

occurs to me that if I ever stop searching for the shoe's next point of discovery, my journey will stop also.

Sometimes I argue, "but you're not supposed to appear over that way; that's not the way I want to go!"

Sometimes the shoe evolves and I question in astonishment, "Purple laces? Where did you get the purple laces?! Those are definitely not the laces I threaded through your eyelets when I first purchased you."

Sometimes the shoe shows up in the MOST unlikely places. "What are you doing over there? Now you've gone and gotten dirt all over yourself. I hope I can wash that stain out." Sometimes the stain has its own message to deliver.

The one thing I have found, of which I can be certain, is that the shoe will always--and only--fit my foot. The shoe will also always appear as the sort of shoe I need at the moment--sometimes a dress shoe, sometimes a hiking boot, sometimes a tennis shoe, for example.

It is nevertheless up to me to do the walking, the dancing, the running, or whatever physical activity is needed. The shoe will not endure the rigors of the journey without me and will certainly show the normal wear and tear of the journey as time passes. Its history will begin to be etched into its surface, just as scars are sometimes used to identify specific individuals, but its story will be my own just as much as it is my shoe's.

I recall a poster which bore the words, "The pearl is the oyster's biography." The challenge of this poster's message is to emulate the humble oyster and cover that which irritates, offends, and perhaps even wounds us with enough layers of beauty that what is at the core of the pearl will be forgotten by all but ourselves. We must remember, if we are to fully possess the miracle of transformation within ourselves, the miracle of growth, which (as another poster I saw expressed it) is the only true evidence of life.

May you be blessed with transcendent life and layers of beauty around every disappointment and wound within you today.

May you find the missing shoe, which will guide you on your way to more wondrous places than you'd ever imagined.

May you find the missing shoe which will magically equip your feet for the unknown journey ahead, through the confusing array of political, economic, and social situations by which the journey itself will be shaped.

May your shoes allow you to dance, just when everyone else's feet are too heavy to do so, and may your dancing reintroduce the world around you to feelings of divine joy and love.

Subscription Information:

"Sister Who's Perspective" is a monthly newsletter available for an annual subscription price of \$25.00 (please make checks payable to Denver NeVaar with the initials SWP on the memo line of the check).

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Sister Who's Perspective

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Life is a collaborative effort, encompassing more than we know. In a time of abundant "information overload," news, communication, and travel across great distances, we often talk at each other without listening, communicating, or understanding. Humanity needs its icons, but also its iconoclasts to grow beyond the good and bad qualities that now limit and describe us. The essences of both God and us remain, in the midst of questions, to be discovered, experienced, and expressed. Please share in this ongoing dialogue, remembering to indicate whether and how you wish to be identified. Blessings, love, and peace to you.
--Sister Who

Contemporary Feudalism

During what we call the Middle or Medieval Ages, the predominant system of civilization and government was called Feudalism and in actuality was only a little better than actual slavery. In the years since that time, the basic pattern of feudalism has assumed many names and forms (the company town and company store, for example). In the present day and age we like to crow incessantly about freedom and liberty while remaining ignorant or in denial (like so many before us) of the forms of enslavement which we not only tolerate and define as normal, but also recommend to others.

The flip side of understanding what the basic pattern of feudalism is, is understanding what true freedom is and often the two terms help to define each other. One of the things that keeps feudalistic systems in place is the limitation of the worker's resources and income to the point of basic subsistence, such that there is no such thing as "getting ahead" without some sort of significant sacrifice (such as going without food for a week in order to buy clothes or have enough money to invest in a new business venture).

Inherent within feudalism are class distinctions which are strictly maintained. Never were the "haves" and the "have-nots" more easily identifiable, one from the other. More often than not, those in control were simply bullies with more resources at their disposal, rather than benevolent caretakers of the citizenry of their particular district or region. As one bully defeated another, the citizens would simply be saluting a different sovereign but little else in their daily lives changed.

What was lacking was true individual freedom: the ability to decide what clothes to wear, what kind of house in which location to

occupy, which form of spiritual worship to practice, who and when to marry, what sort of job or lifework to do, and which remedies and/or practices to employ in an effort to maintain one's physical health (as well as many other things).

In our present day and age, such freedoms are still not guaranteed (though thankfully significant progress has been made). At the crux of this whole issue are the bullies who have appointed themselves (in many cases) to define the rules by which the rest of us are supposed to live. This is not democracy; this is fascism.

The most obvious example of fascism in history, Nazism in Germany during the 1930s and 1940s, resulted in the deaths of perhaps fifty million people. Need I say more about just how dangerous this kind of thinking can be?

So what does all of this have to do with me, an individual in the midst of an enormous country which pays little heed to my solitary voice? In that world peace and the positive growth of humanity (spiritually, socially, and psychologically) begins within each individual person, I must set an example each and every day, of the ideals in which I believe.

All too often, opportunities for actions and words are dismissed because they seem small and insignificant, because we discount their potential for sending positive ripples across the surface of the pool of humanity. More often than not, we will never know the ultimate effect of even a single act of kindness or word of encouragement. More often than not, we will never know the evil which was prevented by our willingness to stand up and speak a simple word of rebuke in response to a prejudiced or hateful idea or comment.

Something as simple as, "I find that

joke to be inappropriate for polite conversation among decent people" can change the course of a conversation.

"If you mean to imply by that comment, that people of that description are less intelligent or less deserving of respect than others, I disagree" may prevent a hateful seed from inciting a form of unintelligent mob violence.

"I am less concerned with whether I agree than with whether that person's perspective has been censored and he or she has been unheard" may open the door to a moment of insight, understanding, and communication by which a community will be made wiser, healthier, and stronger.

To the extent that we allow for censorship, bullying, and manipulation instead of open public dialogue, mutual respect, and freedom of choice, we lay the foundation for a future violent confrontation. Just as a child who cannot get his or her parents' attention will resort to increasingly unacceptable tactics in direct proportion to how long the child is ignored, humanity must pay attention to its individual voices and show respect for their concerns. There may in fact be a divine message within these voices, however poorly the message may sometimes nevertheless be delivered.

Whoever and whatever you find yourself to be, celebrate your life and each moment within it by giving it maximum expression. The feudal lords will probably not be pleased with you, but the divine lord who outranks them by a long shot most certainly will be. Perhaps even more importantly, the world in which you live will be better because of your honest and creative contribution.

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

Progress Reports

*As to my next book, **ReInventing the Sacred Clown**, the first chapter has been submitted to a friend and ex-school teacher for its final edit. I hope to have the chapter in its final form by the end of February at the absolute latest. That'll be one down and fourteen to go.*

For anyone who hasn't heard, a friend has volunteered to back me up financially to allow for participation in my third bodybuilding competition at the sixth international Gay Games, to be held in Sydney, Australia, November 2-9, 2002. My daily workout lasts about two and a half hours and I'm already seeing some improvement. Exactly what Sister Who will be doing while I'm there is yet undetermined, but there are some promising possibilities which are presently being investigated.

The future of Denver Community Television is subject to wide speculation, especially given the administrative posture of the current executive director, but I am working toward the acquisition of equipment which will allow me to create new television shows, independent of that organization. These shows could then be copied, sold, or distributed as widely as opportunity allows. The estimated cost of the minimum additional equipment is under \$2000 and possibly even under \$1000. Please pray with me for this video production capability to become a reality within the next few months. I have met so many very interesting people in the last few years, whom I would love to introduce to the general public through this medium.

I have added a free service to "Sister Who's Internet Emporium" within my Internet website, www.sisterwho.com. As time and energy allow, I have volunteered free sewing services to anyone who wishes to construct a panel for the AIDS memorial quilt, in memory of anyone who has died of AIDS-related complications, and who does not possess skills adequate to the task of creating such a memorial panel. If you haven't already visited my website to see what other things are offered there, I encourage you to do so through your own computer, a friend's, or perhaps one provided at a nearby public library.

Blessings, love, and peace to each and every one of you, now and always. ---S.W.

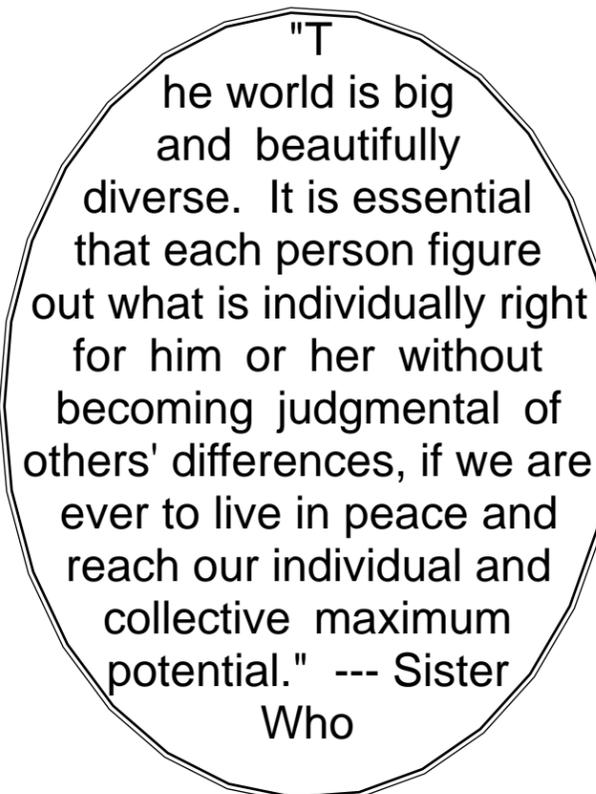
The Missing Shoe

Ever have one of those mornings, literally or figuratively, when you couldn't seem to find your other shoe? Hopping around on one foot, trying to keep my balance, trying not to get my sock dirty because I didn't have time to vacuum the floor the night before--it's a struggle with many different imbalances all at once.

Sometimes people refer to "getting up on the wrong side of the bed" though it's never been explained to me how one knows which is the right side and which is the wrong side and why one side is better than the other.

Metaphorically speaking, the missing shoe is what we need but can't seem to find, to continue our life-journey. The resulting delays, superficially, are quite frustrating. In my better moments, I'm reminded that it often has to do with timing. By this I am not just referring to those times when being "on time" would have put us directly in the path of a horrible auto accident, but also to those serendipitous encounters we could never have foreseen, bringing things and people into our lives we perhaps did not ever realize we needed.

A couple of weeks ago, after attending a local gathering of the Dance of Universal Peace (an interfaith gathering comprised mostly of prayerful dances and songs), it was late, I was



"The world is big and beautifully diverse. It is essential that each person figure out what is individually right for him or her without becoming judgmental of others' differences, if we are ever to live in peace and reach our individual and collective maximum potential." --- Sister Who

tired, and I was eager to get home. A few friends there had mentioned that they were going to a local restaurant to chat for a while. I respectfully declined but an intuition persisted that I needed to be there. For the above-mentioned reasons, I didn't want to go. As I drove away from the building along my standard route home, all the traffic lights were green--until I got to the corner where it would be necessary to turn if I was going to the specified restaurant. "Oh, all right, I'll go," I mumbled half out-loud.

I entered the restaurant, found the table where everyone was gathered, took a seat in one of the few empty chairs, and began studying the menu. The woman sitting next to me was someone I'd seen at the dances several times before but otherwise unknown to me. "It's hard to decide, now that I have to observe a high-protein and low-fat diet," I commented. She asked why I had chosen such dietary restrictions and I began explaining about the upcoming bodybuilding competition at the Gay Games for which I was preparing.

"Oh really?" she responded. "I used to be a professional bodybuilding coach." Suddenly I was all ears and my intuition didn't need to keep nudging me anymore about why I needed to be there. For the moment, at least, I'd found the missing shoe.

Sometimes finding the missing shoe requires more time than I want to allow. Sometimes I find the shoe and lose it again, over and over, as if the shoe is guiding me to where I need to be. I find it in one place, pick it up, and am just about to put it on when the shoe disappears into thin air. I look around again and see it perhaps twenty paces away in a new direction, only to find the same experience repeated. After a few times of this, I get the hint that I'm on a treasure hunt of some sort and begin to ask, "So just where exactly are we going?" but I rarely get an answer.

I recall a poster which stated, "Life is not a destination but a journey." Perhaps it is not so important where the disappearing and reappearing shoe is leading me, as what we are passing along the way. It