

Evolving Tradition

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Tradition is a powerful thing. In many ways, it tells us where we come from and where we are. And in some cases, it also determines where we will be going. The assumption is that all tradition is good. After all, what comprises tradition, for any of us, is what has been around a long time. But does tradition really always do that? The answer is: not really.

If we are honest with ourselves, we have to admit that there are traditions that need changing. Traditions that allow child labor or the silencing of women are traditions that do not accept the equality of all human beings. In many parts of the world, the marginalization of women and girls is an on-going tradition. In many countries, the voices of women are silenced because they literally belong to their fathers, husbands, brothers, etc. Who would argue that such traditions, such time-honored ways of doing things do not need to be changed? Probably only those that directly benefit from child labor or the silencing of women or.....

Yet changing tradition is difficult work...so difficult, in fact, that the collective energy that must be assembled to bring about such change in tradition is often seen as insurmountable. Yet we know that there are things that have to be changed. The question is how to do it.

Perhaps part of the solution is the development of other traditions, traditions that are not founded on keeping things a certain way but rather traditions that provide for the time and space to bring about change. Here are three suggestions for traditions that bring about change:

A Tradition of Hospitality: Hospitality, the welcoming of someone into one's home, is already a part of many traditions around the world. Hospitality is usually seen as inviting of someone into one's physical space, perhaps for food or drink or even to spend the night. Imagine what might happen if we developed a tradition of hospitality that provided space for discussion, for new ideas, for new possibilities. A tradition of hospitality that provides a space for interest, for knowledge and for experience to be shared would inevitably be a hospitality that allowed for new ideas to be discussed and perhaps even brought into being.

Over the past decade, people have come to CREA House from many countries and other parts of the US. One of the traditions of hospitality that has purposefully evolved here at CREA is that we sit around the table, either in the kitchen if it is just a few of us or the dining room if the group is larger and we talk. We talk and talk and share and talk some more. And the ideas that that get spoken in that shared space of being together perhaps might not even have developed if we did not purposefully (as in full of purpose) sit and be together.

In our sharing, we get to know each other better as persons, as individuals and so it becomes a safer place to share new ideas, new ways of doing things. Of course, such sharing takes time but if we really want to bring about change, then it is time well spent.

A Tradition of Questioning: Bringing about a tradition of questioning can be a greater challenge. The word “questioning” has two very different meanings. On one hand, questioning can mean challenging as in questioning or challenging authority. But on the other hand, questioning can also mean possibility for new ways of seeing, of understanding, of doing. The challenge in developing a tradition of questioning is to find the right time and place, the right tone of voice, the right words, with which to both create the environment for questioning and to raise the questions themselves.

When a place is known as a space in which it is a good thing to raise questions, then the growth of ideas that can take place is amazing. But we need to want to create such places, such spaces. And that means we need to want the questions and to be willing to live with what might develop from them. This brings us to the third new tradition.

A Tradition of Uncertainty: Living with uncertainty can be difficult. Not knowing can be difficult. Yet if we are honest with ourselves, we have to acknowledge that the majority of people in the world live with considerable uncertainty each day. The not knowing if there will be food or sufficient earnings, etc. each day are uncertainties which are the daily realities of men and women and their children around the world. Yet they continue to live, to work, to keep going. From them and their struggles we too can learn that it is possible to do more than just survive in the midst of uncertainty.

For a tradition of uncertainty to take root, we need to be able to live and walk in the faith of possibility and hope. We need to be willing to not settle for some situation simply because it creates certainty. We need to be willing to live and walk and work towards what we believe needs to happen.

So what makes this possible? For all of us, both as individuals and collectively, to be able to do that walking in uncertainty, we need each other, we need community. To create that kind of community takes time. It takes attention. It means spending time with each other and *being* with each other as persons, not as interchangeable parts of a whole.

The challenge of taking time, of making the time, is not an easy one. We live in a world where speed and long to do lists are used as a measure of worth and usefulness and value. And the taking of time means spending time, face to face, together wherever and whenever possible for it is only together that we learn to read each others faces and allow others to read ours.

It also means that our value is not measured only in how much work we get done but *also* in the determining if we are doing the right work, the needed work, the work we are called to be doing. Doing is not the same as being. We need both.