

Creating Personal Peace for Purposeful Social Action

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Never before has there been such a sense of urgency to transform society and save our planet, and with good reason. Civilization is on a cliff's edge, precariously balanced between a breakdown or breakthrough in our cultural evolution. Our social, financial and environmental systems are deteriorating, a global pandemic is wreaking havoc on our daily lives and cultural and social wounds that have been festering for hundreds of years are in urgent need of attention. The challenges can seem insurmountable most days, but I remain optimistic.

By default, I believe our natural mode of existence is one of peace. Our human essence is tuned toward one of cooperation and love, and when we engage in deep, personal practice we can return to this centered state of being. Unfortunately, this essence of peace seems to be frustratingly elusive when viewed through the lens of our cultural values. If we're to heal, evolve and unite as a global family it's critical that we take purposeful, social action. Before we heed the call to transform the world, however, we must also engage in the important work of inner transformation to find and return to this place of peace.

The link between personal and social transformation cannot be ignored. In simple terms, if you don't feel good, you can't change the world, and if the society is ill, you can't transform a community. Integral Transformative Practice was founded with this understanding as well. In *The Life We Are Given*, ITP co-founders Michael Murphy and George Leonard write:

"...for all of us there was the vision that first brought us together: the awesome knowledge that the universe is embarked on an enormous journey of evolution and that each of us has a chance to make a positive contribution - no matter how small, how incremental - to that journey. It is, after all, the accretion of minute changes that ultimately powers the most startling evolutionary leaps."

It's imperative that we engage in practices that help us balance and center in a place of peace. What's more, when we're able to find and return to this core essence of ourselves, we're also more likely to get in touch with our true purpose. Once we begin to know and feel our way into our sense of purpose, we, in turn, become more peaceful.

This positive spiral of personal evolution reinforces our personal development and allows us to move out in the world from a peaceful and purposeful place. This is the key to successfully shifting our society toward one of unity and cooperation. Throughout history there have been cultural revolutions, yet we're still struggling to give people their basic rights, freedoms and services required for human dignity upon which a transformed society can be built. Anger and frustration might fuel a movement, but it is love and compassion that will foster and sustain true transformation.

It can seem counterintuitive to ask one another to take action from a place of peace when there is plenty to be angry about in this current climate. It is imperative that we do the work to create a foundation of compassion within ourselves before we try to change the world. I wholeheartedly support peaceful protesting for just causes, but when social action turns to social unrest, a positive message can get lost in fear and uncertainty. An article written in the New York Times recently suggested that the violent demonstrations during the 1968 Democratic National Convention inadvertently helped Nixon win the election. Violent protests and destructive behavior make headlines, but can often hurt the longevity of a cause.

If peace is our natural default mode, then how did we get to a place of such division and fear within our culture? I think the simple answer is that human consciousness has been high-jacked by the materialistic paradigm. We've been brainwashed to such a degree that it's become toxic.

Material wealth is the current metric in which we measure our value, and we've been duped into believing success and happiness are linked to our net worth. So much of our collective frustration, anxiety and fear is a result of this rampant materialism. We long for purpose and meaning, but these materialistic habits distract us from awakening to the spiritual essence of who we all are.

Stepping on a path of personal transformation is a sacred endeavor. By doing the important work toward creating inner harmony within ourselves, we can realize our true connection within a unified field of consciousness. It's time for a spiritual revolution from the inside out. One that is ignited by peace and love and manifests in purposeful social action.