

Keynote Address by Orland Bishop – Connectivity 2006, Sao Paulo.

Bon jour.

I am so grateful to follow Ashu's wisdom. The youth that allows the certain promise to be visible in the world, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to come and join you at this conference.

In reflection of what I should share today, I thought of a poem from an African - American poet. About a river. In his contemplation about the human life he thought of the soul being like a river. A river has a very simple beginning. It builds in momentum, strength, in vitality and moves through time; through terrains of different kinds to a large out-pouring we call the sea, the ocean.

Life is like that. Life begins with the certain possibility, then we discover purpose and intention which gathers momentum, and strength and experience and the constant outpouring into a larger collective of reality we may call community or the world. Each of us is born into a remarkable story that can become true if we believe it. Our story can become true, if we love it. Our story will become true, if we serve it.

The poem goes like this:

I've known rivers:

I've known rivers ancient as the world and older than the flow of human blood in human veins.

My soul has grown deep like the rivers

I bathed in the Euphrates when dawns were young

I built my hut near the Congo and it lulled me to sleep.

I gazed upon the Nile and raised the Pyramids above it.

I heard the singing of the Mississippi when Abe Lincoln went down to New Orleans,

And I've seen its muddy bosom turn all golden in the sunset.

I've known rivers.

Ancient, dusky rivers.

My soul has grown deep like the rivers.

When Langston Hughes wrote this poem, it created an event, in his own personal life that took him into searching for other artists. This was in the early 1920ies.

What he began to imagine was the possibility of forming a collective imagination that was later called the Harlem Renaissance. This was a time in Harlem, New York in the United States, when people wanted to demonstrate to the larger culture that they had something to contribute to the cultivation of a new imagination. They were young people at that

time. These were young artists who felt in contemplating the possibilities of their own stories, that they had something to say and they wanted to put it into the world. Each of us has a story in our lives that we must tell, in order for the world to keep living, growing, changing.

The idea, that we are in this world, without any gifts without any purpose, is a very new and incorrect idea. The old story, says that each of us made an agreement to be in this world. We made a choice, but more so, we made a type of divine agreement. It is known in African stories that before birth each of us has a divine twin, a part of ourselves that remains in the spiritual world, while the other part of ourselves is born into existence. Before birth we make this agreement that we will come and fulfill something very unique and particular on this earth. But right before we are born, we embrace the tree of forgetfulness and we come into a search, we come into a quest for meaning. We want to rediscover the agreement that we made with our divine self.

All the other agreements are secondary agreements. They help us to reconnect to the memory of our lives, but this one vital agreement, remains hidden in the soul, it's our real identity, it's the part of ourselves that no one can tell us what it is who we are. It's the part of ourselves that is locked into the heart, and only when we find what we love we find the identity of who we are.

There's thus no other type of knowledge, no other type of experience, other than finding the courage to love something very unique about oneself and about the world.

Now, the challenge is that we, and more so for young people, are living in a time, where we have so much information about the world, even about space and time, about history, and the vast opportunities, that lie before you. But there is still this need to know who I am, who you are. How do you get there?

Yesterday's speakers Flavio and Julia shared with you the circumstances of their lives, that put them in touch with the question: What am I going to do with that which I am? The part of myself, that is ready to serve, and wants to serve something very big. This is something about the soul that has a very big imagination to it.

Then life circumstances meet us, something comes into our lives that require courage and this is where we find love. It is initiated when our courage is awakened. We have to go beyond the boundaries of our normal, everyday life and step into the heart of what we love.

Now, our culture doesn't give us initiation systems anymore, we've lost that. Youth, young people, that I know take the risk to initiate themselves. They risk that everyday, to find what they love, because the culture doesn't provide it.

Youth violence, the attempts to involve ourselves with drugs, is a quest for the soul. In the absence of this soul knowing, all the other acceptance will occur.

Everyone wants to live, life is the impulse to give to oneself the courage to keep moving, rolling, changing and ultimately serving this larger imagination we call the world. But we need some help, we need some direction, we need courage, to take up our life in the world. So, today I

was wanting to point to two basic ideas and I am so glad that Ashu began to talk about space, because this is a fundamental part of one of the ideas I am trying to speak to. Relationship.

I think space allows - becomes a vessel for - possibility.

When those possibilities are envisioned, whether it is in the mind, in the heart, or in the soul, we have the opportunity to create. The opportunity to move it from possibility to probability, to actually bring it into existence. When space begins to operate, to express itself, existence is made, reality is made.

The interesting thing about human life is that there is some reality that we cannot create by ourselves. There is some reality that we require at least two human beings to create. The first reality is the reality of language. One person by himself or herself cannot really speak a language. A language is the process of communication; you must have another being in order to communicate. Within oneself there is a process we call contemplation where you experience the awakening of the life forces that allow you to imagine the possibilities of how to create, but in order to actually say something the idea must be in the mind already that there is someone to say it to.

At this state between mind idea and another human being allows existence to happen. Our world exists there. If we are going to be active in changing and healing the world we must speak with another human being. We must communicate with another human being. It really doesn't matter if a person is in the position of influence or power to do something about the deciding of how to change it. That is not the reason why we communicate.

We talk with anyone who we can develop a relationship with, because it is in that relationship that the power of the world is re-negotiated. Any two people, any two persons, can begin to work on the possibility of healing the world. The larger the group the greater the probability. But it is in this small space that the world events occur that can become a catalyst. The event that will ultimately grow into a larger process.

We encourage young people to spend time in conversation with each other about the ideas that they carry in their soul, in their soul memory. Because those can be happily cultivated by the conversations that they have. This space, this inner space, is essentially so important, to making the world a better place.

This space between two people is just as powerful in conversation, in conceptualising a new world, as the space between a man and a woman that conceives and conceptualises and gives birth to a child. To another human being. It parallels that same reality. That an ideal is not just thoughts put together, or concepts put together, it is the power of the soul releasing - being released - in such a way that it ultimately flows into the world.

I want you to imagine the thing that you can say, if you have someone else to listen to you. The possibilities that you dream of in this world. And that you hope that someone will be a partner in agreeing with you, that it is possible. Not only that. They should be agreeing with you that it is probable, that it can happen. I invite you into taking action for that.

This world needs that level of conversation. It is not so much a political treaty that will change this world. It is not another business deal that will change this world. Friendships will change this world!

Every treaty that we made in our culture has been broken, every business deal, many of them, have given the world the problems that it has. People serving their own self interest. But there is something about friendship, there is something about the quality of friendship, yes, we go through betrayal, but this is where we find the mystery of love.

In the betrayal that we often experience when we risk telling someone who we really are - what we really love, who we really want to be and we find this place where I can only be myself if I share who I am with someone else, we risk the possibility that we would be betrayed - but it is in this inner space of struggle that the greatest decision can be made.

I am going to be myself in spite of these circumstances. The world has betrayed us for the most part. All of us in some way feel that we weren't welcomed, hosted, supported, to be who we really are. In some ways.

But these circumstances are not there to stop you. It is to awake and initiate you into the action of self-affirmation. To build a confidence that I am because I am.

I am because I can, from this point, choose to give myself to the world because I have something in myself to give.

This space that Ashu spoke about, this inner space of a soul, is a space that takes in the world, transforms it, and brings it back into consciousness, brings it back into, we'll say, an ability.

It gives us the abilities that we discover.

I was reflecting on a young friend who came to me maybe a couple of years ago, his parents - his mother - called me. This is a young man who had used ecstasy, the drug ecstasy; and he had slipped out of his regular framework of consciousness. So he was having these illusions of mind and could not return to his normal life consciousness and they wanted some help. I went to visit with them and this young man was so hyperactive, he was unable to sleep for several days.

We began the process of observation, how to enter a dialogue with someone who has lost the regular framework for conversation. How do you bring a human being back from that edge?

I asked him to repeat three things that I felt was the essential knowing of the soul. That, in spite of all the circumstances of our lives, if we can say these three things we will find our way out of the circumstances. I began this process with him.

The first was: I am here. I am here. Now, here doesn't necessarily mean just physically here. Here is now. I am now. And the first aspect of here or now is the awareness that I am speaking. I am the one speaking. So I begin with having him internalize his own words. I am here. To bring attention to what I'm doing. So, for each of us in this struggle of finding our way: Where are you, where are you in the struggle? I'm here.

Stop for a moment. We can't be out of the struggle without being aware of it. Aware of the self that is somewhat different than the struggle. I am

here. To be yourself, you must be aware of the moment. From that moment, you can decide anything. Any course of action, any possibility of change. But there must be a certain affirmation or acceptance of where you are. Now, that's not giving up, that's not it. In fact, it's the very opposite. It is the beginning of self-sufficiency. It is the beginning of saying to oneself; I will decide what happens next.

So we practiced that for a period of time. I am here.

The second was: I am myself.

I am myself. Now the word myself can transcend the circumstances. I'm not the circumstance that I am in. I'm not these conditions, I'm not the conditions of poverty, I'm not the conditions of violence, I'm not the conditions, in this case, of being high. No, I am myself. One must be able to claim the self as an authority, over the conditions that the self is experiencing. Just to say "Here I am" that is the condition of the world. In order for the self to have the appropriate relationship to what it must do. I know where I am.

The third that I told him, in the sense, was: I am safe.

I am safe. This is so important to say, that nothing can enter me without my permission. Nothing can enter me without my permission. I reclaim the economy and my right to exist without feeling myself to be a victim of the circumstances that I am in. I'm claiming my freedom. Now, these are certain things that may sound like just words, but to the self-meaning is carried with this. It steps into saying: OK, I will fulfill these words. I will make them true. That is what we say to ourselves as ourselves become true. It is important that you say the truth, the things that matter, the things that provide the context of hope, strength and courage and fortitude, in order to step into the world in which we live. Not as a victim, not as someone that is on the losing side of the battle, but someone that can, through the word, enter reality. When reality is born, morality is complete, and we make the right choice.

So that young man said this, and we practiced it 20 hours a day for two weeks. 20 hours a day for two weeks. He was now in a hospital, psychiatric ward of the hospital, and he was being diagnosed a schizophrenic, and that he would be on medications for the rest of his life. This was the medical picture of where his future would go.

My thinking was: languages, words, are keys, not just for a person, for the world. The whole of reality is defined by the word. What we say and what becomes belief, what becomes conception of the mind and heart, and what becomes our will, eventually.

If we don't begin to say the things about ourselves and the world that we know are possible, it will never happen. Some other diagnosis, some other conception, some other pattern would prove it. It is important that human beings speak what they know in their hearts to be true. It is important that human beings say to themselves: I am myself. Myself.

This inner space has the potential to give birth to a consciousness that will heal everything about our lives. Healing itself does not have to mean to completely fix everything, but it gives you meaning. It gives you a knowing of how to work with what is given.

It took two months for this young man to reconstruct his mind with his

words and enter a new conversation. In fact, we were in the hospital he was speaking with the psychiatrist in their method of what they were asking him, to them he is schizophrenic, and he turned to me and we have a normal conversation. Why? Because I thought him to be normal. And with the conversation he is in, he adapts to the expectation of that conversation. It was interesting, how he would turn from one to the other and enter two different realities.

Our conversation puts us in the reality that gives us either well-being or crisis. Gives ourselves identity or some bizarre formulation imposed by someone else's weird thinking. We cannot look at the world in the way that the world is just given and we are nothing and can do not anything about it.

I invite you to think that you are just as important to this world as the sun is!

Typed from the recording by Katharina Ludwig