

Being Aware in the New Year

Written by Vivian Bikulege



Hope has two lovely daughters. They are anger and courage. Anger that things are not what they ought to be, courage to make them what they might be. - St. Augustine

During this season of peace and good will, I read a daily reflection that asked what outrages me. It took me by surprise.

I do not really like the idea of purposefully being outraged or angry or upset. Conflict and elevated blood pressure are not in the top ten of my favorite things. However, the question has stayed with me because I have never thought about it. The reading went on to ask, “What is the one thing you can do – if only to be aware, rather than just being numb and unaware?”

Indulge me for a moment as I brainstorm things that might drive me to outrage. Maybe your list is different. Maybe we share some things in common.

Poverty, war, starvation, torture, cancer, ignorance, prejudice, child abuse, animal abuse, stagnant politics, lying, rude people, unkind people, pollution, litter, hit and run drivers, rude drivers, arrogance, intolerance, neglect. I wish I could say that abortion outrages me but I think I am more numb than outraged. I do believe abortion breaks the Commandment, “Thou shall not kill,” and it is hard to acknowledge that I am numb to killing.

My sister and brother seem to have found ways of acting on their passions and beliefs. My

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sister is a founder of *Beads of Courage* in her community hospitals, an arts-in-medicine program where children with serious illness and their family members earn beads signifying strength and courage for every procedure they endure. During a recent visit to Beaufort, I told Stacie I would have trouble facing children battling cancer. She told me that looking into their faces and sharing their struggles keeps her committed to the work. My brother Stan, as Chairman and CEO of his company, fights to retain jobs in the U.S. He funds programs for football and wrestling at St. Joseph's in Greenville, and along with his wife Paula and their daughter Natalie, he has provided help to renovate and furnish a women's shelter, and cared for young men who have lost their parents.

I am more homebound in my efforts to make a difference. My husband and I care for my mom, and Toby and Trooper (yes, we filled the gap of losing my mom's dog Cokie with a rescue from Georgia) are a couple of canines whose fate might have been quite different had we not discovered and claimed them. But the question, "What outrages me?" lingers. My apathy and silence may be most outrageous. Generally, I opt for passivity to avoid hurting or challenging others. I am not vocal about my religion. I apologize too often and too much for no good reason at all.

For the past three years, I have chosen a single word to focus on in the new year. Better than ten resolutions, or the monotony of my routine goals of fitness and money management, is my choice of a single word to guide me over the next twelve months. Previous words included clarity, balance, and present. When I reflect upon 2011, I wonder how present I was or have become. When I read about being aware versus being numb, I recognize that I still have a long way to go because I truly am numb to my habits and many times to my interface with the world around me. So, I choose the word "aware" as my 2012 mantra.

With that in mind, I make my resolutions.

I resolve to be aware of what comes out of my mouth. I will not let my goals of becoming more productive technologically overshadow the power and impact of face to face communications, a letter, or a telephone call. I will smile more. I will be more aware of what goes into my mouth. I will be aware of my muscles. I will be more politically aware and educated about my vote. I will be aware of my environment. I will be aware of what I use, what I do not use, and how to use less. I will be aware of how I give and what I need to ask for. I will be aware of love.

The daily meditations that followed the message about outrage were readings on living peace

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and hopeful action. I suspect, I may even venture to believe, that later in my life I will have the time and still have the energy to give action to my outrage. My passion still lies in my writing and the act of putting words on paper with the hope that another person will find light and encouragement from them. This is my solitary way of taking peaceful action.

I wish you a season of renewed hope and a new year plentiful with the tools to meet your outrage with creative and positive action. 2012 is not a time to sit idly by. *Time* magazine recognized

Protester

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as its Person of the Year, pointing out that every individual contributes to “collective, colossal change.” In some way, to paraphrase Gandhi, each of us is a living incubator for the change we want to see in this world. My goal for 2012 is to live my life more aware of the choices I make as witness to my outrage and as a means to moving away from a dulled existence. See you along the way.

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