

Talking Cents

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Talking Cents is an ecumenical group charged by the Auckland Anglican Diocesan Council to promote an alternative to current economic and political thought, and to encourage debate within the church. Ministry units are encouraged to distribute these articles. This article is contributed by David Tutty, manager, St John the Baptist Old Age Home Winterveldt, Pretoria.

Seeking to be better allies: Facing the collective Pākehā shadow

Aotearoa New Zealand is blessed to have a range of committed Pākehā social justice activists. These Pākehā have been touched by the pain of injustice and have responded out of passion and good heart. Their actions witness both to the importance of being allies to those who struggle and to the journey still required to become better allies.

The journey of becoming an honourable ally is a steep learning curve that requires much humility and conversion. We, Pākehā, have inherited a collective way of seeing and acting that arises out of our particular history. Parts of this history are explicitly known and other parts not so. In learning to become an ally, we are often confronted with a history we do not recognise. We are challenged to see our complicity with injustice and how we have become beneficiaries because of the ongoing agenda and unjust actions begun with our forebears. This is often painful and requires serious self reflection in order to face and integrate this new learning.

Drawing on the language of psychoanalyst, Carl Jung, the Pākehā journey in becoming an ally is also, in reality, a journey of being confronted with our shadow side. While Jung focused primarily on the individual, some of his followers have extended his insights to any collective with similar history and culture. See "Stephen Diamond, *Essential Secrets of Psychotherapy: What is the "Shadow"?*.

So, Pākehā, as a group, have a shadow side. Jung sees this shadow as the sum of our personal and collective aspects that we find unacceptable and therefore want to repress and deny. This shadow side, when not faced with humility, often leads to defensive behaviours where what is denied is unconsciously projected onto others.

Therefore, I wish to argue that having the courage to face our collective Pākehā shadow side is a necessary and healthy step in order to become better allies. In fact, it is even more significant than that. Catholic social ethicist, Mary Elizabeth Hobgood, names that "the most profound and potentially the most radical politics comes directly out of our own self-identity as opposed to working

to end somebody else's oppression ... The source of the most radical politics is our obligation to work for our own liberation" (White Economic and Erotic Disempowerment in *Interrupting White Privilege: Catholic Theologians Break the Silence* eds. L.M. Cassidy & A. Mikulich). So seeking to become better allies is also about seeking our own liberation from our shadow side.

As an attempt to name something of our collective Pākehā shadow, I wish to outline four interconnected factors that have been formative for Pākehā. I claim that Pākehā have inherited unquestioned assumptions and behaviours that arose because of:

- the Enlightenment,
- the dynamic of empire,
- the social construction of whiteness (the white New Zealander)
- the dominant theologies of the Christian tradition.

And because our Pākehā experience has parallels with other examples of British expansion, I dare to draw on the analysis of two U.S. white Catholic theologians and name Pākehā as "morally crippled," "spiritually impoverished" and "epistemologically compromised" because of these four formative factors of our shadow side. See "Mary Elizabeth Hobgood and Margaret Pfiel in *Interrupting White Privilege: Catholic Theologians Break the Silence*".

The impact of the Enlightenment is the first factor of our collective shadow I want to address. Many will say that the modern European way of thinking that arose in the 17th and 18th centuries is no longer at issue with the rise of postmodernity. Yet missiologists, J. Andrew Kirk and Paul Hiebert do not agree. Kirk believes that while "modernity is sorely wounded ... it is not obvious that it has yet been superseded" "*What is Mission?: Theological Explorations*". This is because there are vested interests involved.

Hiebert sees that while Enlightenment thinking serves the powerful and their self-interests it will still be a dominant force influencing and shaping ways of looking at the world. "*The Gospel in*

Human Contexts: Anthropological Explorations for Contemporary Mission".

With this in mind, I wish to point to the fact that it was the Enlightenment that gave our European ancestors a sense that they were superior to others with the right, and even the duty, to exert power over both the physical world and those who were not European. Through the rise of science and the use of technological advances, our forebears gained a sense that they had discovered the secret of knowledge. This, in time, justified European manipulation and exploitation and enabled covetousness to become the driving force of the economy. See "Lesslie Newbigin's *Foolishness to the Greeks: The Gospel and Western Culture*" and his 1995 unpublished "*Gospel and Culture* address". Today, it is Pākehā institutions and economic agenda that dictate the way things are done in Aotearoa New Zealand.

One of the most dramatic aspects of the Enlightenment was the dynamic of empire building. This is the second factor contributing to our shadow side. Britain, alongside other European powers, sought to control other territories and peoples for the sake of resources and profits. Looking back, we have often spoken of settlers coming and working hard to establish a new life. We forget that the establishment of settler colonies required the use of force. Many postcolonial theorists note that the use of the term "settler colony" was just a political device to hide the true reality of physical violence. Two of these theorists, Johnson and Lawson, argue in "*Settler Colonies in A Companion to Postcolonial Studies*, eds H. Schwarz & S. Ray" that the "'invader" rider should always be kept in mind. Force was, and still is, used at multiple levels in Aotearoa New Zealand. The settler invaders usurped Māori rights to their land and resources, to their labour and identity, and to their majority status and their historic line of development. We, Pākehā, today, are the beneficiaries of this ongoing use of force. We maintain political, legal, social and economic structures that ensure that full self determination is not available to Māori.

The third shadow factor is the racism that arose to justify colonisation and the violence required to achieve it. A growing number of social theorists are "turning the gaze" on the perpetrators of structural racism by naming the process through which white social dominance is gained and used (see Ruth Frankenberg's 1993 *White Women, Race Matters*). Whiteness, as a white social dynamic, is racism's "patriarchy" rendering white superiority

invisible, normal and universal. What most deeply underpins this dominance is a level of greed and fear which needs to be exposed and dislodged. We, Pākehā, continue to gain and use social

dominance without seeing or understanding the dynamic, and its impact on, Māori particularly.

And finally, the fourth factor forming our shadow, is the impact of dominant Christian theologies. Whether we believe in God or not, we, Pākehā, have been influenced by theologies that are complicit in maintaining injustice by supporting and legitimating the status quo. This has occurred in two major ways. Our naming of God as all powerful father, king and lord "assumes that absolute power can be a good" and this assumption "leads to the legitimation of imperial power ... [and therefore of] human coercive power". See "Sharon Welch, *A Feminist Ethic of Risk*"). Also, dominant theologies have divided reality dualistically and dictated what is better. The private-public division has been especially harmful as God is privatised and "**does not disturb us**" leaving us "**with little or no social conscience**". See "Anthony Gittins, *A Presence that Disturbs: A Call to Radical Discipleship*". Both these factors have contributed to the "anti-analysis streak" generally found in religions. See "Tinyiko Maluleke, Religion Analysis for Social Change: Some Key Considerations in *Spirituality for Another Possible World*, eds. M.N. Getui, L.C. Susin & B.W. Churu". In Aotearoa New Zealand, dominant theologies continue to reinforce imperial power and to discourage the development of critical analysis. This has led to, for example, the neo-liberal economic agenda and managed Waitangi settlements that continue to protect the dominance of Pākehā.

As indicated above, my naming of these formative factors is for a constructive purpose. I argue that to be better allies, we, Pākehā, need to face our collective shadow side. The four interconnected factors not only name our deep cultural desire to dominate but also point to the creation and maintenance of structures to ensure this.

I also name that our shadow side leaves us morally crippled, spiritually impoverished and epistemologically compromised and that the journey to be a better ally is in fact a means of self-liberation. So, having the courage to become a better ally is, in fact, an act of authentic self love. And we all know that we can only love those who struggle against injustice to the extent we truly love ourselves.