

Psychohistory and Soul Wounds

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It is clear that organisational and social efforts are necessary in forming a nonviolent political process that rightly seeks to empower both the Mestizo (mixed) and fully indigenous peoples of Mexico, and western Latino/a America as a part of the Pacific Rim, and affirm our multiple existence and voices (Arredondo & Aros, 2004; Arredondo, this volume).

It is clear is that our attributions become an internal, individual process, both including and going beyond the cognitive. In other words, in order to effect post-colonial change we have become and are more in touch with how oppression plays out, by means of intergenerational psychodynamics, affecting thought, feelings, and of course, behaviour. Others would assert 'spirit' ontologically as the force that carries the residue of colonial trauma at the individual as well as at conscious and unconscious levels in the group (Duran & Duran, 1995). Thus, there are significant personal and collective aspects to consider and address in how we are, and how we should be or become. In a post-colonial era, I offer a few thoughts in three parts.

Part I: Post-Columbus Oppression: Mexican Mercenary Psychohistory

Since the Maya and Tlaxcala allied with Spain through Hernan Cortez to overthrow the Mexica, an interesting history, if not legacy, has come about. Well known is the European post-Columbian slave trade to staff Mexican silver and gold mines with Indians and Mestizos not only within the Mexican nation, but with those from as far south as Nicaragua and as far north as the Dakota territories. Not long after, Mestizo and indigenous Mexican mine labourers from Chihuahua and Sonora went to work by the tens of thousands in the mines and foundries of the US southwest — Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, and California.

This cyclical, indentured legacy brought about cruel oppression of the indigenous and Mestizo peasantry by the ruling Euro-American elite for the past five centuries in Mexico, Guatemala, and the United States (US). These

relationships based on power and superiority led to the well known dual role of *raza* not only as laborers; but also as 'capos' or muscle for these regimes of Euro-Americans. To save themselves, some of the oppressed became enforcers, scouts, enslavers, and soldiers of fortune, exploiting their own people. This practice continues today in the form of coyotes, humans who smuggle other human beings who seek a better economic life situation into the US. In short, we the people who have lived these exploited experiences for far too many generations, continue to play them out in different forms. We behave as oppressed and colonized peoples in how we oppress ourselves. We have done so under the reign of the US, United Kingdom (UK), and other 'superpowers'. We have served willingly and otherwise from the northern US west of the Mississippi River to Central America. The subjugation of Mestizos has had a broad geographical landscape. This extremely abbreviated synopsis of our role as perpetrators in the west is not all that we have done and may yet continue to do.

Part II: Mestizo and Indian Oppression of Indigenous Others in the West Pacific

In the island nations of the Philippines and Micronesia, Mestizo and Indio, soldiers of Mexico and Guatemala played significant roles in campaigns such as the Chamorro (Chamoru) Spanish Wars where after 28 years of guerilla warfare no warrior-aged man is reported to have survived (Rogers, 1995; Tueller, 2001). Our role in the Pacific shows the impact that we had, going beyond tortillas and metati in the Marianas. In corresponding cycles, Pacific island nations have experienced, post invasion, the parallel of the early history of

the Western hemisphere. In other words, as descendants of colonised people, we carried out the practices of violence and trauma as did the conquistadores. An example is the Acapulco to Manila connections that bind us to Guam (Rapadas, this volume; Rogers, 1995).

Not long ago on the island of Guam, disdain for outer islands (more indigenous, less Mestizo and westernised Micronesians from the Federated States of Micronesia) reached a crescendo. Signalling this change in attitude was an act of violence. A Chamoru youth stabbed a Chuukese (Trukese) youth in a market not far from the University. The Chamoru fear and the Chuukese anger were such that the island shuddered, expecting interethnic violence to rock the community. It was only through the last minute convening and consolidation of the Chuukese chiefs that recrimination was narrowly avoided. The chiefs engaged in strained yet respectful dialogue to bring about understanding, reconciliation, and nonviolent responses.

Not long after, articles in the regional paper reported violence in Fiji when a Fijian politician of Indian descent was elected Prime Minister. This election gave rise to at least one letter to the editor of the paper, denying that interethnic violence would never occur on Guam and denying the tensions and stratification that exist on Guam. I wrote to the *Pacific Daily News*, reminding the readers about how Fiji was, until the elections, 'the place where multiculturalism can work, if it can work anywhere' (Aros, 2000).

For Mexican and other mixed and fully indigenous people, the parallel issues of colour, acculturation, histories of loss, oppression and modernisation in a global context are impossible to miss and many, if not all, can frame the resulting conflict in local terms. We readily see the old Acapulco to Manila galleon route and beyond; we recognise our post Columbian Aztlán life here in the Western hemisphere in a series of misattributions about indigenous violence and oppression in the Pacific.

As descendants of centuries of oppression and violence, we have silently absorbed the mistreatment. Typically, we have psychologically ignored these aspects of our oppression and colonisation in the discussions of ethnic identity development. We have not sufficiently considered the transference dynamic that goes beyond the personal and collective consciousness of our actions and how it plays out. It does so even within our own homes and selves as unconscious, repetitive compulsions that have us abusing and killing ourselves figuratively and literally.

Part III. Contemporary Effects of Post-Colonialism: Owning the Negative

In a world that continues to dismiss and terrorise persons of indigenous heritage, it is the intergenerational acknowledgment of who and what we are personally and collectively, consciously and uncon-

sciously, that is critical to persistence (Aros & Manglona, 2004; Duran & Duran, 1995). Resolving internal and social conflicts involves the 'spiritual and traditional' as well as the 'secular and novel' (Aros, Buckingham, & Rodriguez, 1999). Long overdue is that we begin to look at dual diagnosis issues including alcoholism and drug abuse as expressions of postcolonial self-hate and loathing, and unconscious redefinition compulsions or impulses that individuals play out. Conscious and unconscious collective elements that transcend generations from earlier points in time, from earlier generations, play out personally (Duran & Duran, 1995). Individual and group resolution of our personal and collective hang-ups, wounds, follies, and misdeeds are tied directly to those of our ancestors. Inasmuch as these converge, both must be addressed in order for there to be resolution.

Any, if not all, hopes for a Native postcolonial psychology of liberation must systematically address these 'soul wounds' by community interventions, individual and group therapy; and, through the religious and spiritual rituals we have received and inherited. It is essential to fully restore our 'parts', those we have lost by taking part in oppression as oppressors, as well as those that we have given away when breaking down as the oppressed (Aros, 2003; Duran & Duran, 1995).

Part IV: Toward Solutions

Surely, the Mestizo and fully indigenous peoples of Mexico have many times tried to overthrow our oppressors, only to find ourselves acting just like them. Very often, almost always, 'them' becomes 'us' without the spiritual dimension. Yet the prayers, the dreams, visions, and sacred aspects and teachings we have also inherited must also be embraced. In short, the prognosis for all present or future successful, long-term, nonviolent, positive social and civil movements has to involve internal if not integral ritual and other spiritual and religious dimensions, or we all appear to be limited if not doomed to failure (Duran & Duran, 1995).

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