

Zanzibar - blowing up the wall - an encroachment.

The sand is blindingly white, the water is shades of crystal clear turquoise, the dhows are gliding by, the local fisherman are sorting their nets and I am sitting in a half lotus position thinking about taking a rocket propelled grenade launcher and blowing up the newly laid concrete block wall. It is encroaching on our property. They do not realize who they are screwing with, if they did, they would not dare touch anything that was close to us. The speech has become more refined in my mind as I stare out at the dhows. I will just calmly explain who we are and why they need to move their structure off our property.

The problem is that there seem to be only the workmen and my swahili consists of about 10 words - certainly not enough to get my delicate point across. I do realize I could do more harm than good, there are cultural restraints, so I sink back into my half lotus position and figure out my next step.

We are in the middle of a beach war, but we know what to do - we are well trained and very experienced.

Having sorted out my plan of action, I wander down the beach to SCUBA-DO to find out the time of the morning dive. There I greet my favorite dive guy Chris, his gorgeous wife Tammy and his cool dive folks. They are my therapists. When the thoughts of death and explosives prevents me from sleeping, a good stint of thinking only about breathing and fish helps. I was lucky enough to discover that it helped me early on in the trial. Everyone found their own ways of coping -- looking at fish was one of mine.

I give an abbreviated version of the speech I had been working on to Chris, instead of the workers down the beach. It was basically that I can be very nasty or very nice, but that people should not overstep my boundaries. Chris understood. He knew what we had done over the years, but the Italian dive guy was puzzled.

I smiled sweetly and said:

"You have to understand we have spent the last five years in a trial prosecuting a General, two Colonels and a Major in the former Rwandan armed forces for genocide and I was not feeling like walking away from a cinderblock encroachment on our property."

Good dive people are like any good retail person -- they are trained to be polite and look interested, which is what the Italian did as I blathered on. Chris enjoys having us around, despite our odd behavior. We are good entertainment for the rest of his customers.

During the darkest days, I crawled over to Zanzibar and hung out on the beach, diving and watching fish. They -- the humans and the fish - were all kind and tolerant.

Our trial is now over. We are awaiting the court's judgement. We completed one of the largest genocide trials that has ever been prosecuted. We are altered emotionally,

intellectually and spiritually. Things will never look the same as they did before we started. Our insides have been rubbed raw and then scarred up, only to be ripped open again. Some may tell you that you grow through painful experiences. If so - we are very tall. But we are more likely to vacillate between feeling very big and very small. We have lost the middle ground. In court we fight and then we take flight -- the fight v. flight trigger has become too easy to pull. The beach to me is a chance to regain the middle. A place to just be in the present - to get out of life in its extremes.

Epilogue:

The encroachment turned into a bar and stayed on our beach front for over a year before it burned down in a mysterious fire. We became neighborly enough that when the gunmen came and shot up the bar, the owner dropped off his toddler for me to shelter.

The United Nations Tribunal found our military guys guilty of genocide, war crimes, rape and much more.

The Rwandan Government held over 1 million community trials and tens of thousands court trials for those who participated in the genocide.

Over 800,000 people were killed in the 100 days of the Rwandan Genocide against the Tutsi and over 300,000 women were raped and mutilated.

Final thoughts:

I look back and wonder where everyone has gone. How did this happen? Is everyone fighting demons or is it just me?

Thankfully I live in Santa Fe the land of healers ...