

“My 29th Nervous Breakthrough”

I left my house this morning to run a few errands and enjoy a cup of tea from Starbucks. It was just after ten o'clock and I was definitely in need of some time away from the computer and the household chores that never end. I flipped on the radio to listen to the one radio station I've always counted on for unbiased and investigative reporting.

Lately, the news has been about Afghanistan, an earthquake in Haiti, fires raging out-of-control here in California, and the pandemic. After listening for about twenty minutes, the time it took me to drop off my ballot for the Gavin Newsom recall election and make a small purchase at my local hardware store, then drive several miles to Starbucks, my outlook on the day began to sink.

With the parking lot full, I got in line in the drive-thru and inched my way forward, ordering my tea, then driving to the park to drink it while reading a book, a habit I developed during the pandemic. I didn't know why at the time, but my mood continued to falter, until I felt tired and irritable. Once I finished my tea, I left the park and drove to the natural foods store. That is when the reason for my low mood revealed itself: I was having my 29th nervous breakthrough.

The news continued its barrage of depressing events I have no control over, while I sat at the traffic light sobbing for the unending suffering in the world. I began to wonder where it all went wrong, or has humanity always suffered so miserably? Although, I reminded myself, one million suffering souls thousands of years ago are now seven or eight billion suffering souls, so everyone must really be miserable by now.

I spoke aloud to the air, “I feel as though I'm in the wrong world.” I wiped the tears from my eyes, but I was not through crying. I had more to say. “It's as if there are two worlds, one where all the bad things are happening to people and the one where all the good things are taking place. Right now, I'm in the world of death and suffering.”

At the store, I purchased a few grocery items and an avocado sandwich, then returned home to eat my lunch out on the patio. The goldfinches cracked open the sunflower seeds they dug from the dried sunflower stalks and I read my book. I was determined to shake the mood I had gotten into. However, there was a question hanging in the air I needed to formulate and then ask.

Many questions ran through my mind today- and opinions- mostly questions beginning with “why.” But, I knew there was an underlying question that was waiting to be asked: “Why am I here?” If I am in the world where bad things are happening to people, why am I here? If I feel as though I am in the wrong world, why am I here?

Perhaps there is a reason. Perhaps this world of suffering needs those who plant things to feed the birds, people who feel deeply the suffering of others, people whose gardens are not planted in straight rows and win awards, but are wild places where birds, moles, gophers, possums, bats, and raccoons find sanctuary. Maybe the world doesn't need another millionaire or billionaire or a bestseller or a gold-plated record album. Maybe it needs peaceful souls who smile at babies and crack jokes about themselves. Maybe this world where authoritarians are vying for take-overs as their cities crumble and their people starve, need those who are not into power, but who only seek out the quiet places, to drink tea and read a good book.

The world does not need more money. It needs more compassion. It does not need a spaceship to the

moon, it needs a way to open hearts. It does not need a new shopping center. It needs a new way of seeing. It does not need a better news station or social media platform, a new app or a smarter phone. It needs people everywhere to open up, open their eyes, open their minds.

Timothy Leary's words, "tune in, turn on, drop out," are still necessary. Tune in to what's afoot in the world! Turn on to your place in it. Drop out of the current society of selfish competition and digital unreality. End the ego trip you're on and begin the real trip to where you need to be. It's not about dying your hair and wearing cool clothes. It's not about looking great in those sporty outfits. It's not about learning how to say the f-word with panache or care less about others while you demand to have your way. It's about waking up and learning how to truly live, love, and laugh.

The world needs the dream-bearers and the storytellers. It needs the gardeners and the peacemakers, the music makers and the nature lovers. It needs the vision we hold, the dreams we carry, and the magic we possess. It needs the prayers yet unspoken and the healing yet needing to be applied. It needs the words only poets can speak and the images only artists can paint. Bring your gifts to this world of suffering souls. Bring them out. Let them rain down in fantastic waves of light and love. Sing them without fear and let a new dance on this troubled earth begin!

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