



RHODES SCHOLARSHIP

First Year Retreat

Rhodes House

Hilary 2019

**'No one way
to lead'**

Home – Shadow and Light

Justice – Lived and Applied

No One Way to Lead – Recreate and Create

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Saturday

Session 1:

**Listening to our
stories**

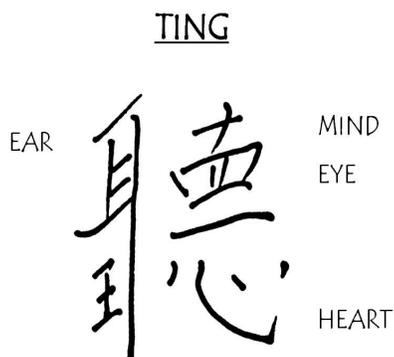
How Well Do You Listen?

September 8, 2014

With recent world events such as the uprisings in Ferguson, Missouri, the wars in Gaza, the Ukraine, and Syria, or tensions between Washington and Moscow, I'm reminded of the important need to have intercultural skills. Alas, it may be unrealistic to hope that fostering intercultural understanding can solve the world's problems. Nonetheless, engaging others and listening intently to their perspectives can be one effective means to avoid miscommunication, misinterpretation, and mistrust and find common ground and solutions.

Have you noticed lately what happens when you take the time to really listen to another person? Active listening is a simple and valuable tool that can help you prosper in the global workplace. Too frequently I hear clients complain about having to "deal with" their culturally-diverse colleagues. I am always heartened, however, when I hear of people who embrace their cross-cultural interactions, despite the additional challenges that language, accents and virtual communication may present. For example, during a recent workshop, a participant recounted how his cross-cultural team (based in three countries) has thrived while his colleagues in the training looked on incredulously. I asked him what his key to success was and he simply said, "I listened to them."

Such an uncomplicated concept that is often under-utilized in the fast-paced, high-pressured, multi-tasking environments in which we frequently work. The Chinese word for listening, TING, offers a useful framework for effective listening across cultures. Its written character illustrates four main components of listening with the ears, the mind, the eyes and the heart.



- **Ears** encourage us to be hear the spoken word, the tone and other paralanguage fillers
- **Mind** allows us to synthesize the information we hear, analyze it and determine how we interpret the message
- **Eyes** provide the means to observe non-verbal messages
- **Heart** helps us connect on an emotional level to foster empathy

Low-context communicators, prevalent in the U.S., tend to focus on concise, straightforward messages conducive to the fast-paced lives many Americans lead. Yet this style of communicating can work against us when interacting with high-context communication styles, prevalent in most cultures around the world. TING is a great example of how high context communicators use multiple channels when giving and receiving messages. Below are some tips for enhancing communication and listening skills.

- Focus on the person(s) with whom you're communicating. The more you are distracted by your Smartphone or other environmental factors (especially during a conference call), the more you will miss what is being said.
- Beware of different meanings of non-verbal cues. For example, somebody nodding their head may not necessarily be agreeing with what you're saying but rather demonstrating his or her attentiveness.
- Consider non-verbal communication from another person's cultural norms instead of applying your own culture's interpretation of the message. For example, indirect eye contact may be a sign of respect or deference as opposed to inattentiveness or boredom.
- Be aware of your personal filters, biases, and assumptions and acknowledge how they may distort what you hear.
- Be sure to reflect back by paraphrasing what you heard, asking clarifying questions and summarizing the speaker's comments based on your interpretation.
- Avoid making quick judgments or assumptions and allow the speaker to finish what s/he was saying without interruption
- Respond to what you hear by demonstrating curiosity, candidness and respect for the speaker's opinions.
- Validate what you heard. This will encourage the speaker to be more open and confident about conveying his/her message, particularly if limited language ability or heavy accents are an issue.

While cross-cultural communication involves patience and resourcefulness, being mindful of how well you are listening is an important tactic to enhance it in any environment.

Voices from Home

Robert Penn Warren (Kentucky and New College, 1928)

“A man goes away from his home and it is in him to do it. He lies in strange beds in the dark, and the wind is different in the trees. He walks in the street and there are the faces in front of his eyes, but there are no names for the faces. The voices he hears are not the voices he carried away in his ears a long time back when he went away. The voices he hears are loud. They are so loud he does not hear for a long time at a stretch those voices he carried away in his ears. But there comes a minute when it is quiet and he can hear those voices he carried away in his ears a long time back. He can make out what they say, and they say: Come back. They say: Come back, boy. So he comes back.”

- Robert Penn Warren, *All the King's Men* (London: Harcourt Brace and Company, 1994), p. 11.

Why I'm Moving Back to South Africa

Award-winning journalist **Jonny Steinberg** on the man who inspired him to write his new book, *A Man of Good Hope*, as well as return to his home country

I am not a person prone to smugness. When I say that my life is the sanest and gentlest a person in our times can hope to live, it is with gratitude, not self-satisfaction. My house is near the center of Oxford, a famously old and beautiful city, and I commute to work each morning on a bicycle alongside a quiet canal. The journey takes no more than seven minutes — eight or nine if I stop to admire the swans; I hardly remember what it is like to sit in traffic or to grind against a stranger on public transport.

I teach at Oxford University where I have a tenured job — a rare privilege in this day and age. The students are clever and hardworking, my colleagues considerate and sane, my days never less than interesting.

Work seldom ends after 7 p.m. On summer evenings, my partner and I often stroll along the Thames into Port Meadow, cross its 300 acres of ancient pasture, and eat in the village on the other side. The light in the meadow is gorgeous from May through September, turning the grass a luminous green I last saw in childhood dreams.

I have just resigned from this job and am giving up this life. In a couple of months, my partner and I will be moving to Johannesburg, South Africa, where I was born. It is a city that heaves with umbrage. “There is a daily, low-grade civil war at every stop street,” the artist, William Kentridge, [recently remarked](#). Sometimes, the war moves up a grade; many friends and family members have stared down a gun barrel over the years, and each act of violence is relived in conversation a hundred times over. It is a city where being white or well-heeled attracts some to beg from you and others to insult you, where life is so palpably unfair that the rich live in a state of astonishing denial while among the poor antipathy runs so deep that if you listen you can hear it hum.

Make no mistake: I am not going to a life of hardship. I will have another tenured job at an institute staffed by some of the smartest people I know; the work is bound to be fulfilling. Labour in South Africa being cheap, we will employ somebody to dust our furniture and polish our floors. And, yet, what we are doing goes against the grain. Between my siblings and my first

cousins, there are 11 of us in my generation and nine live abroad, all in rock-solid places like Canada and Australia. I am a Jew. My kind tends to sniff out trouble generations in advance. We like the foundations beneath our feet to run deep. While my move is by no means crazy, I am swimming in the opposite direction.

None of us understands ourselves especially well. We are dark inside and were we to light the whole place up we would go mad. My reflections on my move are no doubt riddled with self-justifications of which I'm barely aware.

There is nonetheless something for which I know I ache, and it is only to be found in my native land. When I lock eyes with a stranger on Johannesburg's streets, there is a flicker, a flash communication, so fast it is invisible, yet so laden that no words might describe it. This stranger may be a man in a coat and tie, or a woman who wears the cotton uniform of a maid, or a construction worker stripped to the waist. Whoever he is, he clocks me as I pass, and reads me and my parents and my grandparents; and I, too, conjure, in an instant, the past from which he came. As we brush shoulders the world we share rumbles around us, its echoes resounding through generations. He may look at me with resentment, or longing, or with the twistedness that comes with hating; he may catch me smiling to myself and grin. I am left with a feeling, both sweet and sore, that I am not in control of who I am. I am defined by the eyes that see me on the street. I cannot escape them. I cannot change what they see. We may one day fight one another or even kill one another, yet our souls are entwined because we have made another.

I cannot get that on Port Meadow. I can take in the washed-out light and the expanse of green and I can feel melancholy or light or get lost in private thoughts. But the people who pass are wafer thin. I cannot imagine who they are. It doesn't matter enough. There is too little at stake. I am in essence alone.

That's one way of explaining my move. There are others. Each way leads to its own conclusion.

I have spent much of the last decade and a half writing books about people with whom I might brush shoulders on South African streets and yet whose experiences are quite unlike my own. A prison gangster; a young man of peasant stock in a far-flung village; a refugee. The books I write about them are intimate. I spend a year, sometime two, following them around, watching them live their lives, coaxing from them every memory and thought they are prepared to share. I find their school teachers from years ago, their childhood friends. I hunt down every trace they have left in official

records. I read everything that has been written about the village or the neighborhood where they came of age.

And then I write their histories, and, on the coattails of their histories, I try to make sense of my inscrutable country. That is my hope, at least. I do not write fiction; I do not pretend to know what goes on in the heads of those about whom I write. But I do try to imagine, as fiercely as I can, how the world seems to them. The best way to do this, I think, is to pay attention to those moments when a person decides. To commit his first crime, for instance. Or to turn his back on the woman who has just given birth to his first child. Or to leave a city where life is good and venture into a dangerous and foreign world. The more puzzling the decision, the further one must reach in order to understand, the better. If I can get an inkling of why a person decides, I can begin, if just fleetingly, to inhabit him.

The last person about whom I wrote is a refugee from Somalia. His name is Asad Abdullahi. I found him in a shantytown on the outskirts of Cape Town, living in a tin shack with his wife and two young children. I did not intend writing about him at first, but he spoke of his past in flashes so vivid and clean that I could not stop coming back.

Asad was born in Mogadishu, the capital of Somalia, in about 1984. Civil war came when he was 7 or 8 years old and hundreds of thousands of the city's residents fled. Somewhere on the road south he lost his family; he would not lay eyes on a close relative again until he was a grown man. His childhood was mobile, lonely and unattached; he moved from one exiled Somali settlement to the other, across Kenya and much of southeastern Ethiopia. Later, I would retrace his steps in search of people who might remember him. He was a born hustler, his mind so pragmatic and quick, his relation to others so easy; by the time he was 17 he was making a good living on the streets of Addis Ababa, brokering relationships between Somali immigrants and Ethiopian businessmen.

Success brought confidence. He seduced and married a beautiful woman, stuffed his back pocket with U.S. dollars, and, without a passport or a definite plan, headed south, to Johannesburg, telling his new wife he'd call for her soon. The money was easy in South Africa, he'd heard, and if one made one's fortunes there, who knows, perhaps one could jump to America. That's the sum of what he knew.

He was right about the money. One could walk into a shanty settlement on the edge of a South African city, rent a shack cheaply, and stock it with chickens, cold drinks, cigarettes and airtime. The day you set up shop, the customers would come. If you saved, you'd soon have capital to start another business. It was a country made for entrepreneurs.

Nobody had told Asad, though, the cost of making money in South Africa. The country was seething. He was a foreigner making money under the noses of the poor, and they hated him for it. His customers all knew that his shop filled every day with cash. They also knew that were somebody to shoot him and walk off with his day's takings, the police would not be displeased.

By the time I met Asad, my country had scarred him. He had first gone into business with an uncle he found in South Africa, then with a cousin. Both had been murdered on their business premises. In his third venture, Asad was held up at gunpoint and had his head pounded repeatedly against the ground while his customers filed into his store and helped themselves to his stock.

It took me a while to understand Asad the way I do now, for I had to push through a zone of discomfort to do so. He has an enormous appetite for risk. But that is not quite right for it conjures a man calculating probabilities and then taking his chances. What Asad does is more extreme than that. Serially, throughout his life, he has left behind a world he understands and has flung himself at the unknowable. Like when he left Addis for Johannesburg without an idea of what he might find. Like when he returned again and again to set up business in South Africa's townships in the knowledge that his work there may kill him.

I came to understand that Asad was asking himself what sort of life was worth living. His answer was enormously ambitious. He was thinking 10, 20 generations ahead. He wanted to effect a revolution in his lineage, to have his descendants live lives his parents could not have imagined. He wanted generations of Abdullahis not yet born to be Americans or Europeans because he had found his way to a new continent. He wanted his few years on this Earth to count forever.

One could say that he is like my nine relatives in Canada and Australia, a person looking to put down roots in firm ground. But my relatives could emigrate in orderly fashion. They could file papers and look for work. Asad's only option is to throw himself at chance, courting death each time.

I have just given my best explanation for why I am going home. I am quite unlike Asad. My life is moored to weighty institutions like universities. I have good medical insurance. I don't take extreme risks. Yet I have imagined the world through Asad's eyes as fiercely as I can, and have thus been under the skin of a human being I am not. The importance of this experience is ineffable. It is to watch oneself from a distance and imbibe the contingency of who one is and what one feels. This is a secular incarnation of the oldest religious experience.

That is what going home means for me. It is to stand outside myself and watch my bourgeois life prodded and pushed and buffeted around by lives quite unlike my own. It is to surrender myself to a world so much bigger than I am and to the destiny of a nation I cannot control. In this surrender is an expansion, a flowering, of what it means to be alive.

Jonny Steinberg is the author of several books about everyday life in the wake of South Africa's transition to democracy. He has twice won South Africa's most prestigious literary prize, The Sunday Times Alan Paton Award, and was an inaugural winner of the Windham-Campbell Prizes for Literature awarded by Yale University. His new job in Johannesburg is at the Wits Institute for Social and Economic Research (Wiser). His latest book, [A Man of Good Hope](#), was published by Knopf in January 2015.

Source: Jonny Steinberg



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Session 2:

**Sharing Experiences
and Values**

The World as I See it

Albert Einstein

"How strange is the lot of us mortals! Each of us is here for a brief sojourn; for what purpose he knows not, though he sometimes thinks he senses it. But without deeper reflection one knows from daily life that one exists for other people -- first of all for those upon whose smiles and well-being our own happiness is wholly dependent, and then for the many, unknown to us, to whose destinies we are bound by the ties of sympathy. A hundred times every day I remind myself that my inner and outer life are based on the labors of other men, living and dead, and that I must exert myself in order to give in the same measure as I have received and am still receiving..."

"I have never looked upon ease and happiness as ends in themselves -- this critical basis I call the ideal of a pigsty. The ideals that have lighted my way, and time after time have given me new courage to face life cheerfully, have been Kindness, Beauty, and Truth. Without the sense of kinship with men of like mind, without the occupation with the objective world, the eternally unattainable in the field of art and scientific endeavors, life would have seemed empty to me. The trite objects of human efforts -- possessions, outward success, luxury -- have always seemed to me contemptible.

"My passionate sense of social justice and social responsibility has always contrasted oddly with my pronounced lack of need for direct contact with other human beings and human communities. I am truly a 'lone traveler' and have never belonged to my country, my home, my friends, or even my immediate family, with my whole heart; in the face of all these ties, I have never lost a sense of distance and a need for solitude..."

"My political ideal is democracy. Let every man be respected as an individual and no man idolized. It is an irony of fate that I myself have been the recipient of excessive admiration and reverence from my fellow-beings, through no fault, and no merit, of my own. The cause of this may well be the desire, unattainable for many, to understand the few ideas to which I have with my feeble powers attained through ceaseless struggle. I am quite aware that for any organization to reach its goals, one man must do the thinking and directing and generally bear the responsibility. But the led must not be coerced, they must be able to choose their leader. In my opinion, an autocratic system of coercion soon degenerates; force attracts men of low morality... The really valuable thing in the pageant of human life seems to me not the political state, but the creative, sentient individual, the personality; it alone creates the noble and the sublime, while the herd as such remains dull in thought and dull in feeling.

"This topic brings me to that worst outcrop of herd life, the military system, which I abhor... This plague-spot of civilization ought to be abolished with all possible speed. Heroism on command, senseless violence, and all the loathsome nonsense that goes by the name of patriotism -- how passionately I hate them!

"The most beautiful experience we can have is the mysterious. It is the fundamental emotion that stands at the cradle of true art and true science. Whoever does not know it and can no longer wonder, no longer marvel, is as good as dead, and his eyes are dimmed. It was the experience of mystery -- even if mixed with fear -- that engendered religion. A knowledge of the existence of something we cannot penetrate, our perceptions of the profoundest reason and the most radiant beauty, which only in their most primitive forms are accessible to our minds: it is this knowledge and this emotion that constitute true religiosity. In this sense, and only this sense, I am a deeply religious man... I am satisfied with the mystery of life's eternity and with a knowledge, a sense, of the marvelous structure of existence -- as well as the humble attempt to understand even a tiny portion of the Reason that manifests itself in nature."



Relationships Are More Important Than Ambition

There's more to life than leaving home.

EMILY ESFAHANI SMITH

This month, many of the nation's best and brightest high school seniors will receive thick envelopes in the mail announcing their admission to the college of their dreams. According to a [2011 survey](#), about 60 percent of them will go to their first-choice schools. For many of them, going away to college will be like crossing the Rubicon. They will leave their families -- their homes -- and probably not return for many years, if at all.

That was journalist Rod Dreher's path. Dreher grew up in the small southern community of Starhill, Louisiana, 35 miles northwest of Baton Rouge. His family goes back five generations there. His father was a part-time farmer and sanitarian; his mother drove a school bus. His younger sister Ruthie loved hunting and fishing, even as a little girl.

Ambition drives people forward; relationships and community, by imposing limits, hold people back.

But Dreher was different. As a bookish teenager, he was desperate to flee what he considered his intolerant and small-minded town, a place where he was bullied and misunderstood by his own father and sister. He felt more at home in the company of his two eccentric and worldly aunts -- great-great aunts, actually -- who lived nearby. One was a self-taught palm reader. She looked into his hand one day when he was a boy and told him, "See this line? You'll travel far in life." Dreher hoped she was right. When he was 16, he decided to leave home for a Louisiana boarding school with the intention of never looking back.

That decision created a divide between him and his sister Ruthie, who was firmly attached to Starhill. Leaving for boarding school was "the fork in the road for us, the moment in our lives in which we diverged," he writes in his new book, [The Little Way of Ruthie Leming: A Southern Girl, a Small Town, and the Secret of a Good Life](#).

In the book, he describes leaving his Starhill home to pursue a career in journalism -- a career that took him to cities like Baton Rouge, Washington DC, Fort Lauderdale, Dallas, New York, and Philadelphia. He was chasing after a bigger and better career with each move. "I was caught up in a culture of ambition," Dreher told me in an interview.

While Dreher was a dreamer, Ruthie was satisfied with what she had. When Dreher was living in big cities, going to fancy restaurants, carousing with media types, writing film reviews for a living, and traveling to Europe, Ruthie was back home in Louisiana, living down the road from her parents, starting a family of her own, and devoting herself to her elementary school students as a teacher. Ruthie could not understand Dreher's lifestyle.

Why would he want to leave home for a journalism career? Wasn't Starhill good enough? Did Rod think he was better than all of them?

These "invisible walls" stood between Ruthie and Dreher when, on Mardi Gras of 2010, Ruthie was unexpectedly diagnosed with terminal lung cancer -- devastating news that ripped through her community "like a cyclone" says Dreher, who was living in Philadelphia at the time. She was a healthy non-smoking 40-year-old, beloved by her students, her neighbors, her three daughters, and her husband. Now, she had about three months to live. She actually lived for nineteen. On September 15, 2011, Ruthie passed away.

Watching her struggle with terminal cancer for 19 months, and seeing her small-town community pour its love into supporting her, was a transformational experience for Dreher. "There are some things that we really cannot do by ourselves," Dreher said. "When Ruthie got sick, there were things that her family could not do -- they couldn't get the kids to school without help, they couldn't get meals on the table without help, they couldn't pay the bill without help. It really took a village to care for my sick sister. The idea that we are self-reliant is a core American myth."

When news spread of Ruthie's cancer, some friends planned an aid concert to raise money for her medical bills. Hundreds of people came together, raising \$43,000 for their friend. "This is how it's supposed to be," someone told Dreher that night. "This is what folks are supposed to do for each other."

The conflict between career ambition and relationships lies at the heart of many of our current cultural debates, including the ones sparked by high-powered women like Sheryl Sandberg and Anne Marie Slaughter. Ambition drives people forward; relationships and community, by imposing limits, hold people back. Which is more important? Just the other week, Slate [ran a symposium](#) that addressed this question, asking, "Does an Early Marriage Kill Your Potential To Achieve More in Life?" Ambition is deeply entrenched into the American personae, as Yale's William Casey King argues in [Ambition, A History: From Vice to Virtue](#) -- but what are its costs?

In psychology, there is surprisingly little research on ambition, let alone the effect it has on human happiness. But a [new study](#), forthcoming in the *Journal of Applied Psychology*, sheds some light on the connection between ambition and the good life. Using longitudinal data from the nine-decade-long [Terman life-cycle study](#), which has followed the lives and career outcomes of a group of gifted children since 1922, researchers Timothy A. Judge of Notre Dame and John D. Kammeyer-Mueller of the University of Florida analyzed the characteristics of the most ambitious among them. How did their lives turn out?

The causes of ambition were clear, as were its career consequences. The researchers found that the children who were the most conscientious (organized, disciplined, and goal-seeking), extroverted, and from a strong socioeconomic background were also the most ambitious. The ambitious members of the sample went on to become more educated and at

more prestigious institutions than the less ambitious. They also made more money in the long run and secured more high-status jobs.

But when it came to well-being, the findings were mixed. Judge and Kammeyer-Mueller found that ambition is only weakly connected with well-being and negatively associated with longevity.

"There really wasn't a big impact from ambition to how satisfied people were with their lives," Kammeyer-Mueller, a business school professor, told me. At the same time, ambitious people were not miserable either. "People who are ambitious are happy that they have accomplished more in their lives," he says.

People with ten or more friends at their religious services were about twice as satisfied with their lives than people who had no friends there.

When I asked about the connection between ambition and personal relationships, Kammeyer-Mueller said that while the more ambitious appeared to be happier, that their happiness could come at the expense of personal relationships. "Do these ambitious people have worse relationships? Are they ethical and nice to the people around them? What would they do to get ahead? These are the questions the future research needs to answer."

Existing research by psychologist Tim Kasser can help address this issue. Kasser, the author of *The High Price of Materialism*, has shown that the pursuit of materialistic values like money, possessions, and social status—the fruits of career successes—leads to lower well-being and more distress in individuals. It is also damaging to relationships: "My colleagues and I have found," Kasser writes, "that when people believe materialistic values are important, they...have poorer interpersonal relationships [and] contribute less to the community." Such people are also more likely to objectify others, using them as means to achieve their own goals.

So if the pursuit of career success comes at the expense of social bonds, then an individual's well-being could suffer. That's because community is strongly connected to well-being. In a [2004 study](#), social scientists John Helliwell and Robert Putnam, author of *Bowling Alone*, examined the well-being of a large sample of people in Canada, the United States, and in 49 nations around the world. They found that social connections -- in the form of marriage, family, ties to friends and neighbors, civic engagement, workplace ties, and social trust -- "all appear independently and robustly related to happiness and life satisfaction, both directly and through their impact on health."

In Canada and the United States, having frequent contact with neighbors was associated with higher levels of well-being, as was the feeling of truly belonging in a group. "If everyone in a community becomes more connected, the average level of subjective well-being would increase," they wrote.

This may explain why Latin Americans, who live in a part of the world fraught with political and economic problems, but strong on social ties, are the happiest people in the world, [according to Gallup](#). It may also explain why Dreher's Louisiana came in as the

happiest state in the country in a [major study](#) of 1.3 million Americans published in Science in 2009. This surprised many at the time, but makes sense given the social bonds in communities like Starhill. Meanwhile, wealthy states like New York, New Jersey, Connecticut, and California were among the least happy, even though their inhabitants have ambition in spades; year after year, they send the [greatest number of students](#) to the Ivy League.

In another [study](#), Putnam and a colleague found that people who attend religious services regularly are, thanks to the community element, more satisfied with their lives than those who do not. Their well-being was not linked to their religious beliefs or worshipping practices, but to the number of friends they had at church. People with ten or more friends at their religious services were about twice as satisfied with their lives than people who had no friends there.

These outcomes are interesting given that relationships and community pose some challenges to our assumptions about the good life. After all, relationships and community impose constraints on freedom, binding people to something larger than themselves. The assumption in our culture is that limiting freedom is detrimental to well-being. That is true to a point. Barry Schwartz, a psychological researcher based at Swarthmore College, has done extensive research suggesting that too much freedom -- or a lack of constraints -- is detrimental to human happiness.

"Relationships are meant to constrain," Schwartz told me, "but if you're always on the lookout for better, such constraints are experienced with bitterness and resentment."

Dreher has come to see the virtue of constraints. Reflecting on what he went through when Ruthie was sick, he told me that the secret to the good life is "setting limits and being grateful for what you have. That was what Ruthie did, which is why I think she was so happy, even to the end."

Meanwhile, many of his East Coast friends, who chased after money and good jobs, certainly achieved success, but felt otherwise empty and alone. As Dreher was writing his book, one told him, "Everything I've done has been for career advancement ... And we have done well. But we are alone in the world." He added: "Almost everybody we know is like that."

For many years, Ruthie and her mother had a Christmas Eve tradition of visiting the Starhill cemetery and lighting candles on each of the hundreds of graves there. On that first Christmas Eve after Ruthie died, her mother could not bring herself to keep the tradition going. And yet, driving past the cemetery after sunset on that Christmas Eve, Dreher saw sparks of light illuminating the graveyard. Someone else had lit the candles on the graves -- but who? It turns out that a member of their community named Susan took it upon herself to pay that tribute to the departed, including Ruthie.



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Saturday

Session 3:

**Understanding across
Conflict, Challenges
and Differences**

On Human Nature and Leadership, N Mandela

Our life has its own built-in safeguards and compensations. We are told that a saint is a sinner who keeps on trying to be clean. One may be a villain for $\frac{3}{4}$ of his life and be canonised because he lived a holy life for the remaining $\frac{1}{4}$ of that life. In real life we deal, not with gods, but with ordinary humans like ourselves: men and women who are full of contradictions, who are stable and fickle, strong and weak, famous and infamous, people in whose bloodstream the muckworm battles daily with potent pesticides. On which aspect one concentrates in judging others will depend on the character of the particular judge. As we judge others so we are judged by others. The suspicious will always be tormented by suspicion, the credulous will ever be ready to lap up everything from oo-thobela sikutyele,¹⁰ while the vindictive will use the sharp axe instead of the soft feather duster. But the realist, however shocked and disappointed by the frailties of those he adores, will look at human behaviour from all sides and objectively and will concentrate on those qualities in a person which are edifying, which lift your spirit [and] kindle one's enthusiasm to live.

In Defense of Anger

Amia Srinivasan

Aired on BBC Radio 4's *Four Thought*, 27th August 2014

1.

On the 28th of August 1963, in front of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington D.C., Martin Luther King Jr. spoke to a crowd of a quarter of a million people about a dream. That speech, which was televised across the country and heard around the world, has come more than anything else – more than images of men and women beaten by police, schoolchildren attacked by dogs, or swimming pools laced with acid – to stand for the American Civil Rights movement.

But the movement was about more than a utopian dream of racial harmony. It was also about an experience – of unceasing violence, rape, torture, exploitation, humiliation and degradation, perpetrated by white Americans against the black people they enslaved and never really emancipated. In the 1960s, few people spoke more powerfully about that experience than Malcolm X, the charismatic and fiery leader of the Black Nationalist movement. While Martin Luther King spoke of non-violence and loving the enemy, Malcolm X gave voice to the bitterness that black people felt towards their white oppressors. While King advocated for a politics of integration and love, Malcolm X stood for a politics of angry defiance.

In his autobiography, published shortly after his assassination in 1965, Malcolm X expressed his contempt for the March on Washington, where King gave his “I have a dream” speech. What began, he said, as a “militant, unorganized and leaderless” movement of angry black people, “sick and tired of the black man’s neck under the white man’s heel”, had been co-opted by white liberals and their black lackeys, Martin Luther King chief among them. What started as an “angry riptide” had become a “gentle flood”. It enraged Malcolm X to see black revolutionaries linking arms with what he saw as their white oppressors. It enraged him to hear King speak of dreams when black America was still living a nightmare.

Martin Luther King and Malcolm X met only once, on the steps of Capitol Hill. But they were often on each other’s minds, neither comrades nor enemies, but opposing

poles in a shared struggle for black emancipation. In his own memoirs, King lamented Malcolm X's angry rhetoric, his obsessive cataloguing of white crimes against black people, his insistence on the legitimacy of violent self-defence. King didn't believe the problems of Black America could be solved by a politics of anger. Anger couldn't generate the creative response to oppression that was required; only love could do that. Malcolm X's anger, King thought, was counterproductive, a "great disservice to his people" and to the cause of black liberation.

Yet King knew that Malcolm X had plenty of reason to be angry. He knew that a man whose pregnant mother had had her house burned down by the Klu Klux Klan while the police looked on, and whose father, himself a preacher, had had his skull crushed in: King understood that such a man would find it difficult to love his enemy. King didn't approve of Malcolm X's anger, but he never dismissed it.

There are photographs of that one meeting between King and Malcolm X, on the steps of Capitol Hill. The two men are clasping hands, looking into each other's eyes, smiling.

2.

More often than not anger *is* dismissed, especially when it comes from those who, like Malcolm X, have most reason to be angry. Today, the white descendants of American slave owners celebrate Martin Luther King as a moral hero – but write off Malcolm X as an angry black man. That image of the angry black man has dogged the political career of Barack Obama, despite the calm, measured tone of his speeches. In recent years, the spectre of the Angry Black Man has been eclipsed by that of the Angry Arab: hot-blooded, death-seeking and impervious to reason.

And older than both of them is the image of the Angry Woman. Proverbs 21:19 tells us that "it is better to dwell in the wilderness than with a contentious and angry woman", as if one had a better chance of surviving a bear attack than a marriage to an opinionated wife. A woman who loses her temper can expect to be called hysterical, or worse. She can expect men to speculate openly about where she is in her menstrual cycle. And if she's speaking in Parliament, she can expect the prime minister to tell her to "Calm down, dear." And what if you're, say, a woman *and* black? Google "Angry Black Woman Syndrome" and you'll get over a million hits.

These images – the angry black man, the angry woman, the angry Arab – are weapons of control. To dismiss someone as angry is to say that she is governed by emotion rather than reason – that she is uncivilised, not fully human – and so unworthy of serious engagement. To dismiss someone as angry is to say that she herself is the problem – not whatever it is that she is angry about. Of course the image of the angry man or woman has some basis in reality. Many black people are angry. Many women are angry. Many Arabs are angry. Their experience has given them much to be angry about. And this is precisely what these weaponised images obscure: that anger is often a reasonable response to an unreasonable world.

We should be suspicious when the powerful tell the powerless not to be so angry, to calm down dear, to just be reasonable. It is in the interest of the powerful to say such things. Anger can be a weapon in the hands of the powerless. It can broadcast injustice. It can draw crowds. It can motivate us to do what we would otherwise be too afraid, or too resigned, to do. Anger can frighten. We should ask ourselves whether White America would have been quite so eager to embrace Martin Luther King's loving dream if the alternative hadn't been Malcolm X's angry revolution.

And we should ask ourselves what might happen if *we* were angrier: about the privatisation of public goods and the erosion of the private sphere; about austerity in an age of massive inequality; about the demise of social security and the rise of corporate subsidy. About cuts to legal aid and the NHS, about 'go home' vans, about zero hours contracts, about Iraq and Gaza.

The writer James Baldwin said that Malcolm X, by giving expression to the suffering of black people, "corroborated their reality", made them feel as if they "really existed". He helped black people to think of themselves as black, and not as negroes. Anger can be the means to reveal what is really going on, the violence that silently structures how we live. Anger can show us that we aren't really bitches or sluts; fags or dykes or trannies; or any of the words I won't say here that are still used to insult people of colour. Anger can reveal that such words are designed to prevent people from being people. Anger can call us into a new existence.

Anger has its uses, but it also has its limits. Growing up, I was told, as little girls often are, not to get angry – that it was unbecoming, unladylike, and in any case wouldn't make things better. If I got angry, I was only hurting myself, getting het up for no reason. And they had a point. Eloquent anger can command attention. But anger in its most natural form, raw and inarticulate, risks getting you dismissed as irrational or shrill, even when you have excellent reason to be angry. If you want to be listened to, it's sometimes best to calm down.

This is one of the hard truths about living in a democracy: if you want something to change, you have to make others listen to you; and if you want others to listen to you, you can't be too angry about it. People don't like being shouted at, or being told that they've done something wrong, especially when they have. As a practical matter, it's usually better to appeal to people's sense of compassion and goodwill, to speak in a tone of neighbourly love rather than righteous anger.

This is why the exhortation to calm down isn't always an attempt at social control. Sometimes, it's a sincere attempt to help. Well-meaning allies will often remind the politically disenfranchised that getting angry is “counter-productive” to their cause. Helpful men have long told women that feminism would go down better if it were just a bit less “militant”. Straight allies have told queer activists the same thing. A few years ago, Barack Obama told the entire African continent that it should get over colonialism and start focusing on the future.

But even given in a spirit of care, the exhortation not to get angry can be morally pernicious. If you are a victim of racism, homophobia, transphobia, ableism, misogyny, economic exploitation or some toxic combination of these, then you already have it bad enough. But your situation is made even worse by the fact that if you want anyone to pay attention to your suffering, you can't be shouty or shrill about it. Not only do you have to suffer injustice, you also have to police your natural emotional responses to that injustice. This itself is a form of oppression. Everyone else can behave as badly they like, but *you* have to be a saint.

When you tell an oppressed person that their anger is “counter-productive”, you are reminding them of, and re-enforcing, that oppression. It's true that getting angry might not alleviate the injustice – it might even make it worse. But that doesn't mean

that the oppressed don't have the right to get angry. And it doesn't mean that *you* have the right to tell them to calm down.

4.

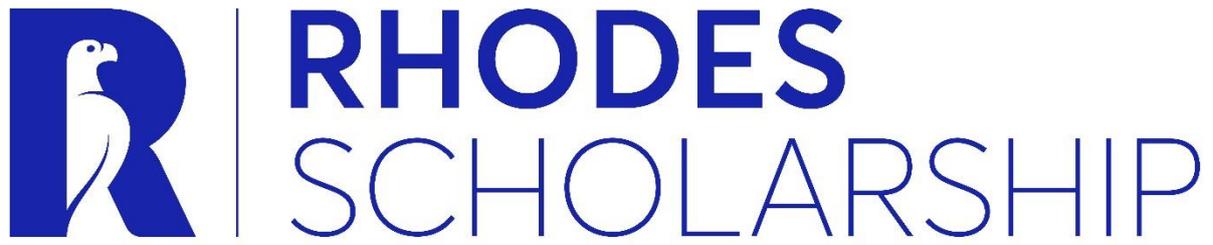
Anger might not always be "useful". But anger isn't justified only when it can be put to some concrete use. Anger is justified when it responds to a moral failing in the world. We often hear about people being "blinded" by their anger. But anger, at its best, is a way of *seeing clearly*, a form of emotional insight into the moral world. "When we turn from anger," the black feminist Audre Lorde said, "we turn from insight, saying we will accept only the designs already known, deadly and safely familiar." When the powerful condemn the angry, we should be suspicious. What "designs already known" are they protecting? What is it that they don't want us to see?

And we should be suspicious of ourselves, too, when we are tempted to tell those suffering injustice not to get angry, *calm down, be reasonable*. For if anger is a form of moral seeing, then telling the powerless not to get angry is an exhortation to blindness. Sometimes it is easier to be blind. Sometimes it takes great strength to see things as they are.

5.

On the 27th of February, 1965, Malcolm X's funeral was held at Faith Temple Church of God in Christ, in Harlem. Many at the time thought his death should have been allowed to pass unobserved and unmemorialised. They thought it better that he be written out of the history of that turbulent period: that he was a rabble-rouser and a radical and an enemy of black emancipation. Nonetheless, 1500 people saw fit to come out and honour him. Those 1500 people saw that Malcolm X's great anger had also been a great gift.

Malcolm X was later buried upstate, in Hartsdale, New York. Friends took shovels from the gravediggers to fill the grave themselves.



First Year Retreat

Rhodes House

Hilary 2019

Saturday

Discussion with
Elizabeth Kiss:
Shadow and Light

LEADING FROM WITHIN

by Parker J. Palmer

Note: This piece comes from Chapter V of Parker Palmer's book, *Let Your Life Speak*. As such you'll notice some references to earlier chapters in the book.

Back to the World

From the depths of depression, I turn now to our shared vocation of leadership in the world of action. This may seem more like a leap than a turn, but none of the great wisdom traditions would look upon this segue with surprise. Go far enough on the inner journey, they all tell us—go past ego toward true self—and you end up not lost in narcissism but returning to the world, bearing more gracefully the responsibilities that come with being human.

Those words are more than a device to weave these chapters together—they are a faithful reflection of what happened to me once I passed through the valley of depression. At the end of that descent into darkness and isolation, I found myself re-engaged with community, better able to offer leadership to the causes I care about.

“Leadership” is a concept we often resist. It seems immodest, even self-aggrandizing, to think of ourselves as leaders. But if it is true that we are made for community, then leadership is everyone's vocation, and it can be an evasion to insist that it is not. When we live in the close-knit ecosystem called community, everyone follows and everyone leads.

Even I—a person who is unfit to be president of anything, who once galloped away from institutions on a high horse—have come to understand that, for better or for worse, I lead by word and deed *simply because I am here doing what I do*. If you are also here, doing what you do, then you also exercise leadership of some sort.

But modesty is only one reason we resist the idea of leadership; cynicism about our most visible leaders is another. In America, at least, our declining public life has bred too many self-serving leaders who seem lacking in ethics, compassion, and vision. But if we look again at the headlines, we will find leaders worthy of respect in places we often ignore: in South Africa, Latin America, and eastern Europe, for example, places where people who have known great darkness have emerged to lead others toward the light.

The words of one of those people—Vaclav Havel, playwright, dissident, prisoner, now president of the Czech Republic—take us to the heart of what leadership means in settings both large and small. In 1990, a few months after Czechoslovakia freed itself from communist rule, Havel addressed a joint session of the U.S. Congress:

The communist type of totalitarian system has left both our nations, Czechs and Slovaks...a legacy of countless dead, an infinite spectrum of human suffering, profound economic decline, and, above all, enormous human humiliation. It has brought us horrors that fortunately you have not known. [I think we Americans should confess that some in our country *have* known such horrors.—P.J.P.]

It has also given us something positive, a special capacity to look from time to time somewhat further than someone who has not undergone this bitter experience. A person who cannot move and lead a somewhat normal life

because he is pinned under a boulder has more time to think about his hopes than someone who is not trapped that way.

What I'm trying to say is this: we must all learn many things from you, from how to educate our offspring, how to elect our representatives, all the way to how to organize our economic life so that it will lead to prosperity and not to poverty. But it doesn't have to be merely assistance from the well-educated, powerful and wealthy to someone who has nothing and therefore has nothing to offer in return.

We...can offer something to you: our experience and the knowledge that has come from it. The specific experience I'm talking about has given me one certainty: consciousness precedes being, and not the other way around, as the Marxists claim. For this reason, the salvation of this human world lies nowhere else than in the human heart, in the human power to reflect, in human meekness and in human responsibility. Without a global revolution in the sphere of human consciousness, nothing will change for the better...and the catastrophe toward which this world is headed—be it ecological, social, demographic or a general breakdown of civilization—will be unavoidable. ¹

The power for authentic leadership, Havel tells us, is found not in external arrangements but in the human heart. Authentic leaders in every setting—from families to nation-states—aim at liberating the heart, their own and others, so that its powers can liberate the world.

I cannot imagine a stronger affirmation from a more credible source of the significance of the inner life in the external affairs of our time: “consciousness precedes being” and “the salvation of this human world lies nowhere else than in the human heart.” Material reality, Havel claims, is not the fundamental factor in the movement of human history. Consciousness is. Awareness is. Thought is. Spirit is. These are not the ephemera of dreams. They are the inner Archimedean points from which oppressed people have gained the leverage to lift immense boulders and release transformative change.

But there is another truth that Havel, a guest in our country, was too polite to tell. It is not only the Marxists who have believed that matter is more powerful than consciousness, that economics is more fundamental than spirit, that the flow of cash creates more reality than does the flow of visions and ideas. Capitalists have believed these things too—and though Havel was too polite to say this to us, honesty obliges us to say it to ourselves.

We capitalists have a long and crippling legacy of believing in the power of external realities much more deeply than we believe in the power of the inner life. How many times have you heard, or said, “Those are inspiring notions, but the hard reality is...”? How many times have you worked in systems based on the belief that the only changes that matter are the ones you can measure or count? How many times have you watched people kill off creativity by treating traditional policies and practices as absolute constraints on what we can do?

This is not just a Marxist problem; it is a human problem. But the great insight of our spiritual traditions is that we—especially those of us who enjoy political freedom and relative affluence—are not victims of that society: we are its co-creators. We live in and through a complex interaction of spirit and matter, of the powers inside of us and the stuff “out there” in the world. External reality does not impinge upon us as an ultimate

constraint: if we who are privileged find ourselves confined, it is only because we have conspired in our own imprisonment.

The spiritual traditions do not deny the reality of the outer world. They simply claim that we help make that world by projecting our spirit on it, for better or for worse. If our institutions are rigid, it is because our hearts fear change; if they set us in mindless competition with each other, it is because we value victory over all else; if they are heedless of human well-being, it is because something in us is heartless as well.

We can make choices about what we are going to project, and with those choices we help grow the world that is. Consciousness precedes being: consciousness, yours and mine, can form, deform, or reform our world. Our complicity in world-making is a source of awesome and sometimes painful responsibility—and a source of profound hope for change. It is the ground of our common call to leadership, the truth that makes leaders of us all.

Shadows and Spirituality

A leader is someone with the power to project either shadow or light upon some part of the world, and upon the lives of the people who dwell there. A leader shapes the ethos in which others must live, an ethos as light-filled as heaven or as shadowy as hell. A *good* leader has high awareness of the interplay of inner shadow and light, lest the act of leadership do more harm than good.

I think, for example, of teachers who create the conditions under which young people must spend so many hours: some shine a light that allows new growth to flourish, while others cast a shadow under which seedlings die. I think of parents who generate similar effects in the lives of their families, or of clergy who do the same to entire congregations. I think of corporate CEOs whose daily decisions are driven by inner dynamics, but who rarely reflect on those motives or even believe they are real.

We have a long tradition of approaching leadership via “the power of positive thinking.” I want to counterbalance that approach by paying special attention to the tendency we have as leaders to project more shadow than light. Leadership is hard work for which one is regularly criticized and rarely rewarded, so it is understandable that we need to bolster ourselves with positive thoughts. But by failing to look at our shadows, we feed a dangerous delusion that leaders too often indulge: that our efforts are always well-intended, our power always benign, and the problem is always in those difficult people whom we are trying to lead!

Those of us who readily embrace leadership, especially public leadership, tend toward extroversion, which often means ignoring what is happening inside ourselves. If we have any sort of inner life, we “compartmentalize” it, walling it off from our public work. This, of course, allows the shadow to grow unchecked, until it emerges larger-than-life into the public realm, a problem we are well-acquainted with in our own domestic politics. Leaders need not only the technical skills to manage the external world—they need the spiritual skills to journey inward toward the source of both shadow and light.

Spirituality, like leadership, is a hard word to define. But Annie Dillard has given us a vivid image of what authentic spirituality is about:

In the deeps are the violence and terror of which psychology has warned us. But if you ride these monsters down, if you drop with them farther over the world's rim, you find what our sciences can not locate or name, the substrate, the ocean or matrix or ether which buoys the rest, which gives goodness its power for good, and evil its power for evil, the unified field:

our complex and inexplicable caring for each other, and for our life together here. This is given. It is not learned.²

Here, Dillard names two critical features of any spiritual journey. One is that it will take us inward and downward, toward the hardest realities of our lives, rather than outward and upward toward abstraction, idealization, and exhortation. The spiritual journey runs counter to the power of positive thinking.

Why must we go in and down? Because as we do so, we will meet the darkness that we carry within ourselves—the ultimate source of the shadows that we project onto other people. If we do not understand that the enemy is within, we will find a thousand ways of making someone “out there” into the enemy, becoming leaders who oppress rather than liberate others.

But, says Annie Dillard, if we ride those monsters all the way down, we break through to something precious—to “the unified field, our complex and inexplicable caring for each other,” to the community we share beneath the broken surface of our lives. Good leadership comes from people who have penetrated their own inner darkness and arrived at the place where we are at one with one another, people who can lead the rest of us to a place of “hidden wholeness” because they have been there and know the way.

Vaclav Havel would be familiar with the journey Annie Dillard describes, because downward is where you go when you spend years “pinned under a boulder.” That image suggests not only the political oppression under which all Czechs were forced to live, but also the psychological depression Havel fell into as he struggled to survive under the communist regime.

In 1975, that depression compelled Havel to write an open letter of protest to Gustav Husak, head of the Czech communist party. His letter—which got Havel thrown in jail and became the text of an underground movement that fomented the “Velvet Revolution” of 1989—was, in Havel’s own words, an act of “autotherapy,” an alternative to suicide, his expression of the decision to live divided no more. As Vincent and Jane Kavaloski have written, “[Havel] felt that he could remain silent only at the risk of ‘living a lie,’ and destroying himself from within.”³

That is the choice before us when we are “pinned under a boulder” of any sort, the same choice Nelson Mandela made by using twenty-eight years in prison prepare inwardly for leadership instead of drowning in despair. Under the most oppressive circumstances, people like Mandela, Havel, and uncounted anonymous others go all the way down, travel through their inner darkness—and emerge with the capacity to lead the rest of us toward community, toward “our complex and inexplicable caring for each other.”

Annie Dillard offers a powerful image of the inner journey, and tells us what might happen if we were to take it. But why would anybody want to take a journey of that sort, with its multiple difficulties and dangers? Everything in us cries out against it—which is why we externalize everything. It is so much easier to deal with the external world, to spend our lives manipulating material and institutions and other people instead of dealing with our own souls. We like to talk about the outer world as if it were infinitely complex and demanding, but it is a cakewalk compared to the labyrinth of our inner lives!

Here is a small story from my life about why one might want to take the inner journey. In my early forties I decided to go on the program called Outward Bound. I was on the edge of my first depression, a fact I knew only dimly at the time, and I thought Outward Bound might be a place to shake up my life and learn some things I needed to know.

I chose the week-long course at Hurricane Island, off the coast of Maine. I should have known from that name what was in store for me; next time I will sign up for the

course at Happy Gardens or Pleasant Valley! Though it was a week of great teaching, deep community, and genuine growth, it was also a week of fear and loathing!

In the middle of that week I faced the challenge I feared most. One of our instructors backed me up to the edge of a cliff 110 feet above solid ground. He tied a very thin rope to my waist—a rope that looked ill-kempt to me, and seemed to be starting to unravel—and told me to start “rappelling” down that cliff.

“Do what?” I said.

“Just go!” the instructor explained, in typical Outward Bound fashion.

So I went—and immediately slammed into a ledge, some four feet down from the edge of the cliff, with bone-jarring, brain-jarring force.

The instructor looked down at me: “I don’t think you’ve quite got it.”

“Right,” said I, being in no position to disagree. “So what am I supposed to do?”

“The only way to do this,” he said, “is to lean back as far as you can. You have to get your body at right angles to the cliff so that your weight will be on your feet. It’s counter-intuitive, but it’s the only way that works.”

I knew that he was wrong, of course. I knew that the trick was to hug the mountain, to stay as close to the rock face as I could. So I tried it again, my way—and slammed into the next ledge, another four feet down.

“You still don’t have it,” the instructor said helpfully.

“OK,” I said, “tell me again what I am supposed to do.”

“Lean way back,” said he, “and take the next step.”

The next step was a very big one, but I took it—and, wonder of wonders, it worked. I leaned back into empty space, eyes fixed on the heavens in prayer, made tiny, tiny moves with my feet, and started descending down the rock face, gaining confidence with every step.

I was about halfway down when the second instructor called up from below: “Parker, I think you better stop and see what’s just below your feet.” I lowered my eyes very slowly—so as not to shift my weight—and saw that I was approaching a deep hole in the face of the rock.

In order to get down, I would have to get around that hole, which meant I could not maintain the straight line of descent I had started to get comfortable with. I would need to change course and swing myself around that hole, to the left or to the right. I knew for a certainty that attempting to do so would lead directly to my death—so I froze, paralyzed with fear.

The second instructor let me hang there, trembling, in silence for what seemed like a very long time. Finally, she shouted up these helpful words: “Parker, is anything wrong?”

To this day, I do not know where my words came from, though I have twelve witnesses to the fact that I spoke them. In a high, squeaky voice I said, “I don’t want to talk about it.”

“Then,” said the second instructor, “it’s time that you learned the Outward Bound motto.”

“Oh, keen,” I thought. “I’m about to die, and she’s going to give me a motto!”

But then she shouted ten words I hope never to forget, words whose impact and meaning I can still feel: “If you can’t get out of it, get into it!”

I had long believed in the concept of “the word become flesh” but until that moment I had not experienced it. My teacher spoke words so compelling that they bypassed my mind, went into my flesh, and animated my legs and feet. No helicopter would come to rescue me; the instructor on the cliff would not pull me up with the rope; there was no parachute in my backpack to float me to the ground. There was no way out

of my dilemma except to get into it—so my feet started to move and in a few minutes I made it safely down.

Why would anyone want to embark on the daunting inner journey about which Annie Dillard writes? Because there is no way out of one's inner life, so one had better get into it. On the inward and downward spiritual journey, the only way out is in and through.

Out of the Shadow, Into the Light

If we, as leaders, are to cast less shadow and more light, we need to ride certain monsters all the way down, understand the shadows they create, and experience the transformation that can come as we “get into” our own spiritual lives. Here is a bestiary of five such monsters. The five are not theoretical for me; I became personally acquainted with each of them during my descent into depression. They are also the monsters I work with when I lead retreats where leaders of many sorts—CEOs, clergy, parents, teachers, citizens, and seekers—take an inward journey toward common ground.

The first shadow-casting monster is insecurity about identity and worth. Many leaders have an extroverted personality that makes this shadow hard to see. But extroversion sometimes develops as a way to cope with self-doubt: we plunge into external activity to prove that we are worthy—or simply to evade the question. There is a well-known form of this syndrome, especially among men, in which our identity becomes so dependent on performing some external role that we become depressed, and even die, when that role is taken away.

When we are insecure about our own identities, we create settings that deprive other people of *their* identities as a way of buttressing our own. This happens all the time in families, where parents who do not like themselves give their children low self-esteem. It happens at work as well: how often I phone a business or professional office and hear, “Dr. Jones's office—this is Nancy speaking.” The boss has a title and a last name but the person (usually a woman) who answers the phone has neither, because the boss has decreed that it will be that way.

There are dynamics in all kinds of institutions that deprive the many of their identity so the few can enhance their own, as if identity were a zero-sum game, a win-lose situation. Look into a classroom, for example, where an insecure teacher is forcing students to be passive stenographers of the teacher's store of knowledge, leaving the teacher with more sense of selfhood and the vulnerable students with less. Or look in on a hospital where the doctors turn patients into objects—“the kidney in Room 410”—as a way of claiming superiority at the very time when vulnerable patients desperately need a sense of self.

Things are not always this way, of course. There are settings and institutions led by people whose identities do not depend on depriving others of theirs. If you are in that kind of family or office or school or hospital, your sense of self is enhanced by leaders who know who they are.

These leaders possess a gift available to all who take an inner journey: the knowledge that identity does not depend on the role we play or the power it gives us over others. It depends only on the simple fact that we are children of God, valued in and for ourselves. When a leader is grounded in that knowledge, what happens in the family, the office, the classroom, the hospital can be life-giving for all concerned.

A second shadow inside many of us is the belief that the universe is a battleground, hostile to human interests. Notice how often we use images of warfare as we go about our work, especially in organizations. We talk about tactics and strategies, allies and enemies,

wins and losses, “do or die.” If we fail to be fiercely competitive, the imagery suggests, we will surely lose, because the world we live in is essentially a vast combat zone.

Unfortunately, life is full of self-fulfilling prophecies. The tragedy of this inner shadow, our fear of losing a fight, is that it helps create conditions where people feel compelled to live as if they were at war. Yes, the world is competitive, but largely because we make it so. Some of our best institutions, from corporations to change agencies to schools, are learning that there is another way of doing business, a way that is consensual, cooperative, communal: they are fulfilling a different prophecy and creating a different reality.

The gift we receive on the inner journey is the insight that the universe is working together for good. The structure of reality is not the structure of a battle. Reality is not out to get anybody. Yes, there is death, but it is part of the cycle of life, and when we learn to move gracefully with that cycle a great harmony comes into our lives. The spiritual truth that harmony is more fundamental than warfare in the nature of reality itself could transform this leadership shadow—and transform our institutions as well.

A third shadow common among leaders is “functional atheism,” the belief that ultimate responsibility for everything rests with us. This is the unconscious, unexamined conviction that if anything decent is going to happen here, we are the ones who must make it happen—a conviction held even by people who talk a good game about God.

This shadow causes pathology on every level of our lives. It leads us to impose our will on others, stressing our relationships, sometimes to the point of breaking. It often eventuates in burnout, depression, and despair, as we learn that the world will not bend to our will and we become embittered about that fact. Functional atheism is the shadow that drives collective frenzy as well. It explains why the average group can tolerate no more than fifteen seconds of silence: if we are not making noise, we believe, nothing good is happening and something must be dying.

The gift we receive on the inner journey is the knowledge that ours is not the only act in town. Not only are there other acts out there, but some of them are even better than ours, at least occasionally! We learn that we need not carry the whole load but can share it with others, liberating us and empowering them. We learn that sometimes we are free to lay the load down altogether. The great community asks us to do only what we are able, and trust the rest to other hands.

A fourth shadow within and among us is fear, especially our fear of the natural chaos of life. Many of us—parents and teachers and CEOs—are deeply devoted to eliminating all remnants of chaos from the world. We want to organize and orchestrate things so thoroughly that messiness will never bubble up around us and threaten to overwhelm us (for “messiness” read dissent, innovation, challenge, and change). In families and churches and corporations, this shadow is projected as rigidity of rules and procedures, creating an ethos that is imprisoning rather than empowering. (Then, of course, the mess we must deal with is the prisoners trying to break out!)

The insight we receive on the inner journey is that chaos is the precondition to creativity: as every creation myth has it, life itself emerged from the void. Even that which has been created needs to be returned to chaos from time to time so it can be regenerated in more vital form. When a leader fears chaos so deeply that he or she tries to eliminate it, the shadow of death will fall across everything that leader approaches—for the ultimate answer to all of life’s messiness is death.

My final example of the shadows that leaders project is, paradoxically, the denial of death itself. Though we sometimes kill things off well before their time, we also live in denial of the fact that all things must die in due course. Leaders who participate in this

denial often demand that the people around them keep resuscitating things that are no longer alive. Projects and programs that should have been unplugged long ago are kept on life-support to accommodate the insecurities of a leader who does not want anything to die on his or her watch.

Within our denial of death lurks fear of another sort: the fear of failure. In most organizations, failure means a pink slip in your box, even if that failure, that “little death,” was suffered in the service of high purpose. It is interesting that science, so honored in our culture, seems to have transcended this particular fear. A good scientist does not fear the death of a hypothesis because that “failure” clarifies the steps that need to be taken toward truth, sometimes more than a hypothesis that succeeds. The best leaders in every setting reward people for taking worthwhile risks even if they are likely to fail. These leaders know that the death of an initiative—if it was tested for good reasons—is always a source of new learning.

The gift we receive on the inner journey is the knowledge that death finally comes to everything—and yet death does not have the final word. By allowing something to die when its time is due, we create the conditions under which new life can emerge.

Inner Work in Community

Can we help each other deal with the inner issues inherent in leadership? We can, and I believe we must. Our frequent failure as leaders to deal with our inner lives leaves too many individuals and institutions in the dark. From the family to the corporation to the body politic, we are in trouble partly because of the shadows I have named. Since we can't get out of it, we must get into it—by helping each other explore our inner lives. What might that help look like?

First, we could lift up the value of “inner work.” That phrase should become commonplace in families, schools, and religious institutions, at least, helping us to understand that inner work is as real as outer work and involves skills one can develop, skills like journaling, reflective reading, spiritual friendship, meditation, and prayer. We can teach our children something that their parents did not always know: if people skimp on their inner work, their outer work will suffer as well.

Second, we could spread the word that inner work, though it is a deeply *personal* matter, is not necessarily a *private* matter: inner work can be helped along in community. Indeed, doing inner work together is a vital counterpoint to doing it alone. Left to our own devices, we may delude ourselves in ways that others can help us correct.

But *how* a community offers such help is a critical question. We are surrounded by communities based on the practice of “setting each other straight”—an ultimately totalitarian practice bound to drive the shy soul into hiding. Fortunately, there are other models of corporate discernment and support.

For example, there is the Quaker “clearness committee” mentioned earlier in this book. In this process, you take a personal issue to a small group of people who are prohibited from giving you “fixes” or advice, but who, for three hours, pose honest, open questions to help you discover your inner truth. Communal processes of this sort are supportive but not invasive. They help us probe questions and possibilities but forbid us from rendering judgment, allowing us to serve as midwives to a birth of consciousness that can only come from within.⁴

The key to this form of community involves holding a paradox—the paradox of having relationships in which we protect each other's aloneness. We must come together in ways that respect the solitude of the soul, that avoid the unconscious violence we do when

we try to save each other, that evoke our capacity to hold another life in ways that honor its mystery, never trying to coerce the other into meeting our own needs.

It *is* possible for people to be together that way, though it may be hard to see evidence of that fact in everyday life. My evidence comes in part from my journey through clinical depression, from the healing I experienced as a few people found ways to be present me without violating my soul's integrity. Because they were not driven by their own fears, the fears that lead us either to "fix" or abandon each other, they provided me with a lifeline to the human race. That lifeline constituted the most profound form of leadership I can imagine—leading a suffering person back to life from a living death.

Third, we can remind each other of the dominant role that fear plays in our lives, of all the ways that fear forecloses the potentials I have explored in this chapter. It is no accident that all of the world's wisdom traditions address themselves to the fact of fear, for all of them originated in the human struggle to overcome this ancient enemy. And all of these traditions, despite their great diversity, unite in one exhortation to those who walk in their ways: "Be not afraid."

As one who is no stranger to fear, I have had to read those words with care so as not to twist them into a discouraging counsel of perfection. "Be not afraid" does not mean we cannot *have* fear. Everyone has fear, and people who embrace the call to leadership often find fear abounding. Instead, the words say we do not need to *be* the fear we have. We do not have to lead from a place of fear, thus engendering a world in which fear is multiplied.

We have places of fear inside of us, but we have other places as well—places with names like trust, and hope, and faith. We can choose to lead from one of *those* places, to stand on ground that is not riddled with the fault lines of fear, to move toward others from a place of promise instead of anxiety. As we stand in one of those places, fear may remain close at hand and our spirits may still tremble. But now we stand on ground that will support us, ground from which we can lead others toward a more trustworthy, more hopeful, more faithful way of being in the world.

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RHODES
SCHOLARSHIP

First Year Retreat

Rhodes House

Hilary 2019

Sunday

Reflections from
Scholars:
Justice as Personal

MR. RHODES, who died yesterday near Capetown, had that in him which makes men do either good or evil on a great scale. He could frame very strong wishes and fairly long plans, and would work hard and cunningly to bring them about. He understood weak men and the special qualities of their weakness—how some are best driven with a bit and others drawn with a ring in the nose, or a carrot, or by perseverance in patting them. And he knew not merely individuals but crowds and the special accessibility of crowds to certain forms of collective emotion. He saw that in modern politics intrigue, if it is to succeed, must be democratised and whole populaces excited or frightened or misled; hence the careful concocting and timing of the "women and children" appeal to English sentiment for the furtherance of the Jameson Raid and the subsequent purchase of the control of the greater part of the British South African press when the agitation for a more official war against the Transvaal succeeded the former conspiracy. Of course all this knowledge and this power are neither good nor bad, morally, in themselves. They are like a ladder, that may be used to save a child from a burning house or to commit a burglary. Mr. RHODES's extraordinary power of getting things done in the political world he lived in cannot in itself be counted to him either for righteousness or unrighteousness. It was an attribute neither moral nor immoral, but non-moral, like being six feet tall. He must be judged not by his knowledge and command of these means, but by the quality of the ends for which he used them. What were those ends, then?

Obituary of Cecil John Rhodes
The Guardian, March 27, 1902

We cannot find the truth in the assumption sometimes made that Mr. Rhodes was simply a very rich man with a strong desire to grow richer, or even that he was merely a very strong man with a great relish for the use of his strength. He had, as it seems to us, a real though a shallow patriotism. He seems to have wished with great vehemence that his country might gain what he thought to be best for her. It was his idea of what was best for her that was at fault. It was, to all appearance, a greatness purely physical. That she should own more and more square miles of land, that her flag should be, as he called it, "the greatest commercial asset in the world," that she should hold in the hollow of her hand the lives of more and more men of other races—this we fully believe that Mr. Rhodes fervently and constantly desired for England. It was an ideal purely dynamic, a wish not so much that England should succeed in achieving this or that great and worthy thing in the world as that she should be able to do anything she liked. In

Obituary of Cecil John Rhodes

The Guardian, March 27, 1902

individuals this longing to have the command of wealth and influence simply as forms of force, and not as means to any predetermined end beyond them, is common enough; indeed this grandiose form of appetite is what commonplace people usually mean when they talk of ambition, but it is seldom entertained so unreservedly and uninquiringly on behalf of a man's country as it seems to have been entertained by Mr. RHODES. Had the adequacy of this conception of patriotic duty and aspiration been questioned in Mr. RHODES's presence he would probably have stared and wondered what the questioner was at. Any kind of political idealism would probably have seemed to him fantastic or mawkish; territory was solid; gold and diamond mines were realities; a map of South Africa wholly red was something that you could see; this was the "robust" reasoning fashionable in his day, and his career has been the most striking example of its application.

Obituary of Cecil John Rhodes
The Guardian, March 27, 1902

For a great number of his countrymen this embodiment of a purely materialist patriotism had a remarkable fascination. From a shallow study of the outlines of the theory of evolution a surprisingly large number of people had recently derived the notion that to get the better of everybody one can, nationally if not individually, is a piece of laudable conformity to natural tendencies which make for the perfection of the world. The idea is as remote from science as from morals, but its vogue in our period of half-educated transition from general popular ignorance to—let us hope—general intelligence has been tremendous; and Mr. RHODES was hailed with delight as a statesman openly and bluntly unconcerned with the ideals held up to the nation by such different thinkers as BURKE, PITT, and GLADSTONE. Here at last was a man "with no nonsense about him." With a touch of positive enthusiasm the most robust of these moderns dwelt on the business-like cynicism with which Mr. RHODES had told the falsehoods needed for the JAMESON conspiracy and how he had tried to bribe one, if not two, political parties in the House of Commons. If the nations of the earth were to be as "dragons of the prime, That tore each other in their slime," here indeed was a dragon efficient in tooth and claw.

Obituary of Cecil John Rhodes
The Guardian, March 27, 1902

Mr. RHODES before he died had outlived the warmest of the admiration that he thus won. For one thing, his exclusive preoccupation with purely material considerations had led him terribly wrong, and, through him and his press, had led this country terribly wrong too, as to the cost and length of the war. On the eve of his success in bringing about its outbreak Mr. RHODES used to predict confidently that the Boer resistance to conquest would break down at the first blow. He was probably absolutely incapable of comprehending the idea of a whole population, men, women, and children, determined to fight to the death against overwhelming odds rather than surrender their country's liberty, a thing not material. This indisposition to allow anything for the effect on others of ideals not entertained by himself was always apt to futilise his calculations, and the spectacle of anarchy, ruin, and hatred that filled South Africa at the time of his death offers a tragic warning to the practitioners of narrowly materialistic statecraft. With a real inclination to serve his country and with powers that would have enabled him to serve her effectually, the judgment of history will, we fear, be that he did more than any Englishman of his time to lower the reputation and to impair the strength and compromise the future of the Empire.

The Founder: Cecil Rhodes and the Purist of Power

R. Rotberg

1988

pp. 679-692

and a striving for manly success. Yet it was his cardiovascular mishaps which later worried the Founder, and spurred him to action. The main point is that Rhodes was physically at least of average strength until the 1890s, when he still accomplished prodigious feats despite a circulatory system which was ultimately taxed beyond its capacity.

Rhodes was not the short, fat curmudgeon of many imaginations. About six feet in height, he originally was fair-haired and slim. A good-looking youth, he became an attractive adult. Only the growing ballooning of his aorta, which progressively restricted the return of blood from his head and upper body, transformed the lithe figure into someone swollen and prematurely gray-haired. Syphilis may have caused his aortic weakening, but it is more likely that arteriosclerosis was the primary culprit. Throughout his forties Rhodes filled out his large frame. He ate voraciously, drank copiously, and smoked constantly. The strain on his heart was severe, and, in ways which are difficult to calculate precisely, the premonition of early death drove Rhodes onward at what was often a reckless pace. But his physical deterioration cannot totally explain the irrationality of the Jameson Raid in 1895 any more than it alone can explain his unaccustomed patience and deft feel for reconciliation amid angry Ndebele in 1896.

After his mother died in 1873, Rhodes loved only men, usually his social and intellectual inferiors. Whether or not he expressed that love physically, and there is modest circumstantial evidence that he did, his emotional attachments were to men. His closest friends and warmest supporters were men who themselves consorted with men and, in a few cases, were widely known in British homosexual circles. In keeping with an image of his age, Rhodes could well have repressed his urges and behaved wholly latently. Or he might have been asexual. In fact, Rhodes surrounded himself with men who were unmarried and, in most cases, were never to marry. Without being at all flamboyant about his tastes, Rhodes usually preferred to spend his days and nights with congenial men.

The product of a mother's uncommon affirmation and a father's disagreeable challenge, Rhodes adapted impressively to the demands of school and family, and managed his teenage transition to Africa with panache. From there the alert, canny, young cotton farmer joined thousands of others seeking their fortunes from diamonds in Kimberley. His imagination and energy were important; so were his skillful uses of the talents of others. Whether pumping water or selling ice cream, Rhodes searched restlessly for opportunity, and employed many of his nine terms at Oxford both to consolidate his post-adolescent sense of self and to make useful contacts among the gentry. His personal epiphany and quasi-religious self-dedication came in 1877, after completing the first half of his Oxford career. Its expression, the "Confession of Faith," is a jejune effervescence, hardly to be taken seriously as a philosophical document. But it has great significance as a sign that he was maturing psychologically and was prepared to seek a self-defined destiny. Rhodes believed that Victorian men should have objects in life. His was a truly grand

affirmation: to unite the present and former English-speaking colonies to the mother country and to bring as much of Africa as possible under the British flag.

It is a measure of Rhodes' magnetism that the men on the frontier to whom he revealed these secret dreams in the late 1870s and thereafter believed in him and in those dreams. So did a range of supposedly skeptical Britons. No matter how wildly grandiose his dreams may appear today, Rhodes' own sense of conviction—his utter self-confidence—commanded a growing legion of followers. Rhodes, articulating his plans in a high voice that broke occasionally into falsetto, inducted men both older and more experienced than himself into a growing fraternity of believers. Even men otherwise cynical seemed to accept the compelling magic of Rhodes' charisma. When he angled for the amalgamation of the diamond mines, sought hegemony over the north, or attempted to oust the Portuguese from Mozambique, Rhodes enrolled supporters from all backgrounds. Not least, the Founder crucially gained the support of men more powerful, wealthier, and better-connected than himself.

Rhodes' genius is rooted in the family soil of Bishop's Stortford, especially in his mother's strong acceptance and reassurance. But since so much of his genius was his gift of persuasion, it is clear that Rhodes at some early moment discovered that he could make men believe both in the rightness of his cause and in his ability to realize it. Yet his intelligence was not of the type that impressed his contemporaries. It is unlikely that he would have done well on modern tests of intelligence, which for the most part correlate with academic performance rather than achievement in a broader sense. His intelligence was more centered in the capacity to discern relationships among objects and to project forward in time the outcome of various new arrangements. His ability to analyze the elements of a situation and to be decisive was no better than that of others in Kimberley. Nor could he manage capital or make business decisions any better than dozens of others in that mining city in the 1870s and 1880s. But his longer range intuition proved exceptional.

A ceaseless energy was essential. So was attention to detail. More important may have been his ability to empathize—to appreciate the strengths and weaknesses of others. Rhodes called this talent "squaring"—he sensed what others wanted, what their dreams were, and thereupon made converts. Charm, which he had in abundance, bright blue eyes, a broad smile, and an impressively large head could not have been sufficient, but they assisted. Rhodes, said Low, "could conquer hearts as effectually as any beauty that ever set herself to subjugate mankind." An especial appeal to persons whose sexual preferences were similar to his own doubtless helped among a subset of men on the frontier, in parliament, and in positions of power in Britain. Many of Rhodes' strongest allies were homosexuals. But not all were.

Overall, and for men and women of either orientation, it was Rhodes' larger-than-life belief in his own destiny which transcended his human imperfections. One of Rhodes' physicians recalled how the first time they met he was struck by the great man's "leonine appearance, his large and broad fore-

head and his kind smile, but a face full of determination. That was the man: for nothing could alter his mind, if he thought that he was right."²

William Bramwell Booth, the son of the founder of the Salvation Army, met Rhodes in the late 1890s and was as staggered by the Founder's sheer presence as he was by the quality of his mind and the fervor of his idealism. "I have never met any one, always excepting [my father], who made such an impression on me. . . . His life was full of faith—though not, indeed, the highest kind of faith. . . . The moving force of his career was his faith in Britain's future. He believed in Britain as no man I have ever met believed in her. His patriotic faith took on almost a religious enthusiasm."³

Even as a youth, Rhodes exuded power and smelled of success. Thus it was not so much the content of his dream which attracted others but the fact that he dreamed magnificently that roused men who sought to invest their lives with renewed meaning and to dedicate themselves to a visionary purpose. Rhodes was a "romancer." "When you listened to his talk you found yourself carried away by the contagion of his enthusiasm," recalled Low. It is important that a part of Rhodes remained boyish; he appealed to the lost, dreamy youth of a legion of Victorian adults. He had the charisma to recall a golden age and to imbue individuals in number with a renewed faith. If they followed Rhodes, their lives would be as worthwhile as they once seemed to be in halcyon days of prepubescent glory.

Rhodes appealed to the idealism of men. When listening to him, recalled Low, "you remembered only that you were in the presence of a man dominated by an inspiring faith, and an ambition in which there was nothing narrow or merely selfish." A belief in Rhodes became "a substitute for religion." Indeed, "minds of more subtlety and more accurate intelligence . . . yielded to his sway." Low struggled to explain how someone so weak intellectually could fire the enthusiasm of so many. Others were "wittier talkers." Others were better read, more brilliant, and more logical.

Rhodes "was not a clear reckoner or a close thinker." He hardly originated ideas, but "took up the conceptions of others, expanded them, dwelt upon them, advertised them to the world in his grandiloquent fashion, made them his own." Rhodes had "compelling potency." Low describes his art: "It was the personality behind the voice that drove home the words—the restless vivid soul, that set the big body fidgeting in nervous movements, the imaginative mysticism, the absorbing egotism of the man with great ideas, and the unconscious dramatic instinct, that appealed to the sympathies of the hearer."⁴

Rhodes was a revivalist. But he also was an immensely practical problem-solver who enjoyed acquisitions for their own sake, who chortled at corporate coups, maneuvered adroitly in parliament, and took tactical advantage of bumbling businessmen, statesmen, and indigenous potentates alike. Indeed, his talents for finding common ground were equally well deployed and discerned in the legislative backroom with Jan Hofmeyr, in the boardrooms of the City, or high atop the Matopos with angry and aggrieved Ndebele. Rhodes' technique was to think aloud "without eloquence, without dialectics, . . . mak-

ing admissions, making confidences; insisting, recapitulating, riding a phrase to death . . . but always going to the root of the matter—and often making a conquest by sheer frank force of personality." Unlike men of mere warmth, however, Rhodes drove relentlessly and ruthlessly for ends which made sense to some if not to all of those with whom he shared his dreams. He persisted, succeeded, and triumphed over and over again.

What did Rhodes want of life? The question is appropriate, but no short answer can suffice. For Rhodes wanted it all. He sought wealth from diamonds for its own sake, then for a professional education, then so that he could achieve the objects of the Confession, and, ultimately, to provide for the scholarships. He never counted his money obsessively and, in later life, never knew exactly how much he was worth. But it is foolish to suggest that he never wanted to control the diamond wealth of the world for its own sake, or that he did not relish the power, scope, and influence which immense wealth conferred. Merriman, never unbiased, asserted that Rhodes had a "double character." The one side was "given over to the worship of money—the worship of the golden calf." The other was "semi-religious, gentlemanlike, full of all sort of odd fancies and notions, a charming companion." Unhappily, reported Merriman, the first aspect "as life went on rather gained the mastery of the latter." Rhodes was never crass or ostentatious about his riches, although Merriman said that he sometimes could be "brusque coarse [and] ready to gain his ends by any ways. . . ." Rhodes was also no ascetic. Only Kipling described him as a "dreamer devout." Rhodes liked to be able to run a big house and keep a lavish table. He was pleased to purchase property for his brothers and sisters and to distribute it generously to charities and the less fortunate.⁵

Many men and women seek adulation as a narcissistic reward. Rhodes believed in himself, was enthralled by his own ideas, and was narcissistic in that dimension, but he was less interested in being famous than in being influential. "I want the power—let who will wear the peacock's feathers" was one of his favorite sayings.⁶ He sought power in order to shape events according to the contours of his own unique vision. Thus he desired power and would have called that power the power to do good. His decision to enter parliament, hitherto unrecognized as a component of his grasp for power, was but one example of the ways in which Rhodes positioned himself for greatness and ultimate influence. Oxford served that purpose as well. But whereas some persons may find sufficient satisfaction in minor displays of naked power—as bullies, policemen, or modern-day arbitrageurs—Rhodes was impatient with anything less than the power to be decisive. His arrangement with the Bond was a means to greater control, and, thus, even if the precise employment of that power could not have been predicted beforehand, he wanted its use to reshape South Africa and to remake all of southern Africa.

Rhodes derived a portion of power from others. Rudd, Beit, Stow, Rothschild, and a host of businessmen and financiers played critical roles in his rise as an entrepreneur. Each, especially the first two, contributed much more

than an idea or two and more than what could be characterized as assistance at a few critical moments. Their efforts were consistently valuable, strikingly vital, and truly foundation-forming. Without Rudd, Rhodes might have amassed capital more slowly during the 1870s and therefore never been able to shift significantly from ice, ice cream, and pumping into diamond claims. Rudd had the better reputation. He was steady, cautious, and reliable. Rhodes absorbed commercial lessons from Rudd. He relied extraordinarily on Rudd's fundamental integrity and keen business sense during his long absences at Oxford. Later, making a success of investments in gold depended decisively on Rudd, on his contacts in London, and on his ability to gather in and then husband the resources of myriad investors. Not least of all his critical accomplishments, Rudd obtained Lobengula's assent to a concession, the remarkable cornerstone of the Rhodesian imperial edifice. Rhodes' great take-off might have been grounded, or at least more awkward, without Rudd.

Beit knew the value of diamonds, understood the workings of the world money markets, and advised Rhodes on how share offerings could be floated and debentures sold profitably. Rhodes learned from Beit as he learned from Rudd. He employed Beit's capital at crucial junctures and prospered even more from Beit's ability to tap the resources of European money markets. Beit was worth about £8 million—more than twice as much as Rhodes—when he died in 1908. He was a wise speculator and, like Rudd, was steady, solid, sober, free from scandal, and loyal. Again, it is hard to conceive that Rhodes would have achieved as much as he did in the world of commerce without Beit. Had he not had Beit's help, there would have been no consolidation of diamond mining interests, no (or a much smaller) stake in gold, few other corporate victories, and no surplus resources for Rhodesia and the rest.

Merriman reminded Basil Williams that among Rhodes' great gifts he took "other folks' ideas and work[ed] them out. . . ." True, and Rhodes delegated masterfully while almost always managing to focus on the details at his feet as well as the far horizons. Yet, however much Beit's brains, Rudd's resolve, Rothschild's approval and insistence, and Stow's early wealth contributed to Rhodes' economic independence, Rhodes was both pupil and master. They joined him because they believed in his dreams and saw in the fervor of the youth and later in the man a bright gleam that was more than quicksilver.

Like most entrepreneurs, Rhodes was more creative than original. His talent was the marshaling of many pieces in the service of some larger whole. He was the architect, others such as Rudd and Beit the structural engineers. Just as great skyscrapers demand the talents of many but follow the vision of one, so Rhodes introduced several of the fundamental entrepreneurial ideas. He was largely responsible for the innovative life governorships, the trust deed, and the profit-sharing scheme for Gold Fields. It is hard to be sure whether Rhodes, Beit, or Gardner Williams suggested appealing to Rothschild and then to the French financiers for support during the struggle to amalgamate the diamond mines, but, once guided, Rhodes knew when and how to act deci-

sively. He never really understood basic bookkeeping methods or international trade, but he had an instinct for brilliant, timely financial maneuvers. Again and again, Rhodes' conception of a larger future, and his innate talent for reading the contour maps of economic endeavor, proved decisive in developing a diamond mining monopoly in the 1880s. He failed to do so well in gold, possibly because he was distracted, already comparatively rich, and surprisingly cautious.

It was Rhodes' skills with people and his visionary capacity, not his intellect or a midas touch, which won the mines for the De Beers combine. Rhodes saw and believed in the larger, dramatic possibilities and gave others confidence in himself and therefore in his dreams. He promoted himself and his prospects well, and, without reducing the well-conceived unfairly to the flash of charisma, he made his fortune and the fortunes of others largely because his head for business could encompass vast sums and broad results and because he could sell those goals to men of consequence and ability. In all his endeavors, once he obtained support for defined objectives, he could persuade more scrupulous or more conventional men to take shortcuts, water stock, misrepresent prospects, set up secret reserves of diamonds, and disguise the underlying concessions on which floated companies were based. In 1892–93 he even condoned James Sivewright's crooked catering arrangements with James Logan.

Rhodes' lack of shame and guilt was intrinsic to his success. No one with conventional mores could have accomplished what he did in every sphere, especially financially. Rhodes, a man with "big plans and great ambitions," fell victim as politician, promoter, entrepreneur, and empire-extender to the persuasive belief that the greatness of the objective justified any method of achieving it. The more important Rhodes' plans seemed to himself, the more steadily did the significance of his techniques "dwindle by comparison to vanishing point."⁸ The goal, wrote Innes, "alone fill[ed] his vision." Ends were everything; any means whatsoever could be justified if it served great goals.

Decades before the discipline of strategic management was defined, Rhodes was a superb strategist and skilled manager. Levitt defines management as "the rational assessment of a situation and the systematic selection of goals and purposes . . . ; the systematic development of strategies to achieve those goals; the marshalling of the required resources; the rational design, organization, direction, and control of the activities required to attain the selected purposes; and, finally, the motivating and rewarding of people to do the work. . . ." Rhodes would have felt at home among Levinson's corporate leaders. These chiefs of corporations merged their own values and sense of obligation to society into a collective ego ideal which they both purveyed and enforced in the company. Each saw their organization in relation to national and international issues; they were powerfully value-driven. They interacted constantly and supportively with customers, employees, and other constituencies. Like Rhodes, they were not remote figures but immersed themselves in their associates and their affairs. These contacts kept them in touch with real-

ity; they constantly faced their own doubts and fallibility. Sensitive to people and to internal and external politics, they were flexible, intuitive, and imaginative. They took risks; they were not afraid to fail. All of the leaders faulted themselves for refusing to follow their instincts and intuitions as assiduously as they might have done. They were thinkers as well as doers.⁹

Although Rhodes lived before the age of the spreadsheet and rarely did his planning on more than the back of an old envelope, he managed his affairs strategically from the 1870s onward. Levitt's attributes, from assessment to rewards, fit Rhodes and describe his methods and much of the reason for his entrepreneurial and territorial conquests. When he "squared," cultivated, or manipulated powerful individuals, he organized resources. When he excited others with the power of his vision he motivated them to do his work. Rhodes' intuitive grasp of strategic management was displayed most dramatically during the struggle to amalgamate the diamond mines and, virtually simultaneously, in London during the months when he sought ministerial backing and royal patronage for the acquisition of Rhodesia. Rhodes possessed strategic acumen and flair.

As Rhodes began to perform on an imperial stage, his gifts became more and more apparent, his confidence ever more pronounced, and his vision ever more bold and daring. Rhodes wanted the lands beyond the Limpopo, the lands across the Zambezi, and a red line for telegraph and rails all the long way to Cairo. In this sphere he behaved like an Elizabethan, manipulating Her Majesty's ministers as much as he was willingly employed by them to paint southern Africa British red before the crafty Germans or the stubborn Boers could similarly deprive Africans of their lands and power. Although Rhodes probably had not thought specifically of imperial initiatives before 1882, he had mused about them conceptually and generally, and set imperial objectives for himself in the Confession.

As a young entrepreneur with grand ideas, Rhodes saw clearly that the "Suez Canal" of the interior must be kept open so that he and his enterprises would not be stifled by filibustering Boers from the Transvaal. That fundamental striving for scope, for not mortgaging his future, and for keeping all his options open led to the annexation of southern Bechuanaland to the Cape Colony, to the British protection and thus acquisition of Bechuanaland proper (modern Botswana), and to the placing of Rhodes and his imperial ambitions advantageously on the very borders of Ndebeleland. Once Rhodes had sufficient capital he could strive for a charter. With a charter he could raise funds under royal aegis from British investors and devote those proceeds to the conquest of the territory that was to comprise Rhodesia. Doing the actual deed depended less upon tactical cleverness than it did on manipulating overseas and local political environments. Suborning indigenous monarchs was a joint effort of Rhodes, British governors, highly placed civil servants in Whitehall, and even well-situated Protestant missionaries. But just as Rhodes believed that the greater good sanctified dubious means, so the strength of his vision, and only sometimes the wealth of his purse, captivated willing collaborators.

Rhodes' actual conquests were consummated with comparative ease. Relying on a special interpretation of the Rudd Concession and his own superb sense of the outer limits of bravado in a time of rapidly shifting power, Rhodes recruited mercenaries to settle the African-dominated interior. The resulting Pioneer Column skirted Ndebeleland and reached the Shona high ground without drawing hostile fire. Beyond the Zambezi, emissaries concluded ambiguous treaties with Lewanika of the Lozi and with other important leaders. By these different methods Rhodes and his employees acquired what became Southern and Northern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe and Zambia). Rhodes also funded Harry Johnston's forceful occupation of Nyasaland (Malawi). The era of traditional autonomy was everywhere passing. Rhodes' imperialist urge occurred when and how it did both because the scramble for Africa had been started by Europe and Europeans and because he had a vision and a sense of individual destiny.

The imperial Rhodes is hardly attractive. Lobengula of the Ndebele was tricked into providing a concession, his authority ignored by the Pioneer Column, and fine promises given to him—all with Rhodes' knowledge and approval—until the moment came when whites could overthrow him entirely. That moment, the war of 1893, was unprovoked by the Ndebele, and destroyed their independence. With Her Majesty's Government turning a blind eye, Rhodes personally approved the decision to attack; his troops had Maxim machine guns and the more numerous Ndebele had not. Rhodes also badly wanted copper-rich Katanga and the lands leading down to the Indian Ocean shores of Mozambique, but Lord Salisbury had to balance the needs of peace in Europe against an enhanced dominion under the British flag and in Rhodes' grip.

Without Rhodes, the Rhodesias, Nyasaland, and Bechuanaland—an area the size of western Europe including Great Britain, Italy, and Austria—might have become British anyway, if with fewer incentives for white settlers. But Rhodes decided when and how it did so, provided the organizational and capitalist framework, and personally sustained these young outposts of Europe during their difficult first years. For the Rhodesias, certainly, he justly was the Founder. For present day Zimbabwe and Zambia, he appropriately is the despoiler. Both designations pay tribute to the breadth of his conception and the energy, persistence, and care with which he made his dreams come true. The Rhodesias were his offspring, his conscious and half-conscious embodiment of immortality. Establishing them enabled him to serve the expanding family of English-speaking colonials that he sought to recreate as a way of conferring the benefits of Britain upon the world.

Rhodes actively fostered territorial acquisition by English-speakers with a Cape bias. He did so out of no hatred for Africans. Even dislike would be too strong a charge. Africans simply stood in the way of imperial progress. They represented an anachronistic barbarianism. Whites would take over, introduce Africans to higher things, and fashion colonies where a handful of whites would rule greater numbers of blacks and, naturally, rely on their labor. Rhodes was not alone in the 1880s and 1890s in regarding critics of such a program

as sentimentalists. Africa was going to be deprived of its freedom; it was merely a question of whether Rhodes or some lesser being would take charge. He never doubted the superiority of whites nor reflected, even for a moment, on alternative fates for Africans. Rhodes' highly developed sense of injustice was reserved for rebuffs to his own territorial ambitions, not to the hurts inflicted upon Africans.

As a parliamentarian and a prime minister, Rhodes' approach to Africans was consistently antagonistic. Concerned as he was from his first months in Kimberley to secure abundant supplies of cheap labor for the diamond mines and for the Cape generally, Rhodes' legislative power depended upon an alliance with the Afrikaner Bond. That compact in turn was based on crimping the Cape's hitherto color-blind franchise. For the likes of the Bond, too many Africans voted and would overwhelm the polls as soon as the Transkei and Pondoland were incorporated into the Cape Colony in the 1890s. African numbers had to be reduced. Rhodes found a way—by denying votes only to those Africans who held communal property, and, later, by raising the financial qualification levels. He defied liberal thinking in the Cape and, through the Glen Grey legislation of 1894, laid the basis for twentieth-century rural segregation in South Africa. In defending his actions against Africans, Rhodes rationalized, persuading even himself that Africans would benefit neither by voting nor by freehold ownership of farms. So secure was he by the mid-1890s, when these fatal attacks upon African rights were mounted, that Rhodes may not even have paused to consider the long-term consequences of such policies for Africans or for the future of South Africa. Remarkably perceptive about some things, Rhodes (like so many of his contemporaries) never concerned himself about the forfeitures of African trust and respect, and the chasm that was widening between white and black.

True, as a capitalist, Rhodes depended upon an expanding frontier for unskilled labor. Without being able to tap vast reservoirs of manpower, his mines would shut and his ability to finance Rhodesia and his other quests for immortality would cease. His class interest thus inevitably influenced his thinking and his judgment regarding Africans as workers. It was less for glory than to safeguard the mines that he initially entered parliament, and it was partially to secure supplies of fuel wood and Africans that he pushed hard for the incorporation of Stellaland and Goshen, annexed the Transkei, and opened up the north. But Rhodes' financial greed was after 1880 subordinated to the service of a larger purpose. If Rhodes' actions were base, it is evident that his motives were never merely or wholly commercial.

Building upon the fantasy of 1877, and accumulating means and political influence in the 1880s, Rhodes in the 1890s was poised atop an Everest of accomplishment. As a politician and a visionary, Rhodes harbored aims which superseded any attachments to or even much thought about the place of Africans in South Africa. He firmly believed that the realization of his dream of a united South and southern Africa under his own and British leadership intimately depended upon an Anglo-Dutch alliance. The Afrikaners and the

English were the competing "races." Hence how to eliminate race conflict was the problem which Rhodes worked to solve through the end of 1895, and to which he returned from 1898 to 1901. His "equal rights" slogan was devised as an appeal to the Dutch, not to Africans or Coloureds. A leader of the nineteenth century, Rhodes was fully prepared to sacrifice the Cape's liberal tradition and the fullest range of indigenous human rights to cement an accord between the two dominant (white) races. Never anti-Afrikaner, and only antagonistic to the Transvaalers because of President Kruger's patriarchal, obstinate opposition to himself personally and to his dreams of unity under the spreading Crown, Rhodes firmly believed that his objective was commendably lofty. Any and all means were acceptable in the service of that objective. Rhodes, Plumb once declared, "lacked all sense of public morality." A contemporary of Rhodes placed such a judgment in a more fully rounded context. "Absorbed in the contemplation of great ends, he was indifferent to the means by which his results were to be attained." He judged right and wrong by cosmic standards, not by merely conventional rules of morality. "His vision of the future," thought Low, "was too vivid to be blurred by such considerations."¹⁰

The root cause of the disastrous Jameson Raid was Rhodes' fear that gold would fuel the growing independence of Kruger and his ilk and of republican-minded Uitlanders on the Witwatersrand. In either hands, the immense riches of the Rand would shatter Rhodes' hopes for a unified South Africa. Thus Rhodes enthusiastically and incautiously conceived a madcap cabal for the overthrow of the Transvaal government. He would fund and supply the Uitlanders and sponsor an invasion force led by Jameson. When the Uitlanders rose in Johannesburg, Jameson would come to their rescue. But the Uitlanders never rose, and Jameson, on his own initiative and to Rhodes' considerable horror, invaded anyway. Rhodes' appercart was upset, profoundly, his pre-eminent political position destroyed, his reputation sullied forever, and his treacherous (or merely self-serving?) goals exposed. No Afrikaner has ever forgiven Rhodes, and the terrible war that Britain and the Afrikaners fought from 1899 to 1902 was caused to some extent by the enormous distrust of the English and the great gulf between Afrikaans- and English-speakers which grew cancerously after the Raid.

Rhodes not only sought to monopolize the gold of the Rand and to right the grievances of the English-speaking foreigners who outnumbered the Boers on the Rand and in the Transvaal. He played for much higher, much more complex stakes. Rhodes' actions—even regarding the Raid—cannot be reduced to vulgar motives. Ruthless, unscrupulous, foolish he certainly was. Wildly overconfident he was, too, probably because of the ease with which the Maxims had decimated the Ndebele. Rhodes and Jameson had unfounded contempt for the Boer fighters. But so did Lord Methuen, General Sir Redvers Buller, and the entire British army at the beginning of the Anglo-Boer War. In late 1895, too, Rhodes had an unbounded faith in himself. Although he often compared himself to a Roman emperor, his fate was Greek. He (and his acolytes) had come to accept the annointed quality of Rhodes' vision. His

successes had been so staggering and so recurrent that Rhodes seemed indomitable.

Rhodes miraculously recovered much of his reputation and a semblance of his old power in the years after the Raid. The ending of the Ndebele rebellion in 1896 took skill and courage. Rhodes solved an otherwise intractable problem of continuing guerrilla war by venturing unarmed into the Matopos mountains and negotiating a cease-fire with angry induna. Genuinely that was his finest hour. Later he modernized fruit growing in the Cape, expanded its dynamite industry, and improved its ability to store fresh meat. He almost became premier again, and played a significant role in Cape political life on the eve of the Anglo-Boer War. He died before the war ended, leaving the outline of a dramatic scholarship scheme that was designed to unite the English-speaking peoples of the world through education. He also left a great monopoly in diamonds as well as a solid position in gold, and colonies on either side of the Zambezi that bore his name. "Well, there is something that will live," he once said. "They can't take that away, can they?"¹¹

Rhodes' one colossal failure and his often forgotten but most enduring legacy is the fatal antagonism between white South African speakers of Afrikaans and English. Afrikaners in the Cape had trusted Rhodes, but Rhodes betrayed them. Lord Milner compounded that betrayal in 1899 and afterward. Rhodes achieved much for the education of English-speakers in the Commonwealth and the United States, but he killed the distant hope of Afrikaner-British comity in South Africa.

It is as easy to focus on Rhodes' entrepreneurial accomplishments as it is to condemn his supposed avarice. Likewise it is possible and not completely irrelevant to concentrate exclusively on the virtues embodied in his "big idea." It is not hard to show that his practices were sharp, his offenses against conventional corporate ethics many, and his expediency substantial. Milner, who knew Rhodes toward the end of his life, admired him, but still found him "enormously untrustworthy." They were on the "best of terms," but nevertheless Milner felt certain that Rhodes would "give away me or anybody else to gain the least of [his] private ends."¹²

It is appropriate to dwell on Rhodes' role in improving southern African agricultural practices, the efficacy of his mining amalgamation, and the good he attempted to achieve by unifying southern Africa politically and economically. It would hardly be amiss, however, to examine the vast costs to Africans of each of such attributes and to add up the harm to Africa and South Africa through franchise restrictions, rural segregation, the conquest of the Rhodesias, and so on. In a narrow normative sense, Rhodes acted, it is now clear, for both ultimate good and ultimate evil.

Rhodes' appetite was gargantuan. He first gobbled the mines, then swallowed the Rhodesias, and failed only to consume the Transvaal. Each meal served to prepare him for the next and, taken together, they fed a desire for immortality. Other persons of wealth have been content to enrich their descendants, improve the lot of anonymous unfortunates, endow universities, or—bless them—create foundations. Rhodes, driven by his juvenile attach-

ment to reunion, to the ingathering of the lost sheep of far-flung Britain, decided to sponsor the commingling of colonials under the intellectually invigorating spires of England's first university. That was to be a positive gift to the world. It would long outlive his eponymous colonies, and, indeed, since he never imagined that the scholarship committees would select the men (and women!) that they have, and since he desired a tightly knit, imperially centered universe, the fact that the scholarships have succeeded in defiance of the design of their founder is an ironic tribute to the final workings of his uncommon genius.

Rhodes is remembered for no original theorem, for no single invention, nor for any enduring idea other than his scholarships. Imperial expansion is deservedly out of fashion, too, and Rhodes today can hardly be revered as he once was as a conqueror of countries and an organizer of subject peoples. Even the kind of ruthless entrepreneurship which amalgamated the diamond mines and gathered gold hardly excites late twentieth century readers as it did but five decades ago. Rhodes failed Jane Waterston's test, too: Providence gave him "the grandest opportunities" in the arena of African advancement, and he "flung them away." He failed lamentably and destructively to rule "many thousands of natives wisely and well."¹³ He deprived Africans in South Africa of their political rights in order to appease the Afrikaner Bond and further his political, and thus his entrepreneurial and imperial fortunes. He extirpated Zimbabweans, redeeming himself only by concluding a negotiated peace with the Ndebele. On the personal level, he manipulated acquaintances and friends, never really caring that once-close colleagues such as Merriman, Innes, Sauer, William Schreiner, even Olive Schreiner, and John Blades Currey felt rejected and betrayed. He largely ignored or derided his brothers and sisters, but patronized them. Rhodes had deep emotional needs, but he satisfied them almost exclusively through his loyalty and devotion to male intimates of questionable quality such as Jameson, Metcalfe, Rutherford Harris, Neville Pickering, and Johnny Grimmer.

Such is an unabashedly negative assessment, and, as the pages of this biography have shown over and over, there are many other terms and conditions under which the Founder can be vilified. But, there is no denying he was a "mighty force." His vast and grandiloquent vision cannot be dismissed as megalomaniacal. It inspired some of the best and the brightest of Britain's empire. It mesmerized a legion of white South Africans and Rhodesians. He was indeed the Founder—of countries and scholarships. Since Africa across the Limpopo and Zambezi rivers would have been occupied inevitably by Europeans, he saved it for Britain's kind of colonial domination. He dreamt of a union of all South African whites, and destroyed that dream by the Raid. But he did dream genuinely, and believed intensely in a federated future for southern Africa (under white control but for general development). He believed in progress in Africa and the empire on a broad scale and across a vast reach of geography and history. His scholarships embody and fulfill that part of the pertinacious vision which was always focused on giving to posterity.

Rhodes was not a good man, but he was great and far-seeing. He believed

in himself and in his ability to leave the world richer than it was when he entered it. In the titanic struggle between self-absorption and genuine involvement with others, self-absorption almost invariably won. His love affair with his big ideas ultimately crowded out any lasting or deep concerns for most companions, associates, and friends. Rhodes' few long-term relationships were with those who were prepared to subordinate themselves to his dominating goals. The momentum and scope of his narcissistic dreams devoured the accomplishment of a fulfilling and rounded personal generativity. Yet however hollow he may have been in basic human terms, he left a rich and compelling heritage of achievement and philanthropy for humankind. In that soaring sense, which will hardly satisfy every modern reader, he did not, in fact, fling away the gifts of Providence. He amassed, he acquired, he savaged, he disrupted, and he presided arrogantly over the fate of southern Africa. But he also built lasting economic institutions, furthered transportation and communication, improved agriculture, enhanced education, and fervently believed and preached the doctrine that riches were his primarily to advance the positive interests of a modern southern Africa, and the farther flung English empire, and to uplift the colonies and ex-colonies by sending the very best of their young men to consort with and learn from one another in Britain's oldest cathedral of learning. Rhodes had always tried to find his way back home. The scholarships were meant to unify the original empire, to tie mystical bonds, and to provide a way in which Rhodes, the romantic boy and the irrepressible man, could live on, and do good works.

Notes

PREFACE

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CHAPTER 1

The Man and the Mystery

1. Philip Jourdan, *Cecil Rhodes: His Private Life by His Private Secretary* (London, 1911), 19-20.
2. Gordon Le Sueur, *Cecil Rhodes: The Man and His Work* (London, 1913), 20-24.
3. Sidney Low, "Personal Recollections of Cecil Rhodes: Some Conversations in London," *The Nineteenth Century and After*, CCCIII (May 1902), 829.
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6. Imperialist (pseud. John Verschoyle), *Cecil Rhodes: A Biography and an Appreciation* (London, 1897), 9-15.
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Scott Bear Don't Walk (Outstanding War Bonnet) is a member of the Crow Tribe. He is also a descendant of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes. He writes fiction and poetry.

Road Warrior

Scott Bear Don't Walk

“Weren’t you the Indian Rhodes Scholar?” she said, as I shivered in her doorway holding my pizza delivery bag, wearing my “Red Pies Over Montana” polyester shirt and ball cap. She handed me 20 dollars for driving a Sausage Lover’s Special through the snow-drifted streets of the reservation border town of Missoula—for a one-dollar tip.

A month before, I had been sitting next to a well-known British novelist at a Rhodes House dinner in Oxford, which involved multiple courses and sparkling conversation over after-dinner sherry. I had been wearing a jacket and tie, not a tux, but near. The writer asked, “Aren’t you the red-Indian Rhodes Scholar?”

They say the Rhodes is one of the few things a person can do at 20 years of age that will be mentioned at 40, that and joining the Marines—but I didn’t go to Parris Island. I went to Oxford, England.

During my fifth year at the University of Montana, a familiar-looking woman, whose face I couldn’t quite place, passed as I walked across campus. Coming closer, I recognized her as a former classmate who had trounced me in every subject in grade school, the smartest person in class, my main competition. *Becky—Rebecca* (some names have been changed for this story), I called out, asking her what she was doing in Missoula. She said that she had come back from Harvard for the local Rhodes Scholarship interview. I had no idea what the words “Rhodes Scholar” meant. A year later, I would be chosen.

I am from an American Indian tribe—the Crow—located in Montana. I say it this way, “located in Montana” because we predate the founding of the state. We predate the founding of the United States, though this is where we find ourselves. My parents went to college at the local university. They came of age in the 1960s during the Civil Rights movement and the Great

Society. Coming from two separate Indian reservations, my parents were the first in their families to go to college, and, until I went 25 years later, the last. They went from poor to professional. They went from reservation schools and Catholic boarding schools, which sought to kill the Indian to save the student, to become active in the American Indian Civil Rights movement. My parents' generation (though not my parents) founded the "Red Power" movement, occupied Alcatraz Island and Wounded Knee. My father was one of the earliest lawyers in the Crow Tribe, and he still works for his people. My mother was active in American Indian women's rights, and still works in Indian health care. They made the big leap for me. I went to college only because they did.

Is there such a thing as a traditional Rhodes Scholar? Until the 1970s, a Rhodes Scholar was male. Was he also white? In December of 1992, when I called my mother from a high-rise in Seattle to tell her that I had had been chosen by the Rhodes committee, her first words were, "How many women were picked?" She identifies as a second-wave feminist. I grew up in a house where *Ms.* magazine and *Our Bodies Ourselves* sat on the coffee table—we learned that "a woman needs a man like a fish needs a bicycle." We learned that a woman could do anything—Mother told my sister that she could be a senator—but I wondered what an Indian could boy be? In my Rhodes Scholar class of 1993 there were few minorities, but about an even split gender-wise. I told my mother about half were women. "Good," she said. My peers seemed to come from two or three certain universities on the East Coast, men and women. Though not Harvard or Yale, my state university had secretly been sending Rhodes, too. The University of Montana was then rated 4th in the country for public schools for sending Rhodes Scholars, a surprise to me, being so close to the poverty and limited opportunity of Indian Country.

My former grade school classmate mentioned the Rhodes, but I found out what it was when a teaching assistant, Betsy, showed up to class one day dressed up. She usually favored the ripped jeans and Guatemalan sweater look of the early 1990s, so I asked her why she was so dressed up. She said she had an interview for the Rhodes. When she was chosen it was just as another Rhodes, Bill Clinton, was running for president. I finally figured out what the Rhodes was—a prestigious ladder to the world of success. Betsy had come from Chicago to Montana for graduate school; Clinton had come from a little town in Arkansas named Hope. Both went to England. Just before she was snatched up by the world of success, Betsy suggested that I apply.

In one sense, my preparation for the Rhodes was thorough. The Rhodes advisor at my school, Margaret, a sixty-something Philosophy professor, from the East Coast, had a track record of grooming successful applicants. We talked in her book-lined office as she tried to envision me as Rhodes material. She asked if I kept up with the news. She grilled me about current events in her verbally aggressive style: the trade deficit with Japan, human rights in China, Hamas. We discussed Clinton's performance in the latest presidential debates. I don't believe I had ever met someone so upfront, almost brusque, but sure of herself, or sure-seeming—pushy. I had a little idea of what I was talking about, these things of the world, and the rest, I bluffed. As I was leaving her office after our first conversation, Margaret said, "I hope you want the Rhodes, because you're going get it." Even as she said it something didn't register—I had never been chosen for anything. Unremarkable in grades, athletics, student activities, I applied simply because I was told I had a chance.

Margaret began grooming me. I visited her office weekly. It was like the build-up scene in *Rocky* crossed with *My Fair Lady*. She told me what to wear—blue blazer, pinpoint Oxford shirt, fancy shoes—how to look the part. She helped me say what I wanted to say in my essay. Margaret had a reputation as a Rhodes-maker. Without Margaret, I would have never made it. In the 16 years since she retired, there have been no more from my school.

We prepared for the vetting, but we didn't prepare for life at Oxford. Could I go? Did I want to? It was assumed that if I could, I would. Oxford was a great place: everyone just knew that. Key information about what it was like was left to a few pictures in the catalogue. Margaret had sent many to Oxford, but hadn't been there herself. She assumed I would be glad to escape the rural poverty of a cultural backwater, finding refuge first in Oxford, then in the big city. We both assumed that greatness did not, could not, involve Missoula, Montana. I read *The New York Times*, *The New Yorker*, and I desired worldly opportunity, but I also wanted to put Native America on the world's map.

What about the world I was leaving? My university was 15 minutes from my mother's reservation, 20 minutes from my grandmother's house. My father had gone to the same university for law school, and I went to the university preschool. I had never left home. I hadn't even been out of state. My tribe is ambivalent about its people going away. Going away can

make sense, economically, or to study, but in another sense, it doesn't make any. We were nomads and we traveled, but always within a known world of connections. Our world is known through stories. Sacred ancestors, from before humans existed, had lived in and around where Missoula is presently located. At the dawn of time, the sacred trickster, Coyote, killed a monster that was devouring everything in the next valley over. Coyote cut out the heart of the monster and threw it west. The heart of the monster is known by the tribe as the original source of all the mosquitoes in the world. This is what it means to be Indian: I could stand on campus in Missoula, slap a mosquito, and know that it had come from the dawn of time, when Coyote saved everything. Many Indians still live in their holy land, they've never left. Sometimes I would drive over to Idaho and view the heart of the monster, now a red monolith. Other Americans don't have this connection.

At Oxford I would lose touch with this. Other Indians had gone away before: to school, to the federal relocation program, where Indians were enticed to leave the reservation with promises of jobs and job training, so that the country might end its obligations to the tribes and the treaties. But everyone always came back. The story of going away and coming back developed from the very beginnings of the reservation era. The early American Indian novelist D'Arcy McNickle, a member of my mother's tribe, wrote *The Surrounded*, about a young man who goes away to a boarding school after selling his land. He comes back—Indians always came back. Coming back was a common thread to stories of leaving: reconnecting, plugging in, finding ground, finding home. I had some idea of these things when I applied for the Rhodes, but not enough to be able articulate them. In my Rhodes application essay, I wrote about standing astride two worlds: the tribal and the global. What I didn't realize is that if I lost my footing on one, I would fall.

Because of our great poverty and great need, my tribe pinned so much hope on me. After I got the Rhodes, local newspapers and radio and television trumpeted the story. I was a local celebrity and a hit in Indian Country. Tribal newspapers proclaimed my cultural achievement. I spoke at reservation grade schools and high schools and Native American Studies Departments throughout the West. I was the graduation speaker at my father's former high school. On the stand, I was embraced by the tribal chairwoman and members of the tribal council who rarely got along well enough to appear anywhere together in public. I stood for the possibility of an Indian finding success in the larger world.

Many Indian people told me that they were proud of what I had done, seeing it as a cultural achievement, what Indians could do. I saw it that way too. When I was a kid I had wanted to be the first Indian on the moon, and with the Rhodes I had some idea of what it was like. At my university's powwow on campus, an old woman dressed in the traditional style with high-top moccasins, calico dress, wide leather belt, and hair scarf, recognized me out of a crowd, put her arms around me and started crying. She said that she told her teenage grandson about me, so that he could be proud to be Indian.

At that same powwow, in a special ceremony I was given the traditional Indian name "Outstanding War Bonnet." A war bonnet, or headdress, is worn by warriors who have amassed many great deeds, each signified by an eagle feather. My great deed was the Rhodes, and I was given a headdress covered in eagle feathers.

A local Indian health clinic made a poster; it shows a picture of me, alongside a very old picture of my great grandfather, the original Bear Don't Walk, my family's namesake. The poster lauds my scholarship, and says, "This is Today's Warrior: Drug and Alcohol Free." These posters were pasted on the doors and walls of local businesses. I would run into pictures of myself all over town.

A week before I left for England, I was on the reservation helping friends smoke giant Columbia River salmon. We did it on the grill of a junked 1964 Impala, suspended from a rusted swing set, placed over a large fire of larch wood. I went to find a bathroom inside a nearby trailer house and walked into the room of a teenage boy, but no one was there. On the wall, I saw a poster of Michael Jordan dunking a ball—alongside my poster. My tribe didn't have many modern heroes. We had old ones: chiefs, warriors, rebels who fought the coming of the white man. Now, people thought I was one, which really put the spin on my head, not because they thought I was a hero, but because we were so bereft of them.

And so I went to England, and it was in Oxford that I crashed and burned. No story is pre-determined. To this day I search for the signs of what happened, the warnings. I've mentioned that while the Rhodes was important and lauded, I had no real idea of what it involved. I was also very far away from a world that made sense to me. This is all true. But there is something

more. Another person with these same factors might have gone to Oxford and thrived. When I got there, I felt the alienation of a place unlike any other I had experienced. My fellow Rhodes had gone to the better schools in America and found in Oxford something familiar: soaring architecture, manners, a belief in a pursuit of excellence. For some, even the tutorial system was similar. I was a fish out of water, or a buffalo out of the tall grass plains, or an American Indian away from his tribe. A sense of displacement reared up. It wasn't just the crowded stone passages of the medieval city. Nor was it the lack of mountains and truly wild wildlife, though I felt these things. Something was wrong with my orientation, the direction I was facing. Whether from Brazil, South Africa, Singapore, or Palo Alto, students came to Oxford to tap into something old (but not old in the sense of the stories of my tribe), and yet of this moment. Everyone there was trying to get ahead, everyone was concerned about making it, it didn't matter if you were from Seoul or New South Wales, you wanted to plug into the global culture, via the cultural landmarks of English-speaking society. England had been a great power, and had left its mark everywhere. All of these former colonies, and some former enemies, felt a desire to measure up to the Oxfordian model of civilization. Wasn't this why Cecil Rhodes endowed his scholarship?

It was here, along the river Cherwell, in the wood-paneled rooms, at high table, among white china and crystal glassware that I fell out of place, out of time. Perhaps I didn't have enough concern for career and success. If I had stayed long enough, I could have become a convert. Things are not so different on my reservation, we want success. In the whole world, success—measured in terms of resume, salary, material goods—has become our common denominator, and perhaps Cecil Rhodes rightly celebrates the English, but to the nomad in me, all this makes no sense. It is the opposite of sense.

Rhodes Scholars will sometimes talk about the relationships they made at Oxford, but it's a matter of perspective. An Indian elder once told me that nomadic tribes had figured out a way to live so that they only had to spend about twenty hours a week "making a living." The rest of the time was spent really living: socializing, telling stories, singing songs through long winter nights. In Western culture, we haven't figured out how to spend less than forty hours at a desk. In this world, in Oxford's world, relationships aren't as important as getting ahead.

Asking these kinds of questions, I floundered. My meetings with my tutors were a study in acute, almost laughable anxiety and misunderstanding. The Don would say, *Mr. Bear Don't Walk, for next week please read these twenty books, and write an essay on the topic "The French Revolution: What and Why."* I would rush out to find these books. Searching the picked over libraries of my college (Merton) then the History Faculty library, then those of other colleges, I came up with two or three books from the "secondary" class. In a bind, I would consult various and sundry lesser books and come back to my professor in a week, with a handwritten tome entitled "The French Revolution What and Why." As I read aloud, the Don would indicate his displeasure by lighting a cigarette at the nearest possible opportunity. If I could read a few paragraphs before he lit up, my essay was considered decent. Once, and only once, did the Don wait until the end of my essay, only after giving remarks did he remember the cigarette. This was my lone triumph.

Perhaps my mistake was studying for a second BA in history. Classmates who continued on to higher degrees, in their area of study, seemed to enjoy their time better. I had no classes, just the occasional voluntary lecture. There was no hand-holding, and despite the tutorial system of one-on-one teaching, very little attention was paid to me. I had gone from a student of promise at my home to just another face in the crowd. I had been coddled in my old university. As a philosophy student interested in ideas, I had written papers about things like Romanticism, where the professor lectured, interacted with the students, and then expected original thought. Oxford had no such illusions about original thought. As an experiment at Oxford, I presented the paper I wrote on Romanticism from my first university, and got my Don smoking immediately. He didn't like my presumption to present original ideas. He wanted me to simply restate what the sources he had assigned said. This I did not do very well. After my first term of little feedback from my Don, I bought, on my trip home, a couple of large university textbooks of European and world history. I used these and their bibliographies much more than the list of texts from the Don that I couldn't find. I won't justify this, I was drowning, my head was barely above water.

Depression reared up, then. The gray rooms and sidewalks and bare trees of winter were becoming too much. The sun seemed to show its face only a few hours during the late fall and winter months. After the winter break, the sun went away completely. An avid runner, I tried to cope by working out. Something was coming on the edges of my eyesight. It felt like my vision

and my mind were going gray. To head it off, I ran daily along the crowded city streets, and tree-lined paths, and the muddy trails of the river. Oxford is a scenic place, with the boats and high-tension power lines—but nothing compared to my home.

Spurred by the coming grayness, I visited the college nurse. She listened and gave sympathy. With her, and not with my Dons, I could talk freely. She recommended I see the counseling service of the university. I gathered that depression was a common problem, a given discontent of the place. I read that Oxford had the highest rate of suicide of any school in the UK. I read about medications available in America to treat depression. The news stories in Britain about Prozac, which had just become available, were skeptical. Foul moods and black dog depressions were considered a right, and those bloody Americans were trying to medicate away their feelings.

During my summer home with family and tribe, when the sun was in the sky, I felt better. But during my second year at Oxford, as the summer light waned, I felt a more serious depression coming. It felt like a hole in my skull where darkness was escaping. Waking up in my small bed in my small room, I thought, “Oh shit, I’m still here.” I wanted Prozac; I got group therapy. In a room, around twenty Oxford students spoke of their problems. One had just tried suicide with pills, another had been found tying a rope to a light fixture, another had gauze bandages on her wrists, another with dark circles under his eyes barely spoke. Depressed as I was, I was still fighting. And I wasn’t going to get better around students who were worse off than I was. It terrified me to think of the quiet rooms of Oxford full of students who alternated between having the usual “essay crisis” and suicidal thoughts. I wasn’t there yet, but group therapy wasn’t enough and the hole in my head seemed to be expanding, the grayness in my vision growing.

I finally went to the doctor and asked after other kinds of treatment, for medication. They could give old-type antidepressants with a long list of side-effects and negative interactions with common foods. The other possibility, if I were serious, was hospitalization and shock therapy. A child of the 1970s, I had seen the movie *One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest*, based on the book by Ken Kesey. In the movie, the Indian, Chief Bromden, played by Will Sampson, must smother his fellow mental hospital patient, who had been lobotomized, then throw a sink through a window

to escape. In a way, that's what I did, without smothering the lobotomized fellow patient part—there were too many.

Talking with fellow Rhodes Scholars, I found similar feelings of despair and dislocation. People felt like they were treading water at Oxford, some talked of leaving. After speaking with my counselors, my support group peers, the school nurse, and the student advisor at the Rhodes Trust, after a year and a half, I decided to leave. It was apparent that while depression and feelings of displacement and alienation were common, very few people left. This game was for keeps. It was also clear that while there were many resources available to a Rhodes Scholar, real help with the one thing that was keeping me from staying, namely depression, was not available. It was simple and not so simple. Depression touched everything.

Before I left, I met a fellow Montanan who went to my high school thirty years before me. He was not Indian and he took to England, marrying an English woman and having English children. When I told him that I was planning on leaving Oxford and the Rhodes, he said that he continually made plans to take a trip to the Bighorn Mountains on my reservation. First he planned this trip with his kids. Now that they were grown, he made plans by himself. He said that there wasn't a day that he doesn't dig into the bottom drawer of his desk and pull out the topographical maps. Maybe more than anyone else in England, he understood, and he told to leave while I still could.

The day before I packed up my suitcase and boarded the bus to the airport, I visited the Pitt River Museum. Located about a mile from my dorm, it's an old-fashioned anthropological collection of spears and masks and other tribal ephemera collected from all over the world. In a dark corner, I stumbled upon a display case. In it, a large American Indian war bonnet, covered with many eagle feathers, stood atop a black velvet wigmaker's stand. The headdress' headband was beaded with distinct colors, the powder blue and dusty pink of my tribe. Every piece that made the headdress had been gathered in the tribal world of the person who made it—I had seen war bonnets made. Though the maker was unknown to me, the world it was made in was familiar. I knew the same rivers, along which the bald eagle, who gave his long feathers and down, hunted for fish. Ermines, white in winter, were hung down the sides of the headdress, framing the face of the wearer. I knew these weasel-like animals hunted in rock piles and stumps along river

bottoms of the Yellowstone and Bighorn Rivers. Deerskin was used to make the headdress cap. Sinew held it all together. My tribal name is Outstanding War Bonnet. The plaque identified the owner of this war bonnet, a great chief of my tribe, a man named Plenty Coups. He had given his war regalia to an anthropologist who placed it in the museum. The sight of it cut through layers of darkness. I wanted to touch those feathers behind the glass, and feel the way a single feather comes together like a zipper when you run your fingers along its edge. I wanted to feel the ermine soft against my face. I wanted to take in the smoky smell of things that had once been alive, walking and flying along the riverbanks of home. I wanted to feel the subtle weight of the headdress as I hoisted it and put it on—it feels like wearing an eagle on your head. But I didn't dare, the display case glass was too thick. In England, people don't wear such things. I saw the war bonnet as a sign, I had earned a great honor for my people, and now I could come home.

Speech, September 16, 2017 Rhodes House: Dr. Menaka Guruswamy

I am so delighted to be here and thank you to Rhodes House, the trustees, fellow scholars and current scholars for this tremendous honour of a portrait. It is a remarkable privilege to be part of this sisterhood of extraordinary women Rhodes Scholars – you are rocket scientists, artificial intelligence designers, lawyers, teachers, doctors, researchers at the cutting edge of new discoveries, artists, poets, writers, activists and political leaders. You are trouble makers for you unsettle the status quo. You inspire me, you have taught me and you set high standards for me.

My mom put up a series of pictures of me when I left home for college, a shrine if you will in various stages of my development - from bawling to crawling to walking to speaking to litigating – but really THIS portrait trumps her collage. She might disagree, of course. I wanted to thank her, my dad and my partner for their unconditional love and support. Behind every successful woman there is always a wonderful family, and a fierce statute that prohibits sex discrimination. 😊

I came to Oxford and to Rhodes House as young person of 23-24 years in 1998, full of excitement and curiosity. But, as I walked through the halls of Oxford and this house, I was struck by how no one in the paintings that graced their walls looked like me, or really anyone of my fellow Rhodes Scholars from India, or most of the scholars from African countries or really many of my fellow scholars from the rest of the world. And the dissimilarities I am referring to, are not really hair styles - if you know what I mean. The message overall seemed to be: you're here, but you really don't belong.

And we almost didn't get here: for us women these Rhodes scholarships are only but 40 years old. For us, this is not the oldest scholarship in the

world. It is a young sisterhood of talented women, making change by our very existence and by our persistence, almost always against great odds in our professional and personal lives.

That this celebration is for us – Women Rhodes Scholars tells us much about the re-imagination of Rhodes Scholarships over the last few decades. It is the British Sex Discrimination Act, 1975 that enabled Cecil Rhodes's will to be amended, to end our exclusion. Though in real terms the exclusion of many others continued for a long while – black South Africans, LGBT folk, a never ending list of those who didn't really feature on the walls and halls of the Oxford I came to.

Today's Rhodes Scholars better reflect the beauty of the diverse world we live in, and also reflect, the intent of Rhodes House, the Trust and selection committees to better reflect this diversity of human experience and imagine the world rather differently from how the first founder did.

Unsurprisingly, the complexities of the origins of the Rhodes Scholarships, and the source of Cecil Rhodes money and his politics remain an enduring moral challenge for all of us – women and men, who continue to benefit of the privilege of being Rhodes Scholars.

As elaborated in the will of the first founder, Cecil Rhodes' goals in instituting 'the scholarships at Oxford' was for the *“education of young colonists at a British University is to be a great advantage to them, for giving breath to their views, in instruction in life and manners and for instilling into their mind the **advantages of the colonies** as well as to the United Kingdom of the **retention of the unity of the empire.**”*

Unquote.

As an Indian it was even more poignant to come for a post graduate degree in England whose history of colonisation and plunder of my country; is something we still pay for. And whose lingering colonial remnants include poverty and deep divisions that have not healed.

How is it then – that one reconciles moral integrity with the enjoyment of such privilege that the Rhodes Scholarships and an Oxford degree bring? One does so, by deploying this privilege to good use: by that I mean to push the envelope in ways that this privilege allows you to. To ask tougher questions of authority, to attempt to always expand human freedom and be aware when our footsteps contract such freedom, and to practice our professions in ways that better perpetuate equality, and never to forget that our higher education degrees, our time in this Oxford sunshine and the ability of this extraordinary scholarship to open doors – *in built on the backs of Africans*.

What better way than to reimagine the legacy for Rhodes Scholars than instead of expanding the colonial empire- we expand dignity, embrace fraternity, enhance equality and disseminate opportunities. That we lead the fight in preserving our planet, making clear the enormity of climate change in these times of disbelievers in the sciences, and stay at the head of innovative thinking on matters as varied as artificial intelligence to mechanisms for wider accessibility of clean drinking water.

This is a time of some magnitude – for this is a time of great turmoil, of deep division and polarisation, of muscular populism, ever widening inequality, and a contempt for intellectual life. It is now that our *privilege* must be put to use to challenges these phenomena, for our collective moral leadership, will shape the future of our species and safe guard our planet.

The writer James Baldwin once said, “Not everything that is faced can be changed, but nothing can be changed until it is faced.”

To always using this privilege to never turning away from that which needs to be changed, and

to always facing that which seems to be unchangeable – that is what these scholarships must come to mean in these times that we live in.

Thank you.

the RHODES PROJECT

'How Do You Do It?' Hard Lessons in Work-Life Balance





[Anand Giridharadas](#) Follow

Writer. Author of "The True American: Murder and Mercy in Texas" and "India Calling: An Intimate Portrait of a Nation's Remaking."

Jul 31, 2015

The Thriving World, the Wilting World, and You

I gave the following speech at the [Aspen Institute's Action Forum](#), on July 29, 2015, in Aspen. The talk—on generosity versus justice—was to my fellow fellows in the Aspen Global Leadership Network. As a result, it contains some obscure jokes and references. After it popped up in [David Brooks's New York Times column](#) and stirred an outpouring of discussion, sympathetic and critical, I decided to post the prepared text here on Medium. [The video is also available here and below.](#) Discuss!

First of all, a warm welcome to the Goldman Sachs Ten Billion Women lunch. Some of you will remember our very successful 10,000 Women lunch a few years ago. We have hugely scaled up since then. In fact, there are now more women receiving mentorship from Goldman than there are actually women on earth.

Just kidding. This is the opposite of a Goldman Sachs lunch — not least because there will be no lunch.

It is delicious to be back in Aspen. The last time we were here, one year ago, on the final morning of this forum, my wife, Priya, sent me out of our room with a shopping list of four items: two of those items were burritos, and two of those items were pregnancy tests. I returned and asked which she wanted first. She said the burrito, which told me what the test soon confirmed: that we were having a baby. Today, one year later, four-month-old Orion, named for the stars above, is the closest I'll ever get to a successful action pledge.

I was asked to speak to you today about forgiveness, based on a book I wrote. As I considered what I wanted to say to this community that Priya and I cherish, the topic meandered. But it has stayed true in one sense: after I have spoken, I will need your forgiveness.

Because my subject today is not easy. I want to reflect on where we stand as a community on some of the injustices of our time. I want to suggest that we may not always be the leaders we think we are.

Four years and eight days ago, I read in the newspaper an astonishing story. A man in Texas, a white supremacist named Mark Stroman, had been executed the night before. (So far, so Texas.) But in the white supremacist's final days, one of his victims, a Muslim immigrant named Raisuddin Bhuiyan, had been fighting to save the life of this man who shot him in the face in the feverish aftermath of 9/11.

I was intrigued and before long, totally hooked. I went on a journey of reporting this story and writing a book about it, "The True American," that at its heart was about how my country was slowly dividing into two parallel societies — a republic of dreams, and a republic of fears.

After Raisuddin was shot, his life was in tatters. But he remained in America, fought hard and became whole again. And once he had managed to secure the American Dream for which he had come, he reached the conclusion that he had accessed that dream in a way that many native-born Americans could not. And he came to see that the man who shot him was on the other side of that line of fortune, born to a mother who told him she wished she'd aborted him, having cycled through the dismal schools and prisons that ruin so many young American men. And so Raisuddin, in the name of his faith and of his newfound American citizenship, forgave his erstwhile attacker — and then, remarkably, took the State of Texas and its governor to court, to try to prevent them from putting Stroman to death.

Reporting this story was for me a radicalizing experience, an awakening. It brought to vivid, pungent life what we all read about every morning as a defining story of our time — that America, and so many other societies today, has a grave inequality problem; that so many places in this disruptive, revolutionary moment we live in are partitioned lands of thriving here and wilting there.

The world, especially the developing world, has hugely reduced poverty in recent decades. Yet we plainly live in a new Gilded Age, in which extraordinary changes in our economies and technologies have created, as revolutionary times always do, extreme winners and extreme losers.

Some of us — probably many of us in this room — have the feeling of living in one of the most extraordinary times in human history; many others around the world have yet to see those

times benefit them in any tangible way; and still others are watching their lives get worse day by day — sometimes, perhaps, so that ours can get better.

We are a community branded as leaders living through this revolutionary moment, living through this extreme winning and extreme losing. It falls on us to ask the tough questions about it.

But we here in Aspen are in a bit of a tight spot.

Our deliberations about what to do about this extreme winning and losing are sponsored by the extreme winners. This community was formed by stalwarts of American capitalism; today we sit in spaces named after Pepsi (as in the beverage) and Koch (as in the brothers); our discussion of Martin Luther King and Omelas is sponsored by folks like Accenture, David Rubenstein and someone named Pom; we are deeply enmeshed and invested in the establishment and systems we are supposed to question. And yet we are a community of leaders that claims to seek justice. These identities are tricky to reconcile.

Today I want to challenge how we reconcile them. There is no consensus on anything here, as any seminar participant knows. But I believe that many of our discussions operate within what I will call the “Aspen Consensus,” which, like the “Washington Consensus” or “Beijing Consensus,” describes a nest of shared assumptions within which diverse ideas hatch. The “Aspen Consensus” demarcates what we mostly agree not to question, even as we question so much. And though I call it the Aspen Consensus, it is in many ways the prevailing ethic among the winners of our age worldwide, across business, government and even nonprofits.

The Aspen Consensus, in a nutshell, is this: the winners of our age must be challenged to do more good. But never, ever tell them to do less harm.

The Aspen Consensus holds that capitalism’s rough edges must be sanded and its surplus fruit shared, but the underlying system must never be questioned.

The Aspen Consensus says, “Give back,” which is of course a compassionate and noble thing. But, amid the \$20 million second homes and \$4,000 parkas of Aspen, it is gauche to observe that giving back is also a Band-Aid that winners stick onto the system that has privileged them, in the conscious or subconscious hope that it will forestall major surgery to that system — surgery that might threaten their privileges.

The Aspen Consensus, I believe, tries to market the idea of generosity as a substitute for the idea of justice. It says: make money in all the usual ways, and then give some back through a

foundation, or factor in social impact, or add a second or third bottom line to your analysis, or give a left sock to the poor for every right sock you sell.

The Aspen Consensus says, “Do more good” — not “Do less harm.”

I want to sow the seed of a difficult conversation today about this Aspen Consensus. Because I love this community, and I fear for all of us — myself very much included — that we may not be as virtuous as we think we are, that history may not be as kind to us as we hope it will, that in the final analysis our role in the inequities of our age may not be remembered well.

This may sound strange at first, because the winners of our disruptive age are arguably as concerned about the plight of the losers as any elite in human history. But the question I’m raising is about what the winners propose to do in response. And I believe the winners’ response, certainly not always but still too often, is to soften the blows of the system but to preserve the system at any cost. This response is problematic. It keeps the winners too safe. It allows far too many of us to evade hard questions about our role in contributing to the disease we also seek to treat.

So let us step outside the safe, pleasant Aspen Consensus for a moment. Let us talk honestly about some of the harm the winners of our age commit while doing well for themselves, before compensating for it by also doing good.

First, the winners have benefited in the last few decades from a massive re-concentration of wealth by the upper echelons of society globally. The rich didn’t suddenly get better at algebra. The world economy changed, yes. And as it did, the rich fought for policies that helped them stack up, protect and bequeath the money: resisting taxes on inheritances and financial transactions, fighting for carried interest to be taxed differently from income, insisting on a sacred right to conceal money in trusts, shell companies and weird islands. This hoarding does not merely correlate with the have-nots’ struggles. It is in a certain sense a cause, because that is the money that would be going to schools, to vocational training, to infrastructure building, to social insurance, to financial aid. We know this because there are societies where a lot more of this money is taken from the most fortunate, and it results pretty straightforwardly in less cruelty for the least fortunate.

Second, the winners of our age are huge beneficiaries of the generation-long effort by the corporate world to offload risk and volatility from the balance sheet, often transferring them onto workers. The growing rationalization of the business world in recent decades, abetted by the development of management as a science, led to greater focus, increased efficiencies, rising valuations — and bitter realities for workers. The car-service Uber gets a lot of bad press for denying responsibility for its workers’ lives, health, desire for career growth. Yet

more and more of the world's workforce resembles Uber drivers, who shoulder risk for the companies they serve, while no one bears their risk. The contract worker is the future in this supposedly disruptive new age, and she is forced to work volatile hours that change week to week, drop her child off at extreme daycare at 3 a.m., juggle an income that bounces around willy-nilly, knowing that if anything happens to her, the employer owes her nothing.

Third, the winners of our age have benefited hugely from their institutions' growing remoteness from any community. The increasing globalization and virtualization of business has insulated the privileged from the effect they have on others' lives, with devastating consequences. In the old days, if a company CEO suddenly dumped the defined-benefits pension, you knew who to go see to complain. Today it may be an unseen private-equity fund that lobbies for the change. In the mortgage meltdown, there were so many layers of abstraction between traders and the actual things they were trading, that few smelled a rat. Businesses' tax-averse profits ricochet through Bermuda, then cross the Atlantic for what's called a "double Irish with a Dutch sandwich." Some of the leading companies of our age pay negligible taxes, belonging as they do a little bit everywhere and nowhere in particular. The ultimate virtualization has occurred in finance, where banks, which once saw themselves as servants of real-economy firms, decided that finance was an end in itself—and chose idle speculation, rather than aiding the creation of tangible economic value, as their *raison d'être*.

Now, a significant minority of us here don't work in business. Yet even in other sectors, we're living in an age in which the assumptions and values of business are more influential than they ought to be. Our culture has turned businessmen and -women into philosophers, revolutionaries, social activists, saviors of the poor. We are at risk of forgetting other languages of human progress: of morality, of democracy, of solidarity, of decency, of justice.

Sometimes we succumb to the seductive Davos dogma that the business approach is the only thing that can change the world, in the face of so much historical evidence to the contrary.

And so when the winners of our age answer the problem of inequality and injustice, all too often they answer it within the logic and frameworks of business and markets. We talk a lot about giving back, profit-sharing, win-wins, social-impact investing, triple bottom lines (which, by the way, are something my four-month-old son has).

Sometimes I wonder whether these various forms of giving back have become to our era what the papal indulgence was to the Middle Ages: a relatively inexpensive way of getting oneself seemingly on the right of justice, without having to alter the fundamentals of one's life.

Because when you give back, when you have a side foundation, a side CSR project, a side social-impact fund, you gain an exemption from more rigorous scrutiny. You helped 100 poor kids in the ghetto learn how to code. The indulgence spares you from questions about the larger systems and structures you sustain that benefit you and punish others: weak banking regulations and labor laws, zoning rules that happen to keep the poor far from your neighborhood, porous safety nets, the enduring and unrepaired legacies of slavery and racial supremacy and caste systems.

These systems and structures have victims, and we here are at risk, I think, of confusing generosity toward those victims with justice for those victims. For generosity is a win-win, but justice often is not. The winners of our age don't enjoy the idea that some of them might actually have to lose, to sacrifice, for justice to be done. In Aspen you don't hear a lot of ideas involving the privileged and powerful actually being in the wrong, and needing to surrender their status and position for the sake of justice.

We talk a lot here about giving more. We don't talk about taking less.

We talk a lot here about what we should be doing more of. We don't talk about what we should be doing less of.

I think sometimes that our Aspen Consensus has an underdeveloped sense of human darkness. There is risk in too much positivity. Sometimes to do right by people, you must begin by naming who is in the wrong.

So let's just come out and say the thing you're never supposed to say in Aspen: that many of the winners of our age are active, vigorous contributors to the problems they bravely seek to solve. And for the greater good to prevail on any number of issues, some people will have to lose — to actually do less harm, and not merely more good.

We know that enlightened capital didn't get rid of the slave trade. Impact investing didn't abolish child labor and put fire escapes on tenement factories. Drug makers didn't stop slipping antifreeze into medicine as part of a CSR initiative. In each of these cases, the interests of the many had to defeat the interests of the recalcitrant few.

Look, I know this speech won't make me popular at the bar tonight. But this, for me, is an act of stepping into the arena — something our wonderful teacher-moderators challenged us to do.

I know many of you agree with me already, because we have bonded for years over a shared feeling that something in this extraordinary community didn't feel quite right. There are many others who, instead of criticizing as I do, are living rejections of this Aspen Consensus — quitting lucrative lives, risking everything, to fight the system. You awe me: you who battle for gay rights in India, who live ardently among the rural poor in South Africa, who risk assassination or worse to report news of corruption.

I am not speaking to you tonight, and I know there are many of you. I am speaking to those who, like me, may feel caught between the ideals championed by this Institute and the self-protective instinct that is always the reflex of people with much to lose.

I am as guilty as anyone. I am part of the wave of gentrification and displacement in Brooklyn, one of the most rapidly gentrifying places in America. Any success I've had can be traced to my excellent choice in parents and their ability to afford incredibly expensive private schools. I like good wine. I use Uber — a lot. I once stole playing cards from a private plane. I want my new son to have everything I can give him, even though I know that this is the beginning of the inequality I loathe.

I often wonder if what I do — writing — is capable of making any difference.

When I entered this fellowship, I was so taken with that summons to make a difference. But, to be honest, I have also always had a complicated relationship to this place.

I have heard too many of us talking of how only after the IPO or the next few million will we feel our kids have security. These inflated notions of what it takes to “make a living” and “support a family” are the beginning of so much neglect of our larger human family.

I walk into too many rooms named for people and companies that don't mean well for the world, and then in those rooms we talk and talk about making the world better.

I struggled in particular with the project. I couldn't figure out what bothered me about it for the longest time. I wasn't very good at coming up with one or getting it done.

And I realized, through conversation with fellows in similar dilemmas, what my problem was. Many people, including some being featured later tonight, are engaged in truly extraordinary and commendable projects. We are at our best when our projects take the system head on. But I wrestled with what I perceived to be the idea behind the project, of creating generous side endeavors rather than fighting to reform, bite by bite, the hands that feed us. I felt the project distracted us from the real question: is your regular life — not your side project — on the right side of justice?

Ask yourself: Does the world need more food companies donating playgrounds to children, or rather reformed food companies that don't profit from fattening children?

Does the world need more Chinese tycoons engaging in philanthropy in China, or rather more honest and less corrupt Chinese tycoons?

Does the world need Goldman Sachs partners mentoring women or giving money to poor kids' schools, or rather Goldman partners gambling everything to say: the way business is done at my firm isn't what it should be, and I will fight to make Goldman a steward rather than a vampire squid of resources, even if that costs me my job?

I am reminded here of the final words of our Omelas reading: "They seem to know where they are going, the ones who walk away from Omelas."

Sometimes, I find myself wondering what we're actually doing here in Aspen. Are we here to change the system, or be changed by it? Are we using our collective strength to challenge the powerful, or are we helping to make an unjust, unpalatable system feel a little more digestible?

And yet I still come, year after year. Why? Because there is something amazing about this community. And because I have the feeling that we could be even more than we have been: genuine stewards of this chaotic, revolutionary moment in world affairs.

But if we are to play that role, I think we need to consider a fundamental shift in orientation in this community: from working within the system, to honestly questioning where that system fails people; from the unthreatening idea of doing good by doing well, to the braver notion of doing good by threatening our opportunity to do well.

This community has meant so much to me and to Priya. It always will. I am filled with hope, as I leave you here today, that we will find a way to become what has rarely existed in history: an establishment organization that questions the establishment, a society of traitors to our class, of people who choose to spend the capital of their privilege on questioning, and repairing, the system that minted the privilege.

Or we can just go on playing and winning at the same old game, and giving a little back. But I have a feeling this community, summoning the genuine spirit of leadership, could muster the gall to reimagine the game itself.

Forgive me. And thank you.



RHODES
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First Year Retreat

Rhodes House

Hilary 2019

Sunday

Session 4:

Lived Experiences

and Insights on

Justice, Injustice

The Ones Who Walk Away From Omelas

From *The Wind's Twelve Quarters: Short Stories*
by Ursula Le Guin

With a clamor of bells that set the swallows soaring, the Festival of Summer came to the city Omelas, bright-towered by the sea. The rigging of the boats in harbor sparkled with flags. In the streets between houses with red roofs and painted walls, between old moss-grown gardens and under avenues of trees, past great parks and public buildings, processions moved. Some were decorous: old people in long stiff robes of mauve and grey, grave master workmen, quiet, merry women carrying their babies and chatting as they walked. In other streets the music beat faster, a shimmering of gong and tambourine, and the people went dancing, the procession was a dance. Children dodged in and out, their high calls rising like the swallows' crossing flights, over the music and the singing. All the processions wound towards the north side of the city, where on the great water-meadow called the Green' Fields boys and girls, naked in the bright air, with mud-stained feet and ankles and long, lithe arms, exercised their restive horses before the race. The horses wore no gear at all but a halter without bit. Their manes were braided with streamers of silver, gold, and green. They flared their nostrils and pranced and boasted to one another; they were vastly excited, the horse being the only animal who has adopted our ceremonies as his own. Far off to the north and west the mountains stood up half encircling Omelas on her bay. The air of morning was so clear that the snow still crowning the Eighteen Peaks burned with white-gold fire across the miles of sunlit air, under the dark blue of the sky. There was just enough wind to make the banners that marked the racecourse snap and flutter now and then. In the silence of the broad green meadows one could hear the music winding through the city streets, farther and nearer and ever approaching, a cheerful faint sweetness of the air that from time to time trembled and gathered together and broke out into the great joyous clanging of the bells.

Joyous! How is one to tell about joy? How describe the citizens of Omelas?

They were not simple folk, you see, though they were happy. But we do not say the words of cheer much any more. All smiles have become archaic. Given a description such as this one tends to make certain assumptions. Given a description such as this one tends to look next for the King, mounted on a splendid stallion and surrounded by his noble knights, or perhaps in a golden litter borne by great-muscled slaves. But there was no king. They did not use swords, or keep slaves. They were not barbarians. I do not know the rules and laws of their society, but I suspect that they were singularly few. As they did without monarchy and slavery, so they also got on without the stock exchange, the advertisement, the secret police, and the bomb. Yet I repeat that these were not simple folk, not dulcet shepherds, noble savages, bland utopians. They were not less complex than us. The trouble is that we have a bad habit, encouraged by pedants and sophisticates, of considering happiness as something rather stupid. Only pain is intellectual, only evil interesting. This is the treason of the artist: a refusal to admit the banality of evil and the terrible boredom of pain. If you can't lick 'em, join 'em. If it hurts, repeat it. But to praise despair is to condemn delight, to embrace violence is to lose hold of everything else. We have almost lost hold; we can no longer describe a happy man, nor make any celebration of joy. How can I tell you about the people of Omelas? They were not naive and happy children – though their children were, in fact, happy. They were mature, intelligent, passionate adults whose lives were not wretched. O miracle! but I wish I could describe it better. I wish I could convince you.

Omelas sounds in my words like a city in a fairy tale, long ago and far away, once upon a time. Perhaps it would be best if you imagined it as your own fancy bids, assuming it will rise to the occasion, for certainly I cannot suit you all. For instance, how about technology? I think that there would be no cars or helicopters in and above the streets; this follows from the fact that the people of Omelas are happy people. Happiness is based on a just discrimination of what is necessary, what is neither necessary nor destructive, and what is destructive. In the middle category, however – that of the unnecessary but undestructive, that of comfort, luxury, exuberance, etc. -- they could perfectly well have central heating, subway trains, washing machines, and all kinds of marvelous devices not yet invented here, floating light-sources, fuelless power, a cure for the common cold. Or they could have none of that: it doesn't matter. As you like it. I incline to think that people from towns up and down the coast have been coming in to Omelas during the last days before the Festival on very fast little trains and double-decked trams, and that the train station of Omelas is actually the handsomest building in town, though plainer than the magnificent Farmers' Market. But even granted trains, I fear that Omelas so far strikes some of you as goody-goody. Smiles, bells, parades, horses, bleh. If so, please add an orgy. If an orgy would help, don't hesitate. Let us not, however, have temples from which issue beautiful nude priests and priestesses already half in ecstasy and ready to copulate with any man or woman, lover or stranger who desires union with the deep godhead of the blood, although that was my first idea. But really it would be better not to have any temples in Omelas – at least, not manned temples. Religion yes, clergy no. Surely the beautiful nudes can just wander about, offering themselves like divine souffles to the hunger of the needy and the rapture of the flesh. Let them join the processions. Let tambourines be struck above the copulations, and the glory of desire be proclaimed upon the gongs, and (a not unimportant point) let the offspring of these delightful rituals be beloved and looked after by all. One thing I know there is none of in Omelas is guilt. But what else should there be? I thought at first there were no drugs, but that is puritanical. For those who like it, the faint insistent sweetness of *drooz* may perfume the ways of the city, *drooz* which first brings a great lightness and brilliance to the mind and limbs, and then after some hours a dreamy languor, and wonderful visions at last of the very arcana and inmost secrets of the Universe, as well as exciting the pleasure of sex beyond all belief; and it is not habit-forming. For more modest tastes I think there ought to be beer. What else, what else belongs in the joyous city? The sense of victory, surely, the celebration of courage. But as we did without clergy, let us do without soldiers. The joy built upon successful slaughter is not the right kind of joy; it will not do; it is fearful and it is trivial. A boundless and generous contentment, a magnanimous triumph felt not against some outer enemy but in communion with the finest and fairest in the souls of all men everywhere and the splendor of the world's summer; this is what swells the hearts of the people of Omelas, and the victory they celebrate is that of life. I really don't think many of them need to take *drooz*.

Most of the processions have reached the Green Fields by now. A marvelous smell of cooking goes forth from the red and blue tents of the provisioners. The faces of small children are amiably sticky; in the benign grey beard of a man a couple of crumbs of rich pastry are entangled. The youths and girls have mounted their horses and are beginning to group around the starting line of the course. An old woman, small, fat, and laughing, is passing out flowers from a basket, and tall young men, wear her flowers in their shining hair. A child of nine or ten sits at the edge of the crowd, alone, playing on a wooden flute. People pause to listen, and they smile, but they do not speak to him, for he never ceases playing and never sees them, his dark eyes wholly rapt in the sweet, thin magic of the tune.

He finishes, and slowly lowers his hands holding the wooden flute.

As if that little private silence were the signal, all at once a trumpet sounds from the pavilion near the starting line: imperious, melancholy, piercing. The horses rear on their slender legs, and some of them neigh in answer. Sober-faced, the young riders stroke the horses' necks and soothe them, whispering, "Quiet, quiet, there my beauty, my hope. . . ." They begin to form in rank along the starting line. The crowds along the racecourse are like a field of grass and flowers in the wind. The Festival of Summer has begun.

Do you believe? Do you accept the festival, the city, the joy? No? Then let me describe one more thing.

In a basement under one of the beautiful public buildings of Omelas, or perhaps in the cellar of one of its spacious private homes, there is a room. It has one locked door, and no window. A little light seeps in dustily between cracks in the boards, secondhand from a cobwebbed window somewhere across the cellar. In one corner of the little room a couple of mops, with stiff, clotted, foul-smelling heads, stand near a rusty bucket. The floor is dirt, a little damp to the touch, as cellar dirt usually is. The room is about three paces long and two wide: a mere broom closet or disused tool room. In the room a child is sitting. It could be a boy or a girl. It looks about six, but actually is nearly ten. It is feeble-minded. Perhaps it was born defective or perhaps it has become imbecile through fear, malnutrition, and neglect. It picks its nose and occasionally fumbles vaguely with its toes or genitals, as it sits haunched in the corner farthest from the bucket and the two mops. It is afraid of the mops. It finds them horrible. It shuts its eyes, but it knows the mops are still standing there; and the door is locked; and nobody will come. The door is always locked; and nobody ever comes, except that sometimes-the child has no understanding of time or interval – sometimes the door rattles terribly and opens, and a person, or several people, are there. One of them may come and kick the child to make it stand up. The others never come close, but peer in at it with frightened, disgusted eyes. The food bowl and the water jug are hastily filled, the door is locked, the eyes disappear. The people at the door never say anything, but the child, who has not always lived in the tool room, and can remember sunlight and its mother's voice, sometimes speaks. "I will be good," it says. "Please let me out. I will be good!" They never answer. The child used to scream for help at night, and cry a good deal, but now it only makes a kind of whining, "eh-haa, eh-haa," and it speaks less and less often. It is so thin there are no calves to its legs; its belly protrudes; it lives on a half-bowl of corn meal and grease a day. It is naked. Its buttocks and thighs are a mass of festered sores, as it sits in its own excrement continually.

They all know it is there, all the people of Omelas. Some of them have come to see it, others are content merely to know it is there. They all know that it has to be there. Some of them understand why, and some do not, but they all understand that their happiness, the beauty of their city, the tenderness of their friendships, the health of their children, the wisdom of their scholars, the skill of their makers, even the abundance of their harvest and the kindly weathers of their skies, depend wholly on this child's abominable misery.

This is usually explained to children when they are between eight and twelve, whenever they seem capable of understanding; and most of those who come to see the child are young people, though often enough an adult comes, or comes back, to see the child. No matter how well

the matter has been explained to them, these young spectators are always shocked and sickened at the sight. They feel disgust, which they had thought themselves superior to. They feel anger, outrage, impotence, despite all the explanations. They would like to do something for the child. But there is nothing they can do. If the child were brought up into the sunlight out of that vile place, if it were cleaned and fed and comforted, that would be a good thing, indeed; but if it were done, in that day and hour all the prosperity and beauty and delight of Omelas would wither and be destroyed. Those are the terms. To exchange all the goodness and grace of every life in Omelas for that single, small improvement: to throw away the happiness of thousands for the chance of the happiness of one: that would be to let guilt within the walls indeed.

The terms are strict and absolute; there may not even be a kind word spoken to the child.

Often the young people go home in tears, or in a tearless rage, when they have seen the child and faced this terrible paradox. They may brood over it for weeks or years. But as time goes on they begin to realize that even if the child could be released, it would not get much good of its freedom: a little vague pleasure of warmth and food, no doubt, but little more. It is too degraded and imbecile to know any real joy. It has been afraid too long ever to be free of fear. Its habits are too uncouth for it to respond to humane treatment. Indeed, after so long it would probably be wretched without walls about it to protect it, and darkness for its eyes, and its own excrement to sit in. Their tears at the bitter injustice dry when they begin to perceive the terrible justice of reality, and to accept it. Yet it is their tears and anger, the trying of their generosity and the acceptance of their helplessness, which are perhaps the true source of the splendor of their lives. Theirs is no vapid, irresponsible happiness. They know that they, like the child, are not free. They know compassion. It is the existence of the child, and their knowledge of its existence, that makes possible the nobility of their architecture, the poignancy of their music, the profundity of their science. It is because of the child that they are so gentle with children. They know that if the wretched one were not there snivelling in the dark, the other one, the flute-player, could make no joyful music as the young riders line up in their beauty for the race in the sunlight of the first morning of summer.

Now do you believe in them? Are they not more credible? But there is one more thing to tell, and this is quite incredible.

At times one of the adolescent girls or boys who go to see the child does not go home to weep or rage, does not, in fact, go home at all. Sometimes also a man or woman much older falls silent for a day or two, and then leaves home. These people go out into the street, and walk down the street alone. They keep walking, and walk straight out of the city of Omelas, through the beautiful gates. They keep walking across the farmlands of Omelas. Each one goes alone, youth or girl man or woman. Night falls; the traveler must pass down village streets, between the houses with yellow-lit windows, and on out into the darkness of the fields. Each alone, they go west or north, towards the mountains. They go on. They leave Omelas, they walk ahead into the darkness, and they do not come back. The place they go towards is a place even less imaginable to most of us than the city of happiness. I cannot describe it at all. It is possible that it does not exist. But they seem to know where they are going, the ones who walk away from Omelas.



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Sunday

Session 5:

**Applications and
Practices of Justice**



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Session 6:

No One Way to Lead

AUTOBIOGRAPHY IN FIVE SHORT CHAPTERS

by Portia Nelson

I.

I walk, down the street.
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.
I fall in.
I am lost... I am helpless.
It isn't my fault.
It takes forever to find a way out.

II.

I walk down the same street.
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.
I pretend I don't see it.
I fall in again.
I can't believe I am in the same place
but, it isn't my fault.
It still takes a long time to get out.

III.

I walk down the same street.
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.
I see it there.
I still fall in...it's a habit.
My eyes are open.
I know where I am.
It is my fault.
I get out immediately.

IV.

I walk down the same street.
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.
I walk around it.

V.

I walk down another street.

The Invitation

Oriah Mountain Dreamer

It doesn't interest me what you do for a living. I want to know what you ache for and if you dare to dream of meeting your heart's longing.

It doesn't interest me how old you are. I want to know if you will risk looking like a fool for love, for your dream, for the adventure of being alive.

It doesn't interest me what planets are squaring your moon. I want to know if you have touched the centre of your own sorrow, if you have been opened by life's betrayals or have become shrivelled and closed from fear of further pain.

I want to know if you can sit with pain, mine or your own, without moving to hide it, or fade it, or fix it.

I want to know if you can be with joy, mine or your own; if you can dance with wildness and let the ecstasy fill you to the tips of your fingers and toes without cautioning us to be careful, be realistic, remember the limitations of being human.

It doesn't interest me if the story you are telling me is true. I want to know if you can disappoint another to be true to yourself. If you can bear the accusation of betrayal and not betray your own soul. If you can be faithless and therefore trustworthy.

I want to know if you can see Beauty even when it is not pretty every day. And if you can source your own life from its presence.

I want to know if you can live with failure, yours and mine, and still stand at the edge of the lake and shout to the silver of the full moon, 'Yes.'

It doesn't interest me to know where you live or how much money you have. I want to know if you can get up after the night of grief and despair, weary and bruised to the bone and do what needs to be done to feed the children.

It doesn't interest me who you know or how you came to be here. I want to know if you will stand in the centre of the fire with me and not shrink back.

It doesn't interest me where or what or with whom you have studied. I want to know what sustains you from the inside when all else falls away.

I want to know if you can be alone with yourself and if you truly like the company you keep in the empty moments.



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Monday

Optional:

Unwind, Relax and

Recreate



RHODES SCHOLARSHIP

First Year Retreat

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Hilary 2019

Monday: No One Way to Lead

**Optional:
Unwind, Relax and
Recreate**

So Much Happiness

Naomi Shihab Nye

For Michael

It is difficult to know what to do with so much happiness.
With sadness there is something to rub against,
a wound to tend with lotion and cloth.
When the world falls in around you, you have pieces to pick up,
something to hold in your hands, like ticket stubs or change.

But happiness floats.
It doesn't need you to hold it down.
It doesn't need anything.
Happiness lands on the roof of the next house, singing,
and disappears when it wants to.
You are happy either way.
Even the fact that you once lived in a peaceful tree house
and now live over a quarry of noise and dust
cannot make you unhappy.
Everything has a life of its own,
it too could wake up filled with possibilities
of coffee cake and ripe peaches,
and love even the floor which needs to be swept,
the soiled linens and scratched records . . .

Since there is no place large enough
to contain so much happiness,
you shrug, you raise your hands, and it flows out of you
into everything you touch. You are not responsible.
You take no credit, as the night sky takes no credit,
for the moon, but continues to hold it, and share it,
and in that way, be known.