

Barbara Daté

We can do more than we think we can. I believe this more strongly now than ever before. Why? Because I have often witnessed ordinary people accomplish extraordinary acts. How? By having the vision and then daring to do it.

I was lucky to be raised in the York Center Co-op, an inter-faith, inter-racial co-operative residential community of 79 families. The founders created this somewhat utopian place to raise their children within a circle of relationships whose members came from diverse cultural backgrounds and also where everyone was committed to respecting others and cooperating together -- no matter what.

Growing up surrounded by these visionary adults, I was able to observe firsthand how they lived their daily lives showing compassion for one another despite differing ideas and preferences. I saw in real life that "it can be done". We can live respectfully side by side in our lifetime. This village influenced my significant life decisions, and also taught me that "noticing a moment or opportunity" to take altruistic action was not just an honorable and doable action, it is a skill to be nurtured.

I learned this lesson from my father when he saw moments to take stands for justice (even at great personal sacrifice) as he worked for nonviolent solutions to problems. My mother, as a Japanese-American, recognized moments to share her poignant internment story through photos, drawings and poetry to educate people of all ages about the injustice, while concurrently inspiring her audiences. Helping my mother share this with a Cal Young Middle School class recently brought tears to my eyes when they handed her their framed pledge signed by each student individually: "We pledge to do our part in ending discrimination and unfair treatment wherever we may see it so that no person will ever have to suffer the injustice you experienced. We thank you for taking your time to teach us about our past." These youngsters are seeking that path...

This I believe: *If we learn to hit the pause button, we may notice* neighbors, friends or family, acquaintances, even strangers or those who hold entirely different values or have totally unique life experiences or distinct cultural traditions, and then we may further *notice myriad moments rich with opportunities that might lead one to* do the "right thing".

I've worked with people with shared violent histories -- from the Irish context, to those in a teacher's strike, to extended families and faith communities who have hurt one another, to Japanese Citizens, Native Hawaiians and dominant culture Americans coming together on Pearl Harbor's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary to share pain they've experienced, to families of Native Canadian children raised in Residential Schools who "disappeared", etc. Even in those challenging contexts, when people share face-to-face, candidly and earnestly trying to understand one another, healing and evolving relationships can happen.

However, if we fail to be mindful or *notice a moment* to respond to a vulnerable person or fragile situation, our toolbox may go unopened. The tools may lie dormant.

A quote next to my laptop helps me keep my perspective and resolve and lights my path towards action: "Since you cannot do good to all, you are to pay special attention to those who by accident of time or place, or circumstances, are brought into close connection with you." -- St. Augustine.

This I believe: Noticing opportunities to proactively reach out is something that each one of us, from cradle to grave, can learn to do better and better. Progress towards a world at peace is possible. Think what you could do -- "just" noticing a moment's opportunity!