

Active Imagination

Back in the day, we used to love going to drive-in movies. One particular time, my brother came with me and my husband and toddler to see a really cheesy horror movie, “The Incredible Two-Headed Transplant”. I had to use the restroom and my brother Loren volunteered to accompany me because I was a little jittery watching the movie and didn’t want to go alone. I don’t know why I thought *that* was a good idea; he had spent his whole life playing tricks on me. All was going well until we headed back for the car and he started in: “Here he comes; he’s gonna getcha!”. I tried not to let it bother me, but suddenly there were heavy footsteps in the gravel behind us. I shrieked and launched into the dance of holy terror, then levitated all the way to the car. Loren was literally rolling on the ground laughing. As The Temptations would say, “*It was just my imagination running away with me*”. Imagination is not always helpful.

For the most part, though, imagination is the only way forward, and I find confirmation of that from people I respect and admire.

I was pleasantly surprised fairly recently to find that Albert Einstein was quite the spiritual philosopher, and he declared that “Logic will get you from A to Z, but imagination will get you everywhere.” He also asserted that, “Imagination is more important than knowledge.” I’m not sure it’s MORE important, but knowledge is certainly more productive when accompanied by imagination.

The way I see it, we gain knowledge from the past and present, and imagine what can become the future taking that knowledge into account. But imagination can do more than predict the future based on what’s happened or what’s happening; it can

help us find ways to change the direction things are moving, and with it the outcome. Imagination can spur us on to new discoveries. We call it “thinking outside the box”, or “pushing the envelope”. Notice that those are action verbs: thinking and pushing.

You know that I take my inspiration from music, and two songs in particular pop into my head while pondering imagination. Obviously, John Lennon wrote the quintessential theme for imagination:

“Imagine all the people sharing all the world . . . living life in peace . . .”

Earth, Wind, and Fire call it Fantasy:

“And we will live together

Until the twelfth of never

Our voices will ring forever, as one

Every thought is a dream

Rushing by in a stream

Bringing life to the kingdom of doing

Take a ride in the sky

On our ship, fantasy

All your dreams will come true miles away”

But we know that dreams don’t just come true unless we take action to make them happen. That’s the part about “bringing life to the kingdom of doing”. As one tv commercial says, we’re a community of “do-ers”.

At Namaqua, I discovered a hotbed of imagination and action. I’ve never seen such a concentration of writers, poets, artists, musicians, adventurers and dreamers

in one place before. All one has to do is look at our Principles and sources to see why. While not overtly and specifically mentioning these gifts and talents, I see the seeds of imagination there: Worth, dignity, justice, equity, compassion, acceptance, freedom, conscience, peace, liberty, respect. These are technically nouns, but Unitarian Universalists see them as action verbs. These are not only who we ARE, they're what we DO. In order to attain and maintain these aspirations, there is work to do, and we have to do it. Here at Namaqua, we take this call seriously. We consciously strive to live out our principles, and in so doing, bring our principles to life.

And we don't just espouse these principles within our walls and among like-minded people; we take them out into the world and strive to embed them into the larger society. We use our imagination to envision a better future. **Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.** once said that "the arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends towards justice." He imagined a more just and loving future and challenged us to believe and act to make it so. Especially now, with the very fabric of society and democracy at stake, we cannot sit back and trust that this will happen organically. We at Namaqua recognize that and *work* to help bend that arc.

Dr. King was not alone in his assertion that imagination can lead to real change. He had a dream in which he believed and for which he gave his life, and in order to become reality, dreams have to become intentions, and intentions, plans. Plans have to be executed, and that means work. We gladly take it on.

Part of the work is guaranteeing that Dr. King's legacy remains alive and vital by calling attention to his life and reminding the public of his dream and his call to action. Namaqua UUs have been instrumental in this effort. Dick Barton, Sheryl

Johnson, Carol Koch, the late/great Nancy Kain, Trish Murtha, Marsha Lewis, Mim Neal, Pete Buchmeier, Diane Lapierre, and Laurel have worked alongside others, including the mayor of Loveland to make this happen year after year. I can't even imagine the herculean effort that's gone into this event from the beginning. More courageous dreamers than I got this started and keep it going. The MLK committee has to coordinate with the city government, the school district, speakers and sponsors. It all started with one man's imagination; one man's dream that he shared with the world at the "March for Jobs and Freedom" on August 28th, 1963 in Washington, DC.

But it didn't stop there. This amazing group of people here in Loveland, Colorado, picked up that dream and ran with it. Determined to preserve and continue the work of Dr. King, they hurled themselves into the void that was once a sundown town – one in which people of color were not allowed outside after dark - and vowed to change its course; to help bend the arc of the moral universe toward justice.

We know that this is neither a marathon nor a sprint; it's a relay race, and generation after generation will hand off the baton and keep the dream alive and the work continuing.

I believe in – and pray to - gods, goddesses, spirit guides, angels, saints, and ascended masters, and I believe that we have our own personal goddess/ascended master in Nancy Kain. She was not only one of the first here in Loveland to help make MLK day what it is today, but she imagined even more. Her fertile mind produced "Peace in the Park", and she saw it through to fruition for a number of years. She was a Super Hero of the first order, and I'm imagining that she and Dr.

King have already had some interesting conversations – over a shot of tequila or two if it's up to her.

I'm proud to be a part of this imaginative, creative, roll-up-your-sleeves congregation, and I'm proud to have known Nancy. And as soon as it's safe to do so, I'm going to go visit my trickster brother. Maybe I'll come up with a surprise or two for him. I'll use my imagination.

May it be so.