

KINSHIP ACTIVITY

Love expressed in acts of friendship, collaboration, and service

Inayatiyya North American Kinship Connections April 2020

Kinship, an activity of the Inayatiyya, cultivates the natural connection of one heart to another, fostering harmony, goodwill, and caring action. Kinship nurtures the flowering of the individual and carries it outward through friendship, collaboration and service. Kinship inspires people to work together to help those in need, to protect and restore the web of life on Earth, and to create a more just and beautiful world.

Responding with Love and Courage to the Call of the Global Ecological Crisis

The Kinship Activity of North America will host an online, inter-generational zoom call to reflect on the planetary ecological crisis on Saturday, April 18, from 1-2:30 pm EDT. On this call, Shams Kairys, who has focused on this predicament for decades, will open with some thoughts on how we can strengthen the capacity to sustain our gaze on the fraying of the natural world and maintain a positive spirit of engagement, followed by reflections from Sab Bonfonti, a community organizer and facilitator working on social and ecological issues in diverse settings. The call will offer an opportunity to connect with others concerned about this critical issue.

To register, reply to [Rabia Povich](#) including your email and name. You will receive a zoom link a few days before the call.

Kinship Circle Wrestles with Race

by Rabia Povich

In Charlottesville, the summer of 2017 is known as the Summer of Hate. It also proved to be a challenging time for our Sufi community. We were aware that our town was the target of alt-right white supremacists.

In June, when KKK members obtained a permit to gather, we took part in and led prayer vigils at the designated rally site. During that rally I read Hazrat Inayat Khan's *Prayer for Peace* at an interfaith event attended by hundreds seeking a positive expression. In August, the night before the Unite the Right Rally, members of the Sufi community attended an interfaith service as neo-Nazis marched with torches in front of the church, causing a lock-down. The following day three Sufi leaders hosted a 5-hour meditation, prayer and movement event during the deadly Rally in our effort to

provide a safe space where we could hold our concentration on harmony and peace.

The vitriol, hate and injuries generated at these two white supremacist events brought us to a place of deep reflection. We became painfully aware of our insufficient understanding about the impact of white privilege, the culture of supremacy and current systemic racism.

Since then the Charlottesville community has worked toward healing and repair by unveiling painful and unacknowledged truths of inequity. We have learned a truer history of America and the reality of living in black bodies in our country in general and our community specifically.

The community has wrestled publicly with a racist past including: the destruction of a thriving Black community thru urban renewal; the year-long closing of public schools as a response to the Supreme Court's decision outlawing "separate but equal" education (while using publicly-funded teachers and books to teach white children); and the white-only areas created during Jim Crow, including the parks where controversial Civil War monuments remain.

The reverberations of these events led our Sufi community to create a White Aware Book Group. For almost a year we have met bi-weekly, expanding our awareness of race, our families' cultures, our personal biases, white privilege, white fragility and more. By creating a safe space where we listen respectfully and honor each other, we have been able to look closely at our lives and behaviors. We have come to see the systems that perpetuate racial inequity. After examining our personal stories – all different – we began with the

book *Mindful of Race* by Ruth King, read articles, viewed videos, watched documentaries, attended events, and recently completed exploration of racialized trauma with *My Grandmother's Hands* by Resmaa Menachem.

By engaging in this process – a process pursuing justice thru connection and trust – we are better prepared to acknowledge and confront the “original sin” of our nation and the impact racism has had on the local community. Our journey of reflection on race and equity continues as part of our ongoing Kinship work. Our desire is to increase awareness, help heal divisions, find avenues of repair and nurture a Sufi community where all feel welcome.

Serving the Incarcerated

by Mikail Davenport

25 years ago, my late beloved wife began a program at a county jail with three other psychotherapists, a cognitive behavioral trainer, and an acupuncturist to offer personal growth services to the incarcerated. They asked me to supply whatever spiritual support that the inmates might request. The program was entitled “LifeTools”.

When she passed, the program fell apart and we had to close. 15 of the 150 men who graduated from the program over its 5-year duration asked me to serve them as they were convicted and sentenced from 4 – 20 years in Texas prisons. That was the beginning a path of service that has grown and blossomed into now 40 prisoners in fourteen states... by word of mouth, mainly.

Through the prison book project, I have been able to supply them with free spiritual books, based on their resonant spiritual paths, and have been providing many of them with spiritual direction and support. The direction and support are primarily based on the teachings of Pir-o-Murshid Inayat Khan in an interfaith approach to spirituality.

What I have found over the years has been amazing! The attempts at satisfying the hunger of these souls to experience the Divine in their lives has been a great source of joy and fulfillment for me, and the evidence of that growth and experience has been humbling.

This is but one example of the reflection of growth in these men and women from one of the many letters I receive each month from those with whom I work: *“I have found a new life, a new way of being, of thinking, of experiencing the joy of Divine communion I never thought possible...”*

These men and women are Christians, Jews, Muslims, Buddhists, and not yet self-defined seekers of something outside of themselves that they are finding within themselves and that is giving them hope, strength, courage, and patience within the confines of the criminal justice system.

Those who have been released continue their work on themselves, some creating new families, finding fulfilling jobs, seeking continuing education, even establishing their own businesses... all because someone cared to listen and guide them through difficult times with unconditional love, patience and understanding without judgement or advice. It has not been easy; my *nafs* arise, my monkey mind begins chattering, and dealing with that is MY spiritual work. Yet all in all, it has been the most rewarding spiritual practice of my life.

I am not responsible for their success – I am nothing and nobody; I merely open a door through which THEY walk and hopefully continue THEIR path to the God Ideal. In truth, none of us can claim credit for what we do spiritually in the world, because the Divine Spark in us does the work IF we get out of our own way and let it work. YA QUDDUS! In the *Holy Spirit, who does the work.*”

“The moment a prisoner feels that he will no longer remain in the prison, the prison bars must break instantly.”

– Hazrat Pir-o-Murshid Inayat Khan

New Kinship Circle in the Bay Area

Responding to Covid-19 impacts, Shams Kairys will host a weekly online Kinship Circle — a welcoming space for local murids and ashiqs who may be feeling isolated, distressed, or just want to come together in a meditative atmosphere to connect and share with each other.

“Human suffering is the first call we must answer.”

– Hazrat Pir-o-Murshid Inayat Kha

How do we meet the challenge of the day: Wisdom from Inayat Khan

“One person comes into a country with a little cold or influenza and it spreads. If such a bad thing can spread, could not then the elevated thought of love and kindness and goodwill towards all men also spread? Thus we should see to it that there are finer germs of goodwill going from one to the other, of love and kindness, of the feeling of brotherhood, of the desire for spiritual evolution; they will have greater results than the other ones. If we all took this optimistic view, if we all worked in our small way, we could accomplish a great deal.” -- Hazrat Inayat Khan

The Centennial Edition of Inayat Khan’s teachings (Volume 4) on Healing and the Mind World has just been published. Order it from <http://www.omegapub.com/>

Kinship Council for North America Region

The North American Kinship Council provides guidance and nurture for the unfoldment of Kinship. Members include:

Rabia Povich, Vice President for North America
Amir Bisio, Philadelphia, PA
Mikail Davenport, Austin, TX
Shams Kairys, Berkeley, CA
Nur Azad Mangold, Chevy Chase, MD
Zakir Amin Povich, Charlottesville, VA
Batina Sheets, Austin, TX
Wali Via, Eugene, OR

You can learn more about our work at: <https://kinshipactivity.org/> Comments and questions to: rabia@inayatiyya.org

Article Submission

If you would like to share your individual kinship work in this newsletter, or the kinship work of your Inayatiyya community, please send an email to us at info@kinshipactivity.org. We would love to hear what you are doing and share it with the rest of our family. Mikail Davenport, Newsletter Editor and Webmaster

Ideas for serving others in this tumultuous time:

- ◆ Donate blood at your local blood center. Check if you are eligible.
- ◆ Reach out and connect with someone who might be alone, scared, or just wondering. Someone you have not talked to for a while. Connect online or consider writing an actual letter.
- ◆ When you go to the grocery store, ask a neighbor if they need you to pick up anything.
- ◆ Cook a pot of soup and give a jar to a neighbor - wipe the jar with a sterilizing cloth and suggest the neighbor heat it until they see steam.
- ◆ Make masks for yourselves and your friends. Google for directions. Opinions on masks differ, here’s one [article](#).
- ◆ If you play a musical instrument, practice on the porch or deck.
- ◆ Remember humor; it helps us all.