

Into the Cannibal's Pot – Lessons for America from post-apartheid South Africa  
Ilana Mercer

A profound message for America, via analyses of South Africa and Israel

The deepest questions an individual faces in life concern his or her posterity. Where will your children have the best chance of survival, success, and raising their own families? She quotes Russell Kirk, who said eloquently that society is a community of souls, joining the dead, the living, and those yet unborn. It coheres through what Christians call love of neighbor, facilitated by a shared language, literature, habits and heroes. Mercer goes back to these deep questions at every turn in this philosophical analysis of the differences among the societies she knows. Though she has chosen to live in the United States, she is deeply critical of the direction it is taking. She would not claim to have found her "community of souls" anyplace she has lived. I, your reviewer, am a Mayflower descendent who has abandoned the United States to raise a second family in Ukraine to escape the despair and self-loathing which seems to have paralyzed my adult children, and to escape the increasing dangers to life and property which Mercer sees the same way I do.

Mercer is a libertarian. She believes, like the American founding fathers, that people are endowed by their Creator with different levels of ability, and should be allowed by a free society to rise to whatever position their merit would entitle them. This puts sets her in opposition to any scheme in which society's goods are distributed on the basis of race or tribe. This is, of course, exactly what is happening in both the United States and South Africa. Without apology, societal resources are being redistributed in the name of affirmative action to minorities with enough clout to extort them out of the bureaucrats, who are not merely spineless, but complicit in such schemes because they expand their own power.

In South Africa the beneficiaries are of Nelson Mandela's Xhosa tribe. The losers are above all the whites, but also other tribes such as the Zulus. In the United States the beneficiaries are Blacks and Hispanics, the losers are above all white males. However, one notes that reverse discrimination also works against the interests of Jewish and Asian Americans with regard to college admission, and other minorities such as Native Americans, who are not so politically savvy, seem as often as not to be left out because they can be cynically overlooked.

Mercer's version of South African history is a story which I had not read elsewhere and is well worth reading. She takes particular interest in Nelson Mandela, who is enshrined as a saint in the United States, never the subject of a critical word from either Republicans or Democrats. He turns out to have been in his youth just another angry Marxist African. A small degree of sophistication, some incredible luck, and the support of a credulous Western press, and the naïve hopes of Western governments propelled him to the presidency. Defying all common sense, the white government and world advisors led South Africa to an unvarnished winner-take-all, majority rule type of democracy. Better models were available: the federal system from the United States, or various parliamentary systems. Totally predictably, the African National Congress took power and has never relinquished it.

I knew from press accounts that South Africa was a very dangerous country. Mercer emphasizes that this is not by accident, and the victims are not random. The criminals and the police are in cahoots, and white victims find little justice. Particularly oppressed are the farmers, almost 10 percent of whom, more than 3000, have been murdered since 1994 under the new South Africa. Mercer pleads their case at length, and underscores the cynicism by which Western governments refuse to recognize victims of egregious racial hatred when said victims are white.

She takes an almost prurient interest in the most heinous of crimes, such as raping babies under the shamanistic belief that sex with a virgin will cure AIDS, and the sadistic rapes, tortures and murders of white women by gangs of blacks. South Africa's police have stopped maintaining reliable statistics, and stopped releasing any statistics at all in many cases. The United States does a much better job. The FBI crime statistics do categorize perpetrators and victims by race. Even though Hispanics are lumped in with whites, significantly inflating the apparent rate of white crime, blacks commit several times more violent crimes than whites. I had read an analysis of these FBI statistics in a document called "The Color of Crime," available online.

Mercer emphasizes the degree to which hatred and envy drive black on white crime. This should be intuitively obvious. What is interesting is the fact that the governments of both South Africa and the United States stubbornly refuse to recognize that blacks could hate whites. Their dogma is that the hatred goes only one way.

Her most powerful chapter is entitled "Why Do WASP Societies Wither?" What is this death wish that we have? Why do we WASPs flagellate ourselves for supposedly unpardonable sins in our past, such as colonialism and slavery? It is absurd. All of these things are five generations or more in the past; United States was never much of a colonial power. Though my ancestors were in the United States at the time of slavery, they were Northerners. Methodists and Presbyterian abolitionists. Rather than having anything to be ashamed of, I should be proud that they led the battle to do away with slavery. The irony is that the United States was far from the only country to practice slavery, but together with England, and at considerable expense, it was at the forefront of eliminating it. As Mercer points out, South Africa pours scorn on the United States for our history of slavery, absolutely ignoring the much longer, continuing history of slavery in the Muslim world. Instead, they embrace the tyrants of the Muslim world as their comrades in arms against the evil white man. Mercer calls it a combination of envy and opportunism. The Africans envy our material wealth, and they have learned that they can shake us down pretty successfully.

The question of why we WASPs are such pigeons, such dupes to this sort of manipulation is interesting. Why are we committing cultural suicide? We hate ourselves, We feel guilty about our past, we feel guilty about bringing children into our world, we feel guilty about taking any pride in, or even teaching our history. Mercer says that this is a particularly WASP problem. Jews do not have a proclivity to such self-loathing. They have thick skins; they have been picked on and called names for generations. Mercer attributed to our pietism, the teachings of our religion. I'm not sure that she has a full answer to the question, but it is certainly one worthy of investigation. On this topic, one thing I enjoy about Ukraine is

that it has no sense of national guilt. In recent centuries it has been the victim of aggression by Russia, Poland, Lithuania, Germany, Austria, and Turkey. Among others. It is unapologetic about what happened to Jews here; after all, it was a Soviet Jew who directed the Holodomor in which three million Ukrainians, my wife's ancestors among them, died. Today all Ukrainians want is to be left alone to enjoy its new sovereignty. The people are happy being who they are – a wonderful change from the University of Maryland campus where I was six years ago, where the message I got from all quarters was that as a white male I should be embarrassed even to breathe.

Born in South Africa, Mercer immigrated with her rabbi father to Israel in 1965 when his advocacy for democracy in South Africa made him an outcast. She returned in the 80s to study, marry, and start a family, after which she immigrated to the United States via Canada. She writes with personal authority, and on the strength of having read very widely in many fields and languages. Her "Cannibal's Pot" title – taken from Ayn Rand – is a bit provocative. Don't let it deceive you into thinking she is a doctrinaire anything. She is her own person, and has a tremendous story to tell. I'm glad to share a bit of it here.

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