

Eleven Last Wishes



*A few final requests;
uttered a few days before their time*

*via Scaughdt
an (i)am publication*

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An Introduction

All things considered, I am a pretty happy guy with a pretty positive outlook on life. Yes, the injustices & cruelties that still pervade our society continue to grate me to the Core, and yes, there are times when I wonder if we humans are ever going to wake UP to a way of living that is respectful and enlightened and Kind. And yet, for the most part I remember each & every day that we are a young species still heading in the right direction – heading there slowly, yes, and yet heading thereto nonetheless. And while it is true that we might not make it past these times of great trouble & perilous turmoil, at least we have set forth on that Great & Noble Journey – away from merely surviving as a horde of callous carcinogens upon our planet, and towards thriving by becoming the gentle and Caring Caretakers thereof.

And, all things considered, I have a positive outlook as far as my own life is considered as well. I do still get frustrated by my obvious failings to effectively communicate “The Way” of selfless Love to others, and I do often wonder whether I am making a significant difference at all. And yet, for the most part I wake up each day thankful to be alive; thankful for even one more day to spread this Great Message of “radical Kindness”; thankful to be even the smallest part in the Great Movement towards Peace that is blossoming ever more-fully all over the Earth even as I write this treatise.

It is true that life is filled with wondrous Beauty, and it is just as true that life moves past us oh so quickly. Indeed, in many ways our lives are so obviously overflowing with Life precisely because death is always peeking at us from just around the next bend. I am acutely aware of this Truth; acutely aware of the tenuousness of life; acutely aware that I have absolutely no idea how much longer I've got in this fleshly machine currently called “Scaughdt” (true enough for us all – maybe we've got another fifty years to live; maybe we've only got today). And while I hereby renew my vow to live fully & courageously & meaningfully in all the moments I have remaining, I take this time now to offer a few “Last Wishes” as well; things I would humbly-yet-passionately request of you were I on my deathbed and were asked to request them.

As always, enJOY ... and as allWays, do so in **Peace**.

Scaughdt



My 1st Last Wish ...
Replace hatred with acts of Kindness.

Initially, it is VERY important to realize that I am not only talking about war and racism here (though I **do** indeed wish that nations would put down their weapons, and I **do** indeed wish that bigots would put down their viciousness). No, this wish goes far deeper than those more obvious hatreds. I am talking about a deeper “hatred” that affects all of us ... I am talking about the innate and insipid fear that, unbeknownst to most of us, has seeped deep into our Souls.

*I am talking about our hatred of the homeless as we look away when we pass them on the streets ...

*I am talking about our hatred of strangers when we refuse to share with them a warm smile or a heartfelt Hello ...

*I am talking about our hatred for those who have wronged us when we refuse to forgive them their trespasses ...

*I am talking about our hatred for animals when we choose to treat them as mere feelingless commodities ...

*I am talking about our hatred for the Earth when we engage in activities & practices that pollute her waters, poison her air and destroy her natural treasures ...

These are the hatreds that – unless rectified – will be our ultimate downfall. These are the hatreds that – unless halted – will be the bane of all humankind.

And yet to heal these wounds, subtle yet oh-so-deep, we must do more than merely “think good thoughts” or “have warm feelings” ... No, my Friends, to soothe the entrenched dis-ease that keeps us hateful, **we must act** in ways that show a Courage fresh & new.

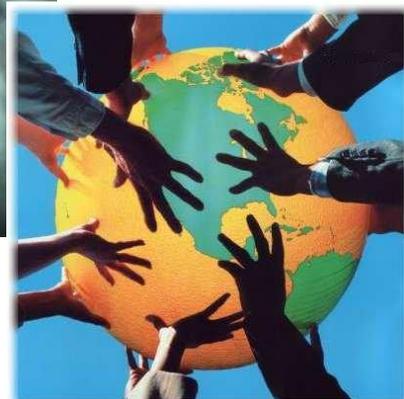
To remove the deepest hatreds that come from our most insidious fears, we must show a Love that stems from our deepest Self ... We must reach out to strangers and our enemies and the downtrodden with acts of radical gentleness, and we must champion a Justice pure & true for the Earth and ALL her inhabitants.

We must do so or perish ... and it is my first “last wish” that we finally do so, and that we finally do so today.

“Try to understand one another. As you sincerely begin to stand in each other's shoes you will automatically begin to be kinder to each other. Knowing another's Truth always leads to Love.” ~ inspired by John Steinbeck

No one is born hating another person because of the colour of his skin, or his background or his religion. People learn to hate, and if they can learn to hate, they can be taught to love, for love comes more naturally to the human heart than its opposite.

Nelson Mandela



*My 2nd Last Wish ...
Replace ceaselessly striving for comfort,
with effortlessly **living in Health.***

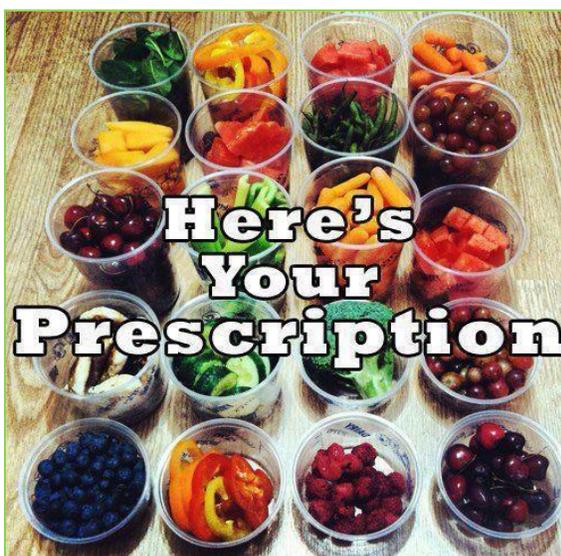
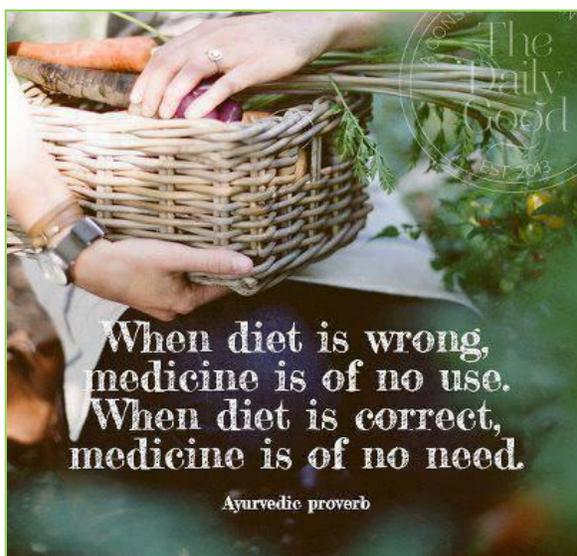
As far as I am concerned, doctors should be paid when we are well, and should treat us all for free whenever we are sick or injured. Of course, at least in the Western world, this pipe-dream is highly unlikely to become reality anytime soon. You see, it is simply not possible to fix what is irrevocably broken, and the fully unjust American medical system, along with the heretofore fully incompetent American political response thereto, has clearly proven that there is no more hope for affordable health care for the vast majority of folks living in the United States.

And yet, and this is true for health-challenged individuals all over the world, if you cannot make your doctors more accessible or more effective, you **can** make them essentially superfluous. Indeed, it is an ever-more-well-known fact that a Compassion-based diet is the second best way to live a healthy Life ... and it is a not-so-well-known Truth that regular, radical acts of selfless Kindness are the very best way to ensure the same ... Of course, a Compassion-based diet is actually composed primarily of regular, radical acts of selfless Kindness, so maybe the two are one and the same.

It's pretty simple, really: to be Kind while you eat is to live a long & Joy-full life. And this offer, along with its undeniable physical, emotional & psychological benefits, is available to each & every one of us right now, today ... And so it is that I offer you Health with my second "last wish"; that with my second "dying breath", I offer you life.

Amen ... Let it be so.

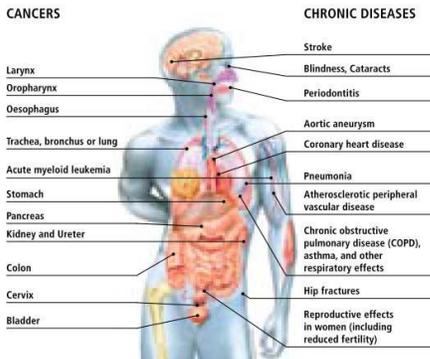
*"We are healthy only to the extent that our ideas,
and indeed our lives, are humane." ~ Kurt Vonnegut*



My 3rd Last Wish ... Please stop smoking!

The main reason I want you to stop smoking is because **I LOVE YOU** and don't like seeing you commit such a willful, slow suicide. Your brilliant and Beauty-filled life is already so short & so priceless, and it is a shame to see you wasting so much of it by inhaling death every day ... That having been said, everyone of us has the right to kill ourselves however and whenever we wish.

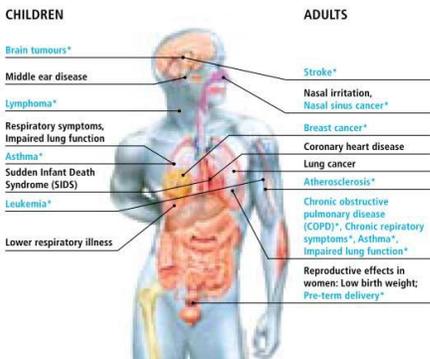
DISEASES CAUSED BY SMOKING



Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. *The health consequences of smoking: a report of the Surgeon General*. Atlanta, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Office on Smoking and Health, 2004 (http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data_statistics/sgr/sgr_2004/chapters.htm, accessed 5 December 2007).

Of course, the other main reason I want you to stop smoking is because – while you **DO** have the right to harm or even end your *own* life by succumbing to your addictions – you do **NOT** have the right to harm or end others' lives while doing so. And indeed, every single cigarette you smoke dramatically increases the chances of every single person around you becoming very, very, very sick.

DISEASES CAUSED BY SECOND-HAND SMOKE



* Evidence of causation: suggestive
Evidence of causation: sufficient



Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. *The health consequences of involuntary exposure to tobacco smoke: a report of the Surgeon General*. Atlanta, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Coordinating Center for Health Promotion, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Office on Smoking and Health, 2006 (<http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/library/secondhandsmoke/report/fullreport.pdf>, accessed 5 December 2007).

Even worse, every cigarette you smoke damages the health & well-being of those same individuals **INTIMATELY & IMMEDIATELY**.

Every co-worker, every classmate, every family member, every friend & every stranger – we are **all** harmed by your choices to sacrifice your own health for a few moments of pleasure.



Yes, nicotine is one of the most difficult addictions to escape, AND it *is* possible to do so – thousands of new ex-smokers are proving so every day. And as such, if you are a smoker, it is my third "Last Wish" that you do so as well ... that you stop smoking, and that you please do so TODAY ... And if you are a non-smoker, it is my wish that you refuse to enable others' smoking any longer; that you no longer say that it's OK for them to smoke in your presence ... Because you Love them ... and thus know that it is not.

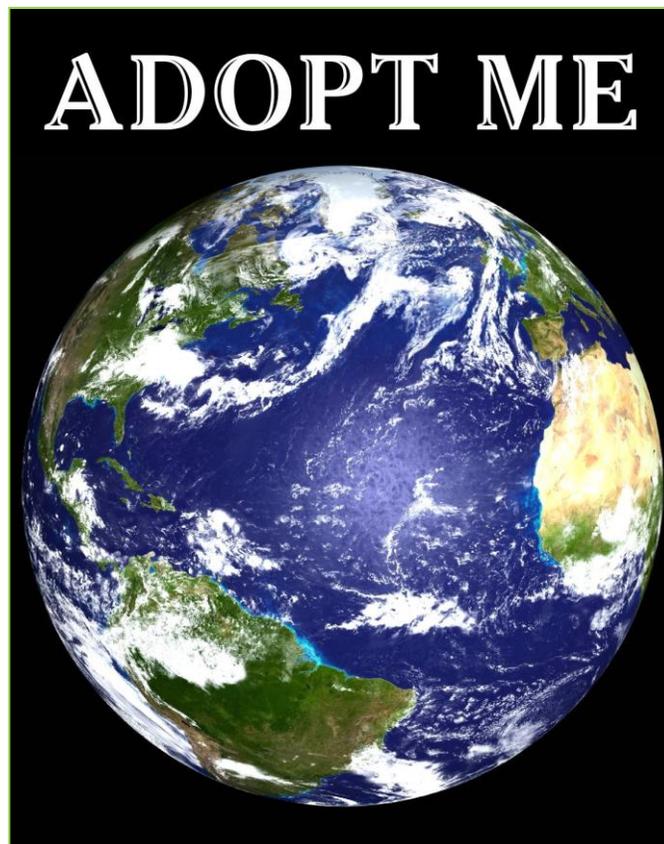


“You get into smoking and you are robbed of the last 25 years of your life. Some cocky folks will say, 'Ah yes, but they are the worst 25 years.' And yet nobody feels like that in a cancer ward ... Cancer wards have a way of knocking the cockiness right out of you ... And for what? Another cigarette?” ~ Tony Parsons

My 4th Last Wish ...
Replace “taking care of yourself”
*with actively **Caring for the planet.***

Let's face it – our Earth is in pretty sad shape. Its forests are dwindling, its polar ice is melting, its wildlife is disappearing, its air is being polluted and its waters are being poisoned ... And, due solely to our collective human greed – solely due to our collective lusts for material wealth & emotional comfort, these tragedies are actually getting worse.

And yet all is not lost, my Friends ... It is not too late to turn our still-beautiful Celestial Spaceship around; not too late for us to cease being the cancerous barbarians we currently resemble; not too late to start behaving instead as the gentle, caring Stewards of our still-possible Paradise we could soon become



Yes, it is true that time is running out on saving our only Home, and yet we *can* still do so – and we don't have to do so overnight. In-deed, every one of you who chooses to help in even a seemingly small way will make a small-yet-significant difference in saving our world from desolation – and our species from its own extinction.

So, would you like to join the team – the only team that has any chance at attaining any semblance of true Victory? If so, simply start by taking three days a week to do at least one of the following:

*Clean up your neighborhood (or simply take a walk with trash bag and pick up all the litter you see along the way) ...



*Plant flowers (or even a tree) ...



*Bike to work; bike to shop; bike anywhere ...



*Reduce (what you own – give away your superfluous possessions to the poor), then Reuse (what you will need again in the future) or Recycle (what you would otherwise merely throw away) ...

REUSE 
REDUCE
RECYCLE

*Save our forests! Limit the amount of paper you use, use recycled paper when you do use it, and then recycle that paper when you are done ...



*Save our lakes & rivers! Limit the amount of water you use ...



*Save our world! Limit the amount of electricity you use (& consider investing in solar &/or wind-generated power) ...



In conclusion, while we cannot hope to save our planet right away – and while it is unreasonable to think that we can convince the “powers that be” to change their greedy & destructive ways, we *can* make personal choices every day that over time will help our planet to thrive in such a way that we will be able to thrive as well ... The time has come for each & every one of us to stop passing the buck to our clearly corrupted & obviously uninterested “leaders”, and to become Leaders ourselves instead.

This is my fourth “last wish” ...
Please join me in honoring it.

*“What we are doing to the world
is but a reflection of what we are doing
to ourselves and to one another ...
Change the former, and we will change
the latter; change the latter, and the
former will change as well.”
~ inspired by M. Gandhi*



My 5th Last Wish ...
Forgive your enemies.

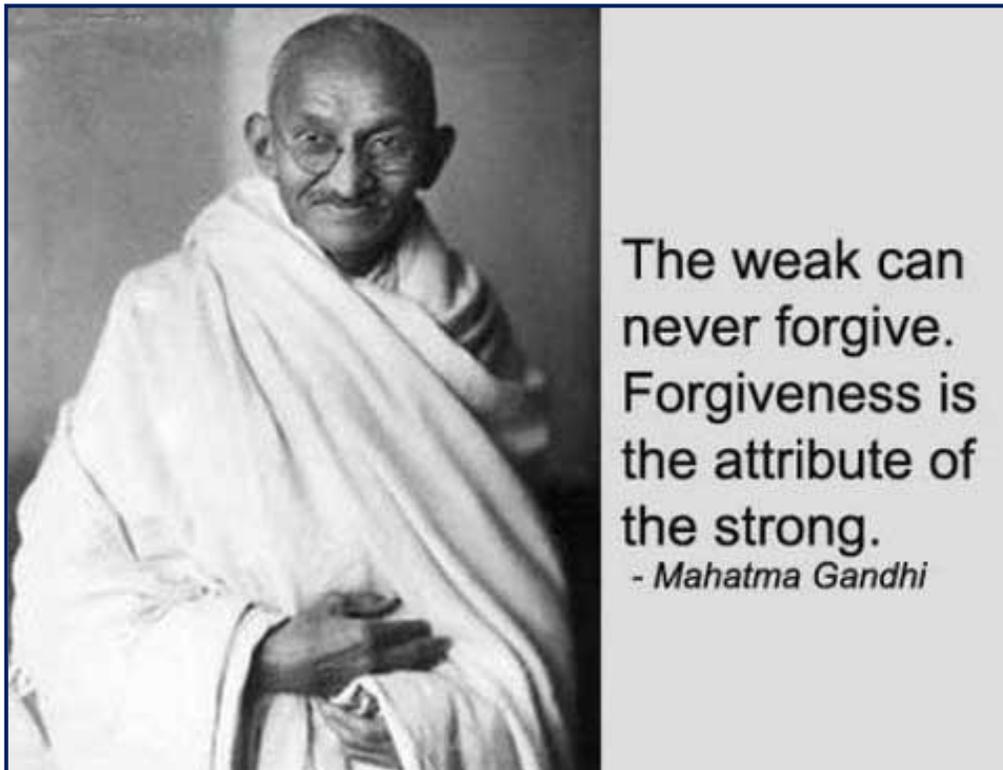
At the start, it is important to realize that there are several forms of Forgiveness available to any given person in any given moment – all of them are innately peaceful, and therefore all of them are innately potent.

The first and most well-known form is the Forgiveness that is given during individual, personal conflicts. It is the mercy we show others when we ...

- * stop & smile & shrug our shoulders in the middle of an argument;
- * do an anonymous Kind Deed for another in the midst of a dis-eased relationship;
- * refuse to gossip about another behind their back; choosing to openly compliment or defend them instead;
- * express admiration for an opponent's strengths in the middle of a competition;
- * obtain a mediator to resolve a matter of law – or even resolve the matter yourself, by simply letting it go.

It is indeed a potent form of Forgiveness to refuse to argue, even when “in the right” ... to refuse to attack, even when being threatened ... to refuse to ridicule, even while being ridiculed ... to refuse to litigate, even after you have been wronged ... to refuse to conquer, even when victory is at hand.

There is far too little of these acts of Forgiveness in our world, and we would all be better off if we would all choose to employ them far more often.



The second form of true Forgiveness comes to us when we Forgive those who – either subtly or overtly – are actively harming our entire communities: ourselves, our friends, those who live nearby we happen to love, and those who live nearby who we don't. I am best referring, of course, to almost all of our current politicians ...

*Consider our local & regional politicians, who are every day succumbing to governments corrupt & nonviable; abandoning we the people in their quests for wealth & power ... We can best Forgive these men & women by refusing to vote for them any longer; by refusing to recognize the wafer-thin differences between their political parties (those parties, too, are all one); by refusing to enable their own moral downfalls by ignorantly feeding the illusion that politicians can actually afford to courageously care; by openly ignoring their actions underhanded & their exhortations hollow ... by choosing instead to rebuild our communities ourselves.

*And consider as well our “world leaders”, those who are every day inflicting terrific & malicious evils upon both the Good & the innocent. Most notoriously, I speak of Kim Jong-Il of North Korea, Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe, Omar al-Bashir of the Sudan, Hu Jintao of China (Free Tibet!), Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel, King Salman of Saudi Arabia, and – of course – Barack Obama of the United States (whose despicable Drone War has destroyed the lives of hundreds of thousands of innocent men, women & children, whose recent prepubescent saber-rattling with Russia, and whose corrupt fast-tracking of the TPP, has unnecessarily made the world far less safe for us all) ... These “leaders” (and others like them all over the world) are this very moment actively harming each & every one of us. As such, what they need most is *not* our condemnation, but our Forgiveness; a Forgiveness that can best be given by reaching out to them openly and with great Compassion; by letting them know that we are fully aware of their greedy, evil ways; by letting them know that we will never support the same; and by letting them know that we still *see* the better, kinder men & women within them – that we will always have faith in their ability to re-cognize & then re-enliven the same.



And finally – let us realize that Forgiveness often flows deepest, and thereby becomes most effective, in its most subtle forms. Humbly consider the following:

*That it is the poor & the downtrodden & the destitute & the homeless (i.e. those who earn & own far less than we) who attack us – by reminding us that we have accumulated far more than we deserve, and are hoarding far more than we actually need ... We can best Forgive these “enemies” by stopping to speak with them when tempted to otherwise look away; by sitting down with them on occasion and touching them on the shoulder and looking them in the eye; by simply showing them we Care.



*That it is those in our lives seen as the “heathens” or the “damned” or the “heretics” or the “unsaved” (i.e. those who do not share our own particular religious beliefs) who attack us – by reminding us that we ourselves are not adhering to the fundamental tenants of Goodness imbedded in our own faiths ...

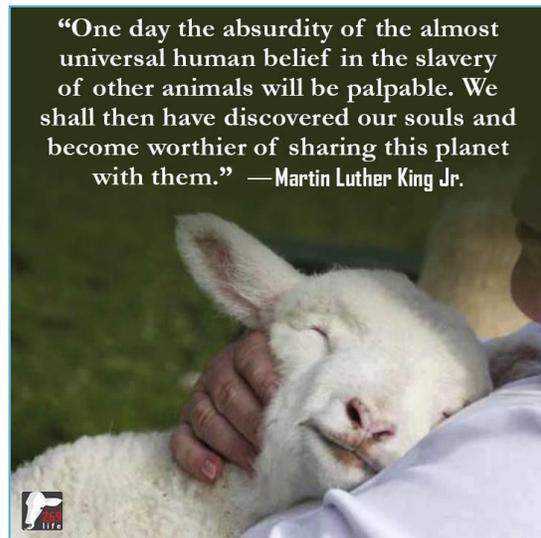


We can best Forgive these “enemies” by openly telling them that they we refuse to condemn or judge them (indeed, that we have no standing to do so); by humbly serving them as the Brothers & Sisters they truly are; by going to their place of worship & sitting with them in respectful, non-judgmental silence.

*... and that it is the sentient yet “stupid” & “ugly” farmed animals, along with those “annoying” & “arrogant” humans who champion their rights to life & freedom, who are attacking us as well – reminding us that, as long as we treat other sentient beings as mere commodities, we are not truly as Kind or as friendly or as compassionate or as Good as we outwardly pretend to be ...

And we can Forgive these “perpetrators” best by showing living as compassionately as they live, by extending the same Kindness they extend, and by championing the same justice they desire (and to which they are entitled) – something we can do most effectively by simply going vegan for a day – every day.

“One day the absurdity of the almost universal human belief in the slavery of other animals will be palpable. We shall then have discovered our souls and become worthier of sharing this planet with them.” — Martin Luther King Jr.



And so it is, my Friends, that my fifth “last wish” is for you to seek out the perpetrators & the opponents & the enemies in your own lives – **all of them**, and then for you to actively Forgive them this day – remembering, of course, that for Forgiveness to be effective it must be courageous; that that for Forgiveness to be real, it must be a verb.



*“Forgiveness has nothing to do with absolving the perpetrator of his crime, and everything to do with relieving him of the unjust burden of being labeled a criminal.”
~ inspired by C. R. Strahan*



My 6th Last Wish ...
Replace protecting your privacy,
*with **strengthening your Community.***
(i.e. less fences; more Friendship)

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

As times change, they bring with them challenges ever more potent, and therefore ever more frightening. These days the average citizen is no longer only afraid of random acts of violence or infrequent acts of crime, but must also be reasonably concerned with forces far more insidious. Indeed, all over the world, injustice has infested our courtrooms, corruption has infected our governments, brutality has contaminated our police forces, hatred has polluted our religions, greed has poisoned our planet, and lust for power has transformed our militaries – originally built to defend us – into tools of mass destruction and empire-building.

And how do most of us respond to these dangers? Well, with understandable measures of self-defense, of course. In essence, we respond to our fears with actions fearful:

- *We build fences around our homes to keep out “criminals” ...
- *We close our curtains to thwart the potential peepings of “perverts” ...
- *We teach our children that the world is filled with “bad people” ...
- *We adopt religious beliefs that teach us to distance ourselves from “the damned” or arrogantly convert “the lost” ...
- *We worship gurus who tell us to establish “healthy boundaries” between ourselves & our enemies ...
- *We listen to those who telling us to obtain our “fair share” of the vast material abundance that is ripe for the reaping ...
- *We place locks on our doors in order to keep safe that which is “rightfully ours” ...
- *We look away from those unfamiliar, avoid those who are “weird”, & turn away from the downtrodden ...
- *We are constantly on the lookout for “potential intruders” – keeping strangers away from our homes; thereby pushing our own neighbors away as well.

Ironically, such a perversely intensified focus on securing our “right to privacy” has banished from our lives the only possession worth having: namely, the ability to intimately commune with others – the ability to live lives filled with Love instead of fear.

Indeed, in succumbing to our most primitive yearnings for the hollow illusion of safety, we have sacrificed all the things in our lives actually worth protecting ... In striving to live a “long & healthy” life, we have destroyed the quality of that living.

AND YET, all is not lost. 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. This is the Freedom of Community, and this is the freedom that I wish for you all with my sixth “last breath”.



And by “Community-building” I do not mean merely helping those who think or believe or act like you do, and I do not mean merely helping in times when it is convenient. I mean reaching out to everyone you encounter in every moment you encounter them ... I mean purposefully & consciously making your Community your number one priority – and including everyone in your neighborhood in that re-Union ... I mean expanding your own Circle of Compassion to include every single sentient being that lives within a mile (or two, or three) of your own home, and I mean doing so actively, in one form or another, every single day of your lives.

*I mean tearing down fences between your yards (or at least opening up pathways through them) ...



*I mean opening up your curtains and/or sitting with a smile & a wave on your front porch ...



*I mean visiting your neighbors on a regular basis, especially those neighbors you like the least ...



*I mean helping to found, and then helping to maintain, a community garden ...



*I mean openly offering your talents to your neighbors *for free*;
... and smiling at strangers when you pass them by;
... and giving away whatever excess food or possessions you happen to have;
... and cleaning up a neighbor's yard while they are on vacation;
... and sprucing up your local park or vacant lot or Rec-Center;
... and coming together in small groups to go forth & serve your local poor;
... and engaging in frequent & radical (& anonymous) "Random Acts of Kindness".

Yes, it is true that real & intimate Community seems to be dying in many towns & neighborhoods, and yet it is definitely far from dead. Indeed, ***nothing*** – no matter how influential or callous the person, no matter how strict or unjust the law, and no matter how corrupt or ineffective the government – can ever stop you from exercising & enlivening your innate Right to live in a community overflowing with Harmony & Happiness.



And yet if you want to have such a fulfilling life, then **you** are the one who must do its rebuilding ... and it is my sixth "last wish" that you commence doing so today.

*"I always wondered why somebody didn't do something about that.
... And then I realized: I am somebody." ~ Lilly Tomlin*

“If man is to survive, he will have learned to take a delight in the essential differences between himself and other men, and between his values and other cultures. He will learn that differences in ideas and attitudes are a delight -- part of life's exciting variety, not something to fear.” ~ inspired by Gene Roddenberry



My 7th Last Wish ...
Replace religion with Respect.

I always find it especially intriguing how Christians will so often & so zealously defend certain passages of their Bible, while simultaneously so often & so casually discounting or even completely ignoring others therein. Take the following passage from Jesus' "Sermon on the Mount" as a prime example:

"And whenever you pray, do not be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, so that they may be seen by others ... But whenever you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father in secret." ~ (Matthew 6:5-6)

Yes, despite the blatant clarity of this admonition – and despite the fact that it comes directly from Jesus Christ himself, every Sunday of every week of every year you will find millions upon millions of Christians dressing up to go to church and pray publicly to a God that they believe has reserved space in Heaven only for them and those who ultimately believe as they do.

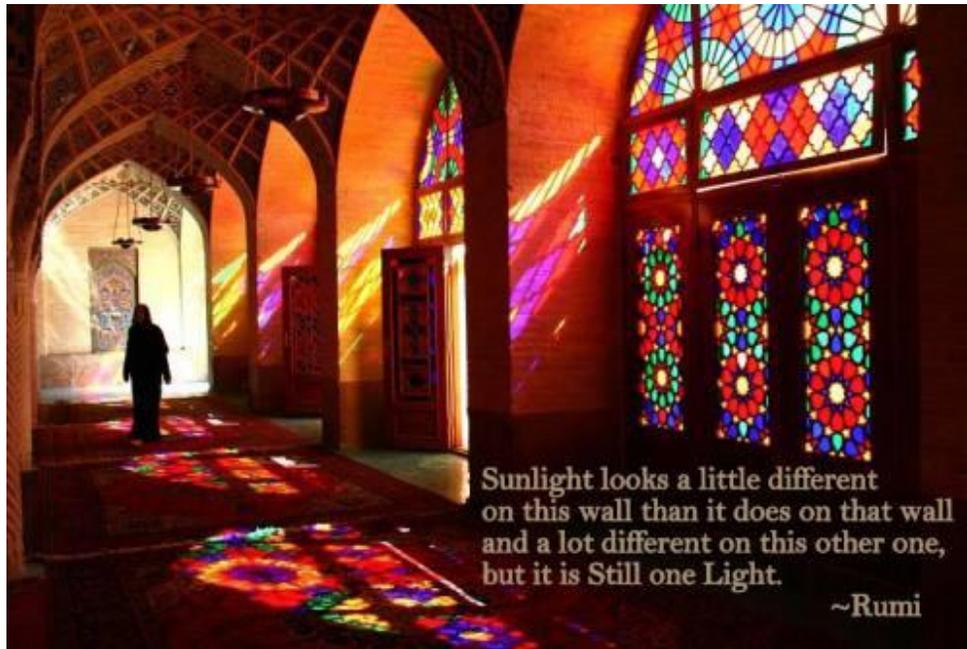
And such flagrant displays of zealous pride are not reserved to Christians ... No, all over the world each & every day we can also find millions upon millions of Muslims & Jews & Buddhists & Hindus & Sikhs doing exactly the same thing; praying with varying degrees of passion, and yet always doing so with an underlying tone of arrogance – a subtle (and sometimes not-so-subtle) certainty of belief in the exclusive correctness of their own individual faiths; often at the spiritual expense of all those who happen to believe differently.

Needless to say, this is not a recipe for Peace.

And yet it is **not** a requirement that we completely abandon our cherished religions for us to deeply Respect others around us ... We must simply have the courage to abandon the tenants of our faiths that are Respect-less.



Indeed, it is **not** a requirement that we completely disavow our favorite passages of Scripture for us to deeply Love others around us ... We must simply have the courage to disavow the interpretations of those passages that are Love-less.



And it is **not** a requirement that we completely reject our bishops & our pastors & our gurus for us to deeply Care for others around us ... We must simply have the courage to reject their encouragements and admonitions that are Care-less.



This is the way to real & lasting Peace ...
For this, ironically, is The Way.

Amen ... and with my seventh “last wish”, *LET IT BE SO!*

“I take literally the statement in the Gospel of John that God loves the world. Indeed, I believe that the world was created and approved by Love; that it subsists, coheres, and endures by Love; and that, insofar as it is redeemable, it can be redeemed only by Love. I believe that divine Love, incarnate & indwelling in and through each & every one of us, ultimately summons the world toward wholeness, which ultimately will be a reconciliation & an atonement between Humanity and God.”

~ inspired by Wendell Berry



HOW TO RESPECT OTHER RELIGIONS

- 1 EDUCATE YOURSELF**
- 2 BE AMAZED - OR EVEN CONVERTED INTO A BETTER VERSION OF YOURSELF**
- 3 BE PATIENT - DON'T FORM OPINIONS TOO SOON**
- 4 BUILD RELATIONSHIPS**
- 5 KEEP YOUR SENSE OF HUMOR HANDY**
- 6 ASK QUESTIONS - LISTEN**
- 7 SAY, "I DON'T UNDERSTAND - YET"**
- 8 EXPERIENCE HOW OTHERS WORSHIP**
- 9 HONOR CONVICTIONS - DON'T TRY TO REMAKE PEOPLE IN YOUR OWN IMAGE**
- 10 EAT TOGETHER, PLAY TOGETHER, AND HOLD EACH OTHER'S BABIES**
- 11 EMBRACE MYSTERY**
- 12 DO UNTO OTHERS AS YOU WOULD HAVE THEM DO UNTO YOU**

*“My religion is very simple.
My religion is Kindness.”*
~ Dalai Lama

My 8th Last Wish ... Redefine your Wealth.

It is indeed true that the Bible says that it is the *adoration* of money, and not money itself, that is the root of all evil. And to the degree that this statement is also true, it would seem that merely earning money – or merely having money, or merely spending money, or even merely "prudently" saving money – would be acceptable practices to engage, if not even commendable ones.

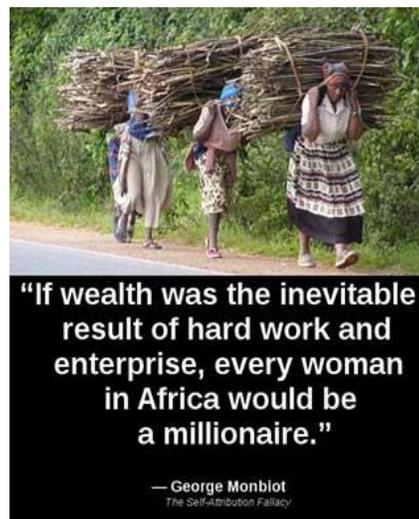
Of course, the problem with this commonly-accepted philosophy is that it simply does not bear Good Fruit ... It never has; and it never will.

Indeed, the problem is that to earn money – or to have money, or to spend money, or even to save money – *is* inherently (in almost all situations) to adore money. Please consider the following:

*To earn money is to provide a service for a reward, which automatically transfers the focus of one's efforts from Loving the other for whom a service is provided to loving the reward that comes thereafter.

*To have money – or to spend money or to save money – is in essence to do the same; to shift one's focus primarily towards the material being that is one's self (who has, and wants to keep on having) and away from the spiritual essence within all others.

Indeed, even the most casual glance at human history shows that people shackled into money-based economies always lead lives filled with uncertainty & fear (those who have) or frustration & anger (those who do not). As such, the few who have end up hoarding more & more & more, while the many who have not end up owning less & less & less; a dynamic that inevitably leads to a social system soaked in violence – envy-based aggressions in interpersonal interactions, desperation-based crimes in famished neighborhoods, and greed-based wars all over the world.



The time has come to put an end to this dynamic of cruelty & injustice – otherwise it will put an end to us. And rest assured that it will not be our politicians who will save us, for they – almost without exception; from local councilmen & women to national Heads of State – have already been purchased by the very financial complex we would have them alter.

No, my Friends, if you are ever to escape this prison of impoverishment, you will have to do so *yourselves* ...

Poverty is not an accident.
Like slavery and apartheid,
it is man-made and
can be removed by
the actions of
human beings.



- Nelson Mandela

Fortunately, there are already quite a few powerful paths to Financial Freedom already available to you. Consider the following facts:



*You are currently free to plant a garden and start growing your own food (and sharing the same with your neighbors).

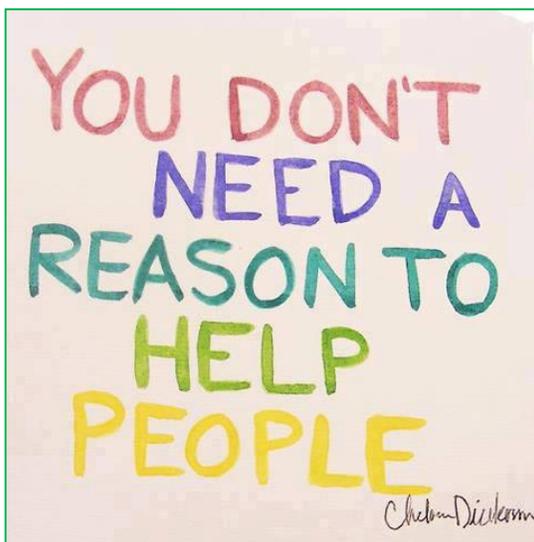
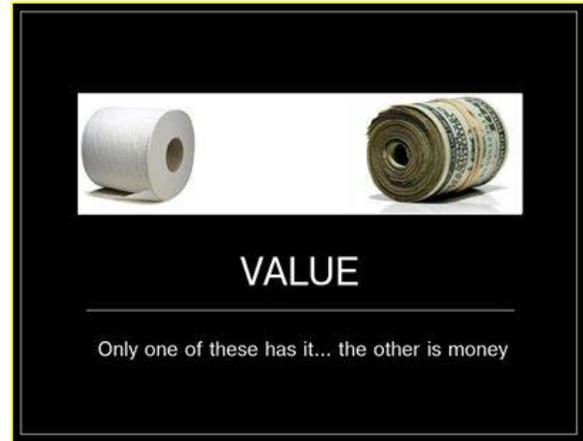
*You are currently free to radically minimize your possessions – recycling what is broken, giving away what is no longer used, and “time-sharing” what is used only every so often.



*You are currently free to radically minimize your expenses – canceling club memberships, revoking cable-TV contracts, turning off unused lights, biking to work (or using public transportation), eating more fresh fruit & vegetables, turning off your cell phone (gasp!), & buying only what you need instead of mostly what you want.

*You are currently free to refuse to support the corrupt banking system in any way, shape or form. You are free to remove most (if not all) of your money from your bank accounts, and to cut up most (if not all) of your credit cards.

*You are currently free to cancel all of your insurance policies; and to invest instead in the only “insurance” that will ever bring you any real solace in times of trial or tragedy – your Community of Friends.



*And you are currently free to make generosity your primary currency – by regularly giving away whatever you have but do not personally need, by bartering for or sharing items with your neighbors instead of purchasing them, and by giving others the most valuable gifts possible for us to give; gifts that have nothing at all to do with money: our Time, our Energy, our Attention ... and our Love.

I have personally lived almost completely money-free for the past decade of my life, and I have never been Happier or Healthier while doing so. And it is because I earnestly adore each & every one of you that it is my eighth “last wish” for you to experience even a portion of the Peace & Joy I have come to know as a result.

Amen ... Let it be so.

“This planet has - or rather had - a problem, which was this: most of the people living on it were unhappy for pretty much most of the time. Many solutions were suggested for this problem, but most of these solutions were largely concerned with caring for small green pieces of paper, which was odd because on the whole it wasn't the small green pieces of paper that were unhappy.” ~ Douglas Adams



My 9th Last Wish ...
Replace weapons with Well-Being.
(or "Less guns & more Goodness" ...
or "Less rifles & more Righteousness")

I currently live in western Europe, where this particular wish is really not necessary to utter. After all, there is no need to fix what isn't broken, and gun violence is simply not an issue in my country of residence (Germany). It would be really nice to think that the other nations & communities of the world would see how effective the gun policies in Germany (& Great Britain ... & Scandinavia ... & Austria ... & Switzerland ... & France ... & Spain, etc) are and then emulate them, and yet such a combination of humility & wisdom is an exceptionally rare find in politicians these days, so this pipe dream will likely remain just that. Once again, our politicians are failing us, and once again, it is up to us to Be the Change we so dearly need to see.

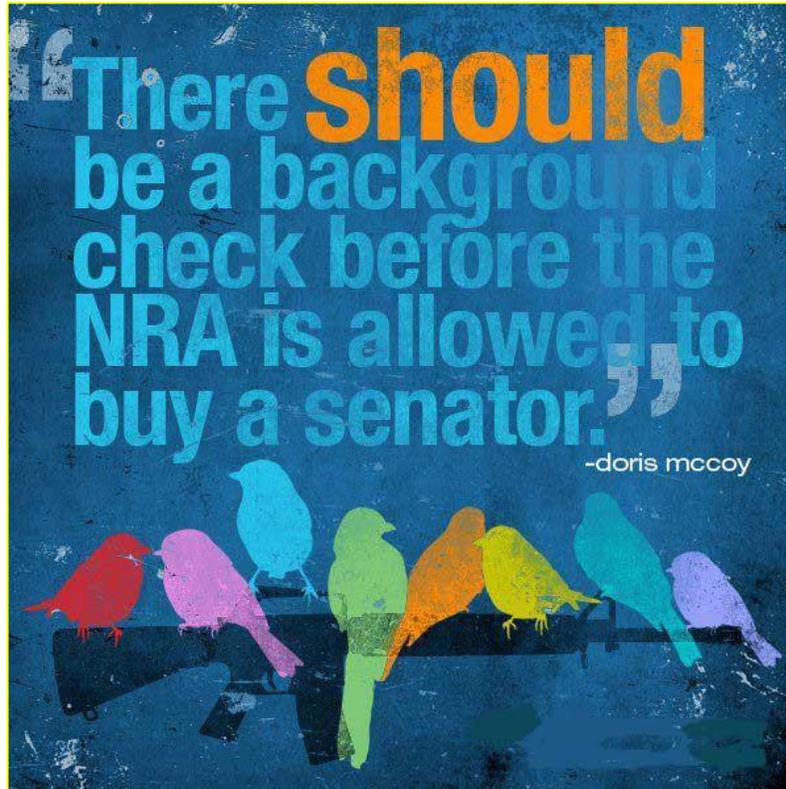
And hence this post – one primarily written for those living in the United States and Russia, and yet just as relevant to anyone & everyone living in any community anywhere in the world where gun ownership is prevalent – and therefore gun violence, a problem.

First, let's look at a few FACTS:

*It has been conservatively estimated that Americans currently own over 300 MILLION guns – that is an average of about one firearm for every man, woman & child in the United States, and in all probability, this figure is quite a bit *understated*. The United States has more guns owned per 100 citizens than any other country in the world.



*In November of 2012, Forbes reported that there has been at least a 200% profit boost for gun makers since Obama first took office in 2008.



*In 2010, WISQARS Injury Mortality Reports noted that more than 75% of guns used in suicide attempts and unintentional injuries of 0-19 year-olds were stored in the residence of the victim, a relative, or a friend.

Nothing to See Here. Just a Coincidence.

**Country with the loosest
gun control laws in
the developed world.**



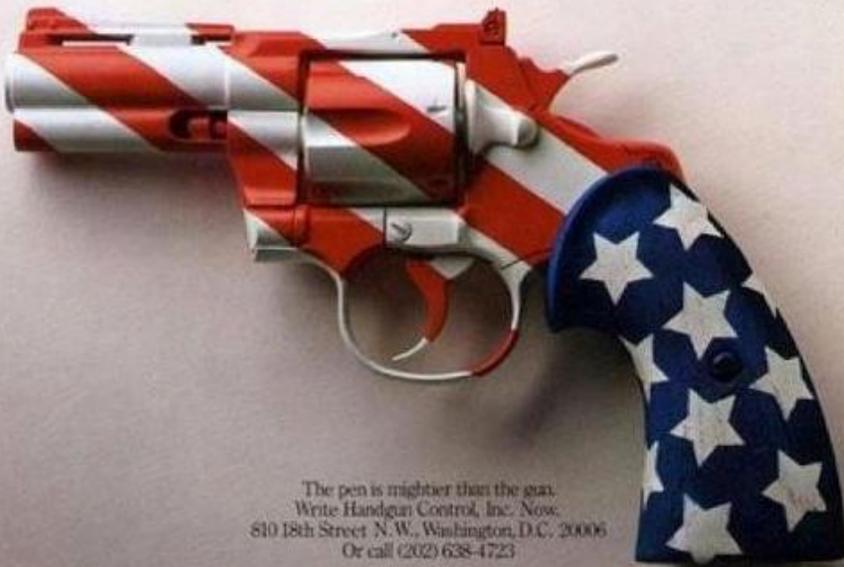
**Country with the highest
gun-related homicides in
the developed world.**



*Of all the children killed in the 23 wealthiest nations of the world each year, over 85% of them are American. A study in the Journal of Trauma and Acute Care Surgery found that the gun murder rate in the U.S. is almost 20 times higher than the next 22 richest & most populous nations *COMBINED*.

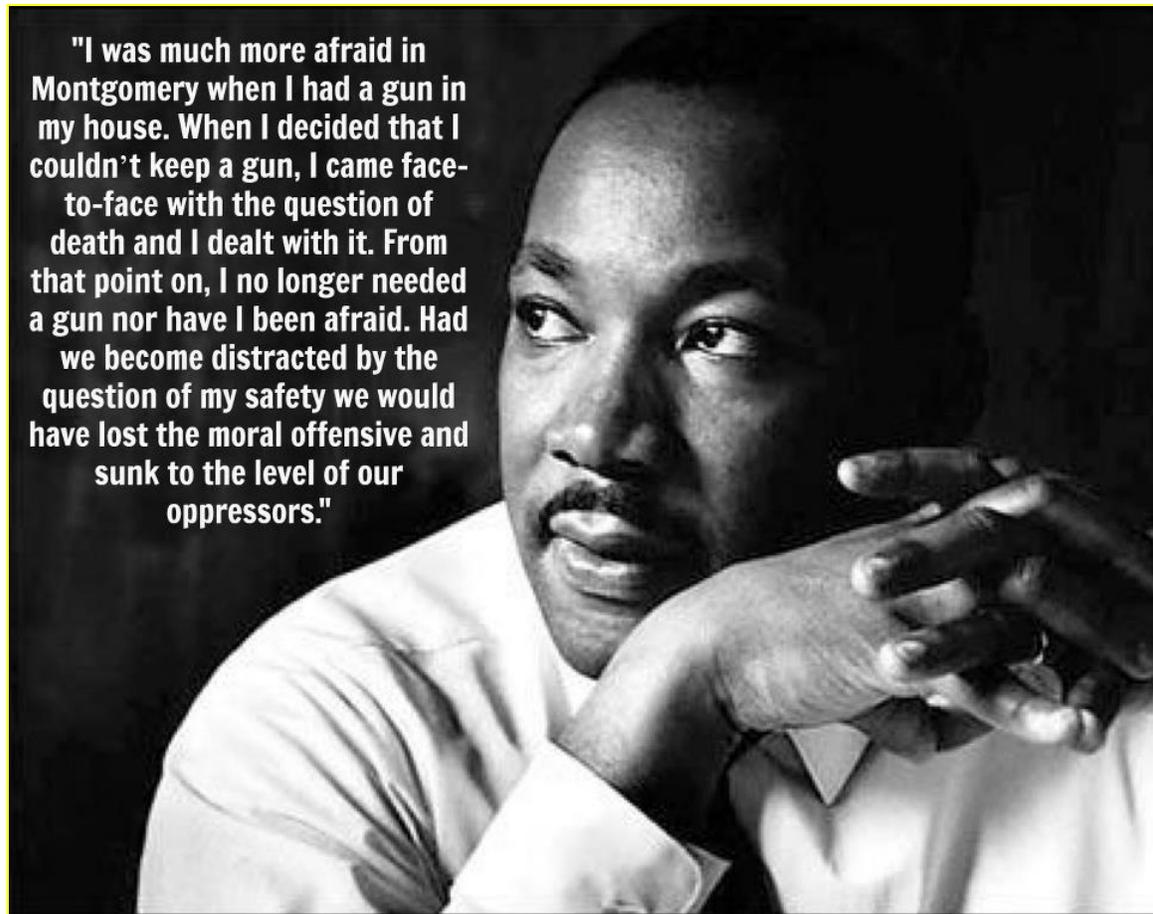
**LAST YEAR, HANDGUNS KILLED
48 PEOPLE IN JAPAN.
8 IN GREAT BRITAIN.
34 IN SWITZERLAND.
52 IN CANADA.
58 IN ISRAEL.
21 IN SWEDEN.
42 IN WEST GERMANY.
10,728 IN THE UNITED STATES.**

GOD BLESS AMERICA.



The pen is mightier than the gun.
Write Handgun Control, Inc. Now.
810 18th Street N.W., Washington, D.C. 20006
Or call (202) 638-4723

*Not surprisingly – though quite ironically – -- the Harvard University Injury Control Research Center also noted that, by a margin of more than 3 to 1, Americans feel *less* safe, not safer, when others in their community acquire guns.



Now I realize that many people around the world have been indoctrinated by cultures where gun ownership is equated with safety and empowerment, and yet the fact of the matter is that owning guns actually make one less safe and less empowered.

* Every time a weapon is purchased, our faith in the Goodness of others is weakened – a Goodness that is the only real hope for Humanity. Indeed, every gun that is bought is a theft from those who are hungry but have not yet been fed, is a theft from those who are cold but have not yet been clothed, and is a theft from those who are homeless but have not yet been offered shelter.

*Even worse, every time a weapon is drawn, our faith in Love is shackled, a faith in the innate power of caring & Kindness that is the only hope for our real Happiness. Indeed, every gun that is brandished is a theft from those who would know Peace, for there can be no Peace with our enemies while we defend ourselves against them.

*And worst of all, every time a weapon is used, our faith in whatever we call God is shattered – a Knowing of our innate Interconnection with all our sentient brothers & sisters, and indeed with everything in the Universe, that is the only hope for what some call Bliss and others, Salvation. Every gun that is fired is a theft from those who would enter Heaven, for there can be no entrance into any Paradise – be it here or in the hereafter – until we enliven the courage to actively Care for those “least deserving” of the same.

In essence, my Friends, we are not here to protect what is ours or to “defend our own”. No, we are here to give what we have and to expand our Family Circle to include all those around us – especially those whom we fear.

For Love unconditional is the only Way to true Happiness ... Each & every one of us innately knows this to be True, and each & every one of us also knows that Love can be neither truly given nor truly received while living in fear.

And yet guns – by their very nature – are instruments of fear ... In fear they are forged, in fear they are possessed, and in fear they are used. Remember that Jesus did not say, “Fear not, but arm yourselves just in case.” No, he quite clearly said, “Fear not ... and Love your enemies” ... And he didn't say these things merely because they were “right” or “moral” or “good” ... He said them because **THEY WORK!**

Jesus understood that no intelligent mammal (we humans included) will bite the hand that feeds; that no sentient animal will ever lash out at another who is being Kind; that no intelligent being will ever attack a member of its own herd ... As such, he understood that Love functions – always & in all Ways; that the answer is not to defend ourselves aggressively against those we fear, but rather to reach out to those very people and bring them into our homes & our hearts *before* enmity becomes an issue. And yet this form of Love cannot ever be given powerfully while we cover ourselves in cowardice ... Love cannot exist where weapons of “self-defense” abound.

So put down your guns, my Friends ...
... and put your Faith in the Power of Love instead.

Amen ... Let it be so.

“Courage is not the absence of fear, but rather the judgment that something else is more important than fear.” ~ Ambrose Redmoon

“Freedom lies in being bold.” ~ Robert Frost

“Darkness cannot drive out darkness: only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate: only love can do that.” ~ MLK Jr.

My 10th Last Wish ... Trounce your Television.

As of 2013, over 99% of American households contained at least one television (and 65% of them had three or more), and every person in those households watched – on average – over 5 hours of television *every day*. “Zoning out” has become a real epidemic in the United States, and yet it is not the only nation having TV troubles. Other countries have succumbed to the scourge of TV as well – with the citizens in Russia, Canada, Great Britain, Italy, Spain and Poland all averaging over 4 hours of television watched per day.

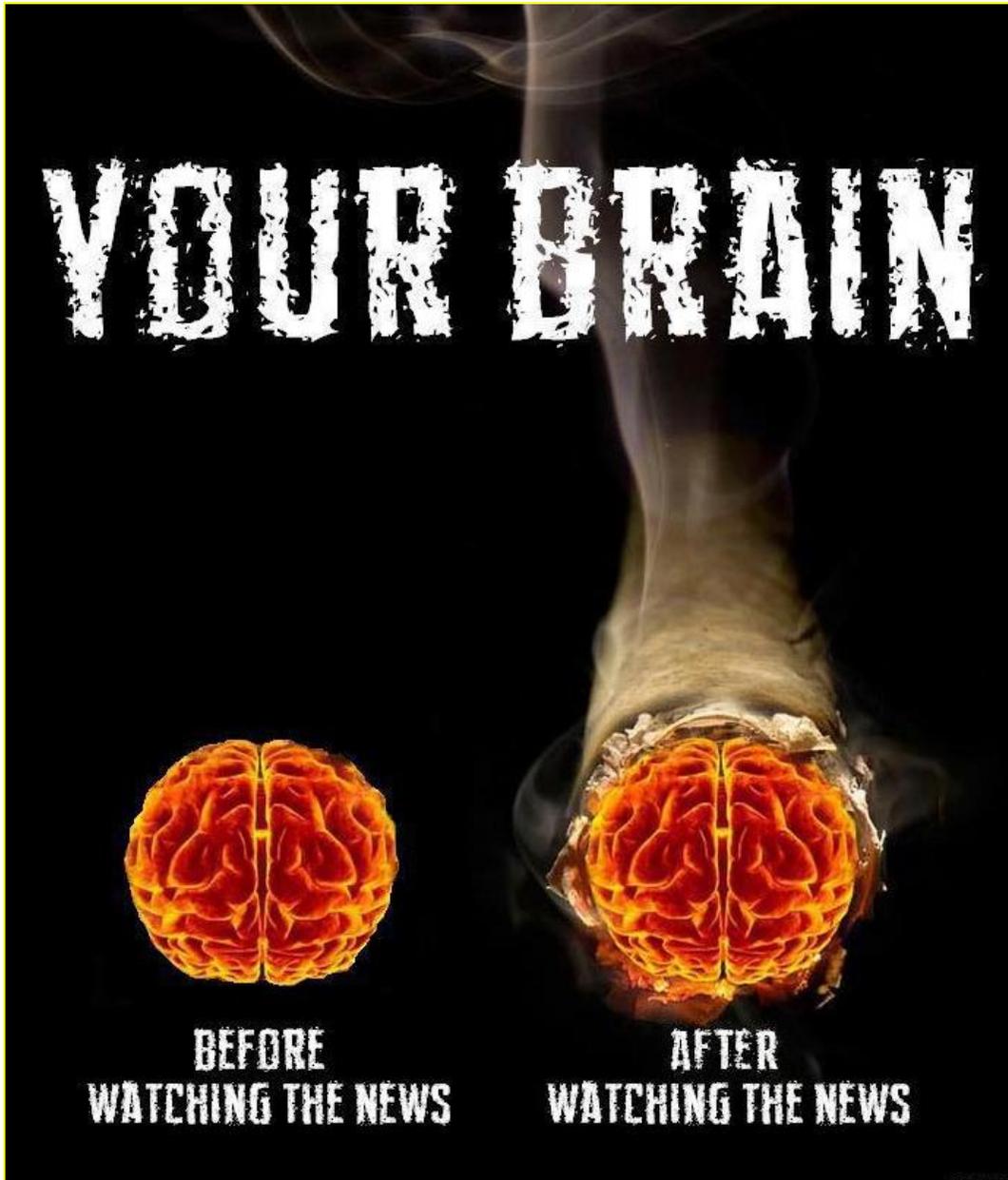
And it is not only television that is sucking the life out of our lives ... Also as of 2013, our world had 1.5 BILLION Facebook users, over 500 MILLION Twitter accounts, and over 1 BILLION unique Youtube visitors every month. All in all, well over 4.5 BILLION people use their mobile devices to regularly access social media sites ... Yes, as if it wasn't clear enough already, we humans have been sucked into cyberspace.

But what's the big deal, you ask? What's the harm in a few hours of cybernetic “fun” every day? Well, if you can pull yourself away from your i-Phone for the next few minutes, I'll tell you ...

*First of all, it is no longer a secret that the current mass media broadcasts an obscene amount of subtle misinformation and outright lies. Fox News is the most famous (and the most flagrant) of such perpetrators, and yet CNN, ABC, NBC, CBS, BCC and even PBS are guilty as well. In essence, stories shared by major news sources are tainted by the money that finances them. So in essence, major news sources are not news sources at all anymore. Pure & simple – they are propaganda machines; spewing forth stories designed to get you to fear the “enemy” of the moment and buy the coolest products of the day. Every now & then they will sprinkle in a factual story (or even – God forbid – an uplifting & inspirational one), and yet ninety-nine times out of every hundred times you turn on the boob-tube, you will end up listening to maliciously manipulated manure.



*It has also been conclusively proven that tuning in to mass media makes you prone to violence, both physical and verbal. There have been well over 4000 studies done related to this theme, and they conclusively show that watching television contributes to aggressive behavior, causes nightmares, and intensifies paranoia. Just as damaging (if not even more so), watching violent TV programs has also been linked with having less compassion & empathy toward others in our everyday lives.



*And finally, it has also been clearly shown that engaging your mass media devices regularly makes you stupid ... Indeed, research has now conclusively shown that when you are watching TV or staring into your laptop or i-Phone, your higher brain regions shut down, and your brain activity shifts to its “lower”, more primitive regions – regions permanently cemented in a response mode of insecurity, worry, fear & “fight or flight”. Over time, watching electronic media causes your higher brain regions to atrophy due to lack of usage. Indeed, studies have shown that TV viewing among children leads to lower attention spans and poor brain development, and that mass media viewing among adults leads to lessened abilities to reason and focus on the tasks at hand (i.e. a lessened ability to appreciate life).

**Turn off the TV.
Put down the tabloid.
Live YOUR life,
not theirs.**



There is essentially no more doubt that mass media is both a farce and an opiate. It ruins the overall quality of our lives, it makes us aggressive & anxious, and it makes us susceptible to the corrupt, the callous and the sometimes cruel whims of those “in power”.

Fortunately there is a simple solution to this epidemic; a solution that is my tenth “last wish” for you all ...

TURN OFF YOUR TELEVISIONS & PUT AWAY YOUR I-PHONES ...

Do so *right now* – and then get out there and live your life!

Amen ... Let it be so.

*“All I know is just what I read in the papers,
and that is the alibi for my ignorance.” ~ Will Rogers*

“People are sheep. TV is the shepherd.” ~ Jess C. Scott

“Don't hate the media; become the media.” ~ Jello Biafra



*My 11th (& final) Last Wish ...
Treat all sentient **animals**
as though they **are equally worthy of Life**
... because **THEY ARE.***

This is my final wish, and I have saved it purposefully for last, if for no other reason than it is the one most important to me, and currently the wish most dear to my heart. That's right, even if you were to ignore all my previous ten pleas – even if I were on my deathbed and had only one wish instead of eleven, I would wish for you to go vegan; even if only for one month.

“Go vegan?!?!” you ask, “Why is that more important than eliminating hatred, or attaining a sense of Health, or protecting the sanctity of the Earth, or forgiving one's enemies, or building a vibrant Community, or becoming One with God, or attaining true Wealth, or liberating our minds? ... And why for only one month?”

Well, since you asked ...

First & foremost, going vegan for just one month saves the lives of anywhere between twenty (20) and thirty (30) beautiful, caring, sentient beings – innocent animals who would otherwise live brutally shortened lives of stark confinement & immense suffering before ultimately enduring a death most violent & most horrible.



“They are, like us, sentient beings who have subjective awareness. They feel pain; they experience fear and distress. They value their lives just as we value ours.

What does it say about us that we deprive them of all they have for a reason as frivolous as our palate pleasure?”

- Gary L. Francione

Secondly, while going vegan “cold turkey” is admittedly challenging, doing so for only one month is more than doable for all of us. Plus, it is a simple Truth that all the amazingly Good Decisions you will ever make in your life will only bear the “fruit” of deep-seated Joy & lasting Peace if you make them because you *want* to make them – not because a dear Friend asked you to do so from his deathbed. In essence then, going vegan for me for only one month means that you can thereafter possibly choose on your own to go vegan for the rest of your life.

ANIMALS

Are Not Ours to Eat 
Animals on factory farms are treated like meat, milk, and egg machines.
By switching to a vegetarian diet, you can save more than 100 animals a year from this misery.

Are Not Ours to Wear 
It may be called "wool," "mohair," "pashmina," or "cashmere."
But no matter what you call it, it means bad news for the animal it came from.

Are Not Ours to Experiment On
Estimates of the number of animals tortured and killed annually in U.S. laboratories vary widely but are in the millions.

Are Not Ours to Use for Entertainment 
Animals don't want to ride bicycles, stand on their heads, balance on balls, or jump through rings of fire.
Sadly, they have no choice. Trainers use abusive tools, like whips and electric prods, and force them to perform.

Are Not Ours to Abuse in Any Way 
For every one companion animal who lives indoors with a human family and receives the attention, health care, and emotional support that he or she needs, there are thousands just barely surviving.

And finally, going vegan actually fulfills – either immediately or gradually – every single one of my previous ten wishes:

*For there can be no sincere Kindness towards our fellow humans downtrodden and “less than” until we also choose to be sincerely Kind to all sentient life forms “lower” and “less intelligent” ...

*For there can be no real Health for us humans while we continue to eat the dead flesh & mammary secretions of other species; substances our bodies are simply not designed to consume or digest ...

*For our Earth will not survive unless we choose to cease supporting the meat/milk industry – the number one industry responsible for the poisoning of our air, the polluting of our water, the destruction of our forests & the starvation of our children ...

*For it is hypocritical for us to forgive our human enemies if we continue to behave immorally & disrespectfully towards innocent members of other species; we cannot rebuild our own communities until we can lovingly include all other sentient life-forms therein ...

*For it is useless to replace the hollow facets of our condemnatory religions with our heartfelt, Loving prayers while we are needlessly & heartlessly destroying our God's other sentient creations ...

*For there is no sense attaining “abundance” or “wealth” while our Souls remain impoverished by apathy & lust ...

*For we cannot know real safety for ourselves or provide effective security for our families until all sentient beings are safe from *us*; we cannot cease being the victims of violence until we choose to cease being the perpetrators thereof ...

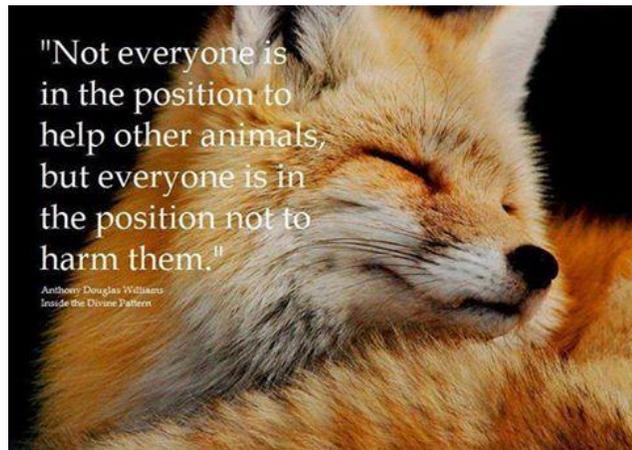
*And it is useless to free our minds from the prison of lies & deception fed to us by the minions of our mass media if we continue to remain bound & shackled by the still-barbaric “norms” of our current culture.

We're not "being kind" or "saving animals" by being vegan. We're not being "compassionate", "merciful" or "awesome" by being vegan. Veganism recognises that nonhuman animals deserve at least one very basic right - the right not to be used as property. It's about justice. It's nonviolent. It's the minimum standard of decency.

And so, my Friends, we come to the conclusion of my eleventh & final “last wish”. It is a wish so very humble that it embraces not only all your fellow humans, but all of your sentient animal cousins as well – and it is a wish so very powerful that – if fulfilled – will improve every facet of your lives. And this Final Wish is essentially this:

Just for this week, be Kind *to all*, even when disadvantaged;
Just for this week, be Kind *to all*, even when inconvenienced;
Just for this week, be Kind *to all*, even when least inclined;
... especially when least inclined.

Amen ... *Let it be so.*

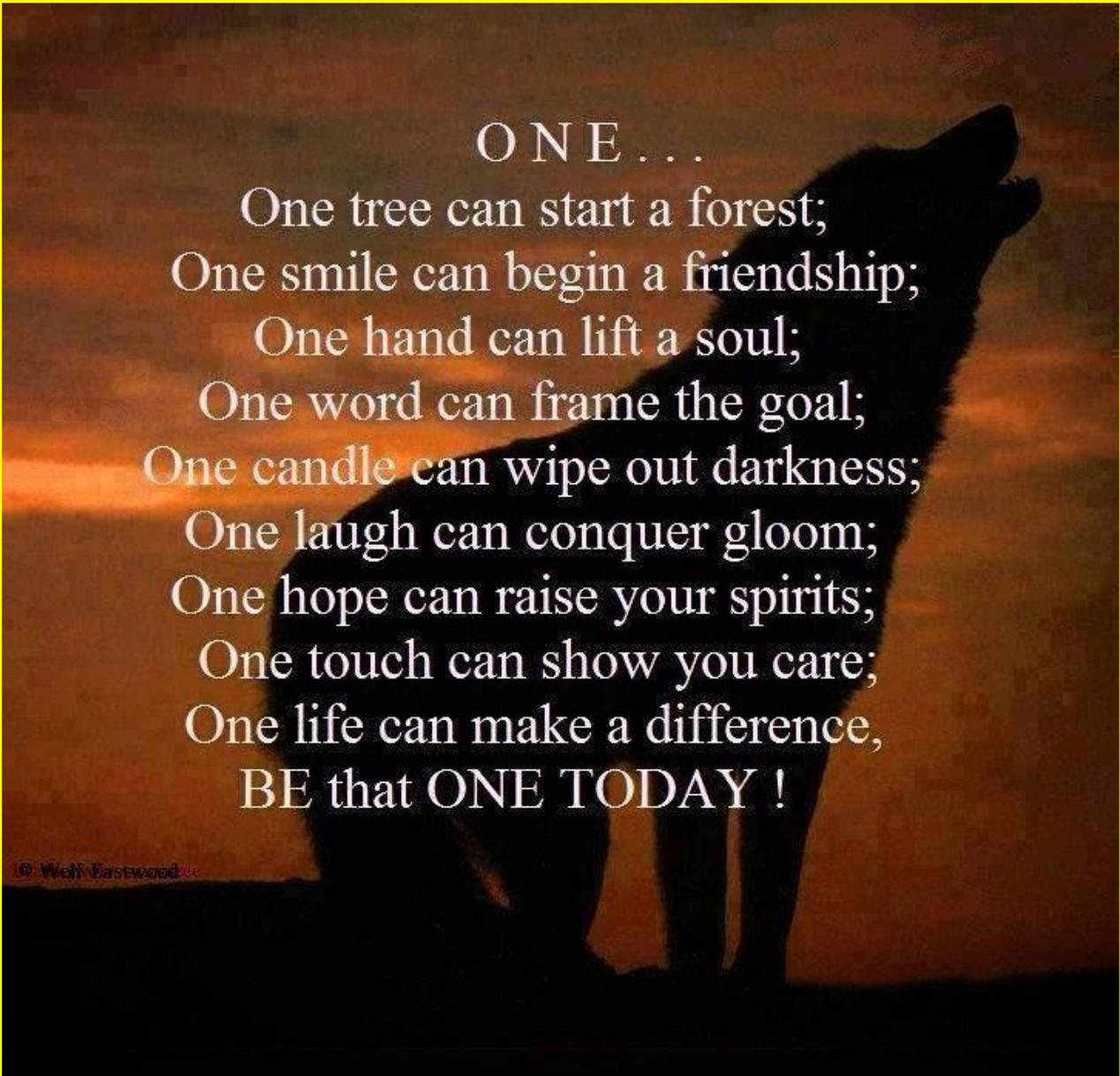


“Just how destructive does a culinary or style or entertainment preference have to be before we decide to eat or wear or view something else? If contributing to the suffering of billions of animals that live miserable lives and die in horrific ways isn't motivating, what is? And if you are tempted to put off this all-important question of conscience -- to look casually aside and say ‘Not now’, then when?”

~ inspired by Jonathan Safran Foer

“As long as Man continues to be the ruthless destroyer of lower living beings, he will never know health or peace. For as long as men massacre animals, they will kill each other. Indeed, he who sows the seed of murder and pain cannot ever hope to reap real Joy and Love.” ~ inspired by Pythagoras

“Non-cooperation with evil is as much a moral obligation as is cooperation with good.” ~ Martin Luther King Jr.



ONE . . .

One tree can start a forest;

One smile can begin a friendship;

One hand can lift a soul;

One word can frame the goal;

One candle can wipe out darkness;

One laugh can conquer gloom;

One hope can raise your spirits;

One touch can show you care;

One life can make a difference,

BE that ONE TODAY !

© Wolf Eastwood cc



**DONT KEEP
CALM
GET ACTIVE
CHANGE THE
WORLD**



*“And I will take one from a thousand and two from ten thousand,
and they shall Become a single One.”
~ Jesus (Gospel of Thomas 23)*