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NAMASTE

a student human rights journal
2007

University of Connecticut

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EDITOR'S NOTE

Namaste (nah-mah-STAY) is a Hindi word meaning, "the Spirit in me meets the same Spirit in you." It is a South Asian greeting originating in India that is used for "hello" and "goodbye." The greeting is commonly accompanied by a slight bow made with the hands pressed together, palms touching, in front of the chest. This is a well-recognized symbolic gesture in which one hand represents the higher, spiritual nature while the other represents the worldly self. By combining the two, the person making the gesture is attempting to rise above their differences with others, and connect themselves to the person he/she bows to. The bow is symbolic of love and respect.

This journal is meant to promote the study of human rights at the University of Connecticut and serve as a venue for recognizing and displaying the great academic achievements of undergraduate students in this field of study.

Recognizing the work being done within the human rights community at the University of Connecticut will foster an environment that promotes mutual respect. More than that, it is hoped that this ideal will be embraced by University community members and translated in various ways and works to the larger global community.

नमस्ते

FOREWORD

Darfur, discrimination, compliance: these are keywords that capture the range of concerns in the essays presented in the second issue of *Namaste*, the human rights journal produced entirely by students at the University of Connecticut. Student activism around the issue of genocide in Darfur became much more visible in the past academic year. As a result, the Uconn Foundation divested from Sudan. What we see in the essay on Darfur is an example of moral passion and clear analysis. The other two essays draw attention to problems closer to home: discrimination in the U.S. against immigrants and U.S. noncompliance with international human rights convention. These essays thus reflect the emphasis on a critical approach to the U.S. and human rights in UConn's human rights program. The essays are complemented by the art, also submitted by students, that enriches student engagement with human rights.

Sponsored by student government funds and the Human Rights Institute, *Namaste* provides an opportunity for students to publish and disseminate their ideas and to learn the value of words and images in increasing awareness.

Eleni Coundouriotis
Associate Director
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Storrs, Connecticut
April 2, 2007

INTRODUCTION

It is the hope of the *Namaste* staff that this second issue will serve not only as a medium for students to express their thoughts and concerns regarding human rights, but also as a statement clarifying what human rights are and how they should be approached. Adherence to human rights doctrine requires more than just action and advocacy; it also requires understanding.

While through *Namaste's* brief history it seems to have acquired something of an artistic quality, it was the desire of this edition's staff that the journal maintain a level of scholarly integrity. *Namaste* seeks to be expressive as well as informative. In recent times, the topic of human rights has received more attention and interest than at any point in the past. The rise of activism within the student body of the University of Connecticut, graduate and undergraduate students alike, indicates a level of awareness with regards to human rights issues that would have been unfathomable even in the recent past. Over the last academic year, the Storrs campus has seen the rise of numerous human rights activism organizations, several focusing on the genocide in the Darfur region of Sudan that has been going on since 2003. Most notably, *UConn Stand*, who has pushed the university to consider methods of divesting funds from corporations that have close ties to the Sudanese government, and *Idealists United*, who recently organized the first human rights awareness festival on campus.

The reason such efforts are important is that the topic of human rights needs to be brought out into the open; it needs to be recognized not only as a topic of ethical imperatives, but one of considerable intellectual worth. Human rights should be conceived of as having an essentially academic aspect. The reason for this is that, at least in my own experience and the experience of the staff while trying to produce this edition, there seems to be a discrepancy between the meaning of human rights

in general discourse and the understanding of it as defined in doctrine and various covenants. Human rights is not an all-encompassing category in which the totality of human suffering can be placed. If this were the case, human rights would be nothing more than a euphemism for acknowledging human misery. What understanding could this lead to? "Human rights" refers to a set of criteria that a specific issue must meet in order to be recognized as such. Of course, this set of criteria is rather broad and it happens that a great many of mankind's woes fit under this label, but there are others that do not. This does not in any way imply that these issues are any less worthy of attention and action than human rights issues; however, for the sake understanding, there must be a clear distinction.

Like any discipline, human rights comprises a variety of issues that are related or similar. That is the reason for the set of criteria. Because these issues often have many things in common, it is possible for those studying them to abstract, dissect and better understand them. For the sake of better focusing attention and effort, there needs to be more precision in the public discourse on human rights, otherwise it will not be taken seriously or be recognized as a valid intellectual pursuit. If human rights is denied such status, it loses a certain degree of legitimacy and the growing level of awareness that is so vital to the continuation of efforts to stop global atrocities will be threatened. This has been well understood in recent years and in order to further public education on human rights and human rights issues, many universities across the country (including the University of Connecticut) have established institutes dedicated to human rights research in the hopes of widening the public's comprehension of the topic. That is the hope of the Human Rights Institute at the University of Connecticut, and that is also the goal of *Namaste*.

Namaste, above all, seeks to spread awareness and understanding; it seeks to illustrate how all of humanity is interconnected. As is stated in the editor's note, "namaste" is an expression of good will emphasizing the interconnectedness of the greeter and the greeted. This journal seeks to evoke this sense of harmony and proffer the idea that such harmony is integral to the realization of universal adherence to human rights standards. Appreciating the very notion of human rights means being mindful of the world outside that of our immediate modes of existence; it means more than acknowledging, but thoroughly realizing that there are people all over the world who live

lives totally incomprehensible to us. Ignorance does not denote a lack of caring, but an inability to conceptualize suffering. It is one thing to learn about a genocide taking part overseas; it is quite another to visualize that suffering and live with such thoughts lodged in one's consciousness. This, more than anything, should illustrate the necessity for human rights to be recognized as a discipline. This should illustrate the necessity for a course of action that helps people to understand the nature and severity of human rights issues all over the world. This, above all, should illustrate the need for comprehension, for it is comprehension that gives birth to the confidence necessary to enact change. It is my hope, and the hope of this edition's staff, that *Namaste* will be able to contribute to the development of such an understanding.

Terence DeToy
April 18, 2007

JOHN CORKERY IV
Breaking the Barrier the U.S. Has Posed for Human
Rights

ABSTRACT

This paper describes the dynamics of the long-standing opposition between human rights and national sovereignty as well as the impact the United States has on this paradigm. The enforcement of human rights standards requires nations to be willing to subject themselves to oversight by outside parties and to the jurisdiction of international courts. This, it has long been argued, constitutes a violation of national sovereignty. This must be recognized as a necessary measure. However, the United States has repeatedly acted in opposition to human rights covenants that would allow for the realization of such measures.

BREAKING THE BARRIER U.S. SOVEREIGNTY HAS POSED FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

On December 10th, 1948, the United Nations General Assembly ratified the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR).¹ This was a monumental moment in human history as it was the first time an international organization adopted a document considered to have universal value. It was also the first time that human rights were set forth in detail. The United States played a major role in the writing of the UDHR as former first lady Eleanor Roosevelt chaired the committee responsible for drafting the document.² Over the past 58 years, however, the U.S. has given much higher priority to sovereignty than to human rights; it has only signed four of the seven major human rights covenants. "The US has yet to ratify several other widely accepted human rights treaties, including the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights."³ With its own self-interest in mind, the U.S. has failed to fully comply with human rights standards, creating a major barrier greatly hindering the realization and regulation of human rights throughout the world. Realistically, bringing down this barrier will require the teaching and promoting of human rights throughout the general U.S. population.

A right is a just claim or title that can be legal, prescriptive or moral and are the basis of all moral theory.⁴ Human rights are a set of universally agreed-upon standards set forth in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. These rights pertain to the basic necessities a human being needs to live a healthy, happy life free of violence, oppression and poverty. Human rights allow individuals to make legal, moral and prescriptive claims on their government.⁵ The universality of these rights implies that they are given to all peoples, regardless of race, ethnicity, nationality, religion, mental capacity, sex, or political ideology.

It is important to note that human rights violations can only be committed by state actors or other organized entities. From the definition of human rights, an individual cannot violate another individual's human rights. The UDHR was set up in this manner in order to protect people from systematic abuses by their respective government. Basically, human rights are the minimum standards created by the U.N. by which governments are supposed to treat their citizens. In this sense, human rights were created to check governmental power. This allows governments to remain sovereign in regards to creation and regulation of domestic law, so long as the minimum human rights standards are met.

Sovereignty is the exclusive right to exercise supreme political (e.g. legislative, judicial, and/or executive) authority over a geographic region and/or group of people.⁶ The creation of universal human rights

standards has, in many cases, put states at odds with human rights. This is because complying with universal human rights standards puts limits on how a state can treat its citizens and creates obligations for a state with regards to its people. By disallowing certain actions that states can take regarding its citizens and forcing states to provide minimum standards of living for its people, human rights limit the political authority and sovereignty governments can possess. Giving up power goes against states' self-interest, which is something many countries are reluctant to do.

Abiding by human rights standards is extremely beneficial to a country's people. Many governments, however, either do not believe this or are composed of power-hungry individuals that do not care about the well-being of their people. This unwillingness to give up sovereignty in the name of human rights is strikingly widespread in the world today. In fact, many nations, including the U.S., have neglected to sign legally binding human rights treaties and covenants in order to retain sovereign power.⁷

Having sovereignty can be seen as a crucial element in the happiness and well-being of a nation's people. This is because being sovereign allows a group of people to live according to their own rules and regulations. If something goes wrong, the group can only blame themselves. When forced to live by the laws of others, conflicts usually arise as the controlling group often creates rules in their own interest. Throughout history, groups that have taken sovereignty from other nations have almost always created rules that exploit the controlled peoples. The history of colonialism shows this principle clearly. No person or group of people wants to be exploited and thus many have realized the importance of being sovereign.

The realization of the importance of sovereignty has led to a misconception about complying with human rights: that complicity with these standards will negatively affect a nation's people. This seemingly negative effect arises from the thought that giving up sovereignty opens up an opportunity for a nation to be exploited by those to whom sovereignty has been ceded. As history has revealed, a nation giving up or losing sovereignty has almost always suffered negative consequences. This is because the group giving up sovereignty usually has little or no representation in the group to whom sovereignty was given and they, in turn, most likely care little about the interests of those from whom they

took sovereignty. As a result, people tend to think that giving up sovereignty should always be avoided.

The idea that losing sovereignty for the sake of complying with human rights will negatively affect a nation's people is a misconception. Giving up sovereignty to comply with human rights standards today is a different matter than instances where sovereign power was given up in the past. The two reasons why giving up sovereignty has negative effects in the paragraph above do not relate here. This is because a nation giving up sovereign power, in this case, has equal representation in the U.N. Furthermore, the U.N. cares about the interests of those nations who willingly cede their sovereignty. This is, of course, only if the U.N. is viewed as a legitimate organization whose intentions are to positively regulate states' treatment of their citizens, and not as a group of self-centered nation-states looking after their own self-interest. (The latter view is one that could be argued because of countries like the U.S. It is important to note that if this view is accepted, it will strengthen the argument made later on in this paper that the U.S. itself should give up enough sovereignty to comply with human rights standards.)

If the position that the U.N. is an international organization with good intentions for humanity is accepted, then giving up sovereignty to comply with human rights will be seen legitimately as beneficial for a nation's people. This is because the sovereign power ceded would not go towards supporting the exploitation of the respective nation's people. Rather, this power would be used to protect a nation's people against abuse from their own government and to force this government to provide the minimum living standards laid out in the UDHR. With this line of thought, any people living in a nation that refuses to comply with any or all human rights standards have reason to be wary of their government. Furthermore, these people should attempt to protect themselves by calling for their government's compliance with human rights doctrine.

In the world today, the U.S. is seen as the most—or one of the most—powerful nations in the world in terms of political, economic, military, and technological capabilities. The actions taken by the U.S. have a major influence in countries throughout the world. In any group, it is the actions of the dominant figure that help set the standards by which all other members of the group conduct

themselves. The U.S. being the dominant figure in world politics today can be seen as having what Kant would call a moral duty or “categorical imperative” to perform actions that will set the best standards possible.⁸

In the early stages of its role as one of the world’s most powerful countries, the U.S. has taken actions that could be construed as fulfilling this moral duty. This is evident as Franklin Delano Roosevelt led the U.S. into battle in an effort to dismantle some of the worst dictatorships the world had ever seen. F.D.R. also played a major role in the creation of the U.N. and shortly thereafter, his wife, Eleanor, as mentioned above, helped draft the UDHR. After this small window of time, however, the U.S.’s efforts (or lack thereof) of fulfilling its moral duties as a world leader have been mediocre at best and, in many cases, downright despicable.

The failure of the U.S. to fully comply with the very standards it played a major role in creating has created a barrier to the realization and regulation of human rights throughout the world. Currently, the U.S. has not ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), or the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR). Nor has the U.S. taken part in any of the major International Labor Organization (ILO) conventions.⁹ Also, the U.S. is one of the few industrial countries that still has and continues to use the death penalty. “The United States ranks only behind China, Iran, and Vietnam in the number of executions on annual basis—countries responsible for other serious human rights violations condemned by the State Department. The Council of Europe has banned the death penalty in all of its 46 member states, and abolition of the death penalty is now a precondition for joining the European Union.”¹⁰ By not complying with these conventions and continuing to use the death penalty, the U.S. has set low standards in regards to human rights for the rest of the world to follow. Many countries with less power have argued that if the U.S. would only comply with certain standards, they would as well. By failing to comply with these standards, the U.S. has limited its ability to persuade other countries to comply with the very same standards. By looking after its own self-interest through non-compliance strategies, the U.S. has created, and continues to uphold, a barrier holding back the potential for human rights.

*

These issues might not seem consequential, but the truth is that if the U.S. complied with all human rights standards and thereafter used its might to leverage other countries to do the same, these standards could possibly be heavily regulated today with violations a rarity.

On a positive note, the U.S. has ratified the UDHR, the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the Convention Against Torture, and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT), and other important human rights documents. Also, even though poverty does exist in the U.S., a majority of the population enjoys a high standard of living. U.S. citizens are fortunate to live in a democracy where voting is easy and accessible. All of these things have made the U.S. a great nation; however, this does not excuse the country from fulfilling its moral duty to the rest of the world.

As noted above, the U.S. ratified the ICCPR; however, as also stated before, many of its people suffer from poverty. In such a wealthy, powerful nation, how has poverty remained such a significant problem? The answer lies in the failure of the U.S. to grant social and economic rights to its citizens. Social and economic rights are mostly seen as positive rights—that is, rights that must be given to people. This differs from civil and political rights, which are rights that cannot be taken away from the people. Both of these sets of rights are in the UDHR.¹¹ According to political philosopher Thomas Pogge, these sets of rights are seen to be not only equally important, but also dependent on one another for the creation of a fully functional, healthy society.¹² Social and economic rights include the right to healthcare, the right to an education, the right to food and clean water, etc. These are rights that place financial obligations and duties upon the state. As a result, many states are reluctant to grant these rights to their citizens. Unfortunately, as noted above, neither set of rights can reach its full potential without the help of the other. The U.S., although guaranteeing civil and political rights, has left many of its people in poverty as it refuses to grant large-scale social and economic rights.

In order for human rights to be fully recognized and regulated, the barrier that the U.S. has created by placing its self-interest above human rights must be brought down. Since the U.S. is arguably the most powerful country in the world today, its full compliance with legally binding human rights doctrines would give the U.N. the proper authority it needs to push other countries into compliance. In this scenario, the U.N. would also be empowered to begin taking the necessary steps toward real regulation of human rights standards.

This idea of full U.S. compliance with human rights may seem idealistic and overly progressive, but then again it could be argued that all existing political institutions and ideologies began as idealisms that eventually were acted upon. All that needs to happen for full U.S. compliance with human rights is the presidential signature and Senate ratification of the currently unratified covenants. With a major shift away from conservatism and toward liberalism recently in U.S. government, this idea may be closer to reality than it is currently thought to be.

With the results of the 2006 U.S. congressional elections, statesmen will most certainly be careful in considering the public's opinions and desires when making decisions in order that they increase their chances of keeping their jobs come next election. With this in mind, all that may be needed to push this newly-elected liberal government to enforce human rights standards is a call for conformity by the U.S. public. This seems to be the only realistic way to push the government toward compliance with human rights standards.

Currently, it is very unlikely that the U.S. public will make this call. This is undoubtedly due to the fact that a very small percentage of the American public knows of and understands the idea and philosophy behind human rights. Even those that are aware and have a basic understanding of human rights may not know of this barrier the U.S. has created. These people may also not realize that the U.S. government has failed to ratify major human rights covenants. As stated above, this failure negatively affects the U.S. population and positively benefits the government itself. If the public were to be informed of these issues, it is likely that a call to comply with human rights standards would be made.

In order to bring awareness and understanding of these issues, it seems a logical step to create a human rights promotion tour. Above and beyond raising awareness for and promoting human rights, the tour could provide a way to inform the public of the U.S. government's failure to comply with human rights standards. The negative implications this has on American citizens and all other peoples throughout the world would also be discussed. This could be done in an effort to not only educate people and get them talking about human rights, but also to stir the U.S. public into voicing their support for these standards in the hopes the

government might listen. A human rights promotion tour seems to be a good approach to bringing down the hypothetical barrier theorized in this paper. This is because it is a step towards garnering the will of the people, which is seen as the major component for U.S. compliance to become a reality.

The idea of forcing governmental compliance with human rights standards by promoting them from the ground up is exemplified by a quote from one of America's most thoughtfully beautiful citizens, Eleanor Roosevelt: a woman whom former president Harry S. Truman once called "the First Lady of the World" in honor of her extensive promotion of human rights:

"Where, after all, do universal human rights begin? In small places, close to home—so close and so small that they cannot be seen on any maps of the world. Yet they are the world of the individual person; the neighborhood he lives in; the school or college he attends; the factory, farm, or office where he works. Such are the places where every man, woman, and child seeks equal justice, equal opportunity, equal dignity without discrimination. Unless these rights have meaning there, they have little meaning any where. Without concerted citizen action to uphold them close to home, we shall look in vain for progress in the larger world."¹³

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EDWARD CECARELLI (IN COLLABORATION WITH STEPHEN OSTERTAG)
Multi-ethnic Identity and Survival: Immigration and
Discrimination in the United States

"Umoja" (2006)
Stephanie Samaha



ABSTRACT

This article explores how people voluntarily immigrating to the U.S. confront forms of discrimination and prejudice that differ from that which they experience in their countries of origin, especially for those immigrants from developing countries. They may discover new stigmas associated with a racial-and-class-based hierarchy. Those located upon the upper echelons of the racial and class hierarchy in their countries of origin may experience a greater threat to their sense of self-identity, as they are often no longer perceived with the same social value. Many will be placed at the bottom of the U.S. status hierarchy, because perceptions are more powerful than reality, and people calling the U.S. home (a population largely of immigrants) often perceive immigrants with perspectives conflicting with the immigrants' understandings of self.

MULTI-ETHNIC IDENTITY AND SURVIVAL: IMMIGRATION AND DISCRIMINATION IN THE UNITED STATES

This article explores how people voluntarily immigrating to the U.S. confront forms of discrimination and prejudice that differ from that which they experience in their countries of origin, especially for those immigrants from developing countries. They may discover new stigmas associated with a racial and class based hierarchy. Those located upon the upper echelons of the racial and class hierarchy in their countries of origin may experience a greater threat to their sense of self-identity as they are often no longer perceived with the same social value. Many will be placed at the bottom of the U.S. status hierarchy, because perceptions are more powerful than reality, and people calling the U.S. home (a population largely of immigrants) often perceive immigrants with perspectives conflicting with the immigrant's understandings of self.

To compensate for their status demotion and their newly-experienced form of discrimination and prejudice, many immigrants will employ different strategies of negotiating their identity in an effort to retain the status they once enjoyed. For those who occupy multiple ethnicities or races, such strategies may include promoting one ethnicity or race over another. This is done in hopes of garnering a more favorable reception from others, while distinguishing oneself from and sometimes discriminating against a group of people with whom they share a common heritage as they fight like crabs in the bucket of U.S. stratification. This phenomenon compels one to redefine his or her inner and outer self-identity, creating a false or "double consciousness," a concept discussed in the early 20th century by W.E.B. Dubois.¹ This should be recognized as a human rights violation because of its potential for mentally and physically debilitating consequences on one's sense of self.

Categorizing based on biological features has enabled the emergence of what are essentially castes that individuals in power—largely white, wealthy males—have labeled and continue to label as races.² Race, however, is a faulty concept that involves the lumping of people with divergent ethnicities and physical characteristics into one set of beliefs or assumptions³. People are socialized to perceive race based on many pre-defined racial and ethnic categories, despite the lack of any inherent biological grounding upon which such distinctions can be made. However, socially and institutionally constructed identities, such as race, have consequences for both those being categorized and those categorizing.

Multi-ethnic and multi-racial people are among those disenfranchised

by the way governments and societies determine ethnic and racial identity. The categories generated by the U.S. government, employers, and society help maintain and reinforce the negative representations associated with specific racial and ethnic groups, while blindfolding other oppressed groups from seeing their common plight. This is displayed in the way the U.S. Census and numerous other surveys conceptualize and measure race and ethnicity. People from completely different global regions (e.g., Africa and Jamaica, or Europe and Australia), each speaking a different language, are lumped into overarching categories primarily based on either the subjectively-defined degree of melanin in their skin (e.g., "white," or "black"), their larger continent (e.g., Asian), or their shared language (e.g. Hispanic). For example, people from Ethiopia, Ghana, Jamaica, and Haiti are often lumped under the category of black or African American, despite their differences in language, culture, and skin pigmentation. The U.S. Census Bureau blatantly admits to using this false criterion, stating on its website "[We] generally reflect a social definition of race recognized in this country. ...[We] do not conform to any biological, anthropological or genetic criteria."⁴

Until a recent U.S. Census (2000), multi-ethnic people could either choose only one "race" or choose "other," with a space to pencil in a "race" apparently unworthy of mention provided.⁵ The U.S. Census 2000 does not accurately differentiate between "ethnicity" and "race," but instead asks for "race," giving a mixture of ethnicities and racialized ethnicities to choose from; the only real difference from the U.S. Census 1990 is the option to choose more than one "race." The options were: American Indian or Alaska Native, allowing a space to specify the tribe, "black"/African American/"Negro" (but not affording the dignity to Africans or those African descendants in various regions of the Diaspora to specify their country of origin), Asian Indian, Chinese, Filipino, Japanese, Korean, Vietnamese, Native Hawaiian, Guamanian or Chamorro, Samoan, other Asian, with a space to specify, other Pacific Islander, with a space to specify, and "white." "White" is usually and ethnocentrically listed above the rest on the racial question, though alphabetically it should be last.⁶

The second major modification seen in the U.S. Census 2000 is the question the U.S. Government calls the "ethnicity question," "Is person Spanish/Hispanic/Latino?" The Census Bureau defines ethnicity as "the heritage, nationality group, lineage, or country of birth of the person or the person's parents or ancestors before their arrival in the United States."⁷ On the Bureau's Q&A page it gives the answer to why this question was asked, "Race and Hispanic origin (also known as ethnicity) are considered distinct concepts and therefore require separate questions in cen-

suses and surveys. Hispanics or Latinos may be any race...⁸ Why does their definition of ethnicity target Spanish speakers—a variety of peoples—and no one else? Not only is this statement racist, but the United States Government is conveying what Jones would call a scientifically false representation of ethnicity.⁹ An ethnic community is defined as “a named human population of alleged common ancestry, shared memories and elements of common culture with a link to a specific territory and a measure of solidarity...”¹⁰

If assumed to be of “Spanish/Hispanic/Latino” descent, respondents are then given the choice of specifying their national descent, unconsciously agreeing that it falls into this misleading category. This question serves the purpose of isolating those that speak Spanish, and none other. For one, this “yes or no” question assumes a cultural unity between Spanish Europeans and the many countries of Middle and South America, and the Caribbean. Furthermore, it employs a faulty term: “Latino,” which is widely disputed due to the fact that Spaniards, Italians, Romanians, French, and Portuguese all view themselves as “Latin.” The Mexica Movement was formed as a resistance movement to combat discrimination against the indigenous people of the Americas and to reject the label “Latino,” claiming that it entirely “fails to acknowledge that the vast majority of Mexicans and Central Americans are actually of majority indigenous bloodlines, with European ancestry playing a minority DNA role.”¹¹ Ignorantly, “Latino” is given racial qualities, as it is likened to terms such as “European American” and “African American.”¹²

Job applications are another front where multi-ethnic immigrants begin to recognize and experience a change in status. In some instances, respondents can check a box for more than one ethnicity or race. However, this is the exception and not the rule. For instance, in the online job application for the “Monster” web site, it asks for “ethnicity.” The options given are: Decline to Identify, White (Not of Hispanic Origin), African American/Black (Not of Hispanic Origin), Asian/Pacific Islander, American Indian/Alaskan Native, and Hispanic.¹³ Although many applications and surveys now allow people to choose more than one “race” or “ethnicity,” they still force people to think of themselves in distinct ways, simultaneously, and sometimes unwillingly, adopting or associating with false racial characteristics that are socially recognized to categorize each group. With new regulations, applicants often have the right to decline to verify their “race” or “ethnicity;” however, their ability to hide behind the paper or online application will dissolve during the in-person interview or by close job scrutiny if hired. This exemplifies a continuous system of institutional and social discrimination that nega-

tively impacts human rights.

It is purported that “ethnic” statistics are to better serve diverse communities with equality seeking programs and services (Census 2000 Brief). If this were the case, there would be specific inquiry into the enormously variant Europeans who have starkly different cultures, instead of offering an ambiguous and faulty concept such as “white”. Ultimately, these institutional policies are psychologically brainwashing for all those involved.

In trying to avoid discrimination, those of multi-ethnic heritage may 1) choose a more socially valued identity in which they can pass as (Goffman 1963), while aware of how they will be perceived regardless, or 2) choose to decline because they don’t wish to be pigeonholed to one identity. This shows an expansion of multi-ethnic conscious awareness of how they are perceived, and how they perceive, and how they perceive themselves. This is done while belittling and neglecting the overall human identity we share. In sum, although the multi-ethnic may have the option to choose more than one “race” or ethnic group, not all ethnicities are represented and therefore people must accept lumping themselves into false categories such as “white” and “black,” or settle for being one of the “others.” While peoples’ choices are generally made based on the interrelationship of how they are classified in a given society and how they classify themselves, the actual choices are rather restrictive.

Who are these people?

Multi-ethnic immigrants come from different social classes and ethnic backgrounds, comprising diverse languages, religions, diets, and various other customs. Just like most immigrant groups, there are challenges facing their acceptance into the United States. However, some groups have a better chance at achieving long-term acceptance into the “American identity.” For example, during the 19th century, an influx of Irish brought with them a new form of xenophobia in the consciousness of established European Americans. In addition to their political prowess, the Irish’s similar biological features, specifically the level of their skin pigmentation, allowed them to eventually be absorbed into the dominant European American culture.¹⁶

Today, little (if any) differentiation is made in terms of social status between, say, an Irish and an Italian. In fact, European inter-ethnic procre-

ation is commonplace and most people of mixed European descent are categorized incorrectly as “white,” encouraging a shared “American” identity. Furthermore, because of their similar physical characteristics, most European Americans can choose to identify with the dominant “white” race, often accessing the benefits attached to this identity. This graduation to a full “American” identity has never applied to groups of African descent, South American Spanish-speakers, Middle Easterners, or Asian peoples. Rather, through questions of race and ethnicity on surveys and job applications, people of color are consistently reminded that their identity is not what the dominant group defines as “American.”

Within multi-ethnic countries, a battle for resources rages on the premise of skin pigmentation. “Colorism” is an important element of intra-group racism. As race and skin color are social constructions that generate their significance from the salience we attribute to them, skin color simply “one device for assigning people to a racial category.” “...Skin color would not be the determinant of [one’s] status. That is determined by [one’s] classification as black and the accompanying societal views attached to that racial classification.”¹⁷ Manual, unskilled labor in Puerto Rico is seen as taboo for whites, and with “every grade of color, ascending from the jet black Negro to the pure white, carries with it a certain feeling of superiority.”¹⁸ A similar phenomenon exists for those living in South and Central America (e.g., Brazil). Brazilian consciousness evolved after World War I when the Brazilian saw poor immigrants, as poor as he, rise the social/economic scale surpassing him. This signaled to the Brazilian that white social mobility could be beneficial to him.¹⁹

For multi-racial and multi-ethnic peoples, such scenarios nurture a conundrum pertaining to one’s sense of self. Observing growing inter-ethnic procreation in the Americas, Park poignantly reported, “His mind is the melting pot in which the lower and the higher cultures meet and fuse...the [multi-ethnic], conscious of his mixed origin, unwilling to accept the inferior status of his [African] ancestors, invariably constitutes...a distinct racial category and a separate social class.”²⁰ Whiter, multi-ethnic people tend to enjoy a more independent place in society than mono-ethnics, and have more access to economic, educational, and political resources. The multi-ethnic strives to prove that the level of subordination applied to blacks does not apply to him.²¹ This leads to a “double-consciousness,” or

dual identity. However, as we discuss, this phenomenon can be troublesome for those emigrating from countries in which they enjoyed a respectable level of affluence and privilege.

Why are they important?

Some multi-ethnics who can latch onto genetic physical characteristics of the dominant class stand a better chance at improving their social standing. However, those of darker complexions do not enjoy this luxury, possessing a “human stain” or stigma²² that only gets diluted after inter-ethnic procreation with lighter-skinned members of the dominant group. These multi-ethnic immigrants and their offspring vary in their immersion, socialization, and assimilation into the U.S. populous. Because of the simple fact that immigration from these groups is occurring, they constitute a growing portion of the United States population. This new group of multi-ethnic immigrants emigrating from countries once colonized by infiltrating Europeans transporting African slaves to indigenous lands in the Americas is the subject of our analysis.

Multiethnicity as a Survival Strategy

Most often, assimilation to the dominant class’ racialized ethnicity is expected for a successful transition. But one with physical stigmas including linguistic accents and skin color cannot simply change their identity. In the multi-ethnics’ struggle to present themselves in a way that is acceptable, their new society is likely to deny their presentation and impose its own perceptions of who they are and who they are expected to be. This treatment results in a denial of human rights. In other words, the implementation of what we conceive of as race or a racialized ethnicity has consequences. This may be particularly shocking for those multi-ethnic immigrants who enjoyed a heightened level of privilege or luxury in their country of origin.

Forming a new and growing segment of society, immigrants of multiethnic heritages have found they must develop strategies for facing a racist world that desires to pigeonhole their identity. Because they perceive themselves differently from the way they are perceived by others in their new home, they need to negotiate their position in society’s racist settings; and, whenever possible and appropriate, they may use their ambiguous multi-ethnic identity to their socio-economic advantage. Altering or foregoing their understandings of their inner self and presenting themselves ethnically and racially in their attempts to achieve equitable standing with the dominant class are survival strategies.

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This phenomenon is a learned “double-identity consciousness,” which serves two major functions: 1) a survival strategy of projecting favorable identities to navigate prejudice, and 2) a personal coping technique by which one can assume the appropriate self-classification in social or familial settings. Consciously redefining and differentiating themselves from other racial and ethnic minorities, multi-ethnics may try to rank higher on the race and class status hierarchy. If applicable, their multiple identities allow them to manipulate their European descent in various social contexts. In one context, perhaps a job interview, a multi-racial immigrant can overemphasize their European heritage. When shared with other racially-ostracized people in the privacy of their homes, they may settle back into the identity they were accustomed to in their native country.

Identities can be deceptively conveyed, as there is a range of flexibility for identity formulation and its implications unique to multi-ethnic immigrants. “[Multi-ethnic] identities exist in a fluid state and may change according to the social contexts they face, including family, school, or even larger social settings.”²³ This change of social settings applies to the immigration process. While multi-ethnic people often experience a dual consciousness due to their diverse heritage in their native country, there are implications for this phenomenon that have more of an impact for them upon entering the U.S., where the categories and social rankings differ. In their native country, if they possess a high enough level of European ancestry and can claim to be white, they have an edge over their compatriots. This is demonstrated in the disproportionate level of white multi-ethnics occupying their countries’ positions of influence.²⁴ However, upon immigrating to the U.S., their identities are categorized according to new standards and those unable to claim European ancestry try to associate with the dominant group in other ways. A related example is the case of those from the Dominican Republic. Here we have a case of such extreme racial consciousness that the population purposefully denies their own blood, history, kin, and even skin color in favor of identifying with the white elite. Blacks and mixed-bloods make up approximately 90% of the Dominican population, but they have generally denied their black status. Many U.S. statesmen and journalists have “conceived of Dominicans as other than black.” Dominicans are aware of their African heritage “despite the insistent efforts of the conservative intellectual elite to define them as part of a Western, Caucasian community.”²⁵

Because multi-ethnic immigrants are forced to embrace a culture predicated on socially-constructed perceptions of race and ethnicity, they nat-

urally develop ways to emphasize aspects of their identity that resemble the dominant group to achieve various benefits. Further, they are encouraged to silence their originally-perceived identity by assimilating into the dominant group. This is forced upon them by social interaction, but it is also institutionally reinforced. For example, some politicians or TV personalities advocate banning the use of alternate languages from the work place, and are designating English as the official language of individual towns²⁶ or counties²⁷ or even the country.²⁸ This coerces people to be ashamed of who they are: to feel inferior to those around them and isolated from what they perceive to be a hostile culture. It also negatively affects U.S. citizens by diminishing their tolerance and appreciation for diversity.

Immersing oneself in another culture, especially without proficiency in the language, can be a marginalizing experience. It is uniquely overwhelming for people who at least had more social mobility as multi-ethnics associated with the dominant group (but not necessarily the majority) in their home country. Multi-ethnic people who struggled to define themselves in their own country, where they were familiar with the norms and customs, now are placed in a contrastingly lower stratum of the new society where they may unfortunately assume a lifestyle of precautions to reduce the intensity and frequency of their experiences with racism. Simply put, an affluent, light-skinned Mexican is now a "Latino/Hispanic," and is forced to assume this identity and its prescribed characteristics both socially and institutionally.

Another dynamic of multi-ethnic immigration is when immigrants enter the U.S. without proper and official documents. Employers hire undocumented immigrants to increase profits and avoid paying American citizens lawful wages. Undocumented immigrants are willing to work long hours in what are often inhumane conditions and for dangerously low wages while unprotected by safety and worker compensation laws. Just as disturbing is an undocumented immigrant who assumes a social security number alias, pays into social security with his false identity, and can never claim the fruits of his labor at retirement. Contrary to the argument that undocumented workers deplete American resources, workers unable to claim social security are producing an estimated annual surplus of seven billion dollars: an underhanded and welcomed profit for the United States.²⁹ Though ostracized and attacked politically and socially on the very basis of their presence, they are instrumental in the functioning of critical industries in the United States.

Conclusion

The shock of immigrating into a society that devalues you is a debilitating experience. This is especially true for those leaving an affluent position in their country of origin where, often due to a “whiter” multi-ethnic heritage, they have more resources³⁰ and conceivably more of an ability to immigrate to the U.S. The result is an influx of affluent people—or at least people leaving comfortable lives in their country of origin—who come to the U.S. and find that they will have to struggle to find the most laborious, undesirable, and hazardous occupations such as bathroom sanitizing, landscaping, and dish washing. These new immigrants often not only have to face the fact that they have stepped backwards in terms of socio-economic status, but also that they must adopt a new identity to offset the effect.

They no longer present the same person on the outside, because they recognize that they are perceived differently. This in turn changes their own consciousness of who they are inside. In other words, it is a breakdown of selfhood. What makes it even more debilitating is the language barrier. In a place of unfamiliarity, immigrants may generate a sense of isolation in a hostile society due to an identity that they cannot escape. This is when the reinforcement of double-conscious identity formulation occurs to compensate for the demotion from the socio-economic status they may have enjoyed in their native country. Immigrants make the conscious decision to come here to better themselves just as every European who immigrated here and usurped land and resources from the rightful indigenous people of the land, the Native Americans. So if we beckon, “Give us your tired, your poor...” we must have a more open mind as the “melting pot” United States.

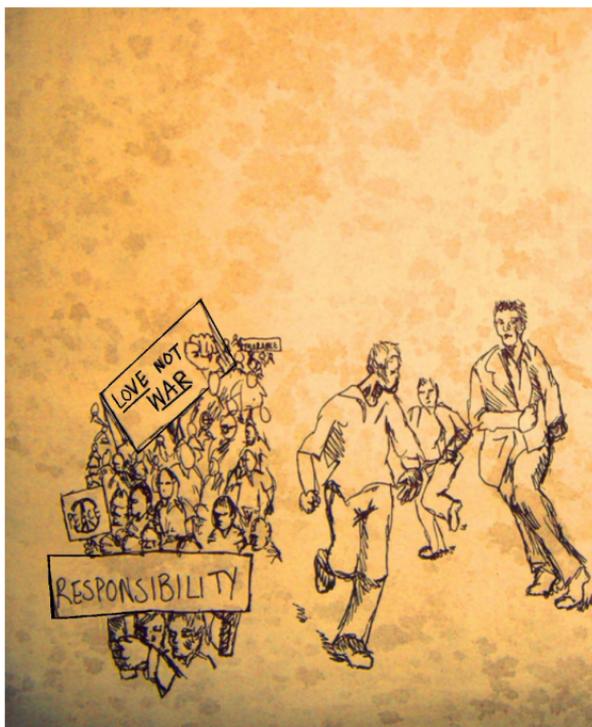
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AMANDA DORNBURGH
Judgement Day

"Responsibility" (2007)
Christine Elmore



JUDGEMENT DAY

God has...commanded that the heavens and the earth will be consumed by fire on the day of judgment, when ungodly people will perish. 2 Peter, 3:7

Fear is recognizable. When people are afraid, their hands start shaking, or their foreheads start to sweat, or their eyes well up with tears and a terror takes over them. Most of the time, fear is temporary: a person's fear will end and it will end in a timely fashion.

But imagine living in fear. Imagine the constant, overwhelming presence of panic. Imagine a morning beginning with bombs, a daytime walk that include witnessing rapes and killings, an afternoon of witnessing the burning of whole villages, and a night of inconsistent sleep. Every day.

Darfur is a region in Sudan. Here, hundreds of villages have been burned and abandoned. More than 400,000 people are dead. Over 1 million people have been forced into refugee camps. This is genocide; this is Darfur.

He looked for justice, but saw bloodshed; for righteousness, but heard cries of distress. Isaiah, 5:7

What is genocide? I have heard genocide described as a "mass murder of people." I have heard it described as "the desire to eliminate a group of people." Either way, it is an ugly, sick, prolonged process. For those living it, it is a nightmare that comes to life.

In early 2003, the Sudanese government enlisted Arab tribesmen to fight the rebels in a legitimate military campaign.¹ These Arab tribesmen are known as the "Janjaweed," and are considered a special division of the military. This division is known as the Border Intelligence Division. Now the Janjaweed have a camp in Mistariha and train there as soldiers. Mistariha is the Janjaweed headquarters, responsible for giving the orders to kill innocent people and rape all of the women. The headquarters in Mistariha get their orders from El Fasher. This is how the system operates. What ever happened to the legitimate military campaign?

During the Holocaust, in World War II, Adolf Hitler wanted to create a society of blond-haired, blue-eyed, heterosexual, non-Jewish people. He

wanted to create a society that was ideal according to *his* own standards. He conducted an “ethnic cleansing,” and carried out severe religious discrimination. In doing so, Nazi Germany murdered approximately six million Jews.² By the time World War II ended, about two out of every three Jews in Europe had been murdered by Nazi Germany.

During the genocide in Rwanda in 1994, the Hutus wanted to exterminate the Tutsis. The Hutus and Tutsis are two ethnic groups that share the same language and follow many of the same traditions. About a tenth of Rwanda’s population died in 100 days.³ Not since the Holocaust had the world witnessed such genocide. Not since the Rwandan genocide had the world witnessed an account of such displacement, starvation, rape, and horror, until Darfur. What future holocausts and genocides await us if we allow the current one to continue? What if there is a genocide that directly stands in our own future; would we want the world to continue on in ignorance and indifference, leaving us to die?

No one calls for justice; no one pleads his case with integrity... Their feet rush into sin; they are swift to shed innocent blood. Their thoughts are evil thoughts; ruin and destruction mark their ways. The way of peace they do not know; there is no justice in their paths. Isaiah, 59: 4-7

Ever since early 2003, the Janjaweed have been fighting two rebel groups in Darfur: the Sudanese Liberation Army/Movement (SLA/SLM) and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM).⁴ The Janjaweed fighters are primarily people of Arab nomadic descent. They target innocent civilians and ethnic groups, namely the Fur, Masalit, and Zaghawa. These are the same populations from which the rebels drew their support. The Sudanese government and the Janjaweed militias are now responsible for the killing of hundreds of thousands of innocent people, the raping of untold thousands of innocent women and girls, and the destruction of countless villages. António Guterres, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, describes the current situation in Sudan and Chad as “the largest and most complex humanitarian problem on the globe.”⁵ The situation in Darfur is catastrophic.

*

They have turned them into crooked roads; no one who walks in them

will know peace. So justice is driven back, and righteousness stands at a distance; truth has stumbled in the streets, honesty cannot enter. Truth is nowhere to be found, and whoever shuns evil becomes a prey. The LORD looked and was displeased that there was no justice. He saw that there was no one, he was appalled that there was no one to intervene. Isaiah, 59: 7-16

The Sudanese government is conducting an "ethnic cleansing" of Africans in Darfur. Does this sound familiar? Adolf Hitler conducted an "ethnic cleansing" against the Jews; the Hutus of Rwanda conducted an "ethnic cleansing" against the Tutsis. Why does history repeat itself? Does anyone care? Who is to blame?

Perhaps the question should be: who is *not* to blame? Can we "blame" everyone who knows and does nothing? I watched the film *Hotel Rwanda*, a horrible, truthful recollection of the genocide. Though this catastrophe lasted only three months, nearly one million people were killed. The mentality of the apathetic is captured in the film by an American reporter in Rwanda who catches the whipping of innocent Tutsis on film. After showing it to his boss, he says, "I think if people see this footage, they'll say 'Oh, my God, that's horrible.' And then they'll go on eating their dinners."

Here, I am found guilty: I have learned about horrible things and done nothing. I have told myself that I would try to do something and haven't. It is difficult to do something, to help out a country that is so broken, that is so far away. It is difficult, but not impossible. Human nature tells us there's nothing that you could do anyway. And to human nature, we listen. But what about petitions? What about the simple process of writing letters to congressmen? What about promoting awareness? And forming clubs? What about rallying people together to make a difference? Why do we choose the easy way out?

From the least to the greatest, all are greedy for gain; prophets and priests alike, all practice deceit. Jeremiah, 6:13

As the popular slogan goes: those with great power have great responsibility. America entered World War II three years into the war, not to save the Jews from concentration camps, but to respond to a direct attack on our own territory. We did nothing when 800,000 Rwandans were killed. Colin Powell declared, "Genocide has been committed in Darfur."⁶ He

said that “the government of Sudan and the Janjaweed bear responsibility.” How easy we find it to place blame on other people. How easy it is to point fingers, to shift blame from ourselves and deny our every option of helping. How easy it is to forgive ourselves.

The nightmare in Darfur began in the summer of 2003. In that year, Janjaweed militias are reported to have killed hundreds of thousands of people and raped a great many of the women whom they left alive. Furthermore, they drove two million people from their homes—not to safety, no, but to live and be hunted in desert refugee camps. In those camps clean water is scarce and disease is pervasive; “The consensus among Darfurians in exile... is that approximately 90 percent of all African villages have now been destroyed.”⁷

So why did we do nothing? Why do we continue to do nothing? What is the cause of our apathy? We are in the year 2007. We have already had our Constitution and our Declaration of Independence written, our Industrial Revolution, our waves of immigration, our strength to transcend tragedies. We are a superpower. Darfur has had none of this. Their level of living would be incomprehensible to us. We can’t grasp its intensity, so we neglect the existence and reality of the genocide.

The day of judgment is coming, burning like a furnace. The arrogant and the wicked will be burned up like straw on that day. They will be consumed like a tree - roots and all. Malachi, 4:1

Why do the people of Darfur have to fend for themselves? Why do they have to wake up to kidnappings, killings and rapes? Why must they fight helplessly? Why did they have to live in fear for three and a half years, without aid or intervention? How must they feel if not one person, but thousands—their entire government, even—feels such passionate hatred toward them?

The nightmare in Darfur began in the summer of 2003. During that year, Janjaweed militias are reported to have killed hundreds of thousands of people—upwards of half a million—and raped a great many of the women whom they left alive.

The government in Sudan is killing civilians, throwing them into fires. The government is conducting an ethnic cleansing of Africans in Darfur. The Islamic government is using the Janjaweed to execute a genocidal

campaign against non-Arabs. *Kill those that you can and rest, they say. We don't want any non-Arabs here.*⁸ Let's reiterate the point: the government of Sudan is working with the Janjaweed to exterminate its own people. It is as if their very birth was a sin. The government offers people the opportunity—the freedom—to loot, rape, and seize land owned by non-Arabs. And people accept this opportunity; they accept it graciously. Better to loot, rape and seize than to be looted from, raped, and have your land seized, right?

How different this is from our own definition of freedom. It is unfathomable that the word "exterminate" is used to describe actions taken against human beings. Civilians in Darfur are comparable to our perception of nasty bugs and creatures.

*The most important element in exterminating vermin such as cockroaches and rats is "Raising customer's awareness of sanitation". Before you call in the professionals, we suggest you try the following measures. (1) Don't feed vermin, (2) Don't let them build nests, (3) Set out adhesive boards, (4) Block holes.*⁹

This past summer, I watched a video that was taped in Darfur on the web site SaveDarfur.org. In this video, a group of Sudanese citizens were quoted saying, "The government shot at us." The African Union troops stood back during the attacks. Meanwhile, the government of Sudan attributes deaths to "natural causes."¹⁰ The citizens of Darfur hold onto their survival for as long as their fate will allow. Who can be trusted if one's own government cannot be trusted? Justice is needed as much as recognition and sympathy.

Why has so little been done to stop the Sudanese government from instigating genocide? In "Darfur: Genocide Before Our Eyes," there are four reasons cited as chief causes of our neglect:

1. *Focus on other wars.* The "war on terror" is a dominant priority in the United States right now. Everyone knows about it and everyone has an opinion on it. We seem to have a drive to implement a democracy in Iraq, but not to stop genocide in Darfur.

2. *Disaster and crisis fatigue.* Both the tsunami in Asia and Hurricane Katrina provided people worldwide with an opportunity to offer relief efforts, community service, and donations of effort, time, and money. These events drew attention away from the relentless killings in Darfur.

3. *Inadequate resources for effective monitoring and the economics of genocide.* Scarce resources have been given to Darfur for humanitarian help. No military support has been offered. Now the African Union is under direct physical threat, so they, too, have withdrawn.

4. *Denial.* Where is denial not present? The Sudanese government denies that they are responsible for the killings; the United States and other governments deny the overall severity of the genocide.

My people have forgotten what it means to do right. Amos, 3:1

Refugee camps in Chad are not much of an escape. Joyce Apsel graphically, honestly describes this situation: overcrowding, inadequate sanitary facilities, shortages of shelter. Severe water shortages. Survival on less than half the daily human requirement of water. Cholera. Dysentery. Hepatitis E. Diarrhea (the leading killer of children in the camps). Malaria. Severe food shortages. Starvation. Relentless insecurity.¹¹

It is sad when “graphic” and “honest” describe the same thing. It is 2007. When will we learn? We are just one world with many different places and many different people, but “world peace” cannot happen through the exclusion and neglect of a particular area. It is our world. Let’s wrap it in peace.

The current situation in Darfur is the result of decades of tension. The non-Arab, so-called “African” tribes have withstood a bitter relationship with the nomadic Arab people. In the past, conflicts were dealt with on a local level, with little violence. But in February, 2003, all of that changed. The government of Sudan began to carry out a violent campaign against the Sudan Liberation Army and the Justice and Equality Movement. And so began the rebels’ attacks. If this is Darfur’s past, where does the future of such a country stand?

In truth, its future does not stand; its future is falling away, further and further away with every passing hour. The longer this drags on, the

more difficult it will be to rectify. Mass murder will become more prevalent, torturous killings will become expected, and help will become more scarce. Apathy will reign over justice.

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth. The first heaven and the first earth disappeared, and the sea vanished. And I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared and ready, like a bride dressed to meet her husband. Revelation, 21: 1-2

What if judgment day is tomorrow? Where do we stand?

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AJAY SHENOY
Killing Time

Twenty minutes. Now what?

The procedure was very clear on everything else. Call an emergency session of the political council of the Nuclear Command Authority. Have everyone make the necessary phone calls. Make sure the National Security Advisor convenes a meeting of the executive council. Make sure they make the proper phone calls.

He had practiced it in his mind until he knew it as well as he knew how to get dressed in the morning. It was a proud testimony to his diligence that everything had gone so quickly and smoothly. After slamming the receiver of the telephone that connected him to his Pakistani counterpart, he had known that speed was of the essence. And now it was done – on both sides of the border, no doubt. The procedure had served him magnificently up to this point. But it left completely blank his agenda for the next 20 minutes.

Twenty minutes. He estimated it would take the Pakistanis roughly 15 minutes to send, and another five for New Delhi to receive. So now what? He eased out of his desk chair and made his way out the door to the hallway. One of his staffers was approaching from the other direction. "Good afternoon, Prime Minister! How did your trade negotiations with Pakistan go? As good as the ones with the WTO?"

He momentarily considered replying that the two nations had managed to strike a bargain for the equal exchange of blazing thermonuclear death. But he could not bring himself to wipe the smile off the other man's face in this most violent manner imaginable. "Oh...they were fine. Just lovely." The staffer nodded eagerly in blissful ignorance, and said, "By the way, sir-ji, I'll be putting in some extra time today so I can have that tourism report on your desk by tomorrow."

The Prime Minister blinked. "Ah, yes...the report...umm...Don't worry about that. Next week is soon enough. Take the day off. Go home to your wife."

The staffer looked confused. "Sir, I am not married."

"Oh...well, could you maybe get married in the next 20 minutes?"

The look he received in response to this question made it clear that the staffer had a very different opinion as to who needed to take time off. "No, I don't think so, sir. You'll have the report by tomorrow," he said as he continued toward his office.

The Prime Minister looked despairingly at the man's retreating back, then turned around and let his feet carry him to the exit. For the first time in months, he was actually aware of the bodyguards that fell in behind him as he made his way onto the street. Bodyguards? Well, he supposed it would be tragic indeed if some miscreant cut his last 20 minutes down to 18. The guards looked confused when they realized that no car was waiting for the most powerful man in this nation of billions, but the Prime Minister decided that for once the leader of the government would walk like any of the countless masses.

For a moment, he considered walking to his home and bidding farewell to his wife and kids. But then he remembered words uttered lifetimes ago, at a cabinet meeting, by an expert whose field he had not bothered to discover and whose name he could not recall.

"...any large nuclear detonation in the Indian subcontinent would affect not just Southeast Asia, but the world as a whole. The conflagration of the massive Indo-Pakistani rainforest would produce enough smoke to disrupt sunlight and weather patterns across the world in a global climate phenomenon called 'nuclear winter.' A nuclear winter would turn even the most fertile fields into icy tundras and thus wipe out almost all terrestrial life as we know it..."

He remembered being thoroughly bored by the discourse and even suspected he had dozed off not long after hearing this fragment. It didn't seem particularly boring anymore. So what was the point in saying goodbye to his family? Should he go down the list of all the things about to be annihilated and say goodbye to every single one?

Goodbye unmarried staffer.
Goodbye bodyguards.
Goodbye India.
Goodbye Pakistan.
Goodbye rainforests.
Goodbye humankind.

*

Instead, he let his feet carry him to a nearby restaurant he had never even noticed before. He perched himself on a rickety chair in front of a worn table and watched as the hostess hurried over to serve her latest (and only) customer. Swatting at the flies that treated her hair as a long-lost homeland to be regained, she eyed this stranger with curiosity. Clearly, a man accompanied with a procession of uniformed bodyguards was either very influential or very despised, but she never even conceived that one of the most powerful men on the subcontinent had decided to forgo a seven-course meal with ministers and MPs to dine at a place where the stove only worked every other day.

"Can I take your order, sir?"

"I'll just have a cup of coffee."

"Right away, sir. That'll only be 15 minutes." Even when the stove did work, it didn't work particularly well.

Her customer appeared shaken. Fifteen minutes? He glanced at his watch and ascertained that he did not have 15 minutes. "Can't you make it any faster?"

"I'm afraid not, sir."

"Are you sure?" he said, withdrawing his wallet. "I tip well." His voice was accompanied by the rustle of hundred-rupee notes.

The woman's eyes grew wider and wider as bills kept emerging. "I'm sure you do, but..." By now, the Prime Minister had the liquidation value of her entire restaurant in his hand, and he kept adding to the amount. "Umm...well...five minutes, sir!"

She hurried out towards the back room. The Prime Minister watched through a window as she emerged from a side door, sprinted down the street, and disappeared into a McDonald's on the corner. five minutes later, he had his coffee.

He emerged from the shabby eating establishment not long after. 8 minutes left. He let his feet carry him where they may, his bodyguards more confused than ever as they followed. He soon found

himself standing before a temple. Deciding that he should at least make his peace with God, he wandered into the shrine. Inside, he eased past the gaping swamis, approached the image of Vishnu, the god of preservation, and sighed.

“You did your best, great preserver. Everything was going fine until I came along. You had a good run, but I messed things up badly for you. But look on the bright side – in just four minutes, you’ll have a lot of people with whom to commiserate.”

He continued on to the statue of Shiva. As he approached, he remembered that the newspapers said that unemployment under his administration had increased painfully because the free trade agreements he had signed with the WTO and the Western agribusinesses it represented. Many local farmers had been driven into poverty. Recently, the headlines had chanted in anticipation of today’s trade negotiations with Pakistan, “PM Sends More Jobs Abroad.” He looked up at the idol of the god of destruction.

“I am sorry, Lord Shiva. It seems even your job has been outsourced.”

Thirty seconds later, the Prime Minister’s bodyguards gaped as the man who held the keys to India’s nuclear arsenal shuffled wearily to the edge of the street and collapsed into a seated position on the dirt and manure-covered curb. But he was too busy staring at his watch to take notice.

Three minutes.

It was amazing to think that just one hour ago, he had been the most important man in the country. An hour ago, he had been looking forward to a short vacation in the Caribbean scheduled for next week. An hour ago, his biggest concern had been the upcoming election. And now, none of that meant very much compared to the way the second hand on his watch just kept moving and moving and moving.

Two minutes.

It was at this point that the Prime Minister suddenly remembered

having left the water running in the bathroom of his suite in the office. Force of habit almost had him reaching for his cell phone to tell his secretary before the second hand again caught his eye and wagged its finger at him in an embarrassing chastisement. Of course, it only wagged in one direction.

One minute.

Just killing time. That was all he had done these past 20 minutes – kill time. Although, he decided, because he had killed a lot of other things today, he saw no reason why time should be spared the same treatment.

THOMAS FARRELL
ON ANY GIVEN DAY

ON ANY GIVEN DAY

A candle is lit, and the flame burns,
The flame burns as it always has.
Centered, and equidistant from the wax cylinder edges.

Like a phantom, it burns strong, and then recedes,
As if waning, and wanting for something,
Almost bending a way in fear, in supplication to some unseen force,
some hidden nature that is better left undiscovered.

Yet unyielding is this flame, always burning its host,
And like the wax cylinder, the substance is molded and shaped by the
incessant fire.
A small triangular flame, so seemingly benign, yet so primordial and mes-
merizing.
So this fire burns every day, and it has different personalities, moods,
differrent definiens.
Something very fluid, and sexual, marks the dance of this flame,
Pushing downward, while thrusting it's body, it's being, into the air.

Some people tend to their fire, and some people are burned by their fire.
Some are burned, and learn to respect the flame,
And some are burned to a fine ash, and return from whence they came.

Others choose darkness, and stumble about all their days,
Casting recriminations, and berating their ill-illuminated path.
Not aware that they are the candle, the wax, the wick,
The very flame they long for.

For darkness is a choice, as is enlightenment,
And the really sad thing is that they don't believe they can burn brightly,
On any given day.

COLOPHON

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