

SEDONA INTERNATIONAL CITY OF PEACE • FALL 2018

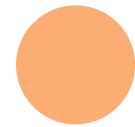
# SEDONA INTERNATIONAL CITY OF PEACE

Sculptors,  
Painters,  
Photographers,  
Filmmakers,  
Game Designers,  
Writers and Poets  
Make Peace  
Their Business

THE GRIP OF HUMAN SLAVERY







Imagine is published by the Sedona International City of Peace, a non-profit organization dedicated to fostering a culture of peace in Sedona and beyond. It is distributed locally and can be viewed online at: [sedonainternationalcityofpeace.org](http://sedonainternationalcityofpeace.org)

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*ON THE COVER: In South Asia, brick manufacturing is done by an endless cycle of bondage as slaves, whose family debt can be transferred from generation to generation. Life in the kilns is harsh and dangerous, working with arsenic and brick dust, working in inferno like temperatures, carrying stacks up to 18 bricks, that weight 4 pounds each. They are beaten, humiliated, intimidated, sexually assaulted. Katmandu, Nepal.*

"The country is so wounded, bleeding, and hurt right now. The country needs to be healed—it's not going to be healed from the top, politically. How are we going to heal? Art is the healing force."

~ Robert Redford,  
National Arts Policy  
Roundtable 2012



© Mary Ellen Croteau

## FROM THE EDITOR

In this fifth issue of *Imagine*, we continue to explore the relationship between the arts and social activism that appears to be blossoming with a newfound vibrancy. Artists across the creative spectrum are expressing their hopes and ideas to heal our world in big and little ways through their work.

Art activist Mary Ellen Croteau, whose work is shown above, uses non-recycled plastic bottle caps to make waste visible and shock her audience into a greater awareness about our throwaway culture and our lagging responsibility to fix the situation. "We need to rethink our use of plastic bottles and excessive packaging materials that do not biodegrade, use petroleum products, and place an enormous strain on our environment."

On the pages that follow, you will meet poets, writers, photographers, sculptors, painters and more who have turned their eyes toward making a difference in their communities and the world.

*Jane Perini*



# Keeping peacemaker legacies alive

BY STEVE SIMON

We were sitting in a cold lecture hall in Warsaw as a business professor droned on about the geopolitics of Poland and the attendant intricacies of doing business in such a newly democratized state. Around me sat classmates from every corner of the globe. We were participating in a uniquely international Masters in Business Administration program offered by a French institution. We had completed our first trimester in Paris and were on a seminar tour of Poland, Russia, and Hungary before continuing our second trimester in New York and ultimately finishing with a third trimester in Tokyo and additional seminars in six cities throughout Asia.

Having previously worked as a

mechanical engineer in Germany and management consultant in the United States and Brazil, I had developed an interest in international business. In the wake of the communist collapse, economists, politicians, and multinational companies in developed countries had succeeded in proliferating the acceptance of “globalization.” To be riding the academic crest of this wave was to my adventuresome mind very exciting. Furthermore, globalization had attractively become vouchsafed in the cause of international peace vis-à-vis economic interdependence. “Economic partners do not wage war against each other,” went the mantra.

As we sat in our Warsaw seminar, a man entered the hall and politely but abruptly interrupted the presenter. With a pensive look, he

paused momentarily and announced, “The World Trade Center has been bombed!” That day was February 27, 1993, the day terrorists detonated a powerful car bomb in the basement of the North Tower. While this was indeed international news, the interruption was for us particularly warranted. In less than three weeks we were to travel to New York to begin our second trimester. Our classrooms were on the 101<sup>st</sup> floor of the North Tower. A collective chill ran through the already frigid room.

The next few weeks we continued our seminars in Moscow and Budapest. It had only been four years since the Berlin Wall had come down and Eastern Europe convulsed with change. There was a great deal of confusion, speculation, and insecurity created by these tectonic shifts. Most of us felt similarly about the prospect of studying in the World Trade Center.

Fortunately, the trimester in New York passed without further terrorist attacks. It was clear, however, major forces were beginning to array themselves in ways that would profoundly impact our world and the hope for real peace. The growing fervor of

Islamic fundamentalism and its use of terrorism would come to gravely undermine an international community’s hope for a peace dividend in a Post Cold War Era.

## Springtime in Paris

It was then I began to fundamentally question the efficacy of the worldview that international competition could result in international peace. I slowly began accepting the grave error in that rationale. After graduation, I accepted a consulting assignment in Paris, but became increasingly agitated by what I perceived to be my participation in a worldview that I no longer adhered to. It was, then, in the Parisian springtime that I came to a crossroads.

I was living in the hallowed artist quarter of Montmartre, right at the base of Basilique du Sacré-Cœur. I visited museums and galleries, attended concerts in the city’s cathedrals, and let the words of writers, poets, and existentialist philosophers revive a creative quickening in me that I had lost since childhood. I decided to quit my job and move to California to align my actions with my inner passion. I became an artist.

For years I immersed myself in the joy and personal peace of landscape oil painting and running my own gallery on Balboa Island in Newport Beach, California. Always, however, the unrest in the world haunted me as it does all of us in some manner or another. Clearly my experiences abroad had tuned my personal antenna to be sensitive to conflict and threats to peace in distant places. More psychologically significant, though, was my family history.

## Silent Night

Both of my parents had grown up as poor subsistence farmers in a bucolic hamlet in Luxembourg. During World War II, my father was imprisoned by the Nazis and eventually sent to a concentration camp. He was not Jewish, homosexual, handicapped, politically dangerous, or any of the things Hitler did not tolerate. In fact, he was a seventeen-year old, Roman Catholic farm boy walking home from Christmas Eve mass. The Germans suspected someone in the town of working with the resistance movement, but did not know whom. Ten men were seized as reprisals and my innocent father was caught in the roundup.

My father was sent to prison and scheduled for execution. That Christmas Eve night he stood in crowded prison cell and listened to a lone, drunken German soldier in the distance sing *Stille Nacht*, Silent Night—the lyrics “sleep in heavenly peace” piercing the night and reverberating within the icy cell. By a strange twist of fate, he would not be executed, but was sent to a labor camp instead. He endured unspeakable horrors. Rather amazingly, he escaped and survived a myriad of illnesses and malnutrition. He then worked for nine years to earn enough money to immigrate to the United States. He came with nothing but the unbridled conviction to seek peace and opportunity for himself and his future family.

I have always had an enormous amount of respect for my father and gratitude for the loving sacrifices he made before his passing in 1995. Ultimately, one of his greatest gifts to me was the series of interviews

he granted me as an amateur, sixth-grade journalist. For five nights he recounted everything he could recall about those dark times in the camps. Those discussions resonate with me to this day. They continue to inform my perspective on the innate good and bad seeds in each of us, and the waters that cause the respective seeds to germinate and ultimately grow. In his own loving way, my father was being a great peacemaker.

## Bending the Arc

Seven years after leaving the business world, on that fateful September 11th, I stood aghast in my apartment in beautiful Newport Beach, California, as I watched on television the towers collapse. The world was in a mess and it did not seem like there were any voices with answers. As my years of landscape painting proceeded, a long simmering inspiration to artistically express my gratitude for the voices in the wilderness that *did* have answers began to effervesce. In January 2012, I began creating a collection of oil paintings depicting great peacemakers. The goal was to study and present those who have changed the world through peaceful efforts, those who courageously spoke up, stood up, and lit the lamp of hope.

I began researching each figure substantially so as to find inspiration for compositions depicting them. I also began videotaping the paintings as I worked on them and writing about the achievements of these luminaries. I began to notice the influences many of the peacemakers had on each other. Martin Luther King, Jr. once famously stated, “The arc of the moral universe





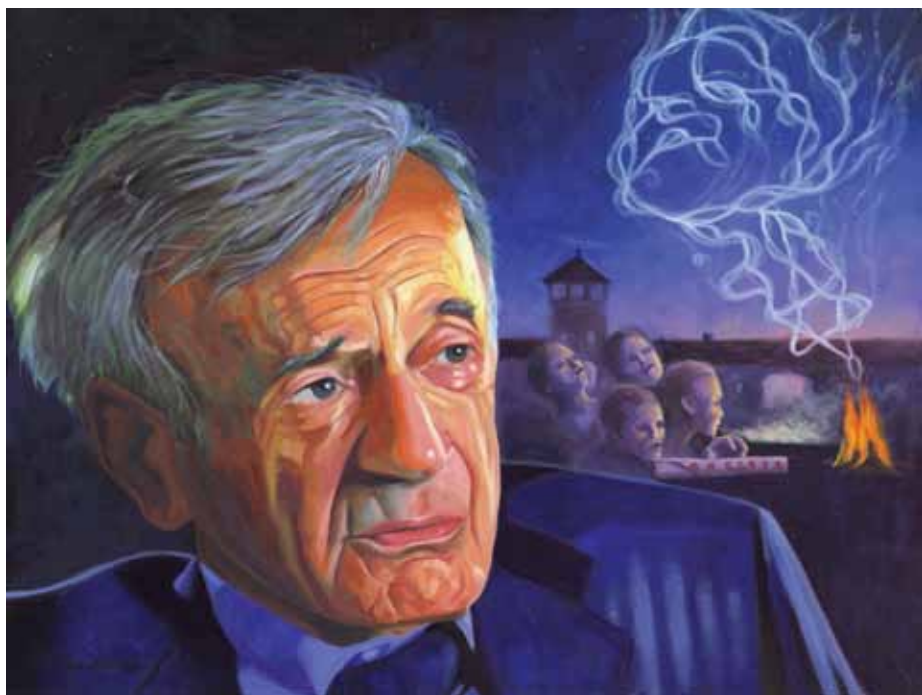
is long but it bends toward justice.” It is indeed a truth that humanity has been consistently progressing toward a more just and peaceful state. It is precisely these peacemakers that keep the relay race going, passing the baton to the next through their legacies.

While humanity has clearly progressed toward justice, at least historically since the depths of the Dark Ages, the magnitude, severity, and breadth of social, economic, and environmental issues threatens the human race like those of no other historical epoch. It is for this reason that the story of the great peacemakers is so critical. There is a depth of wisdom and knowledge to learn from them as we individually confront challenges in our own lives as well as collectively within our families, communities, nations, and across our planet. Sadly, it is a body of historic wisdom and knowledge rarely taught in any meaningful and comprehensive way.

With this tragic lack of education for the advancement of peace, it has become my passion to bring the messages of the Great Peacemakers to audiences wherever welcomed. Upon finishing the paintings earlier this year, I have begun working on a traveling exhibit that will include thirty-six retractable banners, each depicting a great peacemaker. The exhibit will be completed next year. Each banner will include: a biography, an essay discussing the peacemaker’s unique and currently relevant contribution to the “bending of the arc,” and a description of the painting’s composition and symbolism. Visitors will also have the ability to scan a QR code, directing smart phone users to a video of the painting’s progression with audio lending insights to the composition.



*Malala Yousafzai was born in 1997 in the Swat Valley of Pakistan. At eleven she began writing a blog about life under the Taliban, especially about their efforts to prevent girls from receiving an education. Tragically, a Taliban gunmen tracked her bus down one day coming home from school and shot her in the head. Yousafzai was just fifteen years old, but amazingly survived the attempted murder. She has since become a renowned education activist and the youngest person to be awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. Yousafzai is portrayed in this allegorical painting standing up for her beliefs—the pen symbolizing her freedom of expression in the face of repressive violence, and the book her right to education.*



*Elie Wiesel survived Auschwitz-Birkenau and two other concentration camps during World War II. He went on to author the internationally acclaimed *Night* about his experiences in the camps. He became a professor, activist, and wrote 57 books in all, condemning persecution and injustice across the globe. The painting is an allegory of this famous excerpt from *Night*: “Never shall I forget that night, the first night in camp, which has turned my life into one long night... Never shall I forget that smoke. Never shall I forget the little faces of the children, whose bodies I saw turned into wreaths of smoke beneath a silent blue sky...Never shall I forget these things, even if I am condemned to live as long as God Himself. Never.”*



*Jane Goodall has studied the social behavior of chimpanzees in Gombe Stream National Park in Tanzania for over five decades. In 1977, she established the Jane Goodall Institute which works to preserve the environment, protect animals, and improve the lives of people. Since 1991, Goodall’s Roots & Shoots program offers young people an opportunity to make the world a better place through youth-led community action programs. In 2002, Goodall was named a U.N. Messenger of Peace and continues to speak internationally in the promotion of peace. In the painting Goodall is presenting a stuffed animal to her beloved chimp, David Greybeard. Jane’s favorite stuffed animal and sidekick has traveled to more than sixty countries with her on speaking tours.*

Some would say the goal of world peace is a fool’s errand. To such an opinion it must be rebutted that to resign oneself to such a creed is tantamount predestining it. When we feel the cynicism in our hearts and minds for humanity’s capacity to achieve real peace, we need heroes of history to cast a light on the true potential of ourselves and thereby all civilization. Education is the critical first step in seeing that potential.

The peacemakers teach us that peace is not achieved through coercion, condemnation, and competition but rather through compassion and cooperation. The arc of peace is found not only in the words and actions of peacemakers, but it is also evident in the quiet realms of our individual consciences and in the loud expanse of our embattled natural environment. It is time for our own peacemaking genius to flower forth, for each of us has a role in bending the arc, however, big or small.

*Steve Simon is a freelance artist residing in Sedona, AZ. For information on The Great Peacemakers collection and traveling exhibit, please visit: [TheGreatPeacemakers.com](http://TheGreatPeacemakers.com).*



*Harriet Tubman was born in Dorchester County, Maryland circa 1822. She escaped slavery and became a famous Underground Railroad conductor. Using nothing but nightfall, cleverness, and powers of intuition, the illiterate conductor of the Underground Railroad “never lost a passenger” while shepherding approximately seventy slaves to freedom. During the Civil War, Tubman served as a scout, a nurse, and courageously led an armed assault on a group of plantations that freed 750 slaves. Later in life, she was a promoter of women’s suffrage, working with Susan B. Anthony and others. The painting celebrates Tubman’s legendary intuitive powers. Pausing in the dark woods, she taps the ether to divine critical information.*



# Out from the shadows

MENding Monologues takes the world by storm

With the recent revelations about influential men using their power to sexually harass and abuse women, and female victims twitting “#MeToo” to show solidarity and support, the work of The MENding Monologues couldn’t be more timely.

In 2006, The MENding Monologues made its debut in Sedona, Arizona and has gone on to be performed across the country and around the world. Created by local writer and director Derek Dujardin, this live stage show first launched using local men who wrote and performed personal monologues exploring issues of gender violence and sexuality from a male perspective. What was supposed to be one-time only performance to raise money for the Verde Valley Sanctuary has become a worldwide movement with dozens of shows performed at colleges and communities—some as far away as Korea, Ireland and Kenya.

So how did a local Sedona theatre production end up an international export? According to Dujardin, The MENding Monologues was developed to be sort of an unofficial companion

piece to The Vagina Monologues, written by playwright and activist Eve Ensler. In fact, each year the V-Day Worldwide Campaign and One Billion Rising allows communities to perform The Vagina Monologues royalty-free during the month of February to help raise money for nonprofit groups dedicated to stopping violence towards women and girls. It was in support of this cause that The MENding Monologues was written. Then the show followed in the footsteps of its big sister, allowing royalty-free performances of its script. Today, the shows are often performed together, with male and female casts working together in solidarity.

“I had been a fan of The Vagina Monologues and supported local V-Day productions in Sedona and other communities as a spectator for many years,” said Dujardin. “Then in 2006, Sedona playwright Brenda Adelman asked me if I would be interesting in writing and producing a ‘men’s show’ about gender violence with an all male cast. I said yes, not really knowing what I would be getting myself into.”

After writing several light comic pieces for the show, Adelman challenged Dujardin to write about the how sexual violence had personally impacted someone close to him. He

wrote about a time in college when he had been friends with both the raped and the rapist. “I knew about what had happened to my friend Linda, but I had no idea that guy who did it was actually a friend of mine named Dean. This was back in 1989. I remembered him making rape jokes, and sexist remarks, but didn’t challenge him those comments, thinking he was only just ‘kidding around.’ Later, I realized this was man who had raped my friend, this wasn’t just talk with him. When I told that story on stage—which I still have a lot shame around—I discovered it was story that many men resonate with until this day because they have had similar experience. It ends with me saying that my silence was a type of tacit complicity, and that courage to speak out is the antidote to silence.”

Besides having usually having an all male cast, The MENding Monologues is completely different The Vagina Monologues in another important way. The Vagina Monologues has strict rules about men performing in the show, or women performers writing their own stories and performing them in the show. The MENding Monologues encouraged performers to add their own monologues to the show in an ever-growing collection of stories.



In fact, Dujardin makes it a prerequisite to doing the play: He invites every man performing in the show to try to write a monologue about gender violence, even if it's just to share privately with other men or women in their circle. Often, a few of those pieces are good enough to perform on stage and become part of that year's script. In this way, unlike other plays, The MENDING Monologues is open-source material. Dujardin estimates that more than 200 different monologues have been written and performed under the umbrella of The MENDING.

her father, friends, lovers, brothers, husbands and sons—are also affected in many ways. Unfortunately, men don't talk about these wounds and their feelings of disempowerment around violence. They ignore or repress them. As a result, women think that men just don't care, but men, in general are simply at a loss of how to express these feelings of helplessness or hopelessness. The MENDING Monologues is platform to give those feelings a voice that is sorely needed in today's society.

"By telling these stories, I believe

by this work. They often leave the production as advocates and activists empowered to speak up out about sexism or harassment when they see it. More often than not, men return year after year inspired to do another show and invite other men to participate. They have no problem calling themselves feminists. "It very transformative experience," said Dujardin. "When I've visited productions in other cities or colleges, there are always a few men who come up to me to say this work as changed their lives."

While The MENDING is still very

"We won an artistic grant for \$5,000 from the city of Sedona when The MENDING was first getting started. We used that funding to put on a series of shows where both men and women worked together and wrote pieces about these issues," said Dujardin. Today, 20 percent of the pieces are written by and for women, or other gender identifications, and some shows are split evenly as men and women. Dujardin says the work is moving away from monologues to dialogues.

Last year, the script was used as an interdisciplinary teaching tool for a writing curriculum at Hostos Community College in the Bronx, NY, which was part of City University New York (CUNY). Students not only watched performances of The MENDING, they also analyzes pieces and wrote essays about the work, and were challenged to write their own monologues. "That really blew me away," said Dujardin. "I was like 'Really, you're going to study this work, like literature, for a whole quarter?' It was highly validating and to be honest, a little intimidating. I never intended for it to become literature, just an outlet for the truth."

Another landmark show was performed in Nairobi, Kenya using prominent film and stage actors from Kenya in 2015. The director Mbeki Mwalimu, said at one point during the performance, the entire cast was crying together on stage. After that show, the cast was invited to perform at U.S. Embassy in Kenya. That same year, The MENDING Monologues made its European premier at Maynooth Uni-



versity in Ireland, thanks to the help of an exchange student who had been part of a co-ed production at California State University Monterey Bay.

In the United States, InnerMissions Productions in San Diego, CA will mark their eleventh year staging The MENDING Monologues. Director and producer Carla Nell and Kym Pappas were among the first outside of Sedona to recognize the potential of the show to harness voices of men to speak out against gender violence as part of San Diego's annual V-Day and One Billion Rising events. "There's an entire community that has grown around The MENDING and The Vagina Monologues in San Diego," said Dujardin. "The men support the women and women support the men. I even know of at least one couple that met through this work and later married." In 2017, the veteran writers and directors from InnerMission production volunteered to mentor a new MENDING

Monologues at USC San Diego.

One of the favorite and most often performed pieces is called "Tantra." Written by Derek Dujardin and based his own experience with sexual shame and tantric practices, it explores how concept of merging sexuality and spirituality together is a completely foreign concept for most Western men and women. Yet, that union between, what he calls, "the hot and the holy" may be one of those key ingredients missing for more healthy sexual identity. By adding a spiritual component to sex during their upbringing, boys could develop into men who have a more positive attitude towards sex, and perhaps counter both the sexual shame and "pornification" of sex that pervades our masculine culture today.

While The MENDING Monologues does have a social agenda, each piece has enough artistic merit to stand on its own two feet in the theatrical world. Even without the cause behind it, these are simply great stories, expertly written and told.

While no MENDING Monologues productions are schedule for Sedona, AZ this year, you can watch past shows and clips online at [www.themending.org](http://www.themending.org) or by visiting YouTube and searching "Derek Dujardin" or "The MENDING Monologues."

*As a writer, speaker and performer, Derek Dujardin is on the forefront of a new theater movement that helps men find their voice and speak out against violence. In the process, he is helping countless men and women heal by getting in touch with what the true cost of violence is to their relationships. Visit: [themending.org](http://themending.org)*


"I wanted men to write about their own experiences and to dive into their own shadows around masculinity. I think until men acknowledge the impact of gender violence has had on the women in their lives and how they have consciously or unconsciously contributed to it via their actions or inactions, this will become an intractable problem. I wanted The MENDING to be about healing that divide and that started with men reconciling why they haven't done enough until now. That's part of it. There are also male feminists out there that are doing a lot, but don't have platform to speak out. Many men saying they're sick and tired of women being victimized. Men started this problem, so men can end it."

According to Dujardin, there is a ripple effect to violence. What he calls "second-hand abuse" or collateral damage impacts men via the abuse done to the women in their lives. When a woman experiences abuse,

conscious men regain a measure of control over something they have felt powerless to help, fix or smash," said Dujardin. He adds that one of the most satisfying things is watching how male actors can be transformed

much a place for men to express themselves, the project to has evolved to the include women in recent years, where every gender can every identity can share the stage and have a voice.





LISA KRISTINE  
IS A VISUAL  
STORYTELLER  
WHO USES HER  
PHOTOGRAPHY TO  
INSPIRE CHANGE. SHE  
STIRS COMPASSION  
AND TAKES OUR SOULS  
WITH HER AS SHE  
JOURNEYS TO PLACES  
AND PEOPLE THAT  
TIME HAS FORGOTTEN.  
ON THESE PAGES  
HER IMAGES SHINE A  
LIGHT ON SLAVERY'S  
UNRELENTING SAGA.

*Sweat soaked slave-miners  
rest after climbing out of an  
illegal gold mine. Forced to  
descend hundreds of feet  
into the earth, they remain  
down there for up to 72 hours  
where they collect heavy  
bags of stone to bring up to  
the surface. They are victims  
of silicosis and tuberculosis  
from the dust pounding pro-  
cess and condemned to a life  
of never-ending violence.  
Ashanti Region, Ghana.*

# THE GRIP OF HUMAN SLAVERY

BY LORI RUBENSTEIN



Humanitarian photographer Lisa Kristine grew up believing she could do and be anything she wanted. Inspired by her Mom's bookshelf filled with copies of *National Geographic Magazine* and anthropology books, she knew that someday she would go out and meet the people on those pages and learn from them. Even as a young child she seemed to grasp a momentous concept from their faces: the dignity and oneness of all life.

In her early twenties, Lisa—with only a backpack and camera in tow—took off to discover distant lands she had only previously seen in books. When asked about what woke her up to the scourge of human slavery and other wrenching social issues, Lisa responded, “My whole life is based on observing others, yet I hadn’t witnessed slavery. I thought, if I hadn’t seen it, how many others had not? That

propelled me on my journey. Once people see it in my photographs, they can believe it!”

It’s almost impossible to grasp the magnitude of slavery. Forty million people, many of them children, are enslaved in our world today. Lisa is on a mission to raise awareness around slavery, even though it is a highly dangerous and life-threatening profession. In her first direct introduction to slavery, she met with brick workers. “I remember seeing elders, so old, bent over and struggling to carry these stacks of bricks, blanketed with dust. Their eyes were just dead. Everything was mechanical. I started to cry. I was so overcome. The abolitionist who accompanied me said Lisa you can’t do that here. It’s not safe for you and not safe for them. At that point I knew I had a skill that I could offer up to help. I really had to be there for that, to observe, to witness, to not interrupt, not interfere. The abolitionists are the ones who save them, they know what to do.”

*Slavery can be hidden in plain sight. What appears to be a family fishing is actually a group of enslaved workers. Children as young as four work 18-hour shifts, often with just one meal a day. Casting heavy nets and hauling them to shore filled with fish weighing as much as 1000 pounds, they are forced to dive in to untangle nets often drowning in the process. Brong Ahafo, Ghana.*



*A family portrait shows a father with hands dyed black, and his two sons with red and blue. These slaves in the textile industry, forced to submerge armfuls of silk into toxic chemical dyes with no regulations, develop crippling illnesses. Uttar Pradesh, India.*

YOU MAY CHOOSE  
TO LOOK THE OTHER  
WAY BUT YOU CAN  
NEVER SAY AGAIN  
THAT YOU DID  
NOT KNOW.

— William Wilberforce, English politician, philanthropist, and a leader of the movement to stop the slave trade

“I’ve witnessed some pretty awful things. I’m there to shine a light on them. The abolitionists are the ones with the skills to liberate these people, and they are doing that successfully. So, I had to make that delineation.”

Out of Lisa’s vast experiences with indigenous cultures in more than 100 countries on six continents came her founding of the Human Thread Foundation. Its mission is to educate the public and build awareness about human dignity and slavery through interactive exhibitions and programming. Although the internet and social media have brought the world’s suffering directly into our homes, it is not uncommon to experience a certain “outrage fatigue.” We are at the point in human history, however, where we cannot continue to turn a blind eye to the plight of millions of human beings who are enslaved.

When asked if Lisa had any insight into how a person could enslave another human being, she said she believed the problem stemmed from “being disconnected and treating someone as “other” based on skin color, lack of wealth, or religion. To call someone other allows and justifies the behavior that allows for atrocities, like

the slaveholders who enslave children in the fishing villages I have visited. They treat their own children of the same age well, but the slave children are treated like donkeys.”

We are more alike than we are different. Knowing that there is only less than a one percent variation on all human DNA, it is hard to look at these images like these and not be moved. Lisa Kristine provides 14 powerful actions steps to help at: [enslavedexhibitions.com/take-action](http://enslavedexhibitions.com/take-action). One is to educate ourselves on trafficking and slavery and another is to host an awareness event to watch and discuss films, such as the movie *SOLD*, which is loosely based on Lisa’s experiences as a photographer witnessing sex trafficking and slavery.

For more information about Lisa’s numerous books, exhibitions, and the Human Thread Foundation, go to: [LisaKristine.com](http://LisaKristine.com)

*Lori Rubenstein, JD, PCC has been a member of the Sedona International City of Peace, a mediator, forgiveness teacher, legacy workshop facilitator, and author of three transformational books including Forgiveness: Heal Your Past and Find the Peace You Deserve.*



# JOHN SODERBERG

CAPTURING EMPATHY FOR THE AGES

INTERVIEW BY DAWN SHATTUCK

*For the first 18 years of his life, John Soderberg lived in several Central and Southeast Asian countries and visited over 60 others around the world. His exposure to different cultures, art and artists was extraordinary. From those experiences, his appreciation of the works of many great artists played a foundational role in the detail and quality of his own sculptural work. While John trained in several different art mediums during his early years, sculpting became his raison d'être. Sculpting clay to bronze for the past forty years, John has created magnificent works of art, sculpted many notable figures, installed bronze monuments in the US and internationally, perfected his own oil-based clay now used worldwide, created many sculpting techniques, and developed numerous sculpting tools. He shares his vast knowledge with students and protégés so that sculpting may continue to evolve, relaying important cultural stories for generations to come. John utilizes his sculpture to create awareness around human issues by telling critical stories and by assisting nonprofit charities to support those in need.*

**IMAGINE: What experiences and thoughts have shaped the artist you are today?**

**JOHN:** I had a unique childhood—exposed to people, cultures, and religions all over the world. I went to

high school in Bangkok with students from 97 different countries. I learned to see people for who they were as individuals and empathize with them as human beings.

I believe that many of society's ills are caused by lack of awareness, empathy, experience, or exposure to the world. But in my opinion, given enough empathy, brutality becomes impossible. An artist's true mission then, is to tell stories, to inspire or enrage, to encourage people to feel, to have empathy, to help people see things differently...to evolve.

**IMAGINE: Did your activism spring from experiences with your family or from other events in your life?**

**JOHN:** Both. My parents made sure that we experienced the wide range of humanity. We traveled around the world eight times. I went to schools all over the world. When I was five or six, we visited concentration camps. Standing in front of the ovens, I asked my mother why some people would hurt and burn other people. She tried to answer, but I was unsatisfied. I met starving kids in Calcutta's "City of Joy," one of the world's poorest places back then. We met fathers there who promised to sell their own skeletons after death to pay for their daughter's dowry.

**IMAGINE: Were you an activist first or an artist?**

**JOHN:** One needs to be aware of human misery, inequality and injustice to grow one's empathy and compassion. From a young age I experienced first hand people with leprosy lying on the streets, people dying from lack of thirst, the ultra poor, the ultra wealthy, and everything in between. I believe one must be a collector of experiences first. Then, in my case, the artist and, hopefully later, an activist using art as a medium to create awareness and catalyze action.

I started painting in oils at the age of four in Afghanistan. I sculpted in clay at five in India and studied teakwood carving in Thailand at twelve. I was exposed to great art and artists all over the world from the time I could walk. These experiences developed my understanding that good and honest artists tell a story with each work they create, perhaps leading others to see things differently, and motivating them to get off their ass and do something. That's the activism part.

**IMAGINE: What social issues are you naturally drawn to?**

**JOHN:** I have immersed myself in service work for over 40 years. All social justice issues are important to me. Any human misery is critical—injustice, inequality, any unfairness, anyone who's persecuted. Slavery is the base issue. Nothing else matters if a person is not free and cannot guide their destiny. There are more enslaved people now than ever before in human history—something like 30 million or more.

I worked closely with an anti-slavery group in Los Angeles. They developed the Freedom Award given

"To me, an artist is not primarily a creator, but is rather a conduit—absorbing, translating, and conveying messages of value to others, living, or centuries yet to be born."



each year to five people in the world who had done the most against slavery. I was asked to create the bronze "Freedom Award." Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Ashton Kutcher, Demi Moore, Sir Ken Robinson, Camilla Belle, and many other noted people presented my bronzes to these heroes, who often did their good work under threat of death from the slavers. I met an incredible woman, Sina Van, who was kidnapped in Cambodia and sold to a brutal brothel with torture. After some years, she broke free, went to the police and was re-sold to the brothel. She escaped again after some years, and made it out of the country. She created a foundation which has saved thousands of women and girls from slavery.

I was involved in anti-apartheid work with Amnesty International in South Africa in the 80s. One of the more heroic and effective heroes who opposed apartheid was Steve Biko. He symbolized the struggle against apartheid, and was the subject of the film "Cry Freedom." Denzel Washington played Steve in his first big role. The leader of the Black Consciousness movement, Steve was arrested at a police roadblock in August 1977 and held under the country's terrorism legislation. He was a non-violent activist, and was beaten to death after being thrown in jail for not having the right papers. I sculpted a bust of Biko, handcuffed around a pole. On the bronze base, I sculpted in bas-relief a falcon, bound with barbed wire. I intended this piece of sculpture to symbolize the ancient struggle against the brutality of organized racism. On the book in Steve Biko's hand-cuffed hand, I inscribed the Amnesty International quote, "Better to light one



candle, than to curse the darkness.”

My 30 years of service work with Rancho Feliz is another big one for me. It all started on Thanksgiving 30 years ago by a couple of my friends helping a teacher across the border feed fifteen orphans she took in who had been living in rusted cars in the snow. I will remember the images of one trip for the rest of my life. In partnership with two Rotary Clubs and two churches, we pulled up in trucks with food and blankets to feed 50,000 of the neediest people, mostly kids and elders, who had stood in rain and snow (at 5,000 ft.) for two days just to get a bag of food and a blanket. Several 80-year old grandmothers went down on their knees in front of me, praising God for a bag of food. That initial good will effort turned into an organization with thousands of volunteers who have raised funds and built a 45-duplex housing facility, maternity center, day care center for poor mothers, a community garden, computer literacy center, cottage industry center, and many famine-relief projects. One of my more meaningful bronzes is of our founder Gil Gillenwater and an orphaned child. He is giving her a teddy bear for love, a book with hope on the cover, and an apple for sustenance. She is giving him her only possession—a little doll made of rags—symbolizing that when we give, we receive.

**IMAGINE: Your activism plays out in your sculptures. Which ones convey your strongest messages?**

**John:** Art as encapsulated empathy should tell a moving story, should convey important messages, should move people to action. Good art documents the inherent nobility and

possibilities of the human race as well as the atrocities.

**“Steel Butterflies.”** I lived in Afghanistan and have a great appreciation of the resilience of the Afghan people as their world has been under siege for centuries. The atrocities that occurred there during the Soviet invasion and occupation—many directed at children—go beyond the usual horrors of war. The mass kidnappings, the torture, deliberate mutilations and maiming of children as standard policy are beyond the realms of rational thought. I was particularly angered to see photos of anti-personnel mines disguised as brightly painted toy butterflies and other toys designed to attract and maim or kill children.

I wondered what type of mind was capable of using a butterfly—a symbol of beauty and innocence—to hurt children. I felt I needed to sculpt this image to do what I could to help expose and eradicate this evil. I did also sculpt hope though, for the remaining children. The child in “Steel Butterflies” is looking up, hesitating as she reaches, as if someone is warning her off. I worked with the daughter of the Afghan ambassador to Europe who had hundreds of photos of maimed children. The bronze was unveiled on the “Night for the Afghan War Orphans” with Bob Hope and many other celebrities at the Phoenix Biltmore Hotel.

In the sense that no person is an island, this holocaust, these atrocities, dehumanize us all. If we allow them to continue, or to be ignored, I fail to see how we can think of ourselves as compassionate or even civilized.

**“Way of the Warrior.”** This sculpture

is one of my special pieces created to benefit our charitable service foundation, Rancho Feliz. It was founded by Gil Gillenwater, the man depicted in the bronze. The child is a portrait of a little girl who was found near death, abandoned in a warehouse. She was brought to our first Rancho Feliz orphanage, where she was saved and adopted into a good family. Gil is giving her a teddy bear for love, a book with hope on the cover, and an apple for sustenance. She is giving him her only possession—a little doll made of rags—symbolizing that when we give, we receive. The contrast between the impoverished girl and the macho guy who saved her life speaks to the inequality of opportunity and captures the spiritual enrichment we receive as we empower others. In this age of evolving consciousness, the term “warrior” may be redefined as organizing against injustice. It takes more strength and courage to lift someone up than to knock them down. A warrior displays that strength through responsibility and action—by standing for those in genuine need who cannot help themselves.

**“Freedom Awards.”** I sculpted bronzes for the “Free The Slaves” organization. These were given out to five of the most courageous and effective human beings each year who bravely fought against all forms of slavery. The female figure emerging from a cracked and broken world, with flames coming out, is dropping her slave-chains as she reaches forward and up toward salvation.

**“Steve Biko.”** Steve Biko was a young, non-violent activist against racism in

South Africa. He was a law student who was arrested at a roadblock in his own country for not having the proper papers to travel to another city. He was beaten to death in a jail cell and was portrayed by Denzel Washington in the movie “Cry Freedom.” Steve Biko was an artist, in his own way, as all of us are. He created ideas and dreams, and tried to share them nonviolently to help others. For this he was jailed and murdered. He lost his freedom and his life because he dreamed and shared.

**“Earth Angels.”** I created this bronze as a tribute to all those who do service work for others in need. It illustrates the concept of humanitarianism. The essence of any humanitarian act is the lifting up of another human being so they can fly free.

**IMAGINE: What do you wish to convey to up and coming artists?**

**John:** In the beginning of my career as a struggling young artist with no clue how to proceed, very few professional artists would even talk to me. I had to figure many things out on my own. I promised myself that if I ever made it I would help others by teaching and by sharing my inventions, tools and techniques. This sharing has been a rewarding part of my life. I would advise newer artists to do their best to follow excellence, but make sure to also give back to their world by involvement with some important social causes or social issues. I believe that if you are selfish, your art will be selfish and limited. But if you give back, if you help others, both you and your art will continue to evolve and grow to greatness.

“All good and effective art is the encapsulation of empathy and the sharing of that empathy across time.”



*Clockwise from top left: “Steel Butterflies,” “Way of the Warrior,” Archbishop Desmond Tutu presenting the “Freedom Award” to one of five heroes who fought against slavery, “Steve Biko,” “Earth Angels.”*



# Telling stories the world has yet to hear

STORY AND PHOTOS BY JACOB WISE

It all began when I heard a story about a tree so large you could wrap 15 people around its base. Not only was there one tree like this, but entire forests of gigantic trees. Unfortunately, I also discovered that they were being cut down, one-by-one, and that what remained on earth was only the smallest fraction of what used to be. It was because I had not known of these things before that I was moved to make a documentary film about them.

Documentary filmmaking is an extremely effective medium for creating awareness and instigating change and peace throughout the world. Due to its versatility and basis in reality, it can be used to shed light on serious issues and quickly spread messages that can bring some measure of hope and new possibilities to marginalized people or groups.

Another reason documentary is so effective is the availability and minimal amount of equipment needed today. With just a camera and basic editing system, the power of film can be placed into the hands of almost anyone. This allows people to create stories that break away from mainstream media and narratives to tell stories from a multiplicity of viewpoints.

As I write this article I am sitting in a refugee camp in Southern Uganda called Nakivale where I'm working on

a film about the displaced people here. Nakivale is one of the Africa's oldest refugee camps and houses more than 155,000 people from over a dozen nations. They live in different neighborhoods separated by mud roads, but walk freely between them. People have arrived here through a myriad of often traumatic situations and have chosen just as many ways to deal with the repercussions of the horrors they have faced. Many have suffered atrocities of war and genocide that are unimaginable.

The particular place we are staying within Nakivale is a section called Opportunigee (opportunity + refugee) in New Congo. This area is run by a man named Patrick, who is to me a true bodhisattva\* in the flesh. He has lived in the camp for seven years and has long had the money to leave, but chooses not to. He created Opportunigee as a means to help refugees overcome their trauma through exploring and developing their passions and creativity. There are dancers, poets, painters and even a few filmmakers in Opportunigee. Many use their art as a means to break down racial boundaries within the camp in an attempt to redefine what it means to be a refugee.

*\*A bodisattva is a person who is able to reach nirvana but delays doing so out of compassion in order to save suffering beings.*

My filmmaking team came here to collect stories from some of these refugees in order to share them with audiences throughout the United States and the world. As soon as we brought out our camera equipment we were surrounded. People started requesting to be interviewed and asked if we could film them performing their art. Having professional-looking documentary footage of their lives adds a degree of legitimacy to their work that they would otherwise not have access to.

This is the first refugee camp I've ever been to, and it is not what I expected. Yes, there are scenes of children playing in dirty water and people crowded into mud huts, but there is also so much life! I could choose to only film elements of poverty and filth that played into preconceived notions of these places, but it wouldn't be the whole truth. There is such a light and vitality in so many of the people we meet, something I feel is rare to come by in America.

As a documentary filmmaker, there is always a choice about what to film and how to film it. The power of documentary filmmaking allows



"That's what I like about Opportunigee and all of these projects. We are supporting each other. Without that we can't survive," Patrick noted. This is what documentary can do. It raises awareness and dissolves boundaries to help us realize that we are all in it together. We are able to support and empower each other which in turn will help us to work towards a more peaceful and caring world.

*Jacob Wise is a documentary filmmaker who focuses on projects championing social and environmental causes. He is returning to Uganda to continue the project in early 2018. You can view his work at [www.jwiseproductions.com](http://www.jwiseproductions.com).*

me to capture what I am experiencing here and give others an opportunity to shift any preconceived ideas around what it means to be a refugee, for example, and hopefully be inspired and deepen as a human being. In the process of raising awareness, documentary films can also serve to raise funds, and often inspire real activism and change.

Documentary can create a truly independent media that inspires change outside of the traditional corporate media structure we are familiar with. If equipment could be made available to even more people around the world, an infinite number of unheard stories would be brought to the surface. James, a young filmmaker we met in Nakivale, told us that he just wants to make people laugh and feel happy, if only for a few moments. "If I can make them smile or laugh, in that moment they are not traumatized—they are alive."





# VIDEO GAMES:

## A platform for peaceful pursuits?

I first became interested in video games at the age of nine when the local Sears installed a couple of arcade machines in the front of the store. At the time, I wasn't able to reach the controls but I was extremely curious about the lights and sounds the machines made. I remember it being shortly after my tenth birthday when I was finally tall enough to play. Little did I know that those machines

and video games, in general, would be a huge part of my life for the next thirty-plus years.

I got my first computer for Christmas when I was twelve. The primary purpose was to use it for "school projects," which was really secret code for "playing games." In addition to a few games and some business related software, the computer came with built-in BASIC programming language. At the time I only knew what programming was conceptually, but I definitely liked the idea of being able to write my own

software, especially games. So I spent the next few years reading books, technical manuals and magazine articles teaching myself to program.

As a teenager, I had shifted my focus to other things besides programming, and by the age of nineteen, I was working more towards an education in designing computer hardware. My programming interest was rekindled when a friend contacted me about a job at her brother's new game publishing company. When I saw what these guys were doing, I

was extremely impressed and I started programming again.

Over the next decade, I witnessed the video game grow from a relatively small industry to one that would rival (and in many ways, parallel) Hollywood. The video game industry had come into it's own, but not without its share of difficulties.

Through their rise in popularity, video games have been placed in a negative light for various reasons. In the 90's, one of the most popular video game genres was the first person shooter, or FPS. Many of these games were graphically violent and at one point, received some amount of blame for a terrible incident that occurred at a school in Columbine, Colorado, where two students opened fire on their teachers and fellow classmates.

Video games have also received much attention for their addictive potential. Without a healthy balance of real life activities, repetitious playing of video games can result in everything from physical problems like fatigue and sleeplessness to emotional problems like depression or aggression.

While the primary focus in the media has been on the darker side of gaming, there is a more positive side to video games and the gaming community at large that most people are unaware of. There are "serious" games that combine the fun of games with subject matter that isn't typically associated with entertainment. These include education, scientific research, defense, medical simulation, civil engineering and city planning, to name only a few.

There have been an increasing number of studies researching the cognitive benefits of video games. Aside from the countless studies on hand eye coordination, video games have also

been shown to improve motor skills of preschoolers, improve attention skills, improve processing speed, and even help to overcome dyslexia. We can see recognition—outside of the entertainment industry—of the benefits of video games and gamification of certain ideas and concepts. And with the advent of virtual and augmented reality, there is vast potential for new applications in the educational, therapeutic and entertainment games genre.

In education, virtual reality games can be used to provide an avenue for young children to explore career paths and interests. Imagine, as a child, being able to 'test drive' a career as a scientist or lab technician through virtual reality. You could explore the deep ocean as an oceanographer, or try your hand at auto repair, without having to have any in depth education of a subject or prior experience—all of this with content that is engaging and fun!

In the field of medical therapy, virtual reality is being used to help paralysis victims regain partial feeling and muscle control by stimulating the nervous system through simulation. Patients are fitted with a special suit that mimic the sensations of muscle movement, stimulating areas of the brain associated with walking and feeling, helping to stimulate surviving nerve tissue.

In addition to potential benefits achieved from playing video games or game based simulations, the gaming community has a socially conscious side to it. There are companies that create games for cultural awareness such as *Never Alone*, a game based on the "Kunuuksaayuka" a traditional Inupiaq story, and games that assist

in the medical healing process like *Remission* and *Remission-2* a game where "...players blast away cancer cells in scenarios that parallel real-world strategies for fighting cancer".

There are also communities of gamers getting together for positive causes. Websites like *Gaming for Good* ([gamingforgood.net](http://gamingforgood.net)) where users can watch a livestream of gamers playing video games for donations to their favorite charities, or organizations like *Games for Change* ([gamesforchange.org](http://gamesforchange.org)) that empower game creators and social innovators to drive real world change with video games.

Like so many other things in life, video games are a tool that can provide either positive or negative results, determined primarily by our choice of how we use them. The potential for experimentation through simulation is vast and limited only by our imagination. For creators and developers, video games provide an almost unlimited platform for delivering entertainment content, teaching in new, engaging and intuitive ways, or providing new forms of cognitive and physical therapy. For the consumer, video games can be a new way to learn, be engaged in peaceful endeavors, a way to overcome disability or adversity, or just a way to blow off some steam and have fun for a couple of hours.

*Shawn Green is a former game industry veteran who began his career in 1990. He spent the majority of his career working in the first person shooter genre and is known for titles like DOOM, Quake, and Halo PC. In 2007 he started his own company working on non-violent games before finally exiting from the industry in 2013. Shawn currently lives in Maryland and spends his time meditating and working on software of a more enlightened nature.*





# THE ART of PEACE

BY LINDA GOLDENSTEIN

Art, humankind's earliest mark on history, tells a story of how those before us lived. The cave paintings and stone carvings, surviving the millennium, give us insight into the spirituality and practices of our ancestors perhaps stirring something inside us today. From prehistoric times to the present day, art tells the story of humanity and influences our world. It has been used to record history, promote power and build legacies.

Art has and is used as a tool for religious practice and story telling, with sculptures and paintings of the gods and prophets influencing the emotions and beliefs of humanity. Many of these art pieces were created with an intention for realizing the ultimate truth and finding peace. One can only imagine the responsibility artists must have felt in the creation of such works.

In today's world, artists reflect back to us the issues that we need to look at as a human community. Understanding that art is a universal language that transcends religion, politics and barriers to communication.

Artists are not only creating art, they also endeavor to create a dialogue with those experiencing their art. Many offer their works as a call for inner peace and peace in the world. Perhaps you have felt this inner feeling while looking at a painting or hearing a song. One might not even know why they feel the way they do yet return time and again to draw inspiration and heart awakening. It is the artists calling to you.

Those of us experiencing paintings, sculpture, song, dance, or whatever the art form might be, have the opportunity to connect, to join in the conversation of experiencing peace through art. We have the opportunity to support the children of our world in joining in this dialogue. In speaking in the language of the arts, we may find peace in our hearts and dissolve boundaries by speaking the international language of art.

I asked artists about the importance of expressing peace through art and how they see art as a tool for peace. Here is what they shared.

*Linda Goldenstein is founder and president of the Goldenstein Gallery in Sedona Arizona, voted Best Gallery 10 years running. She is an ever-present force in the Sedona arts scene, curating and displaying her artist's works in public spaces, and serving various executive positions for the past 11 years on the Sedona Chamber.*



**Sculptor and pointillist painter Sherab Khandro:** *"Art stimulates the imagination, reaching past the intellect and into our hearts. Art invites us to dream of possibilities, unlocking solutions to outdated problems. In its many forms, art tells stories of the heart and connects us to our common humanity. Through art, we cultivate empathy, a solid path to peace."*



**Painter, poet, author and activist Adele Seronde:** *"Real artists create from the heart."*



**Painter Marilyn Bos:** *"Everything you do in life you do in a painting. You begin, you explore, experiment, make mistakes, you feel proud, scared, frustrated, liberated, at peace and all these emotions are translated to our lives. It is an incredible experience and each experience is different. I know that my art heals me as I create it and my intention is that it heals those that experience it too."*



**Bronze sculptor James Muir:** *"As an artist it is my duty to bring light into darkness of the human heart. I try to channel the divine. We each have our own talents. Some people paint, write books, dance, draw...and I sculpt. As an artist we have to get ourselves out of the way, shed the ego and let the source of creativity flow through. Symbolism is heavy in all my artwork. My goal is for all walks of life to view my sculptures and be moved."*

**Painter Ali Mignonne:** *"I want my textural paintings to invite the viewer in, to feel no fear, pain or negativity in my work. These are places of tranquility and beauty. My spirituality and creativity helped bring me out of my dark personal times and I hope my viewers find internal peace when interacting with my paintings. In a way, my paintings remind us to not give too much energy to the negative aspects of life. We must remember recognize and appreciate all the beauty that surrounds us."*



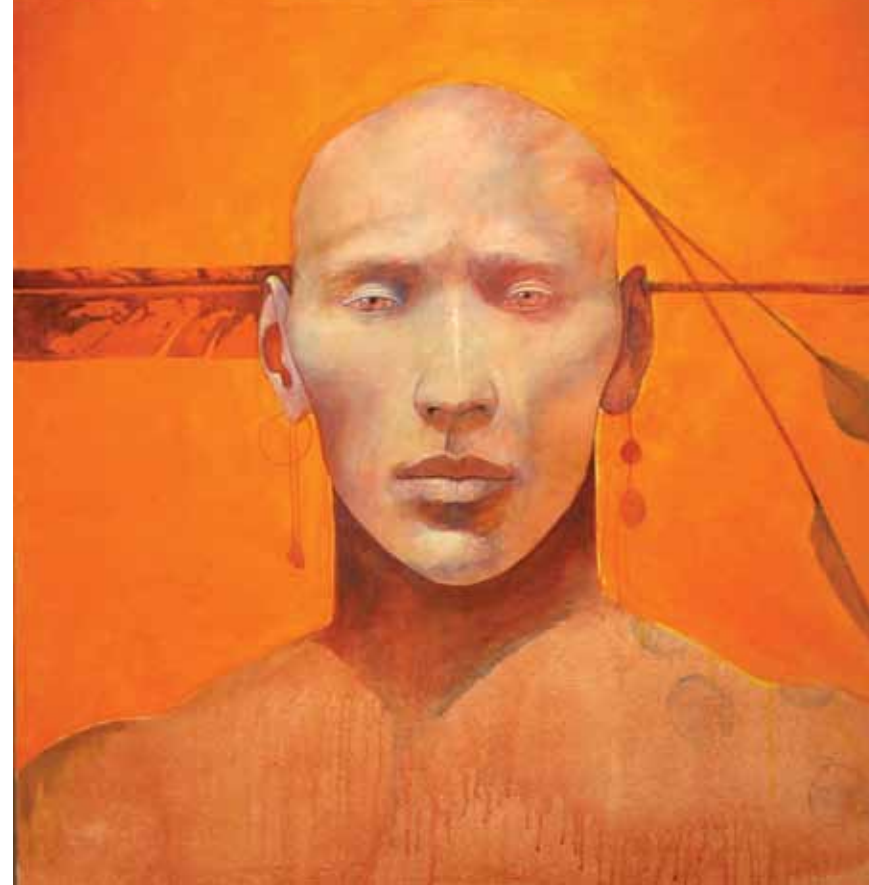


**Mixed media painter Karyl Bennett:** *"I can't think of a better way to promote peace through art than through children—throughout the world. It is vital that children have these experiences early so it is imbedded within their psyche. Many of our school systems are eliminating art from the curriculum. When children are encouraged to engage in the arts, they become more aware of their innate creativity and the possibilities it offers. It opens a whole new world and brings inner peace."*



**Native American painter Ben Wright:** *"Artistic expression is a universal language and world peace begins with inner peace. As an artist and a vessel for the creative source to manifest, I feel deeply compelled to relay messages of ancestral wisdom and knowledge. My work is reflective of the interconnectivity of many cultural and spiritual concepts. I pay homage to peaceful people who have long held the wisdom of living in harmony with our Mother Earth and spirit."*

**Painter Patricia Griffin:** *"When I paint animals I feel the interconnectivity of all living beings. I try to infuse love and intention into my work so that communicates to the viewers. I clear my mind of any negative thought. I'm a conduit of the experience and energy of the animals I paint."*



## COURAGEOUS CONVERSATIONS

# Promoting Harmony and Dissolving Prejudices through Sedona's Human Library™ Event!

BY MARGARET JOY WEAVER

**C**an a community become aware of and begin to dissolve hidden or even blatant judgements, prejudices and stereotypes that create division, breed discord, contribute to misunderstanding, and erode community spirit among its people?

Is it possible to engage in dialogue with those we tend to dismiss, discard, accuse or argue against, and come to an understanding or appreciation of each other's viewpoint? Can we actually foster a culture of peace through courageous conversations with people we have previously closed out of our lives, relate to them civilly, and possibly become a valuable resource for each other?

We saw this begin to happen in Sedona, Arizona, during its first Human Library™ event in 2017. The Human Library is an international social movement that began in Denmark in 2000. Its mission is to create safe spaces for difficult dialogues to take place with the intention of generating greater empathy and social harmony by challenging beliefs around "stereotypes, stigma and prejudice. The books are people, reading is a conversation, and difficult questions are expected, appreciated, and encouraged."

Sedona International City of Peace partnered with the Rotary Club of Sedona, the Sedona Public Library, and the Verde Valley School to host

300 readers and 35 "human books" for an unprecedented community evening of heart opening dialogues.

Take a moment to look at the people in the group photo below—all Sedona residents—who volunteered to be the human books. At first glance, we might not register the stereotyping they have experienced that caused challenges, wounds, or required extra efforts by these people to address being dismissed, bullied, wronged, made fun of, silenced, excluded, or thrown out of their home, their country, their families, or social circle.

From a mentally ill woman sentenced to 15 years in prison, to a former Phoenix police chief sharing his insight on immigration, to a gay

man who managed who came out in his 60s, to a Sikh woman practicing her religion's ancient traditions, to a former Catholic nun, these are people from all walks of life who volunteered to open up about the difficulties they have faced. One thing they all had in common was the courage to look within and share their hearts with a group of up to ten strangers, during four separate sessions, tell their story and answer questions about living under the mantle of a stereotype.

As thinking people, we like to believe we are open, tolerant and accepting of others. But it probably isn't hard to recall incidents when we have gossiped about others, pushed them away, or even verbally





threatened them. Maybe we heard something about them that we didn't like and made decisions that were detrimental to them that possibly disrupted their lives.

It could have been a person with tattoos and piercings, a gun owner, someone with different sexual preferences, like LGBTQ or polyamorous, a person of a different faith, a psychic or spiritual leader, someone using medical marijuana, a policeman, a politician...the list can go on and on. As we become less tolerant of our differences and more vehement in our positions, this habit of uninformed judgment can easily expand to include entire groups of people, organizations, and issues.

Are we willing to take time to shift our perspective, our minds and our understanding? I believe it is possible to create a more open, communicative and thriving community. As an Airbnb host I see people who come to Sedona and become awed by the beauty of its Red Rocks. Perhaps someday they will become equally awestruck by a welcoming, understanding, compassionate and communicative culture we have the power to foster in Sedona.

Now, look at the graphic at the top of this page and consider how many people with these challenges you may shy away from or even ignore? Would you be open to discovering something new, interesting, and maybe even fascinating about them? That is what the Human Library has successfully accomplished, one person at a time in 80 countries around the world, year after year.

As you read the list of labels that follows, it can give one pause. We can



ask ourselves: Have I made judgments about someone with this label? How solid is that judgement? Based on what? Has it become an inflexible position? Could I let go of the label and see that person as a human being just like me?

**Deformed...Amputee...Burn Victim... Dwarf...Autistic...Extreme Body Modified...Homeless...Molested... Molester...Ex-con...On Welfare... Bipolar...Soldier (PTSD)...Teenage Mother...Brain Damaged...Mentally Ill...Divorcee...House Husband... Garbage Collector...Mortician... Wealthy...Drug Addict...Raggedly Dressed...Step-Parent...Old Person... Republican...Democrat...Tea Party... Skin Color...Jewish...Christian... Muslim...Sikh...New Age...Prostitute... Hunter...Slaughterhouse Worker...**

The Sedona International City of Peace is committed to helping dissolve the walls that separate us. We have all had moments of labeling or being labeled. In those moments, perhaps we wished that someone would have come to be with us, listen to us, and remind us we are okay. At this point in human history, it is time to face our fears, confront that which

creates unnecessary division, and to embrace the diversity of our communities, become curious, and create dialogue and cohesion. Sedona, along with hundreds of other cities, will be hosting a Human Library event this year for that very purpose. Everyone is encouraged to participate as a Human Book, a reader, or a volunteer at a Human Library event near you.

For more information about the Human Library movement, this video provides a good overview: <https://www.facebook.com/attn/videos/1714737678561684/>

To read about the 2017 Human Library event in Sedona, visit: <http://www.redrocknews.com/news/88888901-human-interest/65960-human-books-aim-to-open-minds-and-humanl>.

*Margaret Joy Weaver is one of the Founding Members of Sedona International City of Peace and currently serves the Board President. She is also a Founding Member of the Mental Health Coalition Verde Valley. She served on the Sedona International Film Festival Board for 10 years and was Board Chair when the Mary D. Fisher Theater was born. She has an 18-year old daughter from India, co-parenting with her Muslim parents as she completes her studies at Verde Valley School.*

## PEACE OF MIND

# Wabi Sabi: The wisdom and beauty of impermanence

STORY AND PHOTOS BY WIB MIDDLETON

As we try to negotiate our increasingly busy and stress-filled lives, we often find ourselves longing for a more peaceful inner landscape, time to stop, breathe and just be. Unfortunately, our addiction to comfort and convenience that feeds burgeoning tech industries often causes even more stress. Do I need the latest refrigerator that talks to me and tells me what to buy? What will virtual reality do to my kids? Could Alexa be spying on us? Too many concerns and issues, so little

time to smell the roses. And now we find out from social scientists that an entire generation of kids may have to be taught how to play outside.

But, it's not just about taking time to connect with nature again, to spend time in the present moment, to take in the beauty around us. It's also about recognizing and appreciating the ephemeral nature of things—one of the keys to a more peaceful life. As the Greek philosopher Heraclitus of Ephesus once noted, "Everything flows and nothing abides, everything gives way

and nothing stays fixed." And Buddhist Zen master Thich Nhat Hanh offers this insight: "It is not impermanence that makes us suffer. What makes us suffer is wanting things to be permanent when they are not."

Most of us find change unsettling, unless it meets and supports our life plan. Plan making has been raised to a fine art in Western culture as we measure, score and desperately try to stay on track. Then, when life happens in its beautifully spontaneous, organic way, if we are attuned to its flow and lean into it, we can gain a greater appreciation and reverence for the precious life we have.

In Japanese culture there is a deeply rooted philosophical aesthetic called *wabi sabi*, with its ancient roots in Zen Buddhism. Like Zen, it is difficult to put into words. Some Western

interpreters break it down into three observations: "Nothing lasts, nothing is finished, and nothing is perfect." Think of a beautiful bouquet of roses, grown to engage the senses with their beauty and scent as they open and transform the space they occupy into something extraordinary. They peak, then begin to fade, lose their color, and droop with petals falling. Do we give them a moment's consideration in their





death spiral? No. We toss them. They served us; now they don't.

On the other hand, some of us bind their stems, hang them upside down to dry and repurpose them as potpourri. It's in that quiet transition from vibrant bouquet to dying roses that we can appreciate the beauty of their imperfection and maybe our own. That appreciation, that mindful awakening is wabi sabi.

In his book, *Wabi Sabi: The Japanese Art of Impermanence*, Andrew Juniper says, "Wabi sabi's influence on Japanese aesthetic values has inspired such arts as the tea ceremony, flower arranging, haiku, garden design and Noh (ancient) theater. It offers an aesthetic ideal that uses the uncompromising touch of mortality to focus the mind on the exquisite transient beauty to be found in all things impermanent."

These days it is easy to become entranced by the shiny new object. We love our gadgets, our cool tech stuff. Carpet cleaning robot? Bring it! Wabi sabi is 180 degrees in the other direction. Walk through an antique shop. Find an old worn table. Look for nicks and weathered areas where perhaps elbows rested generation after generation, where robust conversations and peels of laughter forged new friendships and loving family celebrations late into the night. You can feel the subtly undulating surface and imagine when life stopped for a while and the table provided that place of connection.

There is a soulful residue in certain old things where aging suggests that the thing itself in all its imperfection emanates an indescribable intrinsic grace. It speaks to us, and if we are listening, opens us to see-



ing the beauty in all things. Maybe that's why we both love the natural vibrance of fall colors and experience the sadness of the leaves falling and winter approaching. A touch of melancholy is wabi sabi too.

The recognition of impermanence, some will tell you, is a freeing experience. It gives us options in its raw truth. For Buddhists it is an essential contemplation to prepare for the next life. Seeing the beauty in imperfection around us can become a deeply enriching practice of mindfulness and can release us from the searching and grasping to the next

passing pleasure. Wabi sabi can open our eyes, slow us down, and awaken us to a new appreciation of the extraordinary tapestry of experiences that is our life. It can naturally take us to new depths of inner peace by seeing things just as they are, and relaxing in that truth.

*Wib Middleton is a professional photographer and writer who explores the wabi sabi aesthetic as a way to express the beauty of impermanence. Whether it's a fading rose or an old factory door, his images remind us of the ephemeral nature of all things. For more examples of his wabi sabi imagery, go to [wibmiddletonphotography.com](http://wibmiddletonphotography.com)*

## SPREADING PEACE

# The Art of Kindness

BY JAWN MCKINLEY

It was just over a year ago that her husband had died, and the ordinary act of grocery shopping had made her feel the loss deeply that day. As she was walking back to her car, she spotted something sparkling in a tree. A strange pull drew her to the object. "To my surprise, it was a gift and a blessing meant for me," recalled the woman in a letter. "Words cannot express how touched I was. With a smile in my heart, I am grateful to know that there are people out there who care. I call them angels."

She had found a Kindness Charm. Thousands of others have found them, hanging from branches, laying by a path, shining out of a fountain. Each charm carries a wish: "Take me home and spread kindness." The women of SedonaKind have made it their mission to take these hand-made gifts and their message of kindness around Sedona and the world.

## The Birth of SedonaKind

The Greek playwright, Sophocles, once said, "Kindness gives birth to kindness." In a way, another kindness group inspired the birth of SedonaKind. Around six years ago, a group of Sedona hiking buddies stopped to meditate on a ledge. Gifted with a glorious view and precious friendships, the women felt the need to do something more for others. One of the group had just read about Ben's Bells, an organization in Tucson that

spreads kindness in memory of a little boy. That idea moved the friends to begin a movement of their own in the face of all the troubles in the world. That's all it took.

Within days, the friends were together again, this time to create "Kindness Charms." Each charm is made from carefully selected pieces of old, broken or donated jewelry. They all have a heart and the message to spread kindness.

Across Sedona, the word spread quickly. Soon the women had formed their own version of a "kindness bee,"

*I found my kindness charm outside the Secret Garden Café. After news of the awful terrorist attacks in Paris, the charm was a gentle reminder that there is goodness and purity in our world. - Kamilla 2015*



gathering once a month to make hundreds of charms to be hidden around the area for people to find. Some of the women began taking the charms along as they traveled the world.

Today, more than 6000 charms have been made, and carried to every state in the US and to 43 countries around the world. The magic is that the people who need to find them, who've had a tragedy or simply a bad day, who are lonely and need to feel loved, are the ones who find the charms. To this day, the friends continue to meet, and weave into those charms their heartfelt kindness and compassion for those in need.

Over the years, the group expanded, as did the need to spread kindness in a world that often seems to be spinning out of control. The women wanted to do more, and SedonaKind was born. Its mission is simple: "to encourage acts of kindness, large and small, locally and around the world." They built a website, [SedonaKind.org](http://SedonaKind.org), to help get out the message, and pursued new projects to spread kindness.

"We have a good collection of artistic people in SedonaKind," said Katie Hamilton, one of the founders. "After the charms, they turned their artistry to the creation of Kindness Greeting Cards which also have made their way around the country."

The Kindness Cards were put to perfect use in Sedona with the "Operation Special Delivery" pro-



gram. In its first year, 250 handmade cards were delivered anonymously to Sedona’s unsung heroes, thanking them for all they do. One recipient told a neighbor, “I sat right down on the floor and cried when I found this card on my doorstep. No one had ever thanked me before.”

In 2017, the women fashioned 200 beautiful “Boxes of Love.” They were presented to the Verde Valley Caregivers, and to patients and caregivers at the Medical Center and the Cottonwood and Accord Hospice centers.

**KIS: Kindness In Schools**

“It’s the Kindness Ladies...the Kindness Ladies,” the young children at West Sedona School call out as the KIS (Kindness in Schools) teams arrive. Kindness in Schools was developed to encourage and support teachers, parents, and children in fostering and rec-



ognizing acts of kindness every day in their schools. The goal is to help create a more compassionate and considerate environment in the classrooms and on the playgrounds. Again, art plays a role in this process. “We’ve designed



*“Kids and art just go together. We just added kindness to the mix,” said SedonaKind member Joy Sinnott. The organization joined with the Sedona Art Center (SAC) and Rotary to teach the children of Big Brothers Big Sisters to make their own Kindness Charms during a joyful party called “Art from the Heart.” The children loved the idea of sharing their charms with families and friends to help make their world a kinder place. Many charms were displayed in a SAC exhibition, and the kids were so proud!*

‘Kindness Bracelets’ that we give to the students and teachers. They spell out SedonaKind and the word “Kindness” in 5 languages round the band,” said Gloria Woody, head of the KIS team. “The kids love to wear them.”

The “Kindness Ladies” offer interactive activities that include art projects, reading and storytelling, a puppet theater, and designing a kindness book with artwork and stories created by the children. It’s been said, “Kindness is the greatest wisdom,” so taking that message into the schools is a perfect fit.

**Sedona Kindness Day and More**

Mayor Moriarity and the City Council proclaimed the first Sedona Kindness Day to align with World Kindness Day on November 13, each year. For the weeks of celebration, SedonaKind artists produced beautiful Gratitude Trees along with heart ornaments for display around Sedona. Residents and visitors wrote statements of gratitude on the ornaments. The trees became a personal, artistic vehicle that bore witness to all that is peaceful and blessed in the Sedona community.

Also, on Sedona Kindness Day, the Sedona International Film Festival screened a special film provided by SedonaKind. As in last year, this year’s screening is a fund-raiser for a local charity, Veterans and PTSD programs. “We select the films to show how individuals can undertake simple acts of kindness that can spread compassion and good works everywhere,” explained founding member Jawn McKinley. “People can make more of a difference than they imagine.”

“Being part of SedonaKind has gifted us with a heightened awareness



*Grateful Tree created by SedonaKind artists*

of all the possibilities for kindness and an appreciation for the countless acts that spread peace and compassion around the world,” said Sandy Brandvold, a founding member. “There can’t be too many groups spreading messages of kindness. We feel privileged to be part SedonaKind and to collaborate with other giving, loving individuals and groups who make our community so special. Our Kindness Charms still travel the world, and our hometown activities mean the world to us. They make our hearts sing.”



*SedonaKind members fashioned 200 “Boxes of Love” to adults in hospice centers, hospitals and those in need of assistance in the Verde Valley.*

**WHO ARE WE?**

by Adele Seronde

And who are we, Americans  
to howl, outraged in fear  
that those illegals seeking refuge  
within our stripes and stars might rear

their unchained voices, claim  
a portion of our greed?  
Disenfranchise us by taking jobs  
we no longer do ourselves, feed

their children on our crumbs  
and claim security in this land  
where we barely feed our own,  
or hear our children’s cries? Stand

up, Americans! And face what  
our voters meant: WELCOME to those  
from any land or race, or stature  
who need sanction from injustice—who lose

everything but dignity. We hide now  
as prisoners within our stripes.  
Who are we, Americans,  
to deny protection to the hand that wipes

our tears, our sins, our ignorance  
away, performs our menial chores  
with such compassion? Who are we, Americans,  
to wield such arrogance that we shut our doors?





## Arts activism brings us together

BY DAWN SHATTUCK

In every society, art and culture matter in that they provide a platform for social interaction, create a forum for open dialogue and room for freedom of expression, all of which are critical drivers of social change. As emphasized by artist and designer Olafur Eliasson, “Art and culture represent one of the few areas in our society where people can come together to share an experience even if they see the world in radically different ways.”

Creative works are often utilized to amplify social issues while also becoming a collaborative bridge between various groups and cultures. Creative activism often arises from a collective appreciation of works of art, be it dance, painting, poetry, sculpture, music, etc. Through their efforts both artists and activists demonstrate a vision of what is possible for humanity. The next phase of evolution for humanity may well be in the hands of these creatives and their ability to craft inspired events for the rest of us to witness, to participate in, and hopefully grow from.

Art does not necessarily show people what to do, but with an activist focus, works of art can connect you to your senses as well as to specific issues and the endless challenges of our world. This in turn may spur the activism needed to go out and change the world one problem, one issue, one opportunity at a time. Or conversely, someone may have activist tendencies and wish to work creatively with others to bring awareness and change to a particular social challenge.

We certainly have no shortage of challenges to face. Slavery worldwide is at an all time high. Public safety policies and laws around the sale and use of automatic weapons are needed. Some places are still struggling to address issues of adequate food, water, and housing—the basics of survival. There are endless opportunities to help. What issues call to your soul? Maybe use forms of art to create awareness, maybe raise funds to help a cause, or invest time helping to create events and develop actions that promote a culture of peace where you live. As so well put by Yoko Ono, “A dream you dream alone is only a dream. A dream you dream together is reality.”

■ **Good Reading.** *The Creative Activist: Make the World Better, One Person, One Action at a Time*, Rae Lusk, Publisher Wise Ink. 2015. Rae Lusk interviewed 100 leaders around the United States for insight into what makes a creative activist. This book will help you sort out if there is something significant you are meant to do and help you find your voice to make it happen.

■ **Participate in a national conference on social transformation:** Over 3,500 environmentally and socially conscious citizens will gather at the 2018 Bioneers Conference in October to get inspired, build community and take action for a just and sustainable world. Proposals for being presenters are currently being accepted for the 2018 Bioneers Conference. [www.Bioneers.org](http://www.Bioneers.org)

■ **Inclined to become an artist activist or express your social concerns through creative avenues?** Check out the following organizations for more information or possible training.

1. **The Creative Action Institute** works at the intersection of creativity and social change. Their focus is to build the capacity of



leaders and organizations for innovation, collaboration and resilience to advance conservation, health, and human rights globally. They stress that creativity powers people, and people working together power change. The organization seeks to build an inclusive and just world where individuals, communities, and ecosystems flourish. [creativeactioninstitute.org](http://creativeactioninstitute.org)

2. **The School for Creative Activism** says it is “the only training school that offers a broad-based education focused on the organizers themselves; teaching overarching principles, perspectives, and skills of creative activism that they can apply to their own campaigns.” This school is both a training program for grassroots activists and a workshop to help socially engaged artists become more politically efficacious. [Artisticactivism.org/c4aa-trainings-programstiveart-sandcultures.org](http://Artisticactivism.org/c4aa-trainings-programstiveart-sandcultures.org)

3. **Mission to Perpetuate Dying Cultures - First Nation Arts and Activism.** The Native Arts and Cultures Foundation’s mission is to promote the revitalization, appreciation and perpetuation of American Indian, Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian arts and cultures through grant making, convening and advocacy. To date, the foundation has supported more than 200 artists and arts organizations in 30 states and Washington DC, nurturing the passion and power of creative expression. [nativeartsandcultures.org](http://nativeartsandcultures.org)

4. **Art for Social Change** is a Canadian research program studying ways in which the arts are used to engage people and encourage positive change. The research program involves the participation of community members, students and change makers from a wide variety of sectors, and professionals working in the fields of social innovation, social enterprise and public policy. Field study

projects involving arts-based dialogue, performing, and visual arts, as well as the creation of a learning institute, will enrich both research and the resources to be created. [art-for-social-change.ca/](http://art-for-social-change.ca/)

■ **The Give to Columbia Organization** held a peace-building workshop called “Lab 43: Types of Violence vs Strategies & Solutions of Non-Violence” for 350 students from seven high schools in Aburo, Columbia. Through mural creation, students were taught to recognize the various types of violence, how to address them, and the idea that one can survive violence by embracing human resilience and becoming the voice of hope for others.

Led by Artist John Moore, well versed on non-violent strategies used by Dr. Martin Luther King, students discovered the impact their creations have to transform communities.

[GivetoColumbia.org/](http://GivetoColumbia.org/)  
Promoting Peace through the Arts



One of the student murals highlighting strategies promoting non-violence.

## Can you imagine an end to slavery?

In this issue of *Imagine* we have taken a closer look at the enduring issue of human slavery. It was estimated that in 2016 over 40 million men, women and children worldwide were subjected to some form of slavery, including human trafficking, forced labor, debt bondage, descent-based slavery, child slavery, and forced marriage. Only a fraction are being helped. If you think you may be interested in working or volunteering in this area, here are a few organizations actively involved in some aspect of ending slavery and human trafficking.

- **Anti-Slavery International** works to free people from all forms of slavery around the world. [anti-slavery.org](http://anti-slavery.org).
- **Free the Slaves.** Using a community-based causal model tied to economics and other cultural factors, Free the Slaves works to rescue those enslaved and change the operative paradigm so others are not subjected to the same treatment in the future. [freetheslaves.net](http://freetheslaves.net).
- **Save the Children** works with children in 120 countries to provide healthcare, education and protection from exploitation and neglect. The premise is to be involved in the everyday existence of children and especially in times of disaster. [savethechildren.org](http://savethechildren.org)
- **The Polaris Project.** This organization is primarily focused on sex trafficking around the globe both from survivor support and global safety net perspectives. They operate the National Human Trafficking Hotline: 1-800-373-7888. [polarisproject.org](http://polarisproject.org)
- **Shared Hope International.** Human trafficking focused in their mission, this organization works to prevent, restore hope, and bring justice. [shared-hope.org](http://shared-hope.org)

Whether slavery or other issues are near and dear to your heart...your efforts are needed. Let May 2018 become the year that your activism takes off! By your efforts, may you find Peace in your heart, in your community, your culture, and in our world!



A special thanks to all of our Sedona International City of Peace Partners

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