

Sitting with a Broken-Open Heart

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Report: Sitting for Peace on Sunday, August 2, 2015

When human beings can sit “at peace” with their own uncomfortable thoughts, images, feelings, and sensations, we will also be able to better understand and eventually welcome the differences we see in others. Bringing love to suffering will include loving actions. Recognizing that it is always “hurt people that hurt people” goes a long way toward helping us separate the actor from the action. Certain actions need to be banished from human behavior yet human beings, in themselves, need redemption not banishment.

Sitting all day, (four, 2.5 hour periods of sitting and walking meditation) is both challenging and fulfilling. Some periods fly by with lightness and joy, some inch along very, very slowly. Of course the point of the day is not personal enjoyment or entering an extraordinary state of consciousness. Rather, the intention is to recognize that the sources of dis-ease and violence within myself and the greater world are one and the same.

Sitting with all that arises in mind and body, eyes wide open to the great injustices on this planet AND finding

that **uncomfortable, broken-hearted peace that comes through acceptance of “what is” is the practice.**

How can one be at peace with social injustice and a broken heart? I don't know. Yet I know it is essential. By “at peace” I do not mean that one is resting joyfully or without pain. I mean something like not adding to the hatred while returning to presence by grounding in the present moment and consciously acknowledging the various forms in which suffering arises.

Meditation Day

At the beginning of each quarter of the day, I offer a subject for our focus.

6:00

We start the day at 6:00 am. No words, rather we hold an intention to include the inner and outer world in our field of awareness. Sitting with whatever arises in body and mind is our task. Through simple, whole-hearted acknowledgment of each inner voice, we attempt to neutralize any mind states of conflict. We become the place of peace. This peace does not always feel wonderful, rather it is accepting, awake and aware.

9:00

At 9:00am, we focus on violence that is created through racial identity. Since many anthropologists do not even see the validity of a category called race, maybe we can more accurately say the violence that is perpetrated due to varying skin colors. Said that way, it seems even more absurd.

I suppose in our genes, connected to our tribal history, are strong forces of “us and them”, with all of “them” being dangerous and of differing worth. Clearly, humanity will not be at peace until this confusion about skin color, tribes, and “us and them” is eliminated. A festering wound lives around our planet and is reaching a new boiling point in the United States. If Abraham Lincoln and the Civil War was the first wave of healing and Martin Luther King and the Civil Rights movement the second wave, then we are in the third wave of exhuming this obscene body of hatred from its shallow grave.

12:00

At the 12:00 pm meditation cycle, we focus on gender violence in all its forms. Its most obvious and pernicious version remains alarmingly, unbelievably prevalent in our world today. Women and children throughout our precious planet are, right now, being raped and brutalized. While violence is often expressed sexually, it is important to see that this is a subset of all desire to dominate. The

“negative masculine” (often, but not always in the form of men) seeks DOMINATION. It is a hungry beast eating voraciously in a desperate attempt not to experience its own inner pain.

This can be seen in our relations to other people, animals and the earth itself. When we destroy the rain forest or the oceans without thought for the future, the same kind of domination that creates sexual slavery is at work.

3:00

At 3:00pm our focus shifts to violence in the name of belief. While this is often religious in nature, it actually includes any belief that seeks to justify violence toward others. We will not find peace on this planet until enough people can stand clearly and firmly for their values without “killing” the other. In my picture this killing can be in word or deed. Although there are clear, gross versions of this all over our planet, from Syria to Tibet, I want to include the more subtle expressions in our own minds and hearts. We need to learn to argue and disagree passionately but with respect, while listening deeply to the pain and needs living in the other.

- How do I use my voice or my logic to kill?
- When do I confuse cleverness with wisdom?

- When do I turn my values into a hammer in which I metaphorically beat others?

- Can we disagree without hatred?

These are questions for true peacemakers.

Gautama Buddha spoke of three poisons: greed, hatred and ignorance.

Greed is the unbridled, all-consuming state: “I want and I take”.

Hatred is the all-consuming passion: “I will destroy you, you are nothing”.

Ignorance is the “inability to open our hearts, minds and eyes to others and experience our interconnectivity with all of life”.

May we all continue to work to clarify our internal voices, confusions and sufferings as we also engage in actions toward social justice in the healing of our shared world.

Peace is our calling, our deep need. May we all work together in creating a planet in which greed, hatred and ignorance can be healed as we become truly humane and loving beings. I believe we can choose this as our collective destiny.