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ARNHEM, THE NETHERLANDS  
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Hayy, I'm ZubinNur, I was born in England, and lived for ten years in Germany. I now live in The Netherlands; I have been here for longer than I have lived anywhere. Similar to England the Netherlands has colonial roots... there is a lot of ground to heal in both countries in order to evolve out of the distorted ideologies that we used to give ourselves permission to abuse and misuse other human beings. Our ancestors have bent and misused our religions to give us permission to perpetrate the most horrendous acts and atrocities. That which could have been our guiding star for Love, Integrity and Compassion was abused, misused, and misrepresented for profit and gain.

We are, (some of us,) in the process of learning about our "White Innocence"<sup>1</sup>, our white privilege, our white arrogance and how we can learn some white humility. White Innocence is a book by Grace Weber. There's a quote that I keep going back to because it resounds so deeply with me. Ms Weber quotes Aimé Césaire (a forefather of post-colonial studies) who "courageously chastised Europe", he wrote:

*"What I am driving at? At this idea: that no one colonizes innocently, that no one colonizes with impunity either; that a nation which colonizes, that a civilization which justifies colonization, -- and therefore force -- is already a sick civilization, a civilization that is morally diseased, that irresistibly, progressing from one consequence to another, one repudiation to another, calls for its Hitler, I mean its punishment." (1972, 39)<sup>2</sup>*

There is an image of The Netherlands through history as open, liberal, progressive, welcoming for refugees, manifesting equality etc, etc... If this was ever the case, it no longer is. Weber quotes the work of Prins who touches on the dubbele bodem<sup>3</sup> that prevails here, the prevailing attitude is: *"If you want to be equal to us, then don't talk about the differences; but if you are different from us, then you are not equal."* We like to think we are progressive, integrated, egalitarian and we are NOT. Somewhere in our psyche the old colonial still lives and often rules...the sickness carries on.

This work is not comfortable, it's similar to the Death Doula work I do... sit and listen..., witness, feel... acknowledge the inner fear, anger, helplessness, whatever arises, embrace it...offer it acceptance and compassion...it's not easy to look at our past, and the consequences of not looking are even more horrible. Our past offers us an opportunity for deep healing...to do it we have to accept that our very ground, the very ground that has formed our bones is based on inhuman cruelty and misuse of power and religious fervour. It's not easy. And the rewards will be amazing. We all know the reluctance to turn up when we've done wrong, the wanting to hide, the blaming and shaming, and we all know the relief when we do turn up, we know the energy that is accessible once again and then we begin to heal the wounds we have

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<sup>1</sup> White Innocence Grace Weber 2016 published by Duke University Press (ZN: Isn't that interesting? That it is published in America... and not available in Dutch???)

<sup>2</sup> Aimé Césaire 1972 Discourse on Colonialism

<sup>3</sup> dubbele bodem, a second (false?) floor B. Prins 2002 "The Nerve to break Taboos: New Realism in the Dutch Discourse on Multiculturalism."

made, in ourselves, in our society. This is what we need to do nationally and globally, cleaning out the stinking wounds of the past, offer recompense... how will we, can we do that? What form can it take? May our hearts open to offer us new ways to heal the wounds and pay our debts ... those made by our culture, our greed, our thirst for power over.

There IS racism here, there is institutional racism in our governing institutions, only recently it has been found that the tax office runs extra checks on people with double citizenship; it's a known fact that your very name can mean you will not be chosen for an interview - people with a non-western background have 16% less chance of being invited for an interview (SCP research 2008), your colour means you are so much more (between 25 to 50%) more likely to be stopped, pulled over, bullied and intimidated by the police. Nine out of ten estate agents (realtors) are ok with owners of property saying they don't want people from Marokko, Turkey, Poland, Bulgaria etc., in their houses! If you an ordinary person of colour on the street... you are not as safe as I am... or if you a woman in a hijab you could well be verbally or physically abused even in the street, just for being you, just for dressing as you wish. I too am 'import' here... only I am 'safer' because it's not visible. The system and the nation are, as Césaire says, sick... sick to its roots. We are still endeavouring to grow on 'dis-eased' roots.

This is a time, a great time of opportunity and energy for change, for equality for ALL PEOPLE... we can't undo what was done by our ancestors, we can be honest, and address how we have misused, mistreated and abused whole nations of people... as many as we could... for our profit, for greed. Our countries, lands, businesses cannot truly flourish when they are built on such unethical foundations. The law of retribution is universal.

We like many other western countries are full of excuses, such as... 'I didn't mean it like that'... with little or no movement towards fundamental change. We too have people who say, "I don't see the difference." My answer is "Well, Beloved, the difference is here, go talk to that person about their life, about what they experience in our society every day." We have to turn up for each other, hear the horrors, the experiences, the constant racism our friends and colleagues are up against.

I was and am so grateful to find this path, of Spiritual Freedom and Inclusion, open for all who wish to walk with us, and honouring and respecting all other paths, no conversions, no evangelism, respect for all. All is One. This is how I see our path - this is the post of Truth I endeavour to hold in this heart. I am aware that I do not see a fluid mix in our community that reflects the societies we are living and working in... What can we do, while NOT being evangelical? How do we offer our support and strength?

Our practices and prayers offer me daily support in learning to open my heart to embody our message, in my daily dealings, meetings, challenges. It's a super-human job!...I fail regularly and fortunately I can also apologize, I can learn, I can change, and with my efforts and all our efforts we will change in the world. Little by little, step by step, breath by breath.

*"The one who treads the path must be willing to risk the difficulties of the path; to be sincere, faithful, truthful, undoubting, not pessimistic or sceptical, otherwise with all their efforts they will not reach their aim. They must come whole-heartedly, or else they should not come at all. Half-heartedness is of no value."*

THE PATH OF INITIATION - SUFI MYSTICISM – Repose – Hazrat Inayat Khan

Our practice has to be not to look away, to not take (what seems) the safe path, do not doubt 'whether it is worth it', or 'will it make a difference'... every breath makes a difference.

Part of my practice is not only empathizing with victim...also to endeavour to understand what is going on in the aggressor, the racist, the bully? Sadly, there is often no place for conversation there, the shields placed by fear are too strongly cemented in place... doesn't stop me trying, doesn't stop me speaking/demonstrating. And I pray daily 'raise us above the distinctions and difference which divide'... and I watch... I watch me... to see where I am doing it... where do I step back? Where do I dissociate? Where do I fall back into 'us and them'? Why, where, what are my triggers. I have to dismantle my 'white innocence'... to 'Illuminate the Shadow' as Pir Moineddin so beautifully said. And there are various levels to this work, the personal, the family, community, societal, national and global level. The Dance of Change is partly our own healing, and partly standing up in the crowd, in society to the Establishment, and cracking open the old illusions 'so the light can get in' ... it is TIME... in fact... it's way past time. We have to stand up for CHANGE ... NOW.

I don't have the answers, I don't know the way forward for us all, and Insh'Allah, like Pir Moineddin said "*We are Murshid.*" ... "WE" also have the answers, we have to speak out AND we have to listen... to ALL SIDES. Another quote that inspires me is one from Gandhi "*Don't take sides, take peace.*" Which resound also in the words of Martin Luther King "*Darkness cannot drive out darkness only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate, only love can do that.*" These two great men gave us such amazing, shining examples of using their rage and disgust, their fury and disappointment as fuel to work for change. So, as we are active, and as we speak out, we have to make sure we nourish our hearts and souls so we won't burn out before this CHANGE is done... Insh'Allah we are in for the long haul this time. And we need stamina to do this work for there are generations of wrath, pain, misuse, degradation, segregation, murder and egotism that need addressing. May we be strong enough to be here for our whole human family.

And finally, this poem by Starhawk re-appeared in my life a month or so ago...

*We do not become healers.  
We came as healers. We are.  
Some of us are just catching up to what we are.*

*We do not become storytellers.  
We came as carriers of the stories that  
we and our ancestors actually lived. We are  
Some of us are still catching up to what we are.*

*We don't become artists. We came as artists. We are.  
Some of us are still catching up to what we are.*

*We do not become writers... dancers.. musicians... helpers... peacemakers.  
We came as such. We are  
Some of us are still catching up to what we are.*

*We do not learn to love in this sense.  
We came as Love. We are Love.  
Some of us are just catching up to who we truly are.*

We have taken birth into sick societies, it's our job, our duty and our calling to use the qualities we find in our spiritual practice to empower us to heal the wounds our cultures have created and to work towards number six of the Sufi Aims:

"There is one Family, the human family, which unites the children of the earth indiscriminately in the parenthood of The Divine."

(And yes, I have altered the words, we are walking the Path of Spiritual Liberty, for me it's important to make the words meaningful to this heart, while respecting and knowing their source.)

May the Spirit and Truth of our Human and Spiritual Family hold, sustain and support us as we form the Breath of Change.

ZubinNur 9.vi.2020