

There is a word, over the years that I have grown to love. It is not from the English language and not from Christianity – but it is a word that celebrates the essence of life across all religious denominations and all races, genders and differences.

The word is Namaste, it is from Hinduism and it is used for several things, even greetings. The core of the word is what interest me and finds me using it a lot in my writing because it is a word that can say so much. Namaste, at its root means: “I celebrate you, where we are one.” If you will, repeat that and internalize it a few times. “I celebrate you, where we are one.” Think of saying this to a loved one, think of saying this to a ‘not-so-loved’ one. How about to those that have hurt you, those that are different than you, those that you may have looked down on here and there (we have ALL done it – you know that!).

I may not like how you look, I may not like what you believe, how you conduct your life, or what you stand for... but I can still celebrate you, where we are one. I know very few belief systems that at their core do not believe in this very thing. It would be hypocritical for most of us to have prejudice and to certainly act upon it.

How much do we take away or not give ourselves by placing the barrier or “shelter” up around us from those that are different from us? For some, it would be impossible to imagine a world without, Vincent Van Gogh, Albert Einstein, and Salvador Dali – even Winston Churchill. These men were mentally ill; these men lived lives of both glory and complete horror. Without telling the story of each of these men, I can tell you that they all had someone in their lives that celebrated them where they were one.

We do not need to walk around “loving” everyone – the world is not made up that way, it never was. What we can do, however is celebrate in a person, where we are a part of that person and they a part of us.

If we take a mentally ill person who has committed a crime, for now I will stick with a non-violent crime, as many are, and I celebrate where we are one – we take a different approach, don't we? The approach in a similar scenario would be, “well – you need to be held accountable for your actions, but – we need to do this in a humane way that first and foremost protects you from society and society from you. We also need to stabilize you – stabilize the cause of your actions, monitor this and get you on a treatment plan that we never have to come back to this circumstance. If we take the approach that we do not recognize that we are one and that one is better than the other and that

someone's opinion is more important than truth and reality – we get a very different scenario. I don't need to itemize that scenario, you have been reading it.

Let's look at the word "one" for a moment. There is nothing "one" on this earth – everything is made up of millions of ones. You, your body is made up of more cells than the US bailout plans. And those cells are made up of parts. How or why would we take the number "one" and somehow believe that we are not all a part of one another in some way form or fashion? Because we decided to? We as humans have been doing a lot of deciding over the course of thousands of years – some things we have gotten right, some wrong and it is important that we ALWAYS question, "Could it be different than what I think it is?"

Harrison's Story website and book is not designed so that everyone runs out and gets on the cause of mental illness and the criminal justice system. What it is designed for is to break down the stigma and walls therein; to translate the realities of mental illness in a way that we can all comprehend and understand. This, is the power of people, this is the power to change – understanding, compassion and yes, Namaste!