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I'M NOT REALLY LIKE THIS

She said as she and her daughter loaded their car with stolen booty during the recent riots in Los Angeles.

So the question is, if she isn't like this, what is she like? Who is she? What causes us to do things that 'aren't like us' that under other circumstances, we would be horrified to notice that we had engaged in and we would most certainly condemn others for? And yet, we frequently find ourselves doing those very things that we swore to ourselves that we would never, ever do. Not even the even the most saintly of us is exempt! And, conversely, neither is the 'biggest sinner' exempt from being 'saintly'.

How are we to understand our capacity, even our propensity, for engaging in acts, thinking thoughts, and feeling feelings that we say we do not approve of? And, yet find ourselves engaging in more often than we would like to admit?

Follow me, then through this brief presentation of material that explains as simply as possible this quite complex process in the human psyche. Consider that part of the contents of your psyche is known to you and part is not known; that is part resides in the conscious psyche and part resides in the unconscious part of the psyche. Estimates suggest that far less than ten percent of the psyche is conscious to us and 90 percent or more is unconscious to us. What this means is that we do not know most of the contents of our psyche because we cannot see it or know it, and, therefore, we do not believe that those capabilities and attitudes are present in us. Anything that is in the unconscious is unconscious (hidden) and we do not know it is there, and we do not know that we do not know that it is there.

We tend to unconsciously place things in our unconscious that cause us fear or feelings of inadequacy or unlovability or that are contrary to more 'ego-enhancing' ideas, feelings, beliefs that we consciously hold. Thus, any thing that is not 'ego-enhancing' we tend to discount and disown, and believe that it may be true of others, but not of ourselves. When we disown these more negative aspects of the psyche, we unconsciously project these on to others and believe that we are innocent of them. In fact, we frequently feel and express a lot of emotion as we condemn others for these acts, feelings, and beliefs. The fact that we point the finger at others in a condemning way, coupled with a lot of emotional reactivity, while we believe ourselves to possess only the desirable traits is a dead giveaway! This emotional finger pointing tells us that we are indeed looking at our own disowned aspects. These disowned aspects are called our 'shadow side', because they are not conscious to us.

So we are challenged to look at our reactions to these civil disturbances and notice our reactions to Rodney King, the Los Angeles Police, the jury trying the case, the looters and vandals, such as the woman quoted above, and murderers, as well as the victims. Where do we have great disgust and where to we have great admiration? For those who perhaps don't remember, this was a situation in 199 where during a period of civil disturbance, Rodney King was pulled from his car in an intersection and beaten by another man.

'I'm not like that, you say, I would never take advantage of any one in these ways.'
Let's look at some of the other ways that we might also manifest this side of the psyche.

For instance, remember when you felt so insecure and jealous that you cut another person down, unfairly accused them, angrily cutting them to shreds, self-righteously proclaiming your innocence and 'rightness'? You murdered the connection between the two of you.

Or do you recall making the subtle judgments about another person that caused them to lose esteem in the world? Do you recall the ways that you maneuvered another person to take care of you, to do things your way, to give you what you wanted, rather than being concerned about what their needs or wants were? Or even telling deliberate lies about another person or sabotaging them? Even more subtly, how have you vandalized another's 'material goods' by getting them to take care of you? Or even taking care of another so that they would take care of you?

Or when were you so jealous and envious of another's material goods, status, or other qualities that you 'lusted unto death', you were consumed with jealousy that you might as well have taken the envied goods because the relationship was never the same. This looted the relationship.

What are the subtle and sneaky ways that you loot another, steal from them, and kill them out of your life, all because you are fearful, jealous, angry, hurt, and/or feel inadequate?

The journey of awakening requires that we awake to all aspects of ourselves. This awakening to own and embracing the parts of ourselves which go counter to our ideas about who and what we *should be* is very powerful work. We recognize that the *should be's* are our idealized pictures of ourselves. We judge ourselves when the *should be* isn't the way it is. When we move to non-judgmental observation, there can be relief when we realize that those parts of ourselves that we have tried to disown are indeed legitimate parts of ourselves and offer us the juice for our transformation process.

Transformation is made possible when we acknowledge that who we are is indeed a compilation of who we think we are and who we think we are not. Owning our own dark and light sides paves the way for us to be a whole person, that is, having all our parts. Only in holding the tension between the conscious and the shadow parts is there opportunity for us to birth ourselves. Who we truly are comes out of the fusion. Otherwise we run the risk of seeing ourselves as separate from the content of the whole of consciousness, when indeed, we are but an out picturing of consciousness and contain the full spectrum of qualities—both what we judge as good (light) and that which we judge as bad (dark). When we move to the place of non-judgmental observation, we are more likely to have a conscious choice as to how we think, feel, and act, and not fall into unconscious defensive behavior. We have the opportunity to live in the space of unconditional love and can accept ourselves Just the Way That We Are and Just The Way That We Are Not.

In this place we see that, yes, indeed we are 'like that' and we also are like that and that and that. This is the mystery of consciousness.