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Notes from the Director

“It is clear that the way to heal society of its violence... and lack of love is to replace the pyramid of domination with the circle of equality and respect.”

~ Manitonquat

This quote by the Wampanog elder, Manitonquat, is part of the e-mail signature line of Dr. Fania Davis, our featured guest author for this issue of the newsletter. Davis is an attorney and activist who brings her own deep spirituality to the practice of civil rights law. She is engaged in the international restorative justice movement, currently developing processes to help heal the wounds of war in places such as South Africa and Colombia. Locally, she is involved in a program that is introducing restorative justice approaches to reduce youth violence here in Oakland. We are pleased to share a glimpse of her work with you.

HOWARD THURMAN CLASS

Back by popular demand! Our ten week community course, “Howard Thurman: The Growing Edge,” will be offered in Oakland, starting in mid-September. All are welcome. A visionary religious leader and thinker, Howard Thurman’s writings and sermons demonstrate the seamless interweaving of mystic spirituality and social engagement, the inseparability of the “inward” and “outward” journey. Thurman mentored Martin Luther King Jr. and other leaders in the struggle for freedom and justice. He co-founded the nation’s first interracial, interfaith, intercultural congregation, The Church for

the Fellowship of All Peoples in San Francisco.

Through readings, discussion, creative activities, rare video and audio recordings of Dr. Thurman, and visits from special guests who knew and studied with him, we will dive deep into his life and teachings, exploring their application to our own inward and outward journeys of the spirit. Please see p.5 for details.

SPIRIT, SOUND & SILENCE

One of the things that Thurman emphasized was the importance of having regular times of respite and spiritual renewal; times of “re-fueling” in order to sustain our work of service and transformation in the world. Our quarterly Spirit, Sound and Silence retreats provide an opportunity for this deep nourishment of the soul. The next retreat will be held on Saturday, August 4th and all are invited to attend. For complete information, see p.5.

VOLUNTEER APPRECIATION

On Memorial Day, May 28, we held our first (and long overdue) volunteer appreciation brunch, honoring all who have so generously shared their time and talents in support of OneLife Institute. About 30 people were present to enjoy a sumptuous meal, followed by an organizational update (see p.2), the presentation of beautiful certificates of appreciation, a special blessing prayer of gratitude, and our quarterly visioning. It was very moving and inspiring to realize how many people have contributed the gift of service to this organization. → →



People discover OneLife Institute with an exclamation of relief and excitement. Our vision of the integration of spirituality and social action resonates with their own inner calling....

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Notes from the Director, continued

All-told 46 people received certificates for everything from staffing retreats to book-keeping, from videotaping events to doing community outreach, from grants consultation to culinary ministry! Every act of participation represents an affirmation and we are deeply thankful.

ONELIFE UPDATE

Earlier this month I was honored to speak at the commencement ceremony of Inner Light Ministries, where my friend Rev. Deborah Johnson is the founding pastor. They were celebrating the graduation of a new group of spiritual practitioners, individuals who had completed three rigorous years of classes and intern service hours. In my remarks I quoted from the Book of Esther, in the Hebrew Bible: *Who knows but that you have come...for such a time as this.*

Such a time, indeed. A time of great suffering and great possibility. Of hungering and hope. More and more often, it seems, people discover OneLife Institute with an exclamation of relief and excitement. Our vision of the integration of spirituality and social action resonates with their own inner calling, a felt need at such a time as this.

Until now OneLife has operated almost exclusively on love, grace, and sweat. We have relied on the faithful generosity of volunteers (especially our board of directors), income earned through the services we provide, and donations from a handful of cherished supporters. We have had no paid staff and have never pursued grant funding.

In order for the organization to continue to flourish and be faithful to its mission, we must grow and strengthen our infrastructure. Prayerfully, we are moving into a period of expansion: looking to hire our first paid staff person (a part-time administrative assistant and community networker) and add new members to our board and resource council. We are also in the process of writing our first grant

proposals. The aim is not only to subsidize our present offerings, allowing us to make them available to more people, regardless of ability to pay, but also to develop new programs and resources supporting personal and social transformation.

An essential component of our organizational sustainability is your involvement. We have some specific needs, of course, but would love to hear about your interests, ideas, skills, talents, resources, contacts, and networks. Opportunities for both local and long-distance participation are available.

Recently people have been showing up with expertise in working with youth, using the creative arts – and particularly spoken word – as part of life-skills and leadership development. This isn't something we had planned for and set out to implement, but rather the organic unfoldment of a divine idea. When we start to say "yes" to God (however one may name or conceive that sacred Love-Intelligence), things happen. Thurman says our commitment catalyzes all that is necessary to accomplish its fulfillment. We have witnessed this repeatedly since our first "yes" in 2004, and trust that this same process will continue to guide us going forward.

But, to paraphrase the proverb, it takes a village to raise an Institute! What may seem inconsequential to you could be exactly what we need. In a small organization every hand and heart makes a significant difference. Perhaps you are connected with a community nonprofit that could benefit from our services. Or maybe you know a great event space. Perhaps your business or a group of friends might want to underwrite the rent for one of our retreats. Perhaps you can donate refreshments for a reception, or help with outreach. Let's explore the possibilities together. We look forward to hearing from you...

In peace and with gratitude,
Liza

Justice as Healing

By Fania E. Davis, PhD, JD

The dominant paradigm of justice in modern society is based upon a sort of fundamentalist notion that crime is sin and the only way it can be atoned for is through punishment and suffering. “Justice” focuses on just deserts – inflicting pain, suffering, isolation, deprivation, even death – as the only thing that can right the wrong, the only way to pay back the debt to society, to balance the scales and settle accounts. Harming is the *raison d’être* and essence of our current system – a system driven through and through by the coercion of jails, guns, police, and courts.

We are socialized into believing that this coercive justice is natural and universal, that justice has always been done this way, and always will be. However, in the last two decades, we are witnessing a sea change in the way we think about and do justice. Humanity is now making an historic shift from a justice that inflicts harm to a justice that heals, from a retributive justice to a restorative justice.

This paradigm shift in the way we conceive justice moves us closer to the vision of Mohandas K. Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr. Gandhi declared: “That action alone is just which does not harm either party to a dispute.” This do-no-harm approach is rooted in the Hindu principle of *ahimsa*, or nonviolence.

Both Gandhi’s and King’s concepts of justice arise from the transformative power of love. Dr. King defined justice as “love correcting that which revolts against love.” According to Gandhi, “If you express your love – *ahimsa* – in such a manner that it impresses itself indelibly upon your so-called enemy, he must return that love....And that requires far greater courage than delivering of blows.”

The contemporary restorative justice movement has much to learn not only

from Gandhi and King, but also from the ancients. Though restorative justice is new to western jurisprudence it is not at all new in the sweep of human history. For most of human history reconciliation and restitution to victims and their kin took precedence over vengeance. Punishment as we know it today was the exception rather than rule. Indeed, in most indigenous languages, there are no words for jails, courts, and police. As with restorative justice, in indigenous practice the focus is on repairing and rebuilding relationships, and bringing about reconciliation and social harmony. The goal is to strengthen relationships by fashioning win-win outcomes. Justice is a healing ground, not a battleground.

Adversarial justice intentionally pits two opposing parties against one another in a zero sum battle to determine right or wrong, guilt or innocence, winner or loser. But in restorative justice, there are no sides. Parties come together in a circle with everyone focused on the same center: *how the harm is to be repaired*. Restorative justice seeks a healing for all versus a victory for one.

Rather than rely on the threat of coercion and punishment, restorative justice seeks to heal and transform the wounds of victims, offenders and communities caused or revealed by the wrongdoing. It is frequently based upon a fourfold process of: (1) Truth telling, (2) Apology, (3) Making Amends / Reparation, and (4) Reconciliation.

Instead of a primary dependence on justice professionals and the State, restorative justice seeks greater self-reliance in the community by involving all those with a stake in a specific offense to come together in order to heal and repair the harm as much as possible. Restorative justice helps to move from the sense of an individualistic “I” to a communalistic “we.” → →

(continued on p.4)



Fania Davis is a civil rights trial lawyer in Oakland, CA. She specializes in employment discrimination litigation, with a subspecialty in academic discrimination. She also teaches indigenous justice and restorative justice at San Francisco's New College Law School. Fania has apprenticed with Vuzamazulu Credo Mutwa, a chief healer in the Zulu tradition.

Justice as Healing, continued

Restorative justice views a vengeful and punitive response to harm unacceptable, because, first, on a social level, it sets into motion endless cycles of violence and counter-violence. Punishment – tantamount to officially sanctioned vengeance – is a mere variant of the original harm. It replicates, reproduces, and multiplies harm, like a voracious metastasizing cancer, until we are almost totally consumed by it. An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth leaves the whole world blind and toothless, as Gandhi has observed. It results in the destruction of community safety nets, ultimately leading to total social breakdown.

Secondly, on an individual level, a punitive vengeful response harms us psychologically. It locks us into the past. It immobilizes us because it tethers us to disabling definitions of ourselves. We define ourselves by the pain. We over-identify with it, mistaking it for who we truly are. Our attachment to suffering blocks the path to healing. Ultimately, rather than dissolve, the desire for vengeance magnifies and expands the pain. We are victimized a second time around, but this time we are our own abusers. It is scientifically documented that hatred and anger eats away at our well-being, on physical and emotional levels.

In just 25 years restorative justice has become a rapidly spreading global movement. Not only has it been applied to the criminal justice system, but it has been used to address conflict in schools, communities, prisons, workplaces, and even in tribunals to heal the wounds of war and mass social violence. Activists and scholars are now beginning to explore the possibility of using restorative justice to address mass systemic and historic wrongs in the U.S. inflicted against both Native Americans and African Americans.

Though neither a magic wand nor panacea, evidence shows that restorative justice has been quite effective. Victim and offender satisfaction levels tend to be high. This is especially important since victims are invisibilized by the current system, which sees crime as a violation of law and not as injury against a person.

Restorative justice invites us to transform deeply held beliefs about how we respond to wrongdoing and conflict. It invites into the circle of justice-making all those affected by the wrongdoing. It invites and challenges us to call forth our highest selves, offering apology and making amends for wrongdoing, and forgiveness for having been wronged.

According to cultural historian Charlene Spretnak, the massive denial of our inherent interrelatedness is the ultimate cause of inter-species and intra-species disaster. The delusion of separateness has engendered not only suicide, homicide, and genocide, but has pushed us to the brink of biocide, the destruction of the earth's life support systems themselves. Based upon Gandhian, Kingian and indigenous views of justice as healing, restorative justice is the loom upon which the fabric of our sacred interrelationship is being rewoven. It is a beacon lighting our way into a perilous future.



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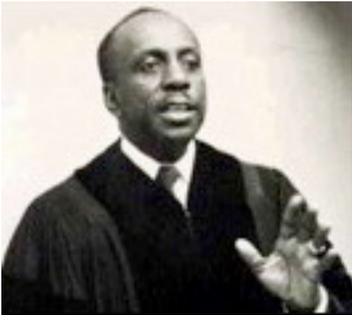
This article is excerpted from remarks by Dr. Davis at the 10th Annual Howard Thurman Convocation at The Church for the Fellowship of All Peoples in San Francisco on Oct. 16, 2005.

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For more on Restorative Justice and the work of Fania Davis please visit:
www.livingjusticepress.org • www.spiritlawpolitics.org

“Howard Thurman: *The Growing Edge*”

Ten week class begins Tuesday, Sept. 18th in Oakland



- Join us to learn about the life and legacy of this inspiring 20th century mystic and visionary.
- Explore key themes in his writing and apply them to your own spiritual journey.
- Experience rare video and audio recordings of Dr. Thurman and enjoy the stories of special guests who knew and studied with him.
- Expand your own “Growing Edge.”

When: Tuesday evenings, 7:00 – 10:00 PM

Where: Laurel Office Center, 4173 MacArthur Blvd., Oakland, CA 94619

Tuition: \$150 - \$295 sliding scale (no one turned away for lack of funds)

Text: *For the Inward Journey: The Writings of Howard Thurman*, edited by Anne Spencer Thurman. Friends United Press (\$24). Available at class.

Spirit, Sound & Silence Retreat ~ Aug. 4, 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, Aug. 4th 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.*

**Howard Thurman:
*The Growing Edge***

Tuesday evening class
Sept. 18 ~ Nov. 20, 2007
Call or e-mail to register:
510.595.5598
classes@onelifeinstitute.org



**Upcoming Retreats:
Save the Dates!**

August 4, 2007
November 3, 2007
January 26, 2008



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.

6114 LaSalle Ave. #759
Oakland, CA 94611

Phone: 510-595-5598

Visit us on the web at:
www.onelifeinstitute.org

“Without forgiveness there can be no future for a relationship between individuals or within and between nations.”

~ Desmond Tutu

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*Spirituality & Social
Transformation*