

Racism: Poor treatment of or violence against people because of their race. A belief that race is the primary determinant of human traits and capacities and that racial differences produce an inherent superiority of a particular race.

Judgment: The ability to make considered decisions or come to sensible conclusions.

- Merriam-Webster Dictionary

Our society has made big strides regarding tolerance, and yet, racism still occurs in some way, shape or form. Most people continue to determine a person's *value* using race as an indicator as well as their appearance, economic status, religion, clothes, hair style, sexuality, job, the street they live on, whatever they can grab onto. Most people don't want to admit to valuing other races and perhaps you imagine that you are more evolved than your neighbor, somehow uniquely tolerant and color blind.

Well, maybe....

It is time we pull the sheets off the Klan member's head and knock down the crumbling house we thought would stand forever. Can we please agree to not look away from the hidden agendas of law enforcement bullies and let's stop hiding in our comfortable beds and take the covers from our eyes squeezed closed so tightly that no light comes in?

Fear mongering, violence, political polarization and racial finger pointing continue to grow like weeds in our American yards. This emotional vacuum seems to be sucking in the extreme personalities popular in politics and reality TV. As members of the human species each of us are co-conspirators in these dramas. Extremism isn't a new concept and thankfully for the last 50 plus years, education and increasing emphasis on tolerance has evolved into what is now political-correctness in all aspects of our culture. It was an important development that has elevated society towards greater respect for all people. The problem we now face is that using politically correct appropriate terms for groups or sexual orientations can sometimes reflect only surface polite behavior, not a true appreciation of a person or a group's qualities. Educating society about different sectors of our world is just the beginning. And we are at the point we seem to be worried more about not offending someone. The idea of being called a "racist" is so scary for some people that they are fearful to break out of the political correctness and explore what we truly have in common with one another.

We are ready to look at our natural instinct of judging others with fresh eyes and accept it as a valuable resource that can be used to heal our divisions, ultimately eliminating the need for political correctness. It is sort of a super power we have yet to appreciate.

At this point, let me be very clear, this shift in perspective is in NO WAY an excuse for people who crave some rationalization for their intolerance, that would be an evil perversion of this truth. This is an honest appraisal of how you and I function within a societal structure and it is time to shift away from political correctness towards an authentic relationship with one another. Each of us has specific qualities that through customs, ethnicity and personality claims our own little spot on the Earth and those qualities should be celebrated, not used to diminish a person's power.

For billions of years the Earth's vast intelligence and chaotic beginnings perfected mutually beneficial ecosystems from which we humans erupted. We evolved by living OFF the Earth as we are made OF the Earth, all of us, plants and animals alike, only different combinations of the same elements. And miraculously we humans developed judgment and our physical senses to keep us safe from predators and danger. According to genetic and fossil evidence, Homo sapiens evolved to modern humans leaving Africa 60,000 years ago and over time replacing earlier human populations such as *Neanderthals* and *Homo Erectus*. Over this gigantic span of time, although short in Earth years, our modern DNA is amazingly still 99.5% the same as the Neanderthals. In fact humans continue to be 99.9% alike today. Our brains have grown in size allowing us to conquer nature, invent language and establish civilized societies but evolutionary speaking, we have developed only slightly past our ancestral cave man instincts to protect our tribe. The proof is on the nightly news. Happily we are at the point that civil discourse is the norm, not rocks and clubs, and we have developed strategies to work together more often to resolve our differences, yet the DNA of our ancestors remains rooted in us. Triggered to be cautious of someone that has unique features, clothing or cultural mannerisms, we may even invent scenarios and whole organizations, to conspire with our beliefs and manage the "outsiders".

Unfortunately humans can do stupid vicious things and some of these things are dripping with the blood of others. Sadly, power and egos can pervert even ethical goals. Unlimited power from any source can be like a wild animal, it wants what it wants to satisfy its urges. Throughout history that sort of wild physical drive overrides our mutual bond of compassion, tolerance and communal needs. I personally have witnessed people who are triggered by the fear of the unknown and their reactions turn to the defensive, leading to anger, and violence.

My experience at Tumbleweed, an organization that serves homeless youths 12-25, assisting with housing, food, jobs, case management, education, social skills and other resources enlightened my view of "outsiders". Most or all of these young men and women were either kicked out or ran away from neglectful, dysfunctional, addiction laden and abusive homes. A huge proportion (38%) identify as part of the LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual, Transgender) community. I volunteered for 2 years doing art projects, coaching them through relationship crises, doing writing projects, and making small items to take on the road. Most had had little guidance and were in survival mode. It sometimes took weeks and months for reluctant clients to address me, let alone work on a project. Vulnerability was threatening to them. I felt close to several of the many clients but due to the nature of their transient lives, I couldn't know if I would ever see them again, that's why I made my time with them as impactful as they allowed it to be. I planned projects that they could make in less than an hour, something tangible that they could take in their bag since they had so little.

Frankly I had little experience up until then with a great variety of races and cultures. I was not completely isolated however and enjoyed a diverse group of friends but this intense "urban" environment was a new one for me. My time there exposed me to a wide array of personalities and orientations and I was impressed at how very unique everyone that visited the center was. Being a bit self-conscious, their perception of me was a persistent question. Why did they think I was there? How could their stability be improved from someone that they couldn't relate to? What they had seen and done I felt inadequate at times to fully comprehend and how different our lives have been. I "assumed" they saw me as this bored middle aged lady who is nice and does art stuff. Were they using my good intentions to ridicule me? I was

judging my motives and theirs. How could they trust me so I might be effective? My insecurities kept me from opening up too much, and I didn't want to look foolish either, my vulnerability you know.

One day near the beginning of my time there "Dominique" a transsexual African American client and I had a nice rapport going and we were talking make up and other fun girl topics. The mood was very relaxed in the little quiet room where we sat alone. After some time, a lightness of energy occurred in which the both of us were instantly flooded with the awareness that we have the same issues, dry skin, men and decorating our clothes and the clear reality of our many similarities was comical, we laughed in complete agreement. In a flash, our eyes met and I saw her physical body fade and her Soul became very clearly visible, there was no boundaries between us. I felt her pure heart touching my Soul easily and naturally. We were different in our physical appearance but ONE connected being. For just a brief moment it was a profound epiphany. Years of assumptions about race, cultural differences and sexual orientation that make us separate faded. The physical appearance is simply the personality emerging from its desire to be seen as a fragment of the ONE. We are essentially each a piece of the same cosmic pie. I saw myself in her eyes as she shared ideas and worries. It was exactly what my other girlfriends would share but with different players, scenarios and phrases.

I figured out in that moment all the drama about racial differences does exist but is just a convincing illusion we've created over the millennia to manage our fears of separation. Every other human is looking for the same thing, to love and be loved, to have a comfortable home and to feel they matter. Suddenly I was free, I let go of MY own fears of being liked and judged by the clients. It didn't matter if I looked different, I was them.

Simply put we each are here, searching to return to our Divine Source (God) and the fear of separation creates the illusion we will be separate forever. We act out so we can survive the pain of losing the deepest love of all, each other and abandoning that part of our Soul. My new perspective helped me understand that instead of reacting to my fear of abandonment and by accepting we are ONE, there was a new space in me to be okay with my whole imperfect self. I relaxed and was free to say what I felt without self-editing. From that point forward I had no problem trusting the clients as other humans who were mirroring me back to myself and I to them. They could see the potential of themselves in me. I bounced their potential back to them freely. If I touched their Soul as mine was touched I knew Gods' Grace was showing up for us both.

I am sharing my own fears and embarrassing assumptions because I know I am not alone. I am pretty sure there are lots of people scared to speak up and admit they don't know how to act or respond to certain situations or with people, who are different from them. I know our similarities are greater than our differences. I argue that hope is here right now and we have had the solution all the time.

Of course we are separate in physical form but our Souls embody tiny fragments of light, woven together with our fellow humans in such a way that's beyond our understanding just yet. This unified field of energy is ONE body and the Earth and this ONE body are linked physically, energetically and elementally; rooted in the same celestial soil. We are tuned into one another on some level our physical animal self may not be aware of. Since we are tuned into one another, toxic thoughts can contaminate the whole body of ONE through each of us as individuals. It's vital we act with compassion, or our group consciousness can easily revert to its

brutal habits of the animal in us. Sharing pride in another's well being, actively participating in a compassionate appraisal of your neighbors character and their attempts to understand us, can have a miraculous benefit of simultaneously raising up everyone. That annoying stranger that your eyes have been avoiding is simply you with different memories and skin. Denying our awareness exists and staying in bed or behind walls will not erase what we know is the eternal truth in ourselves. It will only give us false pride that we have somehow conquered our human flaws of racism and discrimination.

The enormous benefit of letting go of the old paradigm is the massive potential of change. If we are willing to recognize and admit openly that our involuntary judging of others is an ancient instinctual behavior and not necessarily a bad thing, we can observe situations neutrally, ask questions and easily find similarities between our "different" lives encouraging a trust to grow. By addressing our assumptions about our fellow humans out loud with one another we can take away the lingering fear of looking foolish. The more we are willing to share and answer the "whys" and "help me understand" we can be free to release the shame of racial awareness as a secret character flaw we are trying to shake. We can view it with wiser eyes directing our super power to its highest possible use for humanity, to join forces as ONE. With a freshly shaped trust, we are free to express our concerns, fears and curiosity openly and candidly to each other, as a part of an "us," not with assumptions or stereotypes. This perspective opens our hearts to evolve beyond the nervous silence of political correctness towards human brotherhood.

Whether you have been a victim of racism or prejudice directly, or remember a time that you felt completely powerless, surviving beyond danger becomes all consuming. Consider the deep feelings of fear and anxiety that override any sort of empathy you might have had for the other person. At some point you may begin to adjust your actions to avoid them or the situation from happening again. It's very understandable to feel frightened, defenseless and vulnerable. So you figure a way to not speak publicly, limit your goals to something safer, hide, take a different route, plan revenge, or whatever applies to you.

I suggest that if you encounter these scary, infuriating people, and they come in all shapes and descriptions, that THEY are piece of light from the great ONENESS reflecting your Soul back to you. That may be hard to imagine but in fact they are teaching ALL of us, *through* you, what we as a whole are capable of if we shun awareness of our personal responsibility. If you run into this person, ask yourself: What part of me, needs some attention because obviously someone is showing me a viewpoint that I cannot or won't admit to in my life. Do I appreciate my uniqueness as much as I could? Stop and ask yourself why they are your teacher.

Of course when you make big changes such as this, our fearful parts may get triggered and we can react using old labels instead of judging the situation neutrally. So fellow humans I propose that if you decide the quality of a person on anything but their character or heart, then you are judging yourself on those things. Racial disparities or discrimination are showing up in your life as these situations, people and events for you to confront, for all of us to confront through you. Fortunately hope is waiting patiently within each of us, with the possibilities to share our God given potential of pure love. It will emerge out of the chaos of our physical fears, just as the Earth has proven to be our provider and from which we humans have emerged.

Please accept your own uniqueness and individuality as a blessing. Trust we are part of each person's experience on Earth. This is the key to Love. The Divine Source (God) is working in and through us. When you encounter someone different in some way shape or form go ahead relax, all is well. If you are willing to please smile or start a conversation. We are ONE regardless of where we live, dress, speak or act. It just is. So I ask you to love your fellow human as yourself and be filled with the relief that you are helping *yourself* be happy. I suggest that the more everyone realizes its safe to talk openly about our uniqueness we will find similarities. As we allow strangers to be curious about us and actually ask us why we do this or that we can finally transition out of the negative perception of judging and use it for genuine tolerance. We can go from assuming things about appearances to a curious appreciation, ultimately transforming our society from fear based to unity based. Wouldn't it be nice to be rid of our habitual awkward silences in stores and on the streets for some open conversations? The more you give thanks for yourself and your beautiful Soul with all its uniqueness and imperfections you make yourself whole. This healing will ultimately affect us all, easily creating a world of refreshing honesty and equality beyond our wildest dreams.

Finally, laughing has a way of lightening up even the most troubled situations so let's find humor at how similar and skilled we are at assuming differences. Let's laugh at the beauty of how each human being is uniquely gifted for something special. Let's all stand together in eager anticipation as each light (human being) of the ONE discovers what that special gift is so we can cheer them on and share in their excitement. And here's hoping that in the not too distant future, we can have a good long laugh at how long it took for us to realize these facts.

HUMAN RULES TO LIVE BY

1. Courageously Love other humans as you love yourself
2. Love the Earth as you love yourself,
3. Lift the weak and Defend those who act from Love
4. Trust and Respect others as they are a part of Divine Source like you
5. Discover your enemies' positive attributes and Forgive Hurts.
6. Be Moral and Ethical in ALL you do
7. *Admit to* and *Act on* positive thoughts about yourself
8. Do your very best to remove *your* unhealthy habits, thoughts, and deeds with courage and compassion
9. Laugh at your own suffering, embrace the lessons in it. We live a short time.
10. Accept that change is a constant of life and adjust your expectations

Your neighbor is your other self dwelling behind a wall. In understanding, all walls shall fall down. Who knows but that your neighbor is your better self wearing another body? See that you love him as you would yourself. He too is a manifestation of the Most High.

- Kahlil Gibran