

## ENGLISH: *PARADISE ROAD*

### Conflict only has a negative effect on people.

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Conflict is inevitable and as humans it is something we all must encounter. Though there is a polarity of levels of conflicts one undergoes, each play a fundamental role in the development of an individual. Whilst the term 'conflict' itself, is vastly perceived as a burden and something to avoid, its actual impact on an individual varies. Depending on our own strength and the circumstances, conflict may serve a vehicle for growth, and realization of one's remarkable inner strength. It can even force us to re-evaluate our lives and morals. Nonetheless, there are situations in which conflict can belittle us, leaving us consumed in pain and unable to find within ourselves an inner resilience. Consequently such conflict can also leave us more damaged than before.

Picasso's infamous 1937 painting 'The Weeping Woman', depicts a young woman distraught after witnessing the bombing of Guernica in Spain. It is centered on the internal aspects of conflict, the negative ways in which they can contort one's sanity. The use of acid green and purple, suggests the gloomy the rigid nature of the conflict faced by the woman. Her wide-eyed stare and gaping mouth reveal a sense of exasperation and desolation at the treacherous nature of humanity that she has just witnessed. The woman appears consumed by this sense of distress, revealing how conflict can engulf an individual and leave them inconsolable. Further the use of a dark grey background and black doorway creates a sense of isolation and the door is symbolic of a pathway to 'doom'. This reiterates the sense that internal conflict can shatter individuals, leaving them battling difficult emotions. However, the use the front and side portrait view creates a sense of duality, in that each individual responds to conflict in a different way, and that there are many stages to this response.

Analogously, the terror of conflict becomes too difficult for some people to sustain and in turn affects them negatively. Bruce Beresford's Paradise Road, explores this impact of conflict. In the film, some of the women in the camp are unable to withstand the horrific environment and thus consequently harbour a sense of hopelessness. They are convinced they will die in the camp, with no chance of survival. This is especially evident in Mrs Tippler, who believes the vocal orchestra doesn't "give a damn about...the whole camp". She is unconvinced of the benefits of the choir and prefers to isolate herself from it. This proves to be her demise, as without that support system the POW camp becomes unbearable as she eventually consumes poisonous snails knowingly, leading to her death. Mrs Tippler's fear engulfs her and is evidently a negative effect of conflict. Likewise, Rosemary Leighton Jones notability one of the film's most optimistic characters is inconsolable after she witnesses her husband's capture by the Japanese for attempted escape. She transforms from believing that the Japanese were "not going to win - we'll win" to becoming despondent, convinced that "none of [them] would ever leave Sumatra". Rosemary's demise reveals how conflict can change an individual for the worse.

However in midst of conflict, some individuals can undergo a positive metamorphosis or conflict can act as catalyst to reveal inner strengths. Such a display of strength in the face of conflict is evident in the experiences of Immaculeelibagiza. She was a Tutsi woman who faced the threat of persecution, by the Hutu tribe during the 1994 Rwandan genocide. Imaculee was forced to hide in the three by four foot bathroom of her neighbour, along with eight other women for a staggering 91 days, in order to survive. She sought strength through faith and prayer, and this shielded her from growing insane and hopeless. Imaculee believes that "if [she] had no faith in god [she doesn't] think she would be here today". Despite the comprising living conditions and fear she harboured, Imaculee's conflict reminded her of her faith, and allowed her to uncover perseverance. If not for the conflict, she may have never known the resilience she was able to harness.

A similar display of courage and tenacity is evident in Bruce Beresford's Paradise Road. Conflict allowed particular women to re-asses their stance of society and their perceptions of themselves. In particular Susan McCarthy, a young Australian nurse finds an inner courage that liberates her. In response to the harsh lifestyle she is longer a "shy little thing from nursing school", but a young

woman determined to seek justice. This strength provides her with the mental stability to overcome her horrific torture; where she is forced to kneel under the hot sun for 20 hours, surrounded by sharp spears of metal. The perseverance she has built through conflict is essentially what saves her. Likewise, Adrienne Pargiter the conductor of the vocal orchestra shows great strength in her willingness to conduct and advocate an activity, which some prisoners saw as frivolous. She realises that she must become a beacon of sanity and that the vocal orchestra “is worth risking” in order to allow the survival of the women in the POW camp. Adrienne learns the pointless nature of class structure, develops friendships and gains tenacity through her time in the camp. Her priorities and morals are altered for the better due to the oppressive environment and they consequently leave her a more holistic individual.

Conflict in all its entirety is a part of our journey through life. It is something we all will face and we all must learn to accept. Through we may not necessarily be able to control the conflicts we meet with, it is essential that we understand that we control the outcome, and the impact of the conflict on ourselves; be this negative or positive. In the words of William Ellery Channing “The human spirit is to grow strong through conflict”.