

Travel: Perception Shift

Thomas Jefferson Memorial Church, Unitarian Universalist, Charlottesville, VA

TJMC-UU 1st/3rd Sunday pm Covenant Group 3/2/2104, Laura Wallace

Chalice Lighting

"Time is the coin of your life. It is the only coin you have, and only you can determine how it will be spent. Be careful lest you let other people spend it for you." — Carl Sandburg

Check-Ins

Opening Words

...travel, for many of us, is a quest for not just the unknown, but the unknowing; I, at least, travel in search of an innocent eye that can return me to a more innocent self. I tend to believe more abroad than I do at home (which, though treacherous again, can at least help me to extend my vision), and I tend to be more easily excited abroad, and even kinder. And since no one I meet can "place" me — no one can fix me in my risumi —I can remake myself for better, as well as, of course, for worse (if travel is notoriously a cradle for false identities, it can also, at its best, be a crucible for truer ones). In this way, travel can be a kind of monasticism on the move: On the road, we often live more simply (even when staying in a luxury hotel), with no more possessions than we can carry, and surrendering ourselves to chance.

This is what Camus meant when he said that "what gives value to travel is fear" — disruption, in other words, (or emancipation) from circumstance, and all the habits behind which we hide. And that is why many of us travel not in search of answers, but of better questions. --*Pico Iyer (author of "Video Night in Kathmandu," "The Lady and the Monk," "Falling off the Map," "Cuba and the Night" and "Tropical Classical")*

TOPIC – Travel: Perception Shift

QUESTIONS – respond to any you like (in any order):

- 1) What is it about leaving home and going elsewhere that attracts you?
- 2) Has visiting another place ever changed something in you, or something you believed? How?
- 3) Share a story about a moment in travel that was in some way transformative.
- 4) Looking back, is there a particular travel memory that's stronger than others? Why do you think you remember that experience so vividly?
- 5) What place within 5 to 50 miles of here have you not explored but would like to?

Closing Words

And even as the world seems to grow more exhausted, our travels do not, and some of the finest travel books in recent years have been those that undertake a parallel journey, matching the physical steps of a pilgrimage with the metaphysical steps of a questioning (as in Peter Matthiessen's great "The Snow Leopard"), or chronicling a trip to the farthest reaches of human strangeness (as in Oliver Sack's "Island of the Color-Blind," which features a journey not just to a remote atoll in the Pacific, but to a realm where people actually see light differently). The most distant shores, we are constantly reminded, lie within the person asleep at our side.

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