

I, TOO, HAVE A DREAM ...

In the presence of family, friends, and especially Love, I have discovered that all things are possible. The vision of what is now the Imagine Peace Foundation began in my imagination as a child growing up in what used to be a small town in Southern California. I was blessed to be surrounded by a loving family, yet, growing up as a small child in the 60's I was also surrounded by a turbulent time with war on television, assassinations and conflict. I took in and accepted my parents tears, the fear in the world, the loss of all the people I saw on T.V. as they heard the news of their loved ones coming home in what I came to know of as big bags of sadness. I felt this sadness in my heart and it encompassed me. I would spend hours in my backyard dreaming of peace as I lay on the grass staring at the clouds and in the evening as I looked up at the twinkling stars on warm summer nights. Another way I connected with peace was with my wonderful toy the Hoola Hoop. I would pretend that it was my spaceship and along with my reluctant travel companion, my little dog Precious, we'd jump into our circular spaceship and travel to other countries and galaxies where there was war. We would bring the leaders together believing that if they could just meet each other, hold hands, and look into their eyes they would never want to harm one another. After all, we each lived under the same clouds and the same amazing stars.

Then as time went by I got married at age 17 and had a child of my own, an adorable son, Dennis. Eventually I became a single parent. During this time, and because of circumstances, I allowed myself to disconnect from my dream. I went through periods of great sadness and despair, not really understanding at the time why I felt this way. A few years ago I believed I was on a path of joy and then on September 11th not only did the whole world mourn a huge loss, I also suffered a personal loss. I believed I was going to, finally, marry the man of my dreams but was informed by a letter that day that we would not. I had sold my home and furnishings in anticipation of a new life. When this happened my foundation was shaken so deeply that I went into a year and a half period of isolation and reevaluation. It was through losing everything that I discovered that if I were to attract the circumstances in my life that I desired that I would have to start with me. There was nothing outside myself that could bring me joy; I could only create joy for myself by choosing to be joyful. I had to embrace the dark side of my soul, face my fears, remember who I was and reconnect with my purpose. But, spirit doesn't mess around and finally decided enough; it's time to soar! So the gift of the past years of facing my fears and remembering how to love myself was a long, but necessary, journey back to my heart.

I am grateful to those who showed up at a visioning on June 28th last year, when I invited 40 people to my home, and 36 of my friends and family attended not really knowing what was going to happen. I stated my intention. Just saying the words "I want to open a Center of Peace" was the first step. The journey from there, the people who said YES, those who have given their time, and opened their hearts - they are my amazing, spiritual guides who have become so dear to me. I am grateful to those who have stepped inside my dream and made it more wonderful than I could have imagined by myself. I'm in awe of the gifts they bring to me each day with their kind words of encouragement and inspiration. Thank you, to each one of you.

The path to peace is not easy as it takes courage and imagination. We must look outside the box and within ourselves for the answers. Violence starts within each one of us and we can choose to think differently. We can teach our children through our example to honor, love, and appreciate, themselves and others. Children need to know that they are the gift. We all need to know that.

I know there is a place of peace that will come forth in our world. It's just a matter of time. The path may not be clear, but I know that it starts here within each one of us. Within our hearts, our minds, and our convictions. People have made great sacrifices to obtain peace in our world, and we honor them. It is because of them that we know we can choose another way. I believe the best way to continue to honor, those who have given their lives in the pursuit of peace, is for us to recognize and discover that there is a different way to come to terms with conflict. There will always be conflict, however the joy of victory at the price of another's life is a fleeting and haunting joy. The joy of transforming ourselves and reaching into our hearts in search of a different outcome, a kinder way, is a path that we can feel

magnificent about pursuing. The gift is of knowing that in conflict can come great healing, if it is handled with love and compassion. Anger and fear can be a tool to know we need to look inside ourselves for understanding. The other gift is acknowledging that we are, our center of peace.

About a year ago I wrote down my vision with the help of many, of what is now, Imagine Peace Foundation. On that day I had watched Oprah, as I often do, and she was honoring the birth of Martin Luther King, Jr. I was inspired, as I always am, by his vision and it brought to tears once more by his "I Have a Dream" speech. My son is grown and married now and as of a year ago September, I have a beautiful Grandson, Alex, who I saw come forth into this world with awe and amazement. I knew as I looked into his face for the first time that I wanted his world to be filled with the love and compassion. I felt at that very first moment that I saw spirit dancing through his eyes, and I also, have a Dream...

I have a dream that someday my Grandson, Alex, in the future will have his grandchildren sitting around the dinner table and when I listen carefully I can hear them say in disbelief - "Grandpa, can you imagine that long, long ago there was a time that men and women fought against each other and killed each themselves as a way to solve their problems. Why did they do this? I am so happy Grandpa, to know that we now live in a peaceful world."

My grown Grandson will say; "People did this because for a time people forgot who they were. They were lost and searching to find themselves in a world that in the end did not bring them joy and fulfillment. Then, one day, men and women began to dream again and to remember who they were and in that 'remembering' they began to find their joy again, and in that joy there was peace. They took what they remembered out into the world and shared their dreams of a new world with others. Your Great, Great, Grandmother along with many others that were with her, and those that came before her, were the pioneers of a new way of thinking. They had a vision and a belief that with love, compassion and patience a new way of being was possible. They began to show kindness to others where kindness was lacking. They listened, not only with their minds, but with their hearts. They became not only tolerant, but reached beyond that, to really understand and strive toward appreciation of all they met. They had many challenges along the way and their vision was greater than their fear. If she were here right now she would look into your eyes and say: "I see in you the light of the universe, and in knowing the wonder that you are when you listen to your heart, remember this; when you truly believe, all things are possible."