

Daily Meditation 08-17-22

Breaking the Silence: Native Americans & Historical Trauma

Good morning.

In the last two meditations we've been considering the rich topic of silence and even nothingness. And today we're introducing a more prophetic side to silence. Silence being so much a part of a mystical practice, on the prophetic side can often mean breaking the silence, speaking out, making a difference that way, interfering that way, which as Rabbi Heschel says is the primary work of the Prophet.

In today's and tomorrow's daily meditations I'll be sharing with you an article written recently by Donna Schindler, who's the author of this very powerful book, *Flying Horse: Stories of Healing the Soul Wound*.

And as I point out, Donna Schindler is a psychiatrist who's worked seven years with Maori people in New Zealand, and 25 years with Navajo people, and more recently, a number of years with Northern Californian indigenous people.

And the title of her article is, "For Native Americans, Historical Trauma Is Deadly"...historical trauma is deadly. And as she points out, the Pope's visit recently to apologize to indigenous people of Canada triggered this letter, which she invited me to share with our readers.

And I think it's most appropriate.

What I'd like to do to supplement, if you will, the essay that is shared today, is to share with you a few words from her book, *Flying Horse: Stories of Healing the Soul Wound*.

She points out that in the 1760s there were an estimated 310,000 native peoples living in California. It was the most densely populated area in the United States...what we call the United States. More than 100 distinct languages were spoken. But by the beginning of the 20th century, this 310,000 population had dwindled to 20,000 Natives remaining in California...from 310,000 to 20,000.

And the mission movement of Junipero Serra was a big part of that destruction. And so too, of course, was the finding of gold in 1848.

Now in the first movement, native people were hired - over 4000 were hired to be miners, and initially there were friendly relations between Indians and prospectors. But one day, a prospector accused an Indian of stealing his pick. An Indian leader went to the camp of the prospector to try to make peace, and he was shot by the white man. And there was this confrontation that went on.

In 1850, Governor Burnett, governor of California, declared "A war of extermination will be waged against the races until the Indian race becomes extinct." That's the governor of California, 1850. The result was a policy of extermination carried out by whites on the California frontier with a goal of getting rid of Indians who were

"obstacles to progress" and the volunteer militia as well as miners and ranchers gathered to kill the Indians. Local governments offered \$5 for an Indian head and 25 cents for a scalp. People would come in with eight to 12 Indian heads tied to their mules.

And the legislature passed a law that the Indians could not have guns. California natives were often captured and sold as slaves. The practice of kidnapping Indians and selling them into servitude was carried on to an extraordinary extent, according to writers at this time. Up to 4000 Indian children were captured and sold as slaves between 1852 and 1867. The wage to buy an Indian child was between \$30 and \$200 apiece. Indian girls and women were used for purposes of labor and of lust, as one San Francisco paper put it.

So it's not surprising that indigenous people in California today suffer from this inherited trauma. And this is getting the truth out. This is breaking silence. Thank you, Donna Schindler.

We'll see you tomorrow. Thank you.