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SYNERGISTIC EMERGENCE IN THE 21ST CENTURY

PNE Inspirations

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Beauty Behind the Horror

"I DON'T THINK OF ALL THE MISERY ... BUT OF THE BEAUTY THAT STILL REMAINS."
- Anne Frank

"You gain strength, courage, and confidence by every experience in which you really stop to look fear in the face. You are able to say to yourself, 'I lived through this horror. I can take the next thing that comes along.' ... You must do the thing you think you cannot do." - Eleanor Roosevelt

"I really enjoyed your newsletter. I would like to hear what your mission is, and how others, such as myself, might contribute. When 42% of single mothers live in abject poverty in this country we have a problem. One hears constantly of kidnapping, rape, and incest being perpetrated against our daughters. Wives are beaten and/or killed by their spouses. Fathers beat their children, but mom has no place to go. Single mothers don't receive their child support. It goes on and on. I applaud you for doing something about it". - LeighAnn Homeier, Chatham, IL

Our spotlight this issue shines on the **beauty**, strength and courage that comes when a person looks at, and then proceeds unyieldingly, to move through **horror**. I relate closely to the way a lotus seed grows. The lotus is considered a sacred flower. Its origins are buried in the murky sludge in the bottom of a lake or pond. In order for the flower to grow and blossom, it must first push up, experiencing several layers of heavy suppressive darkness in the form of mud. Then it moves through water and finally bursts through the surface to meet the light and unfold into its destiny – which is an exquisite flower, sublime in its presence and beauty.



My own personal life's journey parallels this metaphor. I was 4 years old when my father was drafted into the Vietnam War, and I distinctly recall collecting medical supplies with my mom to send to him and the medical unit he ran as a doctor. The horror of that war, the understanding that most of his patients were children averaging about 5 years old, still has an impact on me now. At 15, while sleeping in my bed, a tornado hit my house in Illinois, and in approximately 45 seconds everything I owned was destroyed and the fabric of reality ripped apart. I witnessed a natural phenomenon that has permanently altered my priorities on what's important. Six years ago I had the profound challenge and privilege of helping my mom through the dying and death process. This experience revealed a fundamental truth to me – in order to really support my mom I had to confront my own death and the universal principle that everything is impermanent. Everything dies.

All these experiences had a similar life lesson: the only way to deal with the unthinkable, the horror, is to look at it straight in the eye and step right into the heart of the experience. In doing this, there's a feeling of burning, sometimes falling to pieces, and often crippling emotions and body sensations. Most people stop there, but on the other side the experience is always a lightening up, and an unshakable inner strength, a renewed appreciation for the simple things, a deep compassion for others and a profound humility in the face of the truly awesome mystery that life is. It's not so much that I've blossomed into a lotus; it's that I see the world more as hundreds and thousands of lotuses everywhere and at the same time I'm present to the horror of Africa, of AIDS, of domestic violence, of drug or sex addiction, of mental and physical disease, of corruption and abuse of power. In the face of all this I have an innate knowing that there's a sweetness of life available. And the answer is very simple ... shine a light on the horror and step through the fire.

“They took away what should have been my eyes. (But I remembered Milton’s Paradise). They took away what should have been my ears. (Beethoven came and wiped away my tears). They took away what should have been my tongue. (But I had talked with God when I was young). He would not let them take away my soul – Possessing that, I still possess the whole.” -Helen Keller