

June 25, 2015

Dear Friends,

Last week's act of mass murder at Emanuel AME Church left nine people dead. On Sunday, a shooter opened fire on a children's party in Detroit, killing one adult and wounding others. Regardless of whether a harmful act is motivated by hatred for races of people other than one's own, or hatred for religious beliefs, or hatred for differing sexual orientations, or hatred for another's actions, or simply hatred for another's point of view or authority, all of these "motivators" have one thing in common: hatred.

From a spiritual perspective, everything and everyone emanates from the One, so hatred of anything or anyone is evidence of a fragmented mind, of deep rejection of parts of one's self, hurled outward onto the innocent. Fueled by fear, hatred breeds the experience of separation, intolerance and ultimately violence—except among those who are bonded by virtue of hating the same things, and even they are not immune from one another's violence, for hatred is a self-destructing energy.

For an individual or any group of individuals to hate stereotyped groups of people is to globalize and genericize one's personal choice to hate. When we hate people, they cease to be real people with hearts and minds. They become objects ... the "someones" we have chosen as our rationale for practicing hatred. But when one's **deliberate and overt actions** are motivated by hatred, it is clear evidence of mental illness ... of a reality lacking cohesiveness and relevance to the principle of life.

When hate-fueled actions take the lives of innocent people, those actions are further evidence of a type of soul sickness that slams shut the heart and the gateway to healing. So as we ponder what a person might do to eradicate racism, to offset intolerance and actively appreciate diversity, let us not forget this is a spiritual issue at its core, and the answer lies within one's own state of spiritual wellbeing. Holding a diversity-training workshop or seminar may be very helpful ... **and** what heals all is the recognition that love is the great healer. With each incident of discrimination, injustice, bigotry and violence, we have the opportunity to bring a higher energy to bear through compassion, forgiveness and right action.

I do believe the congregation of Emanuel AME Church understands this. It is evidenced by their statements of forgiveness of the perpetrator. It is even evidenced by the perpetrator himself who stated that, for an instant, he considered changing his mind because the people were so nice to him.

Jesus taught us to turn the other cheek. Turning the other cheek is not a passive act but one of great courage with conscious intent. When motivated by a deep love for peace, justice and harmony ... when motivated by compassion for another's self-induced, useless, unnecessary suffering, it is a powerful intervention in the cycle of a self-perpetuating hell. Jesus said to turn the other cheek **and** he also said the Truth will make us free. I believe that Truth to be stated in Unity's first two principles, essentially, "There is only God and we are all individualized expressions of that One God."

So, we pray for peace and envision an end to violence. In that prayer, let us also see all African American people in this land healed from the wounding actions of those who live in ignorance of our Oneness. Let us see our vulnerable and broken children embraced by spiritually awakened, loving adults so that seeds of despair cannot take root in their souls. Let us create an energetic safety zone when opinions are expressed that do not match our own or appear harmful to others. Let us see our love for expressing whole and holy life infused with the power to turn the tide for humanity. Let us see a world powerfully transformed by a growing movement of shared spiritual awakening ... and let it begin with each of us.

Blessings, Donna Johnson
President and CEO, Unity Worldwide Ministries