

From Peace comes the Whole

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In a society that is structured around materialism and violence, one may find it discouraging to walk the path of peace. With cultural and social views and political motives as distorted as they are, it is easy to choose violence as a reaction and as a way of survival in our polarizing culture. As individuals with a responsibility to ourselves, our peers and our descendants, however, we must take the initiative to challenge the violence with nonviolence and to place empathy above hostility; as artfully stated by contemporary artist Michael Franti, "We can bomb the world to pieces, but we can't bomb it into peace."

The existence of peace requires cooperation and purpose in our everyday lives. Effective and lasting peace cannot be the product of coercion, but rather must be the result of mindfulness. If one is able to practice respect, tolerance and mindfulness with every interaction he or she makes with another individual, then peace will be achievable. Currently, the political and social climates of the United States resemble the tenor of a high-stakes poker game in which the purpose is to 'win', amassing as much wealth as possible, by deceiving one's fellow players. However, if one can practice simple acts of kindness and sincerity to those they interact with on a daily basis, focusing on the advancement of the self through the advancement of the whole, then one will find that peace is attainable. Peace must be the manifestation of love not only among individuals, but within them as well. Thus, to truly achieve peace with one another, we must first achieve inner-peace.

This philosophy leads to the realization that the majority of the global interactions our country undertakes are leading to the downfall of our already suffering society. In many cases that seem hopeless diplomatically our response is to 'send in the troops', to react with a display of power and force. This show of force, many believe, is a necessary precaution to ensure that the enemy does not 'misunderestimate' us. The fear that is used to manipulate our culture has had a major damaging influence on our society's transition to peace. To achieve peace we must, as a society, mature and open our views and tolerances of other cultures. Only with the absence of fear can understanding take place, and only with understanding can mindfulness begin. We have made the choice to isolate ourselves from the world by showing our greatness, without first demonstrating the capacity for goodness. To become mature, civic participants in the global community, we must come out of the alcove of our comfortably ignorant society and accept the differences of others through mindfulness.

Only from this union can the peace be achieved, and only from the peace can we truly be whole.