

Human Kindness Foundation

a little good news

Spring 2004

EVERYTHING IS DIFFERENT, NOTHING HAS CHANGED

Dear Family,

It's been a year and a half now since I came out of a year-long period of silence, and I really understand the meaning of *Everything is different, nothing has changed*.

Everything Is Different...

Invitations keep coming in to do what I've been doing for so many years: Write more books or give lectures or retreats. But in my heart, it just seems our modern culture is turning spirituality into one more consumer activity – who's got the hottest new book about learning to love yourself; who's the hottest new teacher, what's the hottest new diet? Do we really need more and more, do we need *new* ways of saying the same classic truths, or should we heed the words of the great Tibetan sage, Milarepa: "*What is needed is not more teachings, but more PRACTICE!!*" Especially since coming out of silence, I truly believe that. I don't want to blindly add more words to a world that really needs deeds.

Nothing Has Changed...

Whether I write books or not, it does seem that my destiny, my *Dharma* in this lifetime, is to communicate and to create projects that will hopefully help the world in some way. I've been very busy lately doing both. The primary form of communication this past year has been music, and the other new project is one that I never would have dreamed in a million years. I'm happy to fill you in on both. Just read on.

The Muses Came Calling

My first few months out of silence, I could barely force myself to speak. I did a lot of manual labor and spent a lot of time in prayer, meditation,

and chanting. The first "call" came gradually in my chanting practice. Singing and chanting are profound elements of my path. Little snatches of melodies or lyrics would occur to me, and before long I realized that these were new songs.



Bo and friends rock on.

I hadn't written songs in many years, and I hadn't recorded any since my 1986 record album, *Stumbling Toward the Light*. To respect this new flow of inspiration, I went alone into a cabin to do a songwriting retreat. The Muses were really strong – while I was awake, asleep, praying, eating, bathing. Four days later I had four songs that I really liked, including *Magic Man*, the

first song I've ever been able to write about how I first met my Guru, Neem Karoli Baba, in dreams when I was a small, troubled child.

Within a few months, seven new songs were born, and seven songs I wrote in the '80's had been given new life. We realized we had a new album on our hands; that this was

the way I could finally share with you some new "writings," some fruits from my year of silence. The only name I could give the new album was *Whatever It Takes*, a phrase which seems to sum up my life for the past several years.

My old friend and gifted guitarist, Armand Lenchek, signed on as producer, and we spent intense twelve-hour days in the studio with many of the same

musicians and singers who performed on *Stumbling Toward the Light*. Meanwhile, Zan McLeod, another great guitarist



Josh, Bo and friends perform at a local prison.

and my producer on the first album, contacted me after many years and said we should reissue *Stumbling* onto CD. So Zan and I then *also* spent twelve-hour days in the studio, remixed all the songs and replaced several vocals I had never been happy with.

After almost fifteen years of being too busy for music, and a year spent in total silence, I've got two CDs coming out at the same time (*see last page for details*), pouring out my heart to you in that way, and reuniting with dozens of great musicians and backup vocalists I hadn't seen in many years. Music has once again become a big part of my path, and it is truly a universal language for touching people. Yet I never would have figured. Oh well, *Man plans, God laughs*.

Blueberry Hill

Then there's the new project. For the past ten years we have been increasingly aware of how many parolees hit the streets with no job prospects, no job skills, no experience or credibility in the job market; amid the traps of easy credit, heavy debt, excessive consumerism. An idea that has lurked in the backs of our minds was to "someday" create a job-training program that would address many of these issues and help people stay out of prison.

Last year, while I was in the thick of recording my albums, we heard that an old friend's factory was up for sale because he was moving to a larger facility to expand his business. The 10,000 sq ft factory sits on five acres that includes a two-acre certified organic "u-pick" blueberry orchard.

God deposited an almost casual idea in my mind to talk with the owner about the possibility of Human Kindness Foundation maybe, sorta, kinda, somehow owning the place to create our job-training program for ex-cons. Turns out John wasn't looking for any profit from selling his old place; he just needed to pay off a note at the bank that was about half the tax value. If we paid off that note, he'd donate the rest. As we told you last year, Mister Rogers had left us \$50,000 in his will, and we hoped to apply it toward something really special, really different. Well, hmmm....

Within a few weeks we were proud owners of some of the tastiest blueberries in the world and a spacious, modern



factory sitting empty in anticipation of its next gig. We quickly renamed the new place "Blueberry Hill."

Bio- what??

As we cast our net in various directions to come up with a product to manufacture at Blueberry Hill that would support up to twenty jobs, one of my backup singers said "You should look into this thing called 'biodiesel,'" and once again, the heavens seemed to start humming as soon as I said "What's biodiesel?" For the next six months, my life was a crash course in chemistry, economics, agriculture, ecology, and politics, learning amazing facts about this new solution to America's problems with fuel and pollution.

Biodiesel is diesel fuel that is made from soybean oil, restaurant waste oil, canola oil or any other animal or vegetable fat. It has zero sulfates, is 1/10th as toxic as table salt, and more biodegradable than sugar. It is a renewable fuel that can be made all across America and reduce our dependency on foreign oil. Diesel engines require no modifications to run on biodiesel. In fact, Rudolf Diesel designed his original engine to run on peanut oil, not on the smelly petroleum product we came to call "diesel" fuel.

The idea of creating jobs and job-training around a product that is as good for the planet as biodiesel is very exciting. I have met many of the top biodiesel experts in the world, attended the very first National Biodiesel Conference, and seen a biodiesel refinery up close. A truck running on pure biodiesel smells like popcorn or french fries as it passes by. American farmers have an opportunity to produce fuel for

our own nation. Restaurant waste can become fuel instead of polluting our landfills. The U.S. Navy has built its own biodiesel plant in Ventura CA, using the base's cooking grease to produce fuel for its own fleet. Imagine!



Factory at Blueberry Hill

So that's what I've been working on these days. Our "Carolina Biodiesel Industries" may be the first serious biodiesel producer in our part of the country. We may be able to help clean up America's air as we run ex-cons through a job training program. *[Please don't flood us with applications; we can only take NC parolees to begin with. Give us some time to develop the program. We'll let you know when we're ready to invite people from out of state.]*

All in God's Hands...

So that's *my* report. Now we need about a million dollars to get the new program into operation. How does an organization like ours raise that kind of money? No sensible way, that's for sure. Nonprofits around the country are competing for a shrinking pool of government funds and big grants from private foundations. Our donors – you – are not a wealthy population for the most part. No bank is going to finance a weird fuel plant run by ex-cons – and we have never borrowed money from a bank anyway.

We do not have a plan for raising a million dollars in one particular way. If we sell 100,000 copies of my new CDs, that would be a million bucks right there. If the 40,000 people who receive this newsletter sent us an average of \$25 each (convicts do spend money, you know...), that would also equal a million bucks. If twenty of our wealthier donors

matched Mister Rogers' gift of \$50,000, that would also equal a million. Maybe a little of this and a little of that...?

Bottom line – we really do mean it, we *must* always mean it, when we say this organization operates on faith. We work hard to do our part, but arm-twisting over money has never seemed to be what God wants us to do. "Inform & invite" has been our sincere style all these years, and we're still around, still doing some good work. Here we are again. In my deepest heart, I only want to open a biodiesel plant if it's God's will. No other reason. And if it's God's will, and I do my part of letting the world (you) know of our plans, then the money coming or not coming is a sign from God as to whether we should really do this new project or not. I am content with that. We're all in this together, that's all.

MAKING SIMPLE MIRACLES TOGETHER

After Gandhi's death, the whole Gandhian movement was in disarray. Within a year or two of the establishment of India, a number of his followers decided to have a nationwide meeting to see how best to continue his work. They hoped to convince Vinoba Bhave, Gandhi's closest disciple, to lead this conference, but he declined. "We cannot revive the past," he stated. After much pleading, they finally convinced Vinoba to lead the gathering, but he required that it be postponed for six months, giving him enough time to walk on foot from where he lived to the meeting site, halfway across India.

He began to walk from village to village. As he stayed in each village, he would call a meeting as Gandhi had done. He would listen to their problems and at times advise the villagers. Naturally, he walked through a series of very poor villages. In one, many people spoke of the hardship, of how little food they had to eat. He asked them, "Why don't you grow your own food," but most of them were untouchables, and they said, "We would grow our own food, sir, but we have no land." Upon reflection, Vinoba promised them that when he returned to Delhi he would speak to Prime Minister Nehru and see if a law could be passed giving land to the poorest villagers in India.



Vinoba Bhave

The villagers went to sleep, but Vinoba, struggling with the problem, did not rest that night. In the morning he called the villagers together and apologized. "I know government too well." He said, "Even if after several years I'm able to convince them to pass a law granting land, you may never see it. It will go through the states and provinces, the district head man and the village head man, and by the time the land grant reaches you, with everyone in the government taking their piece, there probably will be nothing left for you." This was his honest but sad predicament.

Then one villager stood up and said, "I have land. How much do these people need?" There were sixteen families, needing five acres apiece, so Vinoba said, "Eighty acres," and the man, deeply inspired by the spirit of Gandhi and Vinoba, offered eighty acres. Vinoba replied, "No, we cannot accept it. You must first go home and speak with your wife and children who would inherit your land." The man went home, got permission, and returned, saying, "Yes, we will give eighty acres of our land." That morning eighty acres of land was given to the poorest families.

The next day Vinoba walked to another poor village and heard the plight of hunger and landlessness from its lowest caste members. In the meeting he recited the tale of the previous village, and from his story another rich landowner was inspired. He offered one hundred and ten acres for the desperate twenty-two poorest families and again was directed to get permission from his family. Within that day the land was granted to the poor.

Village by village, Vinoba held meetings and continued this process until he reached the council several months later. In the course of his walk, he had collected over 2,200 acres of land for the poorest families along the way. He told this story to the council, and out of it, many joined him to start the great Indian Land Reform Movement. For fourteen years, Vinoba Bhave and thousands of those inspired by him walked through every state, province, and district, and without any government complications or red tape, collected over *ten million* acres of land for the hungriest and most impoverished villagers.

-- excerpted from "A Path With Heart," by Jack Kornfield

LETTERS

Dear BoenSita,

Sincerely hope this letter finds you and your family in the very best of health and good spirits. Pardon me for this small interruption into anything you may be in to at this time and grant me just a few minutes of your time. I just had to write you to let you all know how much "Deep & Simple" have touched.

I mean it touched my heart in a way that I'm seeking for your help in bringing me and my son, D, back together. I know the Human Kindness Foundation can send my son some books on family coming together and what its like to Love as God Loves. The way you explained yourself in "Deep & Simple" made me look at my situation toward my son and I, he's 17 years now and I haven't seen him or talked with him or communicated with him since I've been in prison and I've been in prison going on 10 – years.

You see Bo, his mother and I had a bad relationship and now she don't want me to have anything to do with her. My son is too young to handle this responsibility of visiting me and communicating with me, so I have to go through his mother if I want to give him money or just write because she gets all the mail. So that really leaves me out of the picture.

In other words my son's mother keeping my son away from me and causing him to think I don't want to do anything for him or love him at all. She brainwashed my son all these years so now he don't want to have anything to do with me. Bo, I am hurting behind this and can't get my life together. I tried going to family court but she still having her way which the Judge told her to give my son the right to communicate with me but my son was not in court to hear or to know this. The Judge also told her to give my son all my mail which I don't think she do because I still have not got one letter back when I write to him. Bo please help me communicate with my son.

Bo, I just don't have anyone here to help me with this problem on the outside. I don't know what else to do and can't take this pain any longer. I done lost all the hair on the top of my head since I've been in prison worrying about my son and his mother; I'm stressing out. Don't get me wrong. Your books are doing the job its just that I need one more step and

that's for you to send my son, some books and please try to get him to write me, I know you can help me.

I thank you and Sita in advance for all of your time, concern, and consideration toward my problems. Thanks. God bless you all.

Always Love Bo, C

Dear C,

I deeply sympathize with your feelings of being cut off from your son's life. Since even the court has said you should have access to him, you should let the court know your wife is not obeying the judge's instructions, and see if anything can be done about it.

But now that your son is 17, he's almost an independent adult anyway. In another year or so, your wife may still have some influence over him, but no authority to say he cannot see you or write you. The challenge will be how to contact him so that he can begin making his own choices about knowing you.

One of my staff, Richard, has a 21-yr-old son whom he has not seen since the age of 5 months old. Like you, he is very eager to know him, so we located the adoptive parents and called them. They said they have no problem with Richard contacting his son, but they wanted us to know that the son "hates" his real father, that he has grown up saying he would kill him if he ever met him (he blames Richard Sr. for the death of his mom).

So for now, Richard Sr. is being patient, staying in touch with Richard Jr.'s adopted parents, seeing photos of him, but the adoptive parents have not told Richard Jr. yet about his dad. Jr. is in

Army boot camp and they don't want him to face such a difficult, complex thing until he gets a little more settled into his adult life.

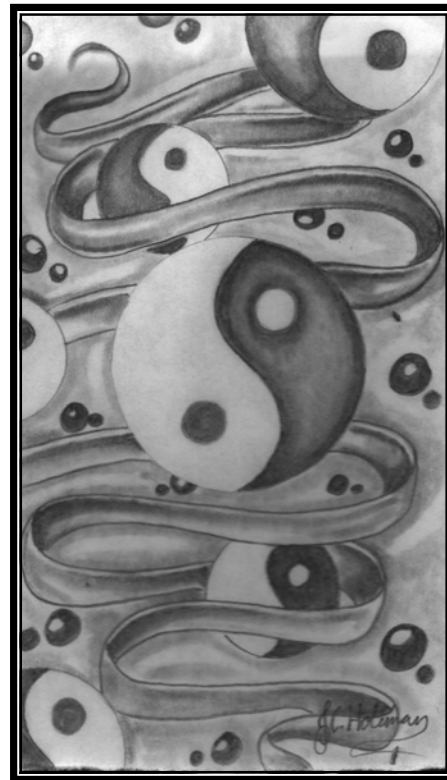
The reason I mention this story is because Richard Sr. is dying to meet his son, to let him know how much he loves him – but finally, after a lifetime of selfish convict living, he actually wants to do *whatever is best* for his son – even if that means waiting longer, even if it means NEVER contacting him. This time, Richard doesn't want this to be just about getting what he wants.

I suggest you do some similar soul-searching, C, because it is YOUR fault,

not your wife's, that you were not around to be a good father to your son. YOU committed crimes and landed in prison. Sure, your wife could have been much kinder about letting you keep a relationship with D, but let's keep the focus on who created this terrible situation in the first place: You did.

So accept the fact that you did not care enough about D having a father outside of prison, and release the bitterness you hold toward your ex-wife. She screwed

up, but you screwed up first, and you screwed up bigger. Your son may have an entirely false impression of you, like Richard's son has of him. Hopefully you can find a way to straighten that out at some point. But it won't be by blaming your wife. It will come about by saying to your son, "I am so sorry I abandoned you by committing crimes and going to prison. I was a terrible father, even though I always loved you. I want to be a better father from now on."



Artwork by Jonathan C Holeman
Rancho Cucamonga, CA

Maybe if you expressed that same sort of thing to your ex-wife, she might not feel so determined to keep you away from him. Jesus said "remove the BEAM in your own eye before talking about the speck in another person's eye." He was talking about this exact kind of situation.

Your attention has been on how unfair your wife is to you. Her keeping D away from you is NOTHING compared to how rotten a father you were. In fact, she probably sincerely feels it is better for D to have nothing to do with you. Up to this point, C, maybe she's right. Ever consider that? You could write to her explaining that now you understand she has been just trying to be a good mother and protect her son, and you're sorry for all the pain and hardship you have brought into their lives.

Love acts for the sake of the beloved. Meditate and pray on all this, read this letter several times, see if you can open your heart and mind past C's selfish interests, and I think God will grace you with the best way to handle this situation. Be willing to be patient and self-sacrificing if need be. It's time to be a good father, not just to get what C wants. I know this is tough advice, but I hope you take it, for your sake and your son's.

Love, Bo



Dear Mr. Lozoff,

I am doing six years in Snake River. It is one of the newest prisons in Oregon. I don't like to talk about my charges because it was their word against mine and you see where I ended. I'm not bitter, but with my charge I fear for my life, and from being raped as well (if you know what I mean).

Before I came to prison I never stayed in one spot for more than a year, except for when I was in the army. I was taken from my home when I was six years old because my stepfather raped me for two years. I was put in foster homes, one right after the other, and when I turned thirteen I ran away. I grew up living on the streets, stealing what I needed or I begged for money. I have lived every where in the world except I have not been to Russia or Africa or Australia.

I never got a proper education only a G.E.D. but a lot of inmates don't even have that. I'm sorry for rambling on but

I thought you'd like to know a little about the person that's writing you for help. My mental health counselor gave me your address after I tried to kill myself for the third time.

An inmate told me about "We're All Doing Time" and said it has been helping him. He told me that meditation and yoga have been the most help.

I've been in prison for almost a year so I have plenty of time to get my head on straight. I've done most of my time in the hole because I tried to take my own life and I feel safe here because they put me in a cell by myself.

I have been dealing with the death of my little brother (17) and the death of my one year old son. My brother had picked up my son to babysit while my mom was at work. While driving back to his own apartment he was hit head-on by a mack truck that was having steering problems. The driver of the truck walked away with out a bruise, my son died in the car (they think he died on impact and didn't feel anything), and my brother died in the I.C.U after 5 hours in the O.R. My mother couldn't take it and took her life two hours after my brother died. I loved my mother don't get me wrong but I had resentment for her for most of my life and she was more of a person who I met twenty years later who gave birth to my brother. I was just starting to get to know her so I don't feel as strong feelings for her as for my brother and son. Is that wrong?

I still think of ending my life but something inside me is saying "don't do it, someone out there still loves you" but the only people who loved and cared for me died. I have no family left and only one friend on the outside but he was in a car accident and can't write anymore so I'm alone and lost and need help to find myself again if I ever had my self to start with.

Any info or advice would help greatly and I hope that you'll write back and give me insight. I know you're just stumbling along in your own journey and don't know all there is (or you'd have left your earthly body still alive to Join God and leave your body to live its life here on earth or have already known that I need help and had helped me already,) don't get my remark the wrong way I'm just saying that not everyone is perfect and nobody has all the answers.

May God always shine on you, E

Dear E,

I'm sorry to hear you've had so many tough breaks recently. Why you are alive and your whole family dead is one of God's mysteries that may never be answered. But each one of us has a choice of faith – the faith that God's mysteries are never just "unfortunate accidents" or "bad luck," but rather, important pieces of a spiritual puzzle that we cannot understand. Even the toughest breaks we can ever imagine are still opportunities for us to walk through a door that can lead to good things not just for us, but for the world.

It's hard. Sometimes it may seem almost impossible. But the strongest, deepest, best people who have ever lived have told us "you can do hard," and "nothing is impossible with faith in God." So we have the choice of whether to believe them, and start trying to make lemonade out of all those lemons we've been handed, or else just to lose hope and get through the day on drugs, tv, scams, hustles, etc. – which you can see people doing all around you in prison, can't you? That doesn't seem like a very joyful way to deal with our shit, does it?

My books are being sent you in a separate package. You said that "all the people who cared about you are dead." Well, that's not true, E. We care about you, and even the inmate who told you about *We're All Doing Time* obviously cared enough about you to tell you that, didn't he? Not only that, but there are incredibly powerful, loving people all over the world – real live saints – who care about every one of us, and protect us to some degree by the power of their prayers. I swear to you that no one in this world is completely unloved or uncared for. Enjoy that.

As you said, you have plenty of time now to look into this spiritual jigsaw puzzle you've been handed. That's what my books can help you to do. Nothing is holding you back, little brother. Do it. Focus all your energy on your spiritual journey – the REAL one, which is about unselfishness and kindness to yourself and to everyone around you. We'll be here as your friends while it unfolds.

Love, Bo



TWO GREAT MUSIC CDs

We are thrilled to announce the release of Bo's CDs, *Stumbling Toward the Light*, and *Whatever It Takes*. *Stumbling* is a complete remixing of Bo's original 1986 record album of the same name, and *Whatever It Takes* is his newest music – half the songs were written since Bo came out of his year-long silence in September 2002. "I've listened to Bo sing these songs many times, and I can't get over how electrifying the musicians have made them. I didn't know it was possible to love the songs even more," says one local friend.

This is original folk/rock at its best – compelling stories created and sung by one of the most down-to-earth spiritual teachers of our time, and featuring sensational musicianship by over two dozen gifted players and backup singers who volunteered their talents out of their love for Bo and Human Kindness Foundation. All proceeds will fund our newest project, Carolina Biodiesel Industries – a way to clean our air and offer job training to ex-cons!

*Hear Bo's music at
www.humankindness.org*

Raleigh News & Observer:

...shows a kinship with Bob Dylan, Paul Butterfield, Electric Flag, Jimi Hendrix... This is music with a social consciousness. If Lozoff's words don't get you, the rhythmic groove will.



The Independent: *...emotional without sopppiness, hard-hitting but not grim, personal and captivating at the same time... the gospel tag at the end of 'The Outlaw Maury Logue' sent chills up my spine... Lozoff's talent as a lyricist shines...*

Wanna help? The magic won't work without your support, so here's how a grassroots campaign works:

Tell everybody you know to check out the new CDs at our website, or let them listen to your copy. If they like the CDs, they can buy them to help raise funds. If they don't want a CD but like the cause, they can send a donation.

Make a point of letting *at least* 20 folks know about it, and ask them to do the same. Get the drift? E-mail is a great way to do this. Just send folks a message and be sure to include our website address (www.humankindness.org) so they can go to it in one click.

Thanks!!! And we'll keep you posted.

As usual, we are committed to making these CDs available free to prisoners, but **we cannot begin our free distribution to prisoners until we have sold the first pressing of 2,000 copies of each CD.** We have sunk a lot of money into studio time and production costs, and we need to recapture those funds first.

If you are a prisoner and can afford to buy a copy, please do. But we appreciate your not requesting free copies until we can update you in a future newsletter. After we've sold the first pressing, we will also make cassette tape copies available for prisoners who cannot receive CDs.

To order the new CDs, go to our website (www.humankindness.org) and order from our catalog, or send in the form below. (Credit cards at our website only)

Name & Address:

Whatever It Takes (code CWT) _____ x \$15 = _____

Stumbling Toward the Light (CST) _____ x \$15 = _____

Both CDs (code CB2) _____ x \$25 = _____

shipping & handling \$3 standard/\$6 priority _____

tax-deductible donation _____ + _____

Total Enclosed (check, cash, or money order) _____

NEWS, NOTES, AND OFFERINGS

GOOD NEWS: JERI BECKER'S RELEASE!

In our Summer/Fall 2002 issue, we interviewed Jeri Becker about her transformation during 23 years of incarceration. After that, Governor Davis of California denied the parole board's decision to release her. But when Arnold Schwarzenegger took office, Jeri Becker was again paroled, and "Arnold" left it alone. So by the time you read this, Jeri will be out of prison. Congratulations, dear friend!!!

UPDATE ON 10-20-30 CELEBRATION

This year marks the 10th anniversary of Kindness House, the 20th of *We're All Doing Time*, and the 30th of the Prison-Ashram Project. We are hosting a weekend celebration at Kindness House that will include time with Bo & Sita, music, meditation, and hanging out among many of you who have been touched by our work over the years.

The 10-20-30 Celebration takes place the first weekend of June (the 4th-5th-6th). Approximately 50 people have already responded, representing a diverse range of humanity from people who have been our donors for nearly thirty years, to

people who will be released from prison just a few days or weeks before the celebration.

There are no charges or fees for the weekend, but *if you can afford to stay in a nearby motel, it will help us to reserve our limited indoor space for people who can't afford other lodging*. We have plenty of outdoor space for those of you who have campers or a tent.

A small amount of "travel scholarship" funds are available to people who can't afford to get here, but that fund is running low, so please don't request help unless you have no other options. Anyone who would like to contribute to that travel fund, please just send in your donation with a note saying "travel fund."

If you do intend to come to the Celebration, **please let us know by May 5th**, so that we can make realistic plans. Because of the number of people and general pandemonium for such an event, we must ask that you not bring pets, even the sweetest and friendliest ones!



Artwork by Larry Kessler, New Braunfels, Texas

a little good news

is a publication of Human Kindness Foundation, which is non-profit and tax-exempt under section 501(c)(3) of the IRS code. Donations and bequests are welcomed and are tax-deductible to the full extent of the law. All money goes directly to support HKF's work, helping us to continue producing and distributing free materials to prisoners and others, and sponsoring Bo Lozoff's free lectures and workshops and the other projects of the Foundation.

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**Can two folk/rock CDs
make our air cleaner, streets safer,
and help prevent wars over oil?**

