

***“Darkness can not drive out darkness, only Light can do that
Hatred can not drive out hatred, only Love can do that”
(Martin Luther King, “Strength to Love”, 1963)***

Grieving Body, Questioning Mind, Hopeful Heart

Russell Delman June 2020

Graphically witnessing the racist violence perpetuated by people in power brings so much grieving. The undeniable reality of the danger of being black in the United States brings rage and shame. Then, to hear our supposed leader, without an ounce of empathy, calling, for “dominance” over the protesters elicits a shout of “NO, not in my name”. Add to that, the surging of Covid-19 among people of color and in predominantly black and brown countries, there is a sense of collective grief and mourning that is palpable. A world of mutual care can seem so far away.

AND

I sense much hope. We see human beings from all races, gender identities, ages, religions, etc. marching with a passionate and mostly peaceful commitment to social justice, equity and care for all. Amazingly, human beings throughout the world are standing in solidarity together for human rights. In this time of great divisiveness, the sense of oneness is greater than ever.

Could this be a watershed moment or will the magnetic forces of the past call us back into our tribal fears? Each of us will play our part in this process and in determining its influence, through our actions, conversations and intentions.

A few minutes ago, I returned from a peaceful protest in my predominantly white community. More than 1000 sign-carrying, chanting people from this small town and the surrounding area, joined together manifesting a powerfully shared commitment. Hopefully, with dedication, this energy will carry forward and the sense of collective, intentional goodwill will lead to true change in our world.

Personal Observations – Sharing my Inner process

There is such a diversity of energies living in my body:

- *Grief lives as hopeless heaviness in my chest.*
- *Outrage feels leg-stomping hot.*
- *Connectedness uplifts, with forward movement throughout my body.*
- *Love has so much sense of possibility, like bubbles or a geyser.*
- *Shame for my unconscious complicity shrinks my body.*
- *Fear comes in my belly, when I sense divisiveness growing.*
- *Hopefulness sneaks into my chest, behind my heart, right atop the fear.*

To live with all of this and not drown, I have discovered three essential practices:

1) Feeling it ALL in my body, as the sensations are alive at the moment is a key. When not sensed somatically, repetitious thoughts, words and pictures in my mind can easily take over my actual, organismic feelings. The body will tell the story, unadulterated by unhelpful images.

2) Finding the “just right” words, gestures or sounds for the bodily energy of the feelings - often with metaphors or imagery - has profoundly integrating effects. Even with painful feelings, this resonance brings a sense of wholeness and calming. This is the gift of the practice called “Focusing”.

3) Questioning the helpfulness or unhelpfulness of any thought is empowering. I often ask - “does that thought or image add to my capacity for love, connectedness and positive change or does it create hopelessness, hate or negativity”. Enemy images do not serve my intentions. Ordinary human beings like us can take responsibility for which thoughts we choose to water and those we allow pass by.

When my thoughts are throwing gasoline on the fire of my feelings, I need to Pause and really question them. Feeling strong emotions does not mean I cannot question my own unexamined thinking.

Alternatively, without sensing my body, I might protect myself from pain through intellectual, mental distancing. Remaining “above the neck” creates isolation and alienation. This is where returning to the bodily sensations while questioning my thoughts is so helpful. What are my guts saying?

Still I don't know how I would be if my daughter was Breonna Taylor, the EMT shot eight times by police while unarmed in her home.
What if my son was George Floyd, gasping for his last breath?

It seems almost impossible to remember the power of love when the pain gets very personal. Yet people do. I bow to those amazing people, the families and friends of the innocent who have been hurt. They are my teachers.

How can we remember:

The light shines in the darkness and the darkness cannot overcome it.

Love, of course, is the answer. No matter what!

Yet how hard, sometimes...

Failing and trying again, again, and again everyday.

Sending Hopefulness a new sense of hopefulness..... Russell