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Thoughts From THE HEART

By: Smith, Joseph

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0300HRS:::~

"HAVE A HAPPY EASTER
AND BLESSED PASSOVER"

FINDING MY PLACE

PART V

I HAVE WRITTEN THIS BLOG NOT AS A PERSON UNIQUELY QUALIFIED IN THE AREAS OF POLITICAL CORRECTNESS, THEOLOGY, OR HISTORY OF THE TWO GROUPS. BUT AS THE MISTAKE OF A MIXED MARRIAGE, OF AN JEWISH MOTHER AND BLACK FATHER, FIERCE FORBIDDEN RELATIONSHIP BY BOTH GROUPS, PRODUCE ME, A MONGREL, A PERSON CAUGHT UP IN AN INCAPABLE NETWORK OF AN PERPETUAL UNANSWERED QUESTION. THIS IS WHAT MY MIXED RACE HAS MADE ME, THE OTHERNESS!!! IN WHICH EITHER GROUP CLAIMED OR WANTED TO BE ASSOCIATED WITH. AS, A PERSON GROWING UP HALF BLACK AND JEWISH, IN A NATION ALREADY, DIVIDED ALONG UNHEALTHY RACIAL LINES, AS, A PERSON GROWING UP HALF BLACK AND JEWISH IN A FAMILY, TWO GROUPS, DIVIDED ALONG UNHEALTHY RACIAL LINES, I HAVE "NEVER" FELT A PART OF EITHER GROUP. THERE IS ANGER IN THESE WRITINGS, FROM A BLACK PERSON POINT OF VIEW, ANGER FROM A JEWISH PERSON POINT OF VIEW, AND ANGER FROM A HUMAN POINT OF VIEW. THESE WRITINGS ARE ABOUT UNDERSTANDING, BUT MOST OF ALL HEALING, BUT THIS ANGER WOULD NOT BE KEPT OUT OF IT. SO I HAVE PERMITTED IT TO ROLLED THROUGH

THESE WRITINGS IN THE HOPES THAT THE TRUTH, THE
OPENESS OF FEELINGS, WOULD LEAD FINALLY TO A BETTER
PLACE. THESE WRITINGS ARE OVERDUE, AND A LONG CONTINUOUS
ARGUMENT, NOT ONE THAT BELONGS EXCLUSIVELY TO THE WRITER
BUT THE KIND THAT CAUSED BOTH GROUP TO DO BATTLE OVER
THE DINNER TABLE. AS THE OTHERNESS, I USED TOO OR RATHER
FORCE TO LISTEN TO THE BLACK SIDE OF THE FAMILY, TALK ABOUT
THE HOLOCAUST, AND IT WAS ALWAYS BROUGHT UP IN A DISCUSSION
WHEN MY MOTHER WAS AROUND. AND MY AUNT WAS GOOD FOR THIS, THEN
ALL THE REST WOULD ATTEMPT TO GANG UP ON MY MOTHER. BUT MY
MOTHER WAS A LAWYER WHO WOULD NOT BE "PUNKED OUT" - THE HOLOCAUST
I FOUND OUT AT A YOUNG AGE HAS ALWAYS BEEN A SCORE POINT
BETWEEN BLACKS AND JEWS, PROBABLY AS A SYMPTOM OF THE SERIOUS
DIVISIONS ALREADY EXISTING BETWEEN THE TWO GROUPS AND NOT AS
AN ORIGINAL CAUSE OF THE "ENMITY" THE HOLOCAUST OFFERS US
ONE THREAD THAT WE CAN USE TO FIND OUR WAY THROUGH THE
UNFORTUNATE MAZE OF BLACK-JEWISH CONFLICT. MY MOTHER'S
SIDE INSIST THAT THE HOLOCAUST IS A **UNIQUE** EVENT IN MODERN
HISTORY, UNPARALLELED IN IT HORROR BY ANY OTHER, MY FATHER'S
SIDE FIND THIS VIEW EGOCENTRIC, OR TRIBAL-CENTRIC, THEY
FEEL IT IGNORES OR ERASES THEIR OWN SUFFERING AND THE
ATROCITY DONE TO BLACKS IN THE 18TH AND 19TH CENTURIES. THEY
ARGUE ABOUT THE CARGO SHIPS THAT BROUGHT BLACK **SLAVES** TO THE
NEW WORLD, AND THOSE MILLIONS THAT DIED IN ROUTE. I
USE TO SAY TO MYSELF, WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN
THE HOLD OF A BOAT IN WHICH MANY PERISH ON A VOYAGE
TO SLAVERY AND THE RAILROAD CAR PACKED WITH THOSE DESTINED
FOR DEATH AND ENFORCED LABOR. WHAT MAKE EITHER GROUP

TRAGEDY OF GREATER SIGNIFICANCE THAN EACH OTHER WHOSE TRAGEDY WAS WORSE IS HARDLY A PRIZE ANYONE WANTS TO VIE FOR, BUT YET THE ARGUMENT AND THE COMPETITION FOR THE DISASTER AWARD RUMBLES ON. IT EMITS A TOXIC DRIP THAT ERODES FAMILY, AND I SAID IT ONE DAY; AND IT WAS MADE QUITE CLEAR TO ME BY MY FATHER'S MOTHER, WHEN SHE STATED, "YOU MIGHT BE MY SON'S MIMIE CHILD, FROM THAT HYPOCRITIC WOMAN, BUT THAT DON'T MAKE US FAMILY." I NEVER TOLD MY MOTHER, WHAT WAS SAID THAT DAY, BUT I DID ASK HER WEEKS LATER WHAT WAS THE MEANING OF THE WORD. SHE SAID IT'S LIKE CALLING SOMEONE BLACK A, "N" SHE ASKED WHERE DID I HEAR THE WORD, I JUST SAID AT SCHOOL, SO FROM THAT POINT WHENEVER I WAS AT THE OTHER SIDE, SPENDING TIME WITH THEM - WHICH WAS EVERY 1ST AND 4TH WEEK END, AND EVERY SUMMER, I LEARNED TO BE SEEN AND NOT HEARD. AND I'M QUITE GOOD AT IT, EVEN TO THIS DATE. I HATED ALL OF THEM EQUALLY FOR ALWAYS TALKING ABOUT MY MOTHER. EVEN MY COUSINS WHO USE TO SAY, YOUR MOTHER IS NOTHING MORE THAN A "HALF WHITE "N", I KNEW WHERE IT WAS COMING FROM. THEY HAD NOT WOKEN UP ONE DAY AND THOUGHT TO SAY IT, WITHOUT DENYING IT FROM SOMEONE, AND THE SEWIST SIDE WAS NO BETTER. THEY USE TO SAY "KUSHI" AND POINT TO ME. [IT MEANS, "DARKIE"] NOT AS BAD AS THE "N" WORD, BUT ALONG ~~THE~~ ^{THE} SAME UNHEALTHY RACIAL LINES. I SPOKE ONE DAY TO MY FATHER ABOUT HIS MOTHER AND OTHER FAMILY MEMBERS - HE WOULD JUST SAY, SHE'S OLD AND SET IN HER WAYS AND MEANS NO HARM!!! MY MOTHER NEVER ENGAGED US IN AN

CONVERSATION ABOUT RACE, IN FACT, RACE OR CLASS WAS RARELY DISCUSSED IN THE HOUSEHOLD OF MY YOUTH. IT WAS ONLY WHILE IN THE COMPANY OF MY FATHER'S SIDE OF THE FAMILY AND THEIR UNEDUCATED DRUNKEN FRIENDS THAT I OVERHEARD THE SO CALLED "GROWN-UPS" PON-TIFICATE ON RACIAL MATTER. AS I GOT OLDER I UNDERSTAND WHAT MY MOTHER'S WAS TRYING TO TEACH US, THROUGH HER SILENCE, RACE AND CLASS WAS INSIGNIFICANT, THAT IT SHOULDN'T AND ULTIMATELY DIDN'T MATTER. SHE WAS TRYING TO TEACH US TO SEE CHARACTER, NOT SKIN. AND TO SEE, ALL HUMAN BEHAVIOR ASSOCIATED WITH RACE WAS A MYTH, A LIE. IT TOOK ME OVER 30 YEARS AND I STILL STRUGGLE TO DATE, BUT YET THROUGH MY MOTHER TEACHING'S, I HAVE FOUND NOTHING IN LIFE MORE UNSETTLING, OR MORE LIBERATING, THAN THAT DISCOVERY. BEING THE ONLY MALE CHILD AMONG NINE SIBLINGS, I GREW UP AROUND WOMEN, FAMILY AND FRIENDS OF MY MOTHER AND SIBLINGS WHO BELIEVED THAT MEN HAD RUINED THEIR LIVES, I WOULD ALWAYS BE THE RECIPIENT OF THESE BELIEFS AND FEELINGS. EVEN MY MOTHER'S FAILED THREE MARRIAGES WOULD ALWAYS SEEM TO BE MY CROSS TO BEAR. I WAS THEIR SOUNDING BOARD, BUT, YET IN MY SEARCH FOR "LEGITIMACY" BECAUSE OF THE BURDEN IF YOU WILL ["ALL MEN (BLACK) ARE THE SAME"], I HAVE AND STILL DO PROCEED WITH SUSPICION IN ROMANCE, IN FRIENDSHIPS, AND I HAVE TAKEN RISKS, BEEN VULNERABLE, ASKED TO KNOW AND BE KNOWN. TO BE BOTH BELIEVER AND DOUBTER, IN A FAMILY WHERE THE WRITER IS BLACK AND JEWISH-WHEREAS "BOTH GROUPS" COMMIT RELIGIOUS WARFARE ON A DAILY BASIS, TO BE FORCED TO ATTEND A CATHOLIC SCHOOL, BECAUSE I WAS NOT WELCOME AT AN HEBREW SCHOOL, TO BE MORE OF ONE RACE, AND NOT FULLY OF THE OTHER, TO BE MORE THAN ONE THING AND SOMETIMES NOT FULLY ANYTHING. THIS IS AN INCREASINGLY COMMON EXPERIENCE FOR MANY

BI-RACIAL MINORITIES OF INTERRACIAL MARRIAGES, "THE OTHERNESS" MY PERSONAL TRIALS, FOR THE [MY] SEARCH OF LEGITIMACY, LEFT ME, ANGRY, AND IT HAS BEEN IN FRIENDSHIPS THAT I HAVE LEARNED THE PLEASURES AND DANGERS OF INTIMACY, THE PLEASURE OF LOVING, UPON IT AND ROCKLESSY, THE DANGERS OF HAVING IT END BEFORE YOU ARE READY.

CASE IN POINT:

I HAD A GOOD FRIEND, WHO HAPPEN TO BE WHITE AND NEW JEWISH, SHE AND I NEVER WAS "INTIMATE" OR INVOLVED ROMANTICALLY, JUST GOOD FRIENDS. WHAT I HAVE COME TO BELIEVE ABOUT INTER-RACIAL FRIENDSHIPS IS, WHEN A FRIENDSHIP ENDS BETWEEN TWO PEOPLE OF DIFFERENT RACES, IT IS SO EASY TO POINT TO RACE AS THE REASON. IT IS EASY, AND IT IS MISLEADING, AS RACE ITSELF IS OFTEN MISLEADING. WE TALKED HONESTLY ABOUT RACE, IT WAS PART OF THE GLUE THAT BONDED US. I LOVED HER, IN PART, BECAUSE SHE WAS NOT THE KIND OF WHITE PERSON WHO LOOKED AT BLACK AND WHITE, AND SAW RACE AS THE MOST SIGNIFICANT ASPECT OF AN INTERRACIAL FRIENDSHIP. MEMBERSHIP HAS ITS PRIVILEGES, SHE HAD A BLACK FRIEND AT PREP SCHOOL WHO SAID SAID THIS TO HER WHEN SHE ONCE ASKED THE FRIEND WHY SHE HAD NODDED HELLO TO A BLACK STRANGER. I LOVED THAT SHE HAD NOTICED THAT HER FRIEND HAD SAID HELLO TO A BLACK STRANGER, THAT SHE RECOGNIZED IT AS A CUSTOM AMONG BLACK PEOPLE SHE KNEW AND OBSERVED, AND THAT SHE HAD ASKED HER FRIEND ABOUT IT. "MEMBERSHIP HAS ITS PRIVILEGES," ONE DAY SHE SAID, WHEN SHE SAW ME GREET A BLACK STRANGER, HER COMMENT CAUGHT ME SO MUCH BY SURPRISE THAT I STOPPED AND FACED HER, AND WE STOOD THERE AND LAUGHED. I FOUND HER INTEREST AND EASE AROUND BLACK PEOPLE RARE ENOUGH IN MY LIFE TO CALL IT SIGNIFICANT.