

The Incompetent Heart: Why People Love to Hate You — Gustavo Razzetti

by Gustavo Razzetti

Why we see others as enemies, not people.

“From the deepest desires often come the deadliest hate.”

— Socrates

The news roller coaster is hurting me.

My emotions are up and down—the wild ride is anything but fun.

Politicians are supposed to commit their best efforts for the public good, not to be fighting against each other. Books are meant to inspire readers, not to sink someone. Similarly, book reviews should help us understand what’s in it for us, not encouraging we bash the author.

We must call out lousy conduct from leaders, not play their game. By taking sides, we are not just legitimizing attacks and divisive behaviors; we are also fueling hate.

The worst part is not that hating others is normal; it has become socially acceptable too.

I’m not taking a moral stand here. I’m far from being perfect. This post is a personal reflection—I’m inviting you to join me.

On the social media stage, looking right seems the only thing that matters. Rather than using our emotions and intellect to do what’s best, we focus [on proving others wrong](#)—those who think differently become our enemies.

The primitive skill to separate friends from foes is an essential *survival* strategy.

However, that instinct made sense in a primitive age where the world was threatening and unknown. It feels irrational that—after centuries of breakthroughs and improvements in medicine, education, technology, and food, to name a few—we still feel under constant attack.

We are emotionally incompetent—that’s why we love to hate others.

It’s hard to believe that we are in the 21st Century—we behave as if the world was still unsafe and dangerous.

Many people are not using their voices to make things better. They express their opinions simply to hurt others; to silence opposite thoughts. The hatred that we see daily on Social Media, the news, or water cooler conversations, is doing us no good as a society.

Our hearts have become completely incompetent—hate has taken over our emotions.

Hate Is Personal; What Causes Anger Is Not

“In time we hate that which we often fear.”
— William Shakespeare

Hating others is an easy way out.

Hate is a self-defense mechanism. When under attack, the ability to quickly separate foes from friends was essential to survive. However, most of our current threats are perceptions, not real ones—we *create* the fight.

When things don't go well, [we play the blame game](#)—we look for a scapegoat. We like always to be right and feel safe. We embrace hate as a way to protect our self-esteem or to defend our community's interests or beliefs.

Hate is personal for the attacker, don't take it personally.

Hate is in the eye of the giver, not on the receiver. People hate what they don't understand. They reject those who think or look differently. People hate others because of what they reflect about them too.

When someone attacks you, avoid getting into a useless battle.

No one wins the war of hatred war. Regardless if someone is passionate and committed to attacking you. Don't get caught into that tactic. You need two sides to start a war.

Avoidance is a powerful response.

You might not be able to disarm your attacker. But haters love to be hated back—they will soon find another enemy that likes to play their game.

Your Heart Was Programmed to Hate Others

“Darkness cannot drive out darkness: only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate: only love can do that.”—Martin Luther King Jr.

Inherently we [are full of goodness](#).

This sounds hard for many people to digest. But our true essence, as human beings, is to be and do good.

Buddhist psychologist Chögyam Trungpa, author of [The Sanity we are born with](#), says: “Delight in itself is the approach of sanity. Delight is to open our eyes to the reality of the situation rather than siding with this or that point of view.”

When we can observe other points of view without judging, there's no need to hate. Being different doesn't mean better or worse; *different* is just different.

The Internet has empowered us to collaborate, share insights, teach, and support others. We can access content for free: books, pictures, recipes, how-to videos, etc. That's the magic of human generosity. Perfect proof that our intrinsic nature is good.

Hatred was part of our society 'software' update—it came by default; you don't need to accept that *upgrade*.

People hate other political parties or religions because their ideology is *the truth*. They reject other races or ethnic groups because their bodies *are superior*. People hate an article because they *know better*.

However, those are just beliefs; not objective truths. Our beliefs blind us—that's why we hate others.

Hate makes people feel cool; it gives them authority and power.

Take racism, for example. It's not natural; it's an artificial concept that was wired into our brains and hearts. [This in-depth National Geographic article](#) sheds light on how science created a *racial hierarchy*. Studies performed by Dr. Samuel Morton wrongfully concluded, by studying skulls from various ethnic groups, that some races were superior to others.

The scientist believed that "Caucasians" were the most intelligent of the races. East Asians—he used the term "Mongolian"—though "ingenious" and "susceptible of cultivation," were one step down. Blacks, or "Ethiopians," were at the bottom. In the decades before the American Civil War, his ideas were used to justify slavery.

The Homo Sapiens species evolved in Africa. Modern genetic research has shown that all humans are closely related. We all have the same collection of genes, but slightly different versions of some of them. *As the article points out: all people alive today are Africans.*

Race has nothing to do with how brains perform. However, we were wired to establish hierarchies.

Rather than taking people for who they are; we judge them by the group they belong to.

Hating someone is personal; the reasons that fuel hate are mostly social. Someone persuade us to see others as enemies. Leaders know how to play the *paranoia card*—they find an external enemy to bring their supporters together.

Having a common enemy is what makes hatred personal—we turn life into a 'them' versus 'us' experience.

We've been taught that the best defense is to attack. That's why people love to hate others. They think that destroying someone else's reputation first would score them a huge victory.

When things get personal, we let our irrationality take over.

Pause and think; is the enemy for real?

Don't let "[mass thinking](#)" cloud your judgment. Avoid being a prey of the "You are

either with us or against us” approach. Those who put you in that situation don’t want you to think; you are just a number — they want to *add you* to their support base.

Don’t Play the Hate Game

“I will permit no man to narrow and degrade my soul by making me hate him.”

—Booker T. Washington

Hating others is a personal decision.

People are intolerant and expect you to behave the same way. It took me decades to realize my own intolerance. That was a turning point to stop “hating” what I didn’t understand or like. Now I can focus on becoming more acceptant of others.

We are wired to see others as enemies, not people.

Writing frequently has exposed me to great people, but I’ve been the target of a lot of intolerance and hatred too. I had to develop a thicker skin than I already had.

I love getting feedback from my readers — not just kind words, but being challenged so I can improve as a person. However, I find it a waste of time to interact with those who are merely looking for a fight.

I wrote a post about freedom, [that created a lot of controversies](#). I said that freedom requires self-regulation too — we are free to speak, but that doesn’t mean we should *attack* others because they don’t share our beliefs. Some people fired back — they said I was encouraging dictators. ;(

I use people’s reactions to self-reflect.

If I feel criticized or don’t understand my message: “What vulnerabilities are being exposed?”, “Why do I feel criticized?” “Are my words confusing?” I challenge my thinking and do additional research.

Reacting is easy; reflection requires courage.

We all have emotions, but that doesn’t mean that we need to let them drive our behaviors. Becoming *emotionally competent* requires to tame your mind — to look at your emotions, [not through them](#)

The Hierarchies of Hate

“Any person capable of angering you becomes your master.” — Epictetus

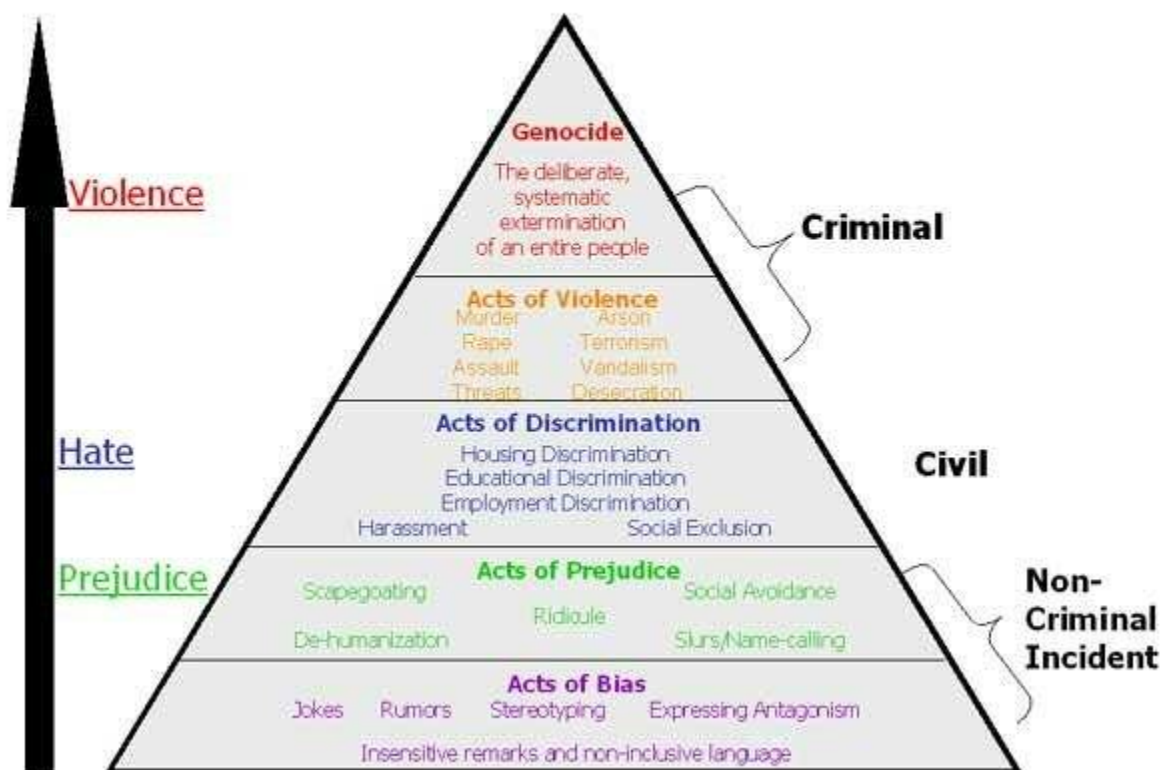
Today threats are psychological rather than physical. We need to correct our thinking, so we don’t apply the same primitive impulse to destroy our “enemy.” Considering evidence — not perception — can help correct your thinking.

Empathy and reflection are critical to avoid feeding your self-preservation mechanism. Most “attacks” are provocations, not *real* danger.

The problem with hatred is that it quickly escalates. What starts as mere intolerance or [a cultural bias](#) could quickly become something more alarming.

The Pyramid of Hate is a powerful exercise that many organizations use to drive awareness—small intolerance acts can turn into dangerous ones. At work, in our families or society, we need to call out these behaviors before they go out of hands.

PYRAMID OF HATE



First Level: Bias

The base of the pyramid is when our prejudice is expressed through jokes, criticism, and other expressions of our bias. It feels 'harmless' but quickly moves to the next level.

Second Level: Individual Acts of Prejudice

This level manifests through acts that start affecting the other person. It includes avoiding those that we hate. [Scapegoating](#), ridiculing, and social avoidance—prejudice turns into rejection.

Third Level: Discrimination

The middle of the pyramid involves intentional discrimination. We limit possibilities to those we hate. From a job promotion to housing opportunities, these types of behaviors are punished by law—they go beyond our freedom of speech.

Discrimination is not about the specific person — it punishes those who belong to a particular group that is hated by the discriminator.

Fourth Level: Bias-Motivated Violence

This level is when discrimination becomes a social movement. Masses — most of the times encouraged by leaders — attack properties, holy places, or groups. It can even include murder and terrorist acts.

When a society gets to Level Four, things are getting out of hand. That's the danger of letting hate become something normal. We won't see the broader consequences coming until it's too late.

Fifth Level: Genocide

Genocide, as defined by the United Nations in 1948, means acts committed with intent to destroy a national, ethnic, racial, or religious group. It includes both physical and mental harm.

How to Build Emotional Competency

“Experience is not what happens to you — it's how you interpret what happens to you. “ — Aldous Huxley

Emotional Competence is mastering how we communicate or release our inner-feelings — it determines our ability to effectively and successfully lead and express.

Here are some tips for you to avoid hate taking over your life.

Be aware of your emotions: Can you discuss feelings without getting into an argument? Apply empathy to understand how others feel, even if it doesn't make any sense to you.

Mind your words: We've incorporated the word “hate” as part of our regular vocabulary. When someone hurts your feelings, avoid using the word “hate.” Reframe it in the form of “*I don't like that you did X to me.*” Even if you are just talking to yourself, it will switch your speech from “defensive” to “reflective.”

Practice adaptability: Try seeing the world through other people's beliefs. I'm not saying change yours; simply understand why other people think differently (even if they are “attacking” you). Let go of your beliefs; experiment conceding something to your opponent. When there's no difference, there's no point fighting.

Avoid power struggles: Let go of having to make your point. Sometimes, it's better to be human than to be right, [as I wrote here](#). When you fight back, you are mimicking your aggressor's behavior. *Provocation is not a war declaration; retaliation is.*

Accept the differences: Tolerance is a two-way street. If you want people to respect your beliefs and thinking, you have to abide by the same rules. It's easy to ask for understanding, but appreciating other's points of views requires courage.

Embrace forgiveness: I know I'm getting myself into trouble again. I suggested this in a previous post [about not playing the victim](#). Some people wrote back furious: "*What if I'm a real victim?*"

My answer was: many people have been through life-threatening situations, and yet when they overcame those, they were able to pardon their perpetrators. Nelson Mandela is a perfect example.

[Eva Kor, an Auschwitz survivor](#), is a clear testament to that mindset too. "*I want everybody to remember that we cannot change what happened, that is a tragic part, but we can change how we relate to it.*"—she said after meeting with one of her perpetrators many decades later.

Let's stop seeing other people as enemies.

The world benefits from diversity. If we all look, think, believe, feel, and act the same, the world would be boring. Understanding, tolerance, and self-awareness are critical to moving from a *defensive* to an *acceptive* mode.

It's not easy. Being tolerant is one of our most significant challenges as human beings. It starts by accepting our uniqueness so we can allow others to be true to themselves too.

Learn to find beauty in what looks different. This age and time require maturity and reasoning, not fight-or-flight responses. As Elvis Presley said: "*Animals don't hate, and we're supposed to be better than them.*"

Additional Resources

The Hate Pyramid—[intro video](#).

The Tolerance Project—[core values](#) to increase tolerance.

The Seven-Stage Hate model—[From "individual hate" to "collective aggression."](#)