



Waking The Hero Within

By Clyde W. Ford

When Martin Luther King wrote about nonviolent social change and the student leaders of the black freedom struggle in America during the 1960's, he proudly noted the role of personal transformation. "They took nonviolent resistance," he said, "and developed original forms of application — sit-ins, freedom rides, and wade-ins. To accomplish these, they first transformed themselves." By this King meant that in their struggle against racism, these young heroes had first a way of transforming their view of themselves from victimization to empowerment.

How do individuals and groups, particularly African Americans, accomplish such a transformation? And how might this help us heal from the long-standing trauma and pain of racism? As a psychotherapist I know that a turning point in the individual healing process does come when "personal stories" of trauma shift from litanies of victimization to legends of empowerment, though it is harder to grasp what similar "social stories" might help heal racism.

When I look at the historical experience of African Americans, I see a series of episodes, one slowly dissolving into the next: "Capture in Africa," "Monstrous Transport Through the Middle Passage," "The Horrors of Slavery," "Whispers of Rebellion and Revolt," "Promises of Freedom Broken," "The Entrenchment of Racism," and "The Ongoing Struggle for Freedom and Justice." It would be easy to fit these episodes into an account of victimization focusing on the atrocities of racism and oppression, and just as easy to fit them into a narrative of denial claiming that these events happened a long time ago and so should not affect us now.

Yet, when I ask myself, "If a single person lived through all these experiences, how would I describe that person's life?" I real-



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ize that this series of episodes reminds me of the epic journey of a hero or heroine, and it is this notion of African Americans' "heroic journey" that points toward a way of transcending victimization and denial.

Across time, and throughout the world, the hero strides out of myths and legends as the one who has ventured beyond the known boundaries of the day, met and defeated spectacular forces, then returned with

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some hard-won, precious gift. Martin Luther King, for example, is such a hero, but then so too are the countless heroes with African faces whose names we will never know; men and women who survived capture in Africa, the horrors of slavery, and the struggle for freedom and justice in America.

There's a wonderful tale from southern Africa about a mythic hero named Lituolone, and his battle against a formless monster, who had devoured all of humankind. It was an uneven contest, and the monster ultimately swallowed the hero. But Lituolone was a lion of a man and soon managed to cut his way out,

thus freeing all of humanity caught in the belly of the beast.

The symbolism of this ancient African tale still speaks to me in this modern day; not only of the life of a modern day hero like Martin Luther King, but of my own life. Reflecting upon King's life, or the myth of Lituolone, I can ask of myself: What is the monster that is consuming my humanity? An unacceptable social illness like racism, violence, poverty, or homelessness? The impersonal demands of an unrewarding career? The emotional drain of an unfulfilling relationship? The psychic pain of an unresolved trauma? The emptiness of an unrealized dream?

Moreover, I may ponder to what hero-part of myself I must give birth to meet this monster in battle. Courage? Fearlessness? Faith? Hope? An end to denial? A belief in my own worthiness? And then I might question: Am I prepared to enter the belly of my beast to wrest whatever victory is mine? What parts of myself am I willing to sacrifice in this life-challenging effort? An outmoded manner of thought? A burdensome set of beliefs? A restrictive view of my own potential in life?

In these essential questions, often with no ready answers, lie the roots of personal trans-

formation. Even beginning to ponder them, also begins to free us from the shackles of our past, whether personal or social, and sets us in the direction of an authentic life lived according to the dictates of our own conscience. For effective social transformation, demands meaningful personal transformation as King noted. We can follow in the footsteps of all the heroes who have gone before us; their journey can become a meditation in our own life. And, no longer a victim of the past or the present, we can wake that hero within us all.

The Castle Of Hatred And Evil

By Dr. Dominique Marguerite

When we humans are physically or psychologically threatened or injured in some way, we often become angry. This form of mental excitation is instinctive and healthy, but it sometimes turns into destructive action and violence. Alternatively, anger can be repressed, but may then build up and eventually burst forth as rage. What to do? Carl G. Jung, the Swiss psychiatrist, suggests we begin by cultivating self-knowledge. He would have us become aware of and learn to handle both the sunny and dark sides of our natures. The self-aware individual will recognize both "how much good he can do, and what crimes he is capable of..."

Dreams and fairy tales are the products of our creative unconscious and reveal basic patterns of our psychological dynamics. The famous German collectors of folk and fairy tales, the Brothers Grimm, tell the story of the Two Travelers. It illustrates, albeit not explicitly, the opposing forces of good and evil in the human psyche. The travelers are a good-spirited tailor and a sour-tempered shoemaker. The shoemaker succumbs to his dark nature and perpetrates all sorts of violence on the tailor, withholding food, blinding, abandonment in the forest, a typically graphic set of Grimm horrors. The tailor struggles on, blind and alone, neither helped by, nor doing harm to, a host of animals (and potential meals) that fall within his grasp. At last he makes it to a city, only to find that his old travel companion is now shoemaker to the king. Fearing revenge the shoemaker convinces the king to give the tailor an impossible task, to find the king's lost crown. The tailor succeeds with the help of a duck whose neck he earlier had not wrung. More trials follow, and in each the tailor is helped by a forest creature whom he had spared while he had suffered, lost in wilderness. His eventual triumph comes with delivering a son and heir to the king with the help of a stork.

In our daily confrontations with anger, we may expect such help from



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within if we follow Jung's advice to understand the dual nature of the forces within ourselves. Jung says the "it is often tragic to see how blatantly a man bungles his own life and the lives of others yet remains totally incapable of seeing how much the whole tragedy originates in himself, and how he continually feeds it and keeps it going. Not consciously, of course, for consciously he is engaged in bewailing and cursing a faithless world that recedes further and further into the distance." Jung further admonished us not to succumb to either the good or evil of our psychological makeup. Through self knowledge, we can find strength to help us suffer through hard times, with a balanced psyche intact, to arrive on better times with joy.

The inhumanity of the shoemaker is possible for each of us. The potential for evil lies in our unconscious: greed, love of power, murderous thoughts, or the ability to act unethically. In the depth of the psyche of humankind lurks absolute evil, the expression of which

is acts of violence, cruelty, torture. These parts of ourselves, despised and rejected, are relegated to the unconscious, ideally at an early age. As children, we quickly adjust to our environment, to particular forms of family and culture. It is a necessary aspect of becoming a socialized individual.


But the potential for evil does not go away. More importantly, negative aspects of the psyche can take on a life of their own if we do not confront and deal with them. Sometimes, what we cannot admit in ourselves, we see in others. In ancient Hebrew society, the people sacrificed or sent out into the wilderness two specially chosen goats, that they might symbolically bear away the sins and faults of humankind. In modern life, we also choose scapegoats to purge ourselves of anger. They may be individuals, places, circumstances, even entire races. Rollo May, humanist psychologist, perhaps said it best: "Life consists of achieving good not apart from evil but in spite of it."

His dream.

Our task.


Join us on January 18th as we honor Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. for his tremendous contribution to our nation.

And the rest of the year, join us in steadily working to realize his dream.

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"We are prone to judge success by the index of our salaries or the size of our automobiles, rather than by the quality of our service and relationship to humanity".

—Martin Luther King Jr.

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