



## **US Message by Diane Rodriguez**

### ***The Movement of all Things.....***

Let's take today to honor the four directions, and the thought and culture, ritual and practice of the ancients: the Muslim Sufis, Tibetan Tulkus, Christian mystics, Hopi spiritualists, Indian yogis, the Japanese Zen, Mexican Toltecs, and on and on who believed that the artist was a creator seer, a trickster who illuminated, disrupted, challenged cultures so in need of constant reflection and change.

In our hemisphere, the Nahuas and the Toltecs envisioned the artist and tribe forming the two strands that entwined to make the nahui ollin, the symbol for harmony and balance.

For me at the center of their connection is a space, a circle that is the theatre where community and artist live to form the human band and together, they give and receive.

Artist and spectator: interconnected and interdependent, and wherever and whenever we come together to make work, to struggle to find the truth, to listen, to be lifted, transported, our energy reverberates drawing from the ancient past and facing, dissecting, embracing what is to come.

Let's take today to will into belief that the creative endeavor that is theatre gives a child the tools to live a life that they create of their own design. That learning to be a good actor is learning to be a good citizen; making choices, committing to them, then, following through. ACTivating a moment in a play is akin to ACTivating a moment in the struggle that is our life. There are victories and there are setbacks and when the setbacks happen you are filled as a creator with ideas that take the setback and set it right.

I discovered how to be an actor and an activist at the same time. And now, I live in the center of that encounter. From a very young age during the 1970's, I joined a scrappy, itinerate, California troupe of actors made up of children of farmworkers and cannery workers, and we took our message of social and political justice to our own people and they saw themselves in us and they listened and changed.

The power of seeing yourself on stage is like no other. Let's give that experience to all who live in our cities, our states, our countries. It is just. There is no need to fear the other.

Each of our stories, like our ancient myths, speak the truth; and if, like the moth, artist and spectator enter the flame together to hear a story that is true, it brings us closer to our communal heartbeat.

Please, let's take today to muse on the non-commercial practice of doing theatre. Let's not think of the restrictive confines of budgets and box office, the numbers that rule our lives both on and off the stage: the obsession our theatres have for us to buy tickets instead of being obsessed with the thought of believing that people and civilization change through the ACTivation of creator as community and community as creator.

What freedom to know that this is a gift we can give each other and that our circle has the ability to expand.

It's this notion of collective creation that inspires me today. When an artist knows her audience it is because she is living in the center of her community. Community, a word we overuse today but its essence remains vibrant—communing, gathering, sharing, listening, exchanging, giving, taking, making. You can't make theatre and not KNOW for who you are making it.

As an artist ages, the characters we've played are etched on our faces. I know they are on mine. Sometimes, we tire as we challenge ourselves to continue the movement. The struggle is ever present. But it is our job to be good actors. To be good citizens. They are the same. I hold onto the hope that our struggle to be good actors continues to cause change. That it gathers all of us from throughout the four directions and makes a theatre for us in the center so that we can hear ideas, disagree, challenge, laugh, illuminate.

A Toltec poet wrote:

*The actor draws his presence from the face of all people  
With the word of truth  
He smiles, cries, sings, acts  
He is a teacher, guide, prophet of the people  
He moves so that all may enjoy  
With all their heart  
The movement of all things.*

And so it is.

Onward.

Diane Rodriguez

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**Theatre Communications Group (TCG)**, the national organization for the American theatre, was founded in 1961 with a grant from the Ford Foundation to foster communication among professional, community and university theatres. Today, TCG's constituency has grown from a handful of groundbreaking theatres to nearly 700 member theatres and affiliate organizations and more than 12,000 individuals nationwide.

**The International Theatre Institute (ITI)**, an international non-governmental organization (NGO), was founded in Prague in 1948 by UNESCO and the international theatre community. Today, the mission of ITI is to promote the international exchange of knowledge and practice in theatre arts in order to consolidate peace and friendship between peoples, to deepen mutual understanding and increase creative co-operation between all people in the theatre arts.