



## Highlights from Interviews with Sharon Salzberg and Rev. angel Kuodo Williams

Sharon Salzberg is a well-known teacher of Buddhist meditation practices, co-founder of the Insight Meditation Society in Barre, Massachusetts and best-selling author.

Rev. angel Kuodo williams is an ordained Zen Buddhist priest, author, activist, and founder of the Center for Transformative Change in Berkeley, California.

### Sharon Salzberg

Real political change must be spiritual. Real spiritual practice has to be political.

In social justice work the only option is loving everyone. Otherwise, there is no path to real change.

The sense of replenishment we get from our own happiness is a gift not only to ourselves but to others. It's hard to help others over the long haul without the inner resource of happiness.

I don't feel despair. I think that there is a significant movement happening, the beginning of many things.

I feel a kind of happiness, even. It's so hard to see the end of the story, very hard, but we get a lot of energy doing what we feel needs to be done.

### Rev. angel Kuodo williams

We have to call people to a vision that includes everyone and demonizes no one.

I think we have a perfect storm of factors coming together to take an evolutionary leap.

My hope is that we will realize how much we all stand to lose if we don't resist this administration, and we will come together to create a new, more inclusive vision for our country.

From my perspective, the election made perfectly clear what has always been the case in this country: It was founded to favor—to make central—white, wealthy, heterosexual males.

We have to recognize our underlying unity. We have to viscerally understand that we're all in the same boat.

We have much more in common with each other than with the wealthy elite—we could make structural changes that would benefit everyone. So Trump and the powers that be have been effective at keeping all of us “marginalized” groups fighting amongst ourselves, rather than changing the system that keeps the existing power structure in place.

The election pulled the veil off that illusion [that we are free of oppression by race, gender and class.] We’re able to see very clearly now a lot of things that are frankly embarrassing for many people to realize.

But I think we have to begin the conversation by recognizing that the America we typically talk about—the America in history books, the land of liberty and justice for all—never existed

It’s not about demonizing. It’s not about fearing or hating each other. It’s about asking people to look at their core beliefs about how we should be in relationship as fellow Americans—and then asking whether we have the systems in place to implement those values. I’m saying that we’ve never had the systems in place to create equality for all because that was never the goal of the founding fathers.

I think that until a different kind of America is being spoken about and drawing people into it, we’re going to keep demonizing and distancing ourselves from each other, rather than recognizing that we’re all in the same boat.

We’ve wanted to believe that efforts to disenfranchise minority voters, for example, were exceptions to the rule because we live in “the greatest democracy on Earth.”

We’re not recognizing ourselves as part of this huge fabric in which we’ve all—along with the natural world—have been reduced to expendables; commodities; resources to be exploited while we’re useful and discarded when we’re not.

America is having a spiritual crisis in which its identity is on the line. America was never that great for a lot of people.

We have to call people to a vision that includes everyone and demonizes no one. That’s a spiritual vision, which we will then pressure politicians to implement.

What we need to do is remind people of their basic goodness and kinship, which allows us to view with compassion the worldview of someone who feels very differently from us.

We need a long-term vision that inspires and unifies us, as well as short-term tactics that move us forward without doing violence to the long-term vision.

The worldview that people in this country have held for generations is coming apart and that is very, very painful; very disorienting. Certainly Americans' drug use and suicide rates are not the smallest indicator. How do we feel then? How do we feel their pain?

So we have to be able to both stand firm in our resistance without standing against the humanity of another.

We don't necessarily need to expect politicians to have these conversations for us, but we need people from different faiths, different communities, different perspectives, to usher in a new vision for what it means to be a human being in this incredibly diverse country.

We need conversations that are not left versus right, but inclusive.

My white friends, colleagues, and allies are more agitated than I've ever seen them: unable to sleep at night; short-tempered; really distraught. They're upset because they see that the world they thought they were living in was a deception. They can't remain comfortably neutral any longer. They're going to have to take action.

Human beings will acclimate to anything and especially the human beings who don't feel the direct pain. But my hope is that we will realize how much we all stand to lose if we don't resist this administration, and we will come together to create a new, more inclusive vision for our country.