

MC: Your adult children seem to share your fondness for humanitarianism and travelling. But were there ever times during their adolescence that you had to teach them important lessons about anti-hate?

JH: Well, I tried to bring them up in a non-judgmental way. I hitchhiked with my son when he was two years old through most major Black ghettos in the United States. At that time, I had already learned that racism in American white kids starts very early, and then it stays with them forever. They sit with their parents in the car, and when they drive close to a Black neighbourhood they hear the door locks. That's the first time their parents give them the message "Stay away from those people" without ever saying a negative word about Black people. Those are messages that white children receive so early, which scars them for life with fear patterns. Since I knew that lasting messages come real early – before you're three – I tried to give my son a reverse oppression by living with people in the ghettos, and he loved it. They had never seen a white child in their neighbourhoods and spoiled him with cookies, ice cream, love and affection. Somehow, ever since, he has always associated Black people with love and affection. That has lasted with him for years and years. He's travelled all over the world. Through all of Africa, and some of the most violent places in the world, because he was prepared since childhood for a life with adventures like this. My daughter, who is a psychologist, travelled alone to the most dangerous parts of Africa, for example, helping former child soldiers in Somalia with their deep traumas. She had to have a bulletproof jacket and twelve machine gun armed soldiers with her everywhere, because the Al Shabaab (a jihadist fundamentalist group from East Africa) constantly tried to kidnap her.

MC: How does your theory on raising children not to be racist apply to prejudiced adults who were never raised this way? Does this mean that they cannot be changed?

JH: No! We must never give up on anybody. I would love to try it out on Trump (laughs) just as I have brought countless of my students with me to my ghetto friends. We must never give up on anybody.

MC: Do you think you could change someone as powerful as a former US President like Donald Trump?

JH: When it comes to people in power, who knows that their power comes from dehumanizing others, I of course can't take that power away. But it's easy to deal with people like members of the Ku Klux Klan because they are totally powerless and they had nothing to begin with, so they are the easiest people to change – far easier than American students.

MC: What about someone who had power within the KKK, like Jeff Berry, the former leader of the American

Knights of the KKK? You talk about your experience in filming a documentary with him in your upcoming book, *Roots of Oppression*, right?

JH: Yeah, he definitely changed. He didn't have power, he just had futile power amongst his small group of powerless 'poor white trash' followers. That's why people should read the stories I wrote about him, because he definitely changed. I took him around to meet my Black friends, and they were forgiving and loving, saying things like "It doesn't matter if you bring a Ku Klux Klan leader here, we believe in Christian love." And they changed him. Black people changed him, not me.

MC: As someone who was raised in the church, what's your take on the social tension amongst the Christians and Muslims in various parts of the world where you have travelled to?

JH: When I hitchhiked around Africa, I saw no problems between Muslims and Christians. Even in most of the Arab countries, they had lived peacefully for generations. And in Syria and Egypt, I photographed how churches and mosques were standing right next to each other. It had always been like this. Even the synagogues were still there. All of this tension has nothing to do with Muslims or Christians. It has to do with a deeper insecurity and fear all over the world which local power-hungry demagogues has blown up into hatred against other groups. Even in Indonesia, where the Christians and Muslims have always lived next to each other. This is a worldwide pattern right now. The world is changing very fast and some politicians use that to stir up hatred, as if to say, "If you can't figure out what is painful in your life... then take it out on your neighbour." So, it's very important not to see it as Muslims vs Christians. It's every religion and ethnic tribes against each other. I saw them live so peacefully together in Uganda back in 2006. The same with homosexuals! Until the American Christian fundamentalists brought their hatred over to Africa and stirred up hatred against homosexuals. Now the indigenous are ready to kill them, but before the arrival of American fundamentalists that sentiment didn't exist. A lot of that comes from the United States, I will say.

MC: Speaking of fundamentalism and the US, after Donald Trump lost the presidential election, he accused the Democrats of fraud. Since then, the tension between Democrats and Republicans has practically turned into hatred. Do you think the country is about to endure a vicious cycle of one-upmanship and political gamesmanship between the Democrats and Republicans for many years to come?

JH: No, I think it will die out again all of a sudden. We saw something similar in the 1930s here in Europe with the Nazis and fascism. It died out after their defeat.

Hopefully, it will not get to that this time... I'm amazed by the hatred between Democrats and Republicans. When I made *American Pictures*, I actually portrayed the country during its best and most equal years ever. Even among Black people and whites there was greater equality then. Then President Reagan came, with his use of coded racism and tax relief for the rich and so on. Since then, the gap between the rich and poor has widened tremendously. It started with Reagan, mostly. At that time, the entire congress wanted to boycott South Africa because of Apartheid, but Reagan didn't want to. Democrats and Republicans joined forces against their Republican president. They could work together. Similar to the way they joined forces to investigate Nixon during Watergate. And that way, they would reach consensus. I read in The New York Times that the Democrats and Republicans now live more segregated from one another than ever before. I have for years seen Republicans suppress the Black people vote in so many ways, like by denying it to prisoners and ex-convicts. My Black partner Tony Harris whom I stood on stage with for years at universities, and who was cultivated and a hero everywhere, voted for the first time in Atlanta, Georgia, this past year, 72 years old. That was the first time he cast a ballot in his life because he lost his vote due to some small crime during his youth. In Florida, one and a half million Democratic votes are lost because of voter suppression. I've seen it since the 1990s and the Reagan administration: Republicans constantly trying to take the vote away from Blacks and poor people. So, it's ironic that now they're convinced that their vote is being taken away, when they have stolen the vote from Black people for years. It looks like Jim Crow laws are back today.

MC: Let's talk about the social impact of the new presidential term. Kamala Harris, who is a person of Asian and African American descent, recently became the country's first female Vice President. Do you think that the Biden-Harris administration will bring about more gender and racial equality throughout the world?

JH: Just like Obama, it's a very powerful message to send to the world. That we stand for a multi-cultural America when the rest of the world is going the opposite way. But Kamala Harris comes after an incredible amount of hatred from Trump. So, this time, it's much more difficult to convince the world that the US is on a better track. I really love Biden for doing all of this, and I also want him to give more money to poor communities and improve the infrastructure in the areas that the Democrats have lost – places like West Virginia and Ohio. Due to globalisation, their work has gone to countries overseas. Yes, I want to see him invest in white workers, because the irony is that Republicans have today become the labour party, which also means that they have to diversify. They can't just offer tax relief for the rich because that would cause anger from the rest of their voters.

MC: When it comes to your career, instead of activism and philanthropy, did you ever consider running for a political position?

JH: No, I don't have the ability for that.

MC: Why not?

JH: There was a Danish newspaper that came up with that idea one time, and my children laughed (laughs). They said, "Jacob in politics? No way!" I know I've influenced many people with my slide shows and workshops at universities, and those people sit in power today. Many of them still contact me. These are people in high government positions and even Wall Street. But I don't want to give up the ideals that I learned during the making of *American Pictures*. How can I work for the Blacks community, the poor, etc.? Because that was my idea at the time, especially working a lot with the Ivy League schools, where many of the presidents come from. That has been my job over the years. Showing a way for people help them to become more responsible without hurting others. We need more responsible politicians that don't sell out the beliefs they had in their youth.

MC: Let's shift gears for a minute here and talk about your work as a writer. At what point during your journey throughout the United States did you know you were creating a book called *American Pictures*?

JH: When I hitchhiked all around, I made these little picture books to show the drivers what I had seen, and I could see how strongly they reacted to them. A lot of people suggested the idea that I should write a book, so that's how I got the idea. But I wanted to make a slide show first because I had thousands of pictures. So, during the last two years of my six-year travel, I knew I was working on some kind of a project. I just didn't know where it would take itself. I made a slide show when I came home. It was such a success all over Denmark and many other countries in Europe that a few months later, a Danish publishing house came to me saying that they wanted to turn the slide show into a book. But I was so busy doing lectures that I didn't have the time to write a book. I didn't even know how to write a book! So, what I did was to use the text to my slide shows and called that a book. The publishing house designed it and set it up. I never made a book, they did. I've never made a book in my life. I wouldn't know how to do it. The museums exhibiting my photos have also made some catalogues.

MC: What was your relationship like with your publisher at time?

JH: The Danish one? Fantastic, until a week after they published *American Pictures*, because I learned that the KGB wanted to use the book to counter President