

Of 'LOVE & HATE'



Returning hate for hate multiplies hate, adding deepest darkness to a night already devoid of light. Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that.

Martin Luther King

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A friend once told me what a young boy said when crossing what is known as the *Nations and Nationalities Square* in Addis. The boy overhears people inside the taxi mentioning the name of the square and he said *'Are you kidding me! They even named the square after those nationalities'*.

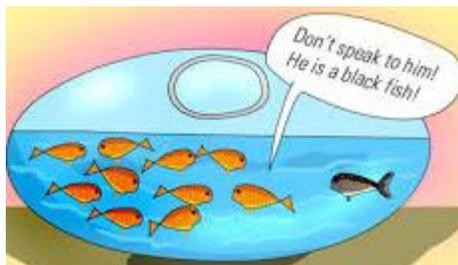
What the boy said may not imply his liking or disliking of nations and nationalities per se. But it is clear that at this young age he has come to believe that the phrase 'Nations and Nationalities' is something used to describe people in the country other than him, and he is somebody different from us. He may not be the only one to have this kind of stereotype; in fact he must have heard it from many others. It is these kinds of

stereotypes that lead to the 'us-versus-them' classification and eventually to prejudiced ethnocentric feelings.

What the boy said may as well be a reflection of the pandemic in the social media. The social media is disseminating hate messages and radicalizing the youth to become ethnocentric, to target one or the other ethnic group for all mishaps or failures. Name calling or using slurs for members of the out-group is leading to greater social distance among ethnic groups.

History is the greatest teacher, of course if we are willing and ready to learn. We know what happened following the collapse of the former Yugoslavia and during the lengthy

violent ethnic struggles in Burundi and Rwanda. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the skirmish in Syria and Yemen are all manifestations of madness and constant reminders of what will happen when conflicts are not peacefully solved, i.e., when love is not allowed to drive out hatred.



The causes of the conflicts I mentioned above obviously differ, but I would say all are mainly instances of ethnic, religious, or racial confrontations that went awry. Conflict is inevitable in every society and the 'us-versus-them' classification is human nature, but in-group favoritism and out-group hostility has always led to disastrous ends. Some of the earliest signs of the confrontations that lead other countries to disaster are already being manifested in our case. But what is strange is that the cause of the recent conflict in some parts of Ethiopia and why members of one ethnic group were targeted defies any rational explanation. For instance, studies revealed that when people face a crisis, they put blame on others as a

scapegoat, such as the bullying and killing of Arab US citizens by White Americans following 9/11.

Dear readers; the world has witnessed many atrocities as a result of bad motives instigated by evil minded maniacs disseminating hate politics. It is time we learn from our past mistakes and focus on our common challenges instead of pointing fingers on one another. Remember; Ethiopia is a country of nations and nationalities and we can live together only if the country is convenient for all of us to live together. Martin Luther King said the following to describe a similar situation in the States: '*we must learn to live together as brothers or die together as fools*'. Love, not hate, is the only way out.



If I should think of any possible explanation for the said incident in our country, the only thing that comes to mind is what the theory of frustration-aggression states. The theory states that prejudices are linked to ego-

defense. People seek to displace their aggressions and frustration on to substitute objects when they are not able to express anger towards its real cause. Hence, frustration causes aggression and aggression causes frustration once ‘scapegoating’ has helped defend the ego.

It is also possible that political elites, unable to come up with viable options to the political discourse tend to ethnicity to achieve their hidden intent. They propagate by saying ‘*you see, it is them who are doing this to us*’ and use ethnic lines as means of mobilizing forces that eventually lead to ethnic clashes. Whether the conflicts surfacing in various parts of the country are instigated by ill-conceived politicians or by aggressive act of frustrated groups, I leave it to the reader to judge.

Whatever the cause, the psychological damage inflicted on the victims will never go away and healing the wounds may not be easy. Only through gradual process can love triumph and coexistence evolve towards a relation of trust. That said, it would be naïve to have high hopes of the passage of time to do the healing. It is still fresh in our memories when being hostile towards unsuspecting everyday people has been considered as a sign of patriotism and still

nothing is done to bring peace and trust among these groups. No explanation is given why policing the situation was not possible, and the band of thugs and bandits were allowed to do what they did. None of us should expect to get the dignity and respect we denied to other fellow citizens, as bigotry breeds bigotry.

**I love pandas.
They're not RACIST.
They're black and white,
and Asian.**



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What has recently happened in Geneva is another manifestation of the ethnic based hatred that ended in absolute madness. Nothing other than extreme abhorrence can explain the deeds of the Ethiopians who were observed demonstrating against the candidacy of Dr. Tedros Adhanom for the highest office at WHO. Does it mean they prefer the Briton or the Pakistani instead of him? They must be ashamed of doing so as fellow ‘citizens’. But in spite of all of these, I am an optimist and I believe that today’s madness will go away and tomorrow will be better.

Adios