The Power of Community

Global Spirit: Join the timeless conversation

The following resources are designed to support a deeper exploration of the themes presented in THE POWER OF COMMUNITY. Video clips, questions, and other resources are offered to invite conversation and to encourage users to explore and add their own insight into the program’s many themes. Use these resources as a package or in part, in facilitated environments (such as viewing parties and classrooms) or in more informal contexts, in small groups, or, on your own.
About This Program

This Global Spirit program explores the powerful role that spiritually-based communities have played for hundreds of years, and continue to play, in supporting the well-being, spiritual growth and transformations of many individuals. Two spiritually-based communities are featured, one Zen Buddhist and one Christian Contemplative, both grounded in their practices of meditation, prayer, and social service. The program explores the challenges of living in a spiritual community, as well as its potential to transform individual and collective consciousness and catalyze positive societal change.

Adam Bucko is an activist and spiritual director to many of New York City’s homeless youth. At age 17, Adam immigrated from Poland to America. He studied in monasteries in the US and India and was influenced by the teachings of Bede Griffiths and Father Thomas Keating. He then worked on the streets of various American cities with young people struggling against homelessness and prostitution. Adam co-founded The Reciprocity Foundation, a nonprofit organization dedicated to transforming the lives of New York City’s homeless youth. He also established HAB, an ecumenical and inter-spiritual “new monastic” fellowship for young people, which offers formation in radical spirituality and sacred activism.

Roshi Joan Halifax, Ph.D., is a Buddhist teacher, Zen priest, anthropologist, and pioneer in the field of end-of-life care. She is Founder, Abbot, and Head Teacher of Upaya Institute and Zen Center in Santa Fe, New Mexico. She is Director of the Project on Being with Dying, and Founder of the Upaya Prison Project that develops programs on meditation for prisoners. She is also founder of the Nomads Clinic in Nepal. She studied for a decade with Zen Teacher Seung Sahn and was a teacher in the Kwan Um Zen School. She received the Lamp Transmission from Thich Nhat Hanh, and was given Inka by Roshi Bernie Glassman.

Phil Cousineau, the series host, is an award-winning writer, teacher, editor, lecturer, travel leader, storyteller and TV / radio host. His fascination with the art, literature, and history of culture has taken him from Michigan to Marrakesh, from Iceland to the Amazon in a worldwide search for what the ancients called “the soul of the world.” With more than 30 books and 15 scriptwriting credits to his name, the omnipresent influence of myth in modern life is a thread that runs through all of his work.

This “Chat” space is intended to ignite the imagination and generate personal reflection. We hope such reflections will spark wider conversations that bring new insights and possible answers to some of our most urgent human questions. Please share your comments and experiences with our global community by clicking the chat icon in the left margin, or by visiting the program page at: www.cemproductions.org/globalspirit/power-of-community.
... Because all of us are asking this question: Why am I here? What am I going to do with my life? How can I find meaning and purpose? And so here at Reciprocity we don’t start with theology. We don’t start with a framework. We don’t even start with a practice. We start with being with each other in such way that we can help each other to be relocated in our truth.

— Adam Bucko, co-founder Reciprocity Foundation

... We’re an intimate campus, so to speak, an intimate monastery and the residents who live here are dedicated people who are very engaged with practice and also with an emphasis on precepts. How do we become a Buddha now, not 20 years from now or at the end of our life, but how can we actualize the best within ourselves now?

— Roshi Joan Halifax, founder Upaya Zen Center

What’s interesting about this new generation is that they don’t just want to leave everything and go into a monastery, and they don’t want to have a job that doesn’t reflect their spiritual values. So what I’m seeing with this new generation is that they want to combine work in the monastery with service. Somehow they want to build these well integrated lives where they do work in the world, but that work reflects their deepest sense of calling...

I look at Upaya as a kind of inter-world between the mountain and the street, between the monastery and all the rest of life. It’s a place with a stable practice community, primarily composed of young people, and is really inspiring. The older people come as guests into the place, thousands of them every year. They see these wonderful young people practicing there, who are the age of their granddaughters and their children, and this shifts the way that they understand their own lives...

— Roshi Joan Halifax, founder Upaya Zen Center

How are young people expressing their spirituality?

Do you sense there is anything new emerging in spiritual communities today? If so, what?

How do you respond to Roshi Joan’s question: “How can we actualize the best within ourselves now?”
Upaya was founded as a way to bring meditation practice together with social action. There’s a kind of gravity in this space, which is immediately palpable when people open the temple doors to enter. You can feel that sense of crossing the threshold of our everyday awareness into a space that has a greater luminosity, greater freedom...

... It’s not really even clear who’s helping who. It’s just about being in that state of receptivity, bearing witness and then there is always this force that just emerges and does the work of healing on both them, me, and everyone else in the space.

— Adam Bucko, co-founder Reciprocity Foundation

For us, from the very beginning, our commitment was to create a space in which people when they come in, they just feel loved. And I think there is something about cultivating that space that evokes certain qualities in us, that reminds us of our potential, of the qualities that are sometimes maybe buried in us, but that are there...

... But the other side of the equation is, if I go to Nepal, or if I’m sitting in a hospital room, or if I’m sitting inside a maximum security prison, there’s something inside of me that it is invited by myself to understand that this also is where I’m practicing. I can’t have just one space and that’s where I practice and everything else doesn’t count. It’s really to understand that the opportunity for practice is in every space that you enter.

— Roshi Joan Halifax, founder Upaya Zen Center

Can you describe an experience of entering a sacred space that evoked certain qualities, feelings or spiritual states within you?

What did you notice about the sacred spaces created by Adam Bucko and Roshi Joan Halifax?

How would you create or cultivate a “sacred space” for your prayers or meditation?
We gather in silence and then everyone speaks to God, knowing that God is in the room, knowing that God is our best friend, taking off our masks, and really voicing our pain, voicing whatever is alive in us at the moment. And something happens when that happens - it's like there are words and then there are no more words to be said...

... And then all of the sudden, religious practices make sense, theologies make sense. Why? Because we are no longer talking about some abstract God. We’re talking about an experience that they just had and we’re talking about narratives and practices that can help them to stay connected to that presence that they felt in the depths of their heart.

— Adam Bucko, co-founder Reciprocity Foundation

The experience of stillness and silence is so essential in our practice here at Upaya, because we’re endeavoring to cultivate these qualities as our primary mental experience...

... We actually engage in a process of physical stillness where we drop down into the body and we really let go inside the body, and let go of the secretion of thoughts, the kind of “under-mudder” which characterizes our lives in general. And that stillness of the mind points to our ability to be with things exactly as they are, in an unmediated, unbiased way.

— Roshi Joan Halifax, founder Upaya Zen Center

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- What do you think of Adam’s invitation to “a direct encounter with God?”
- Have you had such an encounter? Can you describe it?
- What is your relationship to the state of stillness and silence that Roshi Joan speaks about?
- How do you address the distractions, or what Roshi Joan calls “the secretion of thoughts” during prayer or meditation?
In Buddhism, we have what are called the three jewels or the three treasures of Buddha, Dharma, Sangha. And Sangha traditionally has referred to the Buddhist community, which includes monks, nuns, laymen and laywomen. But I see it a little bit differently, that Sangha refers to actually all beings, that we’re practicing with all beings...

... For example, [traditionally] we’ve not included the notion of our atmosphere into our vision of community. And that kind of mental act is causing profound impacts, globally, on how two-leggeds live and on the future of children. So I feel this vision of community as an interdependent weave, which is all-inclusive is a really important way of looking at community.

—Roshi Joan Halifax, founder Upaya Zen Center

So in a sense what we do here [at Reciprocity Foundation] is not so much about claiming some type of religious affiliation, it’s about having a direct relationship with God. And then in that encounter, we experience where we are called to belong, where we are called to serve. So this is both a new kind of spirituality and a new way of being religious...

... So we’re trying to do here what normally used to be done in monasteries. We’re just doing it in the context of a big city. Action can become contemplation and contemplation can become action.

—Adam Bucko, co-founder Reciprocity Foundation

How do you respond to Roshi Joan’s expanded definition of “community” as being comprised of all beings?
When you think of a “spiritual community,” what kind of experiences, images or values come to your mind?
Which of the two communities featured are you personally more attracted to? Why?
For you, how might “action become contemplation and contemplation become action”?
GLOBAL SPIRIT offers a unique inquiry into humankind’s belief systems, wisdom traditions, and states of consciousness.
Series host, co-writer: Phil Cousineau
Series producer, director, co-writer: Stephen Olsson

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