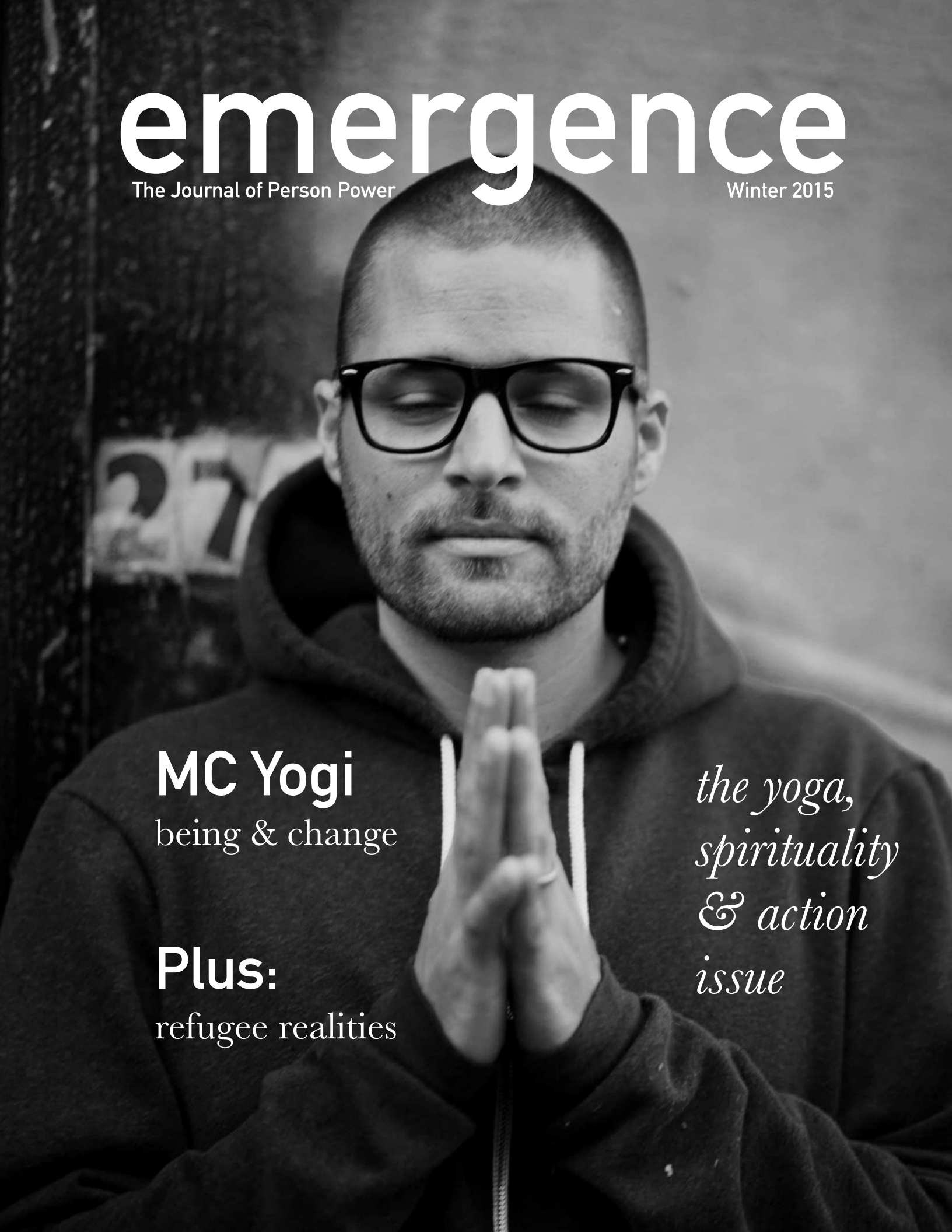
emergence
The Journal of Person Power
Winter 2015
MC Yogi
being & change
Plus:
refugee realities
the yoga,
spirituality
& action
issue

A JUST & SUSTAINABLE WORLD

We all want a more peaceful and equitable society.
Imagine what we can accomplish by strategically building a movement of movements together.

To facilitate that, Metta Center for Nonviolence created **Roadmap**, a set of tools to:

- **Develop strategic thinking toward the realization of campaign goals**
- **Connect with others**
- **Train in nonviolence principles**

Roadmap provides the unity, strategy and nonviolent power for an unstoppable movement.

Organizations are endorsing **Roadmap** and helping build the movement of movements.
For details on how your organization, community group or even yourself can collaborate, email Metta Center for Nonviolence:

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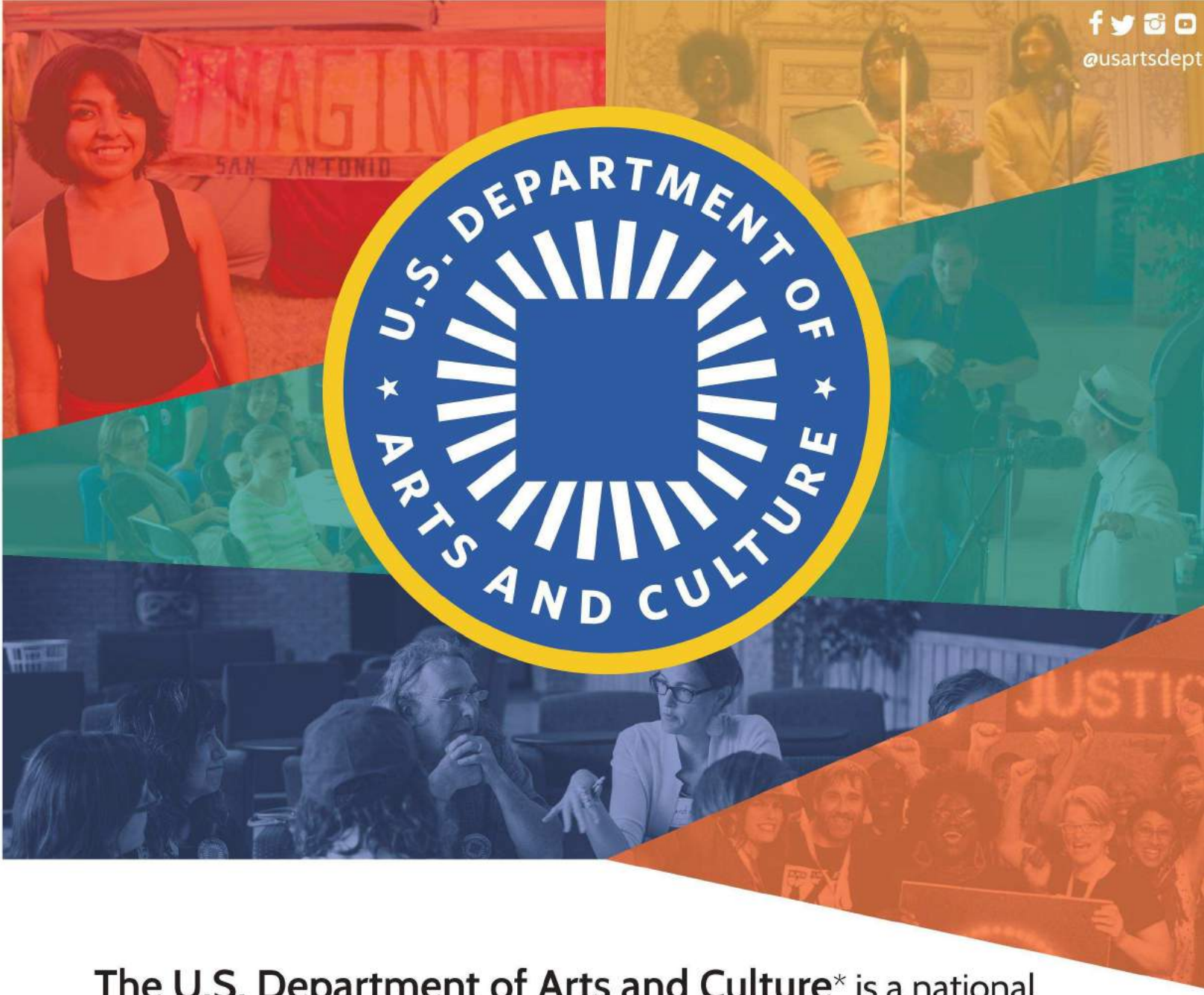

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF ARTS AND CULTURE

TOGETHER, WE CREATE.

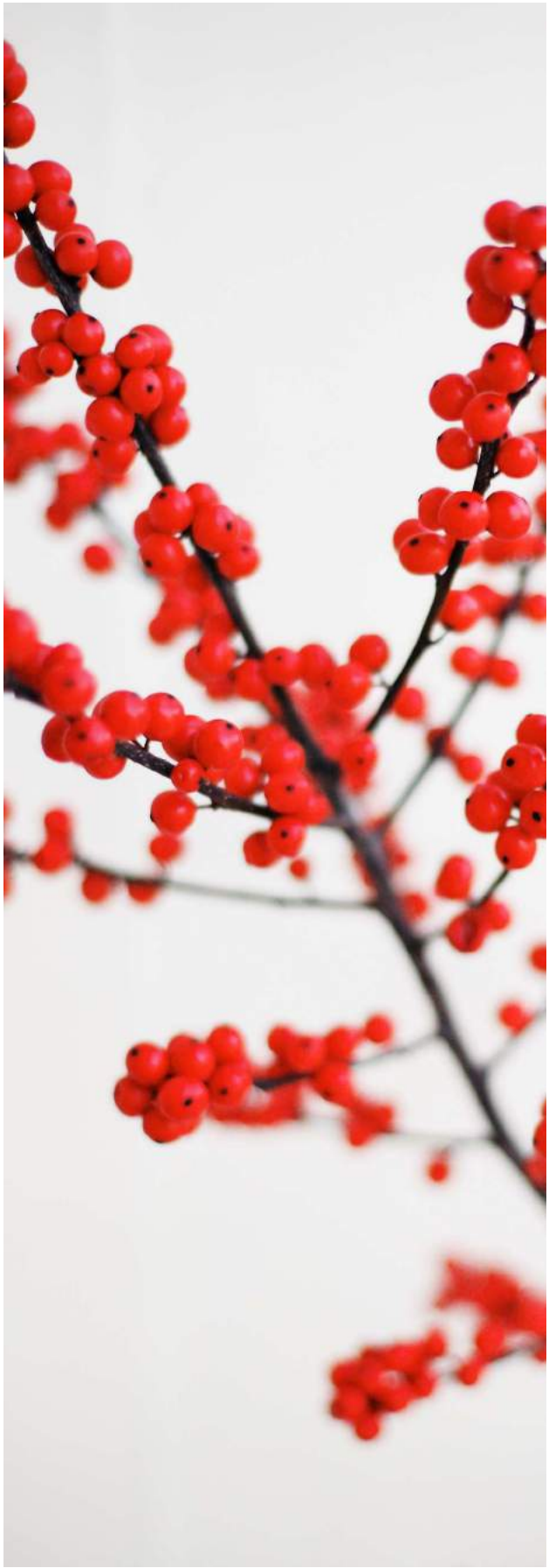
** The U.S. Department of Arts and Culture is not a government agency.* *** You don't have to be a U.S. Citizen or an Artist to be a Citizen Artist!*

featured inside

Photo: Ali Kaukas

Photo: Okke Ornstein

> *"Love is service. The fruit of service is peace. ~ Mother Theresa*



gratitude

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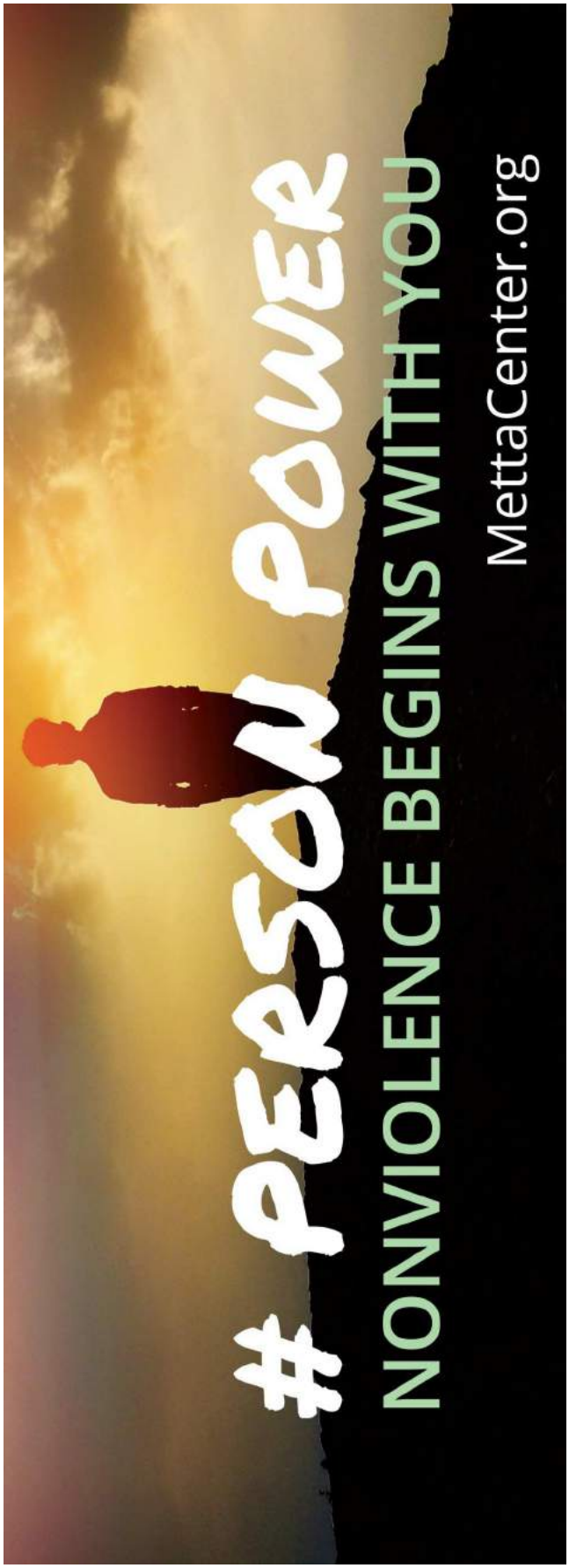

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unity, heart, action

Photo: Mikael Kristenson

More on love from Grace Lee Boggs, the visionary American activist who passed away at age 100 this October: "Love isn't about what we did yesterday; it's about what we do today and tomorrow and the day after."

“Because of great love, one is courageous. ~ Lao Tzu

In their book *Why Civil Resistance Works: The Strategic Logic of Nonviolent Conflict*, Erica Chenoweth and Maria Stephan share data from their two-year study of violent and nonviolent transitions to democracy. They noted a pattern: over the past 100 years, nonviolent movements involving more than 3.5 percent of a country's population *always* succeeded.

In just the United States, 20 million-plus people practice yoga—that's about 8 percent of the US population. What if these 20 million yoga practitioners took their yoga into the world as a vehicle for social change? What if they teamed up with other spiritual practitioners?

It's these kinds of questions that prompted us to consider the crossroads of yoga, spirituality and activism. This issue includes interviews and essays that highlight the intrinsic connection between inner growth and making positive changes around us.

In our feature Q&A, MC Yogi considers the “being” aspects of change. Soneile Hymn, in a personal essay, looks at the importance of stepping back from the folds of action to restore a sense of inner balance.

Artists Ellie Cross and Robert Shetterly portray paths to mindfulness and courage in their own styles, while Okke Ornstein's refugee photos capture human triumph and vulnerability.

Perhaps most vitally, Michael N. Nagler outlines the key ways in which to employ action-oriented nonviolence for beneficial and lasting results.

Thank you for all that you do to bring more peace into the world. We wish you a most joyous season.

KIMBERLYN DAVID
Editor & Creative Director

My Experiments With Person Power

by Michael N. Nagler

Meditation supports human awakening and inner growth.

How can we be politically active, and effective, without upending our spiritual practice?

"I'm going to take you out of politics…and when I put you back in you'll be much more effective." These words were spoken to me by Sri Eknath Easwaran, whom I met in the 1960s, just as the Free Speech Movement (FSM), with its giddying intoxication and its outrage at on-campus censorship of political speech at UC Berkeley, dwindled to a whimper of protest. So when I heard those words from the man I so admired, I was shocked but intrigued.

I was already beginning to realize that politics-as-usual would not solve our problems—mine or the world's (it's hard now, even, to imagine how much hope we students had placed in the FSM). No wonder people were hitchhiking to New Mexico, if not India, to find their spiritual teachers. All I had to do was walk across campus to the Meditation Room to find mine. It would take me a while to realize that Easwaran had, if anything, a greater passion than I did about the sufferings of the world, but he went about solving them in a fascinatingly different way—quietly! As the years went by I also realized, not without awe, that his approach was, just as he said, much more effective. He showed me that constructive work is a powerful complement to, if not a more

effective substitute for, protest, and that unwavering respect for one's opponent (hard as that may be to come up with) is not only the most effective persuasion, but lays the groundwork for lasting change, because human dignity (possibly Gandhi's greatest discovery) is the basis of all justice and peace.

But at that time, only a few months after I had met him in 1966, the initial shock at being told to "get out of politics" was startling, and even the intriguing prospect of a more effective re-entry came with a personal cost. Long before the FSM broke up, an awkward and often painful split had already developed between those of us who wanted what Martin Luther King, Jr. was calling a "revolution of values" and those who built their revolutionary style more on Marx and Engels. The former, like myself, were uncomfortable with the angry mentality and rhetoric of the latter, who often looked on us with a scorn difficult to take from your former comrades.

That same split remains today, though the numbers of the spiritually inclined camp are slowly growing. Time after time, students in the Peace & Conflict Studies Program I went on to found at UC Berkeley would go out to join some worthy movement only to come drooping back: "I so want to help them, but I just can't stand the anger." I would tell them, though I'm not sure it helped much, that this problem was faced by none other than Mahatma Gandhi himself. When asked why so many of his colleagues bailed out of his movement after Independence, he explained: "I was on the train to Rishikesh [the spiritual center in the Himalayas]; they got off in Delhi."

How can we be politically active, and effective, without upending our spiritual practice? The answer is nonviolence, especially as understood by Gandhi, who had inspired Easwaran's own spiritual awakening when he met the Mahatma in the late 1940s. In this kind of nonviolence you try to convert your own anger and fear into creative, positive forces—no small trick—and to reject injustice decisively without offending the dignity or humanity of those still caught up in its execution. This enables them to change more readily, and without cost to our own state of mind or personal development. Indeed, that becomes the outer dimension of our inner growth.

So the second half of Easwaran's promise is slowly being fulfilled. Perhaps the most important capacity I gained from the mythic journey, if you will, into meditation and back out to the tormented world is being able to bring compassion into play through spiritually-guided nonviolence. It becomes second nature for a meditator to stay aware of the positive when the world—sliding backwards as it is into the monstrosities of torture, slavery and ingenious violence—loses faith in its existence.

A signature contribution of the Metta Center for Nonviolence, which some friends and I founded in 1982 with Easwaran's encouragement, is our interpretation of "Constructive Programme," the term Gandhi coined to describe building community-level alternatives to repressive structures, systems and processes. Constructive Program is what makes it possible for me to stay enthusiastic in the face of apparent setbacks, with the understanding that we have the practical, strategic tools to create a different world—one in which all of our communities thrive, free from violence, and people can take up, once again, the search for meaning and fulfillment.

Since I've become a lot more aware of what makes *me* tick, I've also become more aware of what makes others tick. Thinking toward the long term is something I've learned to do. As with the FSM in the 1960s, many activists today seem to be caught up in reactive, immediate goals, and they tend to cling to (often empty) symbols, which can turn the exuberant energy of outrage into exercises in futility. Patience, long-term planning (aka strategy), constructive alternatives and compassion for the opponent are much less flashy but much more gratifying when you at last see them beginning to bear fruit.

So my advice to anyone listening? Don't get off at Delhi! Stay on the train so you can really develop your person power and discover your own best contribution to the life around us. ■

Michael Nagler *is Founder of the Metta Center for Nonviolence and author of* The Nonviolence Handbook: A Guide to Practical Action.

Photo: sergio_leenen, flickr

From Yoga Mat to Peace Studies Classroom

Stephanie Knox-Cubbon takes yoga off the mat with nonviolence

What does it mean to take yoga "off the mat"? For me, it means taking the lessons we learn on our mats—cultivating balance, equanimity, nonviolence and compassion, for instance—and bringing them into our daily lives, allowing them to guide the way we take action in the world.

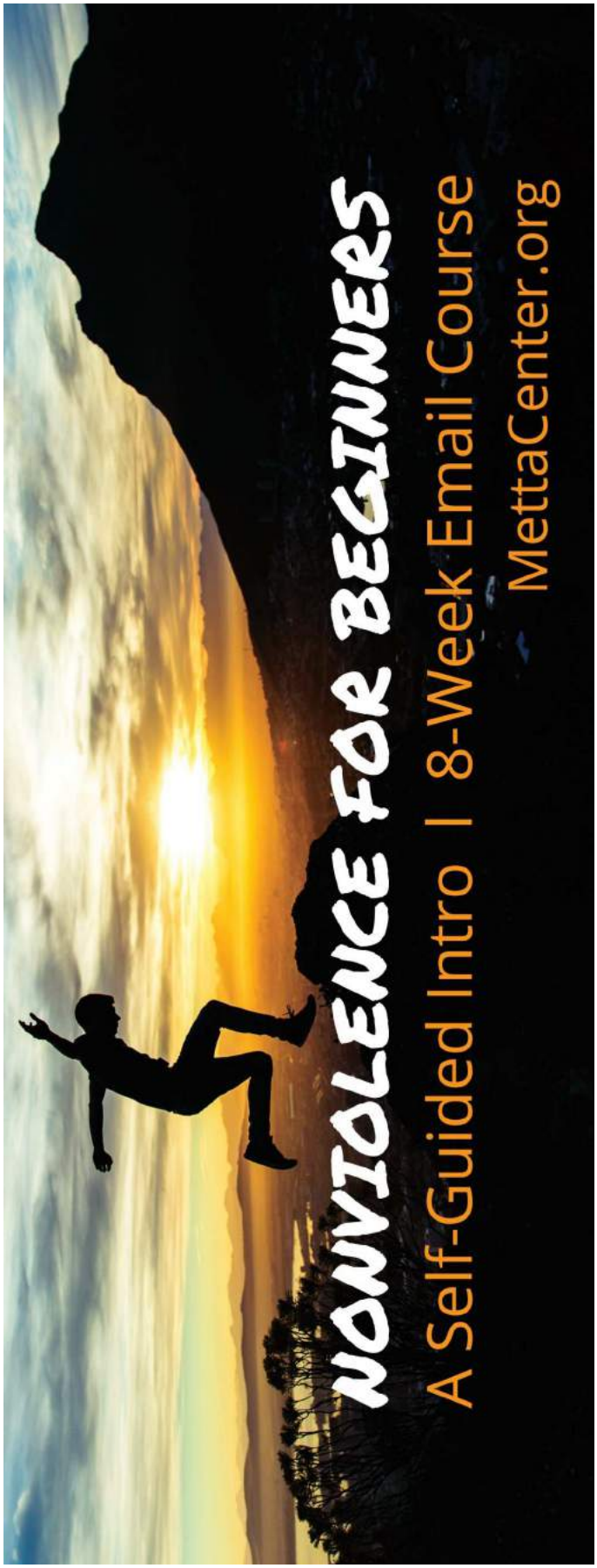
My own journey to nonviolence was through the door of yoga. At the time, I was a stressed-out, anxiety-ridden college student with low self-esteem and a poor body image. I initially enrolled in a hatha yoga class at the college gym in the hope of burning calories, and even though the first class was gentle—or perhaps exactly *because* it was gentle—I felt so great afterwards. I didn't know *why* I liked it, I just knew that I did and wanted more. As the semester went on, I fell in love with the practice, even chanting. The teacher, Susan, taught it in such a way that I hadn't realized we were chanting (at the time I was rather "allergic" to anything that seemed remotely religious). She was steeped in the practice, and later I learned that she had studied with a swami who had come to North America from India in the 60s. I was lucky to have started yoga with such a skillful teacher.

Throughout that semester, I was experiencing my own inner transformation, finding a deeper sense of calm and realizing that some of the negative thought patterns I had been holding onto were no longer serving me. It was after reading a book recommended by my cousin that I truly realized how transformative the practice of yoga could be, that it was really a roadmap for living and self-discovery. The book was *Yoga and the Quest for the True Self* by Stephen Cope, who shares his journey from a career in psychotherapy to being a scholar-in-residence at Kripalu Center for Yoga & Health in Stockbridge, Massachusetts. And it helped me realize that yoga was not just postures and breathing, but rather a science and art that systematically helps humans achieve their highest potential.

From that point on, I devoured all the books, websites and classes about yoga I could find, eventually stumbling upon *ahimsa* (nonviolence), the bedrock of yoga's ethical foundation. Though my grasp of *ahimsa* at the time was limited, I knew that I wanted my life to be guided by that principle—to not harm others. Later, I would come to understand nonviolence as love-in-action, as much more than not harming others.

Considering that *ahimsa* is the first principle, *the* guiding principle of all yoga practices, it's interesting to note that it took some stumbling and digging before I came across any information about it. It was not frequently mentioned in classes, either. How is it that the foundation of the practice could be so elusive, so ignored?

After several years of daily hatha yoga practice, I decided to take a yoga teacher training program so that I could share the healing and transformative power of yoga with others. Inspired by Stephen Cope's personal story, I signed up for the 200-hour yoga teacher training at Kripalu, which offers generous scholarships, making their trainings more accessible to people of all income levels and backgrounds. I did not have much in the way of disposable income, having just returned from two years of service in Niger for the Peace Corps, but I did have a fire for yoga and a deep desire to teach in the spirit of service. I was offered a scholarship and I spent a beautiful, intensive month at Kripalu, where I earned my 200-hour certification.



During the Kripalu training we did things that, at the time, seemed unrelated to yoga—active listening exercises, compassionate communication and a lot of self-reflection. The entire program was highly experiential, creative and centered around group learning processes. Later, I found that these exercises had *everything* to do with yoga: they were tools to take the practice of presence off the mat and into our relationships. I began to see that peace could be learned and wondered why we weren't learning it in our broader society.

After the training, I began traveling, teaching yoga along the way. Eventually I landed in Japan, where I taught English for a year. During this time I was experiencing the connection between inner peace and outer peace, and it didn't feel like enough to just focus on inner peace. My own sense of inner peace made me more sensitive to the suffering in the world, and there arose inside of me a need to address it. At the same time, I was seeing activists engaging in the world with a lot of anger and burnout and little inner peace, which didn't seem effective. I discovered that I wanted to teach more than yoga and English; I wanted to teach peace. This yearning led me to study peace education at the University for Peace, a United Nations-mandated university established in Costa Rica in 1980.

Now my yoga teaching and peace education work go hand-in-hand, each one supporting the other. I bring my yoga and meditation practice into the college classroom—not through yoga poses, but through my own presence, my ability to handle challenges as they come up and in the flexibility and flow with which I teach my classes. Yoga, the Sanskrit word for union, can be expressed in all of our relationships and actions in the world.

I do my best to live in a yogic way. I am by no means perfect—that's why we call yoga a practice! I recently wrote a series of articles for *Yoga Living Magazine* on the yogic code of ethics, which gave me ample opportunity to reflect on how I practice them in the world. I'm also supported by my practice of engaged Buddhism (I have formally received the five mindfulness trainings, which are like lamps that light my path).

There is so much work to be done in the world to end violence, establish equality and justice, and heal and preserve our planet. With yoga growing in popularity every year, there is an amazing potential for it to help foster the building of a world that benefits us all. ■

Stephanie Knox-Cubbon *is a peace and yoga educator. She is also Director of Education at the Metta Center for Nonviolence.*

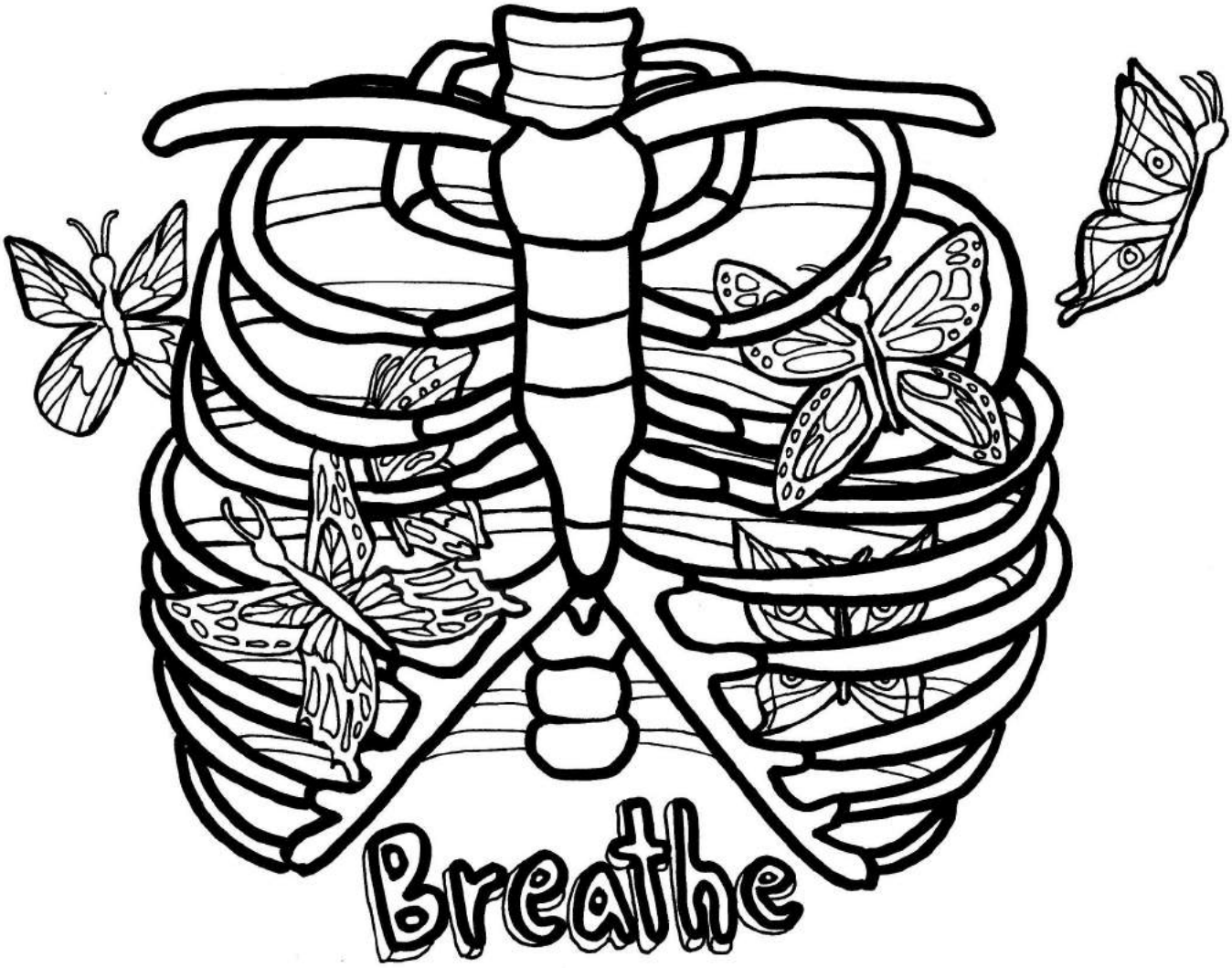


Illustration: Ellie Cross; ink on paper. Artist website: artworks.com

Takin' It to the Streets

When it comes to healing trauma and building communities, yoga can be a creative force in service of social change.

Story: Tameka Lawson

Photos this page: Steve Rhodes

As a trauma-informed, certified yoga teacher I am immensely interested in yoga as a tool for social change. I see yoga as a way to challenge people to seek change and healing within themselves, with the hope that this spills over into their families and communities.

I have never considered myself the creative type—I am not an artist and have never strived to be one. However, when I looked around my home city of Chicago last year, I knew I had to do my part to help create a solution to the violence that was taking over our streets.

I rolled up my sleeves and my yoga mat, packed some sandwiches and, with a group of trusted yoga friends, headed to Englewood, one of our city's toughest neighborhoods. We set up shop on a sidewalk and invited folks to sit down and eat with us, to share their stories. Was it strange? Yes. Did sincere engagement occur right away? No. That took some time.

Due to high levels of gun violence, the media have dubbed the Englewood community "Chiraq," a blending of Chicago and Iraq. But every Friday at around 4:00 pm, my friends and I returned there, signaling that our momentary patch of sidewalk was a safe place to connect. Yes, we were alert; however, we were not afraid: we saw so much hope in people's eyes and resilience in their strides.

Last summer, after about two months of sidewalk meetings, a young woman I had started mentoring dared to utter, "Ms. Tameka, when can we do yoga?" So the next day, I gathered a tray of sandwiches and some yoga mats, while she rounded up six girls.

We began doing yoga once a week. It grew into something they looked forward to, because it brought a restful moment to their hectic lives.

The same group of guys who initially stood over our sandwich table with guns, and the knife-toting girls with them, eventually joined us on that same corner. They, too, lay down on yoga mats for *savasana*, or the final relaxation pose of a class.

Tameka Lawson (center, green shirt) teaching a sidewalk yoga session. Above photo courtesy of Tameka Lawson.

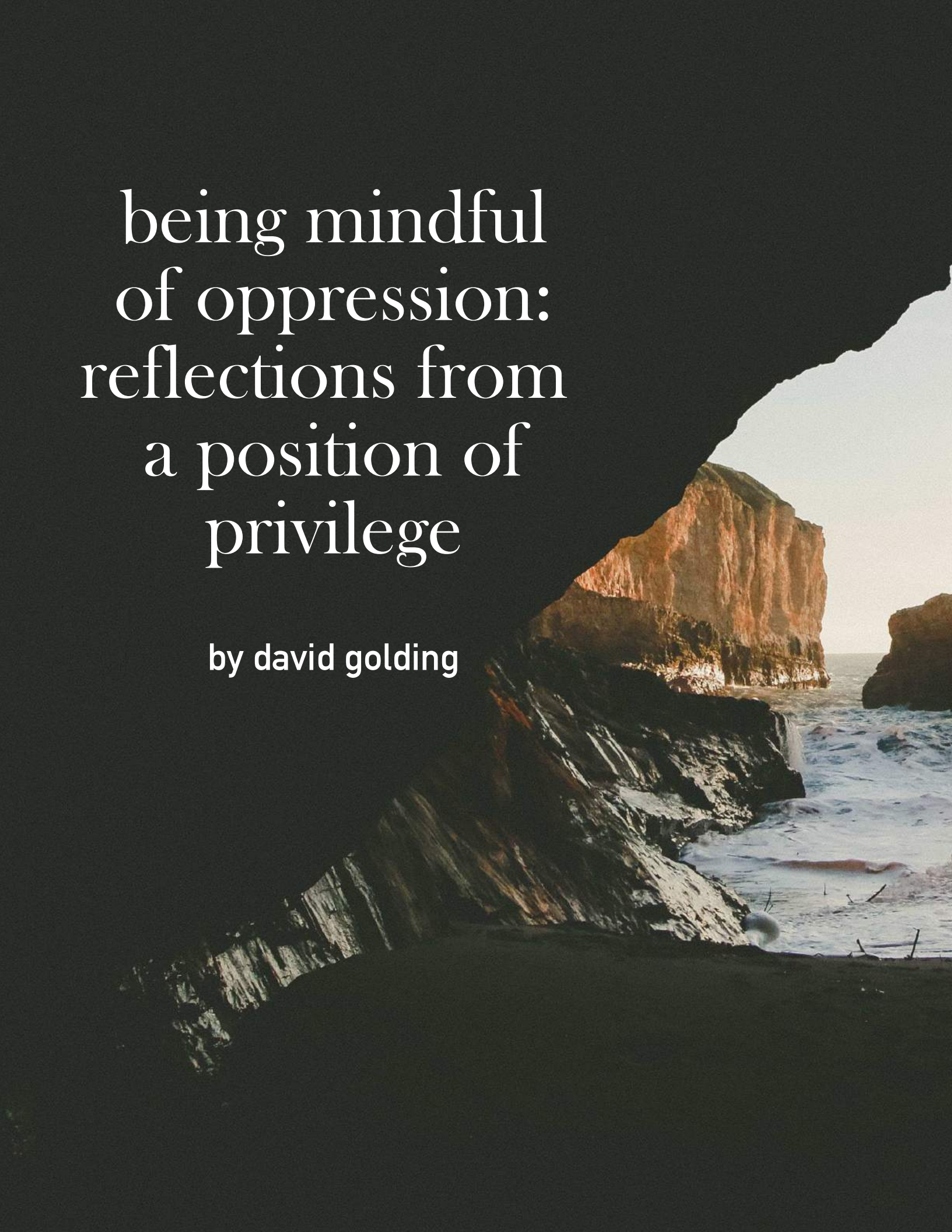
> "I take yoga where it is needed, from the street corner to the police department.

I take yoga where it is needed, from the street corner to the police department. Yoga teaches us to act vs. react, and I have been able to help my students grasp how to take a moment and breathe when they feel certain emotions arising. That simple pause just might save their lives, or someone else's. ■

Tameka Lawson *is a yoga teacher and community activist.*

being mindful of oppression: reflections from a position of privilege

by david golding



Mindfulness meditation has received much attention from the West in recent years. It involves concentrating on the breath to become profoundly aware of the present moment. Perhaps the most recognized writer on mindfulness meditation today is Bhante Henepola Gunaratana, a Sri Lankan monk and the author of *Mindfulness in Plain English.* He and other advocates of mindfulness meditation say that through sustained observation of the mind, one can counteract the greed and hatred that cause suffering. Although the practice originates from Buddhism, it has been adapted to many other religious and secular contexts.

The recent popularization of mindfulness meditation in the West coincides with unprecedented global crises. The two phenomena occur in tandem: *How can I meditate when I am surrounded by an unequal, unjust and violent society? A peaceful world would be ideal for meditation. But every day, I see and experience oppression. How can I just sit there and focus on myself?*

It's not necessary to have a perfect society or a pure mind to meditate. Waiting for inner peace before beginning to meditate, Bhante Gunaratana advises, "is waiting for a situation that will never arise…like a man waiting for the ocean to become calm so that he can take a bath."

Meditation does not require peace, but rather it helps *develop* peace. In fact, Bhante Gunaratana refers to inner turmoil and suffering as the "grist for the mill" through which mindfulness meditation works. Mindfulness meditation fully acknowledges whatever thoughts arise without hiding from them. As a meditator tries to focus on the breath, they inevitably find that thoughts intrude upon their concentration. By continuing to refocus on the breath, the meditator develops insight into the thought processes that were previously experienced without conscious recognition. Mindfulness of the breath doesn't require a perfectly trained mind. The practice isn't even limited to sitting meditation. Attempting to concentrate on the breath at all times helps the meditator examine the immediate challenges of everyday life in order to overcome them.

When I try to remain mindful throughout the day, my attention is pulled away from my breath and to my existence within highly unequal power structures. I see oppression in the workplace, in the media and in my interactions with others. It's tempting to avoid situations in which oppression is obvious, perhaps by keeping to homogeneous communities, but the privilege to do so is itself a manifestation of social inequality. Struggling to force oppression out of the mind is not mindfulness. Mindfulness

Photo: David Shankbone

is a calm observation of experiences as they come and go, no matter how unpleasant. I may find that I have internalized the thoughts of an oppressor, primarily as a sense of superiority from my privileged social standing in relation to race, class, gender and the other modes of identity through which structural violence is reinforced. Without mindfulness, this is the point at which I shove these thoughts out of the way. "I'm against oppression," I reassure myself. "I'm a progressive. I stand in opposition to racism, classism and sexism." Rather than deeply examine my internalization of oppression, I can hastily replace them with such thoughts, which serve to bolster my sense of superiority and skirt personal responsibility. It's so easy for the privileged to turn away from oppression that marginalized groups stage protests to bring awareness to injustice. Avoiding oppressive thoughts can be a pleasant strategy in the short term, but it precludes a genuine observation of oppressive mind states, and, therefore, makes their transformation impossible.

Oppressive thoughts, when subject to mindful awareness, can bring about feelings of shame. In the diligent spirit of meditation practice, I try to remain mindful of the shame itself. Although the mind seems intensely personal, it is conditioned by outside forces. Thich Nhat Hanh, a Vietnamese monk who has been instrumental in the rise of mindfulness meditation in the West, writes: "Examine your talent, your virtue, your capacity and the absence of favorable conditions that led to the failures." Internalized oppression is a result of social conditioning, and thus it shouldn't be a cause for self-hatred. Since it is conditioned and not inevitable, it can be changed. As Paulo Freire, a Brazilian social justice educator who was deeply concerned with resistance to internalized oppression, reflects, "I know that I am conditioned. Yet conscious of such conditioning, I know that I can go beyond it." To overcome internalized oppression, its source must be identified as society's structures of violence.

The most powerful myth perpetuated by a culture of structural violence is that the division between the oppressor and the oppressed is a result of inherent differences, rather than social constructions and conditioning. In reality, there is nothing natural or intrinsic about this separation. Oppression, its mechanisms and its justifications, operate on a linguistic level. Words are the medium through which structural violence becomes psychological. For example, colonialism instilled oppression in the minds of the colonized with the

> **Meditation does not require peace, but rather it helps *develop* peace.**

denotative and connotative hierarchies of concepts like "whiteness," "blackness," "civilized," "savage," "holy" and "heathen." Mindfulness unmasks such ideas as constructed and illusory. "Words are devised by the symbolic levels of the mind, and they describe those realities with which symbolic thinking deals. "Mindfulness is presymbolic," Bhante Gunaratana writes. "When you first become aware of something, there is a fleeting instant of pure awareness just before you conceptualize the thing." Within this deep awareness of the present moment, social conditioning and the internalized oppression it often contains can be transformed.

Resisting oppression is an act of compassion. Being mindful means being aware of others' suffering. In many ways, the privileged benefit from oppression; but spiritually, emotionally and mentally, the harm is done. By making others suffer, the privileged bring suffering upon themselves. Truly addressing the ways in which the mind reflects and reproduces structural violence is challenging. It requires compassion for oneself. Mindfulness is a way to transform internalized oppression, slowly but surely, in the mind and in society. ■

David Golding *teaches Peace Studies, International Development and Sociology for the University of Colombo and the University of London in Sri Lanka.*

MC YOGI
BEING & CHANGE

With his upbeat fusion of hip-hop and devotional music, MC Yogi headlines international music festivals. He has taught yoga at diverse venues, from art museums to the White House. With his wife, artist Amanda Giacomini, he co-founded Yoga Toes Studio, where they've been serving Point Reyes Station, CA since 2001.

Interview: Kimberlyn David
Photos: Ali Kaukas

The title of your latest album, *Only Love is Real*, reads like a mantra. What's behind the title?
It's my personal mantra, something I realized after 15 years of practicing yoga and meditating. What we put out to the world, it echoes–sometimes longer than we're alive. I always make the effort and set the intention to put something out that's meaningful, something that hopefully can trigger some awareness.

What about the message of love is needed now?
The most important teaching about love that I've experienced is developing love for yourself. For a long time, I harbored a really deep self-hatred. Through yoga and meditation, I was able to go to a lot of places inside my heart, to heal and give thanks for the way things unfolded. In my experience, it takes a tremendous amount of courage and wherewithal to develop love and to practice it in everyday life.

The Metta Center, publisher of *Emergence*, refers to person power, our own ability to transform emotions like anger into love and compassion. What inspires and nourishes your person power?
My aspiration is to be more like a super hero. I grew up reading comic books. I still have huge stacks of comic books in my office. When I think back to those stories of those heroes, who were confronted with difficult situations and found a way to turn those traumatic experiences into a strength and in turn help others, that always inspires me. It's constantly taking whatever life is presenting and then spinning that into my yoga so that I become more powerful as a yogi.

You once posted this on Facebook: "Ask not what yoga can do for you but what you can do for yoga." What did you mean by that?
Yoga dramatically transformed my life. It pulled me back from the brink of self-destruction. As I was able to turn my life around, I started to count my blessings. Every day I reflect on how grateful and blessed I am to have had the opportunity to study with teachers, to have found certain books. I've been inspired by the lives of saints and mystics, men and women throughout the ages who dedicated their lives to the practice and became beacons of light in the world.

Nowadays, the way that yoga is presented and portrayed seems superficial. I feel like it's our role as modern practitioners to really understand the culture, respect the culture, educate ourselves and then present it in a way that's honoring where it comes from while at the same time innovating. When you lose touch with the roots of something, it starts to whither and die. Yoga runs that risk in America, because it's very glossy. If you don't have a sense of the real power of yoga, then all that suffering just continues to build, when the real purpose is to dissolve suffering so that we can experience the bliss of just being being alive, being awake.

Many yoga practitioners cite Gandhi without acknowledging his political achievements, which for him were the same as spiritual achievements. Any insights on how yoga can heal the artificial divide between spirituality and politics?
Let me speak about my experience, because that's what I know best. The service work that I've done and continue to do is spontaneous; it just kind of happens because I'm doing my practice and things present themselves. Everything I do, whether it's writing a song that'll inspire a 13 year-old kid living in the inner city or showing up at a school, flows from the well of my practice.

Action is, for me, on an esoteric, philosophical level. I am not the doer. I am aligning myself with the one who is waving the waves, shining the sun, turning the planet, blowing the wind, and allowing that power to move through me. It's what Gandhi calls the "small voice."

Sometimes we wanna go out and put band-aids on the world and fix it. It's a good tendency, because it comes from a place of love. We want to be helpful, we want to support others. But for me, more important is seeing that the world is not broken. Human beings get broken; we suffer, we die. It's a part of the natural cycle of life.

The best thing that I can do is to help relieve the suffering of people around me, bringing some lightness, some laughter, some music, some kindness, some art, some stories. The more agents we have in the world creating this

> If I can transform my mind and make it into a beacon of love and joy, then everything I touch is going to be uplifted by that energy.

atmosphere of love, through the power of our own practice, the more tremendous of an affect there will be. The service parts are gonna happen. The environmental projects are gonna happen. Everything is gonna happen from a place of true, deep joy.

I have a sunny outlook, you know? I've been through the dark times, and I've come to the other side. I realize my only obstacle is my own mind. If I can transform my mind and make it into a beacon of love and joy, then everything I touch is going to be uplifted by that energy.

We can practice meditation and asanas to stay healthy and compassionate. Yet if the body breaks down and our state won't provide affordable insurance plans, what happens? The political leadership says: You don't deserve healthcare. It doesn't matter who's in the Oval Office…
Can I push back a little bit? I've been hearing "it doesn't matter who sits in the Oval Office" a lot. I believe it matters who sits in every office. Who sits in the Oval Office, who's in Congress, who's lobbying for power—all these offices matter. All those positions affect everything because of that collection of decisions. The more we create a culture of awareness—of kindness, compassion, *ahimsa*, alternative views—the more it can take root and grow. [Editor's note: The Sanskrit word *ahimsa* essentially means nonviolence in thought, word and actions. At *Emergence*, we often refer to it as love-in-action.]

I'm a firm believer in the power of marketing. The more the progressive people of the world can present their argument in a way that's attractive, instead of fighting against what's not working, the better. The ways of living in tune with nature have existed for thousands and thousands of years. We had a little blip in history, the Industrial Revolution. We polluted the environment. Let's get back to our initial vision of living in tune with the seasons, like all of our ancestors did, in every culture in every part of the world. We had festivals that celebrated the turning of the seasons. We had rights of passage for young people, we took care of our elderly.

There's a wonderful prophecy in the Buddhist tradition: in the last war that will be waged on Earth, no weapons will be wielded, no swords will be raised, because the power of the enlightened, awakened beings will be emanating so much love, kindness and bliss, that all the people on the opposite side of the aisle ready to wage war will be so overwhelmed by the happiness, that all the weapons will be put down, and the world will be one. That's a beautiful dream. I love that idea.

I look at His Holiness, the Dalai Lama and the uphill battle he has had. And Gandhi is another example. The laughter and the jokes and the way they were able to spin situations back toward truth—I'm such a huge fan of that yogic superpower to move things back to a place of connection, back to a place of peace.

Their brilliant strategies are also inspiring.
Yeah. A lot of strategizing happens by not strategizing. Gandhi had his realization for the Salt March when he went to the ocean and just cleared his head of all his ideas. The Buddha talks about getting out of our own way so we can listen to the wisdom that nature is whispering in our ears through our own breath. We do our practice on the mat, we sit and meditate, so that we can move into an unbroken stream of practice. If we fight for what we want and alienate the other side in the process, then the backlash is more separation. We might get what we want in the immediate but create more problems to deal with later on.

What about conflict, then? People will never agree on everything. What are your heart-minded strategies for resolving conflicts, big or small?
Perhaps the most powerful thing is to put yourself inside the suit of the other person. Really work to see through their eyes, listen with their ears. Understand the complexity of their background, their unique perspective. From a place of compassion. Because the moment we go into defense, we tend to seize up. We throw up our armor. Then instead of becoming more sensitive and connected, we start to choke ourselves off from the rest of nature. To remain calm and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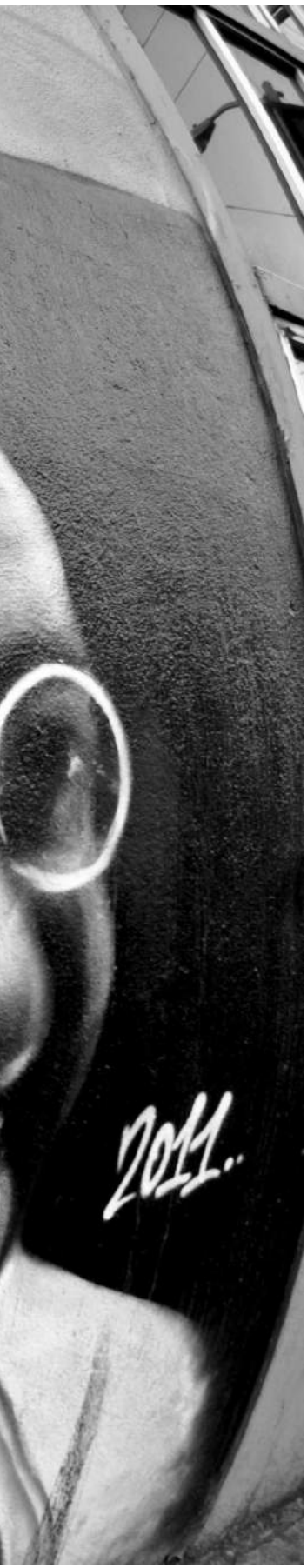


> I've made it my life's work to create a body of work that is free from violence and that doesn't glamorize materialism.

relaxed might be the biggest thing. To win an argument is to find a resolution. So it's not that you win and they lose.

What is something we can both agree on and benefit from? Once that's established, you're part of a creative endeavor together. Whenever you're building something together, it draws people closer. For instance, my wife and I are both artists. We work together. It really helps us stay connected. Whenever we're part of a project, we start to appreciate the differences between each other.

Don't take yourself so seriously that you can't make fun of your own humanness. Acknowledge the other person's strengths to develop an atmosphere of cooperation: "I don't agree with you, but you're so good at what you do, and if we work together, we can find some way to build something we both really want." It's the art of compromise. It's not easy, and there are endless opportunities to take things personally, to get angry, to judge the other person, to create inequalities and hierarchies in the mind. There is an oasis if you can develop these abilities to really cultivate cooperation.

Can we circle back to your music?
One of the things that's really personal to me is the power of music and the art of communication. We know that music is a mood-altering substance. If you put a certain kind of song on, it affects your mood and can influence your outlook on life. I've made it my life's work to create a body of work that is free from violence, misogyny and drug references, and that doesn't glamorize materialism.

My whole mission is to inspire young people to just be aware. You don't have to go along with trends. You can go against the grain and create music, create art, create an idea that's not so disposable. So I would encourage people of all ages: if you're working on a project, really strive to make something that's going to last longer than you will and that has some truth in it so that the next generation can take benefit. ■

Kimberlyn David *is Editor of* Emergence. *She is also a yoga teacher and Communications Director at the Metta Center for Nonviolence.*

Six Principles of Nonviolence

Nonviolence can be a safe, effective and *lasting* way to defeat injustice, but like any other science, it takes some knowledge as well as courage and determination.

by Michael N. Nagler

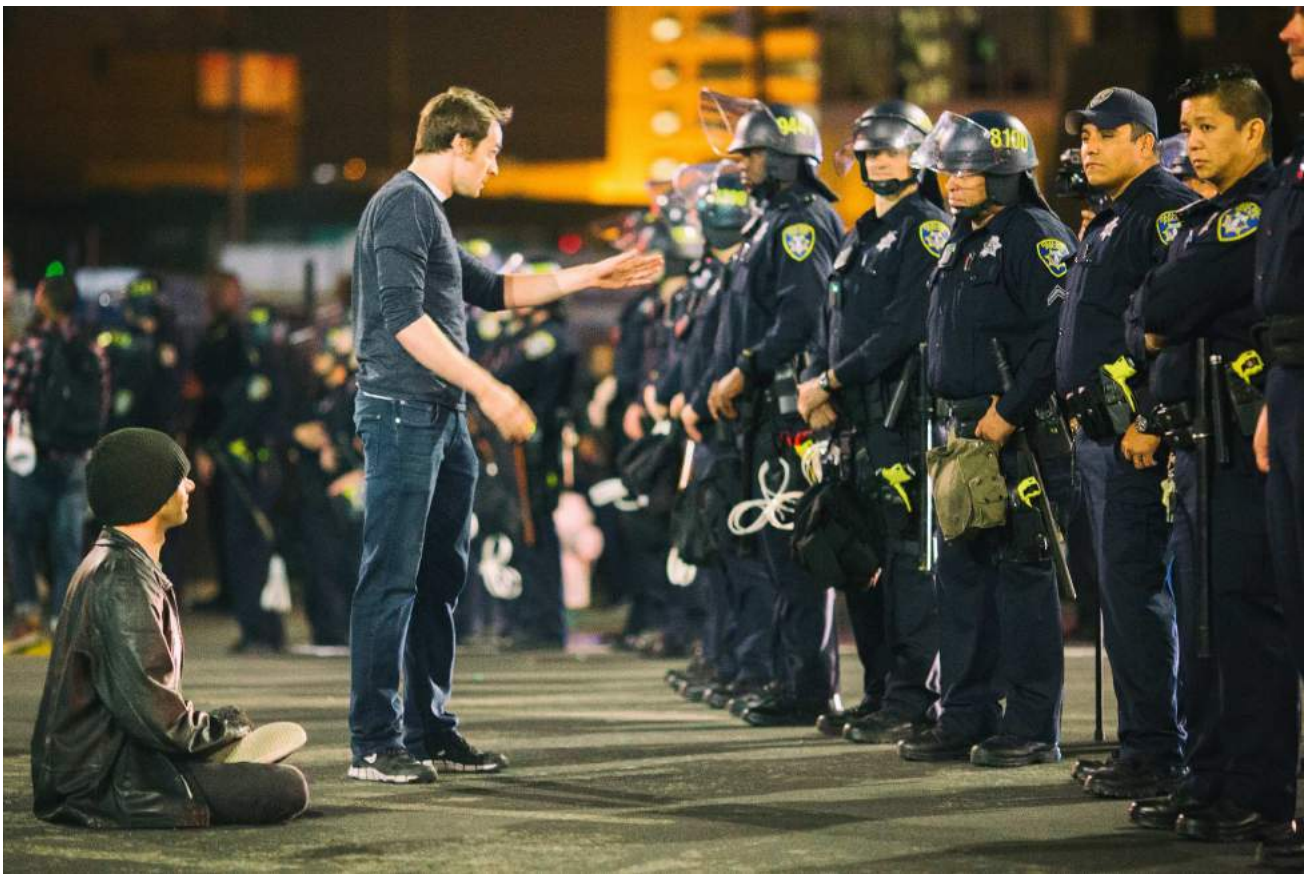


Photo: Thomas Hawk

The six general guidelines below can help you carry out nonviolent action more safely and effectively, while drawing on nonviolent practices from your own cultural heritage.

These guidelines derive, as you'll see, from two basic points to bare in mind: 1. We are not against other people, only what they are doing and 2. Means are ends in the making; nothing good can ultimately result from violence. The six principles are founded on a belief that all life is an interconnected whole and that when we understand our real needs, we are not in competition with anyone. As Martin Luther King, Jr. said, "I can never be what I ought to be until you are what you ought to be. And you can never be what you ought to be until I am what I ought to be."

1. Respect everyone—including yourself.

The more we respect others, the more effectively we can persuade them to change. Never use humiliation as a tool, or accept humiliation from others, as that only degrades everyone. Remember, no one can degrade you without your permission.

Healing relationships is the real success in nonviolence, something violence can never achieve. Even in a case of extreme violence, Gandhi felt it was possible to hate the sin, not the sinner. In 1942, when India was held down by the British and fearing a Japanese invasion, he advised his fellow compatriots:

> If we were a free country, things could be done nonviolently to prevent the Japanese from entering the country. As it is, nonviolent resistance could commence the moment the Japanese affect a landing. Thus, nonviolent resisters would refuse them any help, even water. For it is no part of their duty to help anyone to steal their country. But if a Japanese had missed his way and was dying of thirst and sought help as a human being, a nonviolent resister, who may not regard anyone as his enemy, would give water to the thirsty one. Suppose the Japanese compel resisters to give them water, the resisters must die in the act of resistance.

2. Always include constructive alternatives.

Concrete action is always more powerful than mere symbolism, especially when that action creates constructive alternatives: setting up schools, forming cottage industries, establishing farming cooperatives, devising community-friendly banking. As Buckminster Fuller said: "You never change things by fighting the existing reality. To change something, build a new model that makes the existing model obsolete."

> "A good rule of thumb to follow is: *Be constructive wherever possible, obstructive wherever necessary.*

Gandhi initiated 18 projects that enabled Indians to take charge of their own society, making it much easier to "dismiss" British rule *and* lay the groundwork for their own democracy. Constructive work has many advantages:

- It enables people to *break* their *dependency* on a regime by creating their own goods and services. You cannot get rid of oppressors when you depend on them for essentials.

- You are not just reacting to offenses but taking charge. Being *proactive* helps you shed passivity, fear and helplessness.

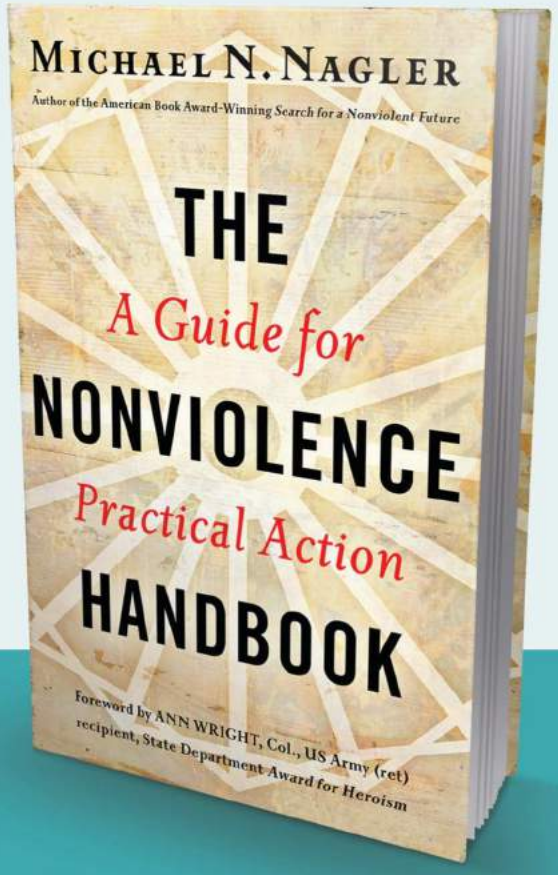
- It gives a movement *continuity*, as it can continue when direct resistance is not advisable.

- Studies have shown that working together is the most effective way to unite people. It builds *community* and reassures the general public that your movement is not a danger to the social order.

- Most importantly, it establishes the *infrastructure* that will be needed when the oppressive regime falls. Many an insurrection has succeeded in dislodging a hated regime only to find a new set of oppressors rush into the vacuum.

**“ Courage,
complemented by the knowledge
of skillful nonviolence,
as provided in this handbook,
is a recipe for a world of peace and justice.**

~ Ann Wright, Col. US Army (ret)
and recipient of the US State Department Award for Heroism



Support your local bookseller with your purchase of a print copy.

Nonviolence Handbook: A Guide for Practical Action
is also available as **Amazon Audible** and **Kindle books**.

3. Be aware of the long term.

Nonviolent action always has positive results, sometimes more than we intended. When China was passing through a severe famine in the 1950s, the US branch of Fellowship of Reconciliation organized a mail-in campaign to get President Eisenhower to send surplus food to China. Some 35,000 Americans took part. Our message to the President was a simple inscription from Isaiah: "If thine enemy hunger, feed him." It seemed as if there was no response. But 25 years later, we learned that we had averted a proposal to bomb targets in Mainland China during the Korean War! At a key meeting of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Eisenhower announced: "Gentlemen, since 35,000 Americans want us to feed the Chinese, this is hardly the time to start bombing them."

Violence sometimes "works" in the sense that it forces a particular change, but in the long run, it leads to more misery and disorder. We do not have control over the results of our actions, but we can have control over the *means* we use, even our feelings and our states of mind. Here's a handy formula: *Violence sometimes "works" but it never works (in making things or relationships better, for example). Nonviolence sometimes "works" and always works.*

Have clear goals. Cling to essentials (like human dignity) and be clear about your principles, but be ready to change tactics or compromise on anything else. Remember, you are not in a power struggle (though the opponent may think that way): you are in a struggle for justice and human dignity. In nonviolence, you can lose all the battles but still go on to win the war!

4. Look for win-win solutions.

You are trying to rebuild relationships rather than score "victories." In a conflict, we can feel that in order for one side to win the other must lose, which is not true. Therefore, we do not seek to be winners or rise over others; we seek to learn and make things better for all.

During intense negotiations over the segregation laws in Montgomery, Alabama, Martin Luther King, Jr. made an interesting observation that he noted in his book *Stride Toward Freedom: The Montgomery Story*. An attorney for the city bus company who had obstructed the African-American people's demands for desegregation revealed the real source of his objection: "If we granted the Negroes these demands they would go about boasting of a victory that they had won over the white people; and this we will not stand for."

Reflecting on this, King advised the participants in the movement not to gloat or boast, reminding them: "Through nonviolence we avoid the temptation of taking on the psychology of victors." The "psychology of victors" belongs to the age-old dynamic of me-against-you, but the nonviolent person sees life as a "co-evolution" toward loving community in which all can thrive. Gloating over "victories" can actually undo hard-won gains.

5. Use power carefully.

We are conditioned, especially in the West, to think that power "grows out of the barrel of a gun." There is indeed a kind of power that comes from threats and brute force—but it is powerless if we refuse to comply with it.

There is another kind of power that comes from truth. Let us say that you have been petitioning to eliminate an injustice. Perhaps you have made your feelings known in polite but firm protest actions, yet the other party is not responding. Then you must, as Gandhi said, "not only speak to the head but move the heart also." We can make the injustice clear by taking upon ourselves the suffering inherent in the unjust system. This allows us to mobilize Satyagraha, or "truth force." In extreme cases, we may need to do it at the risk of our own lives, which is why it is good to be very clear about our goals. Do this with care.

History, and often our own experience, has shown that even bitter hostilities can melt with this kind of persuasion that seeks to open the eyes of the opponent, whom we do not coerce. Nonetheless, there are times when we must use forms of coercion. For example, when a dictator refuses to step down, we have to act immediately to end the vast amounts of human suffering caused by that person misusing power. Still, it requires strategic thinking and nonviolent care to do it right. But when time *does* allow, we use the power of *patience* and *persuasion*, of enduring rather than inflicting suffering. The changes brought about by persuasion are lasting: one who is persuaded stays persuaded, while someone who is coerced will be just waiting for a chance for revenge.

6. Claim our legacy.

Nonviolence no longer needs to take place in a vacuum. Always note that if you are using nonviolence with courage, determination and a clear strategy, you will do more than likely succeed: win or lose, you will be playing your part in a great transformation of human relationships that our future depends on. ■

Refugee Crisis: The Missing Story

Text: Kimberlyn David
Photos: Okke Ornstein

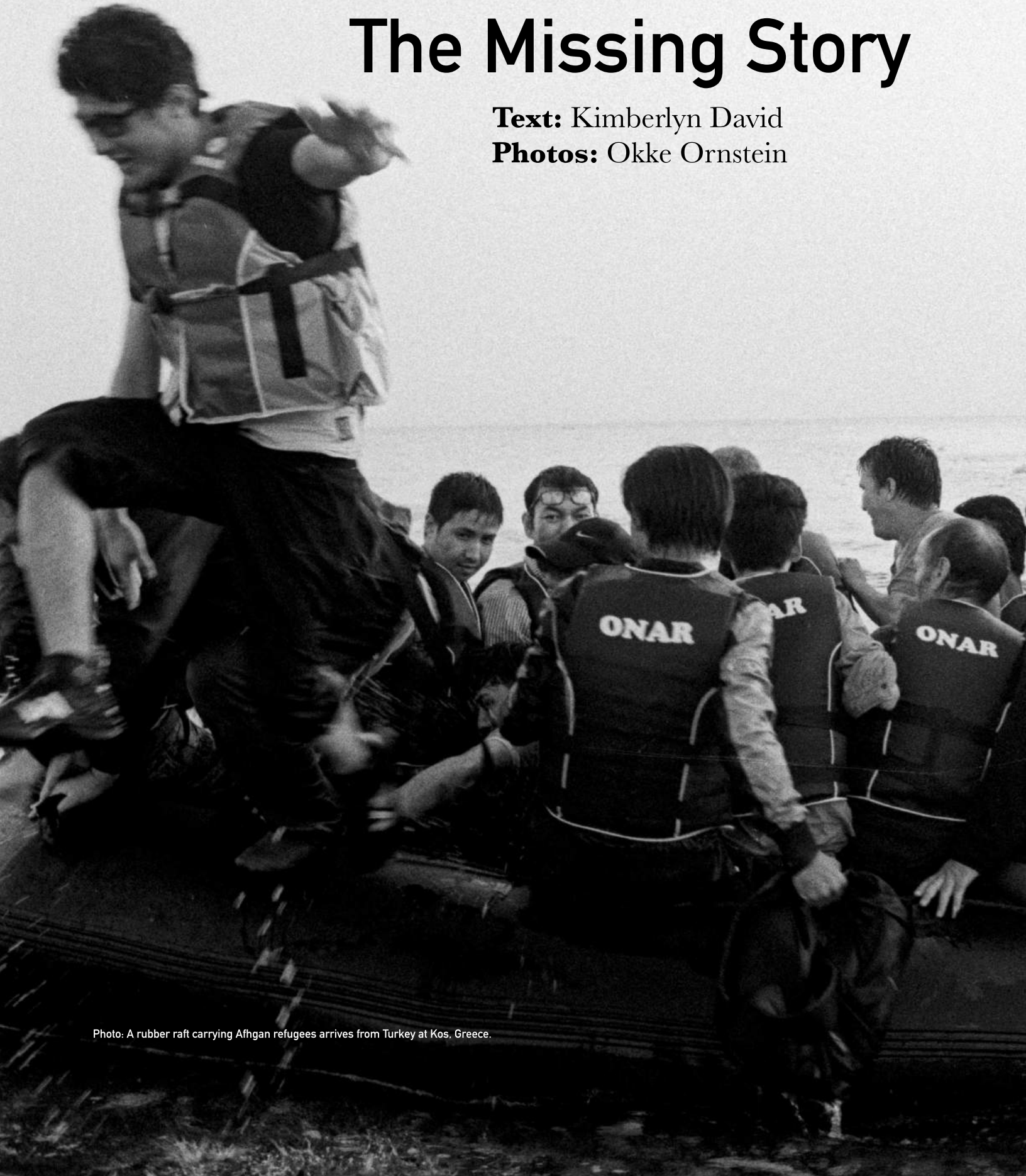


Photo: A rubber raft carrying Afhgan refugees arrives from Turkey at Kos, Greece.

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The massive stream of refugees should be framed not as a crisis but as the largest peace march *ever.*

Afhgan refugees celebrate their safe arrival on the shores of Kos, Greece.

Nothing you see in the news prepares you for the up-close experience of witnessing a rubber raft packed with 40 to 50 people, including babies, suddenly appear out of the early morning darkness and land at the shoreline, a few feet from where you are now standing.

As people climb out of the raft, they hug and sing and cry. You feel their joy and relief: unlike the unfortunate others who have recently drowned, they've survived the short yet treacherous trip across the Aegean Sea. At the same time, you're anxious about the harsh circumstances they've yet to face as they seek haven in Europe.

The refugees quickly abandon the boat and shed their life vests. From the beach, they'll walk for about an hour before they reach town, where they'll register with the police for papers that allow them to move freely in Greece for up to six months. Some will wait for nearly two weeks before receiving papers; they'll live in tents along the touristy waterfront in the meantime. No refugees, you learn, stay in Greece: Those who reach the islands head for Athens once they get their papers—Athens is their gateway to the rest of Europe. The majority of asylum-seekers head to Germany and the rest of Northern Europe, where governmental policies and cultural attitudes have thus far been the most receptive to them.

As the freshly arrived refugees jubilantly disperse from the beach, a few men get out of a pickup truck brandishing local plates. Sunrise is approaching; they waste no time stripping the raft of its floorboards and engine. You wonder which link in the chain of human smuggling they're profiting from.

After being introduced to a European border agent some days later, you share your curiosity about the human smuggling. "Everybody's in on it," he says. Then he nods in agreement when you add: "Funny how money is always more organized than the public institutions responsible for helping people, isn't it?"

One evening, your stomach churns when authorities bark orders at refugees quietly waiting to board an overnight ferry from Kos to Athens. You blink in disbelief when the refugees, who have paid the same ticket price as everyone else, are segregated from the other passengers and embark the ferry from a different line. You think: They've survived the dangerous journey here, they've lived in tents and have gone without showers while waiting for a heel-dragging bureaucracy to deliver their papers and now *this*?

"The refugee crisis" has become a sort of catch phrase, perhaps because the media framed the issue as such early on. It *is* a crisis. But the crisis here is war, along with an unjust political-economic system that benefits from human suffering. Even media typically not shy about beating war drums have pinpointed war as the key problem. Despite this glaring truth, government leaders remain conspicuously silent about how, or whether, they envision building peace and equitable societies. Let alone create safe passageways for refugees in the immediate term.

This September I spent a week on Kos, a Greek island so close to Turkey that I could see the twinkling lights of beach town Bodrum from my hotel balcony. Like other islands such as Samos and Lesbos, Kos had become a major destination for refugees trying to reach Europe by boat, after the land crossing between Turkey and Greece had been sealed off earlier this year.

I went to Kos for two reasons, one being to accompany my partner, a journalist who has covered the Syrian civil war and has been producing refugee stories for a Dutch public broadcaster. As a magazine editor, yoga teacher and lifelong student, I also felt called to look for stories of heart and hope, beyond those of European citizens welcoming refugees into their countries and homes.

For the most part, the news media have done a stellar job informing us about the refugees' plight, from the strife in their home countries to abuses they're contending with at some European borders. We've also been inspired by news of the friendly welcome and support offered by many European citizens. Yet most news accounts keep us stuck on problems, leaving us to wonder what any one of us can do beyond signing petitions, sending donations and welcoming those lucky enough to survive perilous obstacle courses.

We know the refugees are fleeing bombs, totalitarian regimes, lost hopes and dreams. We know that, like everyone else, they want to live in peace, to be happy. We don't want war, those fleeing war-torn places don't either. So isn't there major potential here to create a unified—and therefore unstoppable—movement of peace? Yes, I believe. And therein lies the missing story.

In the words of my partner, the massive stream of refugees should be framed not as a crisis but as the largest peace march *ever*. It's an unintended grassroots movement with a single powerful message: No more war, no more suffering.

Before seeing the realities of refugee difficulties for myself, the humanitarian crisis seemed comfortably distant, even as my partner had been investigating it for quite some time. Once in the midst of it, I instantly understood that this is not a refugee problem or a Europe problem but a problem of the human spirit. None of us is exempt from the consequences of war, whose beastly tentacles grip all our consciences.

It was meeting Hanine that literally brought that realization closer to home. A 26 year-old Iraqi woman from Baghdad, Hanine stopped my partner and I on a Kos street one afternoon—she saw the camera dangling from my shoulder and asked if we were with the media and if we would be sharing her story. My partner arranged to follow Hanine on her journey through Europe, to tell her story for Dutch media. I vowed to do my part: In the United States, we frequently see war through the lens of those who wage it. We rarely hear from the real experts—those who are on the receiving end of bombs and gunfire.

I asked Hanine what she most wanted people to know. "It's very bad in Iraq," she said. "There is no water, no electricity, no nothing." She pointed at my ponytail and short-sleeved shirt, telling me that in Iraq, it was "wrong" for a woman to dress this way. Wearing skinny jeans, a striped long-sleeved shirt and sandals, Hanine could've passed for any other fashionable sophisticate in a city like New York or Amsterdam. The only obvious marker was her tightly pinned head scarf.

For Hanine, the unrelenting violence in Iraq became unbearable after losing two family members. Her brother-in-law was killed in a suicide bombing. Her brother, who served in the army, was shot by a sniper. A pharmacist employed by a hospital, Hanine saw her future growing increasingly dim. "Iraq is hell," she said.

Like Hanine, the refugees escaping brutal situations find themselves trapped between two unappealing choices: staying in their conflict-ravaged countries or risking arrest, or even death at sea, before reaching their final destinations in Europe. Both options pose grave dangers, but the latter at least presents the chance of a hopeful future. So the refugees sell everything they own, gather their cash and make their way through the human smuggling chains between Turkey and Western Europe.

Does Hanine see a possible solution to this human quagmire? "Forget the judgments our governments make on us," she said. Turning toward the cluster of refugee tents behind her, she added: "You, me, him [my partner], the Pakistanis, the Iraqis, the Syrians, everybody—we are all brothers here."

Taking my hands in hers, Hanine told me to have a good

Photo: Afghan women hug in relief.


TOM MIKE

life. As she did, I felt intensely aware of being a US citizen: the date happened to be September 11. I mentally connected the dots: This young Iraqi and I were meeting in Kos, of all places, because the US unleashed vast turmoil in Iraq, using September 11 as a justification for bombing the country in 2003, killing hundreds of thousands of civilians, even though Iraq had nothing to do with September 11.

Hanine, in such a short time, taught me so much about resilience, tolerance and love. She showed me, through her own courage, that we must resist the fear-mongering strategies some of our so-called leaders and experts rely on by opening ourselves to others and listening to their stories.

When you witness humanitarian situations up close, you develop a different relationship with what's going on vs. how you learn about them in the news. You begin to ask yourself questions like: What might we learn about the consequences of war when we open ourselves to those who are fleeing it? What could be healed within politicians' hearts if, for example, Syrian children spoke to members of Congress and weapons lobbyists about the problem of profiting from war?

Members of the major media find their humanity cracking open too. While reporting on situations faced by refugees, some cross the line of professional "objectivity" to lend refugees a needed hand. In a piece for *The Guardian*, freelance photographer Daniel Etter wrote about his emotional responses when seeing a Syrian family arrive to Kos, where he was on assignment for the *New York Times*. "In my entire career as a journalist, I have never been so overwhelmed by a moment that I was lucky enough to witness, and lucky enough to photograph," he wrote, going on to explain that, "at one point I didn't care any more about the images. They were wet and shivering. I helped them find their way towards the city of Kos, where the Greek authorities process people's papers."

Heading out of Greece, I took a midnight flight from Kos to The Netherlands, where my partner's family lives. During those three or so hours, I flew over many of the countries refugees cross by foot, bus, train or car in utter exhaustion. Somewhere below was Hanine, sleeping on a street in Zagreb, Croatia, where she stopped because Hungary had just closed its border and she needed to figure out her next move.

When I arrived in Amsterdam, I didn't have to show my passport or stop at Customs Control—I was traveling between Schengen countries. I had the "right" passport from the "right" country, which made my journey hassle-free. The stinging awareness of my citizenship this time around choked me up. As I waited on a desolate platform for a train out of Schipol airport, the emotions and tears rushed forward.

I'm happy to report that Hanine made it safely to Germany. As I write, she's in a refugee camp in Hamburg, waiting for her asylum application to be processed. ■

> **We frequently see war through the lens of those who wage it. We rarely hear from real experts—those on the receiving end of bombs and gunfire.**

HOW TO SUPPORT REFUGEES

The long-term work of ending war must continue, yet refugees need immediate support. Here are a few efforts worth donating to or participating in:

Doctors Without Borders
MSF, the French acronym for this organization, provides refugees with medical assistance, food, blankets and personal care products. Learn more: doctorswithoutborders.org

MOAS
Migrant Offshore Aid Station (MOAS) comprises medics and maritime officers. To date, MOAS has rescued nearly 12,000 distressed refugees at sea. Learn more: moas.eu

Refugee Air
As we went to print, this Swedish nonprofit, which runs a campaign called #LetThemFly, planned to start flying refugees from conflict zones to Europe. Learn more: refugeeair.org

Refugees Welcome
Flüchtlinge Willkommen, German for "Refugees Welcome," connects refugees with Europeans who have spare rooms in their homes. Learn more: refugees-welcome.net

Photo: Syrian refugees camp at the Vienna, Austria train station, waiting to travel onwards.

Painting of Zoe Weil by Robert Shetterly, as part of his series *Americans Who Tell the Truth*. You can see and purchase art from this series at americanswhotellthetruth.org.

5 Questions for: Zoe Weil

by Stephanie Van Hook

Zoe Weil is a systems-thinker and pioneer in the comprehensive humane education movement. She begins one of her many inspiring and challenging TEDx talks (TEDxConejo) by making the bold claim that if every child succeeded in our current educational system in the United States, we would still be stuck with the greatest problems facing humanity today. As she says, we need an education that re-imagines our human potential for creating solutions. Zoe is Co-founder and President of the Institute for Humane Education.

1. Which qualities of humane education help raise the human image?

The word "humane" means having what are considered the best qualities of human beings. Humane education is a process of learning how to deeply embody the best qualities of human beings.

As a humane educator—somebody who teaches about the interconnected issues of human rights, environmental preservation and animal protection—I often ask young people what they think are the best qualities of human beings, because I don't need to impose any list of my own; we all tend to agree on those best qualities. I say that with some certainty because I've asked thousands of people that question. Nobody says greed, hatred, violence, anger. People talk about compassion, kindness, generosity, perseverance, courage, honesty, integrity.

But how do you put those qualities into practice in a complex globalized world in which our choices—from what we eat and what we wear—can have an impact on people we will never see, animals we will never know and on the environment that sustains us all? When perceived that way, humane education isn't "soft work" at all. It is work that requires critical and creative systems-thinking.

It is ultimately the greatest reward for humanity if we can raise young people who want to learn about the impacts of their lives in the world; who want to create *real* solutions to systemic problems; who want to embody these best qualities that they themselves articulate.

2. If we all agree on these qualities, why is humane education so new?

It isn't new, actually. Humane education as a concept has been around for over a century. The early humane educators were people who started the very first humane societies for animals as well as the first child protective societies. That is the legacy of humane education. Then for many years, it drifted into being the purview of humane societies and how we should treat companion animals, dogs and cats primarily.

In the 1980s, a number of us worked really hard to expand humane education to its original meaning. It still, however, is not integrated into schools. About 18 states have laws that require humane education, but it's usually related to dogs and cats. It's not as deep as what I've just described.

Humane education doesn't need to be its own subject. If we begin to infuse all the foundational subjects we learn in school with this lens, looking at how we lead lives of purpose and meaning, and solve the problems we face, then we make the whole educational endeavor so rich and so important.

3. Do you find it more effective to work outside the educational system, creating your own schools and your own programs, or do you find it more effective to infuse humane ideals into the educational system?

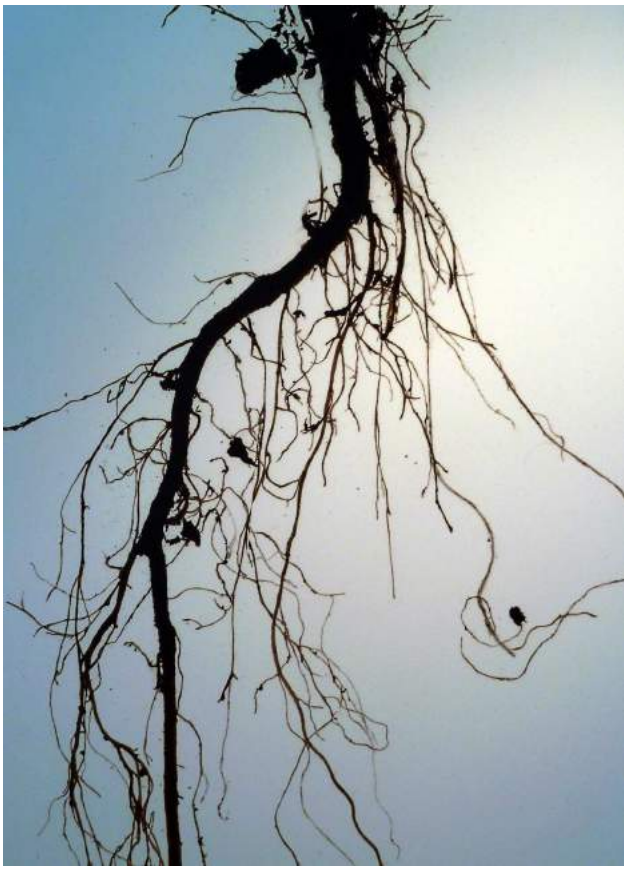
There are days when I'm very disheartened by the direction of our educational system, by our schooling system. But I would never give up on it. The educational system is the root system underlying every other system. There is no other system I can think of that doesn't have its roots in education, and so we must address it, and we must change it. At the same time, the seeds are more easily planted, and they sprout more readily, outside the traditional education system.

At the Institute for Humane Education, we train anybody and everybody who wants to be a humane educator. We have online graduate programs through Valparaiso University, and we have students in that program from all over the US and Canada, and around the world as well. There's a wide range of people in that program—public school teachers, private school teachers, artists. Some of them work at nonprofits or in religious education, and some start businesses. We would love to have about half the people in that program be classroom teachers in the traditional public school system, because we do want to have a big impact there.

Our students bring humane education into their communities in many ways. Homeschooling parents and concerned citizens might take our Teaching for a Positive Futures course, and they will incorporate what they learn into various settings, including summer camps, after school programs or the arts. We have to cast the net really wide. As far as we're concerned, anybody who can have an outlet for bringing the ideas forward should, and we want to help them do that. We also lead workshops, and we have short online courses that are not part of a graduate program.

4. Do you look at restorative justice in humane education?

There's not much that we *don't* look at, so absolutely. In fact, I have a new book coming out: *The World Becomes What We Teach and Educating a Generation of Solutionaries*. I open the book with stories about young people at various levels of schooling. I tell about them learning an issue and then becoming thoughtful solutionaries addressing that issue. These are not real stories; these are stories I made up to illustrate what humane education can be. One of the stories is about a young man who's alarmed by our prison system and our incarceration rates. He pursues learning about restorative justice and getting a certificate in restorative justice in high school so that he can practice it.



> **"The educational system is the root system underlying every other system.**

5. What do you do when you get angry about the state of the world? What brought you to humane education?

I think that anger has been a huge fuel for me. If we're not angry about injustice, cruelty and environmental destruction, then to me something's missing in our souls if we're not angry—or sad—about it. Some people respond to injustices and cruelty with sadness, some with anger and some with a combination of both. I'm one of those people who responds with a combination of both.

As a humane educator, I know that I'm also exposing people to injustice and cruelty—there's no way to solve these problems if we don't know about them. I'm quite aware that my work, and the work of humane education, is going to likely spark anger and sorrow.

There's a wonderful book, *Healing Through the Dark Emotions: The Wisdom of Grief, Fear and Despair* by Miriam Greenspan, on the suggested reading list for our graduate program for all of our courses. As Joan Baez said, "Action is the antidote to despair." I also think it's the antidote to rage that's dysfunctional.

To answer your question about how I got into this work: I was angry, and I was heartbroken as I learned about what was happening in our world. I wanted to do something, so I was writing letters to companies and to my senators and representatives. I started to do leafletting. While those things are important, I did not find them as satisfying as I needed to, to persevere with it.

In 1987, I heard about a summer program at the University of Pennsylvania—I was in graduate school at the time—offering weeklong courses to middle school students. I thought, "Well, I can teach them courses." I pitched five courses to the director, and he said yes to all of them. Two of them were humane education courses. One was on animal issues, and one was on environmental issues. Actually, three were humane education because one was also on media literacy, except there weren't enough kids who signed up for it, so it didn't run.

It was amazing to watch the transformation in my students when they learned about what was happening in the world. In one case, one boy became an activist literally overnight. This was in the Animal Issues course in which I talked about product testing on animals, where everything from soap and mascara and oven cleaner was dripped into the eyes of conscious rabbits. He went home that night and made his own homemade leaflets. It was 1987, so he did not have a personal computer; he hand wrote his leaflets. He came back to class the next morning with a stack of them, and he wanted to hand them out. But not to his classmates. He wanted to hand them out on the street. While the rest of us were having lunch, he was standing on a Philadelphia street corner handing out his homemade leaflets. Many of the kids in that class became activists—just from a weeklong course. That is when I realized I could make humane education my life's work.

I'm still in touch with some of the people who were in that first class. One of them I hadn't seen in 18 years, until I was giving a talk with Jane Goodall in New York [City] a few years ago. I invited him to come to the talk, because he had been working with the mayor of NY on HIV/Aids work, so he was still an activist. When I introduced him to friends I said, "This is David, he was in the first humane education course that I taught..." and before I could finish my sentence, he interjected: "That course changed my life."

If a weeklong course can change a child's life, imagine what would happen if this kind of education infused our entire educational system. We would solve our problems. I just have no doubt about it. Sadly, the current mission of the United States Department of Education is to prepare students for global competitiveness.

It's not as if I'm trying to suggest that students shouldn't be prepared to enter the workforce and do well in it. It's just that this isn't a high enough purpose. It's a very narrow vision of what education can and should be.

The irony is that in other countries, like Finland, the teachers are in the top 10 percent of their graduating classes in high school. It's very prestigious to be a teacher there, akin to being a doctor in our culture. Their pay isn't any different from the pay of teachers in the United States, although they have fewer school days and work hours. But they have autonomy. They don't teach the standardized tests, and they're not competing against each other. They get to be collegial, they get to collaborate. The assessments they give their students are ones they design themselves. On the international tests that are conducted on education, the Finnish students are so far beyond students in the US. Those tests are not the standardized bubble tests. The international tests measure critical thinking, creative thinking and real problem-solving.

If our goal really was competing in the global economy and doing well on international tests, we could be educating in an entirely different way. ■

Stephanie Van Hook *is Executive Director of the Metta Center for Nonviolence and host of* Peace Paradigm Radio (PPR). *This is an edited version of a conversation Stephanie had with Zoe on* PPR.

Photo: Hernán Piñera, flickr

Peace, Patañjali & Passage Meditation

Michael N. Nagler ties ancient wisdom to social action

Yoga practitioners are familiar with *The Yoga Sutras*, the classic spiritual text attributed to the great sage Patañjali. Estimated to be at least 4,000 years old, the *Sutras* offers one of the most penetrating journeys into meditation known in any literature. The second sutra, or aphorism, defines meditation in a terse Sanskrit formula worthy of an Einstein: *yogaścittavṛttinirodha*. Here is a rough translation of that: Meditation (yoga) is the suppression (nirodha) of thought-waves (vritti) in the mind (citta).

Meditation practices differ in *how* they attempt to master the suppression of the thoughts, feelings, ideas and memories that constantly crop up. Elsewhere in this issue, for example (see David Golding's essay on page 15), you can read about focusing thoughts on the breath, for as Ramana Maharshi says, "Breath is the gross form of mind." What we are going to present here is the technique of concentrating on the words of an inspirational passage, akin to the medieval practice of *lectio divina*, Latin for "divine reading."

But first, what is the relationship of yoga, meaning meditation in this case, and social action leading to nonviolence and peace?

In the second book of the *Yoga Sutras* Patañjali lays out the *yamas* and *niyamas,* or self-restraints and fixed observances that constitute a spiritual practice. The first yama is *ahiṃsā*, nonviolence. In Sanskrit, nonviolence has a more robust meaning than it does in English, where we think of peace as the absence of war and nonviolence as the absence of violence. *Ahiṃsā* can be translated more richly as "the power that arises when all desire to harm is suppressed." Does that not sound a bit like meditation as the suppression of thought waves? This is not a translation coincidence, as we'll see shortly.

There are four more yamas, and they read like the observances Gandhi strongly recommended for nonviolent activists and enshrined as regular vows in his ashrams, or spiritual communities: truth, non-stealing (meaning living on minimal resources), abstinence (often primarily understood as control of sexual impulses) and greed, or acquisitiveness.

Needless to say, such observances would make one a less aggressive person. What may be less obvious is the yamas' connection with meditation, which I'd like to illustrate through the technique of Passage Meditation.

Passage Meditation was developed by Sri Eknath Easwaran, while he was still a professor in India. He introduced it to the US in 1959, founding the Blue Mountain Center of Meditation a year or two later. He taught and lived at the Center's ashram in Northern California until his passing into final *samadhi,*or absorption into Reality, in 1999. Like Patañjali's eight limbs of yoga, Easwaran's system had eight parts: meditation, use of a mantram (or spiritual formula), slowing down, one-pointed attention, sense training, putting others first, spiritual reading and spiritual fellowship. Anyone familiar with the Indian spiritual tradition will recognize the system as the adaptation of the age-old classical technique for modern practitioners. Passage Meditation is simple enough to describe but extremely challenging to practice correctly. I heartily recommend visiting the Center's website (easwaran.org) and/or reading Easwaran's *Passage Meditation* for a real sense of what it can do for you.

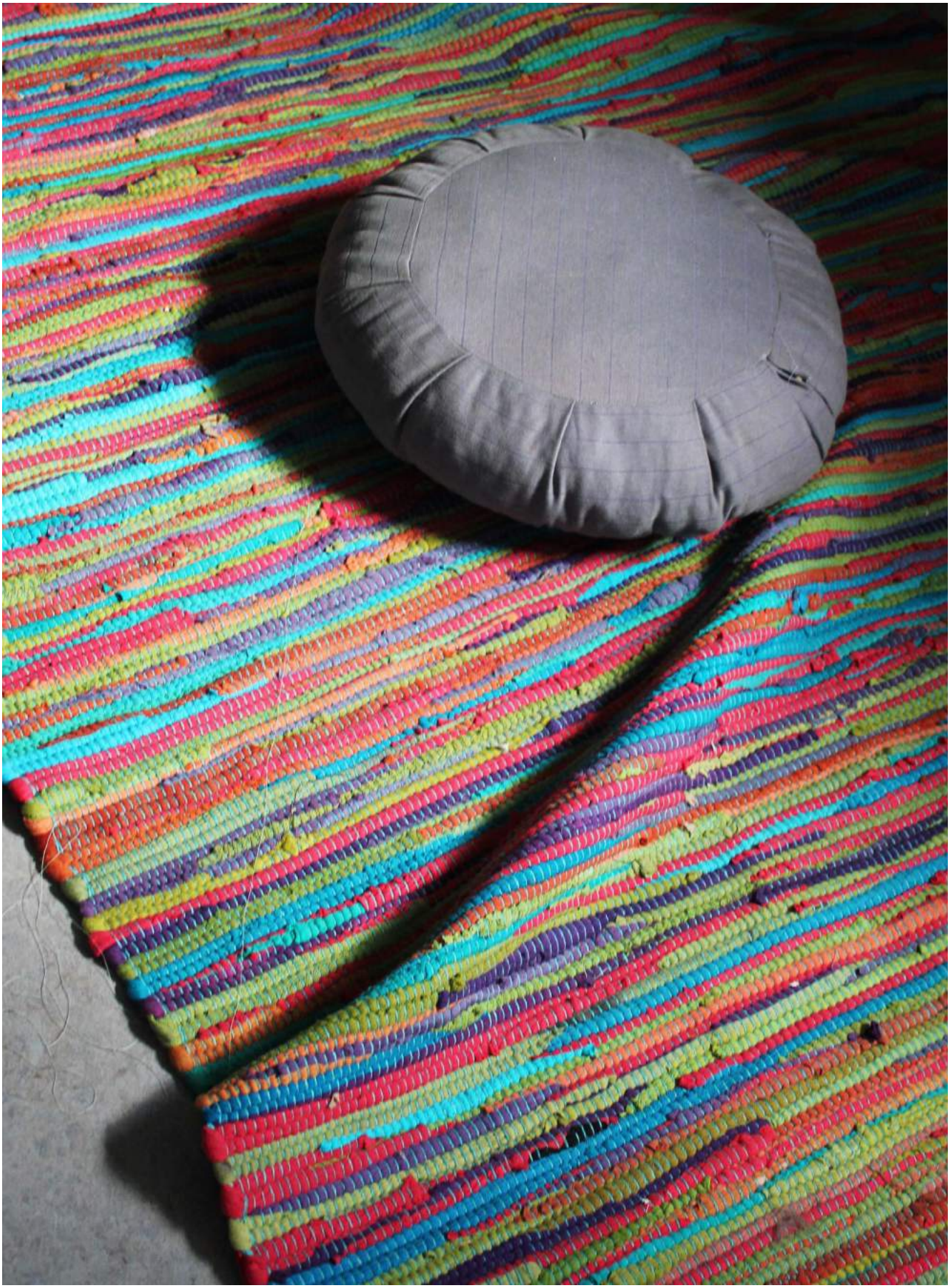


Photo: Quinn Dombrowski, flickr

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Discipline adds to our effectiveness as peacemakers, not to mention our well-being.

Here's how it works:

Pick out an inspirational passage that currently appeals to you and commit it to memory. You'll want it to be a fairly lengthy passage like the prayer of St. Francis, which tens of thousands of beginning passage meditators chose to start with. Then:

1. Dedicate a space where you live for your practice. A quiet room is ideal, but who has a whole room to themselves these days? People have been known to begin in just a corner. You are going to meditate the first thing on arising (OK, maybe after that first coffee), for half an hour. Try not to go longer (as with everything powerful, meditation *can* be dangerous if mishandled). The key will be making your morning meditation a daily habit.

2. Sit on a floor cushion or on a straight-backed chair, keeping your back, head and neck straight. Your posture should be comfortable but steady, balanced and natural.

3. Close your eyes gently and slowly recite the passage in your mind, as slowly as you can without losing the thread. Don't think *about* the words; just let them sink in. The more you concentrate your attention on the words, the more their meaning will register in your deeper consciousness. *And* the thought process itself will be slowing down. So you are doing two things at once: giving the mind positive content and slowing it down; and these two processes reinforce each other. Now comes the hard part.

4. Inevitably, something will pop into mind. Maybe you've only gotten to the second line of the passage ("Where there is hatred, let me sow love," for example) and the next thing you know the mind chimes in with, "Wasn't that guy full of hate at the demonstration last week!" Don't get annoyed with yourself (then you'll have two distractions). The minute you become aware of a distraction, just refocus your mind on the passage. Refocusing is an amazing discipline, and it's where you'll bear the fruits of the practice.

5. In time, you may notice a strange, quiet joy that steals over you when you recover from a distraction and put your mind back where *you* want it to go (it sure is nice to have joy around, but don't dwell on that, either). This quiet feeling adds to our sense of security, giving us a sense of hope that there's something other than this fleeting world to hold onto: something more to *you.*

With a consistent practice, you'll begin to instantly recognize when anger, fear or some other negative state has arisen—*and* quickly recover. You have been "bookmarking" the positive and negative states as "passage" and "distraction." Anger is, in fact, a distraction from our native state of love and unity. This is not to say that anger and fear are never appropriate; but what you *do* with them matters. As Martin Luther King, Jr. put it, we "express anger *under discipline* for maximum effect" [emphasis mine]. This discipline adds immeasurably to our effectiveness as peacemakers, not to mention our own well-being.

How far can you go with Passage Meditation? Gandhi once heard that a certain village headman had vowed to kill him on sight. He went straight to the headman's home, knocked on his door and said, "I'm here to help you fulfill your vow." The man throttled Gandhi—for a minute. Then he dropped his hands, fell at Gandhi's feet and said, "This village is at your service." We wouldn't try to go *that* far after a few weeks of meditation—or maybe ever. But the more deeply we practice, the closer we get to the real principle of nonviolence, described by Patañjali as: "When you are established in *ahimsa*, enmity dissolves in your mere presence." ■

A slightly different version *of this piece appears in Michael N. Nagler's* Meditation for Peacemakers, *available at Amazon.*

In the realm of moving waters

Lesvos Greece, 2015

≈

On the road to hot springs in early summer light,
red poppies welcoming longer days, we see cockeyed

life jackets, cut up water bottles, twisted wet pants
strewn across a wild flower hill, two locals

rolling up a tattered raft, lining up the jackets,
three the size of milk cartons, the orange still

inflated. Refugees walking to town tell us
they turned off their engine so they couldn't

be heard. Rain threatens the blue expanse
between Turkey and Lesvos. The sea chants.

≈

Nine with backpacks, perfect English hellos.
We reach out hands, their lips chapped,

parched volcanoes, several silent, except
for nods, one offers: *we almost died, the raft*

collapsed, we stayed so still, motions with his hands
a clean line of quiet down the middle of his body.

The others stare, shake their heads, yes to near
death on open seas, as the locals caution,

no bus, maybe some bread, no shelter
or sleep until Athens. *Sano* in Greek

means foreigner and guest, we are you
but, we have too little, yes, walk west,

yes, we say, keep walking, their eyes
painted forward, shoes dripping salt.

≈

For three rough-sea days our eyes scan
for rafts, scavengers with binoculars

and souped-up trucks eat bananas, perch
to pick through remains of the water's climb.

A man in a wetsuit waits to drag a new raft
to shore, exhort a price, money all wet.

We ask ourselves, is it better to see
a raft, or not; a child tucked under

her mother's chin, a holding place except,
the sea, now, a petrified forest.

≈

An Afghan's elder son, bones drenched
in sweat, tells me the worst was hiding

in Turkish mountains, scarier than
thirty-nine days walking across

a skeleton desert; he asks, *what island
are we on, in Italy or Greece*; girls

in Kmart shirts, teens with Samsung
phones, no charge, ask about Justin

Bieber and Sylvester Stallone; a long-lashed
girl stirs chocolate pebbles into yogurt,

says she likes the plastic spoon that folds
into itself; an elder woman keeps her eyes

from me until just before parting,
then reaches out her hand, squeezes mine.

≈
The bowl of the earth is turning upside
down, Greeks fled to Syria, Syrians fleeing

to Greece, Afghans paid to fight in
Syria, Afghans escaping to Greece;

Kali Mera and *As-Salam Alaikum* barely
a start; the teens teach me

Persian phrases, my mouth marbles,
as they laugh, ask again about a bus

to pick up their elders; a tourist
bus snorts up the hill, we walk.

≈
Now, I sleep with the sea, my
mind confusing helicopter blades

for fishing boats, a buzzing refrigerator
for a motorcycle. I see a dot zigzagging

across waves, a growing engine whirl, as I
wave *wahe guru* in big sweeps above

my head, guiding them to shore;
forty-four elations land their raft

on soft seaweed, this island, a canopy,
each raft, a nation, we share tea

and marmalade toast, families
walk, babies in arms at the back.

Poem by Becky Thompson, PhD. Becky is a professor, yoga teacher and activist. She is the author of several books, including *Survivors on the Yoga Mat: Stories for Those Healing from Trauma* (meditative essays) and *Zero is the Whole I Fall into at Night* (poetry). Her website is beckythompsonyoga.com.

Shoes

A short story by Patty Somlo

Six weeks after the mosque opened on the corner of Sixth and Broadway, shoes began disappearing from cubbyholes in the outer hall. Stepping through the elaborately carved wooden door in dark nylon socks, each man whose footwear had vanished assumed he'd forgotten where his shoes had been deposited.

"I thought I put mine here," one man said, pointing straight ahead of his nose. "But I guess not."

The men searched above and below the places they'd grown accustomed to leaving their footwear in the old suburban mosque. It did no good.

"My shoes are gone," a handsome young guy with a winning smile said. He smiled as he said this.

"So are mine," echoed an old man standing to his left, his gray hair partially hidden under a snug cap.

It was puzzling, of course, but the imam, a thirtyish American named Robert Fowler who in college had converted to Islam, tried to reassure the men and come up with an explanation.

"Probably a prank some kids are playing," the imam said. "Let's have tea downstairs and you can call home and ask your wife to bring another pair."

Each week for the next several, shoes continued to vanish from cubbyholes in the outer hall. The imam tried to pretend this had nothing whatsoever to do with the protests two years before, when news of the mosque construction went public. He wanted to believe that his outreach to the community had succeeded, as it seemed at the time. He certainly understood there were people for whom no words would change their minds. But he hadn't expected any harm to come to the mosque or the congregation.

Some people wondered why a quiet and shy man like Robert Fowler had chosen to become an imam. When

he spoke, even using a microphone, the men sometimes had to lean forward to hear him. The truth was, Imam Fowler hated conflict. During the period when the city was reviewing the mosque's construction permit and protests ensued, Fowler lay awake nights, listening to his wife's steady breathing, sleep eluding him until just before dawn. Some days his stomach ached and he had trouble getting food down.

Not surprisingly, the continuing disappearance of the shoes upset him. And though he tried to assure himself it wasn't a big deal, Fowler had to conclude that some type of response was needed.

And then some of the women's shoes went missing.

"You're kidding me," Chief Ann Hastings, head of the city's police force said to Fowler after he explained the mosque's latest problem. "Shoes?"

"Yes, Chief. Shoes. It's gotten so bad we're losing members. People can't afford to keep replacing their shoes."

"Shoes," the police chief said, as if verbalizing the stolen items might solve the mystery of their vanishing. "Well, this is a strange one, isn't it?"

"I don't want to think the worst but I suppose we should," the imam said, in a very soft voice. "We must consider that this might be some anti-Islamic activity."

The chief shook her head and then nodded.

The next afternoon, in time for the evening news, a press conference was scheduled. Chief Hastings, her bright blond bob shiny under the TV crews' lights, stood at the podium. Behind her, forming a half-moon, stood the city's religious leaders, including the imam, dressed in their particular spiritual garb.

"We will not tolerate any anti-Muslim acts," Chief Hastings said. "If we find whoever is responsible and the evidence suggests, we will prosecute these actions to the fullest extent of the law as hate crimes."

One by one, each of the religious leaders—all but two of whom were men—stepped up to the microphone, deplored the shoe vandalism and expressed solidarity with their Muslim brothers. That night, the six o'clock news began with a reporter saying, "The latest of what might be a series of anti-Muslim actions. Shoes are being taken from the controversial new mosque downtown."

Mary Wilson did not have a TV, so she missed the reports on the mosque. She had also found herself, strangely enough, without a home. This was not the first time. Mary Wilson had slipped up. She hadn't meant to, of course. As Mary claimed to her counselor, "I was tryin' real hard."

Mary'd started drinking again and found it impossible to stop. She had been binge drinking off and on since the afternoon she turned away for one minute too long. That one minute still haunted her. What could she have been thinking? Whatever thought lasted that long?

She could still hear the tires making that awful screeching sound. No amount of drinking made that stop.

As soon as she heard it, she whipped her head around. Then she started to run.

"My baby," she screamed, trying to reach the eight year-old boy who was the world and the stars and planets in the galaxy to Mary.

On a warm June afternoon, several pair of women's flats, high heels and sandals vanished. That same week, a young Nigerian who'd been studying engineering in London was arrested for attempting to bomb a New Jersey Army recruiting station. The young man's name was Mohammad.

"Just when things seemed to be getting better for us," an older man who worked in high tech said that Friday afternoon to the imam. "They will blame us, of course."

Once again, the imam held a press conference and condemned the latest act. For the umpteenth time, he repeated that Islam was a religion of peace and that true Muslims did not condone violence.

Brushing her teeth that morning in Macy's gleaming white-tiled ladies room downstairs in Housewares, Mary silently vowed to get back into rehab. This time she'd stick to it. No more feeling sorry for herself.

He weighs 54 pounds. That's the crazy thing Mary kept screaming, as she wailed over the body and the screeching ambulance siren got closer. The car, on the other hand, weighed several tons. Her baby, as Mary still called Eldon, even though she let him walk to school with his cousin Jarrell,

had been flung into the air like a baseball. His blood was bright red and pooled around him. There was no warm breath coming from his nose, even after Mary pumped his heart and breathed in and out of his mouth.

She was still pumping when the ambulance arrived.

His name, she told the policeman, was Eldon Flowers. Sure, he had a daddy but Mary did not know where that man might have gone.

Imam Fowler walked down Third Avenue toward Burnside. He glanced from side to side. Nearly every available doorway was filled with bodies in nylon sleeping bags or sitting and panhandling next to crude cardboard signs.

He was on his way to the monthly meeting of RCOH, the Religious Council on the Homeless. The young imam was thinking how useless these meetings had become, with several hours of talk but no concrete steps taken to address the problem. In the two years he'd been on the council, the disheveled throngs on the sidewalk had multiplied. It wouldn't look right if he dropped out, he understood, especially with this latest attempted bombing. But it might do more good to meet with members of his mosque and see what they could accomplish.

Fowler happened to glance down about half a block before reaching the Mission. The shoes—men's soft brown leather loafers, women's black patent leather heels and a few pair of blue and white Nikes—caught his eye.

The imam lifted his left wrist and checked the time. He had at least 10 minutes to spare.

He took his time studying each and every pair, carefully arranged on the wrinkled off-white sheet. He thought about the men and women who came to pray at the mosque—the men's pressed shirts, the dark, clean socks and the women's scarves. For a brief moment, he could smell the strong black tea brewing downstairs in the basement and see women filling the white porcelain cups.

The imam raised his eyes and considered the woman sitting behind all those shoes, her shoulders curled, her head dropped. Of course, he couldn't help himself, so he took his gaze across her side-folded legs, to get a better look.

Mary had set the shoes out neatly, with a small space separating each of the pairs. As she did whenever a potential customer stopped, she kept her gaze lowered while the imam looked.

Hoping to stop the water that had started to run from the corners of his eyes, Imam Fowler coughed, then silently prayed. His mind resisted the familiar words that had long been such a comfort. Instead, the imam found himself turning again and again to gaze at those feet—naked and dirty—lying peacefully next to a sidewalk filled with shoes.

"Excuse me," Fowler said.

The woman raised her eyes. They were large and dark, in a thin tan face the imam felt certain had once been pretty.

"I was wondering," he said, attempting to control the quivering in his voice. "How much do you want for the whole lot?" ■

Patty Somlo *lives in Santa Rosa, CA. "Shoes" previously appeared in* Slow Trains Journal *and is from Patty's short story collection* The First to Disappear, *to be published by Spuyten Duyvil next year.*

Illustration: Ellie Cross; ink on paper. Artist website: artworks.com

The Power to Do Nothing

Growing up with an activist mother, I learned from a young age how to wholeheartedly rebel.

by Soneile Hymn

At 10, I had already joined my first protest (to protect whales) and later that year, I began attending Green Party meetings and anti-nuclear demonstrations with my mother. As an adult, I reached a point at which I was fatigued, cynical and questioning the impact of my work—and even my ability to be a great parent for the beautiful daughter I had been blessed with. War still raged, income inequality was growing, the destruction of nature continued and it seemed that the vast majority of the world couldn't fathom a new way of being. My hope had dwindled to a brittle thread. I felt a calling to let go of activism, but it took me a while to do so. I kept hearing myself ask, *Soneile, isn't that the opposite of what the world needs right now?*

Michael Nagler, the founder of the Metta Center for Nonviolence, coined the term "person power" to refer to developing our full potential as individuals so we can contribute to the world around us. Our capacity to flex our person power is connected to our ability to know and be true to our hearts. For many, myself included, taking action in the world is intrinsically tied to our drive to heal ourselves from the hurts and injustices that we have suffered in our own lives. But I eventually realized that to understand who I was, I needed to distance myself from my identity as an activist and its demands towards political action. I needed to turn inward and face a bigger struggle in my life: the inner struggle to be fully alive. Who would I be if I stopped being who I *thought* I should be? What would I do if I stopped worrying about what I *should* do?

The development of person power is a lifetime endeavor, a continuous cycling to strengthen our center as we change and grow. Sometimes we may need to detach ourselves from our work—say "no" to the outside world—to get in touch with our inner selves. In my case, I discovered how important it was to wade through lingering childhood trauma, because it had been blocking me from understanding, engaging with and transforming myself.

I began giving myself space to develop my person power: I went camping to connect with the natural world; I went through therapy, both physical and emotional; I wrote in my journal and deepened my yoga practice; I made art; I took a solo personal retreat. I also quit trying to save money. Then, I quit a job. I stopped trying to fix things in the outside world. I now feel more centered, more free, more loving with my family, more connected to the human race, more hopeful and less perplexed. I am stronger and more fearless. My inner equilibrium is less dependent on the triumphs and losses of the day. I know myself more deeply and am more present. I know how I want to live my life.

> **"Who would I be if I stopped being who I *thought* I should be?**

Sometimes, it's better to not act at all. ■

Soneile Hymn *is Director of Flow at the Metta Center for Nonviolence and the loving mother of Ramona.*

Nonviolence Highlights of 2015

Compiled by the staff at the Metta Center for Nonviolence

Kayakers rally in a Shell No action organized by the Backbone Campaign, a member of the Shell No coalition.

> Ironic as it might seem, placing relationships before profits is the core of our happiness as well as our prosperity.

Nonviolence goes far beyond protests and street marches. It involves building an equitable society, from the ground up, with economics and education designed to meet real human needs. Ironic as it might seem, placing relationships before profits is the core of our happiness as well as our prosperity.

While much of nonviolence begins with our own potential, what Gandhi called "soul force," creating a peaceful and just world requires all of us. So this article looks at collaborative initiatives aimed at bringing us into that world.

Within a single article, we can highlight just a few nonviolent actions that captured our attention in 2015. We are mindful of, and grateful for, the fact that people everywhere are using nonviolence to address injustices, heal relationships and live their true purpose.

We found the following actions noteworthy because they: featured creative organizing and communications techniques, involved coalitions of diverse participants, represent ongoing efforts to dismantle structures of violence and show the interdependency between our local and global communities.

Shell No

After learning about the Port of Seattle's decision to house Arctic-bound Shell oil-drilling rigs, concerned people banded together and launched the Shell No campaign. Despite opposition from Seattle's residents and city officials, the Port of Seattle proceeded with the Shell lease contract. Other factors contributed to their sense of urgency: the Obama administration had granted Shell a limited drilling window of three months, wildlife would be harmed and the further extraction and burning of fossil fuels would lead to dire climatic hazards.

Strategy: Obstruct Shell's plans to drill off Alaska's North Slope, in the Chukchi Sea

Key message: Cimate justice—now

Participants: Local citizen-activists, environmental organizations and tribal leaders

Tactics: Aiming to block Shell's port activities and prevent the company's rigs from heading out to sea, activists formed flotillas of kayaks, canoes and boats. These efforts kicked off in May, with the three-day campaign "Paddle in Seattle." Then in July, on the scheduled departure of the Fennica icebreaker, kayaktivists choked the Willamette River while Greenpeace activists blocked the waterway from above, by rappelling from Seattle's St. John's Bridge, where they bravely dangled from hammocks and platforms for two days.

Analysis: In light of the three-month drilling window, time was truly of the essence for the Shell No actions. So even delays in drilling time would equal some success. The water and bridge blockades forced the Fennica to turn around on its first attempt out, but on the next day, after police started clearing activists from the bridge and the river, the icebreaker made it through.

The activists' vivid displays garnered international press, intensifying wariness about Shell's drilling plans. This campaign gave rise to a new term in public vernacular: kayaktivism. It also increased a sense of immediacy around the consequences of extracting and burning fossil fuels.

While Shell reached the Chukchi Sea and had started drilling there, the oil corporation dropped its plans at the end of September. In a media release published on its website, Shell announced that it would "cease further exploration activity in offshore Alaska for the foreseeable future." Besides monetary costs, Shell cited a "challenging and unpredictable federal regulatory environment" among its reasons for abandoning its plans. Weeks later, in early October, the Obama administration halted future drilling in the Arctic by canceling governmental auctions for lease rights and rejecting drilling bids.

Shell had already faced obstacles before the launch of Shell No. Lawsuits, rig damage and problematic weather had all led to delays and profit losses. Shell No deserves applause for courageous action and raising massive public awareness, locally and internationally.

Everyday Heroism in Syria

"In a dark time, the eye begins to see..." This opening line of Theodore Roethke's poem "In a Dark Time" comes back to us when we look past the commercial media, into everyday heroism in Syria. You may have heard of the White Helmets, unarmed civilians who risk their lives to rescue victims of barrel bombs and other attacks. Less well known are the more than 60 civil society groups still carrying on the original nonviolent uprising that began in 2011. These groups are working in areas like peacebuilding, human rights and violence-abatement. Their work notably crosses religious, political and geographical lines.

Strategy: In addition to the more than 2,500 White Helmet volunteers working in Syrian cities, Nonviolent Peaceforce (NP), in collaboration with Cure Violence (CV) and the Syrian Civil Coalition (TAMAS), will train and support local groups in organizing civilian protection and cease-fires, along with implementing violence-interruption projects. NV and CV will also consult Syrian activists on identifying best practices. Then, and perhaps most importantly, these support organizations will help local groups form a network to collaborate on building a post-war Syria.

Key message: People *can* organize to keep hope and humanity alive under the most dangerous circumstances. Outside NGOs can discretely offer critical assistance.

Participants: An international organization (NP), a US-based neighborhood intervention group (CV), a coalition of Syrian groups (TAMAS) and countless Syrian volunteers

Tactics: The White Helmets, who are on duty 24 hours a day, rescue victims and retrieve bodies with little equipment.

Analysis: Non-partisanship is of utmost concern for the humanitarian and pre-emptive de-escalation workers in Syria. Non-partisanship has long been an established principle in conflict intervention work, whether intra-neighborhood, domestic intervention like Meta Peace Teams or cross-border organizations like NP and Peace Brigades International.

Europeans Welcome Refugees

The unprecedented number of refugees escaping grave turmoil in their home countries, most of them seeking asylum in Europe, is one of the 2015's biggest stories. While initial media coverage centered on negative reactions of governments and citizens, that perspective quickly expanded once a video recorded by Talal Abk, a Syrian refugee, went viral. Abk's video showed Germans welcoming him and a bus full of fellow refugees arriving in the town of Oer-Erkenschwick. In the video, some Germans are seen holding signs and flowers, others waving and clapping. The heartwarming images captured an angle previously overlooked in the media: love and generosity.

Strategy: Overpower divisive messaging and governmental hand-wringing with friendliness and compassion for people in need

Key message: We welcome refugees, and we want them to feel safe.

Participants: European citizens, with tipping-point help from positive news stories

Tactics: Greeting people with cheers is just one layer of support. Recognizing the scale of the humanitarian issue, Europeans have also assembled community-based networks to assist refugees with transportation, housing and cultural integration.

Analysis: Unlike the other actions we mention, the welcoming of refugees is more of an organic human response than the implementation of a planned strategy. Still, we consider it strategic because the welcoming Europeans are acting with an overarching and longer term goal: countering xenophobia and bureaucracy with receptivity and care.

While governments flounder to broker peace in places like Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan—and as they fail to provide refugees with safe routes into countries where they can apply for asylum—compassionate, determined people are sidestepping officialdom and taking up the lead themselves.

Europeans and refugees are finding ingenious ways to hack bureaucracy. For example, they've taken advantage of a rule allowing anyone to cross the Norwegian-Russian border without a visa—as long as they're riding bicycles. People who cross this border by car or foot must have the visa, but those going by bicycle only need to show a valid passport. One Syrian refugee recounted his travels for *Al-Jazeera*, retracing his journey by plane from Moscow to Murmansk, where Russians drove him to the Norwegian border and then helped him find a bicycle.

Such workarounds are both obstructive and constructive, as they resist a harmful system while formulating practical alternatives to meeting human need. A number of citizen-led initiatives along these lines have been springing up. After Iceland announced that it would take in just 50 refugees, for instance, Icelanders started applying pressure on their government to accept more asylum-seekers by volunteering their own homes and pledging to foster children. At the end of September, the Icelandic government announced it would grant asylum to 100 refugees. That number may have fallen far short of what Icelanders envisioned, but it nevertheless doubled, and it shows how citizens have jammed the "but we can't" inaction of their government with "of course we can!" spirit.

As their governments continue to close borders and build fences, the Europeans who are welcoming refugees show all of us that we *can* take care of one another, that we *can* create flexible systems to serve our needs.

Indigenous Struggles in India

The government and private sector in India are eroding and, at times, outright ignoring policies that protect the environment and indigenous rights with "development" projects on indigenous lands—deforestation, dams and mining are threatening the planet's health and the livelihoods of indigenous communities in Uttar Pradesh and Udisha. The projects have met strong resistance as communities fight to safeguard Earth and their traditional way of life.

Strategy: Stop government and private sector land grabs as well as policy violations

Key message: Protect the earth and indigenous rights

Participants: Local communities; organizations such as All India Union for Forest Working People (AIUFWP), Save Kanhar Movement, Niyamgiri Protection Forum

Tactics: The Uttar Pradesh and Udisha communities have used dialogue, advocacy and local protests and rallies. They are also gaining support from outside allies.

Analysis: This indigenous resistance movement in India is united on a number of fronts. The participating organizations mentioned above were established in the name of protecting community homeland and rights. For engaging in peaceful protests, activists have been beaten and jailed, and some people are still in jail on fabricated charges.

To explain the damages posed by development projects, communities have met with government ministers and shareholders from private sector firms. In some cases, the dialogues have worked to stall development deals, as they did with a mountain mining project. In other cases, like the controversial Kanhar dam project, community activism has been met with violence and the projects are continuing in spite of the resistance.

Largely led by women, these indigenous communities in India are strengthening their organizing work, which has been going on for many years. In light of a 2015 bill that gives corporations easier access to indigenous land for mining and development purposes, the activists have escalated their efforts.

Pope Francis Releases *Laudato Si*

Nonviolence can be as powerful from above as it is from below, from the grassroots. This past May, Pope Francis released his encyclical *Laudato Si: On Care for our Common Home*, which upholds human dignity while boldly speaking to issues typically consigned to the realm of politics. Poverty and climate change, he declared, are the symptoms of a spiritual crisis.

Strategy: Reach Catholics and non-Catholics alike with a vision of the earth as a sacred trust, with humans as her trustees.

Key message: Climate change is real, and as the poor are at the front lines of it, we must address the structural implications of violence.

Participants: The Catholic Church; the environmental and climate change movements; arguably, Earth and her creatures

Tactics: Pope Francis' words show a Gandhian insistence on Truth and a clear articulation of the New Story from a position of recognized power.

Analysis: The Holy See broke ground by weaving together new scientific knowledge with timeless wisdom, drawing on neuroscience, environmental science, biology, social science and even indigenous knowledge, while holding up to new light the Catholic social teachings, including the spiritual inspiration from his namesake, St. Francis of Assisi.

By taking a truthful stance on climate change, poverty, violence and the need for uplifting the human image, Pope Francis set a clear path that others in high public positions can take. As the *Bhagavad Gita* says, "What a great person does, others will follow." Perhaps some of the truth-telling courage we are seeing from leaders such as Canada's newly elected prime minister, Justin Trudeau, is due to Pope Francis's influence. We could also look at President Obama's decision to nix construction of the Keystone XL pipeline through the same prism. ■

The Metta Center for Nonviolence *is a 501(c)3 organization that provides educational resources on the safe and effective use of nonviolence, with the recognition that it's not about putting the right person in power but awakening the right kind of power in people.*

The Head Works With the Heart

Stephanie Van Hook sees nonviolence as experiential learning

Wouldn't it be wonderful if you could learn—I mean *really* learn—about love by reading Shakespeare instead of getting your heart broken, and living through the pain of loving someone who can't or won't love you back? Or wouldn't it be easy if we could get everything we needed to develop our nonviolence by quoting the great peacemakers at length, without ever needing to hold back a single impulse toward greed or resentment? But it doesn't work that way. As Buddha said, we would end up like a cowherd counting another's cows.

Learning wisdom-in-action involves more than our intellectual capacities. The intellect is a helpful tool, but ultimately knowledge must reach the heart—it must, in other words, become realized, seamlessly woven into our thoughts, words and actions as a natural given. We have to listen to our experiences more, instead of letting the intellect constrain what we are capable of experiencing with its preconceived notions.

A mystic might say that this as a kind of faith, in which you experience before you understand, and seek to understand only what you have experienced. If we learn to look closely and deeply enough, we touch upon an ever-present state of awareness, one that ultimately connects us with everything in life.

In nonviolence, all we have to do is let our experiences speak to us. Did that harsh word increase or reduce suffering? Did I feel happy when the person I love enjoyed something? *Then*, with the intellect's help, we can analyze our experiences (our intellects just love meaningful tasks!) and consider, for example, how to expand this reality to inform institution building and social movements. ■

Humanism, Nonviolence, Human Rights, Disarmament, Non-discrimination

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