

The Inalienable Eleven

*... a far more ancient "Bill of Rights";
for some much-needed Courage & Clarity
in our current times of Change & Challenge*



Innate Freedoms that are always yours;
No matter what "they" do ...
... & no matter what you don't.

via Scaughdt
an (i)am publication

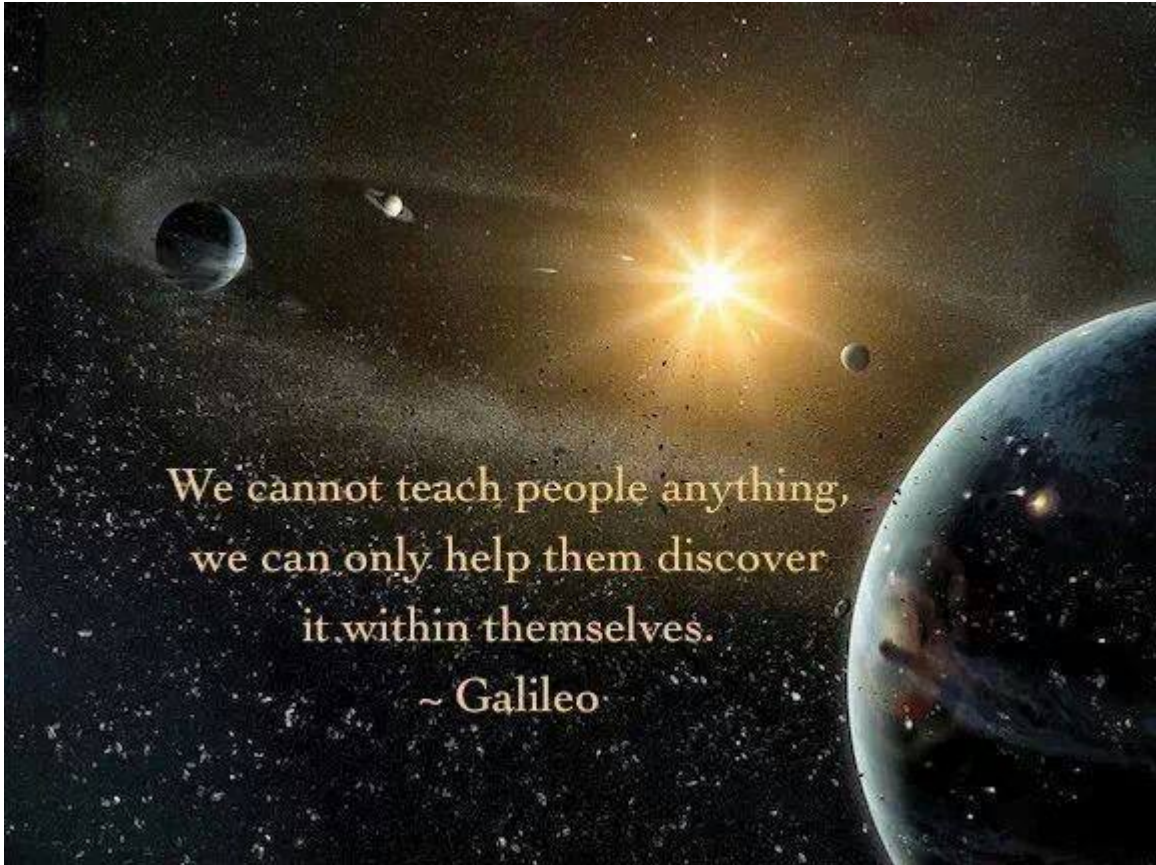
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*“People can get used to anything.
The less you think about your oppression,
the more your tolerance for it grows.*

*After a while, you just think oppression
is the normal state of things.*

*But to become free, you must first
become acutely aware of being a slave.”*

~ Assata Shakur



We cannot teach people anything,
we can only help them discover
it within themselves.
~ Galileo

An Introduction to Slavery & Freedom ...

*“If I have to beat you up to keep you safe,
then that’s just what I’ll do.
It’s this kind of disregard for others
that makes me believe I’d be a good politician.”
~ Jarod Kintz*

Thanks in large part to the internet, there has been a dramatic increase in transparency of late — a lifting of the veil that had previously covered the corruption & malevolence of our world’s political “leaders”. And this awakening has not been limited solely to 2nd & 3rd World nations like Iran & Turkey & Brazil. No, the United States -- a true blue “superpower” -- has now taken center stage in this passion play of perdition ...

Of course, that the American government is patently corrupt and non-functioning has been clear to many for a number of years. But in case you aren’t yet aware of this fact, consider the following:

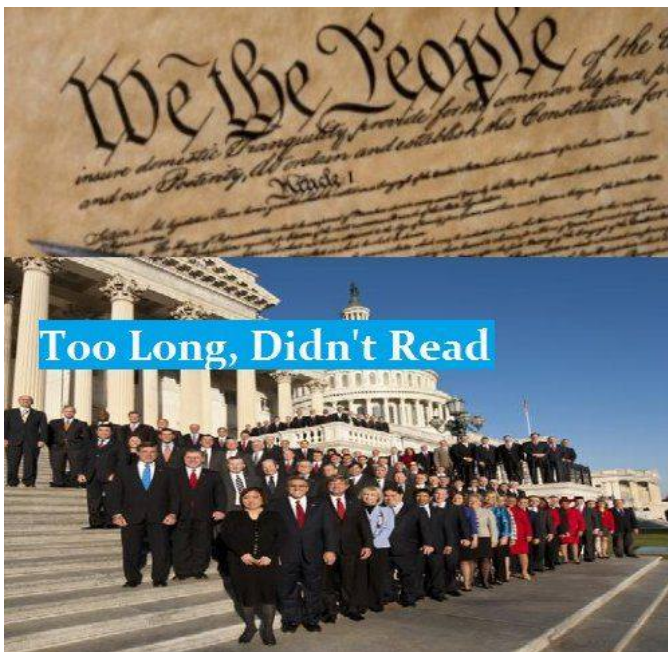
*American bankers swindled millions from the poor and then got bailed out instead of prosecuted ...

*American drones are murdering innocent civilians abroad and are even this very instant buzzing over innocent civilians at home ...

*American politicians regularly pass laws that “coincidentally” benefit themselves & their loved ones ...

*American soldiers are sent to kill and to die for corporate profits ...

*American company Monsanto has purchased enough political pull to brazenly ruin the American food supply ...



*American secret services have been aggressively spying on 1st World citizens ...

*and American laws have been passed in the last few years that now classify peaceful protesters as “threats to national security”.

Yes, my Friends, the more we wake up and look around, the more we can all awaken to the Truth that Big Brother is not merely on his way ...

Big Brother has already arrived!

And this can be quite the depressing realization, especially if you find yourself living the life of material lack inflicted upon the bottom 95% of the world's citizens. After all ...

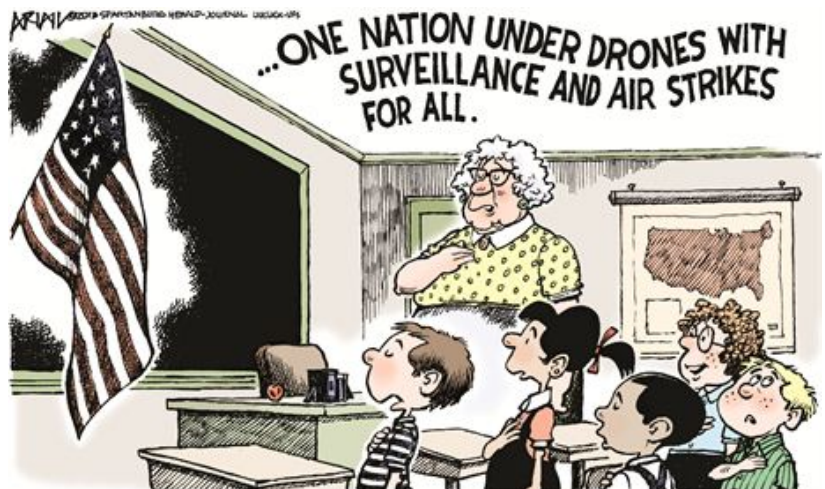
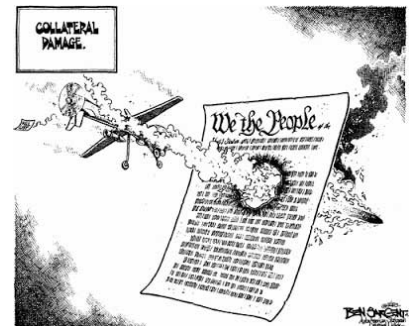
*What are we to do against a political machine that has already been purchased by the wealthy at the expense of the poor; one that is already being manipulated by the few to control the many?

*What can we do against a government that already possesses most of the material wealth and that already controls most of the military might?

*What can we do when our protests for justice & equality & fairness are either blatantly ignored or superficially placated?

*And more poignantly for many: What will we be able to do when things get worse? What will we be able to do when the rights & freedoms we have so long treasured are whittled down to next to nothing?

... Indeed, what will we be able to do when Big Brother stops merely hovering nearby and comes right into our homes?



Well, my Friends, I'm here to provide a key to your liberation ... I'm here today to remind you of a few Truths that Big Brother doesn't want you to remember.

And by far the most important of these Truths is the following: that while your government might indeed be exercising more & more control over your immediate everyday lives, ***NO GOVERNMENT HAS ANY POWER WHATSOEVER OVER THE QUALITY OF YOUR LIVING!***

Indeed, no matter what those "in power" do to you or do not do for you – no matter how bad things may get or how poorly your "leaders" behave, there are eleven Inalienable Rights that every human being has at his or her disposal — eleven fundamental Freedoms that are *always accessible*, eleven essential Liberties that are available to every man & woman & child in every society on the planet; in every democracy, as well as in every dictatorship; eleven basic Allowances that can never be taken from us ...

... and this, *no matter what*.

And so, to awaken the power of these Freedoms and allow them to bless your lives with Peace & Plenty, all that remains is for each of you to mentally recognize these eleven Freedoms ...

... and then go forth and courageously enliven them.

So without further ado, I give you *The Inalienable Eleven* ...

Freedom #01: the Right to HAPPINESS

It is critical to remember that, no matter what happens to you — no matter how bad it gets or how poorly your government is treating you; it is you & you alone who determines your level of appreciation for your life. And therefore it is you & you alone who determines how Happy you are.

As we all innately understand from birth, true Happiness comes not when things are going well for us -- or when we are surrounded by friends -- or when we are immersed in times of fun & pleasure (though these are fine moments, to be sure). No, true Happiness comes to us all only in those times when we are in pain and yet choose to reach out to another anyway; when we are exhausted and yet choose to be amazed by life's Beauty anyway; when we are attacked and yet choose to be Kind anyway; when our rights are abused & we are treated unfairly ... and yet we choose to live Joy-fully anyway.

Big Brother might control our bank accounts and our jobs and our homes and even our physical liberties, and yet Big Brother can never take away our Right to live in Happiness. Opportunities both to remember and to re-enliven Love & Wonder & Gratitude & Joy will forever rain gently down upon all our moments. They are indestructible facets of Reality ... and cannot ever be taken from us.

Yes, our governments and their massive depression dispensers (greed-laced laws, GMO-laced foods & fear-laced TV programs) will continue to place the “protective” umbrella of anxiety & hopelessness over our heads ...



... *and yet* all that is required to free ourselves from their grasp is to set that umbrella aside ... and step out into the Caring rain.



May we have the humility to remember this Truth as our days grow darker; and may we also have the courage to allow this Truth to inspire us to brighten the shadows of self & others with our Gratitude and with our Joy.

Amen ... Let it be so.

*“People are exactly as Happy
as they make up their minds to be.”
~ Abraham Lincoln*

Freedom #02: the Right to FORGIVE

“The oppressed are allowed once every few years to decide which particular representatives of the oppressing class will continue to repress them.” ~ Karl Marx

I remember when I was a young teenager in Middle School (in Alabama, no less) -- how we used to make fun of other kids by calling them “communists” or “commies”. The Cold War was in full swing back then, and about the only thing folks thought they new about Karl Marx was that he was the father of the “evil empire”. Essentially, Karl Marx was a joke ...

... Not so much anymore.

In fact, the more we open our eyes to the increasingly Machiavellian ways our governments are meddling in our lives, the more the wisdom of Marx becomes more poignant.



And yet, no matter what “they” do to you & yours — no matter what freedoms “they” trample or what dreams “they” shatter, “they” can never take away your 2nd Inalienable Right: the *Right to Forgive*.

*The government can subsidize Monsanto’s poisoning of your food supply, and yet nothing can stop you from forgiving them that evil ... and then getting on with finding healthy alternatives to feeding your family.

*The government can forever tarnish what Goodness was left in America’s international reputation with its senseless war-mongering and its evil drone-assassinations, and yet nothing can stop you from forgiving those primitive cruelties ... and then going forth to be a Force for Peace in your community – especially towards those in your neighborhood who have ties to a culture or a country different from your own.

*The government can take the side of the rich over the poor and the powerful over the weak; ignoring or disrupting all avenues of protest, and yet nothing can stop you from forgiving them that injustice ... and then coming together with your neighbors to do for each other what the government should have long since been doing for you.

*The government can even one day soon begin to blackball or torture or even assassinate the brave men & women who are standing up for Justice & Freedom around the world, and yet nothing can stop you from forgiving that wickedness ... and then continuing to rise up to Be the Change you want to see.

There is little doubt that revolution is on its way to American shores – the only real question being what kind of revolution will it be. Unless our politicians suddenly wake up to the fact they are the servants of the people (and start acting accordingly), then the people will have no choice but to rise up against them and replace them.

This is not mere “radical talk”, my Friends — this is realism.

And as America rapidly approaches that day, I would gently remind you all that aggressive means always breed aggressive ends; that violent revolutions always install replacement governments that are ultimately violent; that anger directed at any evil — however justified that anger may be — only encourages evil to defend self and grow stronger; never to awaken to practicing real Peace or enlivening real Justice.

No, if there is to be a revolutionary success in your nation's future, it must be a revolution that is calm and a revolution that is Peace-full. It must be a revolution of your mind more than one of your might. It must be a revolution filled with Heart and empty of hatred -- grounded first & foremost in a compassionate forgiveness for the ignorance of your oppressors ...



And it must be a revolution built not in your country's capitols, but rather in its backwaters and townships; in its neighborhoods and within its city-blocks. In America, if not also in other lands all over the world, a new nation is waiting to be re-made ... a nation of Acceptance,
a nation of Oneness,
and a nation of true Strength ... the Strength of Kindness.

And this new nation will rise sooner than you think ...
... and you will be the ones who make it so.

“Forgiveness in no way requires that you trust the one you forgive ... Forgiveness does not excuse anything ... You may have to declare your forgiveness a hundred times the first day and the second day, but the third day will be less and each day after, until one day you will realize that you have forgiven completely. And then one day you will pray for the wholeness of the other ... and then that wholeness will come.” ~ inspired by William Paul Young

Freedom #03: the Right to GIVE anyway

“The genius of our ruling class is that it has kept a majority of the people from ever questioning the inequity of a system where most drudge along paying heavy taxes for which they get nothing in return.” ~ Gore Vidal

It has been often said that the poor keep getting poorer and the rich keep getting richer. And this isn't merely some catchy platitude that applies only to 3rd World dictatorships — this has been the simple, raw Truth in the wealthier countries of the world for quite some time as well. Even in the United States, poverty and the poor distribution of wealth have been (and continue to be) poignant problems for most. This was true back during the reign of Reagan & Bush, and it is just as true today during the reign of Obama.

And quite a few folks have been striving for quite a few years to correct this grave injustice, mostly to no avail. Social Security legislation -- Unemployment insurance -- Medicare & Medicaid funds -- Minimum Wage laws; all programs designed to keep the heads of the poor barely above water as the drowning tides of inequity & unfairness steadily rise.

In America (and most other countries as well), folks work hard all month for too little pay, only to then pay taxes to a government that spends that hard-earned money on things that are either disgustingly unethical (like Obama's drone war & the NSA's domestic spying program) or that are literally deadly (like the federal subsidies given to Monsanto & other corporate giants for the production of cancer-causing GMO's and their distribution into our food supply) ... All things considered, it is safe to offer the gross understatement that things don't look so great right now. And, at least as far as the financial security of the vast majority of the world's citizenry goes, it is just as safe to say that our future looks even grimmer still.

And yet, there *is* one thing that our governments cannot ever take away from us, and this no matter how poor we already are or how much poorer we become — our Right to GIVE anyway.

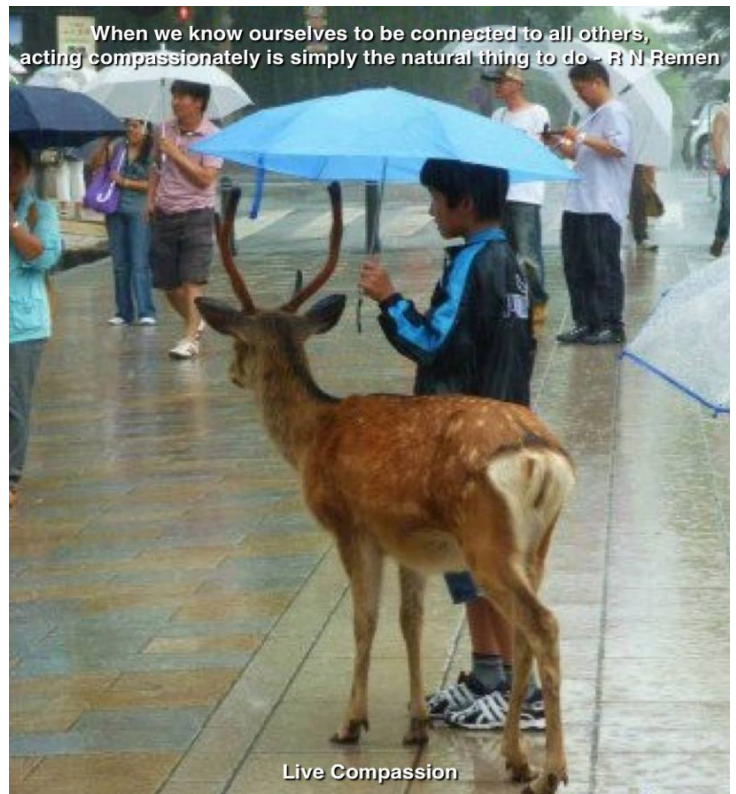
*We might only have a few dollars left in our accounts or our wallets, and yet we can use those few cents to gladly GIVE something to eat to those on the streets ...



*We might be quite hungry ourselves, and yet we can still GIVE our last few scraps to another who pines for some sustenance ...



*We might have lost our homes, and yet we can still GIVE shelter to others — feeding their Souls with the shelter in a hug ... or a smile ... or even an umbrella.



My Friends, please remember that it is not for us to give what is most desired or even what is most needed – that it is not for us to “save the world” or “cure poverty” or do anything majestic or infamous. Rather, it is simply for us to GIVE whatever we have to give ... It is enough for us to reach out each day and do whatever we can to give a small slice of solace to at least one other being. And *this* is the Wealth that can never be taken from us — to not only give when we have enough, but to GIVE when we do not.

Indeed, to lend to another in our times of comfort is not the most difficult of deeds, and therefore does very little good regardless of the amount given. On the other Heart, to GIVE in our times of lack is profound ... To share with others during our own times of need is the Giving that brings Great Change — It is the Giving that rattles the timbers of our communities — It is the Giving that shakes the foundations of our entire Universe.

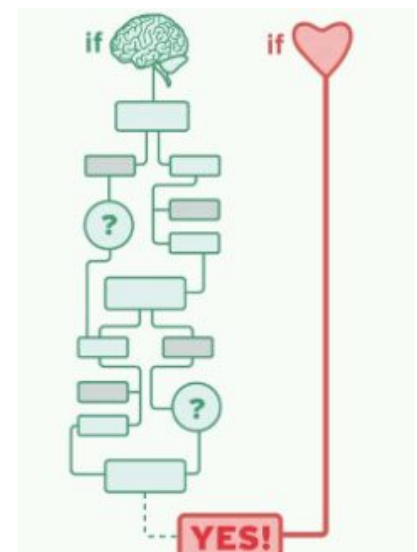
When the rich man tosses a fifty-dollar bill contemptuously (or even kindly) into my basket, I am mildly grateful to be sure, and yet when the poor widow stoops to touch my cheek and lightly touches me with her smile while giving me her last two pennies, then my whole life is changed. In such moments, I am reminded that life is Good despite its shades of poverty & injustice — and I am reminded that I can be thankful for it anyway ... I am reminded, even though I may not be wealthy or powerful, that life is short and that I am here to serve others anyway ... And I am reminded, even though I sometimes have little and yearn for so much more, that my days are filled with an Abundance that far exceeds the hollow “opulence” of money & things — that there are always ways I can be generous; that even though I may be poor & abused, I too can give anyway.

It is in these moments of selfless, loving sacrifice — these moments when we cease to consider or analyze or wonder about whether our gift is “enough” or whether the object of our giving is “deserving”; the moments when we stop thinking about giving and simply reach out to GIVE, that we are reminded that it is LOVE that is the currency of kings ... and as such we are reminded that we are all forever Wealthy.

“You give but little when you give of your possessions. It is when you give of yourself that you truly Give.” ~ Kahlil Gibran

“Give what you have. To someone, it will be far greater than you dare to think.” ~ inspired by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

“For it is in Giving that we Receive ... It is in times of joyful self-sacrifice that the two become One.” ~ inspired by St. Francis of Assisi



Freedom #04: the Right to BE (your Self)

*“It is no measure of health to be well adjusted
in a profoundly sick society.” ~ J. Krishnamurti*

When we hear others speak of tyranny & oppression, most of us naturally think of history’s more flagrant examples – we think of the psuedo-genocidal destruction of dozens of American Indian nations by the United States in the 1800’s ... we think of the imprisonment & attempted extermination of the Jews by Hitler’s Germany in World War II ... we think of the tens of thousands of innocent men & women in Chile who “disappeared” (i.e. were absconded, tortured and murdered) under the CIA-installed regime of Pinochet in the 1980’s ... we think of the millions of lives that were lost in the Rwandan genocide of 1994 ... we think of the imprisonment & torture of thousands & thousands of Tibetan citizens (monks more than militants) by the Chinese government ... and we think of the ongoing enslavement, torture and murder of billions of innocent sentient animals every year by the global meat&milk industry.

And yet, as revolting & evil as these travesties remain, there is a far more malicious form of tyranny that is steadily seeping into our lives even as we speak — the imposition of apathetic conformity.

You see, more than anything else, governments desire to remain intact ... and to remain intact they must remain powerful ... and to remain powerful they require the help of the masses; they need their citizens to behave “appropriately” and even actively support policies that are most beneficial — not to those citizens, but rather to those folks’ political, religious & economic “leaders”.

And so governments enlist the aid of various subtle-yet-extremely potent devices to help “keep us in line” ... Consider the following:

*Governments sell the lie that we have some say in how we are governed — that we have a choice as to who controls our lives; providing us with a handful of political parties and a gaggle of political candidates that *appear* to champion differing values & harbor differing beliefs, and yet in actuality who are all cut from the same cloth — who are all minions of the same Master ...

*Governments use mass media to keep us rabidly cheering our own flags and spewing hatred for all “enemies of the state”; justifying atrocities unspeakable in the name of “national security” — when in reality it is these aggressive policies that pose the only real threat to our personal safety.

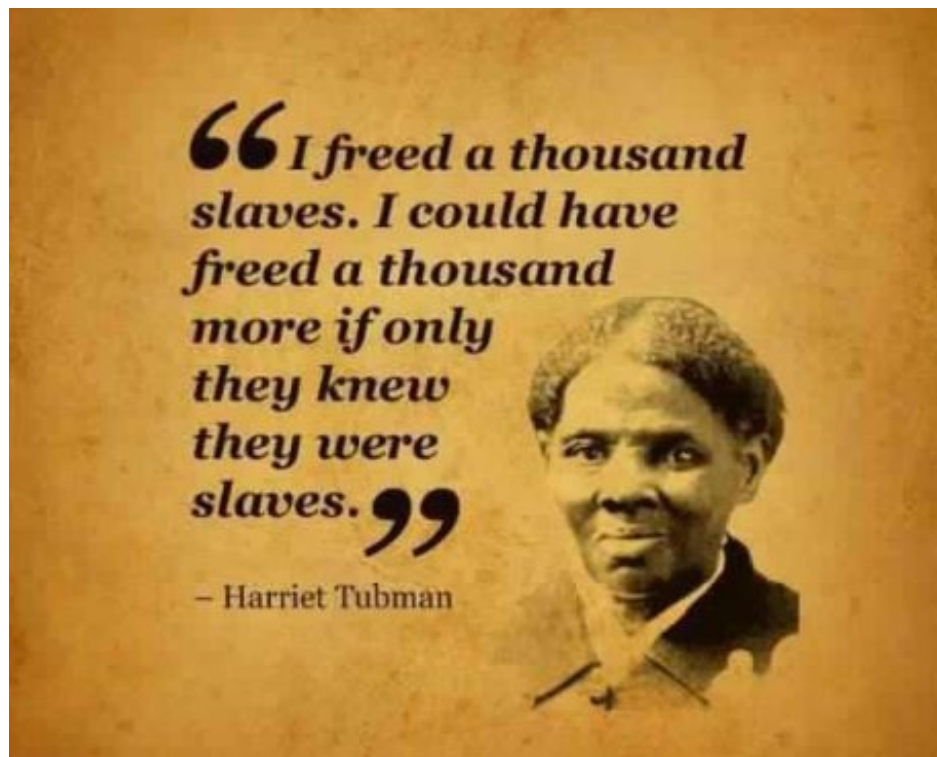
*Governments use our innate fear of poverty & the silky words from their “nutrition experts” to persuade us buy cheap foods that are poisoning the bodies of ourselves, our friends and our children ... (Milk & meat are not only murder — they are suicide!)

*Governments team up with fashion guru’s & make-up distributors & clothing manufacturers to tell us what we need to buy and wear — how we need to appear to others for them to consider us “pretty” or “handsome” or “sexy”.

*Governments team with large corporations to bombard us with advertisements that repeatedly remind us of the things we do not yet have; and thereby convince us that we will never be truly happy until we have enough money & own enough “stuff” ...

*And governments and their lackies pump us full of endless opportunities to be “entertained” — movies that pander to sexual exploitation & violence, gladiator sporting events that pit man against man & city against city, alcoholic beverages & cigarettes that enhance our fears of pain by satisfying our desires for pleasure, mind-numbing television programs that keep us unaware of opportunities to serve our communities ... and that keep us passively avoiding doing anything about rebuilding the same.

In essence, they will do anything to keep us distracted; anything to keep us from waking up to the uniquely Kind & Caring individuals we *all* truly Are ... in essence, anything to keep us from being truly Free.



Well, despite these ongoing tragedies, there is some Good News that remains: namely, that all of the aforementioned imprisonments are essentially of our own making, and therefore we can dismantle all of them as well. Yes, even though you may have passively agreed to be locked up in the dungeons of patriotism or pride or anger or fear or greed or fun, the keys to your liberation are already in your hands — ***YOU CAN BE FREE***, my Friends ... and you can be free TODAY!

*They want you to energetically support the farces that are their political parties & their political platforms, and yet *you can free your True Self* of these inane charades — by ignoring their idle ramblings ... and becoming an active & vocal champion for Harmony in your immediate community instead.

*They want you to ideologically support their wars & their espionage & their drone strikes, and yet *you can free your True Self* of these dark ethics — by rejecting their calls to war & violence ... and becoming an active & vocal champion for Peace instead.

*They want you to morally support their needless-for-you-yet-profitable-for-them enslavement & murder of millions of animals for meat & milk, and yet *you can free your True Self* of these evil practices — by refusing to be an accomplice to cruelty ... and going vegan &/or becoming an active champion for animal rights instead.

*They want you to financially support their corrupt & deluded visions what makes you “beautiful” and “wealthy” and “successful”, and yet *you can free your True Self* of these vapid myths — by abandoning all attempts to enhance or supplement your appearance ... and becoming an active & vocal champion of Kindness & Generosity instead.

*They want you to intellectually support their efforts to dumb-you-down and keep you zombified and feeling “satisfied” with their deluge of superficial pleasures & hollow entertainments, and yet *you can free your True Self* of these constricting shackles — by dismissing the craving for fun & pleasure ... and becoming an active & vocal champion of Intimacy & selfless Service instead.



In conclusion, my Friends, though the physical pains of hunger & thirst & imprisonment & torture are nasty challenges indeed, the greatest threat to our lives is actually a mental one — it is the temptation to selfish pettiness; it is the call to look away in apathy; it is the zealous demand to judge & condemn those who are not like us ... In essence, it is the bland conformity to what is comfortable that manacles & muffles who we truly Are.

At the very least, the one who hungers knows that he is alive ... At the very least, the one who thirsts remembers that she can quench the thirst of another ... At the very least, the one who is imprisoned knows that he was once free ... At the very least, the one who is being tortured remembers who she truly IS.

And despite the gravity of these torments, it is important for us to remember that these are not those suffering the most -- for it is the individual tempted by advertisement who has lost all sense of True Self ... it is the person deluded by dogma who is no longer truly living ... it is the citizen being persuaded by propaganda who has already long since died. These are the people who have already given away the only possession humans have that is truly priceless: namely, the freedom to choose who we Become ...
... the Freedom to BE who we truly ARE.

And yet fear not – for despite its obvious difficulty, the solution to this dark & moldy confinement is ready-made and right in front of you. First & foremost, you must remember that your True Self is not the angry, fearful, selfish person they want you to be — but rather the Good person you truly Are. And secondly thereafter, all that remains is for you to walk into that great light ...
... by acting accordingly.

In essence, your liberty is not something that must be demanded or voted on or fought for. Rather, your Freedom is already waiting for you ... There is no need to break down the walls of your cage, for your cage door is already wide-open. It's a sunny day outside your cell and your wings are ready to soar.

So “take the leap” and come on outside ... Remember how it feels to ***be Free.***

*“Be your Self, your ego is already taken ... literally.”
~ inspired by Oscar Wilde*



Freedom #05: the Right to the TRUTH

*“The truth will set you free,
but first it will piss you off.” ~ Gloria Steinem*

As a species we are slowly and steadily waking up to the fact that we are not being given the Facts; the truth that we are not being told the Truth; the reality that we are not living in Reality ... Our governments have teamed with mass media outlets to smother us with false information and twisted propaganda ... Our churches have teamed with our politicians to smother us with hateful preachings & fearful dogma ... And our bigger businesses have teamed with our own egos to smother us with manipulative advertisements & threats of poverty & destitution.

These institutions have invaded our airwaves, they have invaded our schools and they have invaded our minds — filling our thoughts and the thoughts of those we Love with desires for things we do not have or hold, and fears for enemies we cannot see or touch. They have robbed our lives of any semblance of deep-seated Joy or lasting Peace, and they have convinced many of us that there is no alternative and no way out ... that life must forever remain this way because “these are simply the facts” and “that’s just the way things are.”

What you should know about:

- Why bats are dying by the millions
- Why bees are dying by the billions
- Why birds populations are plunging
- Ocean acidification
- The melting ice caps
- Deforestation
- Dangers of natural gas fracking
- Tar sands pollution and its dangers
- Mountaintop removal
- GMOs, Monsanto, and the problems caused by toxic farming practices
- Potential food shortages because of drought, soil depletion, and the plunge in wildlife populations
- Polluted and depleted aquifers
- How to grow food
- Hazards of industrial pollution
- Lies your government is feeding you
- Lies the financial system is spewing
- Lies about the tax system
- How your rights are being violated
- Damaged, clunky, aging nuclear power plants and their dangers
- * The realities of war
- Depleted uranium bomb residue from the ongoing wars and how it is spreading via weather patterns
- Growth of the prison industry
- Lies about the War on Drugs
- How to disconnect from fossil fuels
- Permaculture and sustainable living
- Importance of organic foods

What the news tells you about:

- Who got murdered
- Lyndsay Lohan
- Who said what that doesn’t matter
- Kanye West and Kim Kardashian
- Car chases
- Justin Beiber
- Who is getting divorced
- The First Lady’s workout routine
- Sex scandals
- The stock report
- Who is gay
- How many cars are selling
- Who got arrested
- Drama in D.C.
- The housing market
- Sports drama
- Misinformation about history
- Who got an award
- Courtroom scandals
- Gas prices
- “Reality” show drama
- What’s being built
- Whatever subtly perpetuates fear
- Travel and leisure stuff
- Who bought something expensive
- What haircut to get
- A little about racism and sexism
- Corporate products to buy
- Who had a baby
- Where to eat
- What color to wear
- Whatever will keep you tuned in

Well, I am here to remind you all that this misinformation is SIMPLY NOT TRUE ... Indeed, while our world is admittedly a place riddled with lust & fear; filled with treasures to be sought & enemies to be conquered, there are other Truths waiting to be embraced — Truths just as valid and just as real; Truths that will empower you to transcend the injustice in your lives, instead of soaking feebly therein in silence.

And all you have to do to find them is take off your society-provided glasses, open your own eyes and take a look ...



Note — I give you fair warning that these TRUTHS soar over & above the delusional “reality” you have been sold by those “in power”. These TRUTHS will upset the “natural order of things” in your life, and as such, they will probably upset you as well ... If this proves to be the case — if you feel yourself tempted to smirk and turn away, fair enough. And yet I would in-Courage you to give them a try before abandoning them altogether ...

After all, many of you have literally little to lose and -- as those adopting them will soon see -- all of you have literally everything to gain.

With that in mind, feel free to consider the following:

*TRUTH: your government is *not* looking out for your best interests, and it never will ... You will have to be the change you want to see -- You will have to reach out to those in need nearby -- You will have to do your part to rebuild your community. So stop investing your time & your money & your energy in the futile fallacy that is politics, and — even if it is only amongst your own friends & family — become the just & gentle government you wish you had instead.

*TRUTH: your mass media news providers are *not* giving you accurate information. Rather, they are actually brainwashing you with loads of myth & manipulation — advertisements designed to keep you wanting, stories designed to keep you afraid, and reports designed to make you angry. So, to harvest the only facts that truly matter, put down your newspapers & turn off your televisions ... and immerse yourselves into your neighbors & your neighborhoods instead.

*TRUTH: money & things & popularity do *not* make us happier. In fact, the more of these things we accumulate, the more difficult it becomes to know true Joy. In reality, our possessions only bring us calm once we realize that we do not need them, and they only bring us bliss while we are giving them away (or using them to benefit another). So get off the treadmill of buying & consuming & having & collecting, and hop on the train of paring down & giving away & sharing with others instead.

*TRUTH: the degree to which your reverends, gurus, experts, idols, pastors & preachers are telling you to judge others, to take care of yourself first, or to sit back & passively watch as injustice and corruption and violence infest your townships, is the degree to which these “spiritual teachers” are *not* guiding you towards lives of true Joy & Peace. The TRUTH of the matter is: you don’t need a teacher to know what you have known since birth — that we are all literally ONE ... that our Purpose here is not to be served, but to serve; not to aggressively condemn, but to silently inspire; not to defend ourselves & our own interests, but to actively Care for others & theirs instead.

*TRUTH: you do *not* need to eat animals to live lives that are happy & healthy. In fact, your lives will be *much* happier & *much* healthier once you stop gorging on the needless (& carcinogenic) cruelties inherent in the milk&meat industry. Humans are *not* “natural omnivores”, we do *not* get efficient calcium or protein from milk or meat, and farm animals — even on the most progressive of farms — are *not* processed (i.e. murdered) “humanely”. Indeed, every hunk of flesh that makes it to your plate and every sip of milk that makes it to your glass was once part of a caring, sentient animal who experienced immense amounts of pain & suffering – and ultimately a horrific death – to provide you with five minutes of palate pleasure. We’ve slated our primitive lusts for dominance & our ignorant beliefs in “superiority” long enough ... It’s time to wake up, my Friends ... It’s time to go vegan.

*TRUTH: you do *not* need to wear certain clothes or apply the right make-up or have a certain body-type or resemble a certain superstar to be “beautiful” or “sexy” or “worthy” or “loveable”. Beauty is your birthright -- You were beautiful the day you were born, you are beautiful today, and you will be beautiful until the day you die. If anyone else cannot see this TRUTH, then it evidences *their* lack, not your own ... More importantly, in all the moments that you have the courage to reach out and be selflessly Kind to another, your innate Beauty cannot help but shine forth. In such moments of raw & courageous gentleness your innate Beauty becomes undeniable to everyone ... In such moments, you transcend the mere beautiful ... In such moments, you become Beauty itself.

In conclusion, it is true that you won't hear these Truths from your politicians or your preachers, you won't hear them from your classmates or your coworkers, and you probably won't even hear them from your family members and your friends ... and yet regardless, Truths they will forever remain.

And because they are constant & unwavering, they do not care if you believe them or enliven them. They are yours to embrace or reject as you see fit. If you choose to reject them, they will not abandon you ... Rather, they will patiently wait for you to one day turn to them once again; to return your embrace with Hearts as open as your eyes were once closed; to step under their cool waters and let them bathe away the dusty ignorance of all your delusions of fear & yearning.

Indeed, it is in the nature of all TRUTHS to wait in calm for us forever. And yet I wonder -- now that we have once again remembered, why should we continue to forget?

“When I despair, I remember that all through history the way of Truth and Love have always won. There have been tyrants and murderers, and for a time, they can seem invincible, but in the end, they always fall. Think about it ... always.” ~ M. Gandhi



Freedom #06: the Right to LOVE anyway

“Yesterday we obeyed kings and bent our necks before emperors. But today we kneel only to Truth, follow only Beauty, and obey only Love.” ~ K. Gibran

Don't get me wrong, it is indeed quite reasonable to hate our enemies ...

*It is reasonable to shun the criminals who attack your loved ones and the terrorists who attack your country ...

*It is reasonable to loathe the boss who harshly criticizes you or the teacher who openly ridicules you ...

*It is reasonable to detest the coworkers & the classmates who gossip about you behind your back ...

*It is reasonable to despise the friend who betrays to you or the lover who abandons on you ...

*It is reasonable to abhor the government who spies on you while it ignores your demands & lies to you about its doings ...

*It is reasonable to be disgusted by the corporations who poison your body for profit and rail against the religious gurus who shackle your Soul for pride.

Indeed, all these forms of hatred are understandable ... They are natural reactions to being attacked; reactions still considered to be “normal” & “healthy” & “prudent” -- considered by many to be reasonable responses to the wrongs & evils we encounter in our everyday lives ... The problem is: they are all — each & every one of them — completely counterproductive. Though such combativeness might be reasonable and though it might even seem “righteous”, it is also as powerless as it is primitive. You see, aggressive responses to the wrongs done to us not only suffocate our own minds with thick cloaks of unsettling anger & morose depression, they also actually *encourage* our enemies to continue abusing us with their misguided forms of malice.

Fortunately we are all sentient beings, and fortunately, as such we are not ruled by our stone-age instincts ... Fortunately, we are not required to respond to hatred & ignorance with more hatred & ignorance. Instead, we have the ability to *choose* how we respond to those who attack us ... Fortunately, we have the ability to choose differently ...

Most fortunately, we have the ability to choose **LOVE**.

Now I am not talking about the “love” of warm & fuzzy feelings here. I am not advocating that we somehow choose to adore or even mildly like the people who are treating us poorly ... What I *am* talking about here is *LOVE*, the verb. I am talking about hating what is being done to you and disliking the person(s) doing the same, while simultaneously responding to their misdeeds with courageously compassionate Kindness anyway.

*I am talking about being repulsed by religious “leaders” who twist & edit & darkly interpret the world’s sacred texts to slake their thirst for influence, and yet reaching out to those charlatans with Kindness anyway; reminding them through your humble gentleness The Way they have so obviously forgotten.

*I am talking about being disgusted by the unethical practices of corporations like Monsanto, and yet openly forgiving their CEO’s anyway, while gently shifting your lives towards consuming with conscience.

*I am talking about abhorring your government — the politicians who sacrifice your well-being for their own power, as well as the agencies who perpetrate great evil in the name of your once-great nation, and yet choosing to feel compassion for their hollow existence anyway, while calmly diverting all of your time & energy to doing for your communities what they long since should have done ...



*I am talking about despising the friends & lovers who disrespect and betray and abandon you, and yet refusing to do the same to them in their own times of need or trouble ...



*I am talking about detesting the folks who say mean things behind your back, and yet choosing to have compassion for their coldness by saying Kind things about them behind theirs ...

*I am talking about loathing the figures of authority in your life whenever they tempt or insult or embarrass you, and yet going out of your way to anonymously give them the unconditional Caring so obviously lacking in their own lives ...



*I am talking about shunning – even hating – the criminals who rob you of your possessions and the terrorists who rob you of your peace of mind, and yet responding to their acts of violence with the only thing violence fears: the open arms of Peace ...



I am talking about all of these things, my Friends ... I am talking about being faced with acts of injustice and aggression and finally responding in a way that actually works.

I am talking about being Kind when least inclined ...
... I am talking about LOVE.

“Now there is a final reason I think that Jesus says, ‘Love your enemies.’ It is this: that Love has within it a redemptive power. And there is a power there that eventually transforms individuals. Just keep being friendly to that person. Just keep loving them, and they can’t stand it too long. Oh, they react in many ways in the beginning. They react with guilt feelings, and sometimes they’ll hate you a little more during that transition period, but just keep loving them anyway. And by the power of your Love they will break down under the load. That’s Love, you see. It is redemptive, and this is why Jesus says to Love. There’s something about Love that builds up and is creative. There is something about hate that tears down and is destructive. So Love your enemies.” ~ Martin Luther King Jr.

Freedom #07: the Right to PRAY with Power

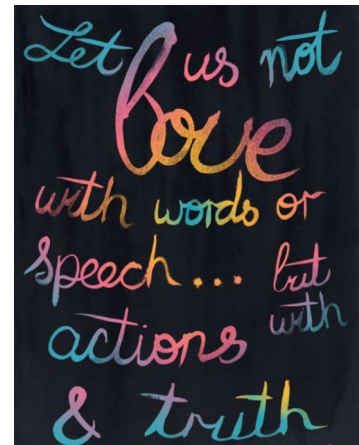
*“The function of prayer is not to influence God,
but rather to change the nature of the one who prays.”
~ Søren Kierkegaard*

*“It is better in prayer to have a Heart without words
than words without a Heart.” ~ Mahatma Gandhi*

For most of the world’s citizens, prayer is an integral part of life; thought to be a purely mental endeavor, an internal dialogue with an external Force we like to call “God” (or Allah or Buddha or chi or prana or cosmic consciousness or quantum interconnection) ... And as such, it is already clear to most that prayer is one of our innate Rights that cannot ever be taken from us by any external force or limited by any set of circumstance. Even in the darkest dungeon in our darkest hour, we can all always find the strength to go within and find Light through prayer.

*And yet this is **not** the Prayer of which I speak today ...*

While the Right to mentally pray does indeed exist and indeed can never be taken from us, truly powerful Prayer is a Freedom that far exceeds language-bound words or tradition-bound rituals ... No, my Friends, as sentient beings you have indeed been graced with the innate ability to Pray, and yet this Blessing is far more extensive and far more potent than you have been led to believe.



To understand what I mean, I offer the following brief expose on what real Prayer is not, and thereby what it actually is ...

The WHERE & the WHEN of Prayer

*Prayer is **not** entering temples or shrines to find God. Prayer is going into your communities to allow yourself to be found by God in the needs of others ...

*Prayer is **not** speaking with the Divine at designated times on special days. Prayer is consciously reconnecting with God in every waking breath and with every living deed ...

*Prayer is **not** calling to God during times of calm & comfort. Prayer is remembering the Presence of God (our objective, energetic interconnection with everything around us) in every moment of trial & turmoil ...

The WHAT of Prayer

*Prayer is **not** asking for clarity. Prayer is being openly grateful for the lack of clarity in our lives; sincerely thankful for our patent inability to objectively perceive any portion of our Reality — an inability that gives power to all our Faith-full leaps of Love anyway ...

*Prayer is **not** asking for guidance or assistance in finding the life-path that is best for ourselves. Prayer is being openly grateful for our ability to be Kind when least inclined; in this manner allowed to be a Guide for others; a Guide leading others back to perfect LOVE ...

*Prayer is **not** asking that others be healed. Prayer is having Faith that Goodness rests within every illness & every injury. And Prayer is bringing that seed to blossom by finding the courage to go forth and gently Care for those who are suffering ...

*Prayer is **not** asking the Divine for gifts of power or abundance or success for ourselves. Prayer is asking God to be used to bring the true Wealth of Peace & Joy to others ...

*Prayer is **not** thanking God for personal victories. Prayer is wishing for the Grace of Peace to fall gently upon the hearts and shoulders of our enemies ...

*Prayer is **not** arrogantly yearning that the “lost” be saved. Prayer is asking for the courage to go forth and do what we can to humbly serve those with religious beliefs different from our own ...

The HOW of Prayer

*Prayer is **not** hollow litanies or intoned chants voiced aloud while surrounded by fellow “believers”. Prayer is a spontaneous eruption of emotion when we are alone in the wildernesses; an overwhelming sense of wonderment at being given the gift of a conscious life at all — an overwhelming sense of gratitude at being given the ability to make a difference in the lives of others ...

*Prayer is **not** a serious or a dour or a weeping affair. Prayer is a joyous celebration of the invincibility of Love; a jubilant reveling in the fact that we are all every day able to humbly assist in that ultimate victory ...

*Prayer is **not** an expression of “faith” in one’s personal salvation or one’s individualized interpretations of sacred scripture or one’s unique beliefs about “the Will of God”. Prayer is an encompassing reverence for the majesty of the One; an overwhelming humility that far exceeds our own imperfect conceptions of Love & Justice & what is “best” or “better” ...

*Prayer is **not** bringing the poor to the church. Prayer is bringing the perfect Love that preceded the church to the poor.

In essence my Friends, prayer is not the freedom *of* religion ... Prayer is our freedom *from* religion. Indeed, prayer that is pure & real transcends all that we have been taught about being devout & most of we have learned about worshipping God.

*It is much more emotional than mental, much more active than verbal, and much more humble than certain.

*It is a silent, emotional reunion with the Divine that far exceeds anything demanded by any church or written in any sacred scripture.

*It is a personal Oneness with Spirit that exists as much in meadows as it does in monasteries.

*It is an awakening of the Soul's perfect LOVE within our Hearts, that then gently compels us to enliven that LOVE in our homes and in our communities ... as much with those named "stranger" & "enemy" as with those we call "family" & "friend".

Amen ... Let it be so.

*"Rebellion to any form of tyranny
is obedience to the single formlessness of God."
~ inspired by Thomas Jefferson*

*"If you want to pray in a way that God understands,
you must pray with open arms and moving feet."
~ inspired by a Quaker saying*



Freedom #08: the Right to true WEALTH

“I am opposing a social order in which it is possible for men who do little that is useful to amass fortunes of millions of dollars, while millions of men & women who work long & hard for most of their days earn barely enough to live.”

~ inspired by Eugene Debs

“Being unwanted, unloved, uncared for ... is a much greater poverty than the person who has nothing to eat.” ~ Mother Teresa

The “Pursuit of Happiness”, long considered an Inalienable Right by many, has for centuries been equated with an abundance of money and possessions; linked for centuries with striving for a life of ease & comfort & security -- a full bank account, a nice home, a life of softness & pleasure & fun. For most folks, this vision represents “the Good Life” ... For most, this is “the American Dream” ... For most, this is what it means to be wealthy.

And, even though it is true that there is theoretically more than enough money & food & land for everybody to enjoy this kind of opulence, that it is indeed hypothetically possible for everyone on the planet — be it via manufacture or manifestation – to drink from flagons of fortune and eat from plates of plenty, the *fact* remains that the very few who currently own so much are, for the most part, still choosing to not share with the very many who have so little ... The fact remains that, even though more than enough resources exist to assuage all the world’s material sufferings, most of the poor have no access to those resources — and most of them therefore are still destined to lead lives of lack.

In the past, our governments tried to remedy this injustice by redistributing our wealth, and yet the rich have long since purchased our politicians (indeed, most of our politicians are themselves rich). As such, there are no more political solutions to poverty ... In the past, our religious leaders inspired us to care for the poor in our neighborhoods (and some still do so today), and yet for the most part our churches have only succeeded in encouraging us to care for others when & where it is convenient — with most of our preachers & pastors becoming quite wealthy in the process themselves ... And in the past, determined men & women could literally work their way out of poverty; they could use raw diligence and sheer determination to do whatever it took to pull their families up from the depths of hunger & homelessness. And yet today most of them are kept out of the “Land of Plenty” by moats far too wide to breach and walls far too tall to scale. For many, wages are far too low, housing is far too unaffordable, health care is far too expensive, stocks are far too brittle and banks are far too unstable (and far too unethical) ... Though it is still possible for some of the poor to rise from the ranks of the impoverished into a middle class that is rapidly receding, the fact remains that hard work alone can no longer bring them there.

And yet, despite these disturbing Truths, I once again bring Good News, and this time I bring it to all those who are poor, as well as to all those who feel that they do not have enough ... And that Good News is this: My Friends, ***YOU ARE ALREADY WEALTHY!***

That's right ... It turns out that real Wealth is not something you have to earn or work hard for or be blessed with, but is rather an innate Right with which we are all born ... It turns out that the key to becoming truly Wealthy is not knowing how to "beat the system" or take back what is "rightly yours" or "manifest riches" ... It turns out that it's not about employing a better marketing strategy for what you are selling, it's not about employing a better investment strategy for what you earn, and it's not even about employing a better employment strategy for finding & keeping a better job.

No, my Friends, your true Wealth — the Abundance that is your birthright, will come to you when you have the humility to *redefine Wealth*; to leave behind the outdated and ineffective meanings of success & prosperity that you were given, and adopt instead fresh definitions of affluence and worth that always bring with them profound Joy & deep-seated Contentment — and these no matter how few funds you might have in your bank account or little cash you might have in your wallet.

Consider then, the following: an expose of what Wealth is not, and thereby a rediscovery of what Wealth truly is ...

*Wealth is not protecting your money or accumulating more of it ... Wealth is giving your money away — using whatever finances you already have to benefit the lives of those who have less than you.





*Wealth is not the possession of property ... Wealth is giving shelter to others; using whatever home you already have (however meager it may be) to provide warmth for those who have none; interconnecting your home with homes of those around you to break down the walls of callousness & independence – allowing real Community to blossom anew.

*Wealth is not investing in the future ...
Wealth is accepting your present situation with
grace & gratitude.

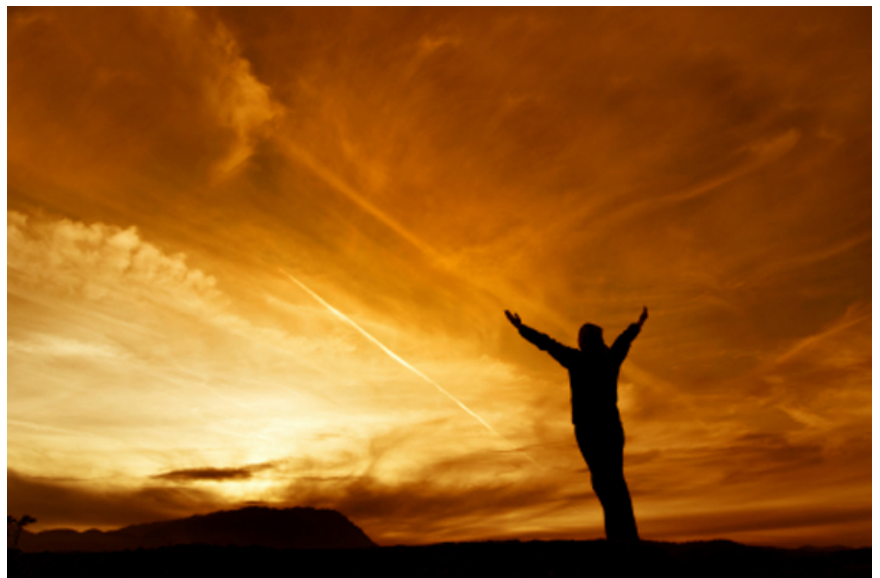


*Wealth is not smothering fear with the delusional blanket of “financial security” ... Wealth is destroying fear by reaching out to Care for those who are afraid.



*Wealth is not a life of ease & comfort & “inner peace” ... Wealth is being soaked in times of turmoil & tragedy, and yet finding Calm anyway — in seeking to bring others ease & comfort & Peace.

*Wealth is not moments of fun & pleasure ... Wealth is feeling sad or afraid, and yet choosing to be grateful for life anyway.





*Wealth is not a table filled with sugar & flesh; foods bought at corporate supermarkets — turned into tasty poison by scientists and purchased with the suffering of other sentient beings ... Wealth is supporting local organic farmers, growing your own fruits & vegetables, sharing your harvest with others, and refusing to eat foods that require the imprisonment & murder of the innocent.

*Wealth is not being surrounded by supporters and “yes-men” ... Wealth is being surrounded by strangers, and yet reaching out in Kindness anyway — treating those “enemies” as Friends.



In conclusion, no matter how much or how little you possess or own, your life is already overflowing with an Abundance far greater than any mansion, and far more valuable than any treasure. This is the Wealth with which you were born, this is the Wealth with which you now reside, and this is the Wealth that will be with you until the end of your days ... This is the Wealth of Peace ... This is the Wealth of Kindness ... This is the Wealth of Community ... And this Wealth is your inalienable Right. No one can prevent you from enlivening it, and no one can take it from you.

It has been planted within your Soul. It is yours forever, and all that remains for you to reap its Joys ... is for you to bring it forth and sow its *LOVE*.

“There are people in the world so hungry, that God cannot appear to them except in the form of bread. And there are people in the world who are so poor, that instead of Love, money and things have become their God.”

~ inspired by Mahatma Gandhi

Freedom #09: the Right to CARE (the verb)

“The most important kind of freedom is to be what you really are. You trade in your reality for a role. You trade in your sense for an act. You give up your ability to feel, and in exchange, put on a mask. There can’t be any large-scale revolution until there’s a personal revolution, on an individual level. It’s got to happen inside first.” ~ Jim Morrison

There is a shift in consciousness that is taking place ... More & more people are turning away from the hollow promises of their politicians; “leaders” who assure us that everything is going to be alright and that they are already doing everything that can be done ... More & more people are turning away from the vain platitudes of their preachers; “reverends” who tempt us to sit back and have faith that God is going to come down from Heaven and right all wrongs ... More & more people are turning away from the droning blur of their televisions; “news” that spreads courage-castrating images of fearful violence, and “entertainments” that smother us with mind-numbing visions of our more decadent desires.

More & more of us are choosing to look around us instead — to look around and see the injustice & the corruption & the poverty that have enveloped most of the world’s citizens, indeed most of our own neighbors.

More & more of us are waking up to the fact that something is truly amiss, and that *we* are the ones we have been waiting for to set it aright.

And as we begin to awaken to the pain & the suffering & the misery, our innate sense of empathy is awakening as well. We are yearning to do something about the pain ...

We are yearning to ease the misery ...

We are yearning to soothe the suffering ...

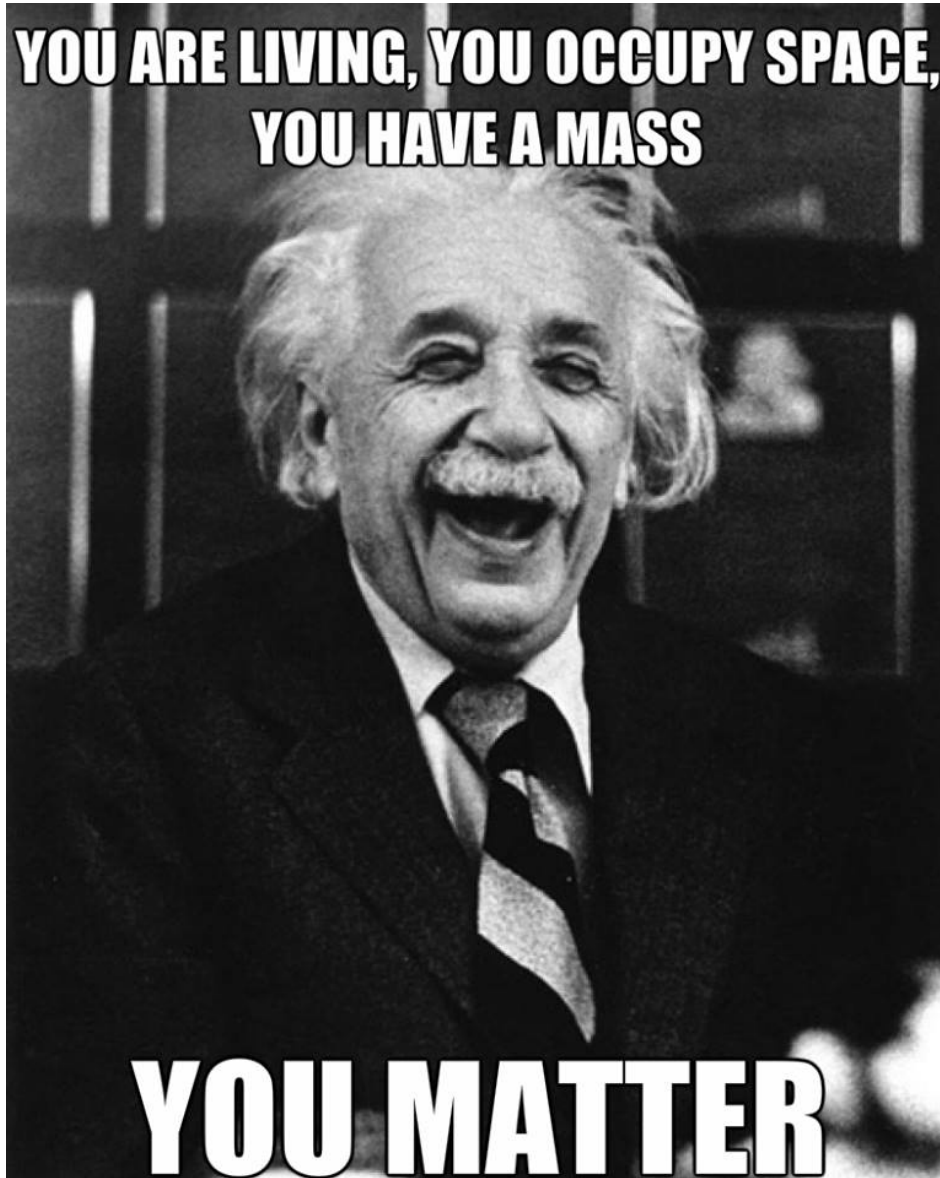
We are yearning to make it right again.

And yet, what are we to do? ... What can we as mere individuals do to make a real difference? Most of us don’t have enough money to donate large chunks of cash to a cause, and most of us don’t have the free time to donate large portions of our lives to those in need.

Indeed, most of us believe that we only have a little bit to give, and most of us don’t even know where or how to start that giving.

Well my Friends, once again I come to you with some *Great News*. While it is true that larger donations of resources and magnanimous acts of service are indeed wonderful gifts to humanity, the Truth of the matter is this:

It is not necessary to give “Big” to do BIG GOOD.



That’s right ... as it turns out, even the smallest deed of selfless Kindness is incredibly powerful; life-changing even ... As it turns out, we don’t need to wait for a worthwhile” service opportunity to present itself, and we don’t need to seek out those who need our Love “the most”.

As it turns out, it is enough for us to do the deeds that we can already do, and to do them where we already are.



To clarify this oft-overlooked Truth, consider the following facts:

*Visiting the ill & the injured in hospitals is awesome -- *and* anonymously placing uplifting notes on the cars in hospital parking lots still does great Good.

*Reading to the elderly in a retirement home is incredible -- *and* listening to an octogenarian share the wisdom of his or her life-story still does great Good.

*Volunteering at a local soup kitchen is inspirational -- *and* bringing cookies to a reclusive or unpopular neighbor still does great Good.

*Becoming a Big Brother, a Big Sister or a Foster Parent is phenomenal -- *and* giving smiles & encouragement to the children you encounter every day still does great Good.

*Preaching unconditional Love humbly from the pulpit is fantastic -- *and* simply asking a member of another religion to share with you about their values and their faith (and then non-judgmentally listening to them while they do so) still does great Good.

*Protesting political corruption and ineptitude is powerful -- *and* ignoring politics altogether (and investing that time & energy in your own community instead) does even greater Good.

*Reaching out to embrace an overbearing boss or a difficult co-worker or a mean classmate is brilliant -- *and* “gossiping positively” about them behind their back still does great Good.

*Sitting down next to, speaking kindly with, and then hugging a homeless person is life-changing – *and* giving them a bite to eat while telling them you care still does great Good.

*Becoming an animal rights activist is magnificent -- *and* vocally boycotting all circuses, zoos & rodeos still does great Good.

*Openly complimenting a stranger is fabulous -- *and* making eye-contact, smiling at them, and sincerely asking them how they are doing still does great Good.

*Beautifying a public park or vacant lot is tremendous -- *and* picking up the garbage you see on the sidewalk still does great Good.

*Demonstrating for equality & human rights is powerful -- *and* embracing a neighbor who believes differently than you do still does great Good.

*Rescuing an animal from a shelter is sensational -- *and* being extra Kind to the strays you see on the street (as well as to your own animal companion, of course) still does great Good.

*Protesting against Monsanto & other companies that are infesting our food supply with their carcinogenic GMO’s is extraordinary -- *and* growing (& sharing) your own food does even greater Good.

*Being openly Loving to someone who has deeply hurt you is amazing -- *and* performing anonymous acts of Caring for your enemies still does great Good.

*Going vegan prevents thousands of acts of cruelty and saves hundreds of innocent lives every year -- *and* going vegan for just one day still does great Good.

In essence, my Friends, there is no such thing as an insignificant act of Kindness ... Every selfless deed requires some measure of courage; requires some transcendence of fear & some confrontation with discomfort ... And as such, every act so performed is a powerful one.

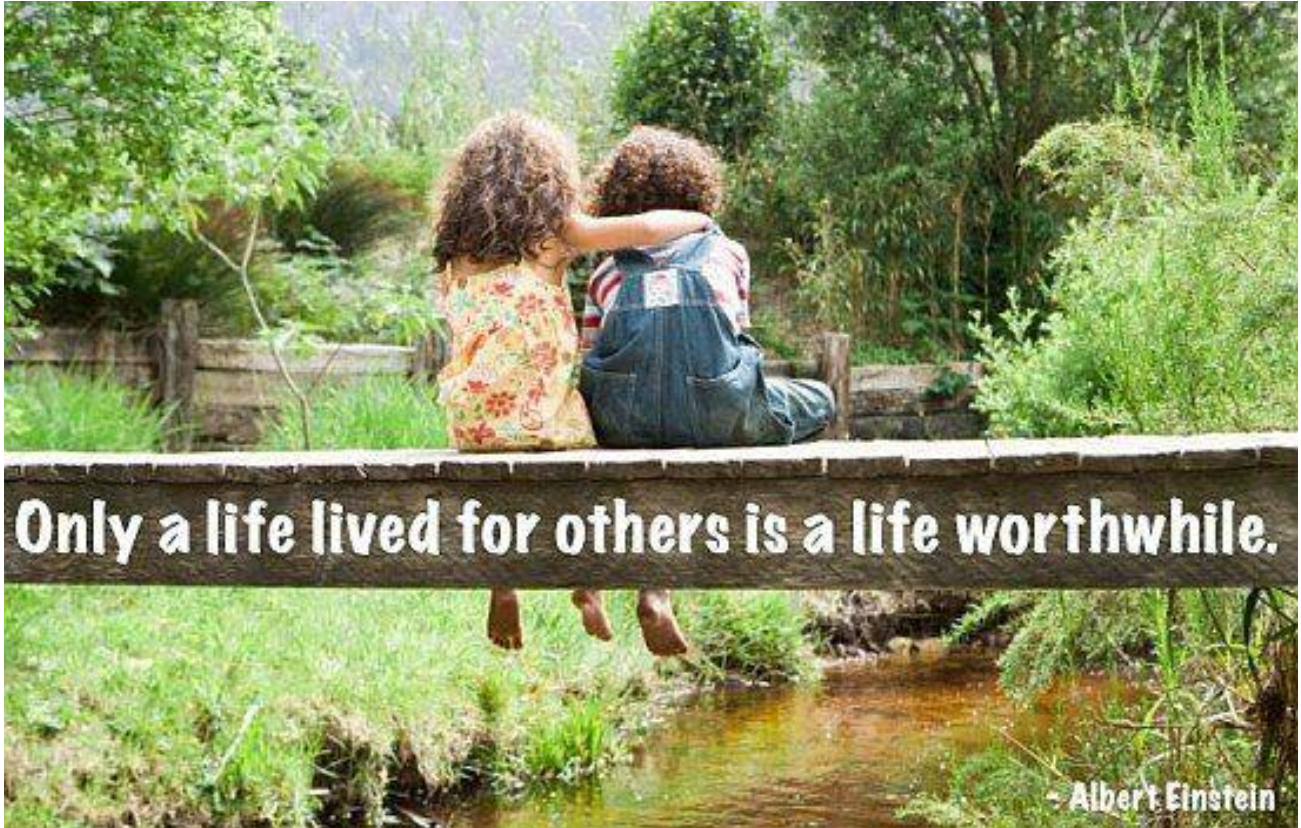
And only such difficult deeds will ultimately matter; only they will turn the tide and allow our species to survive; only they will bring the change we all must one day see.

So let's each go do our small-yet-potent part ...
... Let's go be that change today.

*“The best way to find yourself
is to lose yourself in the service of others.”
~ Mahatma Gandhi*

*“The question which the priest and the Levite asked was: ‘If I stop to help this man, what will happen to me?’ But the Good Samaritan reversed the question, asking: ‘If I do not stop to help this man, what will happen to **him**?’” ~ MLK Jr.*

*“I slept and dreamt that life was joy.
I awoke and saw that life was service.
I acted -- and behold, service was joy.”
~ Rabindranath Tagore*



Freedom #10: the Right to COMMUNITY

*“The community in its fullest sense: a place and all its creatures –
is the smallest unit of true Health” ~ Wendell Berry*

*“A person whose head is bowed and whose eyes are heavy
cannot look to the Light.” ~ Christine de Pizan,*

Without a doubt, my Friends, days of darkness and fear are upon us. As global citizens we are no longer afraid merely of random crime. No, today there are far more insidious forces at work in our world ...

Consider the following:

*Injustice has infected our judicial systems – with lawyers & judges regularly convicting the innocent ...

*Corruption has infested our political systems – with our government’s “leaders” ignoring the needs of the many to reward the desires of the few ...

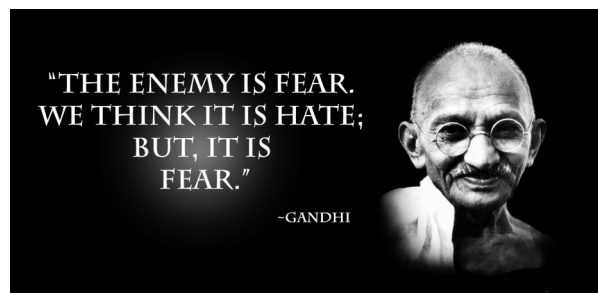
*Brutality has contaminated our systems of law enforcement – with police regularly abusing the powers that we have given them; “protecting” us by spying on our private lives, and “serving” us by assaulting us in public ...

*Immorality has overthrown our military systems – with governments using tactics more evil than the ones that inspired them (see Obama’s villainous drone war), and with soldiers being commanded to become as repulsive as the very enemy they seek to conquer (see the cruel interrogations of Guantanamo) ...

*Greed has poisoned our economic systems – with massive deficits, inflated mortgages, investment scams, identity thefts and the resource-rape of the only planet we have on which to live; with the financial security of the many sacrificed for the luxurious comfort of the few ...

*Hatred has polluted our social systems – with religious zealotry still damning the “lost”, and intellectual zealotry still ridiculing the “ignorant”.

Yes, my Friends, these are indeed quite frightening times.



And how are we responding to these rampant threats of despotism and depravity? Quite naturally, we are answering them with various forms of fear ...

*We build walls around our homes to keep out “those criminals”. We close our curtains to thwart “those perverts”. We refresh our computer passwords and erect thick firewalls to shield our private lives from “those government agents” ...

*We teach our very young children that the world is filled with “bad people” -- by telling them to never talk to strangers and by giving them cell phones so that they can always call us “in case of an emergency” ...

*We endanger the lives of our loved ones by putting handguns in our homes to kill intruders that will never arrive; handguns that have a much higher likelihood of killing or maiming the ones they are intended to protect ...

*We place thick locks on our doors and begin to “neighborhood watch”, and thereby in effect push away our neighbors ...

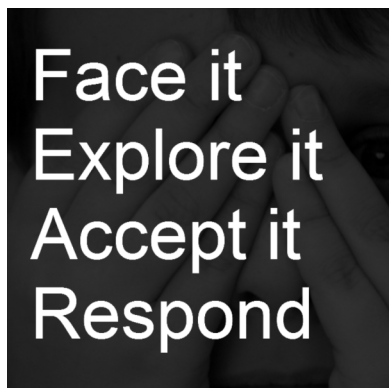
*We look away from strangers, shy away from the “weird” and turn away from the downtrodden – making a vast crowd of probable allies into an invading army of possible enemies ...

*We allow our governments to whittle away our freedoms; hoping they will protect us — meekly offering our liberty in exchange for “safety”, but in reality possessing neither.

Indeed, focusing on our “right to privacy” has imprisoned our bodies and shackled our Souls ... In succumbing to our most primitive desires for security, we have sacrificed all things worth protecting ... In striving to live a “long & healthy” life, we have destroyed the quality of our living.

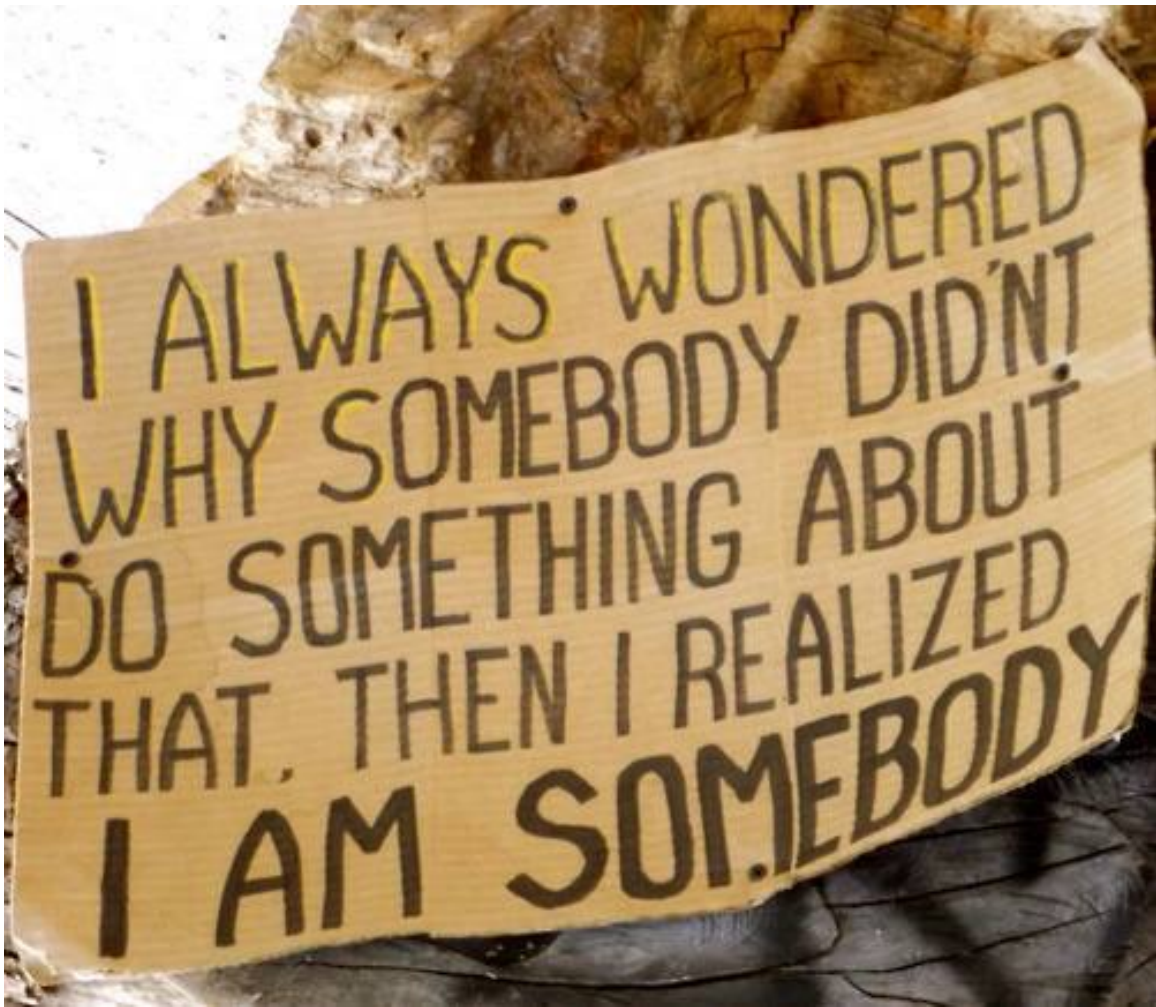
And yet, all is not lost, my Friends. We need not succumb to the shadows of distrust and despair. There is a freedom within us all that, without our consent, cannot ever be lessened or removed ...

... and this is the Freedom of Community.



Indeed, the only real Security we have as humans rests in real Community. And the only real Power we truly have is enlivened in our solidarity with one another ... And by “solidarity” & “community” I do not mean merely helping those nearby who think like you do or who are nice to you first ... I mean reaching out to *everyone* nearby in whatever ways present themselves ...

I mean literally becoming the change you wish to see.



(pictured quote from Gilda Radner)

For those of you who resonate with this Truth and want to empower it in your own lives, here are a few examples of what I mean; a few practical means that you can enliven to reclaim the true security of Community that was yours at birth, and that will ever yours remain. These are the things to consider:

*Consider openly offering your talents to your Community for free. If you are doctor, offer to make house-calls. If you are a teacher, offer to tutor neighborhood children. If you are a massage therapist, offer foot rubs. If you are an athlete, offer to coach a local team. And if you believe you are simply a “normal person” without any special talents or gifts, then you can offer others your sweat, your Kindness and/or your smile.

*Consider buying less and bartering more. Do you have extra zucchini ... or potatoes ... or flowers ... or toilet paper ... or anything at all? Then share it with those nearby who don't. Essentially, if you have it, then offer it.

*Consider starting & maintaining an open-air lending library.

*Consider starting & maintaining a community garden.

*Consider starting & maintaining a communal “Emergency Response Shelter” (or bunker, shed, or garage, or basement).

*Consider knocking down backyard fences and sharing your yard space.

*Consider planting fruits & vegetables in your front yard and putting up a sign that reads “Fresh produce for free ... Enjoy!”

*Consider going out of your way to visit neighbors who are different or disliked.

*Consider coming together and cleaning up & sprucing up nearby parks, traffic islands or vacant lots.

*Consider coming together in small groups and regularly serving the needy.

*Consider coming together and organizing a neighborhood Game Night.

*Consider participating in a “Meal Share” service — taking turns cooking and serving a simple meal for those in need in your community; the elderly, the unemployed, the new parents, the ill, the injured, the “down & out”.

*Consider engaging in frequent, anonymous (and radical) “Random Acts of Kindness”.

While these are some of the more potent ways to transform your neighborhood into a rock-solid Community, there are literally thousands of others. The important thing is not that you do the “best” thing for those nearby, but rather to make sure that you at least *do something*.

In conclusion, while deep-seated Community — that sense of unified intimacy that used to be the core strength of human civilization — may indeed be dying, it is definitely far from dead. Nothing — no person, no law, and no government — can stop you from exercising your Right to live in a Community overflowing with Health, Harmony & Happiness ... And yet if we do indeed want to have such a fulfilling life, then we are the ones who must do its building.



So let's set aside our desire for "protection" & privacy — myths which have proven to be patently unavailable in our current "world of dread". Instead of sitting in front of our television sets being spoon-fed what our "leaders" want us to believe about how dangerous life is, let's head out into our neighborhoods and do something about rebuilding them ... Instead of complaining to our friends & families about how things need to change, let's go forth into our world and start being the change we wish to see.

"Community is proof that Love is possible in a materialistic world... It is a sign that we don't need a lot of money to be truly happy – that in fact, quite the opposite is true. And this real community is created when we recognize that the greatness of humanity is reborn when we accept our individual insignificance by reaffirming our communal greatness; to thank God for having put in a finite body the seeds of eternity which are visible in every small, daily gesture of gentle Kindness and unconditional Acceptance."

~ inspired by Jean Varnier



Freedom #11: the Right to CELEBRATE

*“The year you were born marks only your entry into the world.
The years thereafter are where you show your worth.
They are the ones worth celebrating.”
~ inspired by Jarod Kintz*

No question, times are hard and many of us are struggling to merely get by ... No question, many of our freedoms are being either abused or curtailed ... No question, many of us are unhappy with our lives — feeling hopeless to change the way the turbulent currents of economic unfairness & political corruption are twisting our everyday; the way the jagged rocks of bigotry & illness & violence are smashing our lives.

No question, this life is indeed one tough river to navigate.

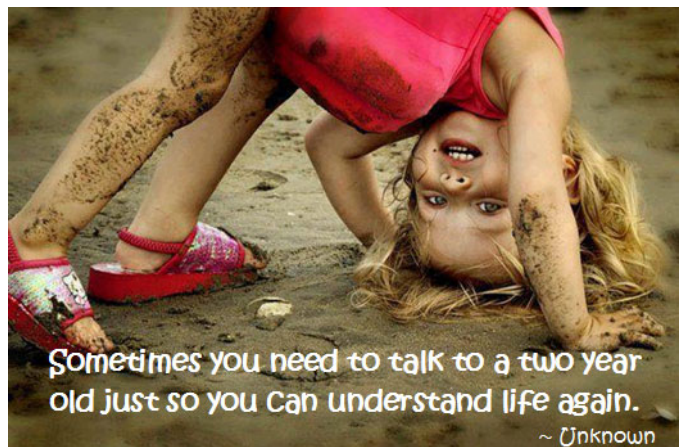
And yet, here too, there is Good News for us all: namely, that life is more than merely navigating the rapids & boulders in “The River” while somehow keeping our head above water — more than merely riding out the hard times while waiting for the waters to calm; all so we can then thereafter sit back, float easily downstream and finally smile ... No my Friends, even in the most violent of torrents, it is always possible to enjoy the ride. Even while being held down underneath churning waters – even while being pummeled by forces too powerful to resist, we always have the right ... and the ability ... to Celebrate our Journey.

Of course, I’m not talking about the traditional ways that we adults “celebrate”; the ways we distract ourselves with hollow revelry and vacuous entertainments. No, our innate Right to truly Celebrate does not mean the freedom to ignore our problems by “partying hard”, or to avoid our challenges by “being entertained”, or to dull our pain by getting “high” or “wasted”.

No, true Celebration is remembering to pause often and be thankful to be alive at all; true Celebration means to regularly stop “doing” long enough to look around in awe at the Beauty that always surrounds us; true Celebration means to take time out from our “important” schedules every day to at least once reach out to others in Kindness.

This is The Way that we all once knew, but have somehow forgotten;

This is The Way of the Child.



For if you watch toddlers on a playground (or in the woods, or in a classroom, or in the grocery store, or in a garden, or in their rooms) — if you really stop long enough to actually *SEE* them while they live their lives, you will notice that they simply seem to “get it”. Consider the fact that ...

*... children take the time to throw themselves completely into their Here&Now; that they remain fully amazed by the Beauty of Nature & fully enthralled by the task at hand.



*... children are Kind to animals; exuding towards them a delicious mix of curiosity & respect & Love.

*... children are Kind to each other; forgiving quickly and playing joyfully — and that this is so regardless of any differences between them regarding their gender, race, social status, religion or sexual orientation.



Simply stated, small children are simply brilliant at celebrating their lives ... and they do so by celebrating their living. And how fortunate we are as adults to still be able to the same! How blessed we are that, no matter what is happening in our lives, we are always allowed to Celebrate life by:

... reaching out to strangers as often as we party with friends & family,

... noticing & soaking up the Beauty of a sunrise (or the majesty of a tree swaying with the wind, or the gracefulness of a bird in flight, or the glory of an endless starry sky) whenever we feel “bored” or “overwhelmed”,

... being grateful for the astounding Gift of Life itself, even when having a “bad day”,

... forgiving our enemies compassionately, even while being attacked or ridiculed,

... giving to others in need, even when our bank accounts are almost empty and our cupboards are almost bare,

... disobeying peacefully all unjust laws and protesting stoically all unjust policies, even when it might mean injury or unjust imprisonment,

... displaying openly our genuine True Self (with acts more than words), despite societal pressures to “be quiet”, “be normal” or “be good”,

... rebuilding our communities with humble acts of courageous Love & selfless Service, even when it requires resources & time & energy to do so.

Yes, regular-yet-fleeting moments of revelry & relaxation are fine in & of themselves, and I am certainly not advocating that we all stop “enjoying ourselves” on occasion ... And yet what I *am* advocating is that we wake up to the fact that our lives are just as fleeting as those relatively hollow moments of “fun”; that we all only have a few days left to do something Meaning-full with the time we have been given;

... that we all only have a few days left to ease off the vacant partying, and amp up the radical Celebrating.

In essence, my dear ones, today we have all been given a gorgeous day to Celebrate Life ... So let’s go make the most of it --- literally.

“There is neither happiness nor misery in the world; there is only the comparison of one state with another. He who has felt the deepest grief is best able to experience supreme Happiness. We must feel what it is to die, that we may appreciate the enjoyments of living ... Live, then, and be happy, beloved children of my heart. And forever remember, that until the day God will deign to reveal the future to humankind, all wisdom is contained in these two words: See & Love.” ~ inspired by Alexandre Dumas



“I am free, no matter what rules surround me. If I find them tolerable, I tolerate them; if I find them too obnoxious, I break them. I am free because I know that I alone am morally responsible for everything I do.” ~ Robert Heinlein

“For to be free is not merely to cast off one's chains, but to live in a way that respects and enhances the freedom of others.” ~ Nelson Mandela

“The really important kind of freedom involves attention, and awareness, and discipline, and effort, and being able truly to care about other people and to sacrifice for them, over and over, in a myriad of petty little unsexy ways, every day.” ~ David Foster Wallace



START WHERE YOU ARE.
USE WHAT YOU HAVE.
DO WHAT YOU CAN