrated by the continued historical silence even today surrounding the long standing sexual relations between early colonials and the Khoikhoi, without doubt further iterating the repugnance associated with the interaction. Throughout recorded history, we learn about the negative attitudes espoused by colonials about Khoikhoi women, their stupidity, ugliness, and uncivilised demeanour. Yet with very few exceptions, the early settlers were in an exceptional hurry to covet, possess, and violently ravage indigenous women. This trend continued through to slavery and became much more frequent. It was this body-politic of Coloureds that carried the shame of European men's lust and bestowed shame on these relationships and their offspring. This unwillingness of the European man to own his wantonness has sadly created a Coloured identity shrouded in unworthiness and inferiority (Mostert, 1988). After all who could value bastardisation and hybridity in a world that valued authenticity and purity?

No doubt, for "purist" whites, Colouredness created a long term and vivid reminder of white men's enduring and unrelenting appetite for black women. Their only option remained to marginalise, dehumanise, and disavow Coloured existence or better still ensure that Coloureds were so thoroughly separated into the "other" that they could never find a home in mainstream society whether black or white. For Coloureds even today, this inherited sense of shame still underpins the social fabric of our identity and accounts for all the associated ambivalence attached to it.

Moreover, during the later years of Apartheid in the late 1980's and 90's, Colouredness particularly by progressive Coloureds became completely disavowed; we even used inverted commas when referring to ourselves. Coloured identity fell through the cracks, first not white enough, now not black enough. Not pure enough, not clever enough, not worthy enough, and definitely not astute enough. Coloured identity has always been

depicted by drunkenness, joblessness, sexual deviance, gangsterism, and political conservatism. After all, it was Coloureds that despite being shamefully denied access to privileges by whites, continued to support Apartheid rather than be ruled by Africans. Coloureds believe they are better than Africans in many ways. Firstly because Coloureds share white ancestries, making them believe they are naturally more civilised than Africans. Historically, Coloureds have also been given marginally better housing, education and healthcare compared to Africans, thus imposing a social divide into Coloured psychology. Apartheid's divide and rule psychology entrenched this attitude. Similarly, many Africans hold negative stereotypes about Coloureds, believing in the myths about sexual deviance, violence, and uselessness. Today it's also more preferable to be African than to be Coloured, because in reality Colouredness is a no man's land both politically and socially.

## **The Political Is Personal**

### **Mixing Blood and Baggage**

So dear reader, knowing what you now know about South Africa, our beginnings, our more recent history, and our long term battles against marginalisation and discrimination, I hope you will bear this in mind as I transition and cautiously share with you a little more personally my own story and the impact of the country's history on my family particularly. I want to share with you the more recent history of my country and my family and hopefully sketch for you a picture of the interplay between my personal journey and the country's political journey which has been so intimately woven together.

You see, I was born in 1970 into a mixed race family on two sides. Both my parents had white European fathers and dark skinned Coloured mothers. My grandmothers, born at the turn of the century and now long gone, would no doubt also have been of mixed race going back to slavery and early colonisation. Consequently, I grew up hearing vague stories about German and Scottish grandfathers and two Saint Helenian grandmothers. Legend has it that my paternal grandfather arrived from Germany by ship at Saint Helena, a small Island in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean. He was 13 years old, and his parents, fearing for his life when the First World War broke out, put their only son on a ship bound for the colonies. There are some variations to this narrative depending on who you ask, but this appears to be the most popular version by far. Apparently, on arriving at Saint Helena with no money and no prospects, my grandfather made his way on the streets in order to survive. Apparently fortune also favoured him, and he somehow managed to ply a trade as a furniture maker who ruled his family with an iron fist and not a lot of obvious affection. I infer this from the fact that my now deceased father never ever spoke of him, never referred to him, and never shared any tiny morsel of information about him at all. My cousins, all of

whom are some years older than I am, have also never heard any stories that could imply any sense of tenderness, compassion, or affection from their parents' stories. However, the most significant condemnation of my grandfather is that my living uncles have no desire to talk about him at all. In fact, they emphatically refuse to do so. I don't know why this is so and they are resistant to engage in conversations about those days, I assume from this that secrets and skeletons abound, or maybe plain old resentment.

Interestingly, as a family we also spoke very little about our paternal grandmother, and today no-one seems to remember much about her either. There is however no dispute about the fact that she hailed from St Helena which is one of Britain's still existing colonies, and home to Napoleon during his exile. It is part of three Islands in the Atlantic Ocean; close in relative distance (7 days) to Cape Town. It includes Ascension Island and Tristan da Cunha in its trio. It was colonised by the British, the French, and the Dutch at various historic intervals. Saint Helena was set up as a trading post in the late 1800's, because it was conveniently situated on route to the East Indies. Saint Helena provided an alternative watering hole for passing ships to dock for supplies (and women). This route was useful in that it allowed passing ships to circumvent the *Cape Of Storms* where ships were always at risk of being wrecked and battered by the rough Cape seas and rock covered coastlines.

Just like her neighbouring islands, Saint Helena didn't have an indigenous population of her own but became inhabited during the slave trade between the East and the West. Slaves were moved, sold, and traded from Madagascar, India, and other regions in Africa by the Dutch and the British colonialists, many of whom fathered offspring from these slaves. These descendants gave rise to the modern day Saint Helena population, including I must assume, both my grandmothers. However, no-one in my family can contemplate the probability of a slave heritage, which would also account for the silence surrounding her story.

In due course whether by fate or fortune it's unclear, my paternal grandfather encountered my grandmother on St Helena. She may even have been a woman some years his senior, already divorced or maybe widowed, no-one will tell, with three children of her own. The exact nature of their relationship, married or concubine is lost forever, but some of the legend tells that they married and found their way to South Africa, probably as a result of a great flu epidemic on the island. I still have reason to doubt this version of events, particularly considering the lack of obligation for colonials to marry woman of colour in those days. However, regardless of their actual marital status, they went on to produce 11 more children between 1926 and 1938, who bore my grandfather's surname, of which my father was but one. Despite being of mixed race my father and his siblings never contemplated any differences between themselves. They happily lived under the illusion that race identity was neither important nor significant to them or to the country. They were to be proved wrong on both counts.

You see the introduction of Apartheid in 1948 and its institutionalisation over the next 40 years had an enormous impact on everyone in the country whether black, white, or mixed race, and in our family these distinction were hazy at best. The girls (my father's sisters) were mostly fair skinned and light eyed, resembling their father in critical ways; while my father and his brothers were darker skinned and handsome like their mother. However, separating people into distinct race groups created complexity for our family and many others like us, especially because race identity was so blurred.

Apartheid's aim was to separate, divide, and sow discontent between the race groups but the challenge for the State was in how to achieve this objective and sustain it over time. Consequently, Apartheid started off being rather subtle when it was introduced in 1948, but it was insidious, with small laws being introduced slowly, like the *Group Areas Act* in 1950. This slow and steady pace allowed Apartheid's laws to blend into the fabric of

society and slowly infiltrate people's lives and consciousness until the system was firmly installed and entrenched, both externally in our environment's and internally in our psyche's.

### **The First Blow**

The first blow from the hammer of segregation was the separation of people into race groups where they had to live together with their own kind. The government introduced a piece of legislation called the *Group Areas Act* of 1950 which separated people and families by race group. Surprised and confused by this dramatic legislative intervention, families of mixed race like ours reeled in shock and horror in 1951, as parents were forced to separate out the dark skinned children from the fair skinned ones, light parents from dark parents. The family were consumed with shame and blame and countless recriminations particularly against the State. Despite all this, in 1952 my father and his dark skinned brothers, most affected by the *Group Areas Act*, all moved out of the family home to racially demarcated Coloured areas while their white sisters remained at the family hearth.

In those early days, despite the growing grip of Apartheid and its clawing presence in their lives, despite this unfathomable reality that was conscionably thrust upon them, the family looked for and found many opportunities to mix and socialise together during the 1950's and 1960's. My white aunts also made numerous day trips to visit our neighbourhoods. I know now that it was also easier for them, because white people were not restricted in their movements, so it must have been less risky for them to visit us than the other way around. The truth is that the everyday impact of institutionalised racism was increasing steadily throughout the 1950's for everyone, and my family was no exception. In the first instance, the Coloured part of the family felt the growing impact of the draconian state machinery more personally than the White family. Schooling was poor and health care even poorer. Women of colour were not allowed to apply for government housing or enter into legal contracts; they were considered minors, to be overseen by their husbands. From

the early 1960's, housing, social welfare, and socio economic development was hugely underfunded for people of colour, but most importantly, my people had no access to political freedoms of any kind. No right to vote, no right to gather together, no voice, no choice, and no future. Discrimination was rife, and people lived in constant fear of state violence and legal sanctions.

The result was that my cousins grew up separately through the 1960's and 70's, white cousins lived White lives and Coloured cousins live Coloured lives, separated by laws that everyone internalised and adapted to quickly and quietly. Over time, my family needed less policing than should have been the case; because they accepted their fate with resignation and sadness. Not surprising, family ties became convoluted over time and relationships became more and more complicated and unmanageable. Our family had to face reality; after all we couldn't be the only ones basking in the joy of unconscious multiracialism in a country ripped apart by racial exclusivity. Looking back now, the incidents which ensued were inevitable, but at the time it seemed inconceivable. I remember distinctly the humiliation of my uncles, the tears of my aunts, and the regret and sadness of the children who didn't yet understand the magnitude of the events which were being played out in front of us.

In the summer of 1979, one of my "White" cousins met and fell in love with a White man. They had agreed to marry and had chosen a date for their nuptials. We were all so happy; she was young, beautiful, blond, and petite. I thought she deserved the glow of happiness that radiated from her innocent face. I lay awake at night dreaming about how she would look in her white wedding gown and satin pumps, fancying myself part of her nuptials, maybe a flower girl, wondering what it would feel like to be a beautiful bride one day. I was only 9 years old and didn't yet understand the world I had been born into. I was naïve, which 9 year old isn't? But I never imagined not being there, not sharing the joy and excitement, not being part of the celebrations, the speeches the traditional events that were to take

place. After all we were family, and weddings were epic events which took place over many days and with much time and effort from everyone, but this was not to be.

The harsh reality was that none of the dark skinned family was invited to her wedding ceremony or any other celebrations surrounding her nuptials. Only my father's White sisters and their children were invited. My cousin had not told her future husband or his family that she was of mixed race, and she wasn't about to disclose it at her wedding. My aunt and uncle conceded, effectively allowing her to negate her heritage and cast aside her family. My father and his brothers were furious; they were humiliated and hurt that their own sister could disavow them in this way. They experienced first-hand through a blood relationship the shame and humiliation of being classified as Coloured, of being cast out and rejected. They felt the deep sense of shame and embarrassment that they represented for their sisters, their nieces and nephews, and all future white in-laws. It was this small but significant event that caused my father and his brothers to draw the lines in the sand.

The brothers were heartbroken but determined to hold onto what dignity they could, they walked away from the sisters, and the family was split apart painfully. Clearly, because staying together was too fraught with contradictions. Eventually their anger grew cold and settled in, and the reprisal lasted for the next three decades. No further invitations were sought or offered on either side of the racial divide. It was clear; we were no longer part of the same family. Ties had been severed and sacrifices had been made. Unfortunately, this marriage was only the catalyst for the split, it became easier from this point onwards and over the next decade without exception, all the other white cousins followed suit.

As the 1980's drew to a close, one by one, the 40 cousins entered adulthood and parenthood without each other. We remained strangers to each other in every sense but name. Truth be told, the divide and rule policies of the State had been very successful and within 20 years, families like mine were doing the work of the State machine. We were willingly internalising the madness of Apartheid's philosophy. We were willingly rejecting our

blood relations based on their skin colour and also internalising the negative stereotypes of Coloureds that were being postulated at that time. I grew up knowing that some things were not open for discussion; white family, the split, the impact of Apartheid, the cousins, the sadness, the damage, the pain, these things had to be locked away in a dark place, never to be visited or enquired about. It was and remains today a topic that cannot be discussed, the pain and anguish still too raw to contemplate or too awkward to acknowledge.

### **Alcohol and Silence**

The silence was deafening. We weren't allowed to talk about the cousins, the events that lead to the split or any of the family members who lived no more than 20 kilometres away. Within the long silences, lay sadness, anger, and resentment. It seethed below the surface and raised its ugly head, when the brothers got together to have a drink and celebrate family events of their own. The atmosphere was often heavy with unspoken accusations, recriminations, and frustrations. It was only over many a comforting drink that the brothers would sometimes dare to speak about their lost sisters, their sadness, and their hurt and explore the pain that they had experienced at the cruelty of the world around them.

Is it any wonder then that without exception, my father and his siblings both Coloured and White chose whether consciously or unconsciously two very distinct coping mechanisms to deal with the trauma and alienation wrought on them by this monstrous system called Apartheid? The first was an addiction to alcohol and the second was a need to keep their silence. Can anyone really be surprised or wonder at their perpetual desire to seek comfort in alcohol? It is unclear whether my father and his siblings were genetically vulnerable to addictions or just severely environmentally impacted by Apartheid and its social violence. As a Process Worker I have learned that substance abuse or any addiction really is also an outlet or a mechanism, even a gateway to experience and get access to hidden pieces of ourselves that are not easily accessible in the stone cold light of sobriety (Bague, Subra,

Arvrs, Muller, Bricout, & Zorman, 2009). If this theory holds true in any way, then Apartheid and its associated trauma may have had a huge impact on my family and may have led them down a slippery slope into addiction and dysfunction.

Sadly, one of the evils of Apartheid was that people of colour were not allowed to socialise in places that were frequented by whites. This meant that normal social engagements and activities like pubs, movie houses, nightclubs, or theatres which operated in the cities were off limits to people of colour. This meant that access to legal alcohol was not permitted. However boot legging was as popular here in the 1960's as anywhere else in the world, inevitably resulting in the creation of homemade beer made from sorghum and maize. The brewing of beer at home eventually resulted in the opening of illegal shebeens (underground pubs) in townships which became alternative places of entertainment. Shebeens played music, allowed dancing, and sold cheap alcohol. This meant that many people, including my father and uncles frequented these spaces, often with the exception of doing anything else.

Unfortunately, shebeens also became part of the Coloured cultural landscape; there were more shebeens per block than schools, hospitals, or cultural centre's combined. Shebeens became the only place for men to congregate, mainly without an agenda or a purpose. Alcohol became a defining feature of Coloured identity and alcohol addictions were common place in my neighbourhood, not just in my family. It started out innocuously enough, my dad would have a few drinks over weekends and occasionally that could turn into some serious socialising. However, before I was 6 years old, I remember a pattern of arguments and fights brewing between my parents about my dad and his drinking habits. True, he only drank over weekends at that time, but then he drank so much that it made up for what he didn't drink during the week. Weekends were horrible, from early Friday evening the tension in the house grew more and more tangible. Everyone anticipated his coming home drunk and argumentative. The expression on my mother's face helped to create the tense

atmosphere. She was a woman of high standards, a lady and an authority to be reckoned with. She was guided by a strict catholic morality, which didn't support my father's decadent lifestyle.

She continuously lectured him and preached at him, hoping in part to wear him down and in part to change him. He never retaliated or argued back, not in the early years anyway. But later! Weekends were a kind of escape I suppose, men like my dad worked in factories all week; he earned a miserable wage and had no opportunities for personal development. Luckily he was a trained artisan thanks at least in part to my grandfather, who trained all his sons to be furniture makers, and luckily they were good at it. But weekends signalled the end of a week of drudgery, and with some money to splurge he went out drinking with his pals, and sometimes he spent the week's wages on wine, women, and song. Who could blame him?

Sadly, my dad seemed cursed, his father was a heavy drinker, and so were all his brothers and sisters. With hindsight it would have been good to understand then the interconnectedness between personal and environmental trauma, social and political marginalisation, internalised oppression, and their impact if any on addictive tendencies. I might have been more forgiving or at best less critical of my father and his apparent weaknesses, if only I understood that he was using alcohol as a pain killer. Maybe then I would have been more supportive, more understanding, and less judgemental, but that was not to be. Awareness of my own, my country's, and my father's roles in an ever changing energetic field was only arrived at much later in my life.

As the 1980's came to a close and I got older, my dad's drinking became worse. He really seemed to seek and find comfort in his addictions. It never appeared that he resented them or fought to manage them; no, he really settled into them and let them linger for a long time. What started out as weekend binge drinking became Thursday nights and Sunday nights too, then the odd drink on a Wednesday night and by the time I was an older

teenager, there wasn't a night when he wasn't drinking. As if that wasn't enough, he also started drinking during the day. I was appalled at how much alcohol one man could drink and survive the impact of, it was unfathomable. Writing this, I remember many times lying in my bed waiting for him to come home, I would pray that he would be involved in a fatal accident and put us all out of our endless misery. Well at least my mom. She was desperately unhappy, but she couldn't leave, she had her own addictions namely the Catholic Church. Also where could she go with her two children? She couldn't even get onto the public housing list without a husband, nor could she get a bank loan without him. Women of colour were minors and not allowed to enter into any contractual agreements of any kind. She was truly stuck, and he knew it. But then, so was he. He was stuck in his addictions, his pain, and his disappointment with himself. So were all of us.

My older sister and I took turns to support him, but it was tiresome and frustrating. No amount of cajoling, begging, crying, or manipulating helped him or changed him. He was on a slippery slope to becoming an incurable drunk. It wasn't long before he lost his job and any respect or tolerance from his wife. His biggest allies were his other drunken brothers. The system exuded hopelessness for people of colour. Such was the plight of Coloured men; working in factories with no joy or possibilities, no training or advancement, no money or time. They witnessed their families torn apart and siblings scattered in the wind, their manhood crushed and obliterated. Alcohol induced oblivion was probably the most responsible option open to them. Coloured men like my father seemed steeped in hopelessness, and my dad manifested that same hopelessness in our home and in our family. We tried everything including stints in rehab, but nothing helped. Every re-lapse made the next drinking cycle so much worse, and the pain and disappointment so much more intense. The hopelessness was tangible for me and definitely for him. No amount of blame or scorn that I managed to pile on him could have equated to the pain and scorn that he must have felt for himself. Slowly but surely, my dad's kindness disappeared. Bitterness,

anger, and misery took its place. Our home became a battleground, and my sister and I became the victims of a long standing war between my parents, consumed as they were by their own disappointment and sadness at each other's addictions.

Of course the social scientist in me has both the insight and the ability to look back now and recognise that my father was a victim of a rotten system. Probably torn and marginalised, hurt and defeated by a system that made him feel worthless and helpless. After all, it wasn't just my dad who drank; it was every second man in the community. It was a systemic problem, probably even a social problem. If I was fair, I could go so far as to recognise that he was a victim of circumstance, a pawn in a game he didn't consent to play, rather than a deliberate master of his own destiny. But the child in me experienced my father as a perpetrator too. I believed that he had some choices; he could have said no thank you. He could have cared more about his impact on his children, on me! He could have loved me more and wanted to be a better role model. He could have chosen a different route to deal with his hopelessness or sadness or history, after all, other people did. Instead, he transferred his hopelessness in the most painful way he could onto his children. How couldn't we feel the projection of his despair when that was all that permeated our home? His rank and status changed from beloved dad to just plain "he".

Night after night of begging my dad to stop drinking turned into many years of perpetual silence and despair. The silence created the space for secrecy to find a space and a place in our home and truly settle in. You see, none of us talked about the problems, none of us addressed the sadness, and none of us acknowledged the pain wrought on us individually or collectively as a family. I found escape, far away from home, sometimes in the arms of lovers, sometimes in the comfort of political activism, sometimes both. We had a secret that couldn't be shared, or even acknowledged. He had a secret pain that he couldn't access, process or even acknowledge and so the entire family constellated around secrecy of one kind or another. My secret centred on the fact that he was an incurable drunk and I

shared his genes. The humiliation, the embarrassment, the fear of disclosure was always imminent.

Ironically, my dad's addiction wasn't the hardest thing to live with; it was the overwhelming silence that it produced in each of us that was harder. It was a veritable undercurrent of denial and misinterpretation, of collusion and conspiracy, where reality was always just a step away. I know now that our collusion was critical, if the secret of my dad's drinking was to be kept then we all needed to keep the silence. Our collusion came in many shapes and sizes, the most common of which was our common denial of the problem of his addiction, its causes and the impact and pain of his drunkenness.

What I didn't know then was that he was keeping many secrets too. They were secrets about his parents, their origins, their race identity, his family upbringing, and his internalised shame, all of which was bound up in his colouredness and his sense of rejection or unworthiness related to it. As he kept secrets about his father, so I learned to keep secrets about mine.

My sister's mechanism for coping with family dynamics was denial and seclusion. She didn't see or hear or experience what was going on around her, she shut herself off and neither engaged nor reacted to the events and circumstances that surrounded her. She cocooned herself in a shroud of denial, so as not to face the demons wrought by alcohol and its inevitable violence.

My mom's medicine of choice was the church, like many of our people it was a place where she found comfort and peace, so she threw herself into it with both heart and soul. She prayed ardently for her husband's recovery, her children's salvation from addiction and her own inner peace from the inevitable anger and frustration which clawed at her spirit every day. I learned to hate the church and all it represented as I watched her pray in vain for peace in her home and the love of her husband. The stronger her commitment to the

church, the more I protested my lack of belief in a god I thought had deserted us. Religion was her crutch but it was my rival, I had no need for faith anymore. I know now that their addictions' were the best medicine they could find at that point.

My coping mechanism was being popular and fun to be with. I could joke about anything and had an uncanny ability to appear really open about everything, while in reality I never disclosed anything emotionally. I learned never to need support, help or comfort from anyone. I became emotionally self-sufficient and forgot how to lean on anyone for anything. I don't think I experienced any real emotions for a very long time; I had them neatly shut away, closely guarded and out of sight. No one would ever have known the pain, anger, frustration, hurt, and disappointment that lay just beneath the surface of my fun loving, easy going mask. I sought "chaos" personally and professionally. The more fractured and broken things were around me, the more I was able to bring calm and a "fix it" attitude to those problems. This made me a valuable family member. I could rally troupes and get things done better than most.

Fortunately, I was also drawn by an internal moral compass to the plight of the less fortunate and most at risk in my country. I may not have been able to fix my family, but as I grew older my desire to fix the world grew more intense. As a result, by the time I was 13 years old, I had become a social activist and later on an international Marxist. Being a social activist and a fixer was obviously my medicine at the time, it was probably insufficient, but the only way I knew how to deal with both the pain and injustice that surrounded me. My parents hated my politics and distanced themselves from my radical beliefs. They feared for my safety and silently wished I would learn some hard lessons to steer me back on a moderate non-political path. This of course signalled to me that a path of righteousness and moral superiority lie ahead. So I spent most of my teenage years campaigning and protesting against the Apartheid state with its demeaning and immoral laws. I knew then, albeit unconsciously, that there was no way that as a society we could separate our personal

psychology from our social psychology. I knew that the problems of my country were indelibly tied to the problems of my community and that the problems in my community were being manifested in my family and in me. We were all part of the same energetic field of experiences, playing our roles like characters in a play.

As a family we were all addicted to our own vices, seeking comfort from them rather than from each other. It was not yet clear to me that what was happening in the country and the extended family was also happening in our family home, we were just a hologram of Apartheid's philosophy of separate development as well. We all "chose" our own separate development paths and rarely did we stop to recognise each other's pain, anguish, and sense of aloneness. We were a reflection of the country, torn apart by politics, religion and personal psychology.

### **The Joy in the Pain**

As a teenager, I found great comfort in politics, the adrenaline rush, the secrecy, the underground activities, and the desire to fix something all appealed to my somewhat fractured psyche. So it's with this personal history that at the tender age of 14, I was drawn into student politics at high school. How could I resist, politics was everywhere, and it felt real and ardent. I had also become more aware of my internal desire to cast off my Coloured identity. I wasn't yet conscious of the shame or hybridity or the psychological contracts of inferiority that Coloureds were burdened with; I just associated negativity with my race group. I wanted to be part of a real race group, an African race group. I wanted to be seen and recognised. I wanted to have a different body politic than Coloureds. I was progressive, free thinking, and politically aware. I wanted to cast off my race as fast as I could, and take on an African heritage that was proud and warrior-like. I wanted to stand up and fight, not recoil in the corner, a lapdog to colonial interests. I chose power and determination instead, a heady combination for a 14 year old in the mid 1980's.

My family however had come from conservative stock, they didn't approve of my politics and they feared that I would be drawn into unholy alliances with Africans. So it was at a very young age that I became aware of severe racism in my family both those in my immediate circle and those further out on the periphery. Similar to other Coloureds in the country, my family feared for the safety of Coloureds living under a possible African government. They upheld all the negative stereotypes about Africans that were popular at the time, often arguing inferiority, incompetence, stupidity, and barbarism. These fears found a voice amongst many family members and some took to the Australian shores to escape the inevitable "black danger" which they believed awaited us.

For those who couldn't leave, like my dad and uncles they became angry and critical of "those barbarians", and I was often the target of their criticism and invective. They never connected my politics and the general struggles of black people to their own experiences, maybe because despite the fact that they had been classified Coloured, their perception of themselves was contrary to this. My parents, despite their plight of poor wages, appalling working conditions, and a generally substandard material existence, supported white rule in the country especially as black rule was seen to be a more dire alternative. This is not an untypical response among marginalised groups. Often, in history we find subordinate groups fight other subordinate groups instead of uniting and fighting the mainstream, in this instance white supremacy. This is largely a result of marginalised groups internalising white views of themselves and the world they live in.

For all these same reasons, I had a different perspective, for one, the continual army presence in my neighbourhood was a firm reminder that black lives were incessantly at risk. I was supremely aware of power and violence, intimidation and harassment because it permeated my everyday reality. Political liberation became my guiding mantra. I sought and found avenues through which I could act against the State and its machinery. I joined the United Democratic Front (UDF) an African National Congress (ANC) alliance partner not yet

banned and began to grow my political muscle. Street campaigns, boycotts, strikes, and underground political organising took up all my available time. I was insatiable. Within a few years, I was identified for my radical political views, and because of great political mentorship, I was drawn into extreme left wing politics and joined a Marxism International by the time I was 18.

I was radical, uncompromising and politically fundamentalist, my future as an activist seemed assured. I thought I was invincible, ready to make the ultimate sacrifice for my country and my people. Threats of violence, numerous arrests, perpetual harassment, and periods underground did nothing to dampen my spirits. Daily I became more convinced of my country's need for a black majority government, a place of freedom and human dignity, a place I could call home. But these were the same views that the State had banned and censored in the 1960's, and they had not become more popular in the echelons of power in the 1980's. No, these were not popular views, they were definitely not views that whites would support and they were not views that my Coloured family would support either.

Black rule had a poor reputation in Africa; we were surrounded by examples of political genocides, tribal infighting, looting, civil war, profound corruption, and militarism. So minority groups in South Africa were not about to take up the mantle of Africans struggling for power. Consequently, my political views further alienated me from my family on both sides of the colour bar. I was living on the edge of reason, stuck in a paradigm from which I didn't want to escape, dreaming of a different country where race didn't matter to anyone. Naively, I didn't recognise how difficult my politics must have been for my father to witness, particularly having watched the impact of racial segregation and its cruelty unfold in his own family. How aware he was of his own marginalisation I do not know, but he was supremely aware of the fact that he was not at the bottom of the racial food chain either, this privilege he wanted to secure. After all nothing was worse in his eyes than being equal to Africans.

I, like many other youth thought that it would just take one more push to overthrow the Apartheid State so we continued to push. However I was not the only one to be disappointed. The State held firm, and the mid 1980's up to 1994 proved to be the most violent in our country. My high school career and that of many of my Coloured cousins were interspersed with political uprisings, boycotts and refusals to write exams. During this time, my parents had little or no idea about what I was doing, and how I was spending my time. They knew I was an activist, but the magnitude of my activities was unknown even to them. Between 1985 and 1986, the state declared two separate State Of Emergencies in the country, which meant that being arrested for political activity could mean 120 days in prison without trial. It was this version of detention that got Steve Biko and thousands of others killed in the 1970's. Detention centres were houses of torture, interrogation, extreme violence, solitary confinement, and for the not so lucky ones, the use of chemical weapons and ultimate death. My white male cousins at this time were being conscripted into the Apartheid army and were often the perpetrators of violence against my people, for me an unforgivable act at the time.

Thinking back, I don't remember feeling scared, or wondering if I could get killed. Most times I was euphoric, maybe in my own way a little drunk, an indicator that I was way out of my depth. I couldn't even contemplate the horrors that could befall me. I too was addicted to the adrenalin rush of taking on the State machine. My first official arrest was when I was about 17. I was detained by the security branch on a hot summer's day, taken to John Foster Square, the main security precinct, to a basement interrogation centre. My happiest moment was looking around and thanking my lucky stars that there were no windows in the room. At least I couldn't "fall" out of one, as was the trend at the time. My second arrest came 18 months later. I barely remember the details, but I know that it was early hours of a cold winter's morning. "We" were putting up posters in the neighbourhood, they could have been posters for a strike or a campaign, I don't remember, but I was

conscious of being out in the open for too long. I whispered over to my comrades that we needed to get moving, and just as we moved towards the motor vehicle, the security branch came screeching upon us with guns drawn. My friend ran but the security policeman held a gun to my head and told her to stop or he would shoot. We were ordered to pull the posters down. I refused. That didn't turn out well for me. Bruised and scared, we were bundled into the back of a "Ratel" or infantry fighting vehicle and carried off to John Voster Square again.

The truth is there were many more of these experiences than I care to recount. Some included political marches where the police released hundreds of police dogs into the crowd, or countless mass funerals where violence erupted and police opened fire or dispersed purple rain and teargas into the crowds. My family and I were subjected to a number of house raids in the middle of the night by a horde of armed security police looking for subversive material or other evidence that would ensure a lengthier arrest and detention without trial.

Last but not least, was a period "underground" when things became so volatile in my neighbourhood that I couldn't afford another arrest without being detained and then charged under the "terrorism act". The result was months away from home, living in safe houses away from my neighbourhood and away from my family. My parents were close to apoplectic, they feared for my life and my soul, but the more they pressured me to relinquish my politics, the more committed I became. The gulf between us seemed to grow daily, a split became imminent. They could no longer tolerate my politics or my world views, and I could no longer respect or abide by theirs.

In fairness, I must own that there were many desperate and lonely moments, when I had some time to pause and wonder at the world white people had created in South Africa and what they were prepared to do to preserve it. I was shocked at the extremes and lengths they would go to in order to achieve their end, but not so shocked that I couldn't appreciate my own determination to thwart their interests. We were polarised and my behaviour was

just as unrestrained as theirs. Whatever the Apartheid government handed out, I was willing to stand against, everyday believing that we would be victorious! I was ungovernable. I couldn't have imagined the amount of time it would take to wear down the State, and I wonder now at my internal reserves to keep up the good fight. But the dark hours did come, they coincided with nights in bed listening to every sound, wondering if I would be pulled out of my bed yet again and hauled into detention.

On these nights when the bitterness and anger, resentment and hatred leaked into my awareness, I thought about my cousins, safely tucked away in the suburbs without a care in the world. Yes, they were happily voting to keep these bastards in government year after year, they didn't care about the cost to us. So much for family, no wonder my father hated them and kept us all away from them. They were the embodiment of white privilege and pathology. They had no clue that I and many of my other Coloured cousins were being followed, harassed, arrested, detained, beaten, and humiliated all to keep them in their cosy beds. My one and only consolation at the time was that their so called white sons were now fighting border wars in Angola or being deployed at our borders for the white army, and that they too faced death every day. So there we were for a couple of decades, blood cousins on opposite sides of an R4 rifle – on the one side, fighting for freedom and on the other side, defending domination.

### **I Am More than Black**

At the end of the 1980's, I had had a number of arrests, and close encounters with the security police, which meant that my more senior comrades became more and more anxious about me and were keen to see me leave the neighbourhood. I was being relocated to Cape Town, ostensibly to cool my heels and prevent another arrest. I was happy for the change in scenery because it got me out of my parents' home, a place that was often more fraught with complexity and strife than the burning streets of the townships. Part of me liked

the idea of becoming a full time student at a University in the Mother City Of Cape Town. So without much ceremony, I was instructed to apply to University, study and “organise” workers in the Western Cape, a little bit like being sent to “Siberia” if the truth be told. The reality was that the African working class live and organise in Johannesburg and not in sleepy Cape Town. Nonetheless, centralised democracy is central to Marxist philosophy and often has its drawbacks, but I did as I was instructed and I moved to the Western Cape, away from the radar of the security forces.

It was here that I met, and fell in love with a true Marxist. I could never have known the impact of my decision to become a Marxist the year before, or my move to Cape Town, but it was this experience (also this husband) who taught me to be an internationalist rather than a Coloured. It was through Marxism that I was able to unlearn my hatred for whites, to cast off my volatile anger at the system, and to make sense of my confusion at the inhumanity of my countrymen. Through Marxism I learned to embrace class awareness, resist bourgeois decadence, unshackle myself from Catholicism and religion, and see the world through the lens of class consciousness. For the first time I truly learn about capitalism, its limits and its cruelty while hoping and working for the realisation of a socialist dream. I learned that in South Africa, we were fighting a class war, and that there were many white people who didn't support Apartheid and many black people who would not share the wealth of the country any better than whites if they had the opportunity to be in power. I learned that you didn't have to be black to be progressive, and that the many Marxist internationals both past and present were filled with white people who also supported the same ideals that I did. So it was with this perspective that I entered my twenties, my best personal growth years ever.

Being away from home and out of the grip of the security police brought its own calm to my over wrought psyche and allowed me some perspective on both my immediate family and my extended family. I learned through Marxist study about the struggles of the working

classes, the conservatism of the middle classes, and the struggles for identity of black people in my country and on the continent.

Not surprisingly, I didn't see or even hear from any of my white family during these difficult years, no one else did either. Invariably they withdrew further and further into their own realities. They all but ceased to exist for me. I do however recall a sad weekend when my mom called to tell me that one of my cousins had committed suicide during a weekend home from the army. My mom was devastated, he had been a favourite of hers in the early days before things got so polarised in the family and in the country.

Fortunately, my relationship with my parents began to thaw, mostly because they weren't living with the continuous stress about my safety and I was relieved of their perpetual bickering. I was also surprised to see that some of my politics started to rub off on my mom, who became more willing to engage with and consider my political views; this was an indicator that the country was shifting away from the youth and into the factories. My dad however, sank deeper and deeper into alcohol and its erstwhile companion, depression.

### **We Live, We Learn!**

Looking back, I wonder both at my courage and my naivety in those dark and dreadful days. I was so young and had no appreciation for the dangers we faced. I never really contemplated death or long term imprisonment which may be testament to the fact that I was a child living a childish dream, or maybe, that I was also a courageous and fearless warrior at the very core of my being. Either way, thousands of people died both on the streets and in detention during those years. Sadly, I should have been playing with toys, chasing boys, going to parties and learning to jive. Instead I was co-ordinating, collaborating, negotiating, and propagating.

Between the age of 14 and 24, any real teenage hood that I could have had was missed; any propensity for frivolity and childlike enthusiasm or wonder was such a distant and unfathomable idea that I could not congruently bring them into my life. Sadly, this was the fate of my generation. As a mixed race child I was bred into social dysfunction and then steeled into political dedication. I used to wonder at what went wrong after liberation; and then I remembered an entire generation traumatised by death, violence, and loss. We missed the joy, of being children and youth.

On reflection it seems that a missed youth cannot be retrieved, regained or recaptured. The pictures that I carry in my mind now are about fractured parts of me that I needed to contain, box and hide from the world, for fear of them exposing my weakness and my terror. You see, hidden just below the surface of the warrior I show to the world, is a scared child, waiting and hoping that someone else will protect her and take care of her in a family and society that cannot and will not. No doubt my white cousins share some version of this unfortunate fate, only theirs is further entrenched with a strong dose of guilt.

### **They're All Small Blessings**

The gift I received from my family and my country was independence and courage. I couldn't imagine anyone being more self-sufficient than I was as a young adult. I felt invincible. I was independent, psychologically resilient, and tough as nails. Nothing and no-one could scratch the surface of my armour. I didn't know that it was armour but I did know that I felt immensely strong and in control of my life and my needs, especially my emotional ones. I didn't need anyone for anything. Friendships were built on trust and loyalty, safety, and commitment; I saw and witnessed these role models everywhere. Comrades placed their safety and their lives in each other's hands so the bonds of friendship were cemented in our heart of hearts. Who needed family under these circumstances?

Alas there were no role models for intimate relationships. I watched and witnessed all kinds of relationships brewing in the cauldron of underground liberation groups, many of which were about power, position, acceptance, and unbridled sexual liberation. All the social rules were suspended in the world of left wing politics. It was a throwback to the 1960's again where flower power and free love dominated the social and cultural scene. In fact it was easier to have mixed race sex than to be in a relationship with someone who wasn't of the same political persuasion. We were unforgiving in our demands of ourselves and of others; it was all out commitment with oaths and promises to boot.

At the age of 20, I moved back to Johannesburg and married out of my religion and out of my community, and very nearly found a way out of my immediate family. My husband wasn't only a Marxist; he was also a Muslim by birth and culture but an atheist by belief. I loved everything about him and what he stood for. Unfortunately our parents didn't agree. We both came from staunch religious families, one catholic and one Islamic. Marrying outside of our religions was strictly forbidden. My husband was also a rabid and unapologetic atheist which was far worse. So we married without permission and without ceremony, witnessed only by comrades and friends in an impersonal, formal court ceremony in the presence of an unfriendly judge who couldn't have cared less about our future. I rejected my family and their wishes and my in-laws and their wishes and forgot about the need for community which is so central to an African life. I cast aside any commitments to the "tribe" and carved my own path without fear or favour of the impact on myself or others. Family relations remained strained and uncomfortable, but I was happy and unburdened by the traditions of the clan. I rejected everything the family stood for socially, politically, racially, and religiously. I too walked away just like my cousins before me, only my rejection of them seemed more righteous somehow.

## **A New Dawn**

### **A Bloody, Painful Start**

In March of 1993, after many years of violence and death, international sanctions and guerrilla warfare, a new negotiating council was set up to get us to elections. Typical of South Africans, we do everything at the very last moment and then, on a wing and a prayer, so we set ourselves a thirteen month election deadline. The electoral council comprised of 26 members of various political parties and was headed by two legendary men, first Cyril Ramaphosa, an impressive African man and also the general secretary of the National Union of Mineworkers, known for his astute intellect and impeccable judgement. The second, his opposite, Roelf Meyer, the then Minister Of Constitutional Development, who by all accounts was part of the Afrikaner aristocracy. He got the unfathomable task of negotiating the best deal possible for his people. Roelf, like Cyril was also a man of great vision who recognised that our future as a country lay intertwined with each other and they were responsible for making the dream happen. This was an exciting time for me and millions like me; at 24years old I was participating in what was a momentous historical victory for our country.

Looking back, the 27<sup>th</sup> of April 1994 was the happiest day of our lives, all South Africans, regardless of race, creed or colour awoke on a beautiful summer day and stood in 10 to 20 hour queues to go and cast their ballot for freedom and democracy. Yes it was the dawning of a new era, our first vote ever as black South Africans. The atmosphere bristled with excitement and everywhere people were rejoicing, without even needing to know the results of the election. The battle had been won just by being able to show up and cast a vote in an atmosphere of peace and tolerance. This was an exciting time for me and millions like me; at 24 years old, I was participating in what was a momentous historical victory for

our country. The country was on the verge of a rebirth, and I remember those days in a blur of exhaustion, emotion, trauma, and excitement, sometimes all of these on the same day. But this moment had not come about easily, there were many false starts and near misses leading up to this day, making its arrival that much more poignant. I remember bracing myself and watching the entire country do the same as the days ticked by before the election. One such moment of terror happened on April 10<sup>th</sup> 1993. It was less than a year before the elections when Chris Hani, the general secretary of the communist party and commander in chief of MK the military wing of the ANC, was assassinated outside his home by a right wing Polish immigrant called Janusz Walusz. I was certain that the country would burn with hatred and vengeance. I thought we would give in to the looming disaster rather than forge ahead to elections and create a better future. In my heart I understood the anger and the pain that my people felt in those chilling days. However, Mandela appealed to me and to all of us for calm and tolerance, he called on us to bridle our anger and hold onto our hope for a better future. He created again a guiding coalition for peace and democracy. He was heard and the country and I sighed with relief. When I got to bed that night, I wondered if my family would have another chance, I wondered if my father's brothers and sisters had heard and were willing to heed Mandela's call for reconciliation, acceptance, and tolerance. Would it be too much to ask that they give each other another chance? When I hinted at this to my father a few days later, he smiled and nodded, suggesting that that too was possible in the future.

### **Nothing Is Free or Fair**

On the 2<sup>nd</sup> of July 1993, the Government announced that the 27<sup>th</sup> April 1994 would be the day of the national elections. Understandably, this caused an unprecedented escalation in violence both by the right wing and by the unofficial state sponsored "third force" who were suspected of being covert police squads. I noticed that the better the negotiations were going, the worse the violence that rained down on townships.

However, in the background to the violence and chaos, the election campaigning continued unabated. I and a few of my Coloured cousins together with many thousands of activists walked door to door, street to street, neighbourhood to neighbourhood, not only campaigning for the ANC, but predominantly teaching citizens to vote. I lay awake night after night, imagining the worst; I knew in my heart of hearts that this was impossible; by all accounts a herculean feat and we were never going to be ready in time for the elections. I was also angry at our leaders, I knew that it took more developed countries with a history of democracy longer to organise elections, and yet we had chosen three months!!!

This was not going to be a walk in the park. We had to consider our geographical spread, our high levels of illiteracy, perpetual violence, and general administrative looting in the homelands. We didn't have accurate population statistics and no voters roll; we didn't know how many voters to plan for. In addition, our people didn't even have identity documents, couldn't read, couldn't write, and couldn't campaign in peace. I cannot recall now whether consciously or unconsciously, but I felt a disaster looming ahead and the clouds of doom gathering. I questioned whether this was even possible. But deep down, I also understood the reality, either we pulled this election off or our country would burn to the ground. Time was of the essence, there was no delaying a process whose time had come. To this end I and many others who were employed in business or other specialist areas of expertise were called on to take a sabbatical from work. All troops had to be rallied because the *Independent Electoral Commission* (IEC) had to set up 41 operations centres across the country, if this election was going to work.

The country was in a grip of terror and my dreams were tormented by grievous images of mutilated body parts, loud explosions, and hot shrapnel tearing into my skin, while I ran from faceless men intent on stopping me from reaching my destination. After endless meetings, campaigns, and strategy sessions, I would collapse into bed in the early hours of every morning gripped by fear, anxiety, and plain heart rendering panic. I, like many others,

knew that the Afrikaner Generals had the capacity to stage a military coup, and that nothing could save any of us from a complete meltdown into civil war and unmitigated violence if that happened. The trick remained to bring in three key parties to the elections, the Afrikaans right wing, the Inkatha Freedom Party made up predominantly of Zulu mine workers, and of course the ex-independent homeland leaders. Without them, a peaceful election could and would not happen.

With only days to go, Henry Kissinger and Lord Carrington were brought in from the UK to broker a deal with Inkatha who wanted the elections postponed. Both chief negotiators refused, recognising that the country would go up in flames, if an extension was permitted. These white knights left South Africa, defeated on the 14<sup>th</sup> of April with no immediate solution probable. There were only 10 days to go before the National elections.

With only 7 days to go, Inkatha agreed to join the elections. The implications of this late entry were hair raising. Firstly all the ballot papers were already printed and Inkatha was not on it, so Inkatha stickers needed to be printed and stuck on manually, all 80 million of them. Then a further 540 voting stations had to be established with no less than 35000 additional recruits to man them, and this was before supplying them with voting booths, ink, pencils, and the like. We were in a crisis and I felt immobilised with panic and fear as the country sat on the brink of disaster.

I woke before dawn on election morning thinking here we are, ready or not. The mood was patient, jovial, and even accommodating, with old people, the disabled, and women with children getting preference in the queues if they had missed the special vote a few days earlier. Everything seemed so calm and serene in my world, my mother and grandmother had been won over to the ANC and were both looking forward to the elections. I stood proudly next to them as they made their mark on Election Day. My dad on the other hand was never going to vote for a black president, not even Mandela, so we didn't take him to the polls to vote. Not very democratic, I know! I wasn't about to assist the National Party in

gaining more votes, and I was pretty sure that his other siblings both White and Coloured would do what they could to support the Afrikaners to keep power. If nothing else they had that much in common.

Unfortunately, elections were fraught with complications; a rough estimate by the IEC concluded that about a quarter of the polling stations were experiencing severe problems verging on systems failure. For those that were operating they would run out of ballot papers by lunchtime, a huge problem, considering the polls were due to stay open until 7pm. Despite this, in the aftermath of an extended election, these were the three best and worst days of my life. I knew that I had to get some sleep, because this was only the first stage of the process as the next 8 days would be taken up in the count. For the first time ever, nearly everyone at home was anxiously excited about the same thing, an ANC victory.

Considering the massive frustrations, violence, and chaos associated with the election in 1994, the change in government and the dawning of a new era in the country occurred relatively peacefully. In other words, we didn't see the monumental meltdown that the international community predicted. This was largely due to the immense eldership of our leadership and their ability to create a vehicle for post-Apartheid reconciliation.

### **No Truth and Reconciliation in Families**

This vehicle was the establishment of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). It was based on a court-like restorative justice process and was assembled post the abolition of Apartheid. Its mandate was to bear witness to, record and where possible grant amnesty to those who had perpetrated human rights violations during Apartheid (1960 - 1994). The TRC was established to determine the fate of victims of gross human rights violations and also grant amnesty to offenders who were willing to disclose their acts of violence that they had committed for political purposes during that time. The broad principles of the TRC were restorative in nature. South Africa had undergone an immensely bloody and

violent past. If South Africa was going to put its past to rest and build a positive future, then the new democracy needed to provide time, space, and opportunity for both victims and perpetrators to come together to tell the truth. The TRC helped to create a national memory for all. No-one could pretend that the abuses had not occurred or were not as bad as many of its victims had claimed. The process ensured that the truth was heard from the perpetrators themselves. The truth telling also allowed many families to finally discover what had happened to their loved ones and in some cases find their remains and give them a proper funeral. The TRC was therefore very effective in ensuring that as a Country we found out about our past in a way that didn't retributively pursue those who were responsible for the abuses.

However, the biggest challenge of the TRC lay in its definition of the term "victim". Only those who were considered to have suffered gross human rights violations including torture, murder, abduction, disappearance, or detention were considered victims. As Apartheid was never declared a "Crime Against Humanity" by the United Nations the majority of black people who had suffered the daily human rights violations of violence, forced removals, pass laws, limited freedom of speech or movement, suffrage, or family fissures, landed up being excluded from the definition and thus had no access to the TRC process. In our rush to conclude the process of reconciliation through the TRC, we did not sufficiently get to understand the enormity of the country's past experiences.

Precisely because of the definition of "victim" in the TRC, ordinary people who had not suffered "gross" human rights violations, like my family and millions of others in communities, were robbed of an opportunity to just speak about the pain they had endured during Apartheid. My family didn't have an opportunity to process or reconcile themselves to the fact that as a family we were torn apart by Apartheid; brothers and sisters, mothers and sons, lost forever to each other because of an unfair and unjust system. There was no reconciliation for families like mine, who were forced to make unimaginable choices based

on their skin colour in order to support their own survival. The country didn't provide any space for families to express the feelings, impacts, frustrations, and substantial losses experienced by individuals under Apartheid. So, in my family, we held onto our angst, internalized our anger, and pretended that nothing untoward had happened. We definitely didn't make amends. Too much time had passed and there seemed very little point in going back and reconciling after 30 years of separation. So one by one, my father and his brothers and sisters died, resolute in their decisions to abandon each other and convinced that they had made the right choices. Forgiveness was unimaginable, reconciliation only a far off dream to be entertained in the wee hours of the morning before dawn shed its light on reality. It was much more likely that the country would make greater progress in terms of reconciliation than we would. I reasoned that maybe it was easier to forgive a system than a sister, easier to understand a law than to understand loyalty, that what was lost in my family was a combination of pride, acceptance, belonging, and love, what had been broken were ties of blood. Family betrayals, by definition, seem harder to forgive - and when they happen between siblings, probably impossible.

Some years after the elections, when the adrenaline had subsided and the dreams for a new country had settled in, I began to notice my husband's depression, to feel his sadness and cringe at his aloofness. He was distant and cool, withdrawn and conflicted, self-contained and disappointed - not in a good space. The more depressed he became, the less he wanted or needed me. I was invisible, cast aside, rejected, again and again and again!!! So I withdrew further and further away. I know now that he was battling with severe and unprocessed trauma and depression, but I didn't know why I was feeling so bleak. I learned much later that many people get depressed after accomplishing something they fought for or worked very hard on. However at the time, it felt as if a black dog was upon me forever growling at my heels, threatening to take hold and not letting me go. It was an unknown sensation, a shadow, a feeling of sadness, deep, dark and overwhelming, like all joy was

being sucked out of me. It felt like my soul was empty, and no matter what I did I couldn't fill it up. It was a dark gaping hole that sat right in the place my heart should have been. It was empty and lonely and scared and sad and needy and fragile. Unfortunately, it had no words, no ideas or vocabulary, and no ability to ask for help. I felt only the wave upon wave of emptiness. I didn't know how to own my own depression so I projected them onto my husband. I had neither the tools nor the wisdom to understand the psychological impact of the road we had chosen as activists and revolutionaries or as a couple.

I had no idea the impact, the trauma, or the damage done to either of us emotionally, by the state of our country or by the choices we had been forced to make politically. Our relationship had been forged through our identity as activists, which was what bound us together. At the time, I didn't realise that our choice lay in either creating a new myth for ourselves or in going our separate ways. I remember hoping and wishing that the feeling wouldn't engulf me. I was terrified that it would settle in and make itself at home in my head. So I ran from my marriage and the possibility of sinking into depression and dealing with the emotions, pains, and traumas of a life already lived.

## **A New Lens a New Life**

### **Surviving and Thriving**

Telling you this story almost 17 years after the event has been really intriguing for me. I realised through this process how much of the story I had forgotten and how much I needed to research and reconfirm for myself from a sequential perspective. You see, it's been years, dear reader, since I've even thought about these events and weirdly, I've never shared them with anyone else because everyone I know has the same story to tell. So, here I am, 17 years after Apartheid and I have not just survived the early years, but they have in fact stood me in good stead and allowed me to thrive in my new life. By all accounts I have succeeded in becoming educated, recognised and even financially secure. I do work that is challenging in a reputable industry and have a family whom I love and adore. Despite the problems that we face as a young democracy, I feel content that we will make it to the next milestone. I also think I will make it to the next milestone, because the events of the past have bolstered my resistance and I feel confident that I will persevere regardless of the challenges ahead.

### **Finding Process Oriented Psychology**

This state of knowing, or being open to the possibilities in the universe, is new for me, and has come as a result of three years of serious introspection and personal development. You see, dear reader, surviving is only half the battle won, but learning to thrive is the rest of my life's work and one which I now take rather seriously. It's taken me years to recognise and realise how much I had been through in my life and how the paths I had chosen were in part my destiny and in part my salvation. I now know that Catholicism, politics, Marxism, Colouredness, marriage, divorce and parenting have all been great influences in my life and have made me the multidimensional being that I am today.

Interestingly, up until recently, I still rejected many of these parts of me and many of the people who were represented by these roles in my family and community. It took a nudge from the universe to place me on a path that would provide me with an opportunity to examine and own these various dualities so that I could integrate them more congruently into my life.

This opportunity arose at dinner one evening with some acquaintances that introduced me to the concept of Process Work and connected me to a network of people who were already engaged in this practice in South Africa. I applied and was accepted into a master's programme which turned out to be providential. Somehow the universe felt that I was ready to focus on myself and my own personal development and growth and this was the programme through which I could do it.

Process Oriented Psychology's course content is drawn from a combination of Jungian psychology, quantum physics, Taoism and shamanism. The subject matter was way beyond anything I could fathom intellectually and completely outside of my linear learning style. I had spent so much of my life defining who I was, boxing myself into predefined roles and agendas that I could not allow myself or others to add to or subtract anything from my being. I believed firmly that I could only believe in one thing at a time and that "the one thing" had already been defined. I was and would always be an activist and a revolutionary. Little did I know that my journey had barely begun, that everything I had seen and done, explored and experienced had brought me to a point of personal self-discovery which was both awesome and daunting. What started as an intellectual pursuit was to become a pilgrimage of self-discovery. It was to become a beacon of light at the end of what felt like a really dark tunnel of personal despair, anger and loneliness.

I recognised that what I needed was a new lens through which to see myself and the world. I needed to be shaken out of my preconceived notions about class and politics, human greed and capitalism, conflict and revolution, and I needed to find a place where our

essence as humanity still resides. I needed to find a place of connection to pain and disappointment, to connectedness and intimacy, to listening and sharing all the parts of myself and others so that our minds, hearts, and souls could connect better, even just momentarily.

### **Process Work, a New Perspective**

I found this lens in Process Work or Process Oriented Psychology which was founded by Arnold Mindell in the early 1970's in Zurich. In a nutshell, it is a comprehensive theory, method and orientation to working with individuals, relationships, organizations and communities especially when they are in conflict. It draws on spiritual, psychological, and social factors for awareness and healing. The methodology brings together diverse fields of inquiry, referred to by Mindell as a bootstrap theory (Hendricks, 1998). This is a scientific term for ideas that unify related theories of nature in such a way that even though the theories differ, they are consistent with each other (Hendricks, 1998). More simply put, Process Work has drawn on the following; Jung's ideas about the unconscious, Gestalt on following process, Roger's support for the individual, the trans personal's focus on the divine and the systems principles on economics, politics and physics (Mindell, 1992).

The theory and practice of Process Work is new and in a constant state of change. As a model it is both different and inspiring because it requires the practitioner to be open to feedback from the client rather than focused on a specific psychological tool or method. This concept resides in the idea that the experiences of an individual, or a group, are important, and that the issues, frustrations and challenges people face can be unfolded to provide insight into their concerns and problems (Mindell, 1992).

Jungian psychology has been a significant influence in the development of Process Work. Carl Jung was well known for his work on dreams and active imagination, the influence of which can still be seen in Process Work today. However, Mindell expanded this

focus to include the body, its sensations, symptoms and illnesses and the importance of the underlying dreaming process in working with individuals and groups struggling in relationships. Mindell recognized that body experiences and sensations carried really important messages and could be unfolded like any normal dream to provide us with information about unconscious expressions wanting to become known (Mindell, 2002b). This is because Mindell saw through his own work as a Jungian analyst that the body provides information to us just like dreams do, they arise through movements and feelings, so he incorporated these dimensions into Process Oriented Psychology.

Furthermore, Jung applied teleological principles into his work: this encompassed the idea of individuation, or the innate tendency of individuals to grow into their own wholeness (Papadopolous, 2006). Jung argued that dreams held the possibility of guiding a person in their development. Teleology indicates that there is a design or purpose in nature and events. If we draw an analogy, teleology would indicate that inherent in say the acorn is the wisdom of the whole oak tree. This is especially relevant when extrapolated to psychology as inherent within a symptom or challenge is knowledge of its own wisdom and the work will be to unfold this wisdom already inherent in the challenge.

Process Work supports this perspective by viewing experience and difficulties as meaningful and purposeful in themselves. From this perspective, difficulties and challenges are viewed as significant and important in their ability to transform ourselves and the world around us.

Process Work was also influenced by Transpersonal Psychology, which is a full-spectrum psychology that encompasses all of traditional psychology and then goes beyond it by adding transcendent dimensions of human experience to it. These could include nature, deep religious and mystical experiences, non-ordinary states of consciousness, and fostering the fulfilment of our highest potential as human beings (Tartakovsky, 2011). Process Work falls under this umbrella, because it also embodies principles of spirituality,

and emphasises deep states of consciousness and expanded awareness. It offers tools and techniques for expanding awareness in a very practical way. Its methods are applied in many fields such as extreme states of consciousness; coma, dreams and inner work; relationship issues; group work and conflict facilitation. It explores the little known parts of oneself, and allows us to find deeper insight into individual and group process.

Process Work also draws inspiration and technique from the Taoists. Roughly stated, Taoism deals with the flow of the universe, or the force behind the natural order that keeps all things balanced and in order. It is considered by some to be a source of existence and "non-existence". Some Eastern religions refer to this as the "yin and yang" of the universe, which can also express itself as the equal forces of "good" and "evil" (Chang, 2011). Taoism assumes that everything that is needed is already present in the situation that exists, and all that is required of us is to follow nature through its own winding path and see where it takes us (Schuitevoerder, 2000). Process Work also postulates that the solutions to problems often lie within the problem itself. It thus requires a trained practitioner to follow the course of the experience (almost like following the path of a river), with awareness and openness, and to assist the person in unfolding this experience without judgment or resistance, accepting what emerges on the other side as necessary and useful to deal with their problem. Similarly, Process Work does not have as its goal the need to change anyone or anything, nor does it judge whether something is good or bad, right or wrong. Instead, its goal is awareness of what is happening or trying to happen in a given situation, body symptom, dream or interaction. It requires the process worker to notice the signals in the client's interactions and unfold the meaning embedded in them. Thus, just like the Tao, Process Workers follow nature and notice what is happening to the self and others through momentary perceptions and flirts and then working to unfold what these could mean for the client or the group.

Lastly, Mindell also came from a physics background, so he grappled extensively with the way in which Newtonian physics separated matter and the psyche or more literally the body and the dreaming process from one another. This led Mindell to draw on his physics training once more. By using the phenomenological theory of irreversible, coupled processes, he recognised that processes occur, connect and are coupled, in all kinds of ways even though there is no explanation for why this happens. This allowed Mindell to work with “what happens” rather than the more traditional mode of “why things happen” to individuals and groups. As a result of this shift, Process Work as a modality now touches on healing, meditation and awareness procedures. As Process Work has grown, it has also expanded its reach, to include working with - and understanding the impact of - social and world issues on the individuals psyche. Mindell recognized that we are more than our individual psychologies; we are in fact greatly impacted by our families, communities and the world around us (Mindell, 1992). Thus, working on world issues is an important aspect of Process Work, and is practiced through World Work a method for working on the social issues in the world today.

Mindell's aim in unifying these various theories is based on his belief that there are no 'constants' in Psychology. We can therefore only be aware of the moving ground and the flow of events around and within us. By its very nature, Process Work is concerned with working with change, rather than with fixed structures such as personality or ego. In this sense it is better classified as a transpersonal psychology, since its core focus is on awareness.

Learning about Process Work and embracing its various influences has significantly impacted on my views of the world and of me in the world. When I look back at my story from this perspective, and with this lens, I see the impact of my country's history differently. I perceive that our journey through slavery, colonialism and apartheid has all contributed to the richness of our landscape and the diversity of our Nation. It is here, in the cradle of

mankind that we have struggled and fought against racism, domination, sexism and hatred of all kinds. These are some of the world's most pressing issues and we have shouldered them as a country and come out on the other side. In a quantum way, we have done this work for the world. By some measures, we have emerged stronger as a people and as a country, deeply aware of our connectedness to our land and to a joint future. Through our struggles, we have learned about our differences and our similarities, we have sat with our demons and discovered our blessings. In a way, we have struggled through our differences to find some small acceptance of each other. As a country we have moved towards something better for ourselves, our children and the world. We have embraced the dream and sometimes even the reality of being a rainbow nation, with all its differences and complexities, sometimes we have even succeeded. We have learned over the last eighteen years that we can walk this road together, a testament to this dream. For the most part, at a deeper level we can, and we want to, live together in peace.

However, the Process Work lens also makes me aware that everything must be viewed in balance, everything exists together with its opposite, the yin and the yang must both be given time and space in my awareness. It is from this perspective that I see not only the journey we have come from and its importance in getting us to this juncture, but also the road ahead. As a country we are now consumed with different problems and our young democracy is at risk of imploding at its centre. Greed, corruption and crime threaten to overwhelm us and destroy our fragile future. My process work lens allows me to view this as a continuation of our earlier journey. It is a fundamental awareness and recognition that something else wishes to emerge in the future. I know that I and others must continue to learn and grow through our country's experiences; our journey is not yet over. I think that we must continue as a people to individuate and the task that lies ahead requires us to get better at picking up our leadership and our power more congruently and for better purpose. I

can see that these new struggles provide each of us with the opportunity to grow ourselves individually and collectively and in so doing, impact the world.

From a more personal perspective, I have expanded my awareness of the nature of events around and within me. The direct impact of a teleological approach to viewing the world provides me with excitement and wonder as I engage in personal and world struggles. I can now look back on my family, our struggles about race, and our pain during Apartheid, my father's alcoholism, and my activism, as the events and experiences through which I was meant to learn about who I am, and what I am to become. I see that each of these has meaning and purpose in my life and that they have provided me with the tools and skills that I need today. Now, in some small measure, I am more able to look at and engage with my past as a collection of gifts and experiences that moulded me into who I am today and also prepared me for the journey I must take tomorrow. It is precisely these experiences that have supported me to work in relationships, groups and situations in the workplace and in my community with an attitude of getting to know myself and the world better. By using this lens and linking it to a deeply spiritual sense of knowing that I, and everyone else, are on a journey of self-discovery and personal growth, makes every event meaningful and purposeful.

### **Deep Democracy - An Essential Tool**

Deep democracy is a central tenant of Process Work and provides another useful lens through which to process events both past and present. Classical democracy, as we all know, is about citizen power (Mindell, 2002a). This is important because we all hope for equal rights and peaceful solutions to everyday issues and problems. However, ordinary democracy only focuses on majority "rule" and does not, according to Mindell (2002), include relationship ability or the deep feelings and dreams of community life.

However, *Deep Democracy* recognises that when all points of view, emotions, and dimensions of experience can interact with awareness, then and only then can transformation and resolution occur. *Deep Democracy*, although used as a tool for conflict facilitation, is more an attitude and a value that encourages and supports diversity of viewpoints, openness to deep feelings and the building of community through our underlying connectedness to our humanity. *Deep Democracy* has a breadth of application across the world, from politics to psychotherapy, from group work to individuals, from organizations to families, across race groups, genders and cultures and is often used as a method to support individuals, groups and systems in conflict. To date, *Deep Democracy* has been applied in places where there is terrorism, revolution, diversity issues, economic problems, school conflicts, climate change, large corporations and governments.

According to Mindell (2002), *Deep Democracy* embraces three levels of consciousness: the first being consensus reality or everyday reality about people, issues, the environment, popular history and so forth. The second level of consciousness is called *Dreamland* - this refers to our dream-like experiences and projections, which happen both while we are asleep and while awake. Finally, *Deep Democracy* recognises the value of a third level of consciousness called the *Essence* level; this is the deepest experiences we have in deep sleep or pre-dreaming and is often experienced as detachment or a place where we have no conflict and where we experience our deeper connectedness to something bigger than ourselves (Mindell, 2002a). At a fundamental level, *Deep Democracy* is mostly about awareness, it suggests that all voices, states of awareness, and frameworks of reality are important when dealing with individuals, groups and systems in conflict. It requires that all these different parts be given time and space to be heard, especially in a conflict situation. A deep democracy facilitator is aware and conscious of underlying feelings as well as the atmosphere surrounding conflictual interactions, as these invariably have a role to play in the conflict and its resolution. *Deep Democracy* is also described as a

collective attitude, which recognizes that all the roles and aspects are not only necessary in a field, but need to be acknowledged, respected and interacted with for the wisdom and wholeness of the field to emerge (Schuitevoerder, 2000). Thus, *Deep Democracy* supports open interaction and the sharing of diverse views and opinions by various roles that exist in each of us individually and in the field. It also relies on bringing these roles to the fore and supporting them in their struggle to be heard, acknowledged and respected as valuable and relevant.

From this perspective, it is easy to understand why *Deep Democracy* is such an important lens for me to look through, when considering both my own history and the history of my country. Looking back now, I am able to see my story and my country's history in the context of a system of racism that was established purely to marginalise any kind of differences, whether they were opposing voices, different races of people or different ways of being in the world. As a country we not only reinforced our differences from our countrymen, we brutally silenced through state sponsored violence, anyone who was racially different, politically different or socially different from the mainstream. Our history allowed the smallest minority (10%) to hold power over the vast majority (90%) both through military force and parliamentary systems and frameworks. The system of Apartheid was set up expressly to prevent the voices, experiences or feelings of the majority of people being heard or recognised in any meaningful way. This lack of inclusivity resulted in many years of turmoil, conflict and violence racking the country both by those attempting to be heard and by those determined to keep their voices silent.

However, despite this history of exclusivity, once we had achieved classical democracy, we took an incredible leap of faith, under the guidance of incredible eldership towards the spirit (if not the exact practice) of *Deep Democracy*. I believe we embraced the underlying values of *Deep Democracy* through the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). The commission was set up as a restorative justice vehicle through which South

Africans could process the worst of their experiences during Apartheid with the hope of reconciliation in the future. When the TRC was in motion, I was at best a critical supporter of its intention, believing that it didn't go far enough to bring justice to the many people who suffered through severe oppression, violence and even murder during Apartheid. However, since discovering the richness of *Deep Democracy*, its attitude and its impact, I can see the value of the TRC more clearly. It became a beacon in the darkness, in that it gave voice to the pain, sadness, anger and betrayals suffered by our people during Apartheid. It provided marginalised people with an opportunity to step forward and share their voices with the world. I believe that our success as a nation today is in part due to the success of the TRC, the impact of which cannot be underestimated.

Through personally embracing *Deep Democracy*, I can see how I have benefited from embracing and engaging more fully with my family, both black and white, about our past hurts, pains and injuries. I have benefited from growing my awareness and being willing to share my experiences with them. This process of reconciling with my family has helped me to find the missing parts of me: and it is primarily my attitude of openness to all voices, experiences and ways of being that has supported me on this journey.

Using my *Deep Democracy* lens, I can see from a more dreamland perspective how the country's leadership in the form of Bishop Tutu, Nelson Mandela and many others were dreaming of peace and reconciliation on behalf of an entire nation. It was this dream that we could be better than our past that made them keen to embrace peace at great cost. Despite 27 years in prison, house arrest, torture and detention, Nelson Mandela and others like him kept the dream of freedom and peace alive in the minds and hearts of black people across the country. If the 1960 to 1990's is held up to the light, then there is no evidence to suggest that Apartheid would ever have ended, or that black South Africans would live in a democratic South Africa one day. From this perspective it was really the dream of a free country which allowed each of us to face a new day, despite its stark realities to the contrary.

It was almost as if those elders were a shared role in the field. It is clear to me that the leadership at the time showed great *Deep Democracy* skills, in that they were both willing and able to invite all roles, views and opinions around the negotiation table and with openness and tolerance, they built their dream of a different South Africa with our oppressors. It is this practice of openness, transparency, diversity and tolerance of all voices and states of being that is embodied in the practice of *Deep Democracy*.

Personally I too dreamed perhaps unconsciously, about my psychology, wishing it to be free from tyranny and oppression, pain, marginalisation and exploitation. Through the practice of *Deep Democracy* I have found in no small measure my own inner tyrant, my oppressor and my exploiter. These are the inner manifestations of disowned parts of me, which manifest in my nightly terrors, but which I have struggled to bring to the surface for daytime observation. I have found that all the roles I see in the world, which I hate and react to most strongly, also sit inside of me. Getting to know these roles and accepting them in me and others is now part of my journey. I know that the practice of *Deep Democracy* in the world requires that I first be deeply democratic internally and learn to love and appreciate all the voices and states inside of me first. It is this dream that keeps me focused on applying the skills and attitudes embedded in *Deep Democracy* into my everyday life.

As a country and as an individual, I see that the essence level has been significantly marginalised due to the overt conflicts and polarisations in the field. I look at myself, and I know that despite the road I have journeyed and the progress I have made, I still get polarised about our differences and feel fraught with internal and external conflicts about our past. I see my one dimensional way of being in the world and I know that I am guilty of perpetuating a lack of tolerance and a closed mindedness in my daily interactions in the world. I know that my psychology is not just my own, so if these conflicts are alive and well in me then they are alive and well in others in my country as well. We have all been deeply scarred by our past both as perpetrators and as victims of Apartheid and we all need to learn

how to value others' voices, views and ways of being, regardless of their race, gender or social background. We have not yet begun to appreciate our connectedness to each other or to something greater than ourselves that connects us to our humanity. We cannot yet see each other as more than black or white, rich or poor, male or female. We have not yet found a place where our diversity doesn't polarise us, but brings us together, this is the work that still needs to be done. We need to re- connect to our African heritage and belief in Ubuntu, a deeply spiritual belief that recognises "that I am....., because you are". We still need to find in ourselves that deep sense that our connectedness to each other is an important aspect of being South African.

Furthermore, *Deep Democracy* has enhanced my ability to find fluidity in the midst of tensions, as opposed to becoming stuck and polarised by a view or an opinion which I may hold internally or externally. I recognise with hindsight that I made no space for differing views and opinions any more than the most ardent of racists in my country. I spend years stuck in a particularly one-dimensional mind-set i.e. I identified as a feminist revolutionary and nothing else. I couldn't identify with being radically political and being spiritual, because conceptually they seemed incongruous. Similarly, I also boxed others into a one dimensional space; I identified my mother as rigidly religious, my father as drunk and my sister as disengaged. These were the only dimensions I was willing to see in myself and in them. I marginalised anything and everything that didn't fit into these key roles. From my perspective, my father couldn't be both drunk and gentle; my mom couldn't be both religious and caring, because I needed to constrain them into being one key role which was both static and unchangeable over time.

It has been the practice of *Deep Democracy* that has given me the skill and the attitude to embrace greater fluidity in myself and in others. *Deep Democracy* encourages me to hold many views and opinions about myself and the world at the same time even when those views and opinions are contrary to each other. Unlike in normal consensus reality,

where I feel obliged to be one sided, even polarised, *Deep Democracy* encourages me to move from one side to another and experience myself even for a moment, moving more fluidly between various roles and positions which I might hold. This ability to move between roles and views allows me access to undiscovered parts of myself and others. Practising fluidity has been a difficult journey and I've often struggled along this path, but practising outer fluidity has helped me grow my inner fluidity and now, I embrace many more aspects of myself than I ever dreamed possible. This method and approach provides me with mechanisms and tools that allow me to drop my rigid sense of "self" and in so doing develop a more multifaceted identity.

From a theoretical perspective, *Deep Democracy* is not only a socio-political method for addressing conflict, but is also deeply committed to both a spiritual and a psychological awareness. It allows individuals caught in the grip of social tensions to continue to connect with their broader transcendent realities; i.e. the bigger thing that connects us to our overall humanity (Diamond & Spark Jones, 2004). Precisely because *Deep Democracy* supports this spiritual and a psychological awareness, I have found it possible to bring my extended family back together again despite the pain of our past. After thirty years of separation, anger and recriminations I have successfully created the space in my heart and in my home to welcome my cousins back together and to share my life with them more deeply. I have sat with them for hours just to hear their stories and feel their pain and sadness about their choices during Apartheid. I now know that the choices made were deeply regretted and that all of us were equally torn apart emotionally and psychologically by the system. This means that I can now see myself and my family members as more than just individuals with opinions and views that I agreed or disagreed with. I can see them as wonderful, warm, amazing people whom I love and want to connect with, regardless of our racial differences, political opinions or life choices. I also know that *Deep Democracy* does not guarantee permanent solutions to our conflicts and dramas, but that it provides us with the opportunity

to bring our conflicts and the conflicts of others to awareness, so that we can grow and learn and change the way we interact in the world.

My practice then is to remember that *Deep Democracy* allows all views a special place in my head and in my heart, but also in my country. I know that if I use my awareness. I am amazed at how beneficial it can be in teaching me about myself in the world. *Deep Democracy* as an “attitude” encourages me to build my diversity muscle so that I can listen, learn, integrate and accept all experiences, both mine and others more congruently. As a “tool” it has allowed me the fluidity to explore the many contradictions and diversities in my family and in myself, resulting in a burgeoning of parts that I never knew existed before. The spirit of *Deep Democracy* allows me to embody more than a purely binary approach to life, love, family and the world. It has given me what no other lens could give me; the ability to hold a multifaceted identity and opposing views inside me and allow others to do the same, while finding deep comfort and respect for all of them.

### **Process Work and Addictions**

The second Process Work area that I wish to focus on relates to Process Work and Addictions. I want to deal with this dimension of Process Work very specifically because its philosophy and approach has helped me to understand my father’s addictions and the impact it has had on me.

My particular frame of reference around addictions has come from the universally well-known programme called Alcoholic Anonymous (AA). At a young age, my mother introduced my sister and I to AA. We attended Alateen as teenagers and I continued on this journey and attended Adult Children of Alcoholics (ACA) as an adult. I grew up understanding alcoholism to be a progressive disease which required the addict to acknowledge, own up to, and give up control over, his addictions in order to recover and survive. In order to achieve this goal, the addict needed to “work” the twelve step programme

for alcoholics and use it as a mechanism to get control over their lives. Over the years I have also witnessed alternative treatment programmes including anti-booze medication, rehabilitation treatment centres and cold turkey quitting. Various therapies discuss addictions in the context of genetic predispositions, cultural biases and psychological weaknesses. These theories sometimes resonated with me and sometimes provided explanations that were adequate albeit insufficient.

I was more inclined to believe that my father was psychologically weak and emotionally immature and susceptible to being influenced by his friends to misbehave. Secretly, I believed that he enjoyed his drinking so much that he didn't want to stop and that we were not important enough to make him want to stop. I was often consumed by both pity and revulsion at his addiction, believing that he lacked both the strength and the will to pull himself together and clean up his act. It was with this mind-set that I entered Process Work.

Understanding and embracing Process Work theory in relation to addictions resonates with me in many ways. When I think about my father in relation to this theory, I am struck by a number of potentially relevant connections.

### **Addictions as Messages**

Mindell (1990) describes addictions as incomplete states; he says they are attempts to create an altered state of consciousness that convey a specific message. He also claims that addictive *tendencies* are normal and that we all have them (Mindell, 1990). He suggests that we get addicted to those parts of our personality that we have disavowed or which we are shy about integrating into our everyday existence. The addiction tries to give us access to that part of ourselves that we disavow unconsciously. In other words, if you have an addiction, you are addicted to a part of yourself that you need desperately. Process Work also holds that addictions may be understood as partially experienced experiences. That

means that we have experienced things but we haven't experienced them consciously or even fully, and we have not used the experience for what it is meant to be (Mindell, 1990).

Interestingly, this resonates with me, because my father identified himself as being a gentle, generous and kind man in everyday reality. This was also a widely held belief among both his friends and our family. He worked hard, provided for and supported his family's every whim. He never said no to any of us, and was happy to circumvent his own desires and needs to meet ours. However, under the influence of alcohol his disavowed traits would often emerge and he would become rebellious, stubborn, authoritative, moody and unkind. The more alcohol he consumed, the more he would rant and rave, throw the food on the floor, sulk for hours, and be sarcastic and mean. These disavowed parts were also more powerful and more forceful. Potentially this may indicate that under the influence of alcohol my father could pick up his own power in the family and be heard, acknowledged and appreciated. However, I can also see now that the partial experience of being powerful and in charge was never entirely experienced by my dad, either because it became lost in the haze of alcohol, or because he experienced such utter and complete guilt and regret in the morning that he would skulk off in humiliation and sadness. It's possible that he may have been grappling with many unconscious messages; however, his drunkenness seemed to want him to show up more powerfully in his family, only he wasn't aware of the message.

This theory goes on to suggest that these potentially purposeful behaviours of the addict can be seen as an addict's search for experiences which are missing in their everyday life. The idea is born from the premise that altered states, i.e. drunkenness, carry unconscious messages for the addict, that want to be lived and integrated into the person's everyday life. Mindell's Process Work views this common need that people have for accessing altered states as a drive toward transformation, and as an unconscious attempt at wholeness. In other words, alcohol and other substances allow us to dream while we are awake (Mindell, 1990).

In relation to my father I can see his drive towards transformation and wholeness. I take this to mean that my father needed to have a more deeply democratic internal process whereby all his parts, gentle and mean, kind and selfish, compliant and rebellious could find a home. All his parts needed to be appreciated and given space to grow and emerge more congruently. This approach would have required my father to be kinder to himself and accept and acknowledge those parts of his personality which I think he associated negatively with my grandfather's violent and mean behaviour. Instead he disavowed these traits as being not part of him, even though they were central to his wholeness. It is clear that he needed them desperately, so they would take over when he was drunk and leak out in a toxic and hurtful manner. Therefore, he used alcohol as a vehicle to access his wholeness, but could never really integrate it purposefully and intentionally into his life.

According to Dworkin (2004) many of us do not have sufficiently developed relationships with the dreaming aspects of our life. She postulates that this creates depression, and causes us to seek substances which bring release or relief. Furthermore, at an early age we are taught to ignore internal signals, hurts, loves, fantasies, body feelings, we marginalize or dismiss altered states and dreaming experiences in our everyday lives and it's through substances and particular behaviours that we can regain access to these states. Western society has many negative assumptions about addictions, including that they are signs of the individual's weakness or lack of self-control. It supports the creation of pathologies in terms of the addict's life and generally judges the addiction as wrong. However, says Dworkin, Process Work recognises that we are all addicted to our wholeness and that addictions' are sometimes an attempt at healing ourselves. As a result of this approach, Process Work doesn't pathologize addicts. Instead, addiction is seen as an effort by the addict to relate to parts of themselves which the sober lifestyle excludes, that addicts cannot access and use deliberately (Dworkin, 2004).

In support of Dworkin's view which relates to the addict attempting to heal themselves, my father's life story was fraught with pain, neglect, abuse and trauma as was his father's before him. Neither man had the skills, opportunity or ability to process these pains and hurts, disappointments and fears except through the process of self-medicating with alcohol. I can see how my father's use of alcohol would have started as a balm to soothe him into a dreamy state, where the impact of the alcohol would diminish the pain of his past for a short period of time. What has become much clearer to me during the writing of this paper is that my father and his brothers never speak of their parents; they expressly refuse to share any morsel of information about them and their lives. This then makes me wonder about my father's experiences of pain and trauma and makes me understand a little his desperate need to heal himself.

Lastly, Process Work as far as I know is unique in that it draws an important connection between the individual, the social and the political dimensions of addictions. This means that the so-called identified patient or addict often mirrors disowned aspects of the family and society at large. It is not uncommon, says Dworkin, for someone at the bottom of the social hierarchy to take substances, in part because the society denies them access to the altered state which the substance brings.

Apartheid, poor education, racism and material instability were all hallmarks of my father's experiences throughout his life. He, like millions of other men of colour, were relegated to the doldrums of South Africa's history. There were no opportunities for advancement, enjoyment or personal fulfilment in his life. His very existence was gloomy, tedious and fraught with trials and tribulations of a social, political and material kind. Alcohol addiction was very common in my neighbourhood, he was no exception, and in fact he was the norm. My father no doubt would have felt the same level of social alienation, lack of power and general inadequacy as all the other men who were treated like children and made to bow to the whims of white men. He was powerless to protect himself or his family from

arbitrary acts of harm inflicted on him by the state and the Apartheid system. This feeling of dissociation must have been further exacerbated by the racial split between my father's siblings under Apartheid, a further indication to him, I am certain, that he was neither wanted nor valued either by his family or by his society.

This particular theory has resonated with me and brought me tremendous comfort and spaciousness in the wake of my father's death. It has provided me with a whole new lens through which to view the world at large, addicts specifically and my father in particular. I have gained a clearer perspective on my father's addictions and have embraced to some extent the fact that he was indeed a man on a journey to discover and heal himself from his past. I see that he struggled valiantly to access his disavowed parts but could never quite bring them congruently into his life without the use of alcohol. He was also a man in pain who had no access to or knowledge of a pain medication that could ease his strife in a way that didn't obliterate him and his family. But lastly he was also part of the political and social wasteland of Apartheid, in his own way a victim of its inhumanity and its addiction to power.

### **Internalised Oppression**

The third and final concept that I would like to focus on relates to the concept of Internalised Oppression. In sociology and psychology, internalized oppression is the manner in which an oppressed group comes to use against itself the methods of the oppressor. For example, sometimes members of marginalized groups hold an oppressive view toward their own group, or start to believe in negative stereotypes of themselves. For example, internalized racism is when members of Group A believe that the stereotypes of Group A are true and may believe that they are less intelligent or academically inferior to other groups of people. Internalized oppression theory tells us that the members of the marginalized group use these behaviours as a defence mechanism against otherwise unbearable cognitive

dissonance. Thus, we cannot expect those marginalized people to "step out from behind their masks" unless they feel safe in doing so (Lipsky, 1994).

According to Mindell (2007), members of marginalised groups internalise a sense of marginalisation which they pick up from the mainstream. We see this when the immediate effects of oppression and the abuse of power are not only external but internal as well. In other words, the attitudes of the mainstream are so well espoused within the culture that the oppressed believe them to be true. Marginalized groups then internalize negative stereotypes about themselves as part of their own belief system. This results in marginalized groups accepting and replicating the propaganda of the mainstream internally. Mindell says marginalized groups are not aware of this phenomenon of internalized oppression so they readily perpetuate it in their group (Mindell, 2007).

Internalised oppression is not specifically a Process Work invention or term, but a concept widely recognised and incorporated into its thinking. Based on the story of my country and my family, I have come to understand how I, and members of my family, internalised our oppression - both as people of colour, and as a minority race group. As a family we have always recognised and acknowledged our white German heritage as if it has been the more honoured, more important and the more dominant heritage, from a racial and cultural perspective. We have rarely acknowledged our dark skinned roots, our possible slave ancestry and our mixed race grandmothers who could have been descendents of Africans a few generations before. It is this sense of white superiority that has guided both our attitudes and behaviours as a family. In our collective consciousness we do not have an African blood line and this has always set us apart from our African countrymen, resulting in my family's prevalent racist attitudes towards black people. Our black roots, though diluted through generations of mixed relationships, is largely ignored and disregarded as un-noteworthy. This cultural and racial bias towards our white lineage was evident in the way we were raised. Despite growing up in rather dismal township conditions, my sister and I

were made to attend ballet classes, taught to read poetry, trained in the art of good table manners and etiquette and harangued into being “ladies”. This form of awareness of our social status was driven home to us repeatedly. I was made to understand what kind of behaviour was acceptable in our family, and what was considered “common or ghetto” behaviour. We were constantly reminded that we were civilised ladies who behaved with style and decorum, never letting down our guard and never behaving like “Bushmen”, a derogatory term for coloureds. We were never permitted to drink or smoke publically, wear revealing clothes, colour our hair, or use bad language. Instead, we went to church, were immaculately groomed and spoke eloquently without using colloquial vocabulary or swearing. We were not “common coloureds” by any stretch of the imagination; in fact we were *raised as whites with darker skins*.

Mohammed Adhikari says Coloureds have internalised white perceptions about Coloured identity, which has always been framed around inherent laziness, drunkenness and immorality, where Coloureds need control and direction from white people to enable them to live tolerably fulfilled lives. He perceives that Coloureds have not yet embraced a more progressionist paradigm which promotes “personal freedom”, “interracial cooperation” and “merit” as part of who Coloureds are and want to be (Adhikari, 2005).

When I look at my father and my broader community it is difficult to deny that this perception and stereotype of the “drunken coloured” applies so widely to my people. My father, my uncles, my male teachers and many coloured men appear unable to break through the barriers that have been set up psychologically against them. Many are immobilised by their internal sense of worthlessness and lack of merit, resulting in large portions of Coloured communities and families plagued by substance abuse, unemployment, illiteracy and gangsterism, all of which are symbols of their internalised oppression.

Similarly, my mother supported the mainstream position against the typical behaviour of coloureds who misbehaved like hooligans. She viewed ‘standard’ coloured behaviour as

negative and unacceptable for her children: again an interesting internalisation of the negative stereotype on our people. My foray into politics was within the adopted identity of an African woman, not a Coloured one. Inadvertently, I too had internalised all the negative perceptions about Coloureds, especially their politics. I violently rejected Coloureds who supported Coloured admission into parliament. I would not be associated with racist political conservatism, backward class consciousness or sectarian practices. I wanted to be part of the African working class and affiliated to African politics build in the traditions of the African National Congress of Nelson Mandela and Oliver Tambo. In the 1980's, I cast off my Coloured identity and denied both my heritage and my racial lineage, because being Coloured was something to be scorned and negated - just like we were taught to do, by white people.

Furthermore, Process Work also recognises that in society in general, the more popular voices in the field dominate the less popular voices. Marginalised individuals do not feel cared for when this happens and they often feel resentful of the decisions that are made by the mainstream (Schuitevoerder, 2000).

From this perspective, South Africa has also been the cultural landscape of my learning about being marginalised and oppressed. The country, its leaders, the churches, the state institutions - they were all built with the express purpose of oppressing people and marginalising voices and opinions by not giving them a space or a place to engage and grow. As a family we were intimately bound to the experience of the country and could not escape its realities, mainly because the mainstream had established systems to ensure compliance, but also because we learned to believe in the system of Apartheid in its guise of '*Separate Development*'. This process of extreme systemic oppression impacted the psyche of many family units including mine, allowing alienating patterns of behaviour to emerge and take root.

I recognise now the extent to which my family perpetuated Apartheid's philosophies and practices in our everyday behaviour with each other and with our extended family. There was no space or place in my family for differing views and opinions or feelings about politics, race or religion. For the most part, my parents had internalised our oppression to such an extent that we were willing to divide our family by race, supporting the rejection of the "white" family. My parents, albeit unconsciously, internalised the negative stereotypes about Coloureds and Africans and in so doing we clung only to our white heritage. They also supported the State in its violence against black people, by not fighting the system and in their silence complying with its philosophy against our own people.

Fortunately, post 1994, a new debate has come to light and settled more comfortably, on seeing Coloured identity as something that is not so much given to us by white people, but as something that is under continuous construction. This re-construction is largely due to a complex interplay of social systems, history, culture, politics and geography. Adhikari supports seeing Coloured identity, as a direct result of being a racial minority of relative privilege with an uncertain future in the racial hierarchy (Adhikari, 2009).

This idea has gained momentum since the birth of our democracy partly because African culture, language and preference have entered the national agenda with so much fervour that "colouredness" has again been marginalised and negated. Learning about and understanding internalised oppression from Mindell's viewpoint, I have started to understand my deeply rooted sense of inferiority, as well as the agonising process that I will need to undertake to deal with its perpetual presence in my life. I have many moments when I can identify myself both as separate and unique and want to be seen and heard as such, but as many moments of feeling worthless and inadequate. Like Erasmus, for the most part, I support and embrace my multi layered identity and draw a keen distinction between my black Political self as opposed to my Coloured social self. I am both of these things. I too acknowledge that my identity has been shaped and shifted by a violent history of

colonialism, slavery and Apartheid. I choose to add to this mixed history the concepts of hybridity and creolisation that now reflect the richness of my Coloured history and my identity (Erasmus, 2001). I have started to cast off many of the negative stereotypes associated with my identity, and am learning to embrace the many parts of myself that are positive and worthy of recognition. However, it's a long and treacherous road, and some days a harsh word, a snide remark, an unkind gesture shatters my confidence and I feel like a failure, unworthy of recognition or reward, feeling useless and worthless, frustrated and sad, reminded of my unworthy roots.

It has been my Process Work lens that has provided me with a perspective that can appreciate all these disparate parts of me. I have started on a long journey and drawn into myself my country's difficult history, from slavery to democracy, and I know that these events have shaped who I am and what I believe. I have looked inside myself and I have found both the German and the San, the free man and the slave, the black person and the white person. I see in myself all their good and all their bad: all the richness and the diversity which they represent individually and collectively and I wrap them up inside of me knowing that they are all part of who I am.

## Epilogue

### Making Amends

It is this new discourse which has allowed me both the courage and the will to re-integrate those parts of me which I marginalised while I was growing up. After 30 years of painful separation within the family, long harboured guilt and anger and significant amounts of “water under the bridge” I decided to hold a massive family reunion, inviting all the cousins and the remaining aunts and uncles to get together and share our stories.

This idea was precipitated by the death of my mother who had been battling with breast cancer for almost five years. Her final gift to me in death was that the very cousin who had caused the initial rift in the family, called me both to sympathise and to ask if she could please attend my mother’s funeral. In that moment, I knew that my mothers’ death had provided us with an amazing opportunity for reconciliation. I agreed with both joy and wonder.

In a way it was the first step towards our own Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Being the youngest of 40 cousins this was no easy task. Of course, there was some resistance, some absolute refusals but mostly there was joy and there was hope. For the most part the cousins were more than ready to put the past behind us and reconnect without too much recrimination. It was a spectacular and joyous occasion for me, but I recognised that for some of the older family members there was much pain and sorrow attached to the event. I met family members whom I hadn’t seen since childhood. Suddenly and inexplicably I felt a profound sense of personal wholeness, as if I had at last found the missing parts of me. I am also profoundly aware that integrating the marginalised parts of me was not only personal, it was happening in the family as well.

It's been a short journey of discovery filled with much joy and sadness, many stories and memories, but every time we get together now, which is often, we delight in our rediscovery of ourselves in each other and we notice how, despite the choices made by our parents and the state, our connection to each other remains strong and deep. We've used our opportunities together to seek explanations, make apologies, share tears and ensure forgiveness. Now we congruently seek our togetherness, our similarness and our connectedness. We share our hurts and our anxieties, our pains and our disappointments and we remember with sadness the events that pulled us apart.

Personally, the process of reconnecting, forgiving and moving forward has been life changing. I have discovered that my capacity to understand and grow my levels of empathy is boundless. Every day I become more aware of my connectedness to something outside myself, to a humanity that despite being flawed and fractured is umbilically and intimately part of who I am. I now realise and am aware that, like everyone, I see the world not as it is but as I am - not so much an independent reality but a reflection of my thoughts and deeds. Sometimes it feels as if I have started on a life long journey to rediscover the world in colour and not just in shades of black and white, the beginning of true diversity. I believe that this journey will help me to learn who I am day by day, and become better than I was yesterday.

Finding my family and reconnecting with them has brought me joy and an immense feeling of belonging, a sense of being part of a tribe with shared beliefs and history, shared values and principles and a shared sense of the future. It's this future that entices me to continue to move forward and support those who still feel the anger, pain and loss of past events both in my family and in my country and to be patient and understanding of their individual paths and choices. It inspires me to tell my children our stories of joy and pain, of loss and discovery, of joy and sadness so that they too can embrace the diversity in their relationships with each other and the world.

I look at my country now with a combination of joy and sadness, and marvel at our ability to live together reasonably peacefully despite our many unresolved conflicts. I also know that when we get it right to live together here in Africa, despite our past, we will impact the world in immeasurable ways. We can make true diversity realisable, by giving others both the courage and the tenacity to stretch themselves to be bigger and better about issues of race, gender, religion, culture or sexual orientation. We, the birthplace of humanity, get to model diversity, interconnectedness and human dignity through our battles with our own psyches, our own families and our own communities every day. It's this commitment we have to struggle, to get along, sometimes under the direst circumstances, that prepares us to impact the world both individually and collectively.

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