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A Treatise on Borderlines as Applicable Social, Cultural, Spiritual, Linguistic and Personal of the Individual and Beyond

Abstract: Borrowing from personal experience, the nature of borderlines in relation to socio-cultural minorities and majorities, and the effects and outcomes that these have on the individual and on the global scenario as a whole, are examined and expounded upon. There is a theory that is formed, in which is stated, that the activities of humankind leading to the formations, deformations, merging of and varied structures of, the said borderlines, is something not premeditated by the human mind, nor foreseen by it; but rather, is an outcome that has gained what can be referred to as its “own life”— a living thing in its own right, and one that man strives to keep up with and even to uphold.

Keywords: Socio-cultural; Borderlines; Multicultural; Multiracial, Change, Globalization; Mergence; Emergence; Positive Direction; Perspective

Treatise

For an individual like me, who considers herself as “borderless”, one must ask why the word “borderless” even comes into consideration, in the first place. Why refer to yourself as “borderless”? What must be the relevance of the word “borderline”, for one to make it a goal to take up its opposite meaning as a label for him/her self?

The relevance of the word “borderline”, in context of socio-cultural issues, is applicable to my life in so many ways, that it can be likened unto the lines drawn out on a map that one would use to find one’s way throughout a new city. Or perhaps, maybe the lines made in a pie when you slice up your pie for dessert after your dinner!

The “lines” that are drawn (or cut) into the pattern of an individual of multiple cultural persuasions and backgrounds, are ones that we are simply born into and never asked to have. These lines begin to define who we are; not just in our own eyes, but also in the eyes of our family, our

neighbors, our teachers at school, and society as a whole. And yet, with these disparate, differing nods of recognition that are given to us by these sources; more lines are etched into our skin! Even more lines are drawn onto the whiteboard that is our minds, even more borderlines are drawn onto the map of ourselves that we are still trying to figure out how to read! And so it has become, that as we are still going on the formative path of trying to decipher the map that leads us to an understanding of ourselves— our family, neighbors, teachers, media, society, and government are drawing their own lines and street signs, bridges and alleyways, onto us— adding to the definition of ourselves that we are still in the process of making! The big pivotal moment in life, is when you realize, that you must take the pens and the pencils and the rulers out of their hands, and begin to design the map of yourself, according to the definition that you have decided to give yourself!

Borderlines have now become subjective items that are there or not there depending upon your own will! These lines have become subjective items that bend and break or build and form, depending upon the structure of yourself that you have decided to create. And this is how one becomes *borderless*. Perhaps she has reached the conclusion of removing all these lines, altogether! Perhaps he has come to the decision of inculcating only what is useful, and defining what is useful, depending on what conforms to his own meaning which he has given himself. And so, this is how one becomes borderless. It is only through a process of self-recognition, determination, and self-mastery.

Yet, the question remains, as to the credence of the word “borderline”. What exactly is a borderline and why exactly does it play such a defining, obstinate role in the lives of many people who are like me? Why would anyone want to overcome it, go around it, or fight it? Why would anybody seek to make it irrelevant?

I was born into a family of two proud cultures: on my paternal side, an American family that anchors deeply and proudly into its European (Scandinavian, British, Irish, Iberian Peninsula, Italian, Greek) heritage; and on my maternal side, a Chinese family mixed with Spanish heredity, a family anchored deeply into its Taoist roots. Each of my sides believed itself to be superior to the other, and considered itself “pure”. Of course, during the succession of the bloodlines, one generation giving into the next, each new generation became more and more unaware of the previous one’s “originality” and I say this in terms of religious and societal nuances. The Celtic/Welsh Christianity gradually became Protestantism, and at the birth of Protestantism down the line, all prior beliefs were seen as nonexistent. Taoism gradually became Protestantism, too, with my Taoist High Priest great grandfather almost totally forgotten by grandchildren and great grandchildren. And yet, amidst all the merging of these “borderlines,” the

same pride of “original purity” is stubbornly retained. Borders merge but that does not necessarily entail that minds merge along with them!

And then came me. What does a girl do when she is born right smack in the middle of two heavyweight cultures, with scatterings of other cultures all thrown into the mix? Well, first she struggles to make sense of things, struggles to identify herself with either side that she is supposed to belong to, and when she realizes that she doesn't really look like anyone else she's supposed to look like, in that moment begins the “drawing of the map”. You pull out your big piece of paper and you start drawing your own map onto it. You begin on the journey that nobody else in your family has gone on; and that is, the journey of inner cartography!

At present, I live amongst Catholics and wouldn't mind going to a Catholic Church! I also don't mind Taoism and in fact, I revere it. I married a Catholic man a long time ago and raised a protestant son with him, a son who is now a teenager and believes that kindness transcends all religion, because that is what I have taught him. My son goes to school with children who are mainly Catholic; and has a girlfriend who, though being born to a Japanese Buddhist mother, is a Catholic, herself. Some of my son's friends go to church; some never go to church. And others, like my son, simply profess kindness and gnosis as the highest state of spirituality, with the belief that “church” is actually a description of the human soul.

Socio-cultural borderlines are the lines stating that since you are related to so and so, then that means you are supposed to go to such and such church, you are supposed to be fluent in such and such language, you should look at least a lot like either of your parents, you must adhere to the cultural dictations of at least one of your lineages, and most importantly, you should never criticize anything about either side of your borderlines, or else, you are immediately perceived as a “hater.” But how is it that when you have fewer borderlines, you may say anything you want about yourself, however, when you are comprised of more borderlines, you must have fewer opinions of yourself, that being, because all opinions that you have of yourself, are opinions that inevitably are about a group of people that don't really see you as wholly a part of them! Of course, this is only another mindset that is standing in the way of us and positive progress, because when taken into logical consideration, the more “lines” found within you, equates to the more perspectives you are inevitably going to have, thereon leading to the more thoughts you are going to want to express. People of mixed heritage should therefore, in my opinion, not be expected to “tip-toe on their own property” just because parts of their land (person) are also shared with others. It is in fact the coming together of varied and numerous pieces,

that create a whole, unified structure— that fortress belonging to whoever possesses it!

My mother used to tell me, “It is okay, you are your own culture, you are your own race, and you are your own nation.” Her words ring true and applicable, not just for myself, but for all those who are like me, for all those who are comprised of a merging of borderlines that have broken into each other to form new continents, new states, new cities, new nations! *You are your own world*, is more like it!

Since I am multiracial, and grew up in more than just one place, it is easily expected of me that I am a multiculturalist; but the truth is that I am a culturalist. I have no agenda to “globalize” the world, or to cause people to despise the notion that there are borders that exist and that nations are sovereign entities composed of their own cultures, people, and languages. In fact, being of multiple cultures and races only causes me to have a greater appreciation for the sense of belongingness that others have. I don’t have this sense of belongingness, because quite frankly, it is difficult for me to decide where I really belong. “Where is home?” is a difficult question to answer. It is a simple question, but difficult nonetheless. Then the idea that something so simple can be so difficult, throws confusion into the mix. I know for certain that though the idea of being a “citizen of the world” is a grand ideal and an open-minded notion to have; it still remains true that there is beauty in knowing where and to whom you belong. I am a culturalist in the sense that I believe that we are all united by the fact that we are all different, and that to remove those differences would only remove that inherent unity. We need not blur the lines that separate us; rather, we may see those lines simple for what they are, and respect them. For it is what separates us all, that also gives us places to call “home”.

I am often asked if I speak Mandarin, because apparently I should be able to speak that, my mother being Chinese and all. But I don’t speak Mandarin, because though I learned the language going to Chinese School in High School, I later forgot it when I didn’t really have the opportunity to use it. But of course, I am just expected to know it because I have Chinese blood. Forget about where I’m actually living or whom I’m actually living with! When in Italy, they think I am French and in France they think I am Argentinian or Brazilian, or— surprisingly— French! In Norway, they have no idea what I am, and the Norwegians are very polite, so they never actually ask me what I am; they just stare at me endlessly. But when in Italy on tourist months, the tourists all think I am a local, so they ask me for directions and when I tell them I am a tourist, they think I am pulling a joke on them and then suddenly I am a horrible local Italian snob who won’t give them any directions!

The joining of many things is what causes a new thing to be born. The merging of numerous borderlines is what causes a new continent to form. The blending of tongues is what gives way to new languages and the teaming up of written dialect is what creates new patterns of written language. Interestingly enough, the mergence of these lines often does not equate to the emergence of new mindsets. The human mind, from my perspective, is in fact not responsible for the current globalization that we are witnessing today. The human mind did not form this holistic idea, did not plant it, and then follow given instructions to make it work. In fact, the human mind today scrambles to keep up with what seems to be a new life form! What is this new life form? Is it one wherein the activities of humanity have grown their own separate set of lungs, their own breath, and their own heartbeats; thus, have now emerged uncontrollable? The activities of man have become separate entities that form the habitats in which we live and need to adapt to, or at least, to gain a deeper understanding of! I say these activities that are the make-up of these “borderlines”, are becoming separate entities independent from the human mind, because it is not the human mind that has foreseen the effects of the actions nor that has therefore made the choices that would purposefully and inevitably lead to those foreseen outcomes. Instead, these activities, which are the fabric of the borderlines we speak of, require the mindsets of man to continually expand, reach, open, broaden, understand, ponder, adapt, and accept, in order to keep up with the growing trends! Or should I use another word other than “trend”? Perhaps the word “standard” is best used here. In order to keep up with the changing *standards*— now that’s a more appropriate word to use.

What use is there for the consciousness of man, if he is merely led by his actions, only to later cope up with his brain? Even a mindless organism can do the same! Even a non-sentient organism may multiply and mutate to form new breeds, without any conscious awareness of its actions! And more importantly, I would like to look at how people strive to cope with the mergence of things that were once separate in culture, in blood, in societal normalcies, in family ties, in ties of friendship, in nation and in creed! Does man in fact readily and openly accept and adapt to these new “inner nations” that are forged at the emergence of people like me? Or when a three-year-old child speaks three different languages and goes to a Synagogue and a Chapel intermittently; is this considered a wonder of nature? An absurdity of nature? A freak show perhaps? Is it something mainstream that the majority feels they are forced to accept? Or maybe there is even a socio-pop-culture type of pressure to “be nice” to those who are generally “different”— a pop culture that does not necessarily reflect an individual’s genuine state of awareness or actual knowledge of circumstance and situation.

There are statistics all around, anyone can Google the statistics on a particular subject and find the numbers that they are looking for, scan and study those numbers... it hardly means anything at the end of the day. So, it is not my intention to do that, it is not my intention to present statistics that are cold and distant from my own experiences, from things that I have myself touched. Rather, my intention is to share something from my own hands, something from a perspective that I have seen and felt for myself!

From every angle, the mindsets of people struggle to cope with and to expand for, the radicalization of globalization that we are seeing in the world today. But struggling is not a bad thing; rather, it is in fact a sign of willpower and direction. People want to be open, people are aware of the need for positive change. However, in that very same light, people also desire security; all people desire a sense of belongingness. What does it mean to a person's security and sense of belongingness, when he sees all the lines he once felt secured behind— merge with the lines that used to be all the way over *there*? What does it entail, for a person's sense of self, when he looks at a child born of several cultures? Do these situations cause a person to question the meanings of the values they hold dear to their own existence? And of immense importance is the question, *At what point does a person begin to define herself as borderless?*

I trust the collective vision of the people of this planet we call home and I feel no bitterness in my heart for any of the personal misfortunes I may have faced due to a lack of understanding in others. The lack of understanding is in fact not important; but what is important, is the evident struggle *to* understand. The fact remains that there *is* a struggle to understand, there *is* a positive direction, there *is* a collective effort carried out by individuals, everywhere! Though this is not to say that I believe borders are to be erased, disrespected and disregarded; because I do believe in the sense of belonging, I do believe in having a home, and I do believe in the right to be different and I believe that everyone has that right to be different in their own way— it is not a privilege that only the minority has; rather, it is a right that everyone has, whether belonging to the majority or to the minority. Belonging to a minority does not necessarily translate to being oppressed. I do not believe in the notion that when one belongs to a minority, one has the immediate evidence to say that he/she is oppressed. Difference is not oppression. I believe oppression is denying others the right to defend what is their own, and in that light, we all must have the fundamental right and means, to defend what is our own from those who would wish to change us in order to suit themselves. May it never be forgotten that equal tolerance must be given to host nations and to host peoples, and that tolerance should *not* be in constant favor of

the minority. The homes of people ought to be respected. The nation is the macrocosmic view of the individual person.

I decided to define myself as borderless when I looked out into the world in search of a role model, in search of someone I wanted to be like. I couldn't find that person, so instead, I decided to *become* that person. In order to be that person, I knew I had to rid myself of the notions that I had of myself and that other people had of me, all of which were defined only by the lines that they understood. I realized that I needed to draw my own lines, leave my own handprints on the skies! The person that I wanted to become was a person not yet invented; and so, I invented myself! As with any invention, I started out with a blueprint that I didn't quite understand, but one that I created, anyway! I forged myself, corrected myself, struggled to uproot many things that I didn't like, many character flaws that I found! I removed the lines that were drawn onto me by others, and I moved them around into spirals. Spirals are beautiful, you see, and they remind me of the waves of water that are ever-changing and that carry us on our ships from one faraway land to another faraway land! Borderlines turned into spiral waves! That's what my map of me looks like! There is no need for bridges— there is only a need for ships!

We become borderless when we begin to see the need to reach from who we are— over there to who we want to become! Or, we become borderless when we begin to see that lines defined by others impede upon our visions meant for ourselves. We become borderless when we begin to feel held back by the borders that are supposed to continually dissect and define us, and in those moments of feeling held back, we push back against them and we broaden ourselves! But then I suppose it is all in how we see it! Because maybe the borderlines are not actually there to hold us back; but what are the odds that those borderlines are actually there to make us feel so uncomfortable with being dissected and defined, that we eventually push ourselves to circumnavigate who we are, in order to form a new world within us! Look at the continents of the Earth! We may see the continents of the world as borderlines that separate us; but what if those lines we see as separation are not actually lines of separation, at all? What if continents are testimonies of what have already broken off and merged, to form and give birth to the world that we have now? What if all the lines of separation that we see, are only evidences of separation that once were, and are only evidences of unity that we now have? Yes, they still remain as reminders of our differences, and of the impact those differences have had on everything, but the beautiful thing is that our unity lies in the fact that we are all different, that we will never be the same, and that not being the same is a beautiful thing. We need not all be the same. We need to

all be who we are. We see the borderlines of our planet as differences and we see them as gaps— but these very same lines wouldn't have been right here and right now, had they not broken off from what they once were before, and merged with others to form anew! The continents we have now, that we see as lines defining and tracing the spaces in between us, are actually the spaces of land that have broken away and merged anew, to form the shape of the global map we have right now! We break and we become, we fall away and then we merge— and in this light— there is actually no such thing as distance, there is no such thing as separation! It is in our differences that we are defined as the same! It is in our distances that we are defined as brothers and sisters, as lovers and as friends! Space is never definitive of who we are and what we can achieve; but space, if we make it so, is only the area where we may ride upon waves to carry us from one point to another!

Now, what if we take that macrocosmic level and apply it to the microcosmic level within us? This would therefore mean that the defining traits within us that are varied and disparate due to the intermingling of races and cultures, are *not* territorial markings of inner separation and confusion, at all, but are instead tantamount to what mental and emotional spaces may be breached and overcome, in order to bring out a certain closeness, a certain unity and a certain harmony! These are not actually points of inner opposition and conflicts; rather, these are points of congruency within us, within the individual! Difference itself and separation itself, can become congruent and can become harmonious. This means that we are free to look at ourselves and into ourselves, to see the testimonies of harmony within us! We are walking testimonies of victory, of positivity and of change. When you look at that child who speaks three languages and who goes to Synagogue and Chapel— you don't need to see a mingling of different things— you may see the oneness of many things! You may see oceans sailed by ships most worthy and most brave! You don't need to see a threat to your security and to your familiarity with yourself and everything around you; but you may in fact see a land so secure, because oceans have been conquered and seas have been crossed! Because security, after all, is not the knowledge of only what we already have; but it is the point of victory in finally knowing the areas that we thought we would never know.

I do not advocate the nonexistence of separation; rather, I advocate the appreciation of separation, by seeing it in a completely different light. I do not advocate the banishment of home and of nationalism; rather, I advocate the notion that nationalism is a living, breathing thing, which possesses the capability of change. I am not saying that I am advocate of the destruction of traditional sense of security and belongingness— I most definitely am not that— but I am saying that even those who are a product of

globalization, can in themselves find security and belongingness, through being courageous enough to define who they are whilst not allowing that definition to be set by others. This is not a treatise on the deconstruction of home; rather, this is a treatise on the construction of homes within ourselves.

Summary: Human actions comprising what we now call “globalization,” are things that the human mind struggles to keep up with and to understand; nevertheless, there is an overall positive direction that the collective intention is heading into. The relevance of “borderlines” in relation to socio-cultural issues is a matter of perspective and our understanding of it can be experimented upon, by contemplating it from a metaphorically physical angle, to an entirely mental angle, and everything in between. The relevance of the word can change and can be bent and even negated, depending upon the said perspective, as well as the fortitude of human will.