

## **Text of a video recording with the same title on Channel Makheni**

### **An open letter to Roxane Gay by Makheni Zonneveld – June 2015 Dedicated to all hate crime victims worldwide**

The day was June 17, 2015 - It could have been any other day.

The place was the Emanuel AME church downtown Charleston in South Carolina - It could have been anywhere else.

The deed was a hate crime - It could have been any act fuelled by bigotry and the US vs. THEM mentality.

#### **Why an open letter to Roxane Gay?**

Because of an article she wrote 6 days after the Charleston massacre. (New York Times – 23 June 2015).

Roxane, I believe many people hold those views and it's understandable. You also said that forgiveness does not come easily to you. You can rest assured, you are not alone. Many people battle with forgiveness.

#### **Why?**

Forgiveness is hard because of how we look at forgiveness.

We think no way, Dylann does not deserve it! Yes he doesn't but Roxane, you deserve healing.

We think, I'll be doing Dylann a favour! On the contrary, when you give forgiveness you become the recipient of the gift.

We think it means exoneration from prosecution. Dylann still has to face the full might of the law and in a fair trial he will get 30 years behind iron bars but you don't deserve 30 years behind hard mental bars of unforgiveness.

Roxane, you and I know that fair trails are few and far between. Even if Dylann gets a mild slap on the wrist like Oscar Pistorius, the blade runner, got for the cold-blooded murder of the unarmed Reeva Steenkamp, it's still no reason for any of us to take poison hoping it will kill Dylann. Unforgiveness can poison you and drive you to a hospital bed or even an early grave.

Another stumbling block to forgiveness is pride. We all know that nothing good comes out of a heart filled with pride.

Forgiveness does not make sense to us. It defies logic. What appeals to us is: 'Revenge is sweet' and 'Don't get mad get even'. It sounds so empowering, but it isn't.

Roxane, you and I are from countries where black life is cheap. In fact considering the fact that Reeva Steenkamp was white and the blade runner also white, all life is cheap these days.

In spite of that, I was fortunate enough to have an opportunity to learn about the liberating power of forgiveness. I chose to NOT take ownership of the problem of racists.

That is why I started spreading the positive message. I even recorded this healing message as a 1-hour cd in 2003. It's titled 'Heal Yourself Heal the Nation' and it is available as a free MP3 from my website. I also started offering diversity competency workshops while I was still in SA.

Just to set the record straight, contrary to popular belief, racism is not a uniquely South African phenomenon. Prejudice of any form resides in hearts - not in statutes.

I suppose by now everyone has figured out that this is not about Roxane and Dylann. This is about you and me and how we respond to our Dylanns.

In spite of having faced racism all my life, I hasten to say firstly, man's inhumanity to man is not limited to racism. If you don't believe me, just watch the next news bulletin.

Secondly, US vs. THEM behaviour that divides people does not always manifest in extreme unlawful behaviour that makes headline news.

Every society has Dylanns. Not all of them go about shooting people. Most Dylanns engage in petty discrimination everyday in all interpersonal relationships including inside families and in the workplace.

When this sad event happened I was in the process of writing a book and since I read about your response, Roxane, I changed the title of the book. The title was 'Organizational and Individual Diversity Competency' I changed it to 'An Open Letter to Dylann Roof'. By the way the recording of 'An Open Letter to Dylann Roof' is also on this channel – Channel Makheni. (*Update, the book now has another name and will be published in 2018*)

In spite of the name of the book, it is not on racism. It is on diversity competency. For

as long as we don't understand the drivers of behaviour we will not understand workplace diversity issues. I believe the starting point is understanding the US vs. THEM thinking that results in the US vs. THEM behaviour and humbly recognizing that there is a Roxane and the Dylann in us.

That is why over the years I've offered diversity programs that go far beyond cultural diversity and demographical differences.

Whoever you are, whatever has happened to you personally or to your family or to your people, forgiveness is a choice you can make today.

You can choose to be a *victim* and suffer perpetually.

You can choose to be a *survivor* and barely cope.

You can choose to be a *thrifer* and go beyond coping. You can choose to be a thrifer and live above you circumstances.

It is good to stand together and sing 'We shall overcome some day' I believe in the power of 'we'. However, Roxane, the power of 'we' starts at individual level.

Another thing, overcoming as 'we', may or may not happen some day. But overcoming as an individual is a choice you or I can make today. Not an easy choice but a choice nonetheless. You and I can be thrivers and sing 'I have overcome TODAY'

Roxane, I hope you will choose to forgive, heal and sing I have overcome TODAY.

Thank you for tuning in. Please tune in to: 'An Open Letter to Dylann Roof'.

If you know a Roxane – someone who is hurting for whatever reason, please forward this link and tell him / her about the free MP3 on detox for the soul.

I hope you will subscribe to Channel Makheni, which is in fact on positive nspirational messages, but none of us can afford to ignore these realities. If you care about the society we are creating please pass on this link.

Charleston people from all ethnic groups stood together in solidarity and showed that peace-loving people are in the majority. Evil prospers when we do nothing. Anger is understandable but it's not the answer.

May everyone affected by any hate crime find comfort in the knowledge that you and I care.



Makheni is a social activist because she cares about the kind of society that the next generation will inherit. She is also a people developer who offers training in the 'hard to implement' skills that are called 'soft' skills.

She specializes in:

The Psychology of exclusion, Workplace Leadership and Effective Presentation skills. The communication tools that she employs are: speaking, conversation and workshop facilitation, face- to-face & online coaching, storytelling and writing.

The video recording of the letter above as well as other recordings are available on her YouTube, Channel Makheni. A free copy of her MP3 titled 'Heal Yourself Heal the Nation' is available on request on the contact page of [www.beyondmulticulturalism.com](http://www.beyondmulticulturalism.com).

Her e-book, The Intersection – Where Storytelling, Leadership and Diversity competency meet is available from her website.

**Contact details:**

<b>Email</b>	<a href="mailto:makheni@makheni.com">makheni@makheni.com</a>
<b>Websites</b>	<a href="http://www.beyondmulticulturalism.com">www.beyondmulticulturalism.com</a> / <a href="http://www.makheni.com">www.makheni.com</a> <a href="http://www.diversiteitspecialist.nl">www.diversiteitspecialist.nl</a> <a href="http://www.makhenithestoryteller.com">www.makhenithestoryteller.com</a> <a href="http://www.breinvoorkeuren.nl">www.breinvoorkeuren.nl</a>
<b>Facebook</b>	Makheni Zonneveld
<b>Twitter</b>	@makheniz
<b>LinkedIn</b>	Makheni Zonneveld
<b>Skype</b>	makheni (appointment via email)
<b>FaceTime</b>	<a href="mailto:makhenilink@gmail.com">makhenilink@gmail.com</a> (appointment via email)