

# sister who's perspective

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## Overview

From one perspective, survival is a universal concern. Awareness decreases, however, when affluence is the predominant experience. So we must guard against taking anything for granted and maintain proactive compassion toward those who are unable to do so, because of how real their challenges are.

May this newsletter empower you to be just that sort of wise healer within our very troubled world.

May one and all and everything, blessed and loved ever be.

## Surviving Elephants

I very much live by the principle that, ideally, everything should be wherever it can do the most good. Consequently, wherever I appear, my intention is to make a positive contribution or provide an empowering creative opportunity. Obviously there are occasions when others reject such opportunities and choose to vent their own brokenness instead.

Behind all of that, however, there is also the challenge of maintaining or developing my ability to appear--which is and always has been a rather daunting task, especially because while compliments are extended abundantly, actual support of my ministerial work is a somewhat rare phenomenon--leaving me with the feeling of addressing my challenges all alone. This reminds me of words attributed to Martin Luther King, Jr., "In the end, we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends."

Yet I would generally be the first to defend such friends: they're overwhelmed by challenges, some of which are clearly worse than mine; it's no one else's job to care for me; they're barely surviving and have nothing to give; they cannot stop all of the injustice I experience; and so forth--all of which, as far as I can tell, are true. An inescapable reality is

that many things can only be accomplished by unified collaboration.

The metaphorical elephants which prevent that are a myriad of topics that allegedly cannot be openly discussed. The more we tip-toe around such things, however, the more negatively our environment is impacted. Yet as much destruction as elephants have occasionally done, they have not rendered any other species extinct, they demonstrate certain generally consistent qualities, and they can usually be controlled.

While on one hand, I insist that it is legitimate to wish for what might have been and to appropriately mourn its absence, I also strive to be accepting of things not turning out as planned--specifically because I recognize that the universe is wiser than I and will sometimes lead me to something better than anything I've imagined. An elephant is, after all, a most amazing creature; an integration of an astonishing spectrum of qualities and abilities that have occasionally proven quite beneficial to certain human activities.

All that being said, a relationship with an elephant is not one of dominance, but rather one of mutual respect. This is why, to offer a personal example of metaphorical application, when my biological parents chose to exclude openly gay or lesbian people from their lives, I responded by respecting their choice and staying away. Those who want me to share whatever I can with them, must make an obviously contrasting and inclusive choice.

There may also be times when an "elephant" metaphorically steps on one's foot and no external injury is visible. The internal bleeding and damaged nerves may still halt all further progress. Indeed, some of life's deepest wounds can only be felt within the mind and heart. Surviving the presence of "elephants," similarly, is just as concerned about what is not seen, as about what is.

May one and all everything, blessed and loved ever be.

## Surviving Tornadoes

Growing up within the upper Midwest, I was taught at a very young age how to respond to the threat of a tornado. A particularly severe incident of such on Palm Sunday in 1965, in fact, leveled the northwest corner of the town within which I grew up. The prescribed response was not actually that difficult to do, but immediate response was nonetheless essential. Often by the time the warning siren could be heard, the tornado was already gone, so quick was its travel.

Tornadoes were nonetheless beyond any human ability to prevent and had to be accepted as a frequently occurring challenge within the scope of life within that region. In mere moments, years of hard work could be destroyed, leaving one with the unexpected tasks of rebuilding--again and again. Since in defiance of statistics that area of the town was hit by tornadoes three times within twenty years, it was dubbed, "Tornado Alley," but businesses have persisted in building there, suggesting that humanity is not so wise as it claims to be--or at least unaccepting of any notion that some areas belong irrevocably to Mother Nature, who sometimes exacts a very high price for contrary choices.

From such a perspective, survival is more or less inseparable from respect, but this involves respecting what is within us just as much as what is around us. The usual advice for responding to a tornado was to get below ground; to go downstairs into the basement. A person with a mobility impairment, however, involving perhaps a wheelchair, a walker, or a cane, could be left dangerously vulnerable during such moments. There were not many places of refuge for those with such disabilities.

If I do not have the personal ability to respond to a particular challenge, I can view this as a serious threat or as an invitation and opportunity to prepare ahead of time, using my ingenuity and any available resources. In this sense, survival becomes a multi-temporal activity--involving past, present, and future.

Past experiences and memories help to identify potential challenges; present resources and abilities empower proactive response; and future projections provide some indication of

when the results of our efforts may be put to the ultimate test.

The other half of surviving tornadoes, however, is having hopefully effective plans for reconstruction. I recall reading somewhere many years ago that a reason for Japanese houses being constructed of paper, was the frequency of earthquakes in that area. People were far less likely to be killed by a paper house falling down around them than if they had used some heavier material. The choice to build a house out of paper could thus be interpreted as a gesture of respect toward the idiosyncrasies of the local environment.

As romanticized as the notion of a log cabin in a wooded area has been for over a hundred years, it has never made any sense to me that people persist in building houses of wood within areas of Colorado known to experience frequent forest fires. A house of stone would be far less vulnerable to this recurring threat and far more respectful of natural cycles of death and rebirth.

During interim moments of transition, however, perceptions of life's unfolding may be analogous to standing the center of a tornado, watching things swirl around in apparent chaos. It only looks like chaos, however, because I do not understand or cannot perceive the patterns of the wind--which are no less real just because they are unknown.

Perhaps someday they will be known, such that, for now, our true adversary may be our own ignorance. Surviving the experience thus requires maintaining our own teachability and openness to constructive change. Human bodies are not designed for immortality, so we must use whatever time is available as wisely as possible. As quickly as tornadoes pass, so quickly does life also seem to have passed, when its final moments are upon us.

Many believe that what follows leaving the physical body is a return to spirit, which would be consistent with understandings of matter and energy as well, but survival is concerned with detailed and intense awareness of the present rather than simply being hopeful about the future--and making this present moment as good as it can possibly be.

May one and all and everything, blessed and loved ever be.

## Surviving Socialization

It is peculiar that expressing love toward one another is so essential, while the majority of socialization is pointed in the opposite direction. Social relationships are concerned about the survival of predominant social realities, rather than unique elements of individuality that create the bedrock from which sustainable societies ultimately arise.

Socialization, at its core, is concerned with empowering individuals to integrate with social environments. Far too many, however, presume an adversarial rather than ignorant and immature relationship. Phrased another way, it is not truly a question of competing interests and agendas, as it is of either not knowing or not understanding how the needs of both may be simultaneously satisfied.

In some ways this is similar to the observation someone made about parenting quite a number of years ago, that the principle problem is that this vital activity is done by amateurs. Even parents with multiple children have insisted that each child is a unique challenge, not having the same qualities as any other and consequently neither learning or responding in exactly the same ways.

Shifting this dynamic one step further to the metaphor of teaching within a more formal classroom, as important as it is for teachers to learn the aptitudes, learning styles, abilities, and limitations of each student, it is equally important for students to learn how to deal with the idiosyncrasies of each teacher. Nearly every teacher with whom I've interacted from

*"If merely imagining, thinking, visualizing, or praying for circumstances, resources, and/or experiences could create manifestation, interpersonal expressions of love would be optional rather than essential to life."*

-- Sister Who

kindergarten through my doctoral program, has insisted that educational methods are basically the same from one instructor to the next. I have never found this to be true; expectations and assumptions have been completely unique in every case.

Referring again to the possibilities of ignorance and immaturity, it may simply be that none of them realize how unique they are, nor have they taken the time to look beyond their own perceptions, enough to understand how radically different life may look and feel from the other person's perspective. I have read in a few places that this is an autistic quality, but I have observed it in so many neurotypicals that I'm more inclined to believe that ignorance and immaturity are simply normal aspects of growth easily identifiable whenever one person is compared with another.

There will always be someone with more knowledge and maturity than one's self as well as someone with less. This is only a problem if this observation is used hierarchically to create assumptions of superiority and inferiority.

There is a very significant difference, however, between being ignorant and being unteachable. We are all ideally in some sort of process of becoming and there is no shame in being a learner. The challenge, rather, is in relating to a so-called teacher who has forgotten that they too are still in a process of becoming, albeit at a different point or level of development than the so-called student is. It is for this reason that mutually respectful dialogue remains so very important, but also persists in being an ongoing struggle.

Every new thing we perceive, may require reinterpretation of everything previously seen and this can be quite daunting, perhaps even exhausting, but it's the raw material from which genuine life is made. Surviving all of this dialogue and struggle, requires ingenuity and adaptability as well as perseverance and doing so in a way that also sustains integrity, lays a foundation for genuine greatness of spirit.

You are the only chance the world has of learning what it does not know, but your spirit must be sustained and nurtured as well, if the divine blessing you are is to ever manifest.

May one and all and everything, blessed and loved ever be.

## Surviving Discovery

My days often end with some sort of heart-break--not because life isn't perfect enough, but rather because after struggling for yet another day to genuinely matter and make a positive difference, I am faced with the weary possibility that I may have failed to do so.

It may in fact be true that I don't matter nearly as much as I'd prefer. For example, although I cared enough to find her when a friend committed suicide a number of years ago, there was no indication my loyalty and available friendship were recognized. My actions, however, were not motivated by her perceptions of me, but rather by my own sense of who and what I am--because of which, I knew I was where I needed to be that day.

Surviving the discovery of just how very selfless my friendship toward her needed to be was far from easy. As much as I may discover by certain struggles that I'm stronger or more resourceful than I previously thought I was, however, surviving that discovery is its own separate challenge. Within such moments, I must integrate new definitions of myself which add new responsibilities to initiate positive actions within circumstances I might previously have otherwise avoided. I can no longer be the person I would have otherwise been; not to myself and not to anyone else.

Is this genuinely a matter of survival; is my continuance actually threatened? Most definitely yes. If I can't find the resources and abilities necessary for the experience to be constructive, then certain destructive effects become virtually inescapable and certain future developments much less likely.

As a holistic fusion of body, mind, and spirit--whether or not I acknowledge this--allowing any part to die disempowers and threatens the others. While change can be good and constructive, no process of giving birth to something new is guaranteed success; only by wisdom, love, and being moved to action are desirable futures built.

Only by showing up and being fully, actively, and positively present, do divine mysteries become real human experiences.

May one and all and everything, blessed and loved ever be.

## On a Personal Note

The current plan is to load a moving truck on Saturday, January 24 and journey to a fixer-upper house in upstate New York. I am still working out exactly how this will succeed.

Psychologically and emotionally, this is perhaps the most difficult transition I've ever faced. In some ways, this complex challenge has been a very solitary battle. In other ways, numerous people have contributed essential resources from afar. The most unnerving part has been not knowing how or even whether specific needs were going to be met at all, until literally moments before they actually were.

My intention is to continue production of monthly newsletters, television shows, and other graphic and video works from my new address of 27 Foote Street, Mineville, New York 12956, as well as to investigate the re-establishment of God Space Sanctuary there.

What the larger implications of this shift may turn out to be, only time will tell, but I've been told to expect healing, presumably of some of the scars that the years of struggle in Colorado have left upon my soul.

Conversely, my fourth album of original songs, "Stones and Seeds," recorded in December, is now available. There are also three book manuscripts I hope to finish writing within the next year or two, one of which--with or without Walden University's validation--would be my dissertation on a holistic integration of spirituality, psychology, and sociology. As usual, I'm too stubborn to quit.

May one and all and everything, blessed and loved ever be.

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*Sister Who a/k/a Rev. Denver NeVaar, MTS*

*27 Foote Street, Mineville, NY 12956*

*email: [dn@SisterWho.com](mailto:dn@SisterWho.com)*

*Internet website: <http://www.SisterWho.com>*

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