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Notes from the Director

“In the course of history, there comes a time when humanity is called to shift to a new level of consciousness, to reach a higher moral ground. A time when we have to shed our fear and give hope to each other. That time is now.”

~ Wangari Maathai

Where do we find hope in troubled times, and how do we share that hope with one another to sustain us in our commitment to personal and social transformation? Our featured guest author for this issue of the newsletter has placed these questions at the center of his activism and scholarship for more than five decades. Dr. Vincent Harding is widely recognized as a close associate of Martin Luther King Jr., Howard Thurman, and many other well-known and unknown heroes in the struggle for freedom and democracy in the US. He remains passionate in his dedication to democracy as a spiritual and social principle that honors the voice and gifts of every person. In his article (see p.3) Dr. Harding reflects on some of the signs of hope he has encountered in his recent travels around the country.

SEEDS OF SACRED INTENT

Join us on Saturday, January 27th for our first Spirit, Sound & Silence retreat of 2007. Our theme will be planting seeds of intent for the new year. Different than resolutions, deeper than goals or plans, the sacred intent for our lives is the soul's purpose or calling unique to each one of us. When we give our full commitment to that purpose, the energy

of Life itself is unleashed toward its fulfillment. Through visioning, guided meditation, silent reflection, and inspirational teaching, retreat participants will be supported in discernment and offered spiritual tools for nurturing their own sacred seeds.

TRANSFORMATIVE VISIONS

The deadline for submissions to our upcoming Transformative Visions art show, jazz and spoken word concert is fast approaching. *Please contact us immediately* if you are interested in submitting visual art or spoken word for possible inclusion in the show. Full information is available on our website. If you don't have internet access please leave a voicemail message at 510-595-5598. We would also be delighted to hear from anyone interested in volunteering or providing sponsorship in any amount to help ensure the success of what we hope will become an inspiring annual event.

END OF THE YEAR GIVING

In this season of giving, we ask you to remember OneLife Institute in your end of the year charitable contributions. Your generosity allows us to offer services of spiritual ministry and education to all seekers, regardless of their ability to pay, and to provide resources that support compassionate social change. Please know that we are committed to the synergy of sharing our blessings not only through the services we provide, but through donating a portion of our income to other nonprofit organizations whose work we believe in. (continued → →)



*"Be within the
compassionate eyes
of God and then
look at the world."
~ Muhaiyaddeen*

Notes from the Director, contd.

Our recent tithe recipients include the Center for Third World Organizing, Timbuktu Foundation, Youth Uprising, the Women of Color Resource Center, and Veterans of Hope.

OneLife Institute is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization and your contributions are tax deductible to the full extent allowed by law. Gifts may be mailed to us or made securely online using the link provided on our website. We extend our humble and heartfelt thanks for ALL your support - time, talent, tithes, and prayers.

May the blessings that you share return to you magnified and multiplied.

In Peace, *Liza*

MYSTICISM & SOCIAL CHANGE

During the upcoming spring semester I'll be teaching at Starr King School for the Ministry, part of the Graduate Theological Union (GTU) in Berkeley, CA. The course will explore the powerful synergy between mystic spirituality and social action. We will look to the example of "mystic-activists" from diverse cultures and faith traditions for insight and inspiration, and consider specific practices to nourish and sustain an ongoing commitment to anti-oppression work and ministerial service. The class is open to all GTU students; others may enroll as special students, if space permits. Please see: www.sksm.edu

Blessed are the Peacemakers

In the Sermon on the Mount, as it is recorded in the fifth chapter of the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus says "Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God." The word "peacemakers," in the Greek translation, is *eirenopoiós*. Its meaning is instructive: "one who makes peace in others having first received the peace of God in his [or her] own heart; not simply one who makes peace between two parties."¹ The term is used only once in the entire Bible, suggesting it may be a neologism – a new word created by Jesus to express this particular concept.

In Aramaic, the language of Jesus, "peacemakers" is *lahwvday shlama*. *Lahwvday* refers to "those who not only make or perform an action but also are committed to it."² Its roots relate to planting, laboring and tending, in order to bring forth fruit. And the fruit, in this case, is *shlama* – peace, but also fulfillment, completion, surrender, union. Similarly, the Hebrew word *shalom*, and the Arabic *salaam*, are commonly rendered as "peace," but a more accurate translation might be wholeness, completeness or integrity.

Peace, then, may be understood as not just the absence of conflict, but a wholistic state of well-being and fulfillment that we are called to cultivate in our hearts and in the world.

This essential integration of the inner and outer dimensions of peacemaking is summed up by Sufi master M.R. Bawa Muhaiyaddeen who counseled,

Practice God's actions every day of your life. Be within the justice of God and do what is just. Be within the compassionate eyes of God and then look at the world. Be in the state of God's peacefulness and try to give peace to the world. Be in the state of God's unity and then try to establish unity in the world. When you exist in the state of God's actions and conduct and then speak with [God], that power will speak with you.³

A Muslim mystic from Sri Lanka, Muhaiyaddeen was known for his efforts to foster unity among people from all religious and ethnic traditions. He believed that when we set up divisions and separations – by race, religion, or

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Signs of Hope

By Dr. Vincent G. Harding

Dear Friends,

As I write this letter to you we have all had a month to give some careful consideration to the possible meaning of the midterm elections that seemed to open new possibilities for our nation and for those of us who are constantly working to create “a more perfect union.” Somehow the recent movement of the American electorate brought back to my mind two slogans that Jesse Jackson lifted up in his historic – but flawed – presidential campaigns of the 1980’s. One was “Keep hope alive,” the other was “God hasn’t finished with me yet.”

Of course, both of these statements could easily be cast aside as bromides from another, simpler time. But when I reflect on last month’s elections and place them in the context of the communities and individual carriers of hope that I have seen at work all around this country, I cannot resist the insistent movement toward light that seems to be breaking into these often dark times.

I am speaking not of some placid, easy optimism, certainly not in the face of a fearful, empire-building, constitution-threatening nation, but rather my conviction is based on rugged hope, hope fiercely emerging from the beauty that I have experienced in the past decades of struggles for the creative transformation of “ordinary” women, children and men who refused to give up their extraordinary dreams of new beginnings.

What I think I have discovered is that feeding my own hope in the best possibilities of this problematic and often dangerous nation requires that I regularly engage in several kinds of journeys. One pilgrimage takes me to the historic sacred spaces where people have lived and died for the redemption of this land, especially in the tumultuous

last half of the 20th century. Another opportunity for the embedding of hope arises when I am able to participate with young people in the work of contemporary attempts to create new platforms of hope, new visions of the possibilities for our nation and this world.

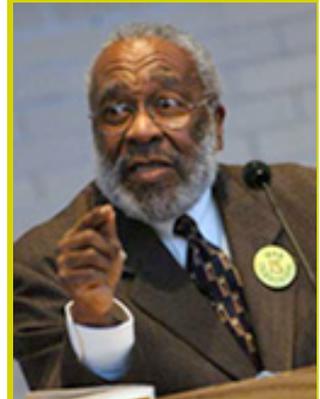
From the blossoming elementary school children in Baltimore’s sometimes hard city who are learning the stories of the long struggle for the expansion of democracy in their church-sponsored “Freedom and Democracy” charter school, to the teenagers in North Philadelphia’s Cookman United Methodist Church who are serving their youthful neighborhood peers in one of the city’s toughest communities with their creativity, compassion and courage – in these places and others I have found signals and signs of the hope that continues to break through the darkness.

This fall in a deeply moving face-to-face conversation with Mumia Abu Jamaal, who has been wrongly condemned to Pennsylvania’s death row for more than 20 years, I saw the hope in his eyes, heard it in his determined voice, felt it in his unshakeable commitment to work for humane transformation, even while behind the heavy walls of injustice.

In Detroit, with the 92-year old Grace Lee Boggs and her creative, multi-racial, intergenerational Detroit Summer crew, here in Denver with Cleo Parker Robinson, creating hope through magnificent dances of transformation, out in Oakland, down in Atlanta, over in Chicago, and even in New Orleans I have seen and heard signs that hope is alive, and I have been given the privilege of working with its carriers.

Refusing to define retirement as disengagement, I find it essential constantly to explore ways in which I can move spiritually, intellectually and physically to introduce the searching →

(continued on p.4)



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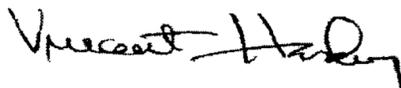
Signs of Hope (continued)

young people of the contemporary generation to that magnificent band of elder brothers and sisters who earlier allowed their commitment, courage, faith and creativity to move them out of safe, predictable places in search of a more just, compassionate and democratic nation. And in the course of the bridging journey I find myself empowered by the relentless determination of these “veterans” to continue their deep engagement in the struggle for the expansion of democracy in America.

As the new year approaches, we at the Veterans of Hope Project are committed to continue seeking out and collaborating with the witnesses to hope who exist everywhere in this nation. And we shall be especially focused on working with our young people to encourage them in the knowledge that the universe is very much at work in them, with them and through them. We are sure that God/Allah/Shango has only begun.

May you have a joyful time of light in Christmas, in Chanukah and in every path of light you take – including the necessary path of our nation out of Iraq and into the ways of peace.

Your brother in hope,



Dr. Vincent G. Harding, co-founder and chair of the Veterans of Hope Project, is a historian, writer and activist who, with his late wife, Rosemarie Freney-Harding, has worked as an organizer and consultant in movements for democratic change for over forty years. He is Professor Emeritus of Religion and Social Transformation at Iliff School of Theology in Denver. Harding was the first director of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Center in Atlanta, and is a former chair and director of the Institute for the Black World. He has also served as senior academic consultant to the award-winning PBS television series *Eyes on the Prize*. Among his many publications are *The Other American Revolution*, *There is a River, Vol. 1*, *Hope and History*, *Martin Luther King: The Inconvenient Hero*, and *We Changed the World*.

The Veterans of Hope Project is an interdisciplinary initiative on spirituality, culture and participatory democracy. They encourage a healing-centered approach to social justice activism that recognizes the interconnectedness of spirit, creativity and citizenship. The Project produces educational materials, workshops and programming designed to support reconciliation, nonviolence and an appreciation of the value of indigenous and grassroots wisdom for contemporary times.

“**Signs of Hope**” is part of a recent letter sent by the VOHP to its national constituency, and it also contains excerpts from a longer essay Harding will publish next year on the theme, “Is America Possible?” OneLife Institute and the Veterans of Hope Project have recently begun to collaborate in several areas of shared concern.

For more on the VOHP please visit: www.veteransofhope.org

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Blessed are the Peacemakers, continued

caste – we cut ourselves off from seeing and experiencing God. He affirmed the oneness of all being as the expression of God’s pervading love and taught that our task was to discover that love in everything we see, and then to *love it*.

Mystic consciousness is the sense of belonging to something greater – not just as an intellectual belief, but a visceral relationship with the Divine in all life. In this context the brutal territorialism of individual, corporate, or national empire-building is unconscionable, and every act of oppression or cruelty, a sacrilege. The mystic’s primary allegiance and sense of belonging is not bound by country or creed or culture, or even individualized self-hood, but is to Life itself, to the sacred transcendent Unity revealing in glorious diversity as the infinite “kin-dom.”⁴

Love is the antidote to the construction of otherness. It is a subversive affirma-

tion in the context of empire. The Dalai Lama has observed that love and compassion are the radicalism of the present age. As peacemakers we must be the living vibration of unconditional love wherever we go, delivering a message not just in what we say, but through how we move in the world, bringing harmony through our presence.

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1. S. Zodhiates, ed. *Lexical Aids in The Hebrew-Greek Key Word Study Bible*. Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 1991.
2. N. Douglas-Klotz, *Prayers of the Cosmos*. New York: Harper Collins, 1990, 66.
3. Muhaiyaddeen, “Peace Can Only Be Found in God” in *Islam & World Peace: Explanations of a Sufi*. Philadelphia, PA: The Fellowship Press, 1987.
4. This term is introduced by Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz in *Mujerista Theology*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1996, 89.

Love is the antidote to the construction of otherness. It is a subversive affirmation in the context of empire.

Spirit, Sound & Silence Retreat ~ Jan. 27, 2007

Join us for a day of renewal, inspiration and enrichment...

- Replenish your soul in the gentle power of intentional silence
- Open to inner wisdom through a guided visioning process
- Walk the meditation labyrinth
- Savor the healing properties of sound and music
- Be inspired by the words of mystics from diverse faith traditions

Saturday, Jan. 27th 10:00 AM – 4:00 PM (9:30 AM arrival & registration)

With special guest: Destiny Muhammad, “Harpist from the Hood”

Retreat location: Holy Redeemer Center, 8945 Golf Links Rd., Oakland, CA 94605 ~ This is a wheelchair accessible site.

Tuition: Sliding scale \$35- 100 (more if you can / less if you can't ~ no one turned away for lack of funds) *RSVP requested for planning purposes.*



**Upcoming Retreats:
Save the Dates!**

January 27, 2007
April 28, 2007
August 4, 2007
November 3, 2007



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Visit us on the web at:

www.onelifeinstitute.org

OneLife Institute is a nonprofit interfaith organization providing services of spiritual ministry and education for the realization of a world of wholeness, justice, and compassion.

Our services include: counseling & prayer support; ceremonies for life passages; consulting & facilitation; creative arts ministry; classes, workshops & retreats that are designed to be informative, inspirational, and practically applicable.

*“... I have reached my hand
through stone and steel and razor wire
and touched the heart of the world.
Mitakuye Oyasin, my Lakota brethren say.
We are all related.
We are One.”*

~ Leonard Peltier

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*Spirituality & Social
Transformation*