

Culture of Peace: The power of peace within

By Tezikiah Gabriel Pathways to Peace

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“Peace is both an innate state of being and a dynamic, transformative, and evolutionary process.”

This is how Pathways To Peace (PTP) defines Peace. As the new PTP executive director, I am in awe and reflection about the meaning of that statement and the guidance it holds for those of us committed to Peacebuilding, locally and globally.

Peace is an innate sense of being.

I take comfort from the notion that I can choose Peace. And, that the choice is inherent in my humanity and hard-wired in my body. Science and spirituality are coming together to reinforce the understanding that humans are co-creating with other humans all the time. But, are we consciously creating what we wish to see in our lives, our relationships, our community, and our world? If you haven't already, you might want to take a quick dive into quantum physics and heart/brain research (e.g., HeartMath). Science tells us that we create through the choices we make. That means, that while we may have little or no control over the external forces that surround us in our complex world, we can in the midst of chaos and adversity, choose Peace.

It may feel selfish, naïve, insensitive, or grossly negligent to focus on inner Peace. There is no doubt that there are many dragons to slay in our Peacebuilding efforts today, as we witness local and global injustice, violence, and oppression. Yet, we know the countless stories of people throughout history that, when experiencing extreme hardship, injustice, violence, and abuse, they chose to respond with compassion, forgiveness, hope, and love.

We might ask, why did they consciously choose those responses over understandable anger, hopelessness, and despair? The answer appears to be that each, on some level, recognized that their survival and sustainability depended on it. They knew that to succumb to their unjust and inhumane circumstances

would not serve them, the people around them, or the circumstance. Today, we recognize that hopelessness and powerlessness, and the resulting apathy and immobilization, does not serve us or the peace we wish to see in the world. The importance of embracing inner Peace is based on the awareness that individual, group, and community survival and sustainability depends on achieving some measure of it.

“Each one has to find his peace from within. And peace to be real, must be unaffected by outside circumstances.”

—*Mahatma Gandhi*

Peace is a dynamic, transformative and evolutionary process.

Peace belongs to everyone. It is a basic need and a basic right. It is multi-cultural, intergenerational, and works locally and globally. It is Peace through justice. It is not the kind of peace that exists in fluffy words that assume homogeneity, lack of conflict, and idyllic naiveté. It is the Peace that exists in the messy happenings that occur in honest relationships — with each other, our community, and our creation. It is interactive — rooted in a willingness to boldly share what we know or think we know, to learn from others, and to change our mind, based on what we’ve learned. It manifests as not having to be smart, right, or perfect. It means caring enough to open up, to reveal one’s truth, and to listen for understanding. It honors good intention and practices forgiveness. It is real, dynamic, and transformative. It can also be challenging.

Inner peace brings with it an internal fortitude and a source of renewable energy that inspires and ignites our Peacebuilding. It flows from our heart, so it lightens our load and gives deeper meaning to our work. As we love, nurture, and forgive ourselves, those same qualities are present in our connections with others — those closest to us and those vastly different. We lift up and support each other. We find unity in our diversity, and we model and emanate the Peace we wish to see in our world.

“If there is to be peace in the world, there must be peace in the nations.

If there is to be peace in the nations, there must be peace in the cities.

If there is to be peace in the cities, there must be peace between neighbors.

If there is to be peace between neighbors, there must be peace in the home.

If there is to be peace in the home, there must be peace in the heart.”

— Lao Tzu (570-490 B.C.)

—Tezikiah Gabriel is Executive Director of Pathways To Peace (pathwaystopeace.org), a United Nations Peace Messenger Organization, and advisor to Ashland Culture of Peace Commission (ACPC). PTP is the progenitor of ACPC. The ACPC website is

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