

## PROFILES IN UNLIMITED LOVE: LIVES ENOBLED BY PURPOSE

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A simple act of kindness can make a world of difference to someone. People who live their lives every day more for the sake of others than for themselves are models for us all. These stories tell of the acts of kindness themselves, but more importantly, they indicate why and how people have such wholesome and compassionate intentions. If every person in the world could tap into the kindness that lies within them, it would be a much better life for them and for others.

In this day and age, it's easy to forget what altruism is, or that it even exists. My generation is so distracted by pop culture, materialism, sex and drugs that the lines between what's wrong and what's right are often blurred. However, after reading these books I was reminded of what true unselfishness and compassion are. Figures like Gandhi, Millard Fuller, and the rest of the people I read about are an example to everyone. I only wish that such a way of life could become more prevalent among my peers. Hopefully, through my summarizing their lives, a few more people my age can discover that there is more to life than what we often think or are exposed to.

As for the rest of the world, I think we all need a little extra love and compassion. You do not have to be a confused teenager to know that there is meaning in kindness.

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<sup>1</sup>In the summer of 2002, I asked my daughter Emma, then 18 years old, to read about people who embody unlimited love. Her summaries, presented here, are appreciated because telling the story of love is the essential first step toward studying the scientific aspects. Why do everyday people become inspired, overcome their supposed limitations, give up on old selfish ways of life, and discover themselves in the process of helping others? Some of these people become well known and even famous for their work; most do not. But public recognition and reputation do not matter to them. They live the way of love and they never stop growing. *SG Post*

Some of the people in these stories start off in difficult circumstances or experienced the hardest of times. However, the harder they fell the higher they rose in love. Look upon these people as a representation of the hope and love everyone can attain, no matter how broken they might be at some point in life's journey. We all have the potential to shine.

### MILLARD FULLER

By the age of thirty, Millard Fuller had it all. He was a millionaire with a beautiful wife and all of the material possessions in the world. However, Fuller's marriage to his wife Linda was not working out. Despite their financial status, the two went through a period of separation in which Linda left their home in Montgomery, Alabama and went to New York City to rethink their marriage. After following Linda to New York, Fuller and his wife went through a period of soul-searching and prayer, realizing that their lives had been led astray. They then reconciled and felt a "strong desire to come back to the Lord and to find His plan for us" (Fuller, 26). Therefore, they sold Fuller's business and gave their money away. The Fullers arrived at Koinonia Farm in Americus, Georgia, in December 1965 to begin a personal healing process. Koinonia was a fellowship in which the members taught improved agricultural methods to poor local tenant farmers. Fuller and Clarence Jordan, a founder of Koinonia, became partners and founded Habitat for Humanity.

Although Koinonia had gone through years of persecution and struggle, it had managed to hold on to eleven hundred acres of land. Fuller and Jordan met with fifteen Christians in the summer of 1968; out of this meeting arose the idea for "Partnership Housing," in which Jordan dedicated forty-two half-acre home sites for rural families

without homes. There would also be a park and a recreational area. The money for this community would come from a “Fund for Humanity”. Unfortunately, Jordan died just one year after this idea was born. His death, however, helped strengthen the Fullers’ passion for the project. In 1976, after years of struggling with such problems as thievery and a shortage of funds, Habitat for Humanity was born.

Habitat for Humanity was an organization that originally intended to “enlarge...[the] attack on the problem of poverty housing” (Fuller, 33). Obviously, this was a large goal. When Fuller wrote *No More Shacks* in 1986, the United Nations Center for Human Settlements estimated that 1-1.5 billion people were not living in adequate living conditions. In the beginning of 1986, there were twenty-five Habitat projects underway in locations such as Zaire, Gulu, Uganda, India, and Peru. These were the beginnings of an attempt to solve a much larger problem. In 1984, Jimmy Carter, a board member of Habitat for Humanity, explained Habitat’s mission:

This is what Habitat wants to do. Plant projects all over the world; sow seeds of hope, encouraging the poor to do all they can to help themselves; and cultivate consciences among the affluent, urging them, privately or corporately, to join less fortunate folks in a spirit of partnership, to solve the problem together.

When asked in 1981 about the goal of Habitat for Humanity in a radio interview, Miller answered, without hesitation, “To eliminate poverty housing from the face of the earth” (Fuller, 20). For years, Fuller continued to preach to “get rid of shacks!” In order to do so, however, the “partnership” to which Carter referred was vital. First and foremost, Fuller put his faith in his partnership with God. He believed that Habitat was “God’s movement, and there’s nothing that can stop it” (Fuller, 22). Secondly, people were in

partnership with each other. The beauty of Habitat was that all peoples, regardless of race, gender, sexuality, or ethnicity could work together towards this common goal. Fuller stated, “We might disagree on how to preach or how to dress or how to baptize or how to take communion or even what communion is for. But we can all pick up a hammer and, sharing the love of Christ, we can begin to drive nails. Thank God we can agree on a nail!” (Fuller, 22)

Fuller was full of ideas for raising money for Habitat for Humanity. In 1983, there was a celebration scheduled in Indianapolis for Habitat’s seventh. “For several weeks I had been thinking about walking from Americus to Indianapolis, a distance of seven hundred miles” (Fuller, 47). As preposterous as the idea seemed, the walk took place after much planning. Gradually, different people began signing up for the walk, either for all or part of the distance, and giving pledges to the different people who were walking as pledges. The experience was very rewarding and they raised thousands of dollars. While walking, they had been able to “deliver the Habitat message in person to several thousand people along the way and expose thousands more to the work through extensive publicity. At least one new Habitat project would start as a direct result of the walk” (Fuller, 70).

Throughout the years, Habitat for Humanity grew in size and support. In 1982, Jimmy Carter spoke at an annual gathering of Habitat directors and representatives. From this came a lasting partnership in which Carter gave his time and energy to Habitat for Humanity. Projects were not only expanding across the nation, but across the world, from India to Nicaragua to Uganda. The gratitude and happiness that the families feel after receiving their houses is amazing. “Families have such strong feelings about their new

houses not only because of the overcrowded or sub-standard situations they are leaving. They are also touched by the love and concern they experience from the Habitat people” (Fuller, 176). After being asked how she felt about acquiring the house, one new homeowner said, “The most wonderful part of it all was the realization that there were people who cared enough to make it possible” (Fuller, 176).

In 1985, four years after Fuller had been asked about Habitat’s goal, he was asked what Habitat was becoming. Fuller replied, “I envision Habitat for Humanity becoming the conscience of the world concerning shelter” (Fuller, 189). Fuller realizes that, “We must educate consciences. We must publicize the need, promote the goal, and provide the opportunity for change in so many ways that poor housing will become unacceptable, and good housing will become a matter of conscience” (Fuller, 189). This “conscience” is universal, and not limited to matters concerning Habitat for Humanity. Fuller wants the spread of this conscience to take place in every way possible. “Wherever you go, there are opportunities. I ride in thousands of airplanes every year. I never know who will be sitting beside me, but I do know this: by the time our wheels touch down at the next airport, my seatmate will have heard about Habitat for Humanity” (Fuller, 190). For Fuller, any goal was attainable. Nothing was impossible. When he said, “No more shacks!” he meant it. And with God’s help, he began to make it happen.

### PATTY ANGLIN

Patty Anglin was the child of missionary parents. In the 1960s, her father, Dr. Richard Pelham, took their family to Africa where he worked as a surgeon for the American Baptist mission hospital. Patty’s mother was a devoted Christian and a loving

mother. “Mother was the most unselfish person I have ever known and she greatly influenced my own values and beliefs” (Anglin, 16). At the early age of nine, Patty wondered about her mission in life, and prayed that God would show her how she could serve Him.

Patty was later sent to boarding school for missionary kids but struggled there. “In addition to my loneliness and homesickness, I had great difficulty learning” (Anglin, 18). Patty struggled to read and write even simple words, and discovered that she had dyslexia. Later on in life, this helped her to understand her own children’s disabilities. Patty also had a difficult relationship with her dorm parents, “Uncle Joe” and “Aunt Min.” One night, after dinner, Patty was overwhelmed with a feeling of homesickness. Instead of doing her homework, she went to a window to get some fresh air and began thinking about her parents. In the midst of her thoughts, the scolding voice of Uncle Joe asked, “Why aren’t you doing your homework?” (Anglin, 20) Patty tried to explain that she was only thinking of her parents whom she missed so much. Uncle Joe berated her and made her write a 500-word essay on why she should not wish to go home. Patty had a horrible time completing this task, and it affected her greatly. After she handed the essay to Uncle Joe, she began crying uncontrollably, and was unable to breathe. Patty was having an emotional breakdown, and her parents were called in to rescue her. She went home for a couple of weeks but returned to school in complete fear of Uncle Joe.

In 1969, Dr. Pelham decided to bring the family back to the United States. Once again, Patty felt lost because her “heart and roots were in Africa and the only culture that I knew was in Africa” (Anglin, 29). She grew homesick and dreamt of being back in Africa, holding African babies in her father’s maternity ward. She envisioned herself

running an orphanage there. “Although I did not realize it, God had been preparing me for my mission in life through these painful experiences. He knew that I would need to understand the feelings of abandonment, loneliness, fear, and the sense of not belonging-- the same feelings that children from abusive, dysfunctional, and broken homes feel” (Anglin, 29). Patty’s past was the foundation for her future.

After suffering through her own divorce as well as her parent’s separation, Patty met and married Harold Anglin. Their child, Thomas James or “T.J.”, joined Patty’s first two children from her previous marriage and Harold’s previous four children. Already, the Anglins were becoming a large family. One day, while T.J. was still a toddler, a social worker came to their family church and spoke about the growing need for foster parents. Harold and Patty were deeply moved by the social worker’s message about children needed a loving environment or else they could develop emotional problems, as well as social or learning disorders. “We felt God telling us that there was room for other kids and we should help them by providing a loving Christian foster-care environment for them” (Anglin, 48). Therefore, Harold and Patty decided to care for special-needs infants during the first months of their lives after parental rights had been terminated by the court. The Anglin’s biological children were also involved in the infants’ lives; “They all took it in stride and in the process each of them developed a sensitivity of their own for special-needs children” (Anglin, 50).

Eventually, the Anglins were ready to open their home in Michigan to foster children. The first child they took in was a three-year-old Hispanic boy named Pedro. Although Patty and Harold were not aware of Pedro’s exact family background, they agreed to give him a home. The Anglins were quite surprised when they were confronted

with a crazy little kid, who tried to hit and kick everyone in sight. Harold finally grabbed Pedro, and held him down for hours, while Pedro struggled to get away. The next day, the Anglins received a call from the social worker who told them that Pedro had been one of eleven children who had been physically abused or even tortured by their father. “The months that followed were very trying. I had to constantly call upon God for His help. We had to deal with all kinds of physical and emotional problems that Pedro acquired in his brief little life in that dysfunctional family” (Anglin, 59).

After fostering many different children, it became traumatic for the Anglins to give them up. “The anguish of giving up these children that we had come to love was awful” (Anglin, 60). Luckily for them, Pedro’s biological father up custody, and Pedro was theirs. The process of adoption took three years, but it was worth it. He eventually grew up into a “creative, intelligent, sensitive, personable, and wonderful human being. It was all there inside him when he came to us that day. We only had to peel back the layers of hurt and resentment that he had built as a defense mechanism” (Anglin, 65). Pedro was the first of many children whom the Anglins would come to love.

The Anglins took in other children like Pedro, each with specific problems and histories. Many of them had traumatic experiences growing up, a teenage mother who could not support them, or some form of disability. After Pedro, the Anglins adopted Cierra, who had a thirteen-year-old mother, and Serina, her little sister. Before the Anglins could continue their mission to take in these children, however, they needed a new home. They were already running out of room and wanted a bigger yard where the children could play. “Harold and I had talked and dreamed about the possibility of moving to the West, maybe Montana, and finding an old small ranch and living off the



land...However, a dream was all it was. I could never see a way for us to act on it” (Anglin, 155). Before they knew it, though, the Anglins had opportunity to make their dream come true.

This dream became a reality because Harold was offered an early retirement package as an incentive for him to quit his job as a teacher at the local high school. Thus, the Anglins had the opportunity to earn more money to buy a new home. They didn’t decide whether Harold should take the offer until Patty went to visit her sister in Wisconsin. While there, she noticed a farm across from a school building and immediately fell in love with it. Patty’s sister, however, told her that the farmer who lived there was *not* willing to sell. Patty persisted, and took a drive down the long driveway to the house. Luckily, Patty met the farmer who owned it and he offered to take her on a tour of the 200 acre farm. Patty told the farmer her story, and explained that her family would love his property. She tentatively asked if he would sell, and after just a moment’s pause, he agreed! The farmer agreed to sell for a very low price. After checking with Harold back in Michigan, the Anglins acquired the two hundred acres, a farmhouse, barn, buildings, timber, grassland, cropland, and a beaver pond. “I recall praying as we drove down the lane with our family for the first time. *Lord, this farm is going to be for our children. This place is a vision I have as a safe haven for children, a place of hope. Acres and acres of hope. Yes, that’s it! That’ll be the name of our farm, Acres of Hope*”

(Anglin, 164). And just like that, the Anglins dream came true.

Harold and Patty acquired some animals, and Harold learned how to farm. Everyone had different chores to do, but there was plenty of playing to be done in the hills or in the woods. After the Anglins bought *Acres of Hope*, they adopted children, an

Indian boy named Ari, and two brothers, Tirzah and Tyler, who had lived in six different foster homes in just eighteen months. Soon afterwards, Patty and Harold also took in Levi, a boy who had been placed in a dumpster by his drunken mother in Cincinnati, Ohio. Finally, the Anglins saved the life of little Zachary, who was born to Nigerian parents vacationing in America. The parents wished to kill the child, as was their custom when a baby was retarded. In fact, Zachary had severe limb impairments. After social workers told Patty that the parents wished to kill their child, she immediately agreed to take care of him and make him her own.

Patty and Harold ended up with a total of fifteen children. The Anglins were kept busy advocating for special-needs children in many ways. “The overwhelming majority of foster parents are not in it for the money. Most could do better financially at other jobs even flipping hamburgers at the local fast food chain at minimum wage” (Anglin, 272). It was, in fact, her love of children and belief that it was her mission in life to help them that drove her desire to take care of so many, especially ones with disabilities.

Patty Anglin is now the chairman of Children’s Health Alliance of Wisconsin. She works with families and agencies in Wisconsin to solve child health issues and lobby for better state involvement in providing health care for children. She is also regional coordinator for Adopt America Network, helping hundreds of families find children like her own to adopt. Finally, Patty speaks at churches and addresses her concerns about adopting special-needs kids. After all, she believes that “Jesus told us to look after the children, widows, and orphans. We *all* need to take responsibility for the problem and be part of its solution” (Anglin, 281). Patty invites us to “reach out in love to a needy child and give that little boy or girl something valuable--*love* and *hope*” (Anglin, 282).

The Anglins still live on their farm, functioning as a large, loving family while advocating the need to adopt special-needs children. In the future, Patty hopes to set up a home on their property for lost teenage mothers, like the one who gave them two of their own children, Cierra and Serina. Patty's dream is to "help them, one at a time, if that's all I can do...maybe one day we will find a way" (Anglin, 287). *Acre's of Hope* is the name of the Anglins farm and also their non-profit organization, which is dedicated to helping children and giving emotional support and financial assistance to families dealing with children who have emotional or physical challenges. "In addition, our mission is to promote greater community understanding, acceptance, and support for families involved in adopting special-needs children cross-racially and cross-culturally" (Anglin, 288).

### CHRISTINA NOBLE

Christina Noble was born in the Liberties in 1944, a "God-struck, beer-soaked slum in south-west Dublin" (Noble, 25). The eldest of eight children and the daughter of an alcoholic, Noble had a very painful childhood. Even 40 years later, her voice becomes "high and tight and there is a hint of fear" (Noble, 25) when she speaks of her childhood. Noble grew up in a dingy flat in the Liberties that had one bedroom, a living room, and a tiny scullery. The living room served as a bedroom for all of the children, who had only one blanket. "The institutional memory of many Dublin people is one of failure, deprivation, ceaseless toil, and monumental hardship. And nowhere in Dublin is that more true than in the Liberties" (Noble, 34).

Apart from her already miserable existence as a child living in utter poverty, Noble experienced many other awful things growing up. She struggled against her

alcoholic father, who was always promising to stay off the drink in order to help support their family and was always breaking that promise. When her father remained sober, it was a dream come true. “With daddy at home we were a family” (Noble, 59).

Unfortunately, one Saturday night after Noble’s father had taken the pledge and had stayed sober for months, Noble’s worst fear came true. Noble’s mother had made a beautiful dinner of fish, mashed potatoes, and peas, a tasty treat to celebrate her husband’s sobriety, but her husband had not yet arrived home. Noble’s mother sent her to go find her father, and a neighbor informed her that he was at the pub. However, Noble “couldn’t go into the pub. I did not want to see my father drunk. It would have destroyed the world in which I had been living and brought me back to all the horror of my life. So I walked around for a while and then I went home and told mam I couldn’t find daddy” (Noble, 62). With tears streaming down her face, Noble’s mother responded that he was probably drunk. Later on that night, her father still wasn’t home and Noble could not sleep. Noble’s father did stagger home, and Noble’s mother made the sign of the cross and braced herself for his homecoming. Noble’s mother tried to come into the bedroom with her children, but her husband caught her and threw her across the room, where she hit her head on the iron frame of the bed. “ ‘You’re killing my mam,’ I screamed. ‘God will never forgive you.’ He stopped and lurched across the room towards me. ‘Please don’t hurt mammy,’ I said. I was very frightened. I wanted to hit my father, I wanted to smash him so hard he would never wake up” (Noble, 65). The abuse did not end there, though. In fact, it only ended when Noble’s father drove his wife to her death because of the obscene emotional and physical abuse he had inflicted upon her.

After her mother died, Noble had to take care of the rest of her siblings, emulating the loving, caring figure that their mother had been. Because her father was spending his wages drinking, the children had no food. Noble collected scraps from people's plates all around Dublin, a miserable and embarrassing experience for a little girl. Often, Noble would wake up as early as 4 a.m. to go to the markets and pick up food that had fallen onto the street. The children were dirty and unkempt, and developed scabies, scurvy, and fleas. Noble's only outlet was singing. "Singing was my island of sanity" (Noble, 89). It was her escape from suffering, something that she had loved to do ever since she could remember. So Noble sang and put on concerts, providing entertainment for herself, her siblings, and other neighborhood children.

Soon after her mother's death, Noble and her siblings were sent to live with her father's family because her father was sick and in the hospital. This, too, was traumatizing for little Noble. Her own relative, the "man," emotionally, physically, and sexually abused her at the age of twelve. Fortunately, a man from the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty for Children came to the house one day and explained that the doctor who treated the children for lice had reported them. A few days later, a hearing was to be held that would change the children's lives forever.

The result of the hearing at Dublin Castle, was that Noble and her siblings were sent to different institutional homes for children all around Ireland. "We were children whose only crime was that our mother had died, our father was an alcoholic, and our relatives beat us and abused us, but we were being treated like criminals" (Noble, 106). The children were put into a van, and each one was dropped off with a teary goodbye at a

different home. Noble promised to come back and find each of her siblings as they parted that day, but it would be many years before they would all be reunited.

Noble, however, escaped from her home and became a child of the streets at the age of eleven. “During the winter, I slept in public toilets and coal sheds; in the summer and on balmy days, I slept under the bushes in Phoenix Park...” (Noble, 114). She would play with the children in the park each day, and retreat to a little cove in the bushes each night. Noble could never find food. When it was too cold outside, she walked to stay warm. She sometimes saw her father, but he was no help. Noble’s life as a street child ended for a short while when she was caught by the police and sent to St. Joseph’s Industrial School. This was “the worse place in all of Ireland for a girl... where Ireland hid its illegitimate daughters and its orphans, as well as young girls who were sent there by the courts” (Noble, 121).

After a traumatic experience at St. Joseph’s, Noble once again escaped and was homeless. She was now sixteen, however, and more scared of living on the streets than ever. A priest once caught her eating candle wax and threw her out of the church. “I’ve never forgotten that. He wore warm clothes, lived in a nice house, and worked in a church where there was gold everywhere. And there I was with nothing but candle wax to eat and he saw fit to throw me out” (Noble, 142). Incidents like these led to Noble’s lack of faith in the Catholic Church.

One night Noble was afraid to sleep because of nightmares, and walked the streets instead. Around 1 a.m., a car began driving alongside of her. Two men got out of the car and shoved her into it. There were four men in all. Petrified, Noble began screaming for her dead mother. Eventually, the car stopped. Noble was forced to walk into an unknown

room and onto a bed. She lay down while they tore off her clothes and beat her until she was half-conscious. “And then, one by one, they raped me” (Noble, 143). After this continued for awhile, they dropped her back off on the streets. “I walked slowly through the breaking dawn until I came back to the park. I wanted to scream but my mouth was swollen and torn and my face was contorted and locked in a rictus of horror. My thighs ached. My lower spine ached. I was bleeding badly from my vagina and knew that the men had done me serious harm” (Noble, 144).

“The thing I remember most vividly about the aftermath of that experience was the horrible realization that there was nobody for me to go to. I needed just one person who would not see me as dust, or barely more than an animal” (Noble, 145). This feeling of neglect would later help Noble understand other children’s pain. To add to Noble’s suffering, she became pregnant from the rape. Having an illegitimate child was considered a horrible crime in Ireland. Noble was again placed in a home and her child was taken away from her. This time, Noble ran away for good. “When a person is almost destroyed on the inside, you can’t see it. But that person must live with the loss, and get on with life” (Noble, 151). Noble decided to go to England.

She hid on a boat and arrived in England the next morning. She had heard that her brother Andy lived in Birmingham, England, and she intended to find him. Eventually, Noble found Andy and stayed with him for a short period. While staying with Andy, Noble held a steady job and found some nice girls her own age to befriend. She also met a man, Mario, through these outings and began seeing him regularly. Noble’s brother did not approve of her dating Mario, who was Greek. So Noble moved in with her friend, Joan. At age eighteen, Noble moved in with Mario and became pregnant a few months

later. Noble's relationship with Mario was not a healthy one, however. He abused her and cheated on her countless times. Their relationship did result in three children, whom she would always remain close.

"It was during this time in my life, at a time of great misery and pain, that I had the dream about Vietnam" (Noble, 178). This dream would shape Noble's future forever. She still doesn't know why she dreamed of Vietnam, but the dream shook her. "In my dream, naked Vietnamese children were running down a dirt road fleeing from a napalm bombing...one of the girls had a look in her eyes that implored me to pick her up and protect her and take her to safety. Above the escaping children was a brilliant white light that contained the word, 'Vietnam'" (Noble, 179). At that time, Noble had no idea what to make of the dream. She was very confused, but knew that it was her destiny to go to Vietnam and work with the children.

Noble's life finally took a turn for the better when she left Mario, gained custody of her three children, and met a man who treated her well. This man's name was Simon. While she was with him, he supported her and helped her. Noble ran a successful catering business, hosting parties for different clubs around the area. For once, she had a good life. In 1989, at the age of forty, Noble thought of little but Vietnam. She had a healthy separation from Simon, and began seeing another man, whom she told about her destiny to go to Vietnam. One day he told her that he had been offered a job in Vietnam. Several weeks later, he called her from Ho Chi Minh City and told her that there was plenty of opportunity there because the streets were overrun with poor children. "The time had come" (Noble, 206). With only a few hundred pounds in her pocket, Noble left her children to go to Vietnam. "This was no summer holiday. I was going half-way around



the world. Although I had dreamed of this moment for almost twenty years, I was frightened...one way or another my destiny was about to be filled” (Noble, 206).

When Noble arrived in Vietnam, it seemed like a movie set to her. She was full of questions and had nowhere to go. She caught a cab to Ho Chi Minh City, already wondering if this was what she was supposed to be doing. The city was orderless and chaotic. Cars, bikes, and people flooded the filthy streets. Noble arrived at the Rex Hotel, where she would be staying longer than she thought. For the next few weeks, Noble wandered through the city, venturing further and further on foot each day from the hotel. She met a nice lady, My Loc, who sold children’s clothes from a little stall. Everywhere she went, she saw ragged children. “They are called *bui doi*, a harsh, dismissing term meaning ‘the dust of life’. They are terribly poor...no one will touch the *bui doi*. No-one wants to be close to them. They are treated like vermin” (Noble, 17).

One day, while standing outside of her hotel talking to the doorman, she saw two little girls playing in the dirt across the street. Noble stared at them and one of the girls caught her eye and smiled, holding out her hand to Noble. Suddenly, Noble was filled with painful memories from Ireland. “I did not want that pain again” (Noble, 19). Therefore, Noble tried to ignore the children and began walking past them. However, she soon paused and turned around impulsively, looking back at the children again. “I stared at the two girls. Even with her gap-toothed smile, the one who had reached towards me was a child of uncommon beauty...I wanted to turn to the right and go round the corner and walk down Le Loi and look at the shops, but I simply could not walk away. I slowly crossed the street towards the two girls” (Noble, 19). Noble studied the girls a little longer, contrasting the little Vietnamese girls to herself, a successful European woman.

Yet, she realized that “there’s no difference between an Irish gutter and a Vietnamese gutter. At the end of the day they are the same” (Noble, 21). At that moment, Noble knew that she was facing a major turning point in her life. The girl reached for her hand again, but Noble panicked and backed away. Then Noble froze because the girl’s hands and expression were those of the girl in her dream. A slight breeze sprang up, and the smoke-filled air seemed to swirl about. Across from her was a billboard advertising a product, and the word “Vietnam” was written on it. “I sobbed. I reached for the girl but I could not see through my tears. She found my hand. And then I was sitting in the dirt holding the children in my lap. I pulled them to me and I rocked back and forth and I cried for a long time and promised that I would take care of them” (Noble, 22). With this encounter, Noble’s destiny was fulfilled. “Here the pain and sorrow and the anger of my childhood in Ireland would be resolved. I would work with the street children of Ho Chi Minh City. Here I would stay. Here I would find happiness... Vietnam would be the bridge across my sorrows” (Noble, 22).

And so began Christina Noble’s crusade for the street children of Vietnam. All of the pain and suffering that she had gone through in Ireland led to a much higher cause. Although she went through more than she deserved, these experiences helped to strengthen her and give hope to other destitute children in Vietnam. Noble began small. She snuck the two little girls into her hotel, which did not allow street children. The Rex was only for wealthy foreigners. Noble bathed, clothed, and fed the two little girls and let them stay with her. She began taking a group of children to an ice cream parlour every Saturday morning. She sat with a dozen children and bought them ice cream, all the while talking about life on the street. One morning, Noble was walking with all of her children

when the police came. The authorities would not let Noble spend time with the children. In fact, they took the children away at the police station. The children were sobbing and begging for Noble, whom they called “Mama Tina.” Afterwards, Noble cried for those children and for all of the suffering children in the world, determined to make a change.

Each day, Noble found more and more children. She would bring them into the hotel and feed them. In 1989, Noble decided she wanted to have a Christmas party. She made the appropriate arrangements and bought and wrapped presents for days. The Rex could only accommodate 150 children, although there was many more that she would have liked to invite. By this time, Noble was a local celebrity among the children. They looked up to her and knew that she would help them. Noble taught the children at the party how to sing. They cried, “We are the world. We are the children.” When the party ended, there were still many children outside the hotel who were waiting but had not been allowed inside. Noble gathered these children up and took them to the ice cream shop. The children who had been at the party began following her as well, and kept singing, “We are the world. We are the children.” “The people on the street were perplexed...some smiled...our voices were raised in a song that could be heard for blocks” (Noble, 236). While sitting at the ice cream shop, Noble noticed some of the children huddled in a corner. One little boy who sold maps on the street came forward and handed her a map. At that moment, all the children said in English, “Happy Birthday Mama Tina.” Noble was speechless. “I clasped the map to my bosom and tried to control my voice as I talked to the children. ‘Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. This is the most beautiful thing I’ve ever been given in my life. Nothing has ever been given to me in so much love’” (Noble, 237). That was the best Christmas of Noble’s life.

Soon after the Christmas party, Noble realized that she had to get organized, even though she had no money, no office, and could barely speak Vietnamese. “How was I to realize my dream of helping street children on a large-scale permanent basis?” (Noble, 242) At this point, Noble decided to go on a long walk in order to think. She stopped by a church and prayed to God for help, although she had little faith in Him. She walked past the church for hours, to no avail. Finally, she saw an orphanage and knew that this was her answer.

Noble approached the orphanage and asked the security guards for permission to enter. She met the owner, and visited with the children. She explained her situation and what she wanted to do. After looking around, Noble left and promised she’d be back the next day. Noble knew that she could fulfill her destiny with that orphanage, but she also knew that she needed official government permission and money to start her work. Therefore, she wrote down her goals, and began fundraising around the city. To her surprise, she kept getting turned down. Finally, she met one businessman who was willing to listen. He and his associates questioned her about why she wanted to do this and she told them of her vision that she knew she had to fulfill. The business donated ten thousand dollars, and this was the beginning of her dream. With the ten thousand dollars, they built the Children’s Medical and Social Centre, a brand new building next to the orphanage. However, there was no money for equipment. The needs were endless. Yet again, Noble began making rounds to different business people in Ho Chi Minh City. But Noble realized that she needed more. She could not do this on her own. It was time to get official help and approval from the government.

Noble flew to Hanoi where she had an appointment with the Ministry of Labour. He questioned why a Westerner would want to help these children. After hearing about Noble's dream and how she herself had been a street child, they were still hesitant. "We talked more. I put the Irish on them. I cried. I waved my arms. I talked incessantly. This was my one chance and I had to make it work. I even got down on my knees" (Noble, 263). After two hours of carrying on like this, the man, Mr. Tue, smiled and told her that they trusted her. They gave her official permission to work with the children of Ho Chi Minh City, and Noble was ecstatic.

Soon afterwards, Noble left for the UK to try and raise money for the children. While there, she raised thousands and thousands of dollars, and established the Christina Noble Foundation in London. Upon her return to Vietnam, Noble brought incubators, cots, machines, sterilizers, and all sorts of medicines for the children. In July of 1991, only two years after she had first arrived in Vietnam, the Children's Medical and Social Centre in Ho Chi Minh City officially opened.

"Sometimes it seems only yesterday that I was so dependant on Mario...now many people are dependant on me...the children depend on me to be strong enough to protect them from the world" (Noble, 280). The Centre was up and running, and Noble was fulfilled. "I am first, last, and always, a mum. I am a mum to every street child in Vietnam" (Noble, 280). Instead of calling the children "bui doi," Noble called them her sunshine children. However, the children and society still considered them "bui doi", so Noble taught them to at least be proud of their name. "When I walk around the streets of Ho Chi Minh City, children will give me a thumbs-up and say, 'Hey, Mama Tina. Bui doi Number One'" (Noble, 281). Noble continued her mission, walking around the streets of

the city and helping whomever she could. Many times, Noble heard of suspicious foreign men who were sexually abusing children and confronted them on her own. Case by case, Noble made a difference to each of those little children, preventing them from going through the pain and suffering that she once experienced.

One of Noble's goals is to set up havens for girls who have been abused by foreigners. She came a long way after arriving in Vietnam, and is proud of that fact. The Centre is well known. "If you come here, wave down a taxi, and give the driver the address of the Centre, chances are the driver will turn around, smile in approval, and say, 'Ah, you go see Mama Tina. She good to children'" (Noble, 292).

At this point, Noble had connections everywhere. One such connection was with the British ambassador, who aided her with supplies. People everywhere began giving money to the Foundation. There are now foundations established in France, America, and Australia. "We have come a long way in a short time. I'm talking less of the building and the equipment and the staff at the Centre than the attitude. To me the attitude we have towards children is far more important than buildings and equipment" (Noble, 299). Noble changed the way people in Ho Chi Minh City think about the children. The Centre has an intensive care unit, which receives children who are acutely ill. At any given time, the Centre has about seventy-five children as patients, and it treats a thousand children each month on an out-patient basis. Noble also opened the Sunshine School. It is located next to the Centre and has about eighty students. A Centre was also established in Hanoi and Noble is determined to open still more.

Although Noble misses England and her children very much, yet she knows that her place is in Vietnam, helping the children. "When I began here in Vietnam, people

said what I wanted to do was impossible. ‘You are only one person’ they said. But when I was a child, I needed only one person to understand my suffering and pain, one person to love me. One is very important” (Noble, 307). The difference that she has made is incredible. She is famous for what she has done, and she has revolutionized the way the Vietnamese think about their own street children. The long established policy of rounding up street children and taking them to homes is not as prevalent. Authorities are caught between continuing this tradition and the increasing public desire to help the children.

Noble’s story is one of a homeless child who grew up with nothing. All she had was a dream. One little dream and an ordinary woman was all it took. “When reporters come here they see my work and invariably refer to me as a Mother Teresa. I don’t know why they do that, it only proves that they don’t really know me. I do all the things a saint wouldn’t do. I belt out songs in clubs...I enjoy a double whisky now and then. I love dancing. I like to ride fast on the back of a Honda. Although I detest violence if I have to protect a child by giving someone a wallop, I’ll do it. I’m more than a bit wild. I’m Irish. Mother Teresa I am not” (Noble, 306). Pretty close, though.

### MITCH ALBOM

In *Tuesdays with Morrie*, Mitch Albom writes about his encounters with Morrie Schwartz, his old college professor from Brandeis University. When Albom graduated in 1970, he knew he had a special connection to his professor. When they said good-bye, Morrie told him, “Mitch, you are one of the good ones” (Albom, 4), and made him promise to keep in touch. Then, in 1994, the death sentence came. Morrie developed asthma in his sixties and had trouble breathing. A few years later, he began to have

trouble walking. After seeing many doctors, Morrie was diagnosed in 1994 with ALS, Lou Gehrig's disease that damaged the neurological system. There was no cure.

Albom had not kept in touch with Morrie. He had lost contact with his college friends. After college, Albom headed to New York and realized, "The world... was not all that interested" (Albom, 14). In his twenties, Albom performed at empty nightclubs and played the piano with bands that kept breaking up. His dream of being a famous musician was not working out. During this time period, Albom's favorite uncle died. After the funeral, Albom was a changed man. He stopped trying to perform and returned to school. Albom earned a Master's Degree in journalism and took the first job he was offered, as a sports writer. Eventually, he took a job at the *Detroit Free Press*, wrote sports books, did radio shows, and appeared on TV. Albom was successful, and bought a large house, cars, and stocks. He married Janine, and continued living his busy life. During this chaotic time, Albom had only a few passing thoughts of Morrie. That all changed when he heard something on TV that caught his attention. It was March of 1995 and Ted Koppel was doing "Nightline." Koppel visited Morrie at his house for an interview in which they talked about life, death, and Morrie's sickness.

After seeing that episode of "Nightline," Albom decided to go and visit Morrie. "I had not seen him in sixteen years. His hair was thinner, nearly white, and his face was gaunt. I suddenly felt unprepared for this reunion..." (Albom, 27). Upon seeing Albom, Morrie gave him a kiss. "I was surprised at such affection after all these years, but then, in the stone walls I had built between my present and past, I had forgotten how close we once were" (Albom, 28). Morrie asked Albom if he wanted to know what it was like to die; and so began Albom's last lessons from Morrie. During that first visit to Morrie,



Albom realized that he had been lost in the hustle and bustle of his life, too busy with work, and only concerned about getting a bigger paycheck. Morrie asked Albom, “Are you giving to your community? Are you at peace with yourself? Are you trying to be as human as you can be?” (Albom, 34). Albom, of course, had not been doing these things.

The two decided to meet every Tuesday. Each week that they met, Morrie had something inspirational to share with Albom. On their second Tuesday, they talked about feeling sorry for yourself. Morrie explained how some mornings he would wake up and feel his body, whatever he could still move, and mourn. Sometimes, he’d even give have a good cry. Then, however, he would stop, and give himself the opportunity to concentrate on all the good things he still had in his life. In fact, Morrie considered himself lucky to have all the time he had to say good-bye. “I studied him in his chair, unable to stand, to wash, to pull on his pants. Lucky? Did he really say lucky?” (Albom, 57).

The next week, Albom arrived at Morrie’s with bags of food that they would share over some good conversation and a tape recorder, so that he could remember what they talked about. “Now, the truth is, that tape recorder was more than nostalgia. I was losing Morrie, we were all losing Morrie...And I suppose tapes, like photographs and videos, are a desperate attempt to steal something from death’s suitcase...But it was also becoming clear to me--through his courage, his humor, his patience, his openness--that Morrie was looking at life from some very different place than anyone else I knew. A healthier place. A more sensible place. *And he was about to die*” (Albom, 64). They spoke about regrets, Albom’s life, and how culture wraps people up in egotistical things instead of looking at the deeper meaning.

Albom wrote out a list of things that he wanted to talk about with Morrie, including death, fear, aging, greed, marriage, family, society, forgiveness, and a meaningful life. One Tuesday, Albom and Morrie spoke about family. Morrie shared with Albom that family is the foundation for everything; without family support and love, there is nothing. Morrie said, “Love is so supremely important. As our great poet Auden said, ‘Love each other or perish’” (Albom, 91). Morrie shared that his disease would be so much harder to deal with if he didn’t have his family, and that family is about letting others know there’s someone who is watching out for them.

The next week, Albom arrived with more food. Morrie’s wife informed him, however, that Morrie could no longer eat most of the food Albom was bringing because it was too hard for him to swallow. That day, the subject of emotions came up. Morrie told Albom how it is important to learn to detach, because everything is impermanent. Albom was confused, however. “Aren’t you always talking about experiencing life? All the good emotions, all the bad ones? How can you do that if you’re detached?” (Albom, 103). Morrie responded with a wise answer. “Detachment doesn’t mean you don’t let the experience penetrate you. On the contrary, you let it penetrate you fully. That’s how you are able to leave it” (Albom, 103).

By their ninth Tuesday together, Morrie was visibly worse. That afternoon, they spoke of love and how it never ends. He asked Morrie if he was afraid of being forgotten after he died, and Morrie was not at all. “I’ve got so many people who have been involved with me in close, intimate ways. And love is how you stay alive, even after you are gone” (Albom, 133). The next week, Morrie gave Albom some of his secrets about marriage. Albom was not very successful at it, and had taken seven years to propose to

his wife. Morrie recognized the problems in today's society-- how young people rush into marriage and then get divorced, or how people just do not know what to look for in the right partner. Morrie knew that there were a few essential components to any marriage. "If you don't respect the other person, you're gonna have a lot of trouble. If you don't know how to compromise, you're gonna have a lot of trouble. If you can't talk openly about what goes on between you, you're gonna have a lot of trouble. And if you don't have a common set of values in life, you're gonna have a lot of trouble. Your values must be alike" (Albom, 149).

On their twelfth Tuesday, toward the end of Morrie's life, they discussed forgiveness. Morrie could not even wiggle his toes at this point, but still felt pain. Morrie liked it when people gave him massages to relieve the pain, so Albom did. He would do anything to make Morrie happy at this point. Forgiveness, Morrie said, was one of life's most important lessons to learn. Vengeance and stubbornness were two things that he regretted feeling in his life. Although such feelings are inherent in human nature, there are ways to move beyond it. "You need to make peace with yourself and everyone around you. Forgive yourself. Forgive others. Don't wait, Mitch. Not everyone gets the time I'm getting. Not everyone is as lucky" (Albom, 167).

On the thirteenth Tuesday, Morrie described his perfect day to Albom. To Albom's surprise, Morrie's last day was completely average. Morrie said that he would wake up in the morning, have a good breakfast, go for a swim, and then have friends over for a nice lunch. Then he would go for a walk in a garden, taking in nature and the beauty around him. Finally, he would go to a restaurant with all his friends and dance all night. "It was so simple. So average. After all these months, laying there, unable to move a leg

or a foot--how could he find perfection in such an average day? Then I realized this was the whole point” (Albom, 176).

The next week, it was time to say good-bye. Morrie had withered away into a small huddle on his bed, barely able to speak. He softly grunted to Albom. Slowly, obviously struggling, Morrie told Albom that he loved him. And Albom told Morrie he loved him too. “I leaned in and kissed him closely, my face against his, whiskers on whiskers, skin on skin, holding it there, longer than normal, in case it gave him even a split second of pleasure. I blinked back the tears, and he smacked his lips together and raised his eyebrows at the sight of my face. I like to think it was a fleeting moment of satisfaction for my dear old professor: he had finally made me cry” (Albom, 186).

That Saturday, November fourth, Morrie died peacefully in his bed. His funeral site was beautiful, with trees and grass and a sloping hill. Albom tried speaking to Morrie, and to his happiness found that his imagined conversation with Morrie felt almost completely natural. “I looked down at my hands, saw my watch and realized why. It was Tuesday” (Albom, 188). Morrie had taught Albom more than he could have learned in an entire lifetime, and his lessons will continue to be learned.

## GANDHI

Mahatma Gandhi was the son of Kaba Gandhi, Prime Minister in Porbandar, India, and Putlibai, both of whom Gandhi greatly admired. Gandhi was born on October 2, 1869. He was born in Porbandar, also known as Sudamapuri. Gandhi attended elementary school but struggled in his studies. Throughout his years of school, Gandhi was very shy and avoided people, especially large groups. He was afraid that people

would make fun of him. When Gandhi was thirteen, he was married. At such a young age, the marriage did not mean much. It was not “anything more than the prospect of good clothes to wear, drum beating, marriage processions, rich dinners and a strange girl to play with” (Gandhi, 9). His bride was Kasturbai, and the marriage would last sixty-two years. Gandhi grew very fond of Kasturbai.

Gandhi’s first experience with *Ahimsa*, or “love and non-violence” came at a very young age. When he was about fifteen, one of Gandhi’s friends convinced him that it was a good idea to try meat, which was against his Hindu religion. Gandhi was persuaded, and tried it to no avail. He could barely eat it and got sick after one bite. That night, Gandhi had a horrible nightmare. However, Gandhi’s friend persisted and started making delicious meats to tempt him. Gandhi took a liking to meat and ate it secretly for about a year. “I knew that if my mother and father came to know of my having become a meat-eater they would be deeply shocked. This knowledge was gnawing at my heart” (Gandhi, 14). Finally, Gandhi decided it was time for a confession. Gandhi wrote it out, asking for his father’s forgiveness. In the note, Gandhi confessed his guilt, requested a proper punishment, and asked his father not to punish himself over this. Gandhi’s father read it and cried. “For a moment he closed his eyes in thought and then tore up the note...He again laid down. I also cried. I could see my father’s agony...Those pearl-drops of love cleansed my heart and washed my sin away. Only he who has experienced such love can know what it is...” (Gandhi, 15). Gandhi thought that his father would be angry with him, but he was instead peaceful because “...a clean confession, combined with a promise never to commit the sin again, when offered before one who has the right to receive it, is the purest type of repentance” (Gandhi, 15).

Soon after this incident occurred, Gandhi was exposed to the *Laws of Manu*, Hindu religious laws. From these, Gandhi learned that morality was the basis of things and that truth was the substance of all morality. “Truth became my sole objective and my definition of it also has been ever widening” (Gandhi, 16). Gandhi’s experiences growing up combined with such strong convictions at a young age would prepare him for his life’s mission and teachings.

After graduating from high school at nineteen, Gandhi went to England to further his studies. After three years in England, Gandhi became a lawyer and went to South Africa to take a lawsuit. The lawsuit was in Pretoria, the capital of Transvaal, and first-class accommodations were purchased for Gandhi to take the train there. While Gandhi was on the train, a white man entered the compartment and looked him up and down. “He saw that I was a ‘colored’ man. This disturbed him” (Gandhi, 35). Afterwards, an official approached him and asked Gandhi to move to the third-class area. Gandhi protested, but there was nothing that he could do. Because he protested, Gandhi was kicked off the train with his luggage. He went and sat in the waiting room. “Should I fight for my rights or should I go on to Pretoria without minding the insults and return to India after finishing the case? Thus, I obtained full experience of the conditions of Indians in South Africa...” (Gandhi, 37). Gandhi was now fully aware of the societal prejudices.

Within a week of arriving in Pretoria, Gandhi summoned all the Indians of the city to a meeting. Gandhi gave his first public speech to “present to them a picture of their condition” (Gandhi, 37). He was twenty-four. Gandhi also decided to teach merchants and other Indians around Pretoria how to speak English. Eventually, it was decided that such meetings would be held on a regular basis. “The result was that there

was now in Pretoria no Indian I did not know or whose condition I was not acquainted with...” (Gandhi, 38). Because of what was happening to the Indians there, Gandhi decided that it would be a good idea to establish a permanent organization to safeguard Indian interests. This group was named the Natal Indian Congress. Three hundred members enrolled in the Congress within a month. A meeting was held once a month. Members were asked various questions and discussed relevant issues. The community was deeply interested. The Congress also used propaganda to acquaint the English in South Africa and England and the people in India the real state of things.

Gandhi could not figure out why the Indians were persecuted in South Africa, when the whites were a minority. He continued to campaign for the Indians. In just three short years, Gandhi had become a prosperous lawyer and was widely known as the champion of indentured laborers who worked for the white South Africans. He also addressed conferences, drafted memoranda to government ministers, wrote letters to newspapers, and circulated petitions. Gandhi also published two pamphlets: *An Appeal to Every Briton in South Africa* and *The Indian Franchise, An Appeal*. “Appeal” was essential to Gandhi’s politics. He appealed to the common sense and morality of his adversary.

In 1896, Gandhi went to fetch his family in India. He also distributed his pamphlets to the leaders of every party in India. When Gandhi returned to South Africa, he brought eight-hundred free Indians in an attempt to arouse Indian public opinion on the South African issue. However, these efforts were reported with exaggeration in the South African press. When the ships arrived, protesters began pelting him with stones and rotten eggs. Others battered and kicked Gandhi. Fortunately, the wife of the police

superintendent, whom Gandhi knew, happened to pass by and opened her parasol between the crowd and Gandhi. The mob grew calm, since they could not attack Gandhi without hurting the police superintendent's wife. Finally, police were sent and Gandhi was escorted to safety. Gandhi had the opportunity to prosecute the assailants but didn't. This refusal made a profound impression on the Europeans and those who were in the mob were ashamed of their conduct. "The press declared me to be innocent and condemned the mob. Thus the lynching ultimately proved to be a blessing for me, that is, for the cause. It enhanced the prestige of the Indian community in South Africa and made my work easier" (Gandhi, 52). Through such non-violent, peaceful methods, Gandhi would break down racial barriers and continue to succeed in his crusade for the Indians.

Because Gandhi felt that he should be more of service in India and friends were pressuring him to return, he decided to take a one-year leave from South Africa and return to India with his family. Upon his arrival in India, he received gifts of gold, silver, and diamonds. "What right had I to accept all these gifts? Accepting them, how could I persuade myself that I was serving the community without remuneration?" (Gandhi, 57). Therefore, Gandhi returned the gifts and they were deposited in a bank to be used for the service of the community. Gandhi believed that this rejection of gifts saved him from many temptations.

Eventually, Gandhi came to the belief that not only was it wrong to accept gifts, it was wrong to have any material possessions. This came slowly and painfully in the beginning. Material goods began to slip away from Gandhi, and "a great burden fell off my shoulders, and I felt I could now walk with ease and do my work also in the service of my fellow men with great comfort and still greater joy. The possession of anything then



became a troublesome thing and a burden” (Gandhi, 62). Gandhi viewed possession as a crime because not all people could possess the same things; therefore, the only thing that every person could possess was non-possession.

In 1903, Gandhi began publishing the *Indian Opinion*, a weekly newsletter. A few months after it was founded, however, the newsletter was in difficulty. Gandhi took a trip to Durban, where the journal was published. An Englishman named Henry S. L. Polak gave him a copy of John Ruskin’s *Unto This Last*, which would change Gandhi’s life forever. “That book marked the turning point in my life” (Gandhi, 68). Gandhi discovered that some of his deepest thoughts and convictions were expressed in this book. From this book, Gandhi realized that, “The good of the individual is contained in the good of all”, and, “That a lawyer’s work has the same value as the barber’s, in as much as all have the same right of earning their livelihoods from their work.” Lastly, he learned “That a life of labor--the life of the tiller of the soil and the handicraftsman--is the life worth living” (Gandhi, 68). Gandhi talked about all this with the editor of the newsletter and they decided that the *Indian Opinion* should be removed to a farm where everyone could labor.

In 1906, Gandhi took a vow of celibacy to help him in his path of self-purification. Gandhi realized that one has to become passion-free in thought, deed, and action in order to purify oneself. One must “...rise above the opposing currents of love and hatred, attachment and repulsion...to conquer the subtle passions seems to me to be harder far than the physical conquest of the world by the force of arms” (Gandhi, 70). Therefore, Gandhi had no relish for sensual pleasures. He saw no room for self-indulgence in life. Gandhi strove to “be jealous of no one, a fount of mercy, without

egotism, selfless...treat alike cold and heat, happiness and misery...ever forgiving, always contented, with firm resolutions...dedicated mind and soul to god...causes no dread...not afraid of others...free from exultation, sorrow and fear...pure...untouched by respect or disrespect...not puffed up by praise and love silence and solitude” (Gandhi, 71).

Throughout his life, Gandhi continued to fight for his people against and oppression and for Indian independence in Britain. Gandhi spent many days in jail, but this only strengthened his cause. The concept of *ahimsa*, or civil-disobedience and non-violence, was critical to his fight. Towards the end of his life, Gandhi claimed that he had ceased to hate anybody. Gandhi hated the systems that were unfair to Indians, such as the system of Government the British people set up in India or the caste system of untouchability for the Hindus. However, he could not hate the people who were a part of such things. Gandhi only had love for everyone. “Mine is not an exclusive love. I cannot love Moslems or Hindus and hate Englishmen. For if I love merely Hindus and Moslems because their ways are on the whole pleasing to me, I shall soon begin to hate them when their ways displease me, as they may well do any moment. A love that is based on the goodness of those whom you love is a mercenary affair” (Gandhi, 193).

On January 25, 1948, a man named Nathuram Godse assassinated Gandhi at a prayer meeting. Godse was bitter that Gandhi made no demands on the Moslems, but he did not hate Gandhi. With a simple gunshot, Gandhi fell and died with a murmur. Prime Minister Nehru conveyed the news to India by radio. He told the people of India,

“The light has gone out, I said, and yet I was wrong. For the light that shone in this country was no ordinary light. The light that has illumined this country for

these many years will illumine this country for many more years, and a thousand years later that light will still be seen in this country, and the world will see it and it will give solace to innumerable hearts..." (Gandhi, 369).

Gandhi's light continues to shine and his influence is ever--lasting. He was a non-violent revolutionary, changing politics and the world. As Albert Einstein stated, "Generations to come, it may be, will scarce believe that such a one as this ever in flesh and blood walked upon this earth" (Gandhi, 369). Indeed, it is so.

### BHAVE

Vinova Bhave was born in Maharashtra, India in 1894. For nine years, Bhave lived in a large house in the village because his father was a landlord. In 1905, Bhave and his family joined his father at Baroda, where he was employed. Bhave's family played an important role in his life. Among them were his grandfather, mother, and father. Bhave's grandfather was very religious and would spend hours in the ritual of worship. One morning, his grandfather was seated and going about his usual process of worship when a scorpion settled on a sacred image. Some villagers had gathered around as well, and everyone began to panic. They wanted to kill the scorpion. However, Bhave's grandfather solemnly declared, "The scorpion has taken refuge with the Lord. He is in sanctuary, let no one touch him" (Bhave, 29). Bhave's grandfather continued with the service while the scorpion remained motionless. When the service was over, the scorpion walked away. For Bhave, the incident "made a deep impression on me: one who takes sanctuary with the Lord is to be treated with respect, no matter who he may be" (Bhave, 29). Bhave felt that he owed his purity of spirit to his grandfather. Bhave's mother also

made a deep impression on him. She, too, was very religious and placed the Lord before everything. Bhave's mother would cry every day while begging for the Lord's forgiveness. "Mother was an ordinary housewife, busy all day long with her work, but her mind dwelt continually on the Lord" (Bhave, 33). Bhave's mother insisted that he water the *tulsi*, a sacred Hindu plant, every day. If Bhave didn't water it, she would not give him his dinner. "This was her lasting gift to me. She gave me so much else, milk to drink, food to eat, and stayed up night after night to care for me when I was sick; but this training in right human conduct was the greatest gift of all" (Bhave, 35). Finally, Bhave's father influenced him. In fact, Bhave compared his father to Gandhi in the way that "he was flexible in many things...[and] firm on points of principle" (Bhave, 43). Bhave's father strove not to cause pain to others, respect elders, and be helpful to one's neighbors. Bhave realized the importance of these things at a very early age.

Bhave's father sent him to many different schools, including a technical school that taught the art of dyeing. Bhave always struggled in these schools. Instead of going to school or studying, Bhave would wander the streets and pick up friends. One of Bhave's childhood friends told him that he had "wheels on his feet" (Bhave, 49). He also enjoyed running. He knew the streets very well since he had roamed them so many times.

Eventually, Bhave decided it was time to leave home. In 1916, Bhave set off for Benares, because it was a "storehouse of knowledge...of Sanskrit and the Scriptures" (Bhave, 57). He also wanted to go to Benares because it was on the way to the Himalayas and Bengal, both places he wished to visit. "Love and attachment for my parents could not stop me from leaving home. Everything else paled before the force of the spiritual quest" (Bhave, 58).

Still searching for his spirituality, Bhave arrived at Kashi. While there, he followed the ways of *Bapu*, or Gandhi. Bhave found him to be “both the peace of the Himalayas and the revolutionary spirit of Bengal” (Bhave, 64). After reading a copy of one of his speeches addressed to the local Hindu University, Bhave agreed with Gandhi’s ideas on non-violence. Bhave began sending Gandhi letters, inquiring more about the subject. One day, Bhave received a postcard that said, “Questions about non-violence cannot be settled by letters; the touch of life is needed. Come and stay with me for a few days in the Ashram, so that we can meet now and again” (Bhave, 64). And so began a dynamic relationship.

Bhave stayed at Ashram and was invited to live there in a life of service. Bhave eagerly accepted. At twenty-one, Bhave was engrossed in meditation and reflection, and learned a lot. In 1917, he took a one- year leave from Ashram in order to restore his health and to study. While on leave, Bhave started a students’ club and walked four hundred miles on foot. He visited four or five districts of Maharashtra to expand his knowledge. At each village, Bhave gave talks. Bhave returned to Ashram exactly one year later. In 1945, Gandhiji was shot and killed. This affected Bhave greatly, and he broke down. However, he realized that Gandhi’s death made him immortal. “When Bapu was in the body, it took time to go and meet him; now it takes no time at all. All I have to do is close my eyes and I am with him” (Bhave, 73).

From 1921 to 1951, Bhave spent his life in educational and constructive work. He studied, taught, and reflected. “These thirty years of my life were shaped by faith in the power of meditation” (Bhave, 76). Bhave felt the strong conviction to help even the lowliest peoples. He believed in the principle of *Sarvodaya*, which meant that “all should

rise, should grow, and all includes the lowliest and the last” (Bhave, 107). In 1946, Bhave decided to help the villagers with their work in the village of Surgaon, near where he lived in Paunar. In 1948, after Gandhi’s death and Indian independence, Bhave felt a new calling. He decided to take a six- month leave in service to those made homeless by the partition of the country. Bhave was working for the resettlement of refugees. Many asked for land, but did not receive any.

Therefore, Bhave decided to travel throughout the country, on foot, to spread the ideas of Gandhiji and peace. “Going on foot brings one closer, both to the country and to the people, than any other form of travel; that was why I did it” (Bhave, 126). Bhave went to countless villages, spreading peace. He would preach about unity and God. In 1951, Bhave set out for Delhi, in North India. His one purpose was to get land for the poor. This need was the result of riots between landless peasants and the mighty landlords in south India. “Mother Earth must no longer be separated from her sons, she and they must be brought together again. The winds of generosity, of giving, must be set blowing across the whole nation” (Bhave, 133). This was the beginning of the Bhoodan, Bhave’s movement for land. Bhave felt that if people knew the basic idea of his movement then they would give land out of pure good will.

In 1952, Bhave entered Bihar and began asking for land—which he generally received. Bhave later began accepting gifts of money as well. When landlords made gifts of land that could not be cultivated, Bhave requested that they make it workable and the landlords agreed. Bhave walked through Bihar from September 1952 to the end of December 1954, and received twenty-three acres of land. “But more important than that, I can say that as I went about Bihar I had visible tokens of the love of God” (Bhave, 139).

Bhave preached everywhere he went. He said to the landlords: “If you have five sons consider me the sixth son, the representative of the poor, and give me one sixth of your land to share with the landless” (Bhave, 15).

Bhave entered Bengal next. While walking from village to village, he recited prayers to the Lord. He received acres and acres of land. After five years of this pilgrimage, Bhave decided he needed to cover more ground. So he began walking double the distance. “I do not feel elated when I get large gifts of land, nor discouraged when they are small” (Bhave, 144). Soon, people began to give whole villages to the cause. Since so much land had been donated, Bhave set up a *Shanti Sena*, a Peace Army, to safeguard the freedom that had been won. Bhave figured that one “peace soldier” would be needed for every five thousand of the population. Therefore, Bhave realized that seventy thousand peace soldiers would be needed for India which had three hundred and fifty million people. “Let India raise such an army of devotees of peace. The task of the Peace Army was to prevent any outbreak of violence by being always alert for signs of tension” (Bhave, 149). Bhave appointed a Commander of the Peace Army, Sri Kelappan, who had been active in party politics. He was greatly respected in his area, Kerala, and fifty young men volunteered to join the army right away. Bhave continued to recruit people for his Peace Army.

Bhave continued to travel, on foot, all throughout India until the age of seventy-five. By the end of his journeys, he had acquired over four million acres of land for the poor. He then stopped his travels and spent time in meditation and prayer. When Bhave was eighty-seven, he became weak and died after an eight-- day fast. Bhave died in complete peace. Throughout his life, Bhave claimed that he was “moved by love.” He

stated that, “There is nothing so powerful as love and thought--no institution, no government, no ‘ism,’ no scripture, no weapon. I hold that these, love and thought, are the only sources of power...All are my kinsfolk and I theirs. In it not in my heart to love some more and others less” (Bhave 18). Because of this philosophy, Bhave was able to accomplish what he wanted, and helped thousands in the process. Bhave was a true spiritual leader whose work moved everyone from wealthy landlords in India to Gandhiji.

### MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.

Martin Luther King, Jr. is widely known as the man who led the struggle for African -American civil rights in the 1950s and 60s. There is less recognition, however, for the actual sermons that he preached to the parishioners in his churches in Montgomery, Alabama and Atlanta, Georgia. These sermons were essentially lessons, and they expressed his feelings on subjects such as love, fear, death, and God. These speeches were made during or after the infamous bus protest in Montgomery, Alabama, and are truly inspiring.

In his first set of sermons, King wrote about “a tough mind and a tender heart.” He said that a strong man is a living blend of strong opposites. “Life at its best is a creative synthesis of opposites in fruitful harmony” (King, 13). King believed that a person needed a tough mind in order to be realistic and decisive. Yet he realized that there was a tendency toward softmindedness in most people. These softminded citizens were the ones who were easily influenced or persuaded by others. “The softminded man always fears change. He feels security in the status quo, and he has an almost morbid fear of the new. For him, the greatest pain is the pain of a new idea” (King, 15). These were



the types of people that King had to fight for equality, because softmindedness was a main cause of racial prejudice. A person who was strong of mind would examine the situation and not judge until after he knew the facts; a softminded person would prejudge. Therefore, King knew that, “The shape of the world today does not permit us the luxury of softmindedness. A nation or a civilization that continues to produce the softminded men purchases its own spiritual death on an installment plan” (King, 17).

In addition to a tough mind, King recognized that the gospel also demanded a tender heart. “Tough-mindedness without tenderheartedness is cold and detached, leaving one’s life in a perpetual winter devoid of the warmth of spring and gentle heat of summer” (King, 17). A hardhearted person lacks the capacity to love and feel compassion, two very important elements. “Jesus reminds us that the good life combines the toughness of the serpent and the tenderness of the dove” (King, 18). This duality of character was essential for African Americans to move toward their goal of freedom and justice.

Being a good neighbor was also key in King’s beliefs and teachings. Good Samaritans will “always be an inspiring paragon of neighborly virtue” (King, 31). King thought that man’s goodness could be described in one word, “altruism.” “What is altruism? The dictionary defines altruism as ‘regard for, and devotion to, the interest of others’.” The Samaritan was good because “he made concern for others the first law of his life” (King, 31). The true altruist would be altruistic to everyone, and not be limited by characteristics such as race, class, or gender. During the time of the civil rights movement, most whites were not being altruistic. They were not concerned with people outside of their own group. “The good neighbor looks beyond the external accidents and

discerns those inner qualities that make all men human and, therefore, brothers” (King, 33). Altruism, though, was not meant only in terms of kindness and compassion toward others. King believed that the Samaritan possessed the capacity for a “dangerous altruism,” in which he would risk his life to save a brother. “The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy. The true neighbor will risk his position, his prestige, and even his life for the welfare of others. In dangerous valleys and hazardous pathways, he will lift some bruised and beaten brother to a higher and more noble life” (King, 35).

In the fourth chapter of his book, King discusses love, perhaps the most important and inspiring subject. King cites the the Bible, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” King observes a great tragedy in life-- that very rarely do people actually live life by how they say or know it should be lived. “On the one hand, we proudly profess certain sublime and noble principles, but on the other hand, we sadly practice the very antithesis of those principles” (King, 40). Jesus, however, bridged this gap in deed and speech. Therefore, he really did love his enemies instead of just saying he did. Even when being put to death on the cross, the ultimate test in love and compassion, Jesus was able to forgive the people who were murdering him. “This was Jesus’ finest hour; this was his heavenly response to his earthly rendezvous with destiny” (King, 41). Instead of overcoming evil with evil, Jesus was able to overcome evil with good. “Only goodness can drive out evil and only love can conquer hate” (King, 42).

King knew that loving one’s enemies was very hard. However, he looked upon the notion as a challenge from Jesus. In a world full of hatred and evil, “the command to

love one's enemy is an absolute necessity for our survival. Love even for enemies is the key to the solution of the problems of our world" (King, 50). In order to love our enemies, King said that we had to have the capacity to forgive our enemies. "It is impossible even to begin the act of loving one's enemies without the prior acceptance of the necessity, over and over again, of forgiving those who inflict evil and injury upon us" (King, 50). Forgiveness means that the evil or injury does not remain a barrier to the relationship. It is important in creating a new beginning in the relationship. King also believed that some goodness could be found in any person, even our enemy, despite their wrongdoing. Therefore, there is some good in the worst of us and some evil in the best of us. Also, "we must not seek to defeat or humiliate the enemy but to win his friendship and understanding...every word and deed must contribute to an understanding with the enemy and release those vast reservoirs of goodwill which have been blocked by impenetrable walls of hate" (King, 52). Forgiveness and love are important, too, because hating someone has just as negative an effect on the person who hates. "Like an unchecked cancer, hate corrodes the personality and eats away its vital unity" (King, 53).

Another topic that King discusses is how to live in a world full of shattered dreams. This is a part of life that cannot be helped, and people have to do their best to cope. When people's hope is lost, there is a tendency to withdraw completely and become introverts. "Such persons give up the struggle of life, lose their zest for living, and attempt to escape by lifting their minds to a transcendent realm of cold indifference" (King, 89). Instead, King states that one must face difficulties by accepting unwanted and unfortunate circumstances but still clinging to hope. "You must honestly confront your shattered dream" (King, 91). In order to deal with shattered dreams, people must have a

faith in God, and hope. “Genuine faith imbues us with the conviction that beyond time is a divine Spirit and beyond life is Life. However dismal and catastrophic may be the present circumstances, we know we are not alone, for God dwells with us in life’s most confining and oppressive cells” (King, 96).

Finally, King gives people antidotes for fear. Fear appears everywhere in the world, in different forms for different people. They may fear water, darkness, loneliness, or not being financially successful in life, as well as a number of other things. In order to face these fears, people must ask why they are afraid. “This confrontation will, to some measure, grant us power. We shall never be cured of fear by escapism or repression, for the more we attempt to ignore and repress our fears, the more we multiply our inner conflicts” (King, 117). To master fear, a person must possess or attain courage. Courage is the power of the mind to overcome fear. “Courage takes the fear produced by a definite object into itself and thereby conquers the fear involved” (King, 118). Lastly, fear can be mastered through love. This is why Christ was not scared when he lay upon the cross. “Hatred and bitterness can never cure the disease of fear; only love can do that. Hatred paralyzes life; love releases it. Hatred confuses life; love harmonizes it. Hatred darkens life; love illumines it” King, 122). Recognizing these steps and being able to live one’s life possessing these virtues can lead to a much more peaceful, content life.

Although Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated in 1968, his words still live on and speak to us through time. He is still the leader that he once was. King’s beliefs and principles are both inspiring and thoughtful. Many more of these important lessons are touched on in his book, *Strength to Love*, and through these lessons we are truly given that strength.

## SCHWEITZER

Albert Schweitzer was born in Switzerland on January 14, 1875. He had a very happy childhood and loved spending time with his parents and siblings. At the early age of five, Schweitzer's father began giving him music lessons. By the time he was seven, he could play hymns on the piano. A year later, with his feet barely able to touch the pedals, Schweitzer learned how to play the organ. This was only the beginning of the emergence of Schweitzer's genius. He went on to become a brilliant theologian, philosopher, and medical missionary in Africa.

From as far back as he could remember, Schweitzer was saddened by the amount of misery in the world around him. In particular, Schweitzer was moved by the pain and suffering that humans inflicted on animals. "The sight of an old limping horse, tugged forward by one man while another kept beating it with a stick to get it to the knacker's yard at Colmar, haunted me for weeks" (Schweitzer, 1). Therefore, Schweitzer prayed every evening not only for humans, but also for all living creatures. When he was only seven or eight, Schweitzer and a friend made rubber catapults out of which stones could be shot. His friend wanted to shoot at birds, and Schweitzer was too scared to refuse his proposal. However, right before the two were poised and ready to aim at the birds, the church bells began to ring. "...And for me it was a voice from heaven" (Schweitzer, 2). When he heard the music, Schweitzer shoed the birds away, and they fled home. Since then, he reflects "with a rush of grateful emotion how on that day their music [the church bells] drove deep into my heart the commandment: 'Though shalt not kill'" (Schweitzer, 2). This was quite a noble realization for an eight-year-old. Because of such experiences,

Schweitzer, at a young age, felt the conviction that humans had no right to inflict suffering and death on any other living creature unless it was completely necessary.

In July 1899, Schweitzer got his degree in philosophy after many years of school. Schweitzer believed that the purpose of all philosophy was to “make us aware as thinking beings of the intelligent and intimate relationship with the universe in which we have to stand, and of the way in which we must behave in the presence of stimuli that come from it” (Schweitzer, 10). Schweitzer was compelled to leave nature at peace and assert himself in it both spiritually and creatively.

In 1905, Schweitzer decided that he wanted to become a medical student in order to go on to Africa as a doctor. Because Schweitzer had been thriving as a theologian and philosopher, he felt that it was unfair that he was allowed to lead such a happy life while so many others around him were suffering. “While at the university and enjoying the happiness of being able to study and even to produce some results in science and art, I could not help thinking continually of others who were denied that happiness by their material circumstances or their health” (A. Schweitzer, 70).

At the age of thirty, Schweitzer decided to commit his life to direct human service in Africa. His friends and family were upset. They felt that Schweitzer should use his gifts in art and science. However, Schweitzer was not going to be stopped. He recognized that he would have to work very hard for a few years in order to become a doctor in Africa. From 1905 to 1912, Schweitzer studied medicine. “Now began the years of continuous struggle with fatigue” (A. Schweitzer, 80). In 1908, Schweitzer took the exam in anatomy, physiology, and the natural sciences. It was very difficult for Schweitzer to acquire this sort of knowledge. Three years later, he took the state medical examination

and passed. Then, Schweitzer had to complete a year of work as a volunteer in the hospitals and write his thesis for the doctorate. He completed all of this, and was soon making preparations for Africa.

To obtain the funds for this quest, Schweitzer had to go around begging for money from his acquaintances. He also received money from his university and his congregation. Eventually, Schweitzer collected all the money he needed to start a small hospital in Gaboon, Africa, where he intended to work. In 1913, Schweitzer and his wife arrived in Africa. As soon as he arrived, he was flooded with sick people. He chose Lambarene as the site for his hospital. It was a good site because the sick could be brought to him in canoes along the Ogowe River. Schweitzer dealt with diseases such as malaria, leprosy, sleeping sickness, dysentery, frambesia, and ulcers. His wife helped as a nurse. Schweitzer worked because he recognized the grace in the fact that, “We are allowed to be active in the service of the mercy of Jesus among the poorest of the poor...In this we feel ourselves lifted above the not always small difficulties which work among primitives who cannot be accustomed to any discipline brings with it” (Schweitzer, 21).

After Schweitzer and his wife had completed two seasons in Africa, they were beginning to make plans to go home for a little bit. On August 5, 1914, he learned that war had broken out in Europe and they were informed that they were now considered prisoners of war. They were to obey unconditionally the regulations of the soldiers who were assigned to them as guards. Schweitzer was also commanded to stop work at the hospital. During his internment, Schweitzer began writing his *Philosophy of Civilization*. Schweitzer determined that “The only possible way out of chaos is for us to come once

more under the control of the ideas of true civilization through the adoption of an attitude toward life that contains those ideals. But what is the nature of the attitude toward life in which the will to general progress and to ethical progress are alike founded and in which they are bound together? It consists in an ethical affirmation of the world and life” (Schweitzer, 65).

In 1917, Schweitzer and his wife were ordered onto a ship in a camp as prisoners of war. Just before they were taken on board, the father of the Catholic mission of Lambarene shook hands with Schweitzer and his wife and thanked them for all the good that they had done during their stay. The couple was taken to an internment camp in the Pyrenees. Schweitzer was the only doctor in the camp, and was soon allowed to utilize his talents. He was even given a room to work in. “I was able to give especially effective help to those who had been brought there from the colonies, as well as to the many sailors who were suffering from tropical diseases. Thus I was once more a doctor” (A. Schweitzer, 133). As a doctor at the camp, he witnessed the worst of the sick.

Finally, the couple was allowed to go home to Switzerland for a few days. Soon after the couple arrived home, they were ordered to depart again. Eventually, they were released and allowed to return home. Schweitzer began writing down his recollections of Africa. Entitled *On the Edge of the Primeval Forest*, the book was published in English and in Swedish.

Schweitzer returned to Africa in 1924. Upon his return, Schweitzer discovered the remains of his hospital. During 1924 and 1925, Schweitzer sent for two doctors and two nurses from Europe to treat the increasing number of patients suffering from dysentery. Therefore, Schweitzer moved his hospital and made it larger. In 1927, Schweitzer



returned to Switzerland to give lectures and organ recitals. He returned to Africa in 1929 and stayed.

Reflecting on his own life, Schweitzer realized that there were two perceptions that overwhelmed his existence. “One consists in my realization that the world is inexplicably mysterious and full of suffering; the other in the fact that I have been born into a period of spiritual decadence in mankind” (A. Schweitzer, 170). However, Schweitzer believed in the future of mankind. Ultimately, he felt that “Whether we be workers or sufferers, it is assuredly our duty to conserve our powers, as being men who have won their way through to the peace which passeth all understanding” (A. Schweitzer, 188),

#### BUDDHIST ACTS OF COMPASSION

Pamela Bloom’s compilation of stories was truly inspiring. Although the book did not focus on one specific person or series of events, the common acts of kindness by Buddhists everywhere dominate the stories. Bloom shares random acts of kindness by different people with the reader in hopes of spreading compassion and wisdom. All of the stories were motivating in different ways, a few in particular.

The first story, *From Victim to Liberator*, relates Bloom’s experience. While in France on meditation with a group of Western students of Buddhism, a visiting master was introduced. He began to speak to the group, repeatedly wiping his right eye that appeared to be constantly crying. This man had been imprisoned for fifteen years inside Tibet as a victim of Chinese persecution. The conditions were horrid, and the Chinese were not content with normal torture. Instead, they gave the Tibetans the worst

punishment they could endure by denying them the right to meditate. Every time the Tibetans closed their eyes, they were beaten. However, the Chinese were not aware that the Tibetans could meditate with their eyes open; so the master could continue his prayers in secret. As the years went on, the abuse continued. The result was the master's draining eye. One day, two of the jailors interrogated him: "What are you doing? No matter what we do to you, no matter how we hurt you, nothing moves you" (Bloom, 20). The jailors realized that their prisoner possessed a power stronger and higher than theirs, and they desired it. Because he had no choice, he taught the jailors the Tibetan meditation called Tonglen, in which one breathes in the suffering of others and breathes out light.

"...Imagine that this monk...had found the inspiration to not only practice compassion but to teach it in the middle of hell to the very beings who were the agents of...suffering...well, that was a level of compassion that transcends the ordinary mind" (Bloom, 21). Years later, for no apparent reason, the Chinese jailors suddenly set him free. And that is how he came to tell his story. Without his boundless compassion, the man would have never been freed.

There was also a memorable excerpt from an article written by John F. Kennedy, Jr. for his magazine *George* after he interviewed the Dalai Lama. The Dalai Lama's peacefulness and kindness impressed Kennedy. Upon seeing Kennedy's bandaged hand, the Dalai Lama held it in both of his hands, rubbing and patting it. Most people recoiled when they saw his hand. Kennedy noticed that, "A combination of joy and thoughtfulness is the source of the Dalai Lama's personal charisma" (Bloom, 43). After the interview for the magazine was conducted, the Dalai Lama left. They said good-bye, and Kennedy watched until the Dalai Lama and his entourage were out of sight down the hill. Kennedy

looked around at the other aides in the room, and felt “content but oddly deflated. It was as if we were all in a dark room and the fellow with the lantern had just left” (Bloom, 44). This story showed what an impact the Dalai Lama had, even on someone who was not particularly religious or Buddhist. Through compassion and kindness, anyone can possess this light that the Dalai Lama seemed to have.

A gay man who was searching for sexual gratification and his own identity wrote another powerful story. The man noticed that alcohol seemed to help him with his sexuality, giving him courage and the wild times that he was looking for. However, alcohol ruined his relationship with his family and friends, as well as his own self-esteem. Fortunately, the man found a twelve-step program in his mid twenties and was able to sober up. Soon afterwards, he became involved in a serious relationship, got a good job, and returned to college to finish his degree. Life was looking good. Then things took a turn for the worse in the late eighties and early nineties. AIDS began to show up, especially in gay men. “First, a few acquaintances, then a few friends, then many friends, then my significant other was diagnosed. Although AIDS was dominant in my life, I seemed able to contend with its ugly presence. That was until my own HIV diagnosis brought me to my knees” (Bloom, 77). All the man could think about was that he was going to die. After living in shock for about two months, the man discovered a support organization for people with life-challenging illnesses. He registered as a client, and was so inspired that two months later he decided to volunteer as a staff member. The man was compelled to live a life of service. “Watching people persevere against seemingly insurmountable odds with such positive and courageous attitudes provided me with a powerful example for my own life” (Bloom, 78). He began working with many sick

people, but became paralyzed emotionally after seeing so many people that he cared about die. Emotionally burned out, the man left the organization and went on an HIV retreat at a Zen monastery because he needed to spend time on his own healing. He joined the retreat and remained at the monastery as an ordained monk. Over the next few years, the man meditated deeply and was feeling better. One day he was asked to organize the same retreat for people with HIV and AIDS that had originally brought him to the monastery. “Strengthened now by my meditation practice, I found myself joyously hosting the weekend” (Bloom, 80). Recently, the man noticed an old friend had come to the retreat, one who had once been his client at the organization where he had previously worked. This newcomer had decided to start giving back to the AIDS community and was volunteering whenever he could. When the man asked the friend what his motivation had been, he told him that he had been moved by his own giving and decided to “devote his life in the same way with generosity, enthusiasm, and commitment. He even wanted to help me coordinate the next year’s retreat. I was speechless, tears in my eyes, a lump in my throat...I never imagined that my conscious devotion to service would ever inspire another person so deeply as to give himself so totally in the same way” (Bloom, 80).

Finally, there was an inspiring story by Penor Rinpoche, a Buddhist. When Rinpoche was a small child, he saw people in Tibet slaughtering animals for food. It upset him so much that he started to cry. Thereafter, Rinpoche began to think about the suffering of human beings everywhere. He wrote, “It’s very important to actually feel...suffering in your own being, to take time and contemplate it. Then it becomes real” (Bloom, 88). Rinpoche believed that if you eat meat, it’s important to think about the suffering that those animals went through for your sake. “To understand how to be kind

to others, you really have to understand the nature of suffering. And it is out of this kind of understanding that real kindness can arise” (Bloom, 89).

If all people possessed the compassion and kindness displayed by the Buddhists in these stories, the world would be a heavenly place. The ability to be that kind and have that much of an impact on people is something that we all aspire to achieve. Yet, it takes a lifetime of work and a very strong person to be able to do this. Examining Bloom’s collection of stories is the first step in understanding what it takes to be a truly good human being.

### THE DALAI LAMA

The Dalai Lama fled his homeland of Tibet and became a refugee at the age of twenty-four. He spent most of his youth studying Buddhist philosophy and psychology and continued these studies for the rest of his life. In his book, *Ethics for the New Millennium*, the Dalai Lama established the concept of “positive ethical conduct.” He attempts to approach ethics on universal, as opposed to religious, principles. Therefore, the book appeals to a larger audience.

In 1959, the Dalai Lama left Tibet to become a refugee in India. When in India, he was brought into closer contact with modern society; however, he spent his formative years cut off from the twentieth century. The Dalai Lama became a monk and continued his spiritual quest travelling and speaking to different people. He dealt with lost family members, people who were sick with cancer or AIDS, and fellow struggling Tibetans. Because of his encounters with all these people, he was reminded of “our basic sameness as human beings” (Dalai Lama, 4). Whether rich or poor, black or white, everyone

struggles to achieve happiness and avoid suffering. The Dalai Lama believed that this search for happiness was sustained by hope. “Everything we do, not only as individuals but also at the level of society, can be seen in terms of this fundamental aspiration [hope]” (Dalai Lama, 4). He believed that a spiritual revolution would help achieve this happiness for the entire world.

This spiritual revolution, however, did not have to be religious. After years of confronting other religions as well as his own, he realized that all religions and philosophies are not less capable of helping people lead better lives. “What is more, I have come to the conclusion that whether or not a person is a religious believer does not matter much. Far more important is that they be a good human being” (Dalai Lama, 19). In believing this, the Dalai Lama made an important distinction between religion and spirituality. He approaches different religions in terms of their claims to salvation or the after --life, connected to more specific rituals or traditions. Spirituality is more universal, concerning qualities of the human spirit such as love, compassion, forgiveness, and harmony. Therefore, his call for a spiritual revolution need not be religious. “Rather, it is a call for a radical reorientation away from our habitual preoccupation with self. It is a call to turn toward the wider community of beings with whom we are connected, and for conduct which recognizes others interests alongside our own” (Dalai Lama, 24).

The Dalai Lama divides suffering into two larger categories: natural disasters and human disasters. Natural disasters include earthquakes, floods, and other events that inflict suffering upon humans but are out of our control. Human disasters, such as wars, crime, violence, corruption, and the like, are all sufferings that come from our own origin and can be controlled or even stopped, which is the ultimate goal. Everyone is

responsible for this unhappiness. However, the Dalai Lama recognizes that the legal system cannot eradicate these problems. Instead, ethics must be imposed. “Since love and compassion and similar qualities all, by definition, presume some level of concern for others’ well-being, they presume ethical restraint. We cannot be loving and compassionate unless at the same time we curb our own harmful impulses and desires” (Dalai Lama, 26). This is fundamental to good ethics.

The Dalai Lama also explains the concept of individuals “*kun long*.” Literally, the phrase means “thoroughly” or “from the depths,” but in principle it is understood to be that which drives our intentions and actions, which denotes a person’s overall wholesomeness and state of mind. When a person’s heart and mind are wholesome, so, too, are their actions. “The individual’s overall state of heart and mind, or motivation, in the moment of action is, generally speaking, the key to determining its ethical content, [and] is easily understood when we consider how our actions are affected when we are gripped with powerful negative thoughts and emotions such as hatred and anger. In that moment, our mind and heart are in turmoil” (Dalai Lama, 31). When we are in this state, we lose sight of the impact our actions may have on others and ignore their own rights to happiness. Therefore, the spiritual revolution can only be achieved through this sort of ethical revolution, in which our “*kun longs*” are realized and made better.

On a trip to Europe, the Dalai Lama went to the site of the Nazi death camp at Auschwitz. Although he had tried to prepare himself for the experience, it was overwhelming. “I was dumbfounded at the sheer calculation and detachment from feeling to which they [the ovens where the Jewish were burned] bore horrifying testimony” (Dalai Lama, 63). After seeing Auschwitz, the Dalai Lama vowed to never take part in

such horrors and take it as a reminder of what can happen when individuals and whole societies lose sight of their basic human feelings. The Dalai Lama believed that humans must empathize with each other and attempt to fully understand what those who are suffering are experiencing. In Tibet, they call this notion “shen dug ngal wa la mi so pa,” which means “the inability to bear the sight of another’s suffering”. “It is what compels us to shut our eyes even when we want to ignore others’ distress” (Dalai Lama, 64). In addition to the empathy that humans need to feel for each other, they must also be kind. He feels that the human smile is especially important in being kind because a genuine smile touches us.

In order to develop happiness and compassion, the Dalai Lama wrote, “We need to restrain those factors which inhibit compassion” and “cultivate those which are conducive to it” (Dalai Lama, 81). Characteristics that are conducive to compassion include love, patience, tolerance, humility, and many others. “What inhibits compassion is that lack of inner restraint which we have identified as the source of all unethical conduct” (Dalai Lama, 81). Restraint and, more broadly, moderation are essential to a wholesome soul. Therefore, humans must cultivate a habit of inner discipline. He uses drugs as an example: We know drugs are bad and we know their consequences. Therefore, we practice self-restraint and refrain from doing such things. “The undisciplined mind is like an elephant. If left to blunder around out of control, it will wreak havoc” (Dalai Lama, 82).

There are many more lessons to be learned in the Dalai Lama’s book. The end of the book, though, is particularly striking. The Dalai Lama speaks of life and how fleeting it is. He reminds us to live the present well, day in and day out, and not turn around and



dwell on mistakes because we can't turn back time. "Therefore, if when our final day comes we are able to look back and see that we have lived full, productive, and meaningful lives, that will at least be of some comfort. If we cannot, we may be very sad. But which of these we experience is up to us" (Dalai Lama). Life could not be summed up any better.

### A NATION OF HEROES

September 11, 2001 is a day that will go down in history. For my generation, it was the first glimpse of real chaos or any sign of weakness in the United States. Before the attacks, America was invincible. Her pride, however, was dwindling. In exchange for the Twin Towers, we gained an incredible sense of honor and respect for our nation. Somehow selfless heroes emerged from the disaster and ruin. *A Nation of Heroes*, a set of short stories from *Reader's Digest*, shares some poignant memories of what it means to be a proud American citizen, and sets an example for all of us.

One short memory recalls an event that occurred on January 16th, 1975. 100 people were waiting in the subway platform beneath New York's 86<sup>th</sup> Street and Lexington Avenue. A rush-hour train was on its way; in its path, a young man was trying to jump up from the tracks that were four feet below. The train was quickly approaching. The man, 34-year-old Everett Sanderson, was down by the tracks because a couple of minutes earlier, a little girl's hand had slipped from her mother's grasp and she had fallen down onto the tracks. The mother, Mrs. DeJesus, screamed and cried for help. Everett, who stood among the crowd watching this helpless woman, thought for a second about what he would do if it were his child. And, like that, he jumped down to the tracks. With

only a few seconds left before the train came, Everett picked up the little girl and hurled her onto the platform. Then Everett had only a couple of seconds to get off the tracks. He tried and failed the first time, but the second time was able to hoist himself up with the help of other people on the platform. Everett was safe, and so was the little girl. Everett received a lifetime pass for free subway travel and a \$1000 check from the Carnegie Hero Fund Commission. Everett said, “I don’t know whether this has changed my life. I know it almost ended it. But if I hadn’t tried to save that little girl, if I had just stood there like the others, I would have died inside. I would have been no good to myself from then on” (Young, 28).

Leo K. Thorsness, a Washington State senator and Vietnam veteran, shared another inspiring story. In 1967, he was imprisoned in North Vietnam at the Hoa Lo P.O.W. camp. The Americans who were captured and imprisoned there were frequently beaten. After a few years, though, the beatings became less frequent. During their last year there, they were allowed outside to bathe. One day, a pilot named Mike Campbell found pieces of a handkerchief in a gutter. Mike began to make it into an American flag. The rest of the prisoners lent him soap to clean the fabric. At night, Mike worked on the flag, making red and blue from ground-up roof tiles and tiny bits of ink. He sewed on stars with the thread from the only blanket he had. A few days later, Mike whispered to his fellow American prisoners that the flag was complete and proudly held up the cloth. “If you used your imagination, you could tell it was supposed to be an American flag. When he raised that smudgy fabric, we automatically stood straight and saluted, our chests puffing out, and more than a few eyes had tears” (Thorsness, 30). A few days later, the guards found Mike’s flag when the prisoners were being stripped so their clothes

could be checked. The guards came for Mike that night, they came for him and he returned badly beaten. A couple of weeks later, Mike found more fabric and began another flag. “Now, whenever I see the flag, I think of Mike and the morning he first waved that tattered emblem of a nation. It was then, thousands of miles from home in a lonely prison cell, that he showed us what it meant to be truly free” (Thorsness, 30).

On June 13<sup>th</sup>, 1982, Karen Hartsock was asleep in her family’s old log farmhouse in Castlewood, Va. All of a sudden, she was awakened by her father shouting “Fire!” and saw fire and smoke coming from the walls. The stairway was almost completely up in flames. Karen began yelling for her two little sisters and brother. Karen pulled her eleven-year-old sister Norma down the stairway and led her to safety. Two of her siblings were still upstairs. Her nine-year-old brother, Johnny, was crippled by cerebral palsy and would die if she didn’t reach him. By that point, the walls of the hallway on the way to her sibling’s room were completely in flames. She finally reached Johnny, wrapped him into a blanket, and managed to carry him downstairs. Instead of escaping herself though, Karen tried to go back up the stairs because she thought her other little sister was still up there. She didn’t know that her parents had saved her sister. While Karen tried to go back up the stairs, a banister collapsed and Karen was trapped beneath a pile of burning debris. Karen’s father quickly grabbed her and they all ran out onto the yard. Karen’s mother flung her body on top of Karen’s to try and smother the flames. Karen was dying. They took her to the University of Virginia Hospital Burn Center. 80% of Karen’s body was covered in second and third degree burns. She couldn’t breathe on her own, and doctors said she had less than a 10 percent chance of surviving. Karen remained in critical condition for days. Eventually, Karen’s condition improved but her body was covered in

scars and she began to deteriorate. A priest came and talked to Karen, telling her that she had a job to do in life and that she had to fight on. Finally, 52 days after the fire, Karen went to a rehabilitation center and resumed her studies. Eight months later, Karen was released from the hospital. In July, Karen received the Young American Medal for Bravery and the Carnegie Medal for extraordinary heroism. Karen said, "I don't think of myself as a heroine. I just love my family" (Kelly, 73). In these simple words, Karen expressed what drove her to save her family. One doctor spoke of her highly; "Karen is one of those rare and remarkable individuals who will never surrender; whose selfless love and spiritual belief are in themselves miraculous life-support systems. Her will and resolve are an inspiration to all burn victims. And her incredible heroism is an inspiration to us all" (Kelly, 74).

*A Nation of Heroes* chronicles these stories as well as a few more. The same theme runs through each story. Acts of huge selflessness, such as these, are an inspiration. Even those of us who aren't at war or aren't stuck in a burning house can do little things to make a difference. And then we'll really have a nation of heroes.

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