

Crisis and the ‘Hip-Hope Movement’

by Honey Novick

When a person is hungry and I share my lunch, I am alleviating that person's hunger for one meal. When a person is hungry and I give them a fishing rod, teach them how to fish whenever they are hungry, I alleviate that person's hunger, PERIOD. This metaphor is a wonderful way to illustrate how one can obliterate a crisis. By paying attention to another's concerns, learning by listening to what the problem or issue is, we confront the issue of the crisis (e.g. hunger) and then present a new way of doing things (teach through mutual understanding), ultimately forming a bond of friendship, mentorship, or concerned citizen. We invest in ourselves when we invest in another person. This fishing metaphor also illustrates how culture and education become the tools of personal development, advancement and community building. I'm a member of the "HIP- HOPE MOVEMENT". The only thing that one person can do for another, in my opinion, is to offer hope. It is hip to offer hope!!! It is hope that helps people get out of bed. It is hope that helps communities heal. It is hope that drives the artist to reach beyond their experiences and strive beyond expectations in whatever medium best suits that artist. The "HIP- HOPE MOVEMENT" strives to get beyond the "blame game" for any kind of suffering and lead the way to personal responsibility or ownership of one's artistic expression.

"Hip-Hoppers" are people of action. We like to laugh and find fun in ordinary things. We also are involved in many projects that bring people together. For example, off and on for the last 16 years, "WOMANVOICE", a peaceful protest that grew out of the Montreal Massacre invites 14 diverse women artists to gather on December 6th. They celebrate and perform music, painting, movement, poetry, etc. Women, in particular need many outlets for creative expression. Through creative expression, we advance personal empowerment and the enrichment of society. The more people speak out in song, dance, painting, poetry, etc., the more feelings and experiences are heard, the sooner people can create dialogue. Dialogue is the first step towards a common meeting ground by people who stand for something. WOMANVOICE welcomed a woman who believes that people in the pornography industry have a right to dignity. She paints exquisite portraits of those people for a coffee-table type of art book. Women speak openly about their view of eroticism, aging, gender, being abused, being physically handicapped, decriminalization of marijuana as well as birthing, motherhood, traditional women's roles and every other kind of in-between. People have to laugh. Sometimes things in life's experiences become so difficult that all we can do is laugh at these seemingly bizarre ways. From sharing various viewpoints, friendships are created, as are new projects, community, and dialogue. However, if there is no respect for diverse opinion, then authoritarianism gets in the way and nothing moves. All art flows from the individual.

I think dialogue, however expressed, is another way of dealing with crisis. The word "crisis" comes from the Greek root for "decision". Because crisis is a juncture, decisions must be made. Often it takes a crisis to happen before real change occurs. Mrs. Cora Weiss, chairperson of the Hague Appeal for Peace, a group of Nobel Peace prize laureates, gave children in very poor urban areas, cameras. They were to photograph their daily experiences. These photos would then be displayed at a gallery. How children see the world is an education in itself. They shot pictures of garbage littering the streets to being hungry, feeling scared, alone and different. These images affected the people who saw them and revealed important issues that if not dealt with could lead to future crises. Of course, these are ideals and ideals take courage and perseverance to enact. It is not easy to see something or say something. There are consequences. Many small-press publishing houses are created just to express one viewpoint. Many CD companies, also, spring up to get a certain kind of music "out there". That is the undying spirit of the artist.

Personal choice and decisiveness is the responsibility of anyone who cares. As artists, we have no choice. By being sensitive, visionary and articulating our perspective, we are compelled to take action. How we translate what we see to a greater audience can be a problem, but that is the struggle of all human relations from communication to public relations and marketing. Art, like life, is all about being challenged, struggling, striving, living in hope, confronting and overcoming crises. In the process, we create a greater world.

Honey Novick is a singer/song writer/voice teacher /poet. With extensive experience in the arts and music, she has a dedicated interest in social justice. Born in Toronto of parents from the Middle East, war and conflicts are serious subjects to her. She is currently working on music programmes for people with eating disorders and for women in shelters.