

VIGIL Script for December 9, 2020
By Karen Wyatt MD

1. Introduction:

Today is the 9th day of December 2020. On the ninth of each month, communities are invited to hold space for reflection on life, death, and transformation and so I invite you to join me in a vigil today and on the ninth day of each coming month.

Today we come together in this Vigil for those who are oppressed. To be oppressed means to be burdened with cruel or unjust restraints or to be weighed down upon by an outside force. We recognize those who are oppressed by unjust laws and traditions, by prejudice and bigotry, by economic disparity, by the failure of our social systems to provide equitable healthcare, education, food security, safety, and opportunities to thrive. We recognize that when human beings operate from the lowest levels of consciousness we bring harm to one another; we exploit the good efforts of others; we profit from the suffering of our fellow humans; we raise ourselves up by stepping on our brethren. We understand that this lower consciousness is part of each of us and we are all capable of doing harm to others and ignoring the suffering and despair of our neighbors. But we are not limited to our basest instincts. We each possess a higher self that can see beyond the fear, greed and selfishness of the ego. We are also capable of compassion, fair-mindedness, love, justice, and generosity. Today we come together to affirm that we can rise above the oppression caused by egoic thinking and create a more just, peaceful, loving, and caring society for everyone.

2. Focus intention with 3 deep breaths

3. Blessing for Lighting the Candle

As we light this candle we shine the light of love and justice on the oppression that exists in the darkness of our society. We shine this light so we can better see the higher path that leads us toward compassionate care and treatment of all our brothers and sisters.

4. Poem:

Rainer Maria Rilke, Sonnets to Orpheus II, 29

Quiet friend who has come so far,
feel how your breathing makes more space around you.
Let this darkness be a bell tower
and you the bell. As you ring,
what batters you becomes your strength.
Move back and forth into the change.
What is it like, such intensity of pain?
If the drink is bitter, turn yourself to wine.
In this uncontainable night,
be the mystery at the crossroads of your senses,
the meaning discovered there.
And if the world has ceased to hear you,
say to the silent earth: I flow.
To the rushing water, speak: I am.

5. Reflection

As Winter approaches we are entering into the darkest time of the year, during a year that has been one of the darkest in our memories. Nearly 300,000 people so far have died from the pandemic; people have lost homes, jobs, financial security, relationships, routines, rituals, and all aspects of a “regular” life. Moreover we have witnessed intolerable systemic racism in the brutal murders of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor at the hands of law enforcement and in the disproportionate COVID-19 cases and deaths for people of color due to healthcare inequities. This has been a year of oppression. Some of us have been burdened by cruel and unjust treatment from our racist systems; others have been weighed down by the constant presence of sickness, death, grief and hopelessness throughout this long pandemic year. We are in need of the light—of any light that can shine in the midst of this darkness, this “uncontainable night,” and help us find our way.

But these are also holy days—when faith communities around the world gather to anticipate and celebrate the coming of the light, the eventual relief from this oppressive darkness. Indigenous peoples are preparing for the solstice, a day to show gratitude for the return of the light. Hanukka—the festival of lights—will be celebrated as a reminder of the Jewish struggle to be free of religious oppression. Kwanzaa will honor the shared cultural heritage of African-Americans and serve as an affirmation of resilience in

the face of systemic oppression. Advent is the season of waiting and longing for relief from suffering, pain and oppression by the arrival of one bright light. On all of these holy days of this darkest month of the year we celebrate by utilizing the power of light—we light candles and lanterns and strings of brightly colored bulbs to drive away the darkness, to remind ourselves that the light is eternal.

Edmond Mbiaka wrote: “Why not dare yourself to become a shining positive light where darkness is the only thing known?”

We come together today in this vigil to remember that WE are the light the world needs. We are the answer to oppression. We are the soothers of unrest, the cool water for the fire, the bell that shatters the silence, the wine that quenches thirst, the breath that creates space around us. We can bring this light to the world and overcome the ravages of oppression when we rise above our own lower consciousness to become beacons of love.

Martin Luther King Jr. said “Darkness cannot drive out darkness: only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate: only love can do that.”

Before he died the Buddha said “Make of yourselves a light.”

The instructions are clear. We are here to be the light during these times of darkness and oppression. We recognize that to shine the light of love for this world, we must rise above our own fear and darkness. We must not be deterred by the bitterness and hopelessness of humanity. We must learn to act from the guidance of our Souls, our higher consciousness, in order to embody this transformative light.

Og Mandino wrote “I will love the light for it shows me the way, yet I will endure the darkness because it shows me the stars.”

During these holy days we remember the darkness and cherish it for nurturing the seeds of new growth, for causing us to search within ourselves for the answers we cannot see, for revealing the beauty of the stars. We wait together in anticipation of the return of the light even as we ignite our own hearts with love to illuminate the world around us.

Love is the force that will transform our hopelessness and despair. Only love will free us from this oppression.

Let us set aside our anger, despair, pain, and fear. Let us search our hearts for the spark of love so bright and vast that it can shelter all who have been oppressed, all who have been battered, neglected, abused, and forgotten.

6. Introduction for silent contemplation

As we now contemplate how to face the oppressiveness of our society, of our lower consciousness, and of the pandemic that weighs heavily upon us this year we open our hearts to reveal the deep love and light they contain. We visualize that we hold all people who are oppressed in one hand and in the other we hold the shining, courageous light of love and compassion. Placing our hands together over our hearts we envision all people being embraced and lifted up by the transformative power of love. We hold space here for the suffering of all beings in this moment and offer compassionate shelter for those who have been mistreated in our world.

Breathing in we fill our hearts with the light of love, breathing out we radiate light in every direction, to all who have been left in the darkness.

Continue breathing love in and out for as long as you like as you pray or meditate.

7. Music and time for silent contemplation

8. Benediction

Having come together in this vigil for those who are oppressed we now prepare to return to our daily lives. Repeat after me this prayer written by César Chávez who was a Latino American civil rights activist for farm workers:

Prayer of the Farm Worker's Struggle

Show me the suffering of the most miserable;
So I will know my people's plight.
Free me to pray for others;
For you are present in every person.
Help me take responsibility for my own life;
So that I can be free at last.

Grant me courage to serve others;
For in service there is true life.
Give me honesty and patience;
So that I can work with other workers.
Bring forth song and celebration;
So that the Spirit will be alive among us.
Let the Spirit flourish and grow;
So that we will never tire of the struggle.
Let us remember those who have died for justice;
For they have given us life.
Help us love even those who hate us;
So we can change the world.

Amen