

Sustainability Sunday: To honor []

Tell me, and I will listen
Show me, and I will understand
Involve me, and I will learn
-Lakota Proverb

I have caught myself often saying it's been a hard day or week—that each obstacle or roadblock standing in my way offers yet another reminder that life is a series of minor explosions, that I'm destined to be cleaning up my own ill made messes until rapture. And I feel like I'm not living, only surviving, I feel exhausted and disheartened and get angry at myself that I've gotten so sidetracked thus perpetuating and so on. Then there are the real tragedies, moments that you cannot expect or prepare for that take our petty concerns and dwarf them, that put what truly matters in perspective. I am reminded this week how precious and short life can be, how dear and important the time we have is and what that means in relation to how we live our lives.

This time we live in makes it horribly easy to coast along, consuming and acquiring a great many needless things never lending question to the value of the things or experiences we collect. It's easy to shut off, to let the cascading numbness take you and settle in, to simply go on playing a role, watching your life move on in front of you, but I don't accept that and the day I do is the day I am not worthy to share other's company. I had a great talk with an old friend this week about why we do the things we do, and what compels us to action, about what it means to live a moral life. So let me come back to right action, let us think not about what has gone wrong in our lives but instead what has gone right. Many years ago I attended a church under a priest named Father Turner who would talk about civil action and truly living your values each and every day, after a while he left the church and started a foundation called the Bishop Sullivan Center which is now one of the largest contributors to impoverished families in Kansas City. He wasn't a hero, or an icon, just an average working class man who was tired of accepting things as they were, who believed in his ability to give back, to leave the world better than he found it through his faith or otherwise. And in remembering him I want to take a moment and put us in perspective here and now-

I want everyone to close their eyes. Try to visualize being in bed, a soft light is coming through curtained windows and it's almost time to wake up, you see the alarm clock and know it's going to start buzzing soon and you'll probably hit snooze like 8 times and be pissed

that you're running late....but right now, in this moment you have a few minutes- those precious minutes that seem before you get to them like they could last forever, just being snugly wrapped up in your blankets next to your lover or cat or whatever. Take a minute with me and think about what you've got going for you. That you have a bed, in a room, in a house with functioning electricity and heat or AC. That you have fresh running water to take a hot shower or bath in. Think about having healthy food to eat that has been grown and harvested, packaged and made ready for you. Think about your coffee and how someone so far away has picked and roasted the beans to be ground down for you to brew and drink. Functioning shoes and a car or public transit, a job to make a living wage with, a whole universe bending over backwards to make all of this as quick and convenient as humanly possible for you to enjoy. Hell, you're not even out of bed yet and look at how many things have gone right! Don't ever make the mistake that just because you've gotten used to them that these are your rights, these things are not owed to you. Not even the possibility of these things are free, and much of the conveniences we find ordinary and even not good enough come by the hard work of the underpaid and usually heavily exploited.

But don't mistake me, this is NOT a guilt trip. All of this if nothing else is a relative truth. You're not going to stop the international slave trade, or the oil crisis tomorrow, and especially not with guilt or fear. But what IS important is to remember that life is an exchange of value, of respecting what has been made available to you and to honor it. I charge you that we are morally obligated to make this world a better place in thanks for the gift of living in it. The reason we write on the wall, the reason we share a meal, the reason we do any of this isn't to wake up in a Utopia, but to accept our own fallibility, to take solace that everyone's life is messy, that we all often lose ourselves in the routine of waking up and going about our day but by readily thinking about and engaging right action we might be able to bring it closer to our attention and focus. And just as the Lakota say it is one thing to be told about generosity and another to experience it, it is only by involving those around us by example and benefit that we are able to instill the seed of chain reaction. So this week I decided to wait until after this lecture to share our names and something we've done that has positively affected us or another in our lives, because I want to add something to it, I want you to think about something you will do THIS week that holds the same purpose to premeditate positive action, there are ten billion things in all our lives that we mean to do and don't, that we relegate to not enough time or any of a million excuses- take the time instead to pick just one even if it's calling a

coworker by his name instead of saying "hey man"

We all have reasons and motivations for the things we do, and let us not mistake that when we do so for others it is because it gratifies something inside ourselves, this is how selfishness becomes a virtue, not in the negative connotation but in a healthy one, for it is only after we have found and resolved our own burdens that can we hope of being in a place to help others through their own. I ask you to realize how much we have going for us, how many beautiful wonderful things we have to be thankful for before we even get out of bed, and to knowingly and mindfully live this next few days in a way that truly shows respect, honor, and joy towards all that has happened and all who have sacrificed both willingly and otherwise that we might be here to speak on it. So for whatever reason you choose to act and inspire right action, whatever name you give it or catalyst you attach, try to involve those around you both friends and stranger alike so that they may learn and involve others, never forget as I won't "small deeds done with great love, can change the world"

I am blessed by each of you and your presence here, and as Motuv blooms and evolves am constantly taught new and invaluable lessons because of the generosity and passion of those that stand at my side, that renew in me a hope for being human and how wonderful it is have the ability to do good work in this world as a community, thank you- D