

Humans Approach a Great Turning Christopher Uhl

Though I am not a flag waver I confess to being touched last week when I looked up and saw the late afternoon sun illuminating an American flag. The next day I purchased a flag and planted it in my front yard next to a McCain sign or is it an Obama sign?

Whoever wins, my heart goes out to them. Can you imagine being President in times such as these? I mean, really, by any measure, things have not been going very well for humankind in recent years.

Eckhart Tolle, author of *A New Earth*, puts it this way: At this moment in history “humans are a dangerously insane and very sick species. That’s not a judgment. It’s a fact. As a testament to insanity, humans killed a hundred million fellow humans in the 20th Century alone. No other species violates itself on such a grand scale. Only a people who are in a deeply negative state, who feel very bad indeed, would create such a reality as a reflection of how they feel.”

Gulp... Yes, there is much to be sad about. A friend said of the upcoming election, “How much will we Americans have to suffer before we wake up?” My response was that “we *are* waking up.” The fact that record numbers of Americans will cast a vote this Tuesday is part of our waking up. We stand, I believe, on the cusp of what the Greeks called *metanoia*—a change of heart resulting in a fundamental shift in our world view—in our understanding of life and human purpose. In the context of politics, *metanoia* manifests as a bipartisan shift away from the politics of fear and deception toward a politics of caring and common purpose.

Joanna Macy, author of *Coming Back to Life*, describes “metanoia” in our time as “The Great Turning”—a time when we, humans, finally TURN AWAY from attacks on each other and the defilement of Earth—and TURN TOWARD each other and Earth with compassion, with kindness. How might this happen? Universalist Unitarian Minister Christine Fry offers this scenario:

You've asked me to tell you of The Great Turning, of how we saved the world from disaster. The answer is both simple and complex.

*We turned. For hundreds of years we had **turned away** as life on Earth grew more precarious. We turned away from the homeless men on the streets, the stench from the river, the children orphaned in Iraq, the mothers dying of AIDS in Africa.*

We turned away because that is what we had been taught....

Until it seemed as if there was no safe place to turn. No place, inside or out, that did not remind us of fear or terror, despair and loss, anger and grief.

Yet on one of those days someone did turn.

Turned to face the pain. Turned to face the stranger. Turned to look at the smoldering world and the hatred seething in too many eyes. Turned to face himself, herself.

And then another turned. And another. And another. And as they wept, they took each other's hands.

Until whole groups of people were turning.... People of all colors, all nations, all religions. Turning not only to the pain and hurt but to beauty, gratitude and love. Turning to one another with forgiveness and a longing for peace in their hearts...

[Abridged from http://www.heartsongproject.org/_articles/thegreatturning.htm]

But make no mistake—no matter who wins this election—the “turning” toward a world of peace and justice that our hearts long for **will not** be handed down to us from Washington. Rather, it will well up in households and neighborhoods and extend outward.

Yes, neighbors, it appears that we are the ones we have been waiting for! May we **turn toward** each other and toward all life with amazement, awe, and gratitude and, in so doing, break free from the “insanity” of the past century.