

The Threads of Grace



"We are all feeling it. This is a new era—an age of interconnectedness—with threads so tightly woven that each of us must now truly consider our role in this life as significant to the whole of life. If you live in fear, you believe that this is a time of crises. But if you defy gravity and look beyond what you see, this can be a time of opportunity." – Caroline Myss

Diane Osborne

Gravity and Grace: Our Journey to Authenticity and Global Action

Caroline Myss and Jim Garrison

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When an Umuvumu tree's bark is cut away, it responds by forming a fine red matting of slender root-threads to cover the wound. This matting, called bark cloth is then used to help clothe people of the village. The Umuvumu tree is also a central hub, providing shade and comfort to those in Rwanda participating in an ancient form of justice called gacaca. Because the prisons could no longer handle the masses of people implicated in the ethnic cleansing and genocide of nearly one million dead, the gacaca courts were reinstated out of pure necessity. Trusted elders, perpetrators, victims, and families all come together to work out solutions towards true forgiveness, reconciliation, and peace (Larson, 2009, p. 18). Rwanda, which has every reason to remain mired in hopelessness, is now leading the world in constructive peace. Here is one of the world's greatest examples of how an entire nation of people can "defy gravity" and "heal beyond the bounds of reason". How is it that the people of Rwanda were able to move from such tragedy into healing grace on a national scale? What do these elders know that we could learn from? Does their respect and connection to the Umuvumu Tree inform their sense of justice? Perhaps embedded within their consciousness is the deep understanding of the beauty of the Umuvumu Tree's wisdom - the very gifts we have to offer others, are found within and grow out of our learning response to injury.

Andrew Harvey (2009) declares that "The power of Love can transform even the most terrible circumstances and the most hardened human beings, and its power of

Wisdom may be able to transform even the natural environment itself” (p. 15). This claim could be easily dismissed without knowing stories of resilience and healing like Rwanda. We often don’t get to hear these stories - they are missing in our mainstream media. Likewise the destruction we unleash is also minimized or infused with suspicion undermining an opportunity for us to reflect upon our actions. In fact as a species, our need to deny what is happening in the world has reached epic pathological proportions. Caroline Myss and Jim Garrison tag teamed throughout the course, “Gravity and Grace”, to drive this point home that we are in one of the most important periods of history and most of us are not paying attention because it upsets our comfort level. When we are not fully aware of what is happening around us, we don’t need to take personal or collective action - this impedes both personal and collective growth (Myss and Garrison, “Gravity and Grace”, April 16, 2010).

This past year, I have chosen to initiate myself into the process of what Jim Garrison calls “ruthless honesty” which is directly activating my own personal “gravity” and “grace” teeter-totter. Researching alternative news sources for the truth of what is happening in the world, I have seen daily accounts of the sheer power of our humanities’ shadow. Focusing mainly on the Middle East and The Holy Land, I have witnessed children used as human shields, urine being tossed onto Palestinians, regular torture of prisoners, homes being destroyed, civilians told to go to the city center only to be bombed there, soldiers posing with blindfolded prisoners like animal trophies,

incarceration of non-violent protestors including children, people being shot for farming their lands, systematic poisoning and diversion of water sources, cutting off power, fuel, food, medicine, toys, education, and building supplies – in short, systemic undermining of basic ways people need to live and rebuild their lives. Not to mention global climate changes, a rise in a new powerful global elite, displaced and threatened indigenous cultures, and the biggest oil spill in our history, in addition to the government and media cover up of all of the above.

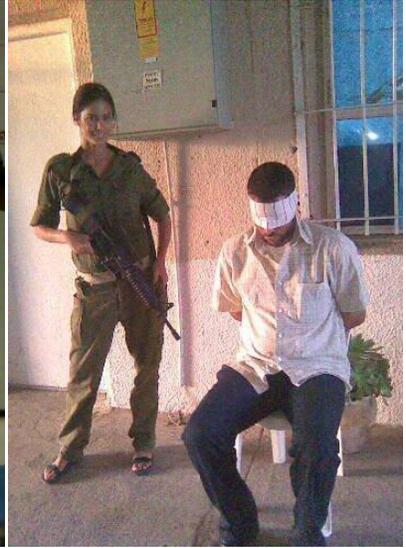
After years of unwillingness to look, I have undergone a deep initiation in deciding to bear witness to the force of destruction that pervades our humanity. Often thrown into despair at seeing so many fueled by war and hate, I then had to face my own inner trappings of aggression in my desire to want to punish the perpetrators. “The hardest part of facing your disillusionment with human nature is that it inevitably leads you to the disillusionment with your own” (Harvey, 2009, p. 95). In the most recent months, I have succumbed to unfamiliar levels of hazy numbness towards life around me. Partly disassociated in a suspended trap of keeping the horror I am witnessing at bay and partly sick to my stomach like I have digested something rotten, unsure if I am digesting it or it is digesting me. I watch myself naively linking in an energetic arm-in-arm with humanity, only to let go when the shadow seems too overwhelming for me to hold onto. It feels like our collective is like a plane that wants to take off, but cannot actually leave the ground. Feeling I am a bodhisattva caught up

in the entropy of the world, has led me to the realization that I must fine tune how I interact energetically with the world around me if I am going to survive and create positive change. How do we deeply witness the weight of the world without getting trapped in its entropy?

On this journey toward opening my eyes, I often question my own susceptibility and other times bask with confidence in my resolve to see truth. I was reassured when I read Andrew Harvey's (2009) words, "Any vision of hope that glosses over the reality of evil or does not respect its power, will not be of any use" (p. 95). Authentic hope, he explains comes out of having faced with full realization the capacity the dark has to bring us to our knees. Feeling our fragility, allowing our hearts to break and surrendering to healing is what guides us to our strength and ultimately to deeper love. And in typical cyclic life patterning, once we have experienced this depth of union, we can then see more fiercely through the darkness. As Harvey (2009) emphasizes:

It is only by realizing the One Consciousness in its essential aspect of transcendent bliss and peace within yourself that you can begin to face the ferocity of its alchemical dance of good and evil, light and dark, in reality. Unless you face this ferocity without fear or illusion or denial, you cannot work effectively for change in a time like ours." (p.176)

Allowing heartbreak, as an authentic and righteous response to maliciousness, feels like welcoming in gravity, but can actually catalyze our path towards grace.



As I have watched my response to the outside world, I will never forget what one head of a major agribusiness corporation said to Andrew Harvey (2009):

What limits all so-called spiritual seekers and activists that I meet is that they both shy away from the full realization of the power of the dark. The seekers I meet are, frankly, bliss bunnies. About as useful in the real world as a rubber ball would be in a war. The activists I know enjoy denouncing others but aren't at all in the business of unmasking their own destructiveness, or the self-destructiveness of their dreary and banal self-righteousness. The bliss-bunny hood of seekers and the offensive self-righteousness of activists make it very easy for people like me to control the world. (p. 174-5)

I was motivated by this statement because I resonated with both categories: the spiritual bliss bunny - happily naive about the world as well as the self-righteous activist – with fingers pointing outward. I was alarmed to learn that someone smarter than me actually counted on these reactions to help them achieve their destructive goal. Even more alarming was that the more I looked around me at what people were doing to create change, the more I saw people falling into these two categories, being manipulated and helping the very paradigm they are against.

Unconsciously diminishing our capacity to empathize with individual and collective pain, these reactions grow out of an inherently flawed foundation

accentuating separation, hierarchy, and disconnection with the rest of life. This underpinning, the Age of Reason, the celebration of the intellectual mind over and above intuitive and heart-knowing has thrust us into even greater collective gravity. Janine Benyus (2005) of the Biomimicry Guild goes so far to say that “if we are to get through, the other side of the evolutionary knothole and bloom as a keystone species, that makes it possible for other life to live, then we must quiet human cleverness. Life survives through an accurate reading of its context and takes deep listening” (“What Life Knows”, 2005). Our ego mind prohibits this listening that builds truthful perception and spiritual growth. It instead falls back on old patterns of response, refusing to let outside change create new inner threads of becoming (Myss, 2009, p. 193). If we perceive clearly we can allow the challenges of the world to catalyze our own internal transformation. Myss (2009) invites us to consider, “The ego will always be afraid because it empowers external forces. The spirit takes what cannot be changed on the outside and transcends it on the inside – and in doing we find we cannot be destroyed by life’s circumstances” (p. 40).

What are the forces in our lives that compel us to break our patterns and create new threads of being? One interesting study came out about the importance of ‘relationships’ in our transformations. Alan Deutschman in his book *Change or Die: The Three Keys to Change at Work and in Life*, found that people open to change not through willpower but through inspired hope from a close bonded resonance with someone

demonstrating that change is possible (as cited in Losee, 2008). Another book, *From Tragedy to Triumph* by John Groom and David Noon, reviews the life of 100 people who overcame great obstacles to bring about extraordinary accomplishments in the world. In each case the cause of their success was because they had faith that change was possible, they trusted their creativity, they persisted with strong self-conviction, and they had a dynamic capacity to connect with others (as cited in Glover, 2010). These two books address transformation on an individual level, but what about on a social and cultural level? How do we move from our individual ground of being to the collective ground of being when we think of threading true positive change into our social networks?

Systems theory is an area of study where we can gain inspiration when thinking about the possibilities of transformation on a larger scale. Systems theorists tell us that all things are made up of systems that exist within larger systems where the relationship between the parts is dynamic. We inherently are changing, open and relational - capable of emerging the right characteristics to deal with our shifting environment. When I first came across many of the photos I shared above, I went into a deep state of despair for our humanity. The thing that freed me and brought me to hope was looking at Systems Theory. Here is what I wrote in my journal:

In witnessing these IDF soldier photos, I have come to an even deeper knowing that as humans, we are not stagnant – but we are patterns that

can perpetuate and shift. We must think of ourselves as dynamic whirlpools in a river of ever-flowing water. And so we continue to be open and see ourselves, not as separate entities but as currents and flows of connection. Atoms, molecules, cells, minds, ecosystems, social systems, cultures are all created by a dance of interactions (beyond mere building blocks). In a war culture, we are taught to forget our hearts and the importance of all our relations. The result is a humanity that looks like the horror in these photos. Yet we all know and have seen the beauty and grace of humanity. What can we do to foster, strengthen and bring about our wise, life-giving humanity more? I deepen my own resolve to make my daily interactions more loving, more kind, more gentle – we are in this – all of us – globally together.

How do we get ourselves out of the stagnant pools of our patterns and into the swift river of change and renewal? If we are to move in the right direction of change then we must be alert, surrendered, deeply honest, insightful, and willing to call on help from each other, from spirit, from our future, and from earth herself. We cannot let our focus of the nonexistence of what we want here on Earth petrify us. We must see ourselves as a larger whole being summoned by the future and acting in alignment with the greater forces of nature and spirit – not “any false authority”. From true surrender, from out of the void, our most creative and ingenious acts arise. May we all germinate

these seeds deep within us by simply yielding to our inner sovereign radiance. These times call us forth (Myss, "Gravity and Grace, April 16, 2010).

Life does not act alone inside a vacuum, we are always in relationship to many forces. All of life is intricately connected and alive, but we have been shamed by science – our indigenous mind has been colonized by our scientific mind. We are at a pivotal point where we need to turn to nature for wisdom. Jim Garrison (2010) explains, "The biggest fog is to think that what we do will not make a difference. It does. We need to step up and let Gaia herself lead that pathway" ("Gravity and Grace", April 16, 2010).

Janine Benyus, (2005) from the Biomimicry Guild encourages us to think or at least listen like an elephant. When the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami was headed to the shoreline in Thailand, people responded by walking towards the ocean. In contrast, hours before the tsunami hit, many animals including elephants, snakes, lizards, and birds had already gone to higher ground. ("What Life Knows," 2005) Here is what one fisherman of the area said "I am a fisherman and pride myself in knowing all the moods of the sea. Nothing in my experience of the sea prepared me for the tsunami. I even saw the wave coming but didn't believe it was what it was, because I had never seen or even imagined a tsunami. I saw my son playing on the beach but didn't even think of catching him up out of harm's way". (Harvey, 2009, p.93) The first step is to move past the denial of what is in front of our very eyes. The next step is to unleash our capacity to listen, see, and know more deeply. We use only five percent of our brains: a severely

diminished perceptual capacity. Imagine what we would see if we used a larger percentage of our brain's capability?

Dragged down by the weight of witnessing our shadow world, I decided to ask for help. I sent out a prayer of intention asking for guidance from Earth and Spirit to help me see in a better way. Before going to bed, I was reflecting on how much I admired Caroline Casey, an astrologer and head of The Coyote Network News for her sense of fun, trickster medicine, and her ability to use alchemy as she wordsmiths a new world into being. At the very moment of that thought, a pack of coyotes started to howl close outside the house. Having never heard coyotes here before, I understood that as a very clear "Yes! Woof! Woof!" message from Earth. That night I had a very powerful dream calling attention to my path as a Seer in this world. Both of these incidents emphasize the importance of reaching out into the threaded wisdom of other life, forces, and dimensions in order to foster true divine grace on the planet.

As I have embarked down this path of capacitating myself as a social healer, I have found that it takes a great deal of listening, discernment and calibration on many levels. For instance pushing the information away as well as getting mired in the energy of the crisis, are opposite reactions that are both equally unhealthy. Yet grief and anger are appropriate responses when grokking the true horror of what is going on in the world. Similarly, speaking out against injustice is critical to creating a change in the system, but fueling that opposition with hate is counterproductive. Caroline Casey

(2010) suggests, "We must say, 'I support your soul, your essence, but I oppose your corporation, act, belief, values.'" Caroline also invites us, when criticizing someone or something, to also include a blessing. ("The Mythic News of Now - Setting Sail with Yemaya", June, 2010). In this way we allow in our world and in each other, room for humanities' greatest potential. Andrew Harvey (2009) talks about this calibrating discernment of duality as "the great marriage:"

The marriage between our left and right brains, between the outer and inner sciences, between the vigor of matter and the fresh waters of the spirit, between body and soul, can only take place through a descent into everything that disturbs this marriage in us and in the world. The great hope that we discover if we dare follow this path is that this union of opposites, although difficult, frustrating, bewildering and sometimes painful is not impossible; the great birthing energies and incessant grace of the Divine Light itself guide, protect, sustain and nourish us through everything (p. 31).

In attuning our passion, our anger, our love, and our hearts, we can remember that anger is just energy that can be used to cleanse. When we allow the energy of anger to mix with the passion of our love inside of our hearts the result is "fierce compassion" (Harvey, 2009, p. 182).

Our path through ourselves is a mirror of our path through this world. Our relationship within ourselves reflects our relationship with our outer world. To deepen our connection to the web of life, we must find our courage to descend into the personal and collective shadow. As we uncover the illusions we empower a new and more tightly woven fabric of humanity. And like the Umuvumu tree, who has been cut, we discover that we are both wounded and unbreakable as we weave together this fabric. Like the Umuvumu tree whose roots descend downward into the force of gravity to establish its strength, we too connect ourselves to the unseen forces and surrender towards our collective illuminated grace. As creative and adaptable beings, we may not live to see this earth fully animated but we are living to see it dismantled and we are the ones who are laying the groundwork. We are the “Johnny Appleseeds”, who may not see these trees bear a great deal of fruit, but may get to see them sprout if only in our hearts (Myss, “Gravity and Grace, 2010).

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