

# Being Peaceful Change

## Saturday, August 1, 2020

### Fr Richard Rohr, OFM

*Gandhi's spirit of non-violence sprang from an inner realization of spiritual unity in himself. —Thomas Merton*

Authentic spirituality is always first about you—about allowing your own heart and mind to be changed.

*Nonviolence is the greatest and most active force in the world. The more you develop it in your own being, the more infectious it becomes till it overwhelms your surroundings and by and by might oversweep the world. —Mohandas Gandhi*

*When you understand, you love. And when you love, you naturally act in a way that can relieve the suffering of people. —Thich Nhat Hanh*

*We are called to assist the Earth to heal her wounds and in the process heal our own—indeed, to embrace the whole creation in all its diversity, beauty and wonder. —Wangari Maathai*

*Along the way of life, someone must have sense enough and morality enough to cut off the chain of hate. This can only be done by projecting the ethic of love to the center of our lives. —Martin Luther King, Jr*

#### **Practice: A Settled Body**

*Resmaa Menakem is a therapist and trauma specialist whose work focuses on how we carry our pain and fear in our bodies. We pass it along to those around us, and we pass it down from one generation to the next. We cannot hope to bring peace to the world if we are not at peace within ourselves. Menakem explains how we might begin the peacemaking process within our own bodies:*

Few skills are more essential than the ability to settle your body. If you can settle your body, you are more likely to be calm, alert, and fully present, no matter what is going on around you. A settled body enables you to harmonize and connect with other bodies around you, while encouraging those bodies to settle as well. Gather together a large group of unsettled bodies—or assemble a group of bodies and then unsettle them—and you get a mob or a riot. But bring a large group of settled bodies together and you have a potential movement—and a potential force for tremendous good in the world. A calm, settled body is the foundation for health, for healing, for helping others, and for changing the world. . . .

Over time, I learned to access a settledness that is always and already present. I usually call it the Infinite Source, but it doesn't require a name, or an explanation, or a belief.

This settling of nervous systems, and this connection to a larger Source, is vital to healing. . . .

You'll recognize some of these practices as things I've described my [Black] grandmother doing; as things many small children do intuitively; as things parents often do with their babies; as things enslaved people did as they worked together on plantations; and as practices from many religions. Almost all of them [such as belly breathing, slow rocking, humming, singing aloud, or rubbing your belly] have also been proven to work in controlled lab experiments.

*Here, Resmaa Menakem offers a practice called "Breathe, Ground, and Resource," which can be done standing, sitting, or lying down, with eyes open or closed.*

Take a few deep breaths. Let your body relax as much as it wants to.

Think of a person, an animal, or a place that makes you feel safe and secure. Then imagine that, right now, this person or animal is beside you, or you are in that safe place.

Breathing naturally, simply let yourself experience that safety and security for one to two minutes.

Afterward, notice how and what you experience in your body.

**Reference:**

Adapted from Resmaa Menakem, *My Grandmother's Hands: Racialized Trauma and the Pathway to Mending Our Hearts and Bodies* (Central Recovery Press: 2017), 141, 146, 151–152.