

PART 2 – Reflections on Meditations for World Peace and Social Justice – THE DEDICATIONS Russell Delman January 2017

In Part 1 of this writing about the all-day Meditation for World Peace and Social Justice, I focused on the structure of the day, the general intention, and some of my learning. In this writing, I will focus on the Dedications that are read each hour and their deeper meaning for me.

Vision

An enlightened vision for humanity – whether from the East, with images of liberation from suffering or from the West, with a democratic image of equal rights for all – implies social structures that support the realization of these potentialities. While human ideals cannot be bestowed by a society, clearly certain forms of injustice create roadblocks for many people.

The following dedications are inspired by a vision of a world in which these roadblocks are absent, not primarily through laws, but because of a transformation in consciousness that will make these forms of violence unthinkable. This is a world in which LOVE would be the guiding principle. You and I can start holding this vision NOW as a template for the future human being. Moving from an us/them, dominate or be dominated mentality IS the current living edge for the evolution of our species. The very survival of life as we know it is likely dependent on this radical shift.

Each of the Dedications invites us to focus on a particular domain of Social Justice. To fulfill the idealistic picture of ALL life being valued, this kind of specificity is required. Importantly, we acknowledge that each of these discriminations arises from the same DOMINATION mindset. The greatest blind spot of perpetrators is not seeing the gilded cage they create for themselves. How obvious, yet rarely seen that *pain and limitation inflicted on another has the same effect on oneself.*

Oppression of others in any form comes from a superior/inferior, us/them paradigm. Acknowledging this impulse in ourselves and in our cultures is an important step. As a white, male, heterosexual, upper middle class, able-bodied, American, I am implicitly part of a dominator culture. The privileges that arise from that culture create a responsibility for me to both identify and change the prejudice that sustains the inequitable situations in my world. One important intention of the all-day sittings is to shine a light on these

matters. *The overall and greatest goal is to grow our capacity for Love and Freedom.*

Dedications

Each dedication is the focus of one hour of meditation (50 minutes sitting and 10 minutes walking).

6:00am–7:00 – **All suffering connected to homelessness – May all people find safe homes.** When I say these words, I see refugees around the world, particularly parents. I notice that children usually adapt remarkably well to their circumstances, their caregivers tend to suffer most. I also pray that people living on the streets throughout the world can be safe, warm and seen. This reading ends with: **we are envisioning a world in which safe, warm homes are universal.**

7:00-8:00 – **All suffering connected to racial discrimination – May people of all races be treated equitably and value each other.** It astounds me that throughout our world, people are still judged by the color of their skin. This is truly unfathomable. I can imagine a time when people will look at this fact with utter disbelief. As a member of the currently dominant racial category, I acknowledge the privilege that comes through white supremacy and the many benefits that have come from the color of my skin. This reading ends with: **we are envisioning a world in which people of all skin colors are equally respected and valued.**

8:00-9:00 – **All suffering connected to sexual violence and sexual identity – May the boundaries of each person’s body and their individuality be universally respected.** I am astounded that *almost everyday* I read a story of a culture or country in which sexual violence is commonplace. When I read this dedication, various people who have shared their stories of abuse flash to my mind and heart. Although women and girls have suffered most, it is now becoming more known that boys and men experience sexual violence in shocking frequency. That our bodily boundaries are respected seems an obvious necessary step for human evolution.

From a larger view, this respect includes more than the acts of sexual violence but also all ways in which people are not granted autonomy and agency in their physical bodies. Narrow societal images of beauty, gender binary, stronger bodies controlling weaker bodies, all fit into this domination

picture. This reading ends with: **we are envisioning a world in which transgression of another person's body is unimaginable.**

9:00-10:00 – **All suffering connected to religious intolerance – May all faiths be honored.** How can the name of God, or whatever one calls the highest and deepest, be used to justify violence? Yet, this has been a dominant theme in our world history. In addition, religious people often hold atheists in contempt and *vice versa*. As humanity evolves, we will no longer feel threatened when disparate views of the divine are expressed. In the future, people will look back on the intolerance in our world as a dark age of human thought. This reading ends with: **we are envisioning a world in which the acceptance of all faiths is unquestionably assumed.**

11:00-1:00 PAUSE

1:00pm-2:00 **All suffering connected to economic and class violence – May all people be paid a fair and just wage and be valued for the work that they do.** When I read this dedication, I imagine people, particularly parents, working hard and still not being able to meet their basic needs. I also think of people who cannot find work or are laboring in disrespectful or abusive environments. It seems obvious to me that in a just society, people dedicating their labors to constructive work must, at a minimum, have their basic needs for food, housing, health care, clothing and respect met. People need to be valued for any work that contributes to our collective life. I am not arguing for a particular economic system, I am pointing to a systemic problem. I also acknowledge how classism, with its often-unacknowledged judgments, creates a painful split in humanity. This reading ends with: **we are envisioning a world in which people will be valued with just wages for their work and respected for their contribution to society.**

2:00-3:00 **All suffering connected to ageism – May the young and old be protected, honored and valued in their capacities and differences.** When reading this dedication, images come to me of child soldiers and child laborers who are not allowed to have a real childhood. At the other end of the spectrum, I see elders being treated disrespectfully, without a chance to live out their days with dignity and often treated as if they are valueless. Society benefits when opportunities exist for elders to share their accumulated wisdom. This reading ends with: **we are envisioning a world in which all children can play in freedom and both children and elders are honored and valued.**

3:00-4:00 **All suffering connected to tribal, regional, and nationalistic identities – May the value of each “other” be inviolable.** Our collective history grew out of clans and tribes in which people from other groups were seen as dangerous and could not be trusted- they were “other”. When a cultural identity is central to one’s self-image, violence arises. If being a “Southerner”, a “Hutu”, a “Nazi”, an “American” or, even identifying with a sports team, becomes central to one’s self-identity, aggression often results. While identities held lightly and consciously can be connecting and fulfilling, evolving humans cannot hold these as central to their self-worth. Ending with: **we are envisioning a world in which people will be free from unhelpful and unhealthy group identifications.**

4:00-5:00 **All suffering connected to discrimination against those with mental or physical disabilities* – May all beings be honored in their uniqueness.** Throughout much of my life, I have worked with people who have disabilities when compared to the norm. Invariably, I have discovered that each of these people has an unexpected gift to bring to their families and society. When I read this dedication I think of the people with obvious disabilities that I have known who have brought a unique offering to the world as well as those who been taunted or devalued because of their physical or mental challenges. This reading ends with: **we are envisioning a world in which people are valued for their particularity and in which the social environment supports their participation in life.**

5:00-6:00 **All suffering connected to human caused environmental destruction – May all beings live in healthy environments.** When I speak this out, my thoughts go beyond humans to include all creatures on our planet, as well as the planet itself. Children breathing thick, smoggy air or polar bears floating on small pieces of ice because of human behavior must become a thing of the past. This reading ends with: **we are envisioning a thriving, healthy planet in which human beings deeply consider the body of the earth as sacred.**

In writing these reflections, I am truly dumbfounded that we live in a world that carries all of this injustice and that I am just now learning to bear witness to its many appearances and disguises. Holding the picture of a world full of justice and therefore, *love*, fills me with hope, determination and a subtle kind of joy, within the suffering. For me it is eye opening to acknowledge my complicity in perpetuating the dominance system.

There is a paradoxical irony in connecting social justice, activism and “just sitting”. Shouldn’t activism be, well, more active? I believe that sitting with these visions and sharing them with each other raises and transforms consciousness, as we shine a non-violent light on their roots. I believe that these practices are a drop in the bucket on the road to a more loving world. I hope you will join The Embodied Life School and other groups throughout the year in these “Meditations for World Peace and Social Justice”.

“Never forget that justice is what love looks like in public”

- Cornel West

* I know some people do not like the word disability and prefer the use of the term “other abled”. Although I appreciate the intention, overall I find this language cumbersome and not helpful.