

The Beloved Community: THE BUSINESS OF US ALL

Artwork by Happy Sloth

By Raymont Anderson

*If you are neutral in situations of injustice,
you have chosen the side of the oppressor.*

– ARCHBISHOP DESMOND TUTU

What is the purpose of religious or spiritual organizations? Is it to assist people by giving them the means to live their best lives? What happens when religious organizations operate in opposition to life, liberty and freedom? When their silence serves as a demonstration that they act in opposition to equity, justice and unity?

What is the point of declaring that we practice a living faith of action by saying such things as, “Treat and move your feet,” if there is going to be a choice, consciously or unconsciously, to abstain from any effective action and activism? If it is believed that, as we read in James 2:14, “Faith without works is dead,” why would any organization choose to remain inactive and silent while all manner of human rights atrocities occur?

There are any number of reasons given as to why many New Thought organizations and individuals do not attend rallies, even though we have evidence of their beneficial impact. And showing up with a New Thought consciousness could be a powerful demonstration that could add to the energy of the students in Tennessee, for example, who in April showed up in record numbers at the state capitol to protest ongoing gun violence in our schools.

As Ernest Holmes said and we often repeat, there is only One Life, and that Life (God/Spirit) is incarnating Itself in, through and as each of us. That One Life is all there is.

While we recognize and embrace the teaching, many remain unwilling to be 21st century New Thought Good Samaritans. In the parable of the Good Samaritan, Jesus taught the importance of service, of helping and of healing people, not because they are reflections of ourselves but because everyone deserves to be humanely cared for.

In a speech at Asilomar in 1954, Holmes said, “Your life is my life; my life is your life. I cannot leave you out and understand myself. I am incomplete. I am lame and blind and halted without inclusion.”

In Genesis, we read something similar: “Cain asks, ‘Am I my brother’s keeper?’” This can be expanded to say, “Am I my brother’s keeper? My sister’s keeper? My gender non-conforming, gender-rich, gender-fluid sibling’s keeper?” In answer, I *am* them and they *are* me. There is only One, and what happens to one affects all.

The ABC television program, “What Would You Do?,” is an amazing metaphysical invitation. It affords everyone the opportunity to deeply assess their values and integrity, while the TV show’s hidden cameras receive and observe how people choose to react and respond with each dilemma they encounter. With each dilemma in life, there is the invitation to choose. And these choices indicate the values of the people choosing.

Each moment, there is the choice to either get involved and take action, to “move your feet,” or to compartmentalize the values and integrity, opt to remain silent and walk away and mind your own business. Whatever choice each of us makes, the Law of Mind always says yes to everything it receives.

The Challenge Is Ours

There is no widespread evidence that New Thought churches, centers or organizations are choosing to engage in the social and human issues before us at this exact moment in time. There is no en masse evidence that they are choosing the health, well-being and humanity of the very people who are being threatened and stripped of their rights to everything from free expression to health care, with more and more legislated discrimination and hate.

It is time to network and connect with one another in clearly identifiable ways.

Mamie Till-Mobley, mother of Emmet Till, realized the importance of speaking up and speaking out after the brutal murder of her son in 1955. She said, “When something happened to the Negroes in the South I said, ‘That’s their business, not mine.’ Now I know how wrong. I was. The murder of my son has shown me that what happens to any of us, anywhere in the world, had better be the business of us all.”

The Beloved Community as embraced by spiritual leaders from Holmes to Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. is not created by watching as people are being hurt emotionally and harmed physically by the passing of laws in opposition to our shared humanity.

Do not forget that at one time in the United States, it was legal to own and sell a Black person. Remember that until 1924, Native Americans were not considered citizens and were denied the right to vote. Until the 1970s, the law prohibited a woman from having her

own credit card or a bank account or bank loan without her husband’s or father’s approval.

So the central question is not one of the legitimacy of the laws but rather what is the role and responsibility of religious and spiritual organizations when laws are established to deny a person’s humanity and freedom to live their lives as an individualization of the Divine?

Where Are the Prophetic Voices of New Thought?

Every day, more and more people find their rights, freedoms and basic human dignities challenged and literally stripped from them. At the same time and in the midst of these denials of our shared humanity, many New Thought organizations, leaders and congregants simply stand by.

For example, there is a shocking lack of effective safety measures implemented for children in their schools, measures that would literally save lives and prevent another generation of children from having to worry each day whether they will survive in the classroom.

As John Lewis asked, “If not us, then who? If not now, then when?”

Do we believe Holmes when he said, “The Divine Plan is one of



“But if the church will free itself from the shackles of a deadening status quo, and, recovering its great historic mission, will speak and act fearlessly and insistently in terms of justice and peace, it will enkindle the imagination of mankind and fire the souls of men, imbuing them with a glowing and ardent love for truth, justice and peace. Men far and near will know the church as a great fellowship of love that provides light and bread for lonely travelers at midnight.”

– DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.

freedom; bondage is not God-ordained. Freedom is the birthright of every living soul." If so, what then is the role of our spiritual organizations and communities to ensure that the Divine Plan — a world that works for all — is made manifest?

The Beloved Community that both Dr. King and Dr. Jim Lockard wrote about is the model for manifesting a world that works for all. We have the means within the New Thought organizations, in the teachings, the tools and the methods of visioning. We already have the ability to be the Beloved Community.

To do so, we must heal the long-standing consciousness of being the "best-kept secret." The consciousness of rugged individualism and going it alone must be healed.

All of the related fears, anxieties and various discord must and can be addressed and healed. And all of this needs to be addressed now, before another school shooting occurs. It needs to be addressed now, before another transgender person's healthcare is removed.

As Jesus told the righteous, "I was hungry, and you gave me nothing to eat. I was thirsty, and you gave me nothing to drink. I was a stranger, and you did not take me in. I was naked, and you did not clothe me. I was sick and in prison, and you did not visit me.

"And the righteous asked, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to you?' Jesus responded, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.'"

The Time Is Now

If our spiritual organizations are to survive and thrive in the 21st century and beyond, we must engage and embody a new paradigm and a new practice. And it must be one that recognizes the importance of supporting human rights with true advocacy beyond offering just thoughts and prayers.

Our life-affirming values can be added to the advocacy work of the many organizations engaged in protecting human rights. We don't each have to grab a sign and take to the streets, just like not everyone did or could do during the Civil Rights Movement. But we can wed our values to our actions by doing what is ours to do. By doing rather than just sitting by.

The call to action is now. The warning alarms are ringing now. The red flags are waving vigorously now. The question before us is: What will New Thought do to be a healing presence in the world? ❀

PRACTICING SACRED ACTIVISM

How can we be the change we want to see in the world and live from our commitment to the Beloved Community? How do our words, thoughts, intentions and beliefs become meaningful action?

From Naropa University: Sacred activism is an approach to social justice that synergizes mindful awareness and spirituality with the work of diversity, equity and inclusion. Spirituality, whether secular or non-secular, nurtures roots of hope, self-awareness and sacred community to human rights work, while social justice work activates and focuses spiritual practice on tangible injustices.

This interdisciplinary framework prepares today's Beloved Community with the skills needed to be active changemakers while simultaneously improving personal resilience, intrapersonal communication and emotional regulation.

From Andrew Harvey: We can live from a vision of action that is inspiring, hopeful and grounded in deep spiritual wisdom and compassion. Some spiritual seekers, for instance, use spiritual knowledge as a subtle way of dissociating from hands-on realistic social, economic and political engagement in the world.

Exhaustion, burnout, and debilitating and divisive emotions can cut us off from the healing and transforming wisdom of spiritual traditions and simple techniques, prayers and practices that sustain, inspire and nourish our well-intentioned endeavors.

People are rising up who have fused deep spiritual knowledge, experience and practice with wise, incessant action for justice and peace. Together, we can accomplish the unimaginable.