

A Poem for Peacemakers

in honor of the Fifth Assembly of Educateurs sans Frontières,
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I.

In the tear-watered soil of this suffering world,
quietly grow the roots of peace.
Their tiny tips travel out inch by inch
around and even through
the rocks, the rubble of war,
the boneyards of famine,
the thickest walls of apathy and fear.
They reach out to each other
searching patiently, incessantly
for the clear stream and its source.
Like a great grove of aspens
lifting up silvery leaves,
a million tiny prayer flags
fluttering in the breeze,
what can be seen of peace is beautiful.
When it is swept away by drought
or fire or flood, the wise do not despair,
but turn again to tend the soil
wherein the roots grow deep
and deep and strong for the next rebirth.
The whole earth groans
and pushes again toward joy.

II.

Every being in this mad time
lives with an arrow in its heart,
so said Gautama Buddha.
Learn to take the arrow out,
he said, then help others
do the same. Hate, fear, and anger
he said, are like a second arrow
beside the first. Take them out!
There is no time to argue
the fine points of archery.
Move out into the world
as wounded healers.
The world needs this medicine:

III.

When this warring world was full of kings,
the longed-for land was called
the Kingdom of God,
then the Peaceable Kingdom.
In this time of race against race
in fragile republics, we look
for the Beloved Community.
It is our native land, and memories
of its pleasant hills and streams,
our young feet in its sun-dappled
meadows call us home.
The wise set aside everything
to pass again through its gates:
the wound in the chest,
the listening ear,
the bright eyes of a child.

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