



**SAVE THE WORLD
IN 500 WORDS:
AN EXERCISE IN COLLECTIVE WISDOM**

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An Exercise in Collective Wisdom

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Peace and Social Justice are Possible

Chungliang Al Huang

Indeed, the world is full of struggle, conflict, and irreconcilable differences between religious and spiritual traditions. I believe these differences are caused by a concretization of literal meanings and rules from these sacred traditions. Also, power struggles created arbitrarily borders and divisions between country and country on this Earth which in herself is a WHOLE world without divisions and borders -- In essence, all the people in the world must eventually realize that in spite of the outward differences of race, color, geography, and national identities, we as human beings are essentially the SAME.

Somehow we have lost the ability to read and see through symbols and metaphors in our sacred texts and teachings to realize this essential sameness. There is a superficial thinking that sacredness and secular are two different things, just like thinking that puts an "and" between yin and yang. Ultimately, what important is the constant use of opposites to find the middle ground; to find the connection. If we continue to focus on opposites and differences, we will always be torn.

We can always use opposites as a way to stretch our true thinking as human beings and to combine the 2 sides of polarity into one whole. In the tai ji way we realize what a gift it is to be stretched and not to be torn apart. Instead of getting torn apart we have the wonderful ability to bring opposites together to make them richer, more whole.

In China throughout the ages, there has always been tolerance and acceptance of differences in religious and spiritual traditions. When Marco Polo left Quanzhou in Fujian Province during the Yuan (Mongol) Dynasty this port city already had Muslim mosque, Jewish synagogue and Christian churches alongside Confucian, Taoist and Buddhist temples, existing harmoniously side-by-side.

For thousands of years, regardless of how history has gone through tyrant rulers and in-human short and violent dynasties, most Chinese people believed in the religious and spiritual practices as living philosophies, and have tried to abide in their intrinsic wisdom and practice.

In China, the three most important religious and spiritual traditions are Taoism, Confucianism and Buddhism; they are the "Three Pillars of Living Wisdom", co-existing and interdependent. In fact, we need them all.

For instance Confucian ethics and regards for harmonious human relationships are important in family, community, society, and extending into world diplomacy. Taoist teaching intertwines Nature with human nature and brings awareness to environmental issues. Buddhist understanding of compassion for human sufferings is an all important learning for becoming a good human person.

In China, we acknowledge that a wise person should wear the Confucian hat at work (in career), don the Taoist robe at home (in retreat and retirement), and slip into a pair of Buddhist sandals in repose, and while aging, to contemplate life and death's cyclical continuity.

From this ancient Chinese perspective, I also believe that social justice can only be achieved by the true understanding of how to realize harmonious human relationships.

Environmental sustainability can only be learned through our awareness of the inseparable connection of our human nature to mother nature. Every person's relationship to the earth and our individual responsibility are integral parts of the sustainability of the whole.

Peace, in Chinese thinking, can only be attained when there is no more hunger -- Chinese word for Peace -- *He* is a symbol depicting food/grain for every mouth; all will be fed, and the word for Balance -- *Ping* is a symbol depicting a game, like ping-pong, with the referee in the center. Peace is also possible only when wealth can be distributed properly to eliminate poverty, and power struggle will cease when there will be nothing to win or to fight about. Peace is possible through a total understanding that the World is One, and we are all brothers and sisters of one big Global family, honoring the privileges of being the custodians of this Earth, and taking full responsibility to sustain her well-being.

Peace →

和

Hé

平

Píng

神

shén

聖

shèng

Sacred →



The renown Tai Ji master, Chungliang Al Huang, came to participate in Asian Studies program at Evergreen. Master Huang's teaching is characterized by humanitarian optimism, wisdom, and soulful engagement. In the Tai Ji workshop Master Huang urged us to be open to experiences and to be filled with wonder. Inspired by this workshop, Chelan wrote a poem "Just say Wow!" Perhaps if we would be filled with wonder and reverence our conflicts would lessen?

Say Wow!

Chelan Weiler

each day before our surroundings become
flat with familiarity
and the shapes of our lives click into place--
dimensionless and average as tetris cubes,

before hunger knocks from our bellies
like a cantankerous old man
and the duties of the day stack up like dishes
and the architecture of our basic needs
commissions all thought
to construct the 4 door sedan of safety,

before gravity clings to our skin
like a cumbersome parasite
and the colored dust of dreams
sweeps itself obscure in the vacuum of reason,

before we think 3 grams of fiber! and
how's my serotonin?
and what would Jesus or Oprah do?

each morning, before we wrestle the world
and our hearts into the shape of our brains

look around and say, Wow!!
feed yourself fire,
scoop up the day entire
like a planet sized bouquet of marvel
sent by the universe directly into your arms,
and say Wow!

break yourself down
into the basic components of primitive awe
and let the crescendo of each moment
carbonate every capillary
and say, Wow!

yes, before our poems become calloused with
revision
let them shriek off the page of spontaneity
like Tourette's syndrome

and before our metaphors get too regular,

notice all the boilers lit in the east
and let the sun stay
a conflagration of homing pigeons
that fights through fire
each day to find us.