

To: Spring 2020 Restorative Justice Group #30

Title: *Everyday Ubuntu*

The first in an intermittent series.

Several years ago one of the Restorative Justice volunteers, Ms. D'Agostino, brought to us the word "ubuntu." I had never heard of it before, but it has turned up in my reading and thinking ever since.

Recently, I heard of a new book, *Everyday Ubuntu: Living Better Together, the African Way*. The author is Mungi Ngomane, the granddaughter of Archbishop Desmond Tutu.

In the introduction, Archbishop Tutu says that ubuntu is summed up as, "My humanity is caught up, is inextricably bound, in yours."

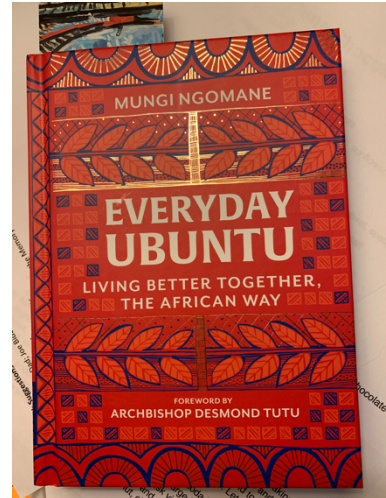
This is enough to keep me reading.

The concept of ubuntu is found in almost all African Bantu languages. Languages with Bantu roots are spoken throughout the continent south of the Sahara. The root of the word "bantu" means people. In Rwanda and Burundi a similar word means "human generosity." In parts of Kenya the concept of "utu" means that every action should be for the benefit of the community. In Malawi, "uMunthu" says that on your own you are no better than a wild animal, but two or more people make a community.

In the book, Mungi Ngomane offers 14 lessons and practices to recognize, develop and enhance ubuntu in our lives.

1. See yourself in other people
2. Strength lies in unity
3. Put yourself in the shoes of others
4. Choose to see the wider perspective
5. Have dignity and respect for yourself and others
6. Believe in the good of everyone
7. Choose hope over optimism
8. Seek out ways to connect
9. The power of the F-word – Forgiveness
10. Embrace our diversity
11. Acknowledge reality (however painful)
12. Find the humor in our humanity
13. Why little things make a big difference
14. Learn to listen so that you can hear

When I find some idea that captures my imagination, I really like to share it. My intention and plan is to work on these lessons with you throughout the fall.



Lesson 1: See Yourself in Other People

Ubuntu is about recognizing the inner worth of every human being ... starting with yourself. And more ... we are who we are thanks to other people. Every interaction with others builds until we are who we are today.



My personal image of this is of a crocheted blanket in the granny square pattern. You can see how each row builds on the one before it, until you have a beautiful blanket.

While our society usually praises people who claim to be “self made,” I think that most of us can credit many other people who have helped us become who we are. None of us lives in isolation from others, even when we might try to build walls of protection around us.

There are many of us who might argue that our lives have been filled with people who harmed us and that harm has led us to make decisions that landed us where we are.

But mixed in with people who have caused harm are the people who have nurtured us (even if we didn't recognize it at the time) and who have cared about us and who sincerely want us to live into the human dignity we are born with. Restorative Justice begins with the principle of healing whatever harm has been caused by crime. And often that healing begins with recognizing that I am the one who needs to be healed.

Ironically, beginning to heal also starts with how we choose to see other people who we meet and live with. With ubuntu in our lives we can choose to view others as our equals, seeing them as we want others to see us. We are no better than anyone else; everyone deserves to be treated with humanity.

Some things to practice:

- Think about who has made you into the person you are today. Think about people who you might not automatically think of.....like the people who clean up after you, who fix the coffee, who open a door, who you talk with every day.
- Think about the people you help.
- Notice how life is about give and take. Do you enjoy giving more than taking? What have you done for someone else that makes you feel good about yourself?
- Connect intentionally with strangers.
- Notice your judgements, feel them and quietly let them go. For one day try to observe without judgement...let negative thoughts go.

Whew this is a lot!!! Begin small and see where it leads you. Enough for today and this week.

~ Ms. Pugh, Restorative Justice volunteer