

Authentic Self Care in the Age of Narcissism
Rev. Wendy Jones
Preached at the
Unitarian Universalist Congregation of the Grand Valley
June 10, 2018

Centering Words:

First they came for the Socialists, and I did not speak out—
Because I was not a Socialist.
Then they came for the Trade Unionists, and I did not speak
out—
Because I was not a Trade Unionist.
Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out—
Because I was not a Jew.
Then they came for me—and there was no one left to speak for
me.
Pastor Martin Niemoller (Sometime between 1946-1950)

Meditation:

First he attacked the Muslims, but I didn't say anything because I wasn't a Muslim.

Then he attacked the immigrants, but I didn't say anything because I wasn't "illegal."

Then he attacked the football players, but I didn't say anything because, "why not
just stand?"

Then they arrested the asylum seekers, but I didn't say anything because "they
shouldn't be here in the in first place."

Then they took the children, and I didn't say anything because "that can't be
happening here."

It's all good. They never came for me. They just kept opening Starbucks so that I
could hide behind my mocha.

Rev. Wendy Jones 2018

Rev. Martin Niemoller is famous for this poem.

However, what a lot of people don't know is that he was an ardent supporter
of Hitler and the Nazi's. Until he wasn't.

Until Hitler started coming for Christian converts of Jewish heritage. Then, and only then, when it became personal did he speak out. As we all know by then it was too late.

According to Wikipedia:

Niemöller was arrested on 1 July 1937. On 2 March 1938, he tried by a "Special Court" for activities against the State.

He received a 2,000 Reichmarks fine and seven-months imprisonment. But as he had been detained pre-trial for longer than the seven-month jail term, he was released by the Court after sentencing.

However, he was immediately rearrested by Himmler's Gestapo—presumably because Rudolf Hess found the sentence too lenient and decided to take "merciless action" against him.^[18]

He was interned in Sachsenhausen and Dachau concentration camps for "protective custody" from 1938 to 1945.^[19]

His former cellmate, Leo Stein, was released from Sachsenhausen to go to America, and he wrote an article about Niemöller for *The National Jewish Monthly* in 1941.^[3] Stein reports having asked Niemöller why he ever supported the Nazi Party, to which Niemöller replied:

"I find myself wondering about that too. I wonder about it as much as I regret it. Still, it is true that Hitler betrayed me.

I had an audience with him, as a representative of the Protestant Church, shortly before he became Chancellor, in 1932.

Hitler promised me on his word of honor, to protect the Church, and not to issue any anti-Church laws.

He also agreed not to allow pogroms against the Jews, assuring me as follows: "There will be restrictions against the Jews, but there will be no ghettos, no pogroms, in Germany."

I really believed, given the widespread anti-Semitism in Germany, at that time—that Jews should avoid aspiring to Government positions or seats in the Reichstag.

There were many Jews, especially among the Zionists, who took a similar stand. Hitler's assurance satisfied me at the time.

On the other hand, I hated the growing atheistic movement, which was fostered and promoted by the Social Democrats and the Communists.

Their hostility toward the Church made me pin my hopes on Hitler for a while.

I am paying for that mistake now; and not me alone, but thousands of other persons like me."

Listen to those words. Let them sink in. The justification. The attitude of “I’m okay” so I will listen to the promise that it “won’t be that bad for the Jews.”

This is important because we must understand **what** is happening today. We must understand **how** it is happening today. We must wake up to the fact that although fascism can happen faster than anybody has realized, it also happens in a steady progression.

We must be able to connect the dots. Of course it’s not going to be the same. Today instead of Jews, it’s Mexicans.

Instead of concentration camps, its old Walmart buildings and instead of the SS it is ICE and the Center for Refugee Relocation.

If we don’t recognize the parallels and recognize them quickly we are going to be in a lot of trouble. We are already in a lot of trouble. People are dying.

A 20 year old girl was shot in the back by a border patrol agent just last week in Texas.

A father from Honduras committed suicide in an ICE detention center hours after having his 3 year old child ripped from his arms last week. This is no longer theoretical. This is real. This is happening today.

People are literally dying. Today. These policies. Are. Killing. People.

So, I am going to talk to you today about self -care. But it is a different type of self -care. It is a self -care that is based on soul survival, the survival of our conscience and our humanity.

About a year ago Tina Fey had a Saturday night live skit that at first glance was quite funny. She was naming all of the crazy stuff this administration was doing and she ended up hiding behind and eating a huge chocolate cake.

It was funny for about a day (for white women) and then our women of color friends and sisters pointed out how obnoxious the skit was because they don’t have the luxury to hide their stress and frustration behind a chocolate cake. It is their sons getting killed. We white women watch the police brutality on TV.

They are sitting at the morgues identifying their children.

So, no.

That skit wasn’t funny to a lot of them. In fact it was disheartening and maddening in its naivety. And, yet, many middle class white women immediately resonated with the sentiment.

I totally understood her point.

A lot of us get it.

And we are watching this train wreck, and we don't know what to do. And we don't know what to say and we feel so powerless that it is easy to just hide under the covers or go eat chocolate or in my case hide out at a Starbucks with a mocha latte.

This was the sentiment that I woke up to on Thursday. For the past two weeks I have been absolutely devastated at the images and the stories of ICE agents separating children from their families who are seeking asylum.

I wake up, I read the stories. They are heartbreaking and infuriating so I go and get a morning coffee.

I realized that that is not self care. That is escape. And that is privileged escape at that.

We have wondered how the German people could let the holocaust happen.

Well, now I know. We are watching it happen here.

They are housing hundreds of children in old Walmart buildings, and there is no oversight.

Last week Senator Merkley from Oregon posted a video of him going into a refugee relocation center in Texas where they were "supposedly" housing hundreds of children.

"Supposedly" because nobody knows how many children are in there because nobody is allowed inside.

Let that sink in.

We don't know how many children are in this Walmart or what condition they are in because nobody, including U.S. senators are allowed inside.

The video shows him being denied entrance and then being escorted off the premises by the police.

This is June 2018. I am not telling a story about 1939.

When he was finally admitted entrance a few days later he described what he saw as hundreds of children, some as young as four years old, being housed in "cages." He later changed his words to "shelters" or something less inflammatory.

But think about that.

His first impression was that he saw hundreds of children being housed in cages.

So here are my questions:

Questions:

- What are those children eating?
- Do they get to go outside at all?
- How long have they been there?

- Is indefinite detention the new normal?
- Do they have advocates or social workers?
- What rights are they being afforded?
- What are the 14 states where they are being held?
- Is Colorado one of them - - if so where are they being held
- How long are they in the Walmart before they are given to a foster family?
- Why will CNN only talk about Stormy Daniels?
- Who is the voice for these children right now?

These are the immediate questions we need answers to. According to the New York Times the ACLU has filed a lawsuit to stop this practice of separating children from their families. And the United Nations human rights commission has condemned the policy. Let that sink in. The United Nations is getting involved. In the United States of America.

But, so much damage is already being done. As I mentioned before people have already died.

So, aside from eating a lot of chocolate cake, and hiding under our beds in depression what can we do?

We can speak out. I sent my meditation to the GJ Sentinel on Thursday and it was printed on Friday. That was pretty easy.

We can speak out loud and often.

Speak out on Facebook.

Write letters to the editor. Start calling your representatives screaming that this is not okay on any level.

Our UUA Pacific Regional Contact Sarah Gibb Milspaugh, posted a beautiful picture of her Grand parents on facebook last week. This is what she wrote.

Sarah Gibb Milspaugh:

“These are my great-grandparents, Sarah and Max, refugees from the Russian Empire. If the current Trump/Sessions policies had been in place in 1905 and 1906 when they arrived at Ellis Island:

*Max would have been detained in a private prison while his application for asylum proceeded at a snail's pace,

*their toddler Rose would have been pulled from Sarah's arms and brought to "foster care or whatever"

*while the bereft Sarah would have been sent to a different private prison.

*Sarah and Max would have had a hard time proving that their lives were really under threat in Ukraine, where, of course, the US government could insist that "other Jews still lived and worked and weren't dead yet." Perhaps they would have been deported. Perhaps they never would have even tried to come.

As it was, the year after they left, there was a major Pogrom in their city where Jewish lives and businesses were destroyed. And of course, later, the Holocaust.

Their lives really were under threat. But would they have been able to prove it to a racist protectionist government trying to punish and intimidate people for seeking asylum? I doubt it.

These are the things I think about as our government, supposedly in the name of our citizenry, does what they are doing to immigrants and their families.

I am outraged. I hope you are too.”

I’m sorry. I know its summer. I know its beautiful outside. I know many of us just want to hang out at the pool or go camping.

And that is all fine.

I really wanted to give a light and fluffy sermon about authentic self care based on a lovely article by Brianna West.

Maybe someday that sermon will come. But for now, I will have to leave it to a simple quote from her.

“True self-care is not salt baths and chocolate cake, it is making the choice to build a life you don’t need to regularly escape from.” Brianna Wiest

<https://thoughtcatalog.com/brianna-wiest/2017/11/this-is-what-self-care-really-means-because-its-not-all-salt-baths-and-chocolate-cake/>

The only way we are going to build that life is to face what is in front of us, step forward and move into our strength our voice and our privilege.

Because it is here.

Now is the time. We must speak out. We must make our voices heard.

We must use our privilege and our power while we still have it, because what is happening is no longer theoretical.

The question is will we allow history to repeat itself?

I really hope not. But chocolate cake, lattes and salt baths are not the answer.

