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COMMENTARY: We Exist Because They Exist

Abstract

Society creates a context that makes disability/dyslexia present and problematic in everyday life. In the two stories that I share I will highlight and demonstrates how the fallacy of normalcy traps us into trying to fit into a non-existing meaningfulness of normal. As a disabled person I perpetuated oppression in hope of avoiding exclusion as part of the disabled other, yet my disabled otherness never allowed me total inclusion. Yet, I worked hard to be normal until I realized that normal is making believe what is false. To be normal is to try hid our commonalty of all having different levels of disability. I wonder, could our stories help us imagine how we could do disability differently. In this effort I will share my stories with you in hope of finding common ground with you. I want us to matter to each other. I believe stories can help us matter to each other. The power of story has been put thus, by the great Indigenous scholar and storyteller Thomas King: The truth about stories is that that's all we are (2003, p. 2). I believe we share stories with each other because stories allow us to create shared common connections while also allowing us to have amazement about those who have unique experiences.

The only home/is each other/they've occupied all/the rest/colonised it; an/idea about ourselves is all/we own.

—Paula Gunn Allen

(cited in *Methodology of the Oppressed* (2000, p. 67))

Before we offend our Ancestors, our elders, our mothers and fathers, our brothers and sisters, those yet Unborn and all of creation with our bad manners, allow us to extend an Afrikan Ubuntu greeting. "Sanibona" meaning "We see you" but which also implies that at a deep spiritual level this student is never alone as his ancestors are always with him. Consequently we see you. The response to this is "Yebo Sanibona" meaning "Yes we see you too." Again, the implication is that the respondent and her ancestors are in agreement about their observation of us. Thus, to our ancestors, to our elders, to our parents, to our sisters and brothers, to those yet unborn and to all of creation "Sanibona." Important to note is the usage of "we, us" throughout this work as a conscious effort to use the collective "first" person (we, us), as this is how we communicate as Ubuntu. To use this form of communication is to be traditional and respectful, as we believe that "this student is because you are." Thus, to speak is to acknowledge our living relations while also honouring our ancestral spirits. Yet we also know that speaking can also be used to deny, refuse and ignore our relatedness.

We know ourselves because they (our ancestors) exist; they give us an opportunity to articulate that which makes us different, but this maxima of “we exist because they exist” has greater implications than the oppositional dichotomy that we have presented so far. The truth is that the maxima we exist because they exist has its roots in the most important guiding philosophical principle of Ubuntu: “Umuntu ungumuntu ngubuntu,” which very loosely and very poorly translated means: A person is a person among other persons or a person is a person only through their relationships with others, but here there is also a sense that humanity is bound up in one. I would also strongly argue that this philosophy is also encompassing of all our relationships with all of creation. Even Archbishop Desmond Tutu struggles to convey what Ubuntuism is in English and his best explanation has been captured by Clark (2002) as: “My humanity is caught up, is inextricably bound up, in yours... A person is a person through other persons... I am a human because I belong. I participate, I share” (p. 343). Thus, it is possible that the other is in fact a part of us and we are in fact a part of the other. The question that arises for us is why does the category of the other (disability and its intersection with other identities) exist? There are a number of possible answers to this question, but the truth is we don’t have a clear answer. So we philosophize and theorize possible and plausible explanations. Here are some we have highlighted:

- We (those of us who identify as disabled) are aware of our relational bonds but the others (possibly we¹) do not see our relational ties as assets for the betterment of humanity and instead they (possibly we) see our differences as threatening progress and development.
- They (possibly we) have in fact made our differences the substance that justifies oppression and marginality.
- As we (those of us who identify as disabled) reach out in relational comradeship but are rebuffed, we (possibly they) begin to wonder if we (possibly they) are Ubuntu.
- Their (possibly our) marginalization and oppression of us, serves us (possibly them) as an educational tool to evaluate if our methods of liberation are dehumanizing or marginalizing of others. As our objective is not to start a second colonialism.
- Yet we (possibly they) still engage because we hold out hope of re-establishing our relational familial Ubuntu bond.

Using Storytelling as a Method of Enquiry

There were no stars, no sun, moon or earth. Nothing existed but darkness itself—nothing existed but nothingness. It was a nothingness neither hot nor cold, dead nor alive—a nothingness frightening in its utter nothingness...

How long this nothingness lasted, no one will ever know. But at last there arose from it the great mother goddess Ma. At the command of the Eternal Spirit, Unkulunkulu, she created herself in human form, and then she created the stars, the sun and the earth. (The moon came later, by accident as I shall relate.) Although she was immortal, the goddess Ma was cursed with strange desires and feelings, which afterwards she passed on to man and beast—anger, hunger, jealousy, misery, and love. Because of this, the wise men of the tribes, the story-tellers, call her the Imperfect One, and woodcarvings throughout Africa give her a deformed leg, one breast much bigger than the other, or hands of unequal size, to depict her imperfection. (Mutwa, 1969, pp. 1-2)

The above quotation from Baba Mutwa, the great Zulu high priest, gives confirmation that the Ubuntu come from an imperfect goddess, Ma. Hence, our imperfections are a reflection of our Ubuntu diversity which is our only perfectness. Regardless of their positive or negative functions, even lesser gods than Ma exhibit imperfection in the spiritual form, in their physical form, or in the deeds. Thus, to be imperfect is to belong to the Ubuntu (human) community. The maxima Umuntu ungumuntu ngubuntu (a person is a person among other persons) allow each of us to know ourselves as part of the other while still allowing us to discriminate ourselves as a unique being by having the ability to reflect on the difference that constitute the other.

1 The bracketed “possibly we” implies that we are also implicating ourselves in these behaviours, hence there is a dual role of being colonized as well as perpetuating colonizer tendencies.

As true as everything that we have said above, we still find contradictions that challenge the Ubuntu spirit. For example if our identity as Ubuntu is based on imperfection, why do we have a word that denotes a person as disabled? Could it be we have created a false end in that we have tried to justify where we begin and the other ends? I identified this as a false end because in our efforts to identify ourselves (Ubuntu), we try to find distinguishing markers of the other (Ubuntu); yet this exercise is futile as we are all Ubuntu which is living energy. Could it be we hurt each other because we are a reflection of each other? Could it be we have forgotten this knowledge and through storytelling we can remember² this memory of Ubuntu (unity)?

Adam Ashforth (2005) in reference to “negative ubuntu” makes the following point:

[t]o the adage “A person is a person through other people,” the negative corollary of ubuntu adds: “because they can destroy you.” That is, a person can survive only to the extent that others in the community choose not to destroy him or her. How they might do so is less important than the fact that they can. And when they do, whether by physical or by occult violence, the demand for justice inevitably arises. (p. 86)

Even in the extreme when we can justify killing in self defence, Baba (father) says, *we should never take life lightly and we should always remember no matter the circumstance, killing is and should always be a very regrettable act because the warrior that kills has one less relative* (Baba, personal communication, 1982). Share our stories and maybe we will find common ground. Maybe we will learn that we all have disabilities, yet its intersect with race, gender, age, spirituality, culture, representation, belief and other human conditions means we all view it differently due to our interactions with others. Could our stories help us imagine how we could do disability differently?

Why story: Stories allow us to speak with authority about that which we know but there is an implicit understanding that what we say

here could have implications for all of us. In an otherwise isolated colonial society, stories allow us to share wisdom, knowledge, joy, pain, love, desire, motivation, memory and all other traits that make up the human condition. Some stories reach beyond the living realm and go into the realm of the dead. In these stories we are reminded that our bodies are of the soil and our beings are of the spiritual realm. Every now and again remember to let your bare feet touch the soil. Let the soil (re-)member with your body. Let the soil tell your body stories about where it came from because there it shall return. We share stories with each other because stories allow us to create shared common connections while also allowing us to have amazement about those that have unique experience. The power of story has been put thus, by the great Indigenous scholar and storyteller Thomas King (2003): “*The truth about stories is that that’s all we are*” (p. 2).

This assignment demonstrates the paradoxes and contradictions of being human among other humans. The first story we will share will demonstrate: the collusion of two worldviews and the undermining of one of these worldviews by the other. Colonialism has established itself as the only viable governance and transmissible institution. Hence, our indigenous ways of knowing were deposed as primitive, barbaric and uncivilized. Yet, as indigenous peoples we know a different form of governance which uses different communicable institutions but, regardless of this fact, we have been conditioned over time to abandon our indigenous worldviews. This insidious form of colonialism was achieved through co-optation, diversionary trickery and lies and this process was so effective in its total mission, we in contemporary society are so conditioned to the colonial system that its stories have become our stories, its memory is our memory and our indigenous memories have become fragments of a distant worldview which nags our conscious. Du Bois identifies this as double consciousness and makes the following admissions:

BETWEEN me and the other world there is ever an unasked question: unasked by some through feelings of delicacy; by others through the difficulty of rightly framing it. All, nevertheless, flutter round it. They approach me in a half-hesitant sort of way, eye me curiously or compassion-

2 I have chosen to write the word (re-)member in this manner as a way to put emphasis on the (re-) part which is defined as the act of doing again or recalling while member refers to the collective that are fragmented. So we use our stories to help us re-member our Ubuntu.

ately, and then, instead of saying directly, How does it feel to be a problem? they say, I know an excellent colored man in my town; or, I fought at Mechanicsville; or, Do not these Southern outrages make your blood boil? At these I smile, or am interested, or reduce the boiling to a simmer, as the occasion may require. To the real question, How does it feel to be a problem? I answer seldom a word. (DuBois, edited by Gates & Oliver, 1999, p. 9) ...

...It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his two-ness,—an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder. (Dubois, edited by Gates & Oliver, 1999, p. 11)

Between the ages of 4 and 7 years old I was in the process of acquiring the necessary skills for becoming proficient in reading functional art such as cave paintings, hieroglyphics, poetry, songs, proverbs, folktales, fables, and the hum of the drum, the cry of the horn and a host of other Ubuntu literary skills. In retrospect I now understand why the older Malawian exiles worked so hard to try to make sure I learned the Ubuntu knowledge and history. They were trying to teach me about my place and my responsibilities within the collective, but Baba (father) having sole parenting rights decided that the most important skills that I needed to acquire were surviving the violence of colonialism. Thus, Baba instilled in me that our survival depended on my ability to learn the ways of the colonizer. I was to become like them and in so doing I naively determined where they ended and I began.³ This colonial indoctrination took place at Danbury Ave in Mabelreign, Harare, then Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) where Baba worked as a neo-slave. He (Baba) just wanted to ensure that his son was not a neo-slave to anyone but instead he ended up with a label for his son. A label that defined his son as abnormal, a label that defined his son as not

normal, a label that said his son was disabled and I imagine that as Baba accepted this label his dream of freedom from neo-slavery must have seemed further away. This is that story.

We know you are one of us when we can recognize your story

Thus, to recognize is to remember and to remember is to recognize

Yet, Tsitsi Dangarembga in *Nervous Condition* (1988) reminds us that

Some things cannot be explained and such things can only be seen

In these pages I am only giving voice to that which can be given voice

Where I am found wanting may others proceed

With knowledge that I do not possess

I had had breakfast and I was making my way out to play when Baba (father) stopped me. I believe I was around seven or eight years old.

Baba: *Devi, you need to start learning to read and write if you are to make it in this white-man's world.*

Me: *Baba, what is reading and writing?*

Baba: *It is how the white-men communicate using symbols of letters like A, B and D. If you know how to do this you can make money without having to toil in the sun like I am doing. You will be dressed very smart, have beautiful women bring you tea and your pen will make your money for you. And if you steal a little for your old man it won't even be stealing because you can't steal with your pen. It is called doing business. The white men did business with us and look now we have no land and on top of it they have got us working like slaves because they knew how to use the pen. Fail to do this and you are a slave. Now go into the servant's quarters and Cook will start the lesson. I will be in to supervise when I am finished smoking my cigarette.*

Me: *But, Baba, I was about to go play my friends are waiting for me?*

Baba: *Will these friends feed you and provide for you? If the answer is yes, then go and never return, otherwise go inside and start working.*

Cook: *OK Devi I will teach you four letters to start with. The first letter is A, the second is bla, bla and bla, bla. Did you get that?*

3 Arguably this dilemma has been with us since the arrival of the first colonizers on the Afrikan continent. With each passing day we become more like them but I wonder if they ever become like us?

Me: Yes.

Cook: Then repeat it to me?

After trying for a long time I realize that I can only remember A.

Me: Sorry I can't remember.

So we do it again and again and again and again but I still can't remember.

Cook: I will teach it to you one more time and if you get it right then you can go play.

By some miracle I get it right and I am free but when I get home in the evening I can't remember any of the letters. Then the beatings start. But the beating can't help me to remember.

The beatings can't help me remember but now I know how it feels to be ashamed of myself, to be a failure in my father's own eyes but I cannot focus on this hurtful knowledge so I focus on the fact that I am bleeding from my nose because of all the beatings.

Me: Look at what you are doing to me Baba? I am no more doing this. I am done with this learning stuff and if it's so good then you learn it.

The above statement was also a threat directed towards Baba because I knew he could not read or write either. In a covert way, I was letting him know that he cannot expect what he cannot do himself. That was the last time Baba ever supervised my learning. He chalked it to the fact that I was still too young to learn. Outwardly I told everyone that I did not want to learn ever again, but inwardly I did not want to know that I could not live up to my Baba's wishes.

My learning disability was therefore a family secret until 1982 when I was found on the streets of Harare by a grocery store owner and placed into the orphanage. After being kicked out of two schools that had special education programs for fighting, I was sent to St. Giles children's rehabilitation center for mental health assessments. There began the screening by psychiatrists, psychologists and any other person that fancied her/his-self to be some head specialist. I was labelled mentally retarded and

brain damaged and for the first time they were not blaming me. They were blaming the disability which they had made manifest and were now promising to help me address. Foolishly I started to believe there could exist me without disability but I was wrong and the other white kids reminded me that I was a dumb nigger.

Thus, my failure to read and write was viewed as abnormal and problematic which made me unusual and weird. This led to the other kids making fun of me because I was strange. This created a cause and effect. I was strange because I couldn't read and write so the kids made fun of me. I used to hit the other kids because I was abnormal and it hurt to be seen as different. When an Afrikan child starts to beat up white children he must be crazy. But could the truth have been I was fighting with an unjust society which was violent in its effort to "dishonour my humanity and in my fight to reclaim my humanity I inevitably dishonour their humanity, honour my humanity and I will honour your humanity."⁴

When they first labelled me as mentally retarded and brain damaged I was very happy because I believed it showed that it was not my fault. I figured that because it was not my fault, society would stop blaming me and I would get the help I needed so I could be normal and fit in with other kids. I figured they would stop telling me to, "pull your boots by the straps and get on with life." I figured because I had a label my invisible disability would be made visible and in the process it would protect me from all the criticism and humiliating putdowns. But I was wrong.⁵

Society creates a context that makes disability/dyslexia present and problematic in everyday life by valuing reading and writing as the

4 Many wars have been engaged in by our Ngoni ancestors because they believed they were preserving life. The point I am trying to make is that you cannot annihilate a people and not expect them to defend themselves.

5 The tensions of disabilities are endless, but in this example two are worth mentioning. On the one hand I am vying to have my disability made visible, yet for our brothers and sisters who have visible disabilities our political society makes them believe that they need to have their disabilities made invisible.

most effective ways of learning. For purposes of creating simplification in education and for purposes of implementing an approach which allows for the illusion of universal teaching strategies, the acquisition and teaching of reading and writing skills has become the legitimized standard for acquiring knowledge. Thus, failure to do this becomes the evidence that something is wrong with the person who's failing to read and write. Society does not question whether its standard is inclusive of all because it is interested in serving the perceived needs of the majority. Society understands that there will be people on the fringes of its imposed standard but the system says,

"Too bad, it's your fault for being on the margins and if we met everybody's needs then we would kill competition. And that won't do because our society is built on hierarchy. There must be winners and losers. But if you can prove that it's not your fault and that you are trying to be normal by orienting yourself towards the established standard then you are deserving of a little assistance. Now that we are linked by this story, where do I end and where do you begin? May this story remain stunted while you grow."⁶

I am here because you were there; so I question again where do I end and where do you begin? Such a simple question, yet its response offers profound political and social implications. Am I not writing these stories in a colonial context? Am I not speaking in a colonial language? Am I not philosophizing and thinking in the colonial worldview? Do I not now dream in the colonial context? It would therefore seem I am colonial but there are fragments of other memories, other worldviews and other languages which tug at my soul. My soul and my spirit cannot find rest. The next two stories demonstrate the absurdity of having disability while perpetuating oppression in hope of avoiding exclusion as part of the other, yet my otherness never allows for total inclusion. In this struggle, society uses implicit and explicit messages that make it clear to me that it is possible to lose my otherness status if I only try a little harder. If I reject my otherness by demonstrating how I fit into the norm as prescribed by society, and above all by

never questioning this standard or considering if there is an alternative to the culture of otherness then I can be considered "normal." Thus, my desire for inclusion and acceptance makes me an active participant in the exclusion and oppression of other people with disabilities. Hence, I've (possibly we) become the expert of using the otherness of others to hide my own otherness. To illustrate this point I will use two examples where disabilities appear for others while I hide my otherness.

Example One

To pain we all have different kinds of shields
But the most commonly used protection is isolation
Yet isolation is pain: Hoping to meet like minds
Hoping to find
love Hoping to belonging
Hoping to be understood
Hoping to be reflected
To counter this pain of isolation we introduce
ourselves through story
Thus, we are all stories reaching out to each other

Part of living in the orphanage was the ritual of establishing where you ranked in the hierarchy of masculine power. Thus, physical fights over dominance were a frequent occurrence. Having joined the boxing club and having improved quite dramatically in my boxing skills, I felt confident in challenging a bigger boy in the same age group as myself to a fight. The targeted boy, however, was unwilling to fight me so the older boys and I began to taunt him. We followed him around the orphanage calling him all kinds of horrible names.

To try to get us to stop and reflect on the absurdity of this culture of violence without antagonizing any of us, the targeted boy in a very dramatic fashion began to question an imaginary figure instead of directly questioning us: "Why must we treat each other so badly, is this not what we have escaped from, so now why are we doing what was done to each of us to each other?" And to put an exclamation mark on this eloquent point he began to laugh at the stupidity of all of our behaviours. For a moment we were all stunned by the truth of his words. It was evident to me that he had stolen my thunder in that moment. I did not care whether he was right or wrong, whether he made sense or

6 I was reminded of the African way of ending storytelling by the work of Wangusa, 1989.

not. All I understood was that I was playing the game and the rules of the game were you are either on top or you are at the bottom of the hierarchy. The question of whether to play the game or not was of no consequence to me. The way I understood the orphanage was you either survive it or it killed you. If you chose to survive then by default you chose the game and the game was only controlled from the top.

It is said that the tongue is sharper than the sword and so I unleashed the sword of my tongue. I looked at the other boys and asked them: "Who the fuck is this white boy talking to? All of a sudden he believes in the spirits of the ancestors? "Roots" has gone and fucked him up or do we need to call the Psychiatrist to see him again?" If the spell of reason had stunned us, then I had the antidote and I was blowing it in the direction of the four winds. The mention of calling the Psychiatrist again for the targeted boy had all the other boys rolling with laughter.

In my attack I had gone for the jugular so I was fully prepared for a fight but the counter-attack that I received was not something I was prepared for. The targeted boy stared at me and in that cold hard stare I read, "Do you want me to put your fucking shit out for us to laugh at? The fact that you are labelled brain damage, you can't read or write, you wet your bed every single night, and your father is a domestic servant or is it domestic slave."

I know in those few seconds of silent staring I pleaded for forgiveness, sympathy and mercy. Instead of humiliating me by verbalizing my secret (every single person who was in the orphanage had secrets about how he came to live there, some of these secrets were known to us and others were still a mystery), the targeted boy simply said, "You win." This led to the deflation of this heated situation. I have never forgotten this gracious gift and I write it in loving memory of the targeted boy whose forgiveness has meant so much to me and whose lesson I'm still learning.

In this situation disability makes its appearance in interesting ways 1) the imposition that the targeted boy was culturally not following the norms of white society as we knew it in Zimbabwe. 2) I attribute this bizarre behav-

iour (need to connect to the an unseen or the act of imagining) to having his mind fucked up by the movie Roots, and 3) if there was doubt about the presence of disability then the call to the psychiatric doctor's authority solidifies the presence of disability. In this social interaction the presence of disability serves to legitimize my position while undermining the authority and truth of the targeted boy. Targeted boy's humanity is of little consequence to me until I sense that he can undermine my humanity by exposing my secret. In this colonial society the humanity of the other may seem to only be respected in the moment that the other threatens your humanity. So the threat cannot be imagined, it must be an imminent threat geared for manifestation and the harm must be calculable. In this story, the need to be perceived as normal leads to secrecy and this secrecy has power over me based on my perceived distance from normalcy. The greater I perceive this distance the more likely I am to try and hide this fact. The harder you work at maintaining and hiding a secret the more currency the secret accrues against you. Thus, the standard of normal is based on what's visibly abnormal between the interactions of people. I wonder if we were telling this story in ChiNgoni would it be the same? What would be different? What would be lost in translation? Would the stories be in the right context? Would I philosophize about them in the same way? When did I start dreaming this unAfrikan dream? Fragment memories take me home to that place where my spirit comes from. To that place that I long to plant my feet in for the first time. Where the problems are all ours and the finger pointing is only directed in our direction. I long for home, I long for the Afrikan dream. Now that we are linked by this story, where do I end and where do you begin? May once again this story remain stunted while you grow.

Example Two

Disabled people have inhabited the culture, political and intellectual world from whose making they have been excluded and in which they have been relevant only as a problem.

—Paul Abberley, *The Spectre at the Feast: Disabled People and Social Theory* (1998, p. 93)

After having been in Toronto for a year, a friend from Vancouver came to visit us. In the excitement to show her the diversity of Toronto we took her around the many diverse communities and ended it all by going to an Ethiopian restaurant near Christie Pits Park. The restaurant had a few regulars who were sitting around the bar, but for the most part the place had a lot of vacant tables. As it was the summer, the owner of the restaurant offered us the prime table which was located on a raised stage. The wide windows were open and gave the impression that we were sitting out on the patio of the restaurant. The waitress came over, took our drink and food order and then informed us that she would be back within a few minutes with our drinks. After about 10 minutes the owner of the restaurant brought our drinks over and apologized for the delay. We let him know that none of us minded as we were catching up with each other and the restaurant owner began to share a few pleasantries with us. As we were speaking, I noticed that the restaurant owner was wearing a Zimbabwe golf shirt and as soon as I pointed this out to him, he enquired if I was Zimbabwean and I confirmed his suspicion that I was in fact Zimbabwean. Thus, a loud Afrikan comradeship was struck up. Invariably the political dissection of Zimbabwe and Ethiopia followed and this would have continued if the business of running a restaurant had not got in the way. Noticing that our food was almost ready our gracious host began to make his exit. At the same time another Ethiopian man approached our window from the street.

Unabashedly, this stranger began to ask for money and when we responded in the usual shooing away manner of, "I'm sorry we don't have any money," he was not swayed or dissuaded by our gestures. Instead he saw this as an opportunity to explain that he was hungry and needed some money. Now, I will admit that I had already made up my mind I was not giving this man a penny because his demeanor and smell indicated to me that he was drunk. Not trusting that he would use the money I gave him for food, I shook my head to indicate that I would not change my mind. Momentarily he took his gaze off of me and stared at each member of the table individually he said: *You put 50 cents here, you put 50 cents here, and you brother, you are Afrikan, yes! So you do better than 50 cents right?* An embarrassing standoff had

been reached when the restaurant owner intervened and said to us: *Don't worry, I will deal with this, this guy is not well in the head, maybe a little mad.* Again, I will admit I was relieved to see our nuisance of a man being firmly led away.

Here is what we overheard as the restaurant owner led the man away from our view at the nice big window that made us feel like we were sitting out on the patio of the restaurant.

Restaurant Owner: *Stop bothering customers.*

The Street Man: *Brother, things are hard.*

Restaurant Owner: *Just stay away....*

Face slap crack, Face slap crack and a boot thud, who knows where.

..... Dead silence

Restaurant owner walks back in and heads behind his restaurant bar counter. Our visiting friend says: *Should we leave or should we say something to him?* I'm uncomfortable and embarrassed, one of our people has just let me down and now my non-Afrikan friend is asking me to do something about it. But what can I do, is this man not one of my own? In reflection now, I concede that I have othered and excluded the Afrikan street man from the normal culture yet regardless of the consequences I have concluded the restaurant owner and I are normal.

In this situation society allows me and invites me to abnormalize my street brother's behaviour. The markers in society that allow us to abnormalize my brother are 1) We should all be able to support ourselves and failure to do this shows symptoms of abnormalcy and sickness. 2) The perceived lack of what is deemed a normal amount of reserve, embarrassment and self constrain is proof that that my Afrikan brother is of no use to society. All the Indigenous knowledge that I possess tells me that this situation is wrong. Yet, I couldn't bring myself to reprimand the restaurant owner. Could this be unquestionable loyalty to Afrikaness? Then what about the Afrikan who was beaten up? Does his Afrikaness not measure up? At the time of the event I wanted to and needed to make a clean break of this mess. It is interesting that I identify my co-optation into the role of

the colonizer as messy. Could I be seeing in me what Albert Memmi in *The Colonizer and The Colonized* labelled as the colonizer, the Usurper? Could I be seeing in me the behaviour of that colonizer who would endeavour to falsify our history because he/she rewrites our laws and he/she would extinguish our memory as a way to succeed in transforming his/her usurpation into legitimacy (Memmi, 1965, p. 52)? Yet, this co-opted string-puppet has fragments of memories that defy this reality. I know that the world can be different. I know now that I have being seduced by the power of the colonial system which has and still uses insidious trickery and lies to gain accumulation through our dispossession of power. Memmi argues that colonial racism must be built on three major ideological components: "one the gulf between the culture of the colonialist and the colonized; two, the exploitation of these differences for the benefit of the colonialist; three, the use of these supposed difference as standards of absolute fact (Memmi, 1965, p. 71).

All this is achieved through the harshest, most pain-fullest and most humiliating manner to insure that we draw less and less from our past memory. Albert Memmi asserts that this colonial reality makes it seem like the colonized are doomed to lose their memory and he (Memmi) can advance this position because he knows that:

Memory is not purely a mental phenomenon. Just as the memory of an individual is the fruit of his history and psychology, that of a people rests upon its institutions. Now the colonized's institutions are dead or petrified. He scarcely believes in those which continue to show some signs of life and daily confirms their ineffectiveness. He often becomes ashamed of these institutions, as of a ridiculous and overaged monument. (Memmi, 1965, p. 103)

But in the reality of this story I say: *look we have had some drinks and the food is here, let us just eat and never come back here again.* So we eat a little quieter, laugh a little less and my conscience becomes a little more disturbed. This situation is "abnormal" to my Ubuntu teachings and to my core values, yet I do the "abnormal" so I can be a part of the so-called "normal."

What is interesting about the three examples of the appearance of disability is that they all highlight the need and want to be included in the cultural of normalcy. Yet the implicit and explicit regulation of normalcy by society, leads us all to internalize these values. Thus, due to own fears and inadequacies we become the gatekeepers. We do a great job of gate keeping in order to secure our own space in the supposedly limited normal culture. Those who seek their freedom by mimicking the oppressors can never gain their freedom. They only gain the skills of how to be a better oppressor (Fanon, 1963). Let us regenerate and revive our Ubuntu governance because these are our institutions, which were designed to serve our needs. I would be a liar if I told you that Indigenous Ubuntu governance was not oppressive or marginalising, because it is. However, as these Ubuntu institutions are a reflection of us, we have a duty to make sure that they also reflect our reality and where they fail to do so we should come together and create a solution. This is how you create responsible democratic participation. From this position we cannot point fingers outwardly as the responsibility rests solely on all our shoulders. We therefore, should be regularly checking if our individual actions are maintaining the status quo and if they are helping to dismantle the status quo we should know how, so we can share the knowledge. Fragment memories take me home to that place where my spirit comes from. To that place that I long to plant my feet in for the first time. Where the problems are all ours and the finger pointing is only directed in our direction. I long for home, I long for the Afrikan dream. Now that we are linked by this story, where do I end and where do you begin? May once again this story remain stunted while you grow.

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