

The Story of the Stone

Stephanie Heuer

20th March 2014



In spring of 2008 I believe that was the year, I was going to give my ‘dignity rocks’ seminar at a high school, Andrew Hill, here in San Jose. I arrived early and was meeting in the lounge with the leadership teacher there, Josh, a dear and close friend. On the couch in the corner of the lounge was a young Latino man, a senior, crying in a lump almost inconsolable. Josh informed me his older brother, a father to a two year old, had been shot and killed in a gang related incident over the weekend. Horrific, however, not uncommon here in San Jose....

I sat next him, and said his name gently, Nikko. I told him I was there, and he repositioned his body in my lap and we sat and he cried for some time. There were no words to say. This is grief, I thought, true and genuine to our human form, and I grieved with him deeply. After some time, when he composed himself a bit, I told him why I was there. I do a seminar for young people talking about dignity, humiliation, violence, and alternatives to violence about ‘being the Arrow’, moving from a mindset of revenge and resistance toward one of respect and reconciliation. For each student, I have a small bag, where I have a rock and a scroll of the human rights declaration for children from the United Nations. I have the students come down and sign a t-shirt that says ‘be the arrow’ with their signatures if they are interested in thinking about alternatives to violence in their lives. I take a rock, hold it, and imitate dropping it in water, and tell them the ripples are the consequence to their actions. Drop pebbles for the bad things, and boulders for the good things... as the ripples correspond directly to the intent of your actions. I didn’t expect Nikko to come that day to my presentation, as I could feel in his body his weak and devastated state, but when I was about to leave the lounge to go to my conference room he stood up and hugged me tightly. I took his hand in mind, and opened it. I dropped a rock I had in my pocket (I carry them always), into his open palm and closed it around the rock. I looked deep in the eyes and to his heart and said, ‘Nikko, if you seek revenge for your lost brother, I will lose you. We will all lose you Nikko... including your precious nephew now left behind...please know I love you. ‘. That is all I said.

I went to the seminar. There were almost 100 students there, some gang related groups, others being in and out of jail, their lives sprinkled with violence and thoughts of isolation from the ‘norm’. Rankism reeks about this group, and I carefully worded my presentation on being the arrow as an ultimate goal, doable, but not necessarily attainable, just hope. When I got to the end of the seminar, I asked if there was anyone who would come down and sign the t-shirt. To my surprise, in the back, Nikko stood up. He had come and I hadn’t seen him enter the

conference room. He stood up, and walked through the sea of students, shocked to see, and equally shocked to see him commit to 'being the arrow', he said, 'I'll sign, I'll be the first'. He came down, no doubt passing some individuals either involved or knowing who murdered his brother. I'll never know, but I do know, he was a brave and precious person at the moment. He signed, and everyone lined up behind him and signed. I have that t-shirt today, and carry it with me to my seminars. It validates my work, Evelin's great inspiration which coined the 'be the arrow' term in Costa Rica, the last seminar with our beloved Don Klein.

I returned for another seminar to Andrew Hill later that year, last day school, June. I finished the seminar and was walking out to my car, and had just sat behind the steering wheel. I saw a young man running to the parking lot, shouting my name. I rolled down the window, and to my amazement, it was Nikko. I got out the car and he was literally filled with excitement. I hadn't seen him at the seminar, but his news was touching. I jumped out of the car, and he said with pride, 'I'm graduating'. He had just found out he would be graduating with his class. The two months since I saw him, he was allowed to do independent studies at home and his teachers gave him assignments that he succeeded in, considering his home situation. I was so very touched that he came running to the parking lot looking for me, to share with me his accomplishment in graduating. I felt he truly was moving on, and through his pain. As I hugged him goodbye, he stood there and walked straight back about two feet. He looked at me with a look I'll never forget. It was sort of squint in his eyes and a face that said, 'I'm going to share my soul with you, can I trust you'... and then he reached down in his jeans, and pulled out the rock. The rock I had given him in the room two months before, during his grief. He said to me these words, which I carry with me in my work and in my soul, 'I carry it with me always, to remind me... remind me of my brother'. I cried, and as I write this, I cry again, to know that my dear Nikko took to hear the 'be the arrow' concept, and made it a working part of his life.

Thank you Evelin for giving me that day in Costa Rica where I really put into my life an idea.

Much love to you all. I will send you a picture of the t-shirt Nikko signed. An update: they never found his brothers' murder, and Nikko never sought revenge. He works, graduated, and apparently is a surrogate father to his nephew left behind.

Safa

California
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www.humiliationstudies.org/howeare/coreteamlong.php#heuer.

See also:

- *Be the Arrow* (2013),

www.humiliationstudies.org/documents/HeuerNY13meetingBetheArrow.pdf

- a graphical overview over Stephanie Heuer's dignity rocks concept

www.humiliationstudies.org/documents/HeuerDignityRocksEnglishCover.jpg

- her Dignity Rocks powerpoint presentation,

www.humiliationstudies.org/documents/HeuerDignityRocks2013.ppt



Evelin Lindner with Dignity Rocks T-Shirts at the 11th Annual Conference of Human Dignity and Humiliation Studies (HumanDHS) in Norway, June/July 2008