

GREEN RECOVERY and SPIRITUALITY: SEEDING THE DIALOGUE

Dedan Gills

*I believe that addiction and its consequences
are the most serious problem now facing
our society.*

Deepak Chopra

*The city has become the
slaughterhouse of the soul.*
Ayi Kwe Armah

We are currently at the dawn of a great awakening as we become ever more aware that, under close scrutiny, much of what we label as trash is endowed with an intrinsic value that can be recycled into new and reusable valuables, that in turn helps to maintain a clean environment and provide for new careers for future generations.

The homeless and marginalized that traverse the streets of our cities, many of them trapped in the throes of addiction seeking to escape the pain of their lives, are cast aside like so many pieces of human trash. Broken spirits, like broken glass or used and crumpled paper that is strewn along our streets have one thing in common: they have been discarded as useless, yet are endowed with hidden potential to serve the greater good. The broken human spirit, the trash of humanity that many of us pass each day as we go about our lives, is actually genius waiting to be activated. The activation of this latent genius, in conjunction with the rapidly growing field of green jobs, is the dream that lies at the core of this discussion.

Due to human folly/apathy, we all face a common peril in light of the literal dismantling, as we speak, of the life support systems that provide the necessary elements for the sustainability of a healthy life for all living things on our planet. This impending catastrophic condition cries out to humanity to rise from our lethargy before we are consumed by the toxic blindness of our own greed and hubris. Although there are many things that we can do on an individual level, the majority of us are so deeply enmeshed in the routine of our daily lives that we do not have the commitment, nor the will at this point, to respond to the greatest challenge in the history of humankind: our common survival. However, the addicted and marginalized, those who have been cast outside the boundaries of society by either themselves, their society or a combination of both, have thus been liberated, so to speak, from the invisible chains that hold us, collectively, death-bound and hypnotized with consumerism, elitism, racism and the myriad of maladies that plague the human condition.

What nature tends to do is correct itself by creating conditions that give rise to a consciousness that has the capacity to resolve what threatens its stability. We all have observed the homeless, driven by hunger, craving for drugs and in search of protection from the elements, mining the urban landscape for castaway recyclables, unaware that they have within them the rudiments of a consciousness necessary for our collective healing and survival that has the potential to blossom out of the heinous quagmire of their broken lives.

Combining the recovery of humans with recycling and greening projects could provide a tremendous boost to the broken spirit that lacks positive self-esteem and purpose. This process has the potential to help restore human dignity, awakening the marginalized and downtrodden to the noble cause of restoring our environment while simultaneously restoring their relationship to the earth and society.

From my personal experience with addiction, I have learned the beneficial effect of becoming increasingly aware of the interconnected nature of life, while consciously challenging my own hubris in working with others and reconnecting with the natural world. This has given rise to an ecology within my own spirit, and the same could provide the recovering addict with the

internal peace and fortitude required to navigate the challenges of life, while transforming the individual from a reactive to a proactive state in the service of their own well-being and that of the global community.

It is one of the most beautiful compensations of this life that no man can help another without helping himself.

Ralph Waldo Emerson

Topics for discussion.

1. Is there actually an architectural design that enhances balance and healing? Can the green architect community contribute to that design?
2. Modern technology has revealed the electro-chemical storm that surges within the addicted individual. How do we restore balance - physical, psychological, spiritual? Organic food, restorative nutrition, meditation, gardening, breathing, exercise, animals, service, etc.
3. Viewing the self from a relational perspective. Stewardship of the earth as a spiritual practice.
4. Green Technology / Green Jobs?

About Dedan:

Dedan Gills is a Los Angeles writer and poet, as well as a Certified Addiction Specialist and Anger Management Facilitator working with the homeless. Dedan is recognized as a highly skilled and compassionate listener, in both his professional and community life as a resident of the Los Angeles Eco-Village, an intentional community demonstrating an environment-friendly lifestyle, where he co-founded the conflict resolution group. Among his many and varied interests, Dedan studied under the tutelage of Permaculture "guru" Larry Santoyo, and is a member of the LA Permaculture Guild.

Dedan was an active member of the anti-war and black student movements of the 1960s. Today he considers himself a "Soul-lutionary", one who explores new paths by using the wisdom of the soul, guided by compassion and mercy instead of confrontation and dogma.

In his work with young people, he has helped to design programs for at-risk teens, and he volunteers as a youth mentor. Dedan is also co-producer of "Watts Up!", a documentary about transformation, growth and transcendence. He has traveled extensively nationally and internationally, participating in conferences that focus on world peace and global healing.

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