



Do What You Can, by Bernie Glassman

I'm basically a simple person. The way I look at the issues you're talking about, which are issues of the globe, is to bring it back to our own bodies. My understanding is that we are all interconnected. But it's not so easy to think that way, so I like to talk about it in terms of our own bodies. Because in a way, all those issues that you talked about for the planet are constantly happening within us, within our own bodies. I have diabetes and prostate conditions, and if I look at it, it could be extremely overwhelming. I mean, I could say, "Well, I can't do anything about it." And yet, if we don't do anything about it, we die. So the point is, we do do something about it! We do something to the extent that we can see clearly. For example, if I see myself on the streets as a homeless person or as somebody who's defoliating the forest, I'll say, "That's me doing this, so what can I do about it?" I'll do what I can. That's my only answer. I don't have any solutions, because I don't know. That's the first tenet of our Peacemaker Community. We may have lots of tools -- knowledge, languages, equipment, whatever -- but we approach every situation from the standpoint of not knowing. That means being completely open, listening. And then doing whatever we can do. Not saying, "I don't have enough money. I don't have enough knowledge. I don't have enough enlightenment. I don't have ..." But saying, "Here's what I do have" -- and then doing the best actions that we can. So approach the situation in a state of not knowing. Then bear witness to it. Try to become it, and out of that, I believe, automatically will come the right actions. Those actions are loving actions just like the action of trying to stop our own hand from bleeding. That is, they will arise automatically. If we're trying to solve issues, then we'll be trapped. Our role is just one piece of the whole picture, and that's all we can do. There's a story of a bodhisattva who finds an empty well and sees a mountain covered with snow and climbs up the mountain with a spoon and gets a spoonful of snow, comes down, puts it in the well, and then goes back up the mountain. He keeps doing that, not with any sense that he's actually going to fill the well with water, but simply because that's what's needed. I preach activism. What I try to encourage folks to do is to do whatever they can with whatever they have at the moment. --Bernie Glassman

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