

► Opinion



The graphic features the 7D NEWS OPINION logo on the left. On the right, there is a portrait of Tony Broadbent, an older man with white hair, wearing a dark suit and white shirt. Below the portrait is a blue box with white text: "Tony Broadbent" followed by "Award-winning author, writer, speaker, brand-strategist, and Beatles expert." At the bottom of the graphic, the article title "The Rumpelstiltskin Reversal: The Jacinda Arden Chronicles - Part 1" is displayed in white text. A small orange navigation icon with left and right arrows is in the bottom right corner.

THE RUMPELSTILTSKIN REVERSAL: THE JACINDA ARDERN CHRONICLES - PART 1

World Politics | Tony Broadbent | Thu, 4 Apr 2019

The horrors so pervasive in children's fairy tales and the fierce emotions they trigger have long proved the hidden catalysts to a greater understanding of the human condition in all its many guises. Offering lessons that once learned tend to stay with us for life.

Yet the recent horrific massacre of fifty Muslims, at prayer, on Friday 15 March, at two mosques, in Christchurch, New Zealand, that will haunt the lives of countless people, of all races and religions, forever after, weren't events out of fairy tale or the latest film fantasy equivalent, they were all too real. More's the pity and the horror.

Reason enough for any right thinking, by which I mean sane, human being to not simply applaud New Zealand's Prime Minister, Jacinda Ardern's response to events, but to take from her as many lessons as might be had.

For a start, in the immediate aftermath of the massacre, she embraced New Zealand's Muslim community without hesitation. "Many of those affected will be members of our migrant communities...New Zealand is their home...they are us," she said. Setting the tone for the entire country's response by naming the incident a terrorist attack and insisting that everyone reject violent extremism in all its forms. And, in doing so, she provided a scaffolding to help a nation hold together in its time of grief.

Even the simple act of her wearing a black headscarf was a signal mark of dignified respect. Showing a shared grief. Hopefully, providing, too, some small measure of comfort to the families of the victims. An extraordinary gesture, in itself, given that, these days, Muslim women's headgear can all too easily provoke an adverse reaction in many parts of the world.

Later, speaking in New Zealand's Parliament, Prime Minister Ardern told grieving families, "We cannot know your grief, but we can walk with you at every stage." And then she resolutely broke with past norms, by refusing then or at any time in the future to utter the name of the suspected killer. "He may have sought notoriety," she said. "But we in New Zealand will give him nothing. Not even his name." And then she implored others; whether man, woman, or media; to "speak the names of those who were lost, rather than name of the man who took them."

The "white supremacist" perpetrator of the Christchurch horror; the he-who-shall-not-be-named shooter; had the names of other infamous killers responsible for similar bloody atrocities, around the world, painted all over his weapons, equipment, and clothing. The sought after notoriety from the blanket media coverage bound to follow his cowardly act of carnage, an obvious prime motivator in the planning and execution of his atrocity. Mercifully, the Prime Minister scrubbed the world clean of those names, too. Then she made moves to ban automatic weapons in her country.

Life lessons, indeed, for by instinctively doing what's she's done; by being innately who she is; without reverting to political calculation or 'opinion-poll' shaped guile; being guided after the attack by nothing more than sincere, honest, and heartfelt emotion and good sense, Jacinda Ardern has offered precious lessons for any world leader who might deign to look and listen and, "inshallah" or "God-willing," might even choose to learn from.

And, in doing so, she moved her ministerial, some might say magisterial influence far beyond the borders of the numerous Antipodean islands she currently presides over. And in the process has set the world a new 'North Star' and proven herself, in every which way, 'The People's Prime Minister.'

Little wonder, then, that there's been all but universal acclaim in response to her exemplary actions since the massacre. With even the Editorial Board of the mighty New York Times being so moved as to print an editorial with the headline: 'America Deserves a Leader as Good as Jacinda Ardern.' News most assuredly 'Fit to Print' in my humble opinion. As, too, were the astute and insightful Opinion pieces on the Christchurch massacre by my esteemed 7DNews colleagues: Chris Doyle and David Robert Powell.

In story, myth, and legend when you know the true name of something; person or object; animal, vegetable, or mineral; beast, dragon or serpent; and can utter its name in full; you are granted power over it. And so it follows: For every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction. That if you take away the given name of some entity or other, you render it powerless; consigning it into nothingness; voiding it for eternity.

When Jacinda Ardern said of the Christchurch assailant: "He will, when I speak, be nameless," she uttered true words of power. Words that not only did much to help a nation begin to heal, but also helped assuage much of the world's shock and horror, too.

But Jacinda Arden didn't stop with that.

One week, to the day, after the massacre, she initiated the broadcasting of the Muslim call to prayer over New Zealand state radio and called for a nationwide two-minute silence in respect of the dead.

And last Friday, two weeks, to the day, after the massacre, she delivered another very compelling speech, at a service in remembrance of the victims, close to where one of the mosques was attacked. This time offering a message of hope and resilience: “The world has been stuck in a vicious cycle of extremism breeding extremism and it must end,” she said. “We cannot confront these issues alone...none of us can. But the answer to them lies in a simple concept that is not bound by domestic borders, that isn’t based on ethnicity, power base or even forms of governance. The answer lies in our humanity.”

Again, all and everything that Jacinda Ardern has done, utterly exemplary in word, tone, and deed.

Fairy tales, myths, legends, and folk tales echo down through the ages because of the luminous deeds or edifying wisdom they seek to celebrate: some born of the bold and valiant acts of heroes and heroines; other tales born of an individual’s or a group’s resilience in the face of certain disaster and death; yet all and everything intended to help teach us how to live.

The chronicles of the words and deeds of Jacinda Ardern may have only just begun to be written, but they have already proven more than worthy of being counted among the tales we should tell our children. And those tales we should tell ourselves, too, if only we have the humility and wit to do so.

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