

Thoreau, Katahdin, The Native American and the Future

Concord, Massachusetts
July 10, 2002

An Evening Event In Conjunction with the Photography Exhibit:
Greatest Mountain: Exploring the Mystical Nature of Katahdin. An Exhibit of Images and Ideas.

Introductory Remarks by Connie Baxter Marlow

Hello. I'm Connie Baxter Marlow, a friend of Katahdin's, great grand-niece of Percival Baxter who purchased and gave Katahdin to the people of Maine and direct descendent of John Alden and William Mullins, signers of the first document of freedom that was to lay the foundation of democracy in America, the Mayflower Compact.

We are gathered here in Concord tonight to ponder a big picture. Concord is in some respects the birthplace of our great nation, as it was here the War for Independence began. Concord is the home of that great spiritual awakening--American style--of the Transcendentalists. It is the place where 3 rivers flow together and its name has the ring of peace – Concord. Can there be Peace on Earth? Can “the shot heard round the world” be the shot that ultimately brought freedom and justice for ALL people to pass on Earth? That is up to us, we the people, to decide.

Albert Einstein saw the world as a puzzle meant for deciphering. Roger Rosenblat in his 1999 Time Magazine article “The Age of Einstein” stated “Einstein understood that the world was a puzzle created for deciphering and more, that a person's place in the order of things was to solve as much of that puzzle as possible. That is what makes us human; this and the governing elements of morals and humor.”

Einstein is also quoted as saying “No problem was ever solved in the same consciousness in which it was created.”

Tonight we will piece some of the puzzle together by making some bold observations. Tonight, using Henry David Thoreau as a bridge we will walk into another consciousness and see if we can gain a perspective from which we can see peace, liberty and justice for all.

What we are going to ponder tonight is the mystical nature of a mountain, the expansive vision of a great American thinker and the worldview of the Earth People-represented tonight by Arnie Neptune-Penobscot Indian Elder.

Mysticism, mystical mountains, Thoreau the mystic. How might one define this magical word? I personally define it as a frequency similar to a radio wave. When one tunes into this frequency one sees and hears certain information. It doesn't matter where or when throughout history one lives or has lived on the planet. It is the frequency where universal law and universal truth are available to any who choose to listen. Imagine a radio station as you're driving down the highway of life. Sometimes its full of static and one can barely hear, sometimes it is as clear as a bell. To me, our great leaders – Washington, Jefferson, Ghandi, MLK, Jr., Lincoln, JFK, RFK, FDR, Buddha, Jesus, our great authors, songwriters, artists have accessed this frequency. It is what makes them great. It has the resonance of the heart, and the heart is drawn to it over the millennia.

In a little book called “Mystics as a Force for Change” an India Indian named Ghose states: “Mysticism proposes a revolution from above and by consciousness. To say “Technology is the grammar of the future” is dangerous nonsense. Technique and transcendence must learn to work together. That would be

the beginning of the Total Man and Totality-thinking. And the individuals who will most help humanity in the hour of crisis are those who recognize a willed change from within as a step to a total change in our relationship with reality, the harmony of the whole.” He further states: “The issue is plain: What is the true nature of things and how do we embody it in our social living?”

That said, I want to introduce our speakers tonight:

First of all I want to introduce Katahdin. I want to ask you to consider opening your hearts and minds to the conscious, loving nature of this mountain as a transmitter of the “truth frequency”. It has long been honored as sacred by the native peoples. It draws us to its slopes and when there, if we have our systems set on “receive” we get a sense that this mountain is “alive”, has a “character of its own”. Some say they “see God” there, others have a challenging hike and call it a day. Katahdin speaks to us, our challenge is to be able to hear what it is saying and then walk with the truth it tells us in our lives.

Next I want to introduce Arnie Neptune, Penobscot Indian elder. The Penobscots were given the caretakership of the land in Maine that is and surrounds Katahdin. Arnie is one of the last full-blooded Penobscots, He is a descendent of the great shaman John Neptune, who was the first Indian to climb above treeline on Katahdin. Arnie left the poverty of Indian Island where he was raised and joined the services, to return 40 years later to bring an elder’s vision to his people. He will share a Native American perspective with us tonight, a perspective which I believe carries keys for realizing the great dream of peace and freedom we all share.

And lastly I want to introduce Brad Dean, Ph.D. and Thoreau scholar who will speak to you tonight of Henry David Thoreau’s contact with Katahdin and of Thoreau’s fascination with and research into the Native American Indian before contact. Brad has edited several of Thoreau’s books, including “Wild Fruits” which is available for purchase here tonight. He is in the process of transcribing Thoreau’s unpublished “Indian Books” and has most recently been editor of the Thoreau Society Bulletin and Media Center Director at the Thoreau Institute. While observing the plethora of Indian arrowheads that Thoreau found in Concord, he stated in his journal that “this little symbol that Nature has transmitted to us, this arrow-headed character is probably more ancient than any other, and to my mind it has not been deciphered.” I believe Thoreau had a sense of the importance of the ideas found in Native thought to the American mind. Thoreau went on to state “Why, then, make great ado about the Roman and the Greek, and neglect the Indian?” He spent a good part of his life attempting to discover these ideas through the research which Brad will touch upon tonight.

To me, as a mother, the future is the key. I have a sense of the extraordinary potential of the love in the human heart and the rest of Creation. I will ask you to ponder the puzzle pieces you have been offered tonight and see if perhaps they might add a perspective from which we might see and become peace, freedom and justice. For as Ghandi has said “We must become the change we wish to see in the world.”

I will close with the words of RFK on Moral Courage: “Each time a person stands for an ideal, or acts to improve the lot of others, or strikes out against injustice, he or she sends forth a tiny ripple of hope. And crossing each other from a million different centers of energy and daring, those ripples build a current that can sweep down the mightiest walls of oppression and resistance. Few are willing to brave the disapproval of their fellows, the censure of their colleagues, the wrath of their society. Moral courage is a rarer commodity than bravery in battle or great intelligence. Yet it is the once essential vital quality for those who seek to change the world that yields most painfully to change.” “This is a great nation and a strong people. Any who seek to comfort rather than instruct, promise satisfaction rather than reveal frustration-deny that greatness and drain that strength. For today as it was in the beginning, it is the truth that makes us free.”

Thank you.

