



## **WARRIORS FOR THE HUMAN SPIRIT**

### **Training to be the Presence of Insight and Compassion**

We need leaders who recognize the harm being done to people and planet through the dominant practices that control, ignore, abuse, and oppress the human spirit.

We need leaders who put service over self, stand steadfast in crises and failures, and who display unshakable faith that people can be generous, creative, and kind.

### **Margaret Wheatley**

*Warriors for the Human Spirit* are leaders, activists, and citizens who want to make a meaningful contribution in this time of increasing assaults on the human spirit and all life. To serve well, to be effective with their energy and influence, they train with discipline and devotion to refrain from fear and aggression and to embody the best human qualities of generosity, insight, and compassion. They are already skilled leaders and activists. They know how to create engaged and productive workplaces and healthy communities. They know how to advocate for their causes and to work well in networks of diverse people. Yet their hard-won skills and valuable experiences are not enough in this darkening time. A different category of skills and capacities is needed so they can act wisely and well, persevere, and use their influence and power to offer sane, life-affirming responses even as threats to people and planet intensify.

Warriors for the Human Spirit are awake human beings who have chosen not to flee. They abide.

They serve as beacons of an ancient story that tells of the goodness and generosity and creativity of humanity.

You can identify them by their cheerfulness.

You will know them by their compassion.

When asked how they do it they will tell you about discipline, dedication and the necessity of community.

### **Warrior in Training**

## Who is a Warrior?

Warriors are people who focus their lives and work on making a difference. They respond to a sense of calling, to a purpose that gives meaning beyond petty definitions of happiness and self-satisfaction. They are of all ages, faiths, professions and cultures. Depending on their age, they have contributed in many different ways or are aspiring to contribute.

Those who have contributed are now witnessing the destruction of their good work as programs, populations, and causes are deprived of resources, minimized in importance, or denied to be of any value. Young people who have just picked up the torch of activism are learning that high ideals, sound ideas, and rational behavior do not create positive change.

Our hearts are broken by witnessing so much destruction and increased suffering, yet the need still lives in us to contribute, to make a difference. What is our work now? What actions and ways of being can give meaning to this time?

### **“What time is it on the clock of the world?”<sup>1</sup>**

A sense of calling, purpose or role cannot be defined independently of the time in which we live. It is essential to identify an answer to the question of what time is it because only then can we discern what work is needed.

Warriors arise only at certain historical times, when the culture is under threat: protection and preservation of people, values, and ideals become critical. We live now in a time when the human spirit is being threatened, oppressed, ignored and reviled. Why is this happening now? Because we are at the endpoint of our global civilization, enacting a pattern already well-established in history, what befalls every complex society at the end of its cycle.

A Warrior is a person who has the courage  
to face the dark forces threatening our world  
and to grieve for what is being lost  
especially for future generations.

Her insight into the present world situation energizes her,  
deepens her compassion for those suffering from oppression,  
and motivates her to live in a way that  
brings peace into each situation she encounters.  
She is strengthened by comradery with her fellow warriors.

#### **Warrior in Training**

<sup>[1]</sup> In her late 90s, after a life of dedicated and powerful activism, Grace Lee Boggs challenged us with this question.

# The Facts of Life

All living systems rise and fall in the cycle of existence: there is birth, growth, flowering, decline, death. The cycle repeats over and over; everything has a beginning, a middle, and an end. Each phase of the cycle requires different behaviors:

- At the beginning, discovery, creativity, learning and invention playfully fill the space of possibility. It is an exciting, high energy time when anything seems possible and hope abounds.
- In the middle, what has been created gets stabilized into complex systems that provide capacity, efficiencies, standardization, and sustainability. Hierarchy and bureaucracy develop and people settle into roles that make the systems work.
- In the final stages of decline and collapse, protection and preservation are essential to save values, ideals, and programs that are being destroyed by the powerful few. As solutions fail and crises proliferate, suffering grows; serving others becomes critical.

This is the cycle of life, irrefutably evident in the history of every civilization. Meaning and purposeful actions shift dramatically depending on which part of the cycle the society is in. Our current global culture cannot be saved by grasping onto the myth of progress or thinking we are unique and different. At this time, it is foolish to strive for innovation and sustainability when what is so clearly needed is protection and preservation.

The Warriors arise when the people need protection. We step into this role of contribution and service in full recognition of where we are, what is possible, and what is not. We are broken-hearted in witnessing all that is being lost. We are exhausted from efforts that can no longer bear fruit. Yet we have abiding faith in the human spirit, in the capacity of people to be generous, creative, kind and compassionate—no matter what. It is our faith in the human spirit that inspires us to undertake the discipline of training to be of service for this time.

While despair might permeate the greater part of the nation,  
others achieved a new realization of the fact that  
only readiness for self-sacrifice could enable a community to survive.  
Some of the greatest saints in history  
lived in times of national decadence,  
raising the banner of duty and service  
against the flood of depravity and despair.

**Sir John Glubb, historian<sup>2</sup>**

<sup>[2]</sup> I used Glubb's six stages of a civilization's rise and fall as a major frame in *Who Do We Choose To Be?*

## The Capacities of Warriors

Any training—to shape our bodies, play an instrument, learn a skill—requires dedicated effort and discipline; no level of skillfulness is possible without hard work and repetitive practice.

Warriors for the Human Spirit train as a community. We learn together and support one another as we discover what it means to live into this vow:

*I cannot change the way the world is  
but by opening to the world as it is  
I may discover that gentleness, decency and bravery  
are available, not only to myself, but to all human beings.*

It takes enormous courage to open to this world, to experience our anger, rage, and grief for what we witness, to acknowledge our exhaustion and despair, and yet continue to step forward in service not restrained by these intense emotions. As we learn how to open to the world without being overwhelmed by it, we discover new capacities for doing the work: gentleness, decency and bravery. This is a rich promise that we have discovered becomes true as we open to the way the world is. We surrender to this reality, and discover work rich in meaning, relationships that endure, and a deep confidence that we're engaged in our right work.

And we can't do this alone. Humans can get through anything as long as we're together. We rely on one another with relationships and connections forged in training together and maintained thereafter by multiple means of being together both online and in physical reality. We seek to embody this historic quote: "I always knew you thought of me, and that if I got in a tight place, you would come, if alive."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>[3]</sup> In a letter written by General Sherman to his commanding General, Ulysses S. Grant, offering his reason for why they won the Civil War.

## **What is the Work of Warriors?**

Wherever we are, whatever our work, we train to be able to offer ourselves in two essential ways:

1. Through our presence, we serve as reminders and role models of who every human being is capable of being.
2. With our leadership, we bravely stand in stark contrast to the current practices and dynamics of this age. We know what must be remembered and preserved to create good human lives and societies, and we embody this wisdom in our work.

As we do our current work, and find new places of contribution, we strive to:

- Be present with compassion and discernment in all situations
- Refrain from using fear and aggression to accomplish our ends
- Create Islands of Sanity wherever possible
- Do our work with greater commitment and different skills, including patience, clear seeing, compassion
- Refrain from fixing, staying present, supporting others to find their own solutions
- Stay in situations which triggered us or from which we fled but where we still want to contribute
- Maintain a keen sense of humor
- Rely on moments of grace and joy