

It is easy to be a victim; you simply fill your mind every day with dark thoughts about all the injustice you have suffered. It also helps to dwell upon all the wrongs the Lakota people have suffered over the past 500 plus years. Constantly pondering past wrongs definitely fuels the victim mentality.

Being a victim consumes all your precious energy. It was very draining for me to cling to all those depressing thoughts of how our people were oppressed and murdered over the centuries. Now, it's much easier to pray.

Of course, to maintain the victim mentality you must stay angry; I once kept everything that angered me burning hot in my heart. You have to continually provoke your own anger or you risk letting it go for happiness.

You will never be happy when you are imprisoned inside the victim mindset. There is no room for joy, for to be a victim entails an enormous amount of indignation. You will never find a path to happiness. You may as well be in a locked prison cell with no key.

Self-righteousness is a keeper of the victim mentality. When you carry a huge amount of arrogant self-righteousness, you are blind to the opinions of others.

Judgment is another toxic mind set. I would get mad when others judged something I did. But I also judged the behavior of other people. When I started monitoring my thoughts, I was shocked to find I was just as judgmental as everyone else.

I do not give away my personal power to anger any more. Anger is poison. Of course, I get mad over things that happen but anger no longer defines who I am. Just because I am mad in any given moment does not mean I have to live my life furious at the whole world. Sadly, many of our young Indian people seemed controlled by their anger.

Underneath the anger is fear, I believe. In my opinion, humanity carries two basic emotions: fear and love. The negative emotions emit from fear while the positive emotions come from love. Look deep inside your anger; hiding behind it is fear. Many people are very mad but they are unsure of where their anger stems from. This might be because all the anger they have ever felt is kept locked deep within. They release absolutely none of their anger. They might state that they cannot allow themselves to get mad because they don't know what they will do. Is this you?

Are you mad because of the way you were treated today? Or does your rage stem from something that happened in your childhood which carried into adulthood? It may take an entire lifetime to identify where your anger originates from.

There are some of you who will continually blame the wasicu or the government or the tribe or boarding schools or churches or full bloods or mix bloods or family members for what happens to you. You viciously

attack other Indian people when their views don't align with your victim mentality. You resent happy Indians who would have made progress in overcoming their own victim mindset. Is this you?

I never realized how much fear people actually carry until recently. The Internet has allowed us to connect with people from all over the world. We are global within our own homes. Consequently, the advent of social web sites, such as FaceBook, has provided an avenue for many people to express their rage from behind the anonymity of their computer screen.

Thus, we now have Indian people attacking one another on social networking web sites. When you try to express an opinion sometimes you are called names. Some people even threatened to kill you. To me, people who engage in online name-calling or threats are immature cowards.

I can tell a lot about the rage a person feels by what they write on the social networking sites. Some young Indian people self-identify as hostiles. What good does being hostile 24 hours a day do? The spiteful bullies seem to resent those of us who are happy with our lives and will use any excuse to attack us. In my opinion, being forever hostile is extremely dangerous because it threatens the chances our children have at happiness. Remember, anger is poison.

Our children are born innocent. They are our most precious gifts. It's our responsibility to mold them during their early years. It's our duty to help our children grow up in such a way that they are not infected with the poisoned mentality of victimhood. The brutal cycle can be broken.

Sometimes I am accused of being weak, conquered or assimilated because I am happy. What a fallacy! I don't know about the rest of you but I choose to be a happy Indian. It is my personal choice. True happiness will escape you when you were full of anger.

Indian people suffer hardship. Our ancestors died at the hands of the oppressors. I understand our collective history. Still, I make a choice every day to make a better life. Where is it written that just because I am Lakota I have to stay enraged my entire life?

Many Lakota people have found true happiness by embracing our own way of life. We walk a difficult path. Many sacrifice themselves every year for the people and pray at our Lakota altar in much the same way our ancestors prayed. We cry tears of sincerity in asking for a better life for our young people.

Still, we are attacked by hostile Internet Indians who will revel in their miserable wrath. They are acting as cowards when they bully their own people with social networking posts. I do not want my grandchildren to learn how to be scornful Internet cowards. Do you?

Wakan Tanka, Tunkasila and God can see into our hearts. I want them to see my heart as pure, not black with rage. Monitor your thoughts for they become your actions.