



SATYA

Truthful in Thought, Word, and Actions

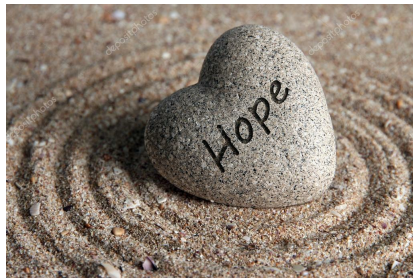
YES! WE CAN PEACEBUILDERS

January/February 2024

"Respect is like air. As long as it's present nobody thinks about it. But if you take it away, it's all that people think about. The instant people perceive disrespect in a conversation the interaction is no longer about the original purpose, it is now about defending dignity."

Ron Mc Millan - Crucial Conversations-Tools for Talking When Stakes are High

HAPPY VALENTINES DAY!



Love: A Feast Beyond Valentine's Day

by
Rivera Sun

Love is in the air . . . or at least occupying the airwaves this week, selling chocolates and roses and candlelit dinners for two. But this romantic love is just a thin slice of the feast of love that exists in the human heart. And when Valentine's Day rolls around, I always rebel

against such limited fare and demand the full deliciousness of all kinds of love.

Love of one's family. Love between friends. Biophilia (love of nature). Agape (the selfless love that a person feels for strangers and humanity). Love for what Dr. King called the Beloved Community. And most especially, love-in-action, one of the many phrases for nonviolence.

The concept of love-in-action runs like a river through the ecosystem of my writings, nourishing the characters in my novels, giving them strength, courage, and nourishment as they stand up for change. In the slightly-fictionalized world of ***The Dandelion Trilogy***, love shows up over and over again. Beyond the obvious love story of Charlie Rider and Zadie Byrd Gray, there's a potent strand of a deeper, more provocative sort of love.

*It is our love that calls us into action now. Our respect for life and our compassion for creation require us to stand up to the forces that cause oppression, suffering, and destruction. – **The Dandelion Insurrection***

Love is a powerful force in their world, galvanizing people into action. It's not 'nice' or 'well-behaved'. It doesn't conform to convenient expectations or limit itself to one person or another. As Zadie discovers in a moment of soul-searching:

This was not the love of pink valentines or pecks on cheeks. This was a blazingly fierce and painful force that raked its talons through the soul and sliced all nonsense into shreds. This Love was here before the universe. It will remain when all is gone. It was coming to walk the Earth again . . . inside every human form.

Unsurprisingly, this kind of love doesn't get a lot of airtime. It isn't used to sell chocolates or roses. This fierce love propels people to confront injustice and abuse. It compels us to take a stand and to challenge bullies of all sizes. It is transformative and liberational, not just for some, but for all. It has the potential to heal the wounds we carry from centuries of divide-and-conquer strategies. It protects our souls as we dare to rise up against the horrors of the world, keeping us from becoming that which we oppose. It rattles the very foundation of empire. It changes everything.

Those who seek to profit at the expense of others refuse to give it airtime in our culture.

Those who want to exploit and abuse people and planet try to keep it out of the spotlight.

Those who gain power through fearmongering and spreading hate would rather keep our thoughts pinned inside the relatively narrow box of romantic love.

Because if finding true love is our primary goal, who has time to overthrow tyranny? The near-exclusive focus on romantic love is part of the propaganda of individualism – a worldview that is convenient to profiteering, but disempowering to the social movements who require our collective action to succeed. Unless we remember our love for community, people, and the Earth, then millions of us are sleepwalking through history, passively accepting the world's injustices.

But if we remember our big, broad love? Well, that would change everything.

Revolutions happen because your heart throws down the gauntlet of its love. – The Dandelion Insurrection

Imagine if we fell in love with place as passionately as with that certain someone. Imagine if we swooned over humanity as a whole. Imagine if we dared to love our country – not with blind patriotism, but with deep commitment – enough to make sure it is living up to its stated ideals. If these kinds of love were unleashed within millions of us, it's not a question of what we'd do. The question is: what wouldn't we do?

As Dr. Cornell West said, "Justice is what love looks like in public." In *Winds of Change*, the third book in *The Dandelion Trilogy*, Charlie, Zadie, and the Dandelions grapple with the long, hard work of translating love into policy and practice. They challenge national pride to take the shape of caring for people in tangible, meaningful ways. Living wages. Housing for all. Universal healthcare. If we truly love our people and our country, we would implement – immediately and without question – these pragmatic expressions of that love.

We, the People, love our people. And if you do not . . . then what exactly do you mean when you claim to love this country? – Winds of Change

At the heart of my ferocious, unrelenting critique of my country is a vulnerable confession of love for this strange place. I love some of the core ideals that have persisted in our often-sordid and unjust history. *Liberty and justice for all* is a worthy notion. Democracy is worth striving for. Equality is still a revolutionary idea for humanity. I'd like to see us achieve it. I share the sentiments of Charlie Rider when he wrote:

I want to love this broken-hearted country, this land of shattered dreams and dashed hopes. I want to help us rise, together, and embody our visions of equality and respect, caring and connection, justice and transformation. I want to fall in love again so that we all might heal and live and change. –Rise & Resist

I want us all to dare to love our country, not its cruel and hateful behaviors, but its ideals. It's easy to hate, to despise ourselves and each other. Love is far more powerful though, and more transformative and revolutionary. It calls us into action. It inspires vision. It gives us the courage to demand the impossible. It makes us bold enough to dream and committed enough to persevere through the tough journey of

turning dreams into reality.

Love is far vaster than a Hallmark holiday. It is far more radical than sappy movies and sentimental cards. In our current times of competing and compounding crises, love unleashed would upend society in a heartbeat. If we loved this beautiful and imperiled Earth, we would willingly abandon the fossil fuels and pollutants that are killing our only home. If we loved the children – all children – we would ensure a livable future for them. If we loved our people, we would make sure none of them went to bed hungry or unhoused. If we loved humanity, we would stop all wars.

Love is a cornerstone of human existence. It is core to our nature.

Without love, we are walking dust, dead matter stumbling from the dawn of birth to the dusk of death. Without love, humanity sleepwalks like automatons, shoved through a nightmarish existence.

But with love?

With love the pivot of change emerges, the lever stretches long enough to move the world, the arc of the universe bends toward justice, the spirit of humanity soars, and the flood of life revives.

I write about love to remind us of our power. I write about love to break through the cloud of hate that confuses us. I write about love because it is the saving grace of humanity as we stand at the eleventh hour of our existence. Remember your love.

In this present moment, which hands like a bead of dew on the grass stem of time, where the life of the planet lies clouded by question marks and the body of humanity sprawls in a wasteland of our own making, the love song of our ancestors and descendants is calling us to rise.

Author/Activist Rivera Sun has written numerous books and novels, including ***The Dandelion Insurrection*** and the award-winning ***Ari Ara Series***. She is the editor of **Nonviolence News** and the Program Coordinator for **Campaign Nonviolence**. Her articles are syndicated by Peace Voice and published in hundreds of journals nationwide. Rivera Sun serves on the Advisory Board of World BEYOND War and the board of Backbone Campaign. www.riverasun.com



Dangerous Speech What Is It?

By Ruth Ann Angus

You see it every day on social media these days – some comment that would qualify as speech that might increase the risk that someone will commit or condone violence against members of another group. This is

Dangerous Speech and how to react to it is the question. That was what I wanted to find out by attending a program on Zoom with Peace Action USA recently where Cathy Buerger, Director of the Dangerous Speech Project was going to speak about Counterspeech.

Buerger gave the audience some descriptions of different types of speech. She said, fear speech is not hate speech, but hate speech and harmful speech is prevalent today. Freedom of expression is important, however dangerous speech inspires

violence. Counterspeech is any direct response to hateful or harmful speech. It is information that counters hate speech and takes away the power of hate speech.

Brueger said the people do not ordinarily commit violence or even condone it against other groups but must be taught to see others as aliens, vermin, threats, etc. Dangerous speech carries specific hallmarks such as:

1. Dehumanization, describing people in ways that deny or diminish their humanity.
2. Accusation in a mirror, asserting that the audience faces serious or mortal threats from the target group. In other words, suggesting that the victims of harm will commit harm.
3. Assertion of attack on women or girls, suggesting that women or girls of the audience's group have been threatened, harassed, or defiled by members of a target group.
4. Coded language, including phrases and words that have a special meaning, shared by the speaker and audience. The speaker is therefore capable of communicating two messages, one understood by those with knowledge of the coded language, and one understood by everyone else. The coded language could be deeply rooted in the audience members' sense of identity or shared history and therefore evoke disdain for an opposing group.
5. Impurity/contamination, giving the impression that one or more members of a target group might damage the purity or integrity or cleanliness of the audience group.

Malicious leaders often use these same types of rhetoric in many cultures, languages, countries and in past historical periods.

As we go through the run-up to the 2024 U. S. elections, the Dangerous Speech Project is tracking speech that has the potential to encourage intergroup violence and they are reporting on new dangerous narratives as they take hold. The most recent elections research report listed the following topics they discussed:

1. Dangerous speech that capitalizes on the fentanyl crisis by falsely blaming it on undocumented migrants. This may persuade people to accept increased levels of force at the southern border putting immigrants at risk.
2. Influential right-wing speakers pushing the narrative that President Biden is doing exactly what Democrats accuse former President Trump of, violating the US Constitution and acting like a dictator.
3. Trans gender people continue to be the targets of dehumanizing speech often weaving together religious and anti-trans discourse from politicians and other public figures comparing trans-gender people to demons, aliens, and imps.
4. An intense trend of rhetoric suggesting a need for increased militarization or secularization at the state level as in a need for arming the citizenry and mobilizing the National Guard at polling places or to confront Border Patrol.

That we may see an increase of these types of speech on social media is of concern to many and help with countering this type of speech is what the Dangerous Speech Project is all about.

Brueger mentioned a Facebook group called “I am here US” that answers harmful or hate speech online that anyone can join. The link is:

www.FB.com/groups/iamhereus .

When asked if she felt it was worth it for us to respond to harmful or hate speech, she gave a resounding “Yes! It is the basic work of democracy.”

You can learn more at www.dangerousspeech.org

Image by Peter Durand



Is It Soil or Is It Dirt?

by
Ruth Ann Angus

That’s the question Tim LaSalle put to us in his talk about regenerative agriculture recently in a presentation put on by the Central Coast Center for an Ecological Civilization. LaSalle is the cofounder of the Center for Regenerative Agriculture and Resilient Systems at Chico State University in California.

What is the difference might be our question back to him. Isn’t dirt soil? The answer to our question is that it depends on the condition of the dirt. If I dig in my garden here in Morro Bay, California, the dirt in some places is really difficult to get a spade through. It’s more like cement than dirt. Even in easier places to dig I find the dirt to be lifeless. What ever happened to earthworms and bugs? They appear to be missing. Soil is so much more than dirt.

LaSalle pointed out that good soil contains living matter, nutrients, even fungus. It provides the nourishment that is essential for growth and the maintenance of life. In other words, soil is a living organism and needs to be treated as such. Current farming practices call for applications of fertilizers and pesticides and a greater use of water than is good for maintaining a healthy soil. He said that soil degradation and loss has been going on for so long that we only have 55 years left with adequate soil to grow our food, and we recognize a climate crisis that says we have less than 10 years before we cannot fix that situation if we can fix it all. While use of fossil fuels is mostly thought to be the culprit with a warming planet, tilling the land, land conversions, animal and rice production might be even greater sources for the climate problem. Statistically agriculture contributes 25% to 35% of the green house gases in the atmosphere.

The solution calls for less inputs of chemicals and fertilizers, cover crops of grasses between commercial crops, using more diverse sets of plants without additives or even compost materials. LaSalle pointed out that fungi can extend plants roots helping them to access water and nutrients 1000-fold.

Regenerative agriculture is beginning to catch on especially with small hobby farmers. It is another story for large commercial farms or farmers who lease land as letting a field go fallow with cover crops of grasses for a season is not cost effective for that farmer. Finding ways to overcome this economic problem needs to be done.

LaSalle and collaborators have worked in Africa with small farmers helping them change their land from dirt to soil with regenerative agriculture techniques. That we in the United States are not on board yet is an issue for him and his cohorts.

The public can aid in promoting better agricultural policies by learning more about regenerative agriculture and asking our congressional, state and county representatives questions about land use, suggesting that they look into this exciting methodology that can help keep food on our tables and revive an ailing planet.

For more information, please visit www.peopleoffaithforjustice.org and read the latest Blog by

Ken Hill of the Central Coast Center for an Ecological Civilization entitled “Life, Soil, Food and You.” Also check out www.cccecociv.org for more information and resources.

images of Dirt from iStock



LINKS

Paul Long from **Our Walk Together with Know Before You Speak**

In this Episode, Paul emphasizes the importance of educating ourselves before engaging in conversations. He highlights the dangers of speaking without knowledge and the need to seek reliable sources of information. (See Dangerous Speech above)

<https://our-walk-together.simplecast.com/episodes/know-before-you-speak>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ySLe1JRvVVI>

Jane Thornton of **New Thought Musicians Showcase** offers the link to a new lyric video by New Thought artist Deb Chamberlin.

We Will Never Stop Marching, by Deb Chamberlin

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lu_-xGcwu_E

John Dear is offering a three week Lenten special beginning Wednesday, February 21st at 4 PM Pacific time. Visit www.beatitudescenter.org to register.

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