

# Tales From Cape Town,

## 2016, #1

Greetings, dear friends. And welcome to my initial peek into the world of Cape Town and this year's adventure.

I was fascinated with the way that people sensed my initial level of gullibility:

When I arrived at the Johannesburg airport, without having slept much for about two days, i.e. looking very raw and green, many young men wanted to “help” me with my bags, and answer my questions. They then demand large sums of money for the service. I got scammed four times during my first few hours in South Africa, as if I had a bulls-eye painted on my forehead.

Another young man stopped me on the street with a sing-songy “HI!”, and told me a sad immigrant's story. Being sleepless and boundary-less, I gave him one hundred rand, (\$7). It was the smallest bill I had, and I didn't really know how much it was worth. But I looked him in the eye and said,

*If you're not telling me the truth, it is your problem.*

He looked extremely uncomfortable for a moment, and then recovered, nodding.



Next, the taxi driver over-charged me and I gave him a tip on top of it. He, too, became uncomfortable and asked me, dubiously,

*Are you sure you want to do this?*

His humanity was peeking through the veil...I had exceeded his boundary of Gamesmanship for ripping off tourists.

Looking back on my stupidity, I cringe....not so much because of the twenty-ish dollars lost, but because I rewarded those scammers; and so they will continue searching for dumb tourists to prey on.



I finally arrived, gratefully, at my Airbnb dwelling, a small home with a bright and airy guest room. My hostess, a delightful young woman named Avril, gave me a quick lesson in using the four keys to unlock the three serious iron and wooden gates into her small house, before she left.

Second Cape Town lesson learned:  
security is a very serious matter here.

I was also warned not to walk alone at night.

However, I wasn't enjoying the feeling of being trapped in the house. So, I set off on an adventure to find a nice restaurant, at 6 p.m., in the next precinct, called Woodstock. I have a simple "tuning" device, a pendulum, which I consult, to know if my ideas are savory or not. I realize that this is foreign, and perhaps not

confidence-inspiring for some of you readers...But that's why I'm writing these Tales and you're at home reading them : )

Walking home from my supper, which was a fabulous butternut/beet/feta salad, that first night, I decided to check out a cute-looking hostel, called the Green Elephant, on my way home.

I was searching for a cheaper place to stay, beyond my Airbnb reservation. A young man there, Mbeki, showed me all around, and we began to talk....about life. After fifteen minutes, Mbeki said,

*You need to meet my friend. He lives nearby.*

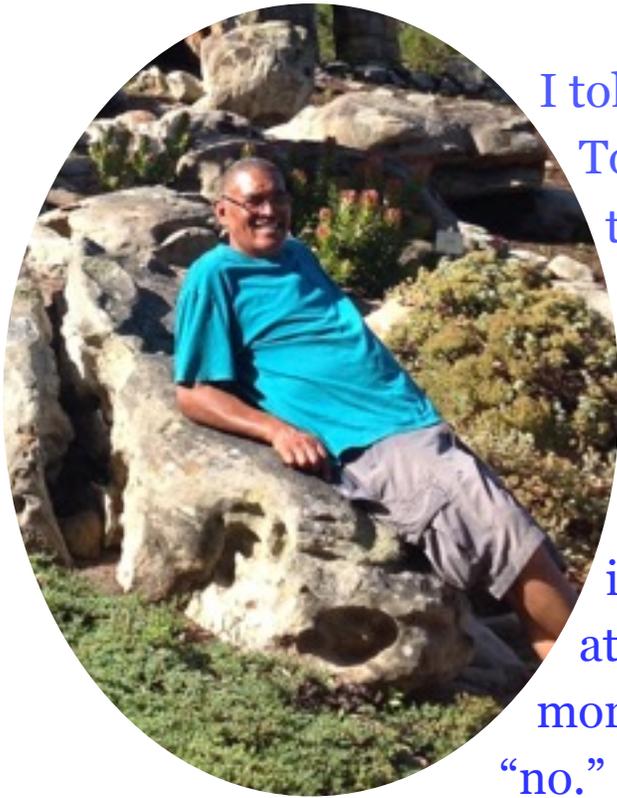
Something about the warm breezy air and Mbeki's face caused me to feel completely secure with him. So we walked a few blocks to meet his friend.

Thus began my deeper journey, here in Cape Town: Fakier (fah-keer'), opened the door immediately, and we recognized us, upon this initial encounter. He said, within minutes,

*So, you practice meditation, and other arts.*

It wasn't a question.

Mbeki explained to me that he (Mbeki) had been a neighborhood security guard a few months before, and had met Fakir on the street one night. In their conversation, Fakier convinced him to change jobs and return to school for an education. And these new developments were, in fact, happening, as a result. That's how I met Mbeki, at his new job in the Green Elephant.



I told Fakir of my reason for being in Cape Town: to do service work with traumatized children and families, and told him

*My teacher sent me here.*

Fakir just nodded, smiling, and invited me to come meditate with him at the Spiritualist church the next morning. Checking my pendulum, I got a “no.” He next volunteered,

*I need to show you several places around here. Table Mountain is very sacred, and the tip of Cape Town, as well. We can drive around tomorrow in the afternoon, if you want. Oh, and you can stay here at my place....And let me ponder your quest about the place to do service. We'll find exactly the right place.*

I didn't doubt that.

Thus ended my first day in Cape Town.

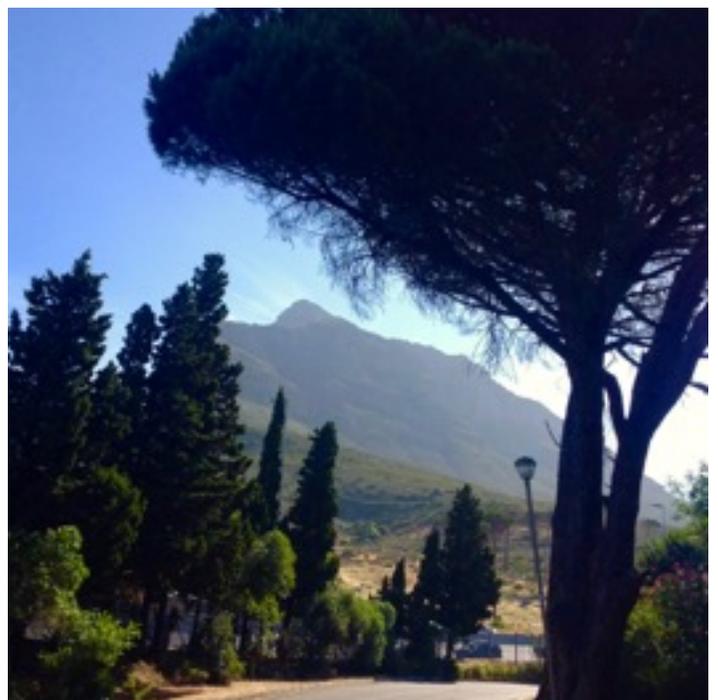
In the mornings, Fakier does foot massage at a community clinic for diabetics. In the afternoon, we drove to a fancy mall downtown to

get a simcard for my iPad. We had to go twice, because I forgot to bring my passport the first time. Fakier seemed more comfortable than I, in the mall. I tend to have a gag reflex when confronted with “uber-privilege”... related, no doubt, to my own conflicted suburban childhood of privilege, in Chevy Chase.

Then we toured all around the seashore in Fakier’s old car and spiraled up to the top of the city, Lions-head. There are hiking trails leading down the mountain...but I was warned, as always, about hiking anywhere alone...or even allowing my iPad to be seen. Over the next couple of days, we toured the seashore, the heights, the botanical gardens, and I bought a cellphone.

The next day we took the public transport, so I could become more independent. I love these mini-van taxis that blare music and stop anywhere up and down the boulevard, the crazy young men shouting and competing with other mini-taxis to cram the most people inside (though it’s never as over-crowded as in Tanzania). I am far more comfortable in these taxis than in the mall.

The soaring peaks of the Table Mountain Ridge are never far from view. They form the backdrop from nearly every direction and are an ongoing source of inspiration for me.

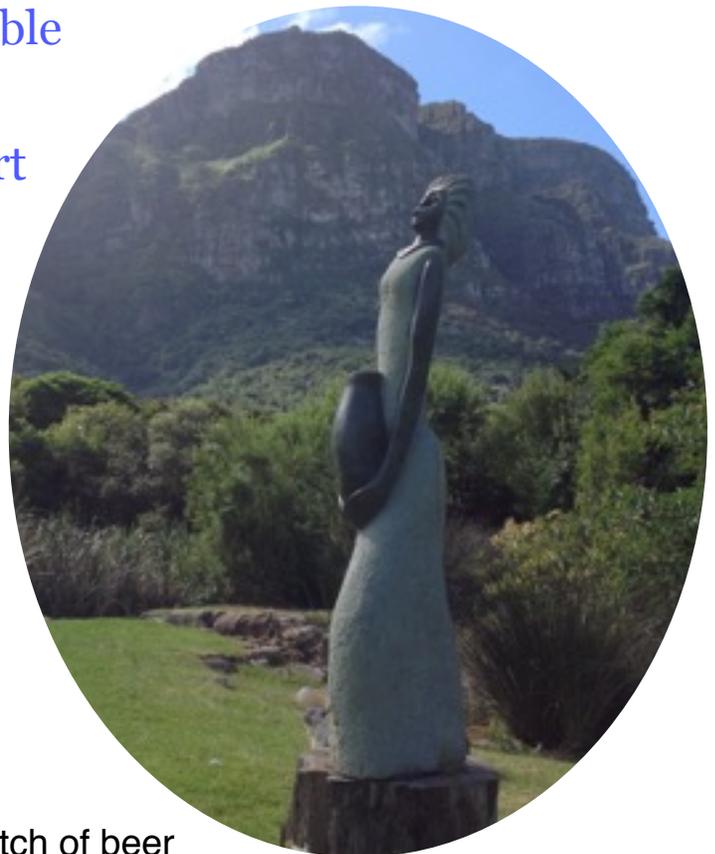


That, and the warm sunny breezes.

As Fakier returned to his daily schedule, I began to travel around on my own, with the MyCiti bus pass and the mini-taxis and LOTS of walking.

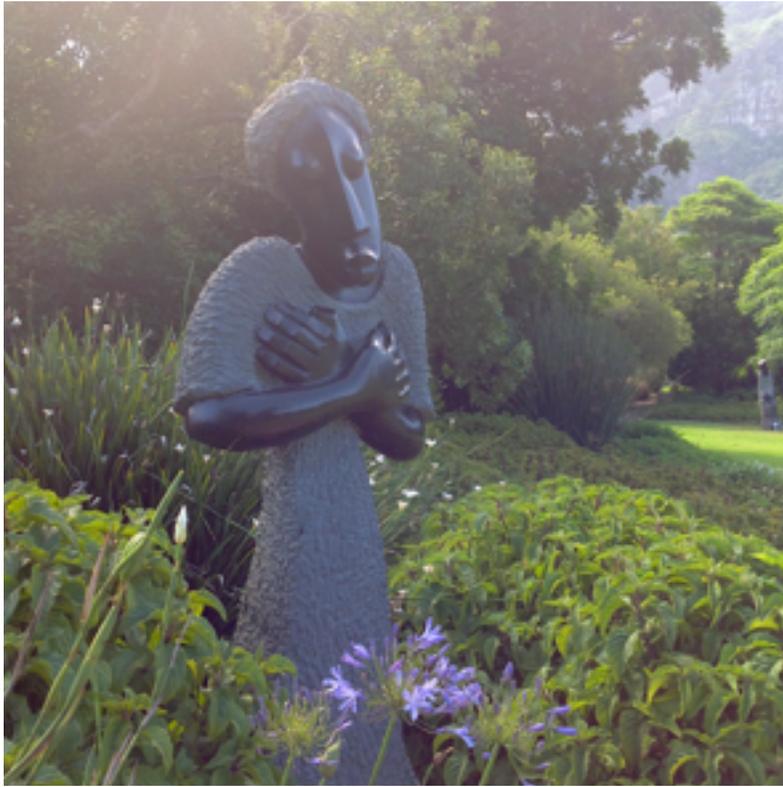
But we had to drive to the incredible Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens, because there is no public transport available, even by taxi. This is one of the subtler ways that apartheid is still maintained in certain areas, though it officially ended in 1994.

The sculpture garden there was the most beautiful I've ever seen. This one is titled:

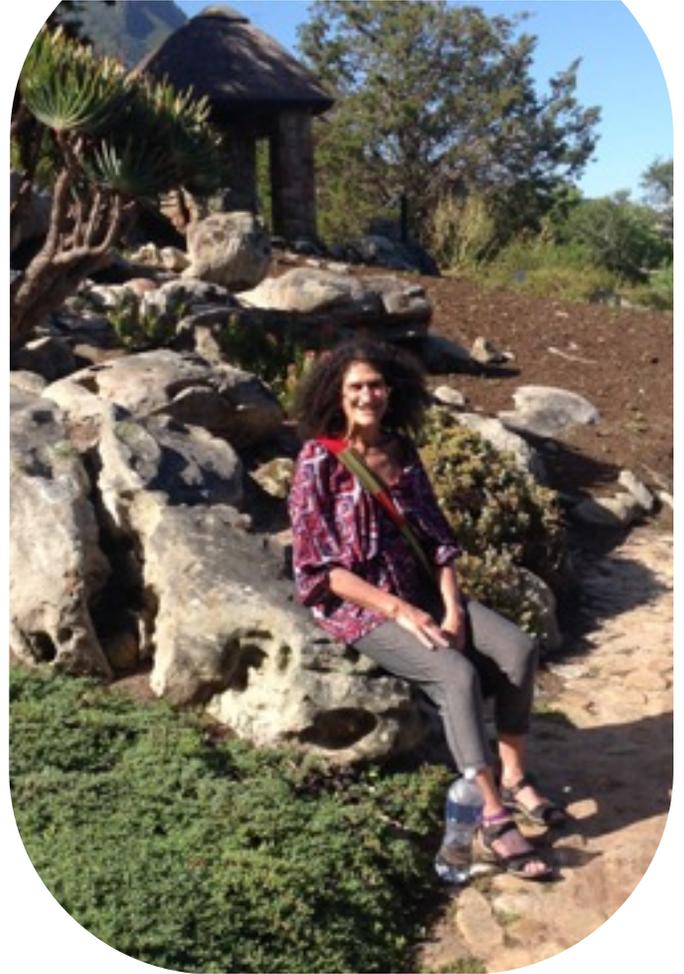


Proud of her new batch of beer

Many fantastic flowers, like the protea, are native to Cape Town. In fact, Cape Town holds its own small niche (well, 7,000 varieties) among the six identified plant kingdoms on the planet. We went to the sniffing gardens, the Garden of Extinction, the sculpture garden, and a few other parts. Kirstenbosch is far too big to visit in just one day.



Bringing Condolences



The predecessor to the pineapple plant is in the Garden of Extinction

I took a cable car to the top of Table Mountain National Park, with its spectacular vistas, flowers and animals.

And yet another afternoon was spent in the aquarium, downtown..



Table Rock Mountain Cable Car



They had a large impressive exhibit devoted to the effect of plastic garbage in our oceans, floating islands the size of France!

In fact, there seems to be a more advanced consciousness about re-cycling in general.

This huge five-foot Moray eel was fashionably attired, inside and out!

And perhaps more public awareness about GMO's, free-range eggs, gluten-free food...issues that are still relatively marginalized in the States.

Meanwhile, Fakier shared many tales from his childhood and earlier life, transporting me into the reality of being a gay and coloured man during apartheid. “Coloured” is the phrase meaning: of mixed racial origins.



In the 60’s, Fakier met the love of his life: a wealthy white man from the corporate world. They lived together in a posh seaside condominium, totally restricted to blacks and coloureds. As Fakier said,

*He had to smuggle me in.*

They pretended that Fakier was the gardener, for years. Neither family had a clue...or at least pretended that they didn’t. Fakier’s lover had to legally register any employee on his premises in a government document, every month. For decades. They could never, by law, touch or be affectionate in public . His partner would have also lost his job as a corporate director. Their secret remained steadfast even after apartheid ended, until the lover died suddenly of a heart attack, in the late 90’s.

Since apartheid ended, the violence and crime on the streets has become legendary, as hungry people from the countryside flood into the cities. I can palpably feel it in the air ...though there is simultaneously a strong stream of loving-kindness running like a river between me and the eyes of so many passers-by.

I found a public ATM machine that seemed relatively safe yesterday, used it, and told Fakier last night. He replied,

*Oh, two different tourists were killed right there this year...shot dead, for their money.*

Fakier's sister doesn't want him to come visit her any more, since her son (age 19) was killed in a hold-up several months ago.

After a week of "awaiting further instructions" about my purpose in Cape Town, I found that I had reached my T.P.Q. (Tourist Pleasure Quotient).

And I began to nurture a little "Stupid Attack.": What if nothing comes up? What if Spirit just dumps me here, in this expensive city soon to be gorged with tsunami-level crowds of drunken tourists? What will I tell my readers, who are eagerly waiting for the real Tales to begin? Sigh.....How my mind loves to ramble and kvetch, given any opportunity.

Meanwhile, I had moved into Fakier's little spare bedroom, and continued to make wonderful meals for myself, and wrastle with my usual technological confusion. But my meditation deepened and lengthened in conjunction with my levels of anxiety. Thank you, dukkha!



Fakier's wonderful garden, left, and house, on the right

Yesterday morning, Fakier and I finally attended a service at his Church of Spirituality. The sermon synched perfectly with my own beliefs...

Ricardo, a barrel-shaped and thickly mounded chap of Portuguese heritage, delivered the sermon on “The Seven Principles of Spirituality.” I felt right at home. Then, following the Spiritualist Church tradition, he began to perform clairvoyant readings, sending messages to whomever he was “called upon” by Spirit to inform, in the audience. One man got a message from the Spirit side; another in reference to his difficult childhood; another woman was told to return to baking as her form of meditation....Then, the fourth message was sent out to “the American woman.” Ricardo pointed to me and said, with great animism:

*Kids! You're supposed to be working with kids. Does that make sense? You will benefit them tremendously, in untold ways, and you will also receive huge blessings from the experience.*

Ricardo knew nothing about me, literally. I responded:

*Yes, I was sent by my teacher in America to do just that... and I've been looking for a more distinct sign-post all week. How does St. Helena Bay sound, as my location?*

Ricardo paused, listened...then threw his arms open and said,

*YES!! Hell, Yes!!*

So, dear readers, I now have my marching orders. It's the same place that Fakier divined, several days before, though he's never been there himself....

In St. Helena Bay, a little village three hours north, with no transport other than by car, is a small hermitage set aside for developmentally disabled children (Polio, Down's Syndrome, Birth defects) who can't speak and need to be fed.

The founder of the center, Island Home, is a Church of Spirituality practitioner named Jimmy Dunbar. He gave up his vocation as a butcher when he got the message from Spirit to take care of disabled children, one of whom is his own child. I came home and contacted Jimmy on the phone. He responded,

*This is quite timely. There is some dark and negative energy around, that needs dispelling*

(hey, it can't be any darker than last winter, with the evil witch doctors in Tanzania contracting for albino children's body parts.)

So, dear readers...I suspect that Tales #2 will be coming from a little village of St. Helena, about three hour drive to the north. I'm ready to go to work.

Tomorrow!

Bye now, dear friends. Thanks for all your wonderful notes and encouragement.



