

Origins of Violence in Our Educational Process

Pulse of Spirit
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DAVID KARCHERE is a speaker and workshop leader who assists people to renew their Primal Spirituality—an experience that virtually all human beings know at birth, and that ideally grows as they mature.

When we think of all the things that happen in our culture and what is most pivotal for the change that is occurring, there are two areas that are pivotal: education and spirituality. There are many other facets of our human experience. But ask yourself, *What is the straw that stirs the drink? What are the most pivotal areas in which we may transform the culture in which we live?*

Education and spirituality. It is easy to observe that the institutions of the culture at large have attempted to take possession of both these areas. And yet, in so many ways, people are taking back their education and they are taking back their spirituality. They are owning these critical processes for themselves and for their own children.

A team of us are working on an online platform for education: *Regeneration Earth*. I had a conversation with a brilliant educator recently. She asked, *What do you expect people to find when they come to an online platform for*

education? Really good question! And so I reeled off the things that come to mind:

1. They find themselves. They come into a place where who they are at their core is reflected back to them. And they find a place where they can discover more of themselves—how they are made and the dimensions of their Being—heart and mind, body and spirit.
2. They find other people with whom they have a natural affinity.
3. They find the emerging world of regenerative culture in the world.
4. They find the Source of life; the very source of reality and the source of their own Being.
5. They find us, who create *Regeneration Earth*.

What became clear to me was that these things are not just for this project that we are working on now. While I was thinking of education for adults, *all* education should assist people to find these things. Education

for children should be for this. What goes so terribly wrong with our educational system is that children are not finding these things.

As I thought about this, I reflected on the spiritual education I've offered for the past twenty-five years. When you begin to understand what is happening for most people in their lives every day, what you realize is that they cannot see themselves. They do not have an understanding of themselves or what is happening in their own heart and soul. If you ask most men how they are feeling, the answer comes back, "Good," or "I'm tired," or some other physical thing. They don't have eyes on what is really happening in the heart and soul of their own human experience. And women are not exempt from this either.

So where does self-awareness go wrong? Education plays a huge part. There is a disempowering message given through our educational system to children: *You cannot believe your own eyes. How you see and experience yourself, and how you experience the world and other people, does not matter. Your childish view is irrelevant in this adult world.*

And so the child is asked to abandon what they know. They are asked to become divorced from their own innate knowing so that they can take on the understanding of the adult world. They are required to listen to somebody's ideas and theories about the world in which they are living. They are told things about themselves by adults, even at a

young age, which they begin to believe. *You are the smart one. You are the funny one. You are the fat one. You are the weak one.*

Children are repeatedly convinced to give up their firsthand experience of who they are that they were born with: *I am that I am.* They have an experience of who they are as characterized by the adults around them. And then they live into that characterization. And then, later on, they hear about psychology, they hear about studies that have been done of other people, and then theories from the data that is collected about how people work. The obvious implication is that this is how *they* work. This is how they are made.

This is such a poor substitute for the innate knowing that the child began with in their life. That knowing includes an innate connection to reality, and an innate flow with the creative current of everything that is around them. It is the basis of relating to the natural world, and seeing and experiencing themselves as a part of that world.

Our educational process does violence to that child. *Violence* is not too hard a word. What I have just described is a violent act to the soul. And so we create a heartless and a soulless education that promotes violence—violence against self, first of all. And then we wonder about the world in which we live, which is so rife with violence at every level—military violence, school violence, gang violence, domestic abuse, economic violence; and

where there is poverty and hunger in the developed world, that is violence.

Violence to self is self-sabotage. We have rising suicide rates in the developed world. The leading cause of death for young people in Australia is suicide, and it's among the leading causes of death in many of the developed countries of the world. We have exploding drug use in the United States, and death from overdose. What is that but violence to self? And yet we don't see the connection between our educational process and that violence.

I am not saying that our educational process is the only factor in the violence of the world, but it is certainly *a* factor. If you are thinking about how we create regenerative culture, don't we start there? Don't we start with reversing what went wrong in our educational process?

Our educational process, and our culture at large, is eager to discover the world and to master it. And a fulfilling human life certainly includes a path of discovery—discovering other people, discovering the natural world, discovering new science and new technologies. But when we do that as an abandonment of our own soul, we are left to live a soulless life. This is the problem with the educational system that is pervasive in the developed and developing world. And so we end up creating technologies that are soulless and heartless. We end up with an experience of the world that is disconnected and impossible to make

sense of, because the place from which the world *can* be understood, the place from which we see it as one world, has been abandoned. If we have learned to become divorced from our core reality and our core perspective—if we have learned not to believe our own eyes—we find it hard to see the world from the one place where there is oneness, which is as ourselves, as the being that we are. I am that I am, and from here it is one world, all connected in me—not “me” separate from you but in the one reality of Being that I am and that you are.

At the core of regenerative education that takes us back to our innate knowing is spiritual education. This is not religious education, nor is it a teaching of belief. I am talking about an education that allows a person to claim their own heart and soul, to affirm the significance of who they are and what they see and what they know, without it having to fit into somebody else's box, or into someone else's philosophy or body of knowledge. *I know what I know—and yes, it is evolving and deepening, but I know what I know.* I want to tell every child—and every adult I meet—that what *they* know is important.

In meetings we had this week at Sunrise Ranch, we were considering some of the elements that are so important in education. Karen Boyett, who is working on the project, was so articulate about the need for a surround of support and comfort, something reaffirming for people who come into an educational setting; something soothing, life-

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affirming and self-affirming. The original meaning of the word *comfort* is “to strengthen.”

Karen was saying that when a human life is creative, it is expansive. But for that expansiveness to flourish, there has to be a surround of support and comfort, a strengthening that gives us the assurance and the confidence to move out, to express ourselves, and then to discover the world around us, and the people around us. And what a joy it is to meet new people, and to discover more of the people we know! What a joy it is to discover new dimensions of the world in which we live!

It is not only children who benefit from a surround of support and comfort. We need

education for adults that invites them to return to any places in their own Being where there has been a disconnect. We need an education that assists them to reconnect to the source of their own Being and which brings healing to the human soul. With that experience, they can explore the world anew.

So let’s affirm the experience of heart and soul for ourselves. Let’s create a surround of support and comfort for the people in our lives that confirms their experience of heart and soul. And let’s create a model of education that does the same.

David Karchere (Edenvale, BC)

dkarchere@emnet.org

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