

Daily Meditation 12/17/21

bell hooks, Champion of the Sacred Masculine & Divine Feminine

Good morning.

In today's daily meditation, we're honoring the new ancestor bell hooks, wonderful cultural critic who lived through many decades of challenge in our society and wrote and spoke eloquently with intelligent criticism of how we are evolving as a species and Americans as a nation. It's really a prophetic voice.

And since we're on the subject of healthy and unhealthy masculinity, it's important to know that bell hooks wrote extensively about that reality too, about what constitutes healthy masculinity.

And when I wrote my book on the sacred masculine, *The Hidden Spirituality of Men, Ten Metaphors or Archetypes to Awaken the Sacred Masculine*, the very first response I had was from a woman. And she said she had, I think she said, over 200 books on the goddess, the divine feminine in her home library, and not a single one on the sacred masculine. And she had two teenage sons.

She said, "I don't regret at all my pursuit of the Sacred Feminine over the past 40 years." But she said, "I think what you're writing about is really important. Now, this does represent a new stage in feminism, that we link up with our brothers to liberate masculinity." And she said, "Until I read your book, I didn't realize how much men have suffered under patriarchy."

So I think that bell hooks is very much in the same camp, that she's assisting all of us, women and men alike, to take a more critical look at how we're defining masculinity. And she has a whole chapter in her book, *All About Love: New Visions*, on honesty, and men play a big role in this chapter: "Honesty: Be True to Love," because she says that men are taught from an early age that life is about obtaining power. And to do that, you have to pretend a lot, and you have to lie to yourself as well as to others. She says,

"To understand why male lying is more accepted in our lives, we have to understand the way in which power and privilege are accorded men simply because they're males within a patriarchal culture" - that's page 37 of the book.

"The very concept of being a man, and a real man, has always implied that when necessary, men can take action to break the rules, that is above the law."

Well, that January 6 might be a pretty darn good example of breaking the rules and being above the law.

And she cites from *The End of Manhood: A Book for Men of Conscience* by John Stoltenberg, a book she very much liked. And she says that

"Patriarchal culture requires all males to invent and invest in a false self. For the moment, little boys are taught they should not cry or express hurt, and feeling or pain, and so forth, from that time on they are learning how to mask their true feelings."

This is so much insight on the theme that we're dealing with now.

And she also said, of course, that men are not, by no means the only group who use lies as a way of getting power over others. And she talks about how women pick up on this strategy and profit from it in the short time as well, in the short view of things.

But she also talks about greed, and how greed is considered legitimate now, while Brotherly Love is not. She says,

"A culture of greed validates and legitimizes one's worship of money. It is not at all interested in one's emotional growth. But if money really made up for loss and lovelessness, the wealthy would be the most blissful people on the planet."

And it would seem that they aren't. Because one thing with greed, you always want more, you're never satisfied, never content. She says,

"To maintain and satisfy greed, one must support domination. And the world of domination is always a world without love."

So those are some of her insights about, about masculinity and toxic masculinity.

And let me just add a personal note that I had the privilege of sitting down with bell hooks several years ago, at a college in Kentucky, where her papers are now residing, and I was invited to give a talk, I think, by the feminist department of the school, but she and I met in a hotel lobby for an hour or so. And it was kind of a personal meeting. We didn't get into a lot of philosophical discussion, but I did ask her how it was because she recently moved back to Kentucky after having lived in New York for years. And I asked her how that move was, from New York to the backwoods of Kentucky. And she spoke very deeply and personally and elegantly about her roots right there in that area, her roots with her grandmother, and so forth. And it was a special thing for her to return there. And that is also where she lived right until her death two days ago.

So thank you, we'll see you tomorrow.