

Nelson Mandela Soared Above The Real World.
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In late December, the remarkable Nelson Mandela died at 95, leaving behind many admirers, but few followers in governance. His funeral brought together world leaders--astonishing, considering that half a century ago, he was imprisoned as a terrorist by the apartheid South African government. But most remarkable was his release from prison, his forgiveness for those who had harmed him, and his leadership as the first Black president of South Africa. He established a model of racial tolerance, prevented the much-feared Black vengeance against their former White oppressors, and set up a model for responsible governance in a region where it was rare.

Unfortunately, to really change age-old customs cannot be done overnight. He was followed in office by two corrupt Black politicians, the second of whom, Jacob Zuma, is a model of abuse of power. He perversely dismissed the horrific AIDS epidemic sweeping his country (and all Africa), claiming it was the result of poverty, not a sexually-transmitted virus, resulting in unnecessary deaths. And he is a model for irresponsible sex, including polygamy.

At Mandela's funeral, President Obama spoke eloquently about which messages from the great leader should have been observed, but too many times, were not. He was cheered by the crowd. But when President Zuma got up to speak, he was roundly booed. The South African electorate knows a villain when they see one (admittedly too late, since they elected him).

Mandela promoted forgiveness and the idea that people of all colors, all religions, all economic levels, were all South Africans. That model is certainly not in practice elsewhere in Africa, alas, and is already melting down in today's South Sudan.

The Central African Republic (CAR) with a population 85% Christian, historically was peaceful between that majority and the 15% Muslims, is now embroiled in a horrific religious war. A sect of Militant Islamists (a worldwide growth industry) rebelled against the CAR's government, unseated the president, and then proceeded to wage war against civilians with scores of attacks. Christian militias responded in kind, with mobs hunting down Muslim civilians in the capital itself. UN peacekeepers and French soldiers have rushed in to protect the civilians. One telling incident was that a peaceful Muslim cleric was given refuge in a Christian church (the reverse would never have happened), and when the church was attacked by a mob, peacekeepers spirited the cleric out.

Elsewhere, in East Africa, an international criminal is still at large. She is Samantha Breathwaite, the British born widow of the jihadi (a convert to Islam), a suicide bomber who attacked the London Metro, murdering scores of their fellow citizens and injuring hundreds of others. She then married another terrorist and fled to Africa with her four children in tow, where she is thought to have participated in the Kenya shopping mall attack. She is so in love with death and mayhem that she is rearing her children to do the same (if they live long enough).

And lest we think the problems are only in Africa, Bangladesh (a Muslim country) is facing threats of violence against the state. An opposition leader (Abdul Quader Mollah) was convicted of war crimes during the Bangladesh war of Independence in 1971 (extremely slow justice) and he was executed in December, 2013.

Mollah's political party, Jamaat-e-Islami, called for a nationwide general strike.

Their thugs encountered hundreds of demonstrators who were celebrating the long-delayed justice in executing this particular monster, whose crime involved joining Pakistani soldiers who killed a million people and raped 200,000 women during the Bangladesh war for independence.

One constant theme in all this worldwide violence is that it is happening in countries that once had moderate forms of Islam (Bangladesh was mostly Sufi, not jihadi, Muslim), or countries with several religions living relatively peacefully side-by-side. The Islamists are insisting that their version of Islam is the only acceptable version, and they are prepared to kill even fellow Muslims to make their point.

It will take a while for Nelson Mandela's model to be adopted in today's world.

672 words

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