

A Tribute to Nelson Mandela

African-American writer Zora Neale Hurston once asked if she felt sad about oppression, slavery, racism... things like that. She replied, "No, I do not weep at the world. I'm too busy sharpening my oyster knife." (Folklore, Memoirs, and Other Writings). As a woman activist and icon contesting white supremacy and exploitative capitalist structures, Ms. Hurston relinquished her right to mull in righteous indignation. She went to action. A beloved leader and brother, Nelson Mandela appeared also to relinquish his right to redeem his suffering in exchange for a larger goal.... that his people should be uplifted from the horrors of indignation and humiliation. To Mr. Mandela, "his people" would include anyone asserting the priority of equality, justice, races living together in peace and respect.... and the end of a white, totalitarian oligarchy. The best definition of forgiveness I have heard, "I relinquish my right to harm you as you have harmed me", breathes life through the Mandela's spirit. And, as Black South African townshippers, like those I witnessed in Khayelitsha, continue to receive homes for free as part of an restorative national initiative, we in British Columbia can wonder why child poverty is still rampant and racial justice has not yet been accorded by the same structures that set Ms. Hurston to shine and polish.

Mr. Mandela may you rest in peace while we do our best to carry on the good works for justice!

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