

2022 January Chalice Circle: Speaking to Power



Opening Words and Chalice Lighting --

Shirley Chisholm to Barbara Lee - If they don't give you a seat at the table, then bring a folding chair.

Song: I'm gonna Walk it with You by Ellie Grace and Brian Claflin

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ir6Hqd0uIXs>

Well it looks like it might be a hard road but I'm gonna walk it with you
And I know that you might have a heavy load but I can carry some too
I will lift you up when they push you down, I will raise my voice & stand my
ground

Well it looks like it might be a hard road but I'm gonna walk it with you

And it looks like it might be a long night but I ain't goin' nowhere
And I know it's gonna be a hard fight but I will stay right here
I will shine a light in the darkest hour. I will face the man in the tallest tower
Well it looks like it might be a long night but I ain't goin' nowhere
(bridge) I will work! I will fight! I will stride in the name of love
I will speak! I will shout! I will sing it to the skies above

Well it looks like it might be a perilous climb but I will follow your lead
And I know it might be a long time until the last one of us is free
But I will hold on tight, stay by your side. I will be with you thru this whole damn
ride

Well it looks like it might be a perilous climb but I will follow your lead
Well it looks like it might be a hard road but I'm gonna walk it with you
And you know that you might have a heavy load but I can carry some too
I will lift you up when they push you down, I will raise my voice and stand my
ground

Well it looks like it might be a hard road but I'm gonna walk it with you
(That's right!) I'm gonna walk it with you. I'm gonna walk it with you

(tag) I will walk! I will climb! Shine the light the whole night through
Because it looks like it might be a hard road but I'm gonna walk it with you

Reading 1

John Lewis said about Barbara Lee - One thing I like about Barbara is "She speak up", She speak out" She has the capacity to do what I call Getting In The Way, Getting in Trouble, Good Trouble, Necessary Trouble.

Barbara Lee was the only senator to vote against granting the President broad, open-ended authorization for military force after 9/11. She faced insults, hate mail and death threats as a result of her vote.

Check-in Briefly describe where you are in your life now, and notice what needs to be shared in order to be fully present in our Circle.

Reading 2: "In a room where people unanimously maintain a conspiracy of silence, one word of truth sounds like a pistol shot."

– Czesław Miłosz

Reading 3:

Ware Lecture, UUA General Assembly 2015, and "Speaking Truth to Power"
Lecture at MIT 2018 by **Cornell West**

W.E.B. DuBois said "I've been wrestling with four questions all of my life, and every generation has to come to terms with these questions. The first question, how shall integrity face oppression?"

For me [Cornell West], that's one of the fundamental challenges of our day, because we live in an age of mendacity [untruth], an age where lies are ubiquitous. Integrity is the quality of your courage and your willingness to radically bear witness against the grain even if you have to sacrifice something precious, (such as your popularity) in the name of integrity.

From the legacy of Athens, Socrates said "The unexamined life is not worth living" but you can hear echoes of Socrates in Black History – "The examined life is painful. Very, very painful." Montaigne said that to philosophize was to learn how to die. And Seneca said she or he that learns how to die unlearns slavery. For me any serious talk about education – brings up what the Greeks call paideia, that's deep education. That's very different than cheap schooling. Cheap schooling is just information. Paideia is about interpretation and transformation. Never confuse the two. Information – necessary. Information – indispensable. But information alone is insufficient for paideia.

You see it in Plato's 'Republic.' Soulcraft is the formation of attention that gets us to attend to the things that matter, not the things on the surface. It's the cultivation of thinking critically for yourself so you're willing to speak in such a way that you are willing to exercise what Socrates called parrhesia. Parrhesia is clear speech, frank speech, fearless speech, unintimidated speech, speech that flows from your soul - not to show that you're clever and smart - but to show that you're courageous and wise." And yes, it will get you in trouble. And its not just any speech, it's got to be rooted in the best of paideia. It's got to be rooted in the best of deep education. Some brothers and sisters of different colors at Harvard were thoroughly convinced that the end goal was to be the smartest in the room.

I said to myself "We come from a different tradition, you see?" A jazz tradition. A Blues tradition. A cracked vessel produced by a Shiloh Baptist Church on the chocolate side of Sacramento, California. I don't fetishize smartness. Now I'm not promoting stupidity. Let the phones be smart, we've got to be wise. Let the computers be smart, we've got to be courageous. In the end, what kind of human being are you in the short trek from womb to tomb? Are you willing to engage in paideia at the deepest level which has to do with your soul, your character? We can fetishize smartness and end up being well-adjusted to injustice, well adapted to indifference. Indifference to evil is more insidious than evil itself. It doesn't matter how smart you are, how rich you are, if you are not willing to engage in parrhesia, frank speech, plain speech. It doesn't have to be in public – it can be on a micro level - on the job, in your synagogue, in your mosque, in the language of John Coltrane a force for good.

Sitting in Silence - *We will sit in silence for 5 minutes. Take this time to center yourself and consider what you want to share with the group.*

Sharing/ Deep Listening: Please share your experiences and thoughts

Additional Thoughts: After listening to others, do you have additional thoughts?

Reading 4:

"In a time of deceit telling the truth is a revolutionary act."

– George Orwell

Checkout – Final thoughts/ appreciation, etc.

Closing Words/Extinguishing the Chalice – Go in Peace By Jim Magaw

When I say go in peace,

- I don't mean "go in mindless oblivion."
- I don't mean "go without challenging yourself or others."
- I don't mean "go in utter ease and comfort."

When I say go in peace,

- I mean "go in peace, seeking justice."
- I mean, "go in peace, committed to equal rights and opportunities for all."
- I mean "Go in the peace that is created when, together, We build communities of true solidarity, deep compassion, and fierce, unrelenting love."

Go in peace.