

The film is about Dr Don Shirley, a gifted African-American classical and jazz pianist and composer with a doctorate in Music, Psychology, and Liturgical Arts, and the friendship that is born between him and his chauffeur during his tour in the Deep South in 1962. In the film Don Shirley is about to embark on a concert tour. He hires a tough-talking bouncer from an Italian-American neighbourhood in the Bronx because he needs a chauffeur and bodyguard during a tour with his jazz trio. Tony Lip, the chauffeur, harbors racial attitudes, but he needs the money and even though Shirley is put off by his crassness, he needs a white driver who can protect him in the Deep South. During the two month road journey and despite their many differences, the two men develop a bond while confronting racism, stereotypes and violence in an era of deep segregation, family and societal dynamics, masculinity, identity issues, addictions, art and intellectualism, resistance and potential, dignity, honesty and respect, as they navigate their way in the South. The film is ambitious in the sense that it touches upon many issues. The musician is portrayed as a highly talented and dignified man, who is struggling with identity issues and loneliness; while racist practices and attitudes isolate him from his white audience and intellectualism and lifestyle from his native black community. As to be expected both men will be transformed by the end of the tour and road trip movie. Bonds will be tested and forged and they will each become mirrors for each others' struggles, pain, blind spots, and misunderstandings. Music will also be a catalyst into forging a connection between them. Both will learn from each other and realize that despite their different backgrounds and experiences and contrasting personalities they each have something valuable to learn and contribute to the relationship.

I think that an underlying theme of the film is our *common humanity*. Despite our often seemingly glaring differences in terms of education, status, background, social contexts, painful historical baggage and current suffering and discourse, we are also interdependent not only at an energetic level, but also in terms of everyday living. The two characters in the film, to differing degrees, both have resources and life skills that in combination can get them through in a tough, rough world. They both get into trouble and they both rescue each other. We are to one extent or other bound by our contexts, available discourse and limited knowledge. Laws, societal practices, expectations and customs bind us and often urge us to behave in ways that may not be aligned with our deeper human core or even to the best of our interest as a species. It is as if the road trip is symbolic of the hero's journey (both characters confront internal and external obstacles and return transformed to some extent) and of the path we need to travel before we can acquire a certain amount of clarity and respect for our differences and understand that in the end, fragmentation and discrimination, at whatever level or intensity - whether we are talking about war, lethal segregation and blatant racism or more subtle ways of discrimination and control - is always about conquering and diminishing.

I had never heard prior to the film about the "Green Book", which as I found out was a travel guide that listed businesses that would accept African American customers as a means of helping African Americans avoid risks and trouble prevalent during the period of racial segregation, commonly referred to as Jim Crow. Without comparing and underestimating the terror and the dire consequences of living under such circumstances in that particular era and later, discriminatory practices are abundant in many parts of the world even though they may not be that blatant and violent or reinforced by laws. Watching the film brought things into perspective concerning my

own experience in terms of subtle and more blatant unpleasant experiences in shops and other contexts. Speaking up or rocking the boat can attract bullying and disrespect, but usually, it is a lengthy process that starts through first positioning people as different, less than and as non deserving, as 'black', whatever that may mean in each culture and society. When we watch a film or read a book, there is always the possibility of learning things about ourselves, since our emotional responses and the associations we spontaneously make can be interesting and informative, especially, if we are more present and mindful to them. For instance, in one scene Tony Lip describes his headache while battling fatigue and driving at night, rain and snow making visibility almost impossible, like him being brain washed. This took me back to old memories of headaches. That's how our miraculous brain works, especially, if we are more present to our moment to moment experience. I don't suffer from headaches, but I have experienced some severe headaches in my early twenties, during my university years, over a very short period of time, which even landed me in hospital, and then again out of the blue, in 2010 the day prior to an exam and then during the exam. That exam was important because it would determine if I got my degree, which would then allow me to enroll in the masters' programme just in time for the fall semester. The experience actually felt like his description, a deep sudden inability to do. It had felt like a mental inertia beyond my will power (I did find my way back and I did pass the exam).

As a result of the scene in the film and in retrospect, it dawned on me that it might have been inner resistance, maybe triggered by some external stimuli, maybe not. Resistance can be self sabotaging and can take all sorts of different forms. It can manifest as physical symptoms. We may feel fatigue and dread before going to our work or after spending time with certain people, where we have felt the need to shrink and dampen ourself. We may resort to coping mechanisms like busyness or smoking, over eating, drinking, and so on, or we may be living for a time and place somewhere off in the future when we will be happy or life may constantly feel like an uphill struggle. We may feel resignation. We may procrastinate reaching out to people or taking action. It will probably all feel normal because we have been conditioned to consider it as normal, when what may actually be happening is that we are pushing against our true self and feelings, succumbing to others' expectations, at a very large cost. Most of us carry an underlying belief that any change is somehow going to be worse than what we are experiencing now. Also, familiarity can feel comforting. And even though resistance, at a mental, emotional and physical level, is a very contracted and uncomfortable place to be we still hang on to it because we have lost trust that the flow of life may be taking us in a more positive and life affirming direction. We are wired to fear change, and change can be hard and scary, but also, part of our society is invested in things remaining the same, at least for the large majority of people. Acknowledging, staying with and being curious about resistance, in whatever ways it may manifest in our behaviours, thoughts, emotions and bodily responses or symptoms is probably the first and very important step. We need to discern the walls that we and others have built that hold up resistance. We need to process the fear places, the memories of discouragement or punishment that may be locked in our cells. We may then explore what might be on the other side of resistance. But most importantly, we need to feel what we feel and stay with what arises in our body. During this process shifts may start to take place in terms of our sense of value, worthiness and gifts.

Another thread in the film was marginalization and discrimination based on notions of *not being enough*, white enough, black enough, and so on. Depending on arbitrarily constructed ideas of enoughness or what it means to be this or that we put people in boxes or on some hierarchical ladder, and then it is easy to objectify them. Hate crimes, small or big, are also the result of impulsive urges prevailing over reason, our projections and available discourse and ignorance. We can all become the 'coloured person' or 'black' for others in all communities: not enough of an ethnic identity maybe, not conventional or compliant enough, not fat or thin enough, not tall or short enough, too white, too dark, too smart, not smart enough, too rich, too poor, too arty and intellectual, not gifted enough, too much of this or not enough of that, as if we were objects to be measured and weighed on some God delivered scale, but division never supports life or serves the interests of the majority of people. The saddest part is that we massively buy into these lame excuses, as if in a trance, and easily treat others with disrespect. In the end, a lot has to do with inner clarity and love. These don't come easy. We need to do our inner work and open our hearts and minds to new ways of being and all the new knowledge available. Finally, another intriguing aspect of the film is its references to food and the cultural implications of foods and eating. There are scenes of almost force feeding, over-eating and over drinking as means to numb and suppress emotions, of family meals, and of warm hospitality and of gathering around the table to celebrate and connect.