



Inner Peace: ‘Just do it’ and Ashland’s World Peace Flame

BY [SALLY MCKIRGAN](#) September 07, 2018

“Believe in something. Even if it means sacrificing everything.”

— Colin Kaepernick

This statement resides at the heart of every conscientious objector as well as those who have marched for a cause and or been arrested for civil disobedience. Former San Francisco 49er Colin Kaepernick should come to Ashland on Sept. 21 for the World Peace Flame lighting ceremony. Peace is for him, and anyone who yearns for the sweet hope residing in the symbolism of this flame. Cheers to the Culture of Peace Commission founders who had the vision and worked diligently to bring it here! They “just did it”!

I’ve never met Kaepernick, who drew the ire of the U.S. President and others because he had the nerve to kneel for justice for his black brothers who have been brutally killed, targeted and mistreated by police. My heart went out to him at the time for his brave act of civil disobedience. It does not matter that he and I are from different races or generations. Nothing matters when we realize people are treated unfairly and the hand of justice is not fair for all — especially if you are black. He was not listened to nor was he understood. Neither was Socrates or Jesus.

The National Anthem is a piece of music. The American flag is a piece of cloth. They are symbols that stand for courage, honesty freedom, justice and bravery, everything he demonstrated. In my heart I will go to the lion’s den of the sports stadiums of the world, to hold his or other hands, for peace, mercy, and compassion for those brutalized or treated unjustly. And many are, like the parents and children separated at the border because they entered this country seeking asylum. The symbols of America are for all people, all religions, all ethnic groups, politicians, police and immigrants included. No one is excluded. Who doesn’t understand the word ALL?

If the government that oversees the promise of America is unjust or ineffective, what is one to do? Civil disobedience and non-violence is smarter and intellectually more advanced than threats, violence and bombs. What would Jesus do? What would Gandhi do? What would Martin Luther King Jr. do? Kaepernick loves his people and his country enough to sacrifice himself for its promise. That is the courage that compelled him and now the Nike Corporation as well. They just did it!

And sacrifice he has. He may never play football again, but the bullying did not bend him. It bent the NFL. Like Huck Finn said after contemplating the “sin” of not sending a letter that would return his slave friend Jim back to his master “All right, then, I’ll GO to hell” — and he tore it up. Huck did the right thing for his friend. Kaepernick has seen his share of pain and hell.

We all encounter pain in life. Most of us know grief and loss. Why wouldn’t we want to ease his pain? Why wouldn’t we want to ease ours? Symbolically if we can join our mind with the idea of mercy and offer understanding, then gentleness will surely appear on some mystical level we may not understand to ease his pain and ours.

So how do we ease our pain? Take Tylenol, have a drink, maybe two or three. Go to a concert, church, a movie, a football game, pray, meet with friends, make an appointment with your therapist or? We seek various distractions to lessen the existential pain of existence. Look at the supplement counters and the variety of prescriptions advertised on TV.

One way to ease the pain is to participate in the Eleven Days of Peace starting Tuesday, Sept. 11, and continuing through Sept. 21, organized by the Ashland Culture of Peace Commission (ACPC). It will culminate with the installation of the World Peace Flame at the exquisite Thalden Pavilion at noon Friday, Sept. 21. (Visit the ACPC website at www.ashlandcpc.org for details.) This is a once-in-a-lifetime happening that acknowledges our deep yearning for peace. It relieves the pain of living in a world that glorifies and prepares for war, never peace. We are reminded that this flame represents the spark within us that KNOWS what is right and will not be bullied into submission. This spark challenges us to awaken and unite with the One Mind that links us to God, to all souls past and even those yet to come. As we gather to proclaim our hope for peace we feel the light of this flame shine upon our One Self and the spark of inner peace we share.

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