



DEEP SPRING CENTER NEWSLETTER

Vol. 19, No. 2 Spring 2011

Lessons for Practicing Non-Violence

September 26, 2007 Wednesday
Nights with Aaron

Aaron: My blessings and love to you.

All of you at times have been persecuted in some way, abused or oppressed, and all of you have harmed others. This oppression of others creates so much pain in the world. And yet, it is also so much part of the catalyst for your learning. I'm not suggesting that we need to hold on to oppression so that you have a tool for learning, but when there is a violence from one being to another, in order for it to be a step toward insight and healing you must understand first what has brought forth that violence, and second, understand how you can relate to it skillfully. Only when all of you truly understand the nature of violence will you have a world that is peaceful.

Violence from one being to another comes from a place of fear and separation. If you have one small glass of water and five terribly thirsty people, it's possible that one is going to push the others out of the way to grab at the glass. What's happening? Neediness, fear that the needs will not be met and, I would say, irresponsibility. Or perhaps a better phrasing would be that fear blocks the capacity to understand that all the beings gathered around that glass are thirsty.

Throughout the history of the world, beings have been violent to other beings. And throughout the history of the world, beings have longed for peace. If you truly want peace, why is it not happening?

I think the primary cause is that you are not seeing deeply enough into the causes of violence and attending to those causes,

(continued on page 6)

Letter from Barbara

"Trust God and Tie your Camel" – an old Sufi quote

Dear friends,

Each year I come home from Brazil filled with new learning and profound experiences. I see that this year I went with expectations of similar experiences. I had a wonderful group of 20 people accompanying me, many of who had been students and friends for many years. I looked forward to the time with them. In 5 weeks there would be time to stand under the waterfall and relax into that beauty and purification, to ride my bike down flower strewn lanes, to swim in a sunlit pool, to visit with friends, and to sit at the overlook with its vast views and rest in spacious awareness. The final 2 weeks, when I would be more on my own, I could focus even more on meditation and silence, work with the Entities and the beautiful energy there, healing and growth.

Life gives us what we need, not what we expect. We may choose: to take what's given and learn from the lessons it brings, or to fight against it and become filled with anger or a sense of betrayal or injustice. At first glance, it seemed this Casa trip didn't give me what I thought I wanted or believed I needed. The first 2 weeks were lovely, a wonderful time for my group and me. It is a delight to bring people there, introduce them to this magical place, and see them blossom. The Entities also were working on me frequently, and I could feel the positive results: sinus congestion of months gone the first day as I sat in Current, knee pain gone following two operations, also done in the Current room. It seemed like every time I walked into the Casa, an Entity appeared and said, "I want you in my Current." The heart opening in these situations was profound.

One day I was sitting outside the surgery room to pick up one of my group after his operation. I was one of about a dozen people sitting on the benches there. The Entity opened Joao's office door and called to me. I went to him and he brought me into Joao's office. It was the Entity I have come to know as Dr. Valdivino. For about 3 minutes he held both my hands and looked in my eyes with deep compassion and

Barbara

love, talking all the while. My mind was spinning, trying to get what he was saying, frustrated because I so much wanted this opportunity to converse and could not understand anything. I was experiencing grasping instead of the joy of his presence. I interrupted when he paused and said, “Eu sou surda” (I am deaf), but of course he knows that. He just nodded, smiled and resumed talking. At that point, the cognizing mind shattered and my heart listened as he continued to speak words I could not hear in a language I don’t know. There was no thought at all. I could feel and allow the unconditional love that flowed from him. The concepts no longer mattered. My heart heard him perfectly. After a few minutes resting in his love and with his continued words, he led me to his Current room.

At that point the cognizing mind shattered and my heart listened as he continued to speak words I could not hear in a language I don’t know. There was no thought at all. I could feel and allow the unconditional love that flowed from him. The concepts no longer mattered. My heart heard him perfectly.

Another day I waited in the Main Hall to go through the line and ask a question. The incorporated entity came out on the stage. It was Dom Inacio, the leading entity there at Casa de Dom Inacio. He does not incorporate often. He looked directly at me, walked to where I stood by the stage, reached out his hand and said, “You know where I want you. Go to my Current.” Each time I went through the line the Entity would say, “You know where I want you. Sit in my Current. I am helping you.” I felt very seen and loved.

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Can we allow that love to be felt, allow ourselves to know our innate divinity, radiance and perfection, even when the conditions don’t directly seem to support it? On Thursday of the third week, the Entity sent me to surgery (unusual while my group was still there). Several days before, I had developed a high fever, diarrhea and nausea. Now I could do little but lie in bed, sleep, and toss fitfully in an uncomfortable body. The week passed and week four began. Mind kept going to, “Not fair; this was to be my week to do my own inner work,” ludicrous of course when you consider that all that stopped me from doing that work as I lay in bed was my own racing mind and expectations. Each day I thought, “Tomorrow I’ll feel better,” and of course that thought aroused enormous grasping and suffering. The deep sense of being seen and heard gave way to the old conditioned thoughts of being invisible and unloved, and although I was able to see those thoughts as just the unfolding of old conditioning, and let them go, they did return frequently for several days. Gradually they ceased; mind quieted, and there was just a feverish woman lying in a bed.

We open to the already present reality without grasping, but always by inviting.

Then came the next question, mind again racing; “If I am seen so deeply, they know what’s happening with me, they must intend this fever for a reason. Maybe it’s for some purification. Who am I to question it? Just let it be.” But we always have free will and nothing ever happens without our agreement at some level. It was at this point that I dragged myself out of bed, went to the Casa to go through the second time line and ask for help, ask why the fever, and Dom Inacio took one look at me and sent me to his Current. “He knows my needs,” the overactive mind argued, with the alternating, “Why won’t he let me ask?” as I sat there in the Current. One opinion seemed to be the voice of fear and one the voice of love. What was most genuine in that moment? Fear and love are not mutually exclusive.

My mind moved to an old story as I sat there that morning:

There was a man caught in a flood; he climbed to the roof of his house and began to pray to God to save him, and heard from God, “I will save you.”
Shortly, a log bumped against where he perched at the rooftop. He thought about climbing on, then thought, “No; God will save me.”
Next came a raft that was rescuing people. “We have room; come.” “No,” he said. “God will save me.”
Finally a boat arrived, the rescuers inviting him aboard. “No, God will save me.”
He drowned when the waters rose. He came to those “pearly gates” and asked with anger, “Why didn’t you save me?”
“Son, I sent you a log, a raft, and a boat. Why didn’t you save yourself?”

What does it mean to save ourselves? Where is the balance between faith and action? If trust is there, from what would I “save myself”? How do I trust that all is as it needs to be, yet still act to “save myself” with love?

My meditation teaches me that we co-create everything. If I wish to hear, there has to be a conscious choice no longer to participate in the old stories of being shut out, deaf or separate. Then I become aware of, and can more fully enact that which already hears, just as I was able to open my heart and fully “hear” the Entity with my heart that day in Joao’s office. We open to the already present reality without grasping, but always by inviting.

I thought I was “inviting;” I thought there was equanimity. But there is a strong distinction between resignation and equanimity. Resignation is contracted, low in energy, and filled with grasping. It is the “near enemy” of equanimity; it distracts us so we can’t experience the true equanimity that’s already there. We believe, “I must fix this contraction (illness, deafness, whatever), instead of just breaking through it.

Mind continued to leap back and forth from, “I should have faith” to “I must fix this,” until the duality of those stances fell apart.

We need not identify with the body or mind, can rest in the loving spaciousness and ultimate reality of our innate perfection, yet we must still attend to the relative reality of our situation, and with compassion. True equanimity is what arose as I stood with the entity holding my hands, yet with ears not hearing. The heart opened with love and presence. There was compassion for the human who could not hear, and an intention to invite physical healing.

Through the week, lying feverish in bed, I explored that line between resignation and equanimity, and how only true equanimity could allow choice from the place of love. Fear was not denied or extinguished but noted with compassion, known for what it was, seen and released, again and again. The illness continued. I took an antibiotic and the fever stopped but I was very weak.

I decided to return to the U.S. a week early. Mind continued to leap back and forth from, “I should have faith” to “I must fix this,” until the duality of those stances fell apart. “I must attend to this body with compassion for it is experiencing severe illness,” unified with “In the long run, this is for the good and that good will reveal itself. Don’t be afraid, but respond with compassion to the body’s needs.” Slowly, mind began to let go of attachment to outcome, and to just watch this whole progression from a more empty place; to choose for returning health and make skillful choices to support that intention, but also to nurture “Don’t know” mind. In the big picture, I simply don’t know. Things will be as they are, and my deepest well-being is not dependent on external conditions.

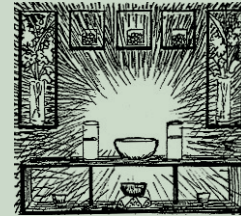
Now (late February) I’ve been home for three weeks. The body is healing. There are still occasional fever spikes. My doctor is doing

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tests, probably to find some tropical bug or parasite that needs further invitation to leave the body. Trust God, and tie my camel. No fear, but skillful choice from the deepest place of emptiness of which this heart is presently capable.

The book tour starts in a month. I look forward to seeing many of you as I travel around the U.S. Please see the whole tour schedule on line on the Deep Spring web site, and more about the book on

<http://cosmichealingmeditation.com/> It is available in your local bookstores and on Amazon. My heart is warmed by the loving pre-publication praise for the book, partially offered below. My prayer is that Cosmic Healing will serve many people and alleviate suffering.

With love,
Barbara



Perfectly Imperfect

April 22, 2007 Emerald Isle Retreat, first evening, Aaron's Dharma talk (excerpt)

Aaron: I am Aaron. My blessings and love to you. I hope you had a lovely day. I saw you building sand castles, swimming in the ocean, and deep in meditation. I saw some of you picking up shell fragments. How many of you found a piece of shell and thought how lovely it would be if it only had been whole? But of course it is whole, it is a whole fragment. You looked at it and said, "It's too bad that the shell isn't intact." But the piece you held was perfect and the rest of the shell is scattered around the beach and in the sea, just where it needed to be. Was the fragment you held any less beautiful because part of it was missing?

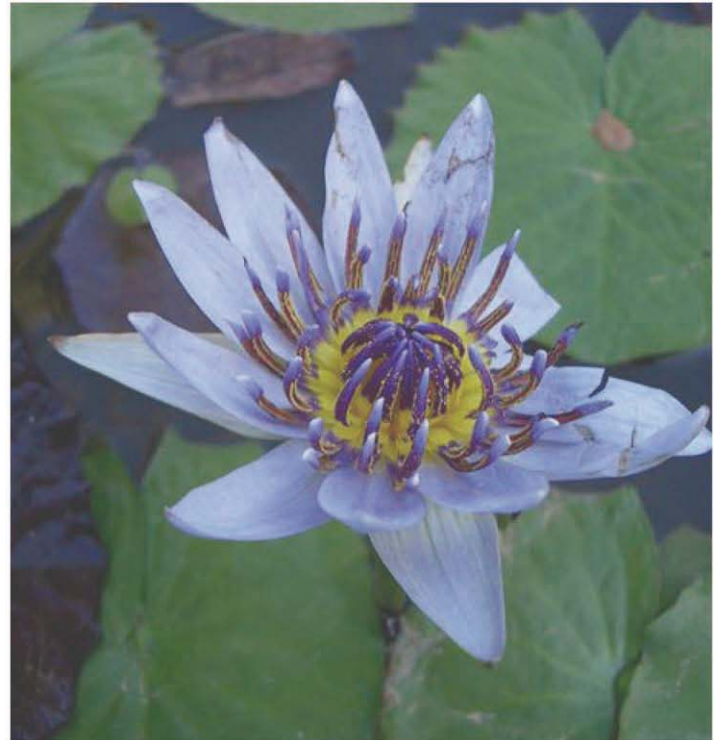
Think about why you discarded it, or maybe you kept it. Barbara was about to toss out the first very beautiful fragment she found when I said to her, "Wait! Why would you throw it away?" And she said, "Because it's broken." And I said, "What difference does it make, is it beautiful?" "Yes." So she collected a pocket of fragments of shells.

Most of you have seen me do this exercise before. The perfect sheet of paper, unwrinkled. (*Crumple it*) Wrinkled, yes? (*he unfolds it*) Can you see the perfect sheet? Is it still there? It hasn't gone anywhere. It just also has wrinkles. I asked Barbara to put this broken conch shell on the altar, to serve as your symbol for the retreat. Can you see the perfect shell? Is it still there? Wrinkled sheet and perfect sheet are non-dual. Broken shell and perfect, whole shell, non-dual. See the part that's missing. Find the little pieces—they're out there, scattered across the sand. It's perfect.

The shell is no less beautiful because it is broken. It has suffered an experience of life, one might say, has become battered a bit, lost pieces of itself, and yet, it holds together. It's not crumbled into a thousand pieces, it's intact. Is it really any different than

any of you? All of you have brittle and broken spots, and yet you are intact and beautiful. Do you spend your time trying to find the little pieces and glue them together, or can you simply cherish your radiance and beauty and know your innate perfection, know that the whole radiant, divine self, is right there.

Bring us some more shell fragments, as well as these intact ones. Let's not put only perfect shells on the altar this year; let's put broken shells on the altar and find the perfection.



Early Praise for *Cosmic Healing*

As I go through Aaron's material, I am struck by its sophistication and its lightness, its clarity and its beauty. **Ram Dass** – spiritual teacher, author of *Be Here Now*, *Still Here*, and other books.

Clear dharma; living non-duality. **Lama Surya Das** – spiritual teacher, author

There are many paths to enlightenment or union with God. Brodsky's "Cosmic Healing," better than any book I have read, sets forth the path to enlightenment by means of physical and emotional healing. Brodsky shows how resolutely dealing with illness, whether serious or ordinary, can purify us emotionally and spiritually unto the highest levels of the spiritual life. She also includes a superb description of the various states and stages of the spiritual path. "Cosmic Healing" is a great gift of love and offers practical methods to bring us into a life of ever-new love and bliss. **Jim Marion** – author of *Putting on the Mind of Christ*.

There are three distinct adventures woven together beautifully in this story. The first is the extraordinary courage, transparency and transformation into wholeness that has come through Barbara Brodsky's personal contact with and application of liberating teachings. The second is the in depth exploration of the process of healing itself. Lastly this is a seminal work for anyone interested in knowing more about the Casa of Dom Ignacio and the Entities associated with John of God. This book will take you on an authentic exploration of liberation. Since 1999, I have had extensive, direct personal contact with Barbara and Aaron and deeply appreciate the profundity of their teachings. I've consistently found Aaron's teachings to be kind, respectful, and filled with humility; they are clear, pointed articulations of profound truth. **Ajahn Thanasanti Bhikkhuni**, Theravada Buddhist Nun, Founder of "Awakening Truth."

Cosmic Healing tells the story of a powerful spiritual journey. Interweaving teachings and experiences from several traditions, Barbara Brodsky opens us to new dimensions of understanding and healing. It's a fascinating and illuminating read. **Joseph Goldstein**, teacher and author of *One Dharma* and other books.

*Barbara is devoted in her service and teachings and a pristine vehicle for Aaron's essence, love and profound wisdom. Thank you Aaron and Barbara for birthing *Cosmic Healing* – the message and unconditional love is palpable and will touch the souls of many.* **Heather Cumming** – Translator; Tour leader to John of God; co-author: *John of God: The Healer Who's Touched the Lives of Millions*

*I just put down Barbara Brodsky's wonderful new book, *Cosmic Healing*. It is a revelation to hear her story in its entirety, as well as to experience so many other stories of healing and wholeness. This book is a rich treasure trove for those who want to go deeper into healing and the search for personal truth. Are you seeking for more? This book is for you! I laughed, I cried, and I loved it!* **Carla L. Rueckert**, channel for *The Ra Material* and other books.

Cosmic Healing exemplifies storytelling as a deep form of healing. Barbara's is a detailed and easily readable true story about being present with pain, deeply knowing wholeness, learning to change our relationship with what is and more. Each page brought me to a stop, to savor, to ponder, to feel. Barbara unfolds a map of the spiritual journey which transcends any single religion. Words fall short! I will be digesting this book for a long time! **Haju Sunim** Zen Buddhist Priest

In this extraordinary book, Barbara generously shares the depth of her experience, bringing to life the timeless and universal essence of dharma. Her courage, authenticity, and wholeheartedness shine through. Within these pages is a profound exploration of the meaning of healing and wholeness, and an invitation into the luminous and ever-present truth of wisdom and love. This book is a deeply compassionate and human account of the journey of awakening. Highly recommended. **Aura Glaser**, Ph.D. Dharma teacher, Clinical Psychologist, and author of *A Call to Compassion: Bringing Buddhist Practices of the Heart into the Soul of Psychology*.

*Cosmic Healing is a striking example of how spiritual truth can make itself known through an infinite variety of ways. Some receive intuitive flashes, others work with physical teachers and still others awaken through the experience of a significant tragedy in their lives. Barbara Brodsky has been graced with all these experiences in addition to receiving spiritual guidance from sources referred to as Entities. *Cosmic Healing* is a book that opens one's eyes to alternative ways of looking at reality and living from one's own truth. Aaron speaks of his teachings as being similar to a finger pointing to the moon and not the moon itself. However, even his pointing is filled with brilliant illumination.* **Matthew Flickstein**, Dharma Teacher, Author of *Swallowing the River Ganges* and other books.

(continued from page 1)

but instead, tend mostly to address the results. You are becoming skilled at creating welfare programs, but not at addressing the causes of poverty. Your doctors can heal terrible wounds, but you do not yet know how to stop the exchange of bullets and bombs. You build wondrous communication devices but have no idea how deeply you are connected energetically and mentally and how to use that innate connection to render the most sophisticated devices unnecessary. As result of this ignorance, the vital communication that could prevent violence is lost.

Let us put this question on an intimate and personal level, rather than universal. Perhaps there is a person with whom you have hard feelings, with much tension between you. Rarely do you sit down with that person or by yourself and look deeply at the causes of the tension. I don't mean just to say, "Well it's because he's rude to me"—that's not the cause of the tension. His rudeness is just his rudeness. The way you react and personalize his rudeness, the way in which you may take it personally and feel you need to defend yourself—that causes the tension. If this being continues to be rude, certainly you can make the decision not to spend time in his company. But if you must be with him, perhaps with somebody who works at the next desk, how can you relate in such a way as to bring about harmony and resolve conflict?

It's very difficult when all the mind can do is obsess with, "Here he is sitting down at his desk. What's he going to say to me now?" Mind is already getting ready for the rudeness. There's already tension about it. And there's blame. "It's all his fault. If he would just shut up, we could exist peacefully." But of course, that's not how it is.

In that kind of situation, what would it be like to invite that person to join you for a beverage break and to say to the person—after your tea, not immediately—a little time for pleasantries and a nibble of the doughnut—and then to say to him or her, "I often feel tension between us. I wonder if you feel it." If the person denies it, then you need to decide how to proceed, probably just saying, "I hear that you don't feel it but I do, and I'm wondering how I can ease the tension that I feel." But more likely, the person is going to say, "Yes, I feel the tension." He may say it defensively. It's so important not to put the other person on the defensive, not to say, "Because of what you are doing, I feel tension." Just, "When we're together I often feel tension. Is there something that I am doing that brings up discomfort in you, that I could learn about and try not to do?"

Who knows what it is? He may say, "You chew your gum loud and it really bothers me." Or he might say, "You remind me of my beloved sister who was murdered. So when I'm with you, I immediately feel tension." Who knows what the cause is. You might not be able to find any specific cause, but at this point you

are addressing the tension in an openhearted way with a premise that both of you want a peaceful relationship and will work to help co-create that peaceful relationship.

It's possible when you ask this kind of question that the other will be abusive. He or she may start blaming you for things that you feel are unrealistic and convey a sense of bitterness. You still can go away from the meeting having learned something important, which is that this person is in deep pain. His pain makes him hostile. And you do not need to take his hostility personally.

Then we see where that goes. Sometimes when you understand that about a person, and they do act in a hostile manner, you can offer them loving wishes in your heart, just noting silently, "You are suffering. May you be free of suffering. I see your suffering coming out in your tension and hostility." This is not a superior attitude. You're not trying to say, "I'm better than you because I see deeply into your issues." Just, "I hold you in my loving

heart. I see your pain. Your pain and my pain are one." But in so doing, you cease to take his hostility personally. No matter who is sitting at this desk next to him, he's probably going to be hostile. It's not about you.

Sometimes when you are able to relax your own negative energy and invite a more openheartedness (I'm using this metaphorically at this point) the person at the next desk may begin to respond to that openheartedness. Barry, may I share a bit of your story? (yes)

Barry (not his real name) had a very difficult neighbor. The neighbor was intruding on his property in hostile ways, by placing his dock into the water in front of Barry's house, rather than on his own waterfront area. Barry was tearing his hair out trying to figure out what to do, how to react compassionately. He tried speaking up and it just made the neighbor more hostile. He tried bringing a gift as predecessor to talking, doughnuts or bread ...

Barry: A plant.

Aaron: Was it well received?

Barry: Not especially.

Aaron: He tried playing with the man's sons. The sons enjoyed it but the man did not change his attitude. Barry was at the point of thinking he might have to move from his house, feeling fear and anger. He saw he needed a new approach. And finally he decided mostly to just ignore it, not take it personally. He could not change the man's behavior, but instead of it getting a rise out of Barry, it ceased to be a problem.

Barry: I moved my dock.

Aaron: You moved your dock. It went beyond that. You and the neighbor on the other side shared a dock, a situation of benefit

Right here is the deep place of learning, when each being asks him or herself, "In what way am I creating separation from another, rather than deeply opening my heart?"

and joy to you both. The houses were on the waterfront. The difficult neighbor had a big waterfront area but put his dock right next to the edge of Barry's property, not straight out into the lake, but angled in such a way that it cut off Barry's small piece of waterfront. Barry simply moved his dock, joined his dock with the other-side neighbor. But what I'm getting at, Barry, is it stopped creating tension for you. I believe as we talked about this, you also started to feel real compassion for this man. It was so clear how much he was suffering.

So Barry was not able to change his neighbor's placement of his dock or his attitude, but for Barry it was no longer a war. There was peace. It was not a problem. Sometimes this is all we can do. We cannot change another person. We do have to try to say no to abuse. But what says no must be love and not fear.

We see the same thing in the world as in our personal relationships. When one person tries to oppress another person, the oppressor almost always is filled with fear, anger, hatred, and misunderstanding, just as Barry's neighbor was. One cannot always metaphorically move one's dock. One cannot accept theft of food and resign oneself and one's people to starvation. One cannot resign oneself to torture, rape and murder. How does one stand up for what is right, yet do it with non-violence?

What we see in the great non-violent movements of the world can give us much ground for learning that we can take to personal relationships. The people of Burma, or Myanmar, have been oppressed and seeking freedom. I understand that there was to be a new oil tax or raise of oil rate... (someone offers explanation)

It put oil out of the reach of many people financially, creating real hardship. If the people were to protest, they would simply be shot down. The Buddhist monks are avowed to non-violence and also to liberating people from suffering. And they saw that there was real physical suffering being created by, I want to keep this as non-accusatory as I can, not taking a political stance, but it seems to me still to be by greed. How can one say no with compassion for those who have fear that breeds greed, yet hold to that reply and refuse to allow another's trespass?

The difficulty in a non-violent movement is that everybody who is taking a non-violent stance must remain non-violent or they will become a catalyst inviting the violence of the opposition. As long as they see it as "us" and "opposition", there's already some violence. Just thinking in terms of separation is violence.

The monks are a very powerful force here, because they see so

clearly into the nature of non-duality and because they're so deeply grounded in compassion. These have been their practice and their learning for so long. So the monks began to chant and march and protest, chanting the metta sutra, the sutra on loving-kindness.

If it could have been held to this kind of non-violent protest, it could make a very strong statement. The military came in and began to use tear gas and to shoot over the heads of the monks. Here I'm looking in the Akashic records at what I have seen as having happened today, in this past 24 hours. I don't have precise details; we've not watched a newscast. But what I see is that the lay people who had been asked not to march because it was more difficult for them to remain non-violent, sat in a circle around the monks when the military accosted the monks. They sat to show their respect and agreement. They did not disperse when the guns were fired, but sat, surrounding the monks, giving their energy to the situation. The military police continued to arrest the monks, and then some of these lay people picked up rocks and began to throw them at the soldiers. The soldiers did not distinguish who was throwing the rocks. They simply lowered their guns and began to shoot at, and also to beat, some of the monks.

Karmically, the military, the monks and the lay people are in this together. We can't create an artificial separation. Throughout many lives they have probably played these roles together many times, sometimes as aggressor and sometimes as the one who is trespassed against. Together they are exploring violence, greed and fear and their causes and resolution. To some degree, we could say that the military and monks are participating as co-teachers to the larger group of lay people. Each is playing its agreed-upon, and karmically created, part.

At some level, the monks had to know that they might be fired on, no matter how non-violent they were. The soldiers had said, "If you're violent, we will shoot," and the monks were not violent. But somebody was violent. The monks are involved.

When we look at the karmic question here, we see that each had responsibility relating to the violence. The soldiers had responsibility because they held the intention to do harm, or at least to follow their orders and shoot or hit with their clubs or guns or whatever weapon they used. The monks had the responsibility to understand what might happen, knowing that they could not separate themselves from their lay supporters or from the soldiers.

Even before there was violence, it was necessary to forgive whatever violence might occur, knowing that what they were doing could very well be a provocation for violence. The lay supporters had the responsibility to try very hard to practice non-violence,

but also to understand that violence might happen, that they could be killed and that they could do harm to others. For those monks who have deeper understanding and are avowed to non-harm, in order not to create unwholesome karma they must ask forgiveness ahead of time for what they do, and must forgive any who transgress against them.

Within this entire field, monks and lay people and soldiers, there is such a profound opportunity for compassion and interconnection. This compassion and learning cannot happen as long as the being that is hurt blames somebody else and says, "I was marching non-violently and suddenly they shot at me. It's not my fault!" It also cannot happen for the one who says, "I had to shoot him because he was breaking the law; it is his fault." Each being is involved. Each being participates. It's so easy to say, "It is his fault." Then one fails to deeply open one's heart to another's situation and understand that what is being done may provoke another, even though it seems harmless. You cannot live in peace unless you accept that you created the provocation and thus offered a condition that gave rise to the violence, and forgive that violence even while you do not condone it.

The one who acted with violence is always the one responsible for his choice. He could have chosen not to be pushed to violence by your catalyst. He is responsible. But you are responsible for providing the catalyst and must understand that you may provoke him beyond the limits of his ability to release reaction.

Put this truth on one side, and on the other, the truth that you must still say no to violence, to abuse, to hatred. Right here is the deep place of learning, when each being asks him or her self, "In what way am I creating separation from another, rather than deeply opening my heart?"

I want to give you an example here that may be helpful. Many years ago, I don't have a sense of your linear time but it was when Barbara was a young woman, she was on a Freedom Ride in the south. The bus was forced off the road. It turned sideways

against a utility pole, not completely overturned, but part way. The people on the top seats slid down to the bottom. The people in the cars who had forced the bus off the road threw bricks and stones through the windows. Then the National Guard came and started shooting at the people on the top of the bus, or above their heads.

Barbara was avowed to non-violence. She lay there on the bottom of the bus just a bit bruised and scratched, not seriously hurt. Nobody was seriously hurt. But she sat there on the bus asking her self, "How am I responsible?" This was before she had conscious connection with me. She understood, though, that in some way she was responsible.

It wasn't until many years later that she began to understand it. She saw that she was asking people to be someplace they were not, not ready to be, which was accepting of this integrated bus,

We come back to how you say no, what says no. When fear says no, it co-creates more conflict. When compassion says no, it serves as a starting point of communication.

accepting of integration in the community. It was fine to ask for this, because this was her deepest truth, but there was a bit of, let's call it self-righteousness, about it that said, "My truth is superior to your truth, and therefore I have to force you to accept my truth. And I'm just going to ride on this bus and sit at these lunch counters and march in this picket line until you stop opposing me." Many people in the Deep South were not ready to do that so they reacted.

What she began to understand was that she needed to have accepted ahead of time that there might be a violent reaction, which she did, but also to understand that she was provoking this violent reaction by standing there and saying, "No, you can't do it the way you've done it before." When you take some cookies from a toddler who has grabbed two handfuls, you expect an outraged reaction. You don't spank the toddler; you comfort him with kindness borne of compassion. Barbara needed to touch deeply on the fear that created the prejudice, and to feel compassion for that fear, so that she was acting from a place of compassion and not self-righteousness. A step beyond that would be to act from a place of emptiness and non-attachment to outcome, but even without that final step, compassionate action can go a long way toward deepening understanding and eliminating violence.

What happened to the bus was group karma. Many on the bus were self-righteous, many much more so than Barbara. So they were co-creating a situation of conflict rather than co-creating a situation of communication. I'm not suggesting you can avoid



Photo by: Deena Loeffler

conflict at all times. The question is not whether there will be conflict but what is the nature of that conflict. Seeing the possibility or actuality of conflict, can you hold the whole situation in your heart without self-righteousness, without judgment, with love and with kindness?

In this way, as happened with Barry also, you become peaceful. What the other does may hurt you, step on your toes or whatever, but it doesn't bring up hatred.

Nelson Mandela speaks so eloquently of how he was tortured and that they could not take away his love. The Dalai Lama talks of the same thing. He lost his home, his country. So many monks were murdered. And yet he speaks compassionately of the Chinese. He says they misunderstand, but there's no hatred. Numerous people who lived through concentration camps and terrible imprisonment have stated that they survived because they refused to hate.

There's so much to be learned from people like this. Most of you think, "It's okay for the Dalai Lama, but I'm not capable of that." But you are! This is where you underestimate yourselves. You are divine; you are radiant. You are born in love and have the capacity to live that love in your lives. It's only your fear and doubt that keep you recreating conflict. If you doubt that you can live with love, then you're going to keep recreating conflict to practice with conflict until you find a way to live lovingly with the opposition.

Once you know that you can live lovingly, there's no longer an opposition, there's just that upset neighbor who keeps sticking his dock in the odd place. This poor man, he was out there in winter. Barbara was at Barry's cabin on retreat. She watched the ice break up on the lake. The next day, there were still big chunks of ice floating in the lake, and here came this man with wading boots with his children to help him. They plunged into the frigid water to get the dock up, out of fear, I suppose, that Barry might beat him to it and put his dock up so that he wouldn't be able to put his across Barry's waterfront area. What suffering! How can one not have compassion for a man who is suffering such fear?

So the opponent disappears. There is just a person who is offered our compassion. And yet we still must say no to him. Barry did not need to continue to say no about the dock since the situation led him to a very wholesome alternative. But let's use Burma for example. Somebody is depriving people of the opportunity to live, literally, to have enough food and to live their lives. How do we say no to that kind of oppression?

Non-violence is enormously powerful when it comes from the heart. Each of you has lived so many times. I know this life is precious to you. I have no argument with that. And yet, sometimes it might be necessary to say, "I'm willing to let myself be killed rather than to respond with violence."

Probably none of you in this room are going to face that kind of situation. But you might be in a situation where, coming back to the neighbor in the office, you find a very angry person. He talks too loud on his telephone; he speaks very rudely to you; he helps himself to your personal belongings. He whistles all day or passes gas frequently. Perhaps he makes sexual innuendos.

Sometimes, compassion simply knows how much this being is suffering and holds a loving space, and sometimes compassion must speak up and say, "No, you may not do this." We come back to how you say no, what says no. When fear says no, it co-creates more conflict. When compassion says no, it serves as a starting point of communication.

In a lifetime long ago, I was taken prisoner for something I did not do. The prison I was put in was literally a hole in the ground. When jailers brought me what might pass for food and water, they lowered it through with a rope. I had a little piece of wood and material that served as a very small shelter from sun and rain. It was a temperate climate.

I was so angry, I was very hostile to those around me. When they gave me water, I didn't say thank-you. When they took up the bucket that contained my waste material, I didn't say thank-you. When they allowed me out once a week and doused me with water to cleanse myself, I didn't say thank-you. I was hostile and angry.

Eventually, it dawned on me, "I'm going to live in this hole for now. It's up to me how I live here. I can live here with hatred, feeling angry because I was innocent, or I can accept this is how it is. But I set the tone for the way I live here; no one else does. If this is going to be my home, let it be a peaceful home."

So my attitude changed gradually. I began to say thank-you. I began to talk a bit to the jailer who came once a day. I found that this jailer was a poor man who was able to feed his family by feeding those who were jailed here. He didn't like his job but he needed some way to feed his family. He had nothing personal

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against me. So we began to talk.

As I became more peaceful and friendly, when they brought me up to bathe myself, they would often let me sit under a tree for awhile, even spend most of the day there before climbing back down into my hole. They began to bring better food, to sit and talk to me, to bring me some clothing and a blanket, to make my life more comfortable.

Physically I was in a prison. I did not have to be in a prison mentally; that was my choice. So I was able to forgive those who had accused me, those who had judged me and put me in this jail, and those who kept me there.

Some years into this, this had simply become my way of life. I spent my days in meditation. It really was an ideal situation. I was given food, water, shelter, and even medicines when needed. Nobody disturbed me. I had time to meditate. What more could I ask? I had been planning to become a monk. Well, here I was!

After years had passed, somebody confessed to the crime and they pulled me out of the hole. They apologized, more or less, perhaps less than more. Just, you're free. Go.

It was harder to go than it had been to be placed in the hole. Where would I go? How would I feed myself? How would I live? But this fear didn't last long because the lesson I had learned was so profound. Wherever I am, whatever circumstance I find myself in, where there is love there is freedom and joy and I am able to co-exist peacefully with the world. Where there is fear and blame, there will be conflict.

We cannot just turn off fear. Fear arises out of conditions. I began this talk with the statement, you must not address the results but the causes. In order to be able to address the world around you with kindness, you must have insight into and address the causes of fear and separation for yourself and in the world. In your medi-

tation, you begin to see how everything arises out of a variety of conditions and then passes away. When there are certain atmospheric conditions, it rains, and no amount of going out there and saying, "But I'm planning a picnic!" and stomping your feet is going to stop the rain. But when the atmospheric conditions change, the rain will stop.

When anger arises, no amount of stomping your feet and saying, "No, I won't be angry," is going to stop the anger. The inner weather is stormy at the moment. In the rainstorm, it's a kindness to your self to acknowledge the rain and carry an umbrella. When the inner weather is stormy, it's a kindness to the self to acknowledge, "Right here is a rainstorm. Right here it's dark and heavy. I offer kindness to this human being that's experiencing anger from many different causes." Just that little pause, noting, "Breathing in, I am aware of anger. Breathing out, I smile to the anger. I hold a space for the anger." Just that, is kindness.

This is what we teach in all our meditation classes. Those of you who are new to Deep Spring, if you have ever wondered to yourself, "What do I do with anger?" there is a path. We don't dismiss anger, we don't bury anger, and we don't act out anger, we hold space for it and know it's impermanent; it will pass.

Slowly you begin to trust your ability to hold that compassionate space and not have to act out your anger. Once you have developed this level of compassion for the self, then you are able to see deeply into others' being, and to find compassion for them. You cannot force compassion. And yet interestingly, it's already there and it has always been there. It's the gold at the end of the rainbow, but a real pot of gold, not an illusory one. It's there. You open to it. It's like the stars on a rainy night; have the stars disappeared? Of course not: they're there; you just can't see them because of the clouds. The compassionate heart is there and your human work is to uncover this compassionate heart and learn to live from it.

DEEP SPRING CENTER'S **mission and goals are to:**

- offer non-denominational spiritual teachings on non-duality
- teach and support the deepening of awareness on non-duality and related topics through the practice of meditation
- sponsor discussion groups, classes, retreats and workshops designed to provide support for spiritual growth and to further the teachings
- publish and distribute materials concerning these teachings
- foster a community of individuals interested in and practicing these teachings
- expand and redefine our specific teachings always with spiritual focus, into directions the teachings themselves lead.