

Chapter 4

Reflection on How National and Gender Culture Can Nourish and Promote Violence and What American Culture Must Face and Change to Reduce Violence: Narrative Inquiry Within Complex Self-Reinforcing Destructive Systems

Nancy D. Erbe

California State University, Dominguez Hills, USA

ABSTRACT

It has been a few years since the editors published their first book together on nonviolence. Arguably, violence has gotten worse. Certainly, divisive nationalist hate mongering leaders have risen to power in three of the world's purported democracies: Brazil, India, and the U.S. Human inability to adapt to change and receive and respond to the objective truths of their lives seems to be leading this disturbing trend in the wrong direction. The editors can no longer just contribute a chapter on micro changes. Instead, they are moved to address and confront entrenched systemic root causes of violence in the U.S. and between men and women around the world.

INTRODUCTION

As we live through a global pandemic and watch the revival of the planet, pollution clearing and widespread social concern against racial violence, the time seems ripe to draw on our lifetime of experience to date working with and preventing violent conflict. The editors share a deep passion for and love of our planet. As a female-male team, they are well-situated to dialogue about how contemporary femi-

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ninity and masculinity engage to prevent and reduce or escalate and create violence in the world today. Ethically, neither of us feel comfortable editing a book on reducing and preventing violence without acknowledging the foundation for and realities regarding increasing and tragic violence throughout the United States over the last two decades.

Both editors are happy to live in the United States, but editor Erbe is starting to wonder if Americans are capable of saving their beloved society. She has watched politicians attempt to tackle critically needed campaign finance reform for over twenty five years with no success. She taught students close to the Columbine school tragedy over twenty years ago and has watched school violence become more and more commonplace.

The coronavirus itself has stimulated deep collective reflection. Why as one example is the United States and its citizens, particularly New Yorkers, the most vulnerable along with the citizens of Spain and Italy? Are there American practices which have created this vulnerability to illness and death? Self-destructive blind spots? Americans are world renowned for their obesity in the face of abundance and prosperity. Is their collective addiction to sugar, alcohol...responsible for hurting their immune systems? We pride ourselves in being developed. The unconscious truths and realities we now face are troubling and sinister.

Another American democracy, Brazil, has joined this group of countries in demonstrating a particular vulnerability to a deadly disease. The editors spent a semester in Rio de Janeiro five years ago speaking to social inequalities and urban studies. They will share some of their thoughts and insight about how American democracies, with increasingly inequality between the wealthy and impoverished, seem to be most susceptible to new global viruses.

Americans and the United States are also world renowned for incarcerating more prisoners than any other society; for rallying behind the death penalty. This chapter will attempt to examine several fundamental American practices (suicidal self-destructive tendencies) behind increasing and more lethal violence.

Editor Singh was born and raised in a village in the State of Punjab, India before attending military boarding school at nine years old in the beautiful Himalayan mountains. He was groomed like his father and family to serve as a military officer. He joined the prestigious tri-service institution National Defense Academy after his high school and was commissioned into the Mechanized Infantry Regiment in India's army. He took early retirement after twenty-one years of service, to join his family in the United States and become a citizen who cherishes its human rights and opportunities. He is well-positioned to critique the role of the military in both preventing and reducing violence but also glorifying and creating some of the most horrific violence found in the world today. He is a rare beloved and popular officer, reminding Editor Erbe of the naval officer who was cheered by his troops as he was ousted by the U.S. federal administration for speaking up and trying to protect those he led from the coronavirus. He will speak to moral masculinity and leadership and the desperate need for more during such troubled and challenged times. For those not familiar with Punjabi history and lifestyle, many rejected the oppressive Hindu caste system, welcoming all to their community. In recent years, in the United States, the Sikh community has been the misguided ignorant target of hate crimes and has responded in ways that inspire: with calm composure, compassion and forgiveness.

Editor Erbe was raised in an American family with relatively recent immigration from Norway. She grew up hearing three languages. Several relatives served during World War II. Her mother spoke up against segregation in Chicago during the early 1950s. She herself grew up in the midst of racial riots and protests against the Vietnam War. Earth Day started in her youth. Her family summered on Lake Michigan in Door County Wisconsin. She was one of three girls honored in her high school for excel-

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