

North Mpls residents, we are the ones we've been waiting for

by Don Samuels

*Minnesota Spokesman-Recorder*

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The world is always and only changed by people who are willing to coexist with discomfort. As former President John F. Kennedy said, "Some men see things as they are and say why. I dream of things that never were and say why." Discomfort combined with hope produces transformation.

That is why it is important for us not to run away from uncomfortable situations. It is in discomfort that the seeds of change are sown. Every innovation, from the bra to the Civil Rights Movement, from the mundane to the magnificent and transcendent, was born out of disaffection with the status quo and the capacity to dream of a fundamentally better reality.

Most people when faced with challenging situations choose either to flee or develop coping mechanisms. Those who flee lose the opportunity to participate in change in an intimate and relevant way. Those who develop coping mechanisms either insulate themselves from the effects of the problem, or they become perpetual complainers who thrive on things being the way they are.

Our focus is on those who neither flee nor accommodate nor complain about the problem. These are those who engage dilemmas. They study the problem from all sides, applying their curiosity, contemplation and creativity. In the process they gain insight for a solution.

Those of us who live in North Minneapolis have a perfect opportunity to fall into this category. We inhabit the location of some of the region's most challenging problems. We have not fled. Now, if we can avoid the escapism, apathy and the immaturity of victim-hood, we may step into the sacred space of creativity and lead this urban community into an unprecedented quality of life.

If you find yourself dissatisfied with the quality of life on your street or in our community, you are being summoned by destiny into a position of creativity and transformation. You are the very person you have been waiting for. There are many around you who desire to move or have given up. You are still here, and you hold the desire on which the structure of the future will be built.

You can identify the components of community life that are unacceptable. This is insight! You have a sense of what this community could be. This is a vision! Often insightful and visionary people are criticized by the other for being naïve or delusional. Often we ourselves feel discouraged and question our sanity. This is natural. But do not relent. We are the hope of the community.

Often in our youth, we have these feelings of discomfort and creativity but are confused about the meaning. We sometimes think our incompatibility with the status quo is a signal that we do not belong. We should get away from this place where we are comfortable. Often our family and friends persuade us that this is the case. They want us to be comfortable, and so they advise us to flee. This is a trick of the mind. Resist it.

Your waves of discomfort are primal calls to the arena of engagement. You are

being called to face the problems of your community and participate in the creation of a new urban reality where young people graduate routinely from high school, have successful college careers, avoid criminal lifestyles, get married and raise fathered and mothered children, build up the culture of their community, and contribute to the wealth of their city.

How this all will be achieved is not yet fully developed. How you will contribute is not yet clear. That is why problem solvers of chronic problems must be people of persistent hope and faith. Get involved. Join people of like mind. Find a project worth your effort. The future is in your hands. As Senator Obama often quotes, "We are the change we've been waiting for."

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