



In Lak Ech

Tu eres mi otro yo —You are my other self.
I am you and you are me.
If I hurt you, I hurt myself.
If I hate you, I hate myself.
If I love and respect you,
I love and respect myself.

In Lak Ech: A Reflection

by Mario Chacon,

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The ancient peoples of this continent were not savage; they clearly understood how the universe functions and what it means to be a human being. In Lak Ech is not simply an ancient Indigenous Maya Concept; in fact, it is a prescription for how we should treat each other as human beings. It is the antithesis of dehumanization. It is the first step towards re-humanization. It is the first step in viewing our fellow human beings not simply as neighbors but as brothers and sisters, as co-equals.

In Lak Ech: WE create. We don't react. The minute we stop creating is the minute we surrender our creative impulse, our humanity, our spiritual vibrancy, our movement, and our direct connection to the universe.

If we poison the earth, we poison ourselves. If we pollute the waters, we pollute our bodies. If we contaminate the earth, we contaminate our food and life itself. If we take care of the earth the earth will take care of us. If we love the earth, we love ourselves. If we respect the earth we live.

When we practice In Lak Ech we quit being neutral and take action in a positive way by adding to the positive experience of being connected with all life. Remember, when you practice In Lak Ech and you give your energy to any other life form you are also giving to yourself! You do not give your energy away to something separate from yourself. You are giving to another part of yourself!

We can practice In Lak Ech tirelessly because when and what we give to others is giving energy to ourselves. When we give, we receive. The more one practices In Lak Ech, the more we receive. What goes around comes around. The more humanity begins to live In Lak Ech, the less we will think in terms of our separateness. There can be no competition, jealousy or envy between us, because we are pieces of each other. We can share and help each other with our connections, ideas, resources without fear that there will not be enough to go around.

When we live the concept of unity, abundance, and wholeness there is unity, abundance and wholeness!

Definitions of Dehumanization

by Mario Chacon

Dehumanization (definition):

1. Dehumanization is taking away the rights of some that most have. In other words, society offers rights to most citizens, but then denies those same rights to other citizens, creating a hierarchy of humanity where some are considered “normal” or “human” while others are considered “sub-normal” or “sub-human.”
2. Dehumanization attempts to strip a person of human characteristics, brutalizing the individual by either mental or physical means; stripping one of self-esteem or meaning/purpose. Dehumanization occurs when a person is forced to endure continual humiliation or shame.

Specific Forms of Dehumanization:

a. Denying one’s ability to care for oneself

If one is denied food, shelter, clothing, safety, or health when these are readily available, then that person is not being treated as a human being who has all of these basic needs in the same way as other humans do. This is a rejection of the person’s humanity.

b. Convincing another that he is sub-human

The process of dehumanization is complete when one personally admits that he/she is less than “normal” and therefore “unworthy” to live with others or receive the same basic rights as others.

c. Denying the ability to obtain fair work

Part of one’s dignity is to participate in work that gives a person the ability to feel that he/she is contributing positively to society, even in a small way. To deny a person that participation is to deny one self-respect.

d. Denying social connection

A human being is a social being. To deny social contact is to deny an essential aspect of what it means to be human.

e. Physically or mentally punishing another for not giving one proper “respect”

If we cause a person to be humiliated for not giving us “respect” (a word that has different meanings depending on the speaker), we are stating our human superiority. Often one does not give respect because of fear or because the person demanding respect already displayed qualities that denies another person his or her own proper respect (for example, demeaning a person without cause).

f. Forcing one to live in denial of one’s beliefs or values or both

Humans are moral beings and we must believe that what we do is done with good intentions or at least on a positive moral basis. Otherwise, we lose our dignity and our right to see ourselves as human. To force one to act in a personally unethical manner is to destroy one’s self-hood.

Re-humanization

Rehumanization, the restoral of meaning, of dignity and self-hood for a person who has been brutalized, seeks to restore the humanity of the individual by acknowledging the truth and pain of person's losses while also recognizing the humanity in each person. It is to be involved in bringing a marginalized group into the sphere of "normal" in society. To re-humanize is not just a matter of public rights. The most important aspect of being re-humanized is to change the public perception and attitude toward the marginalized group. When women were granted the right to vote, they were re-humanized publically. Then, the Women's Movements of the 1920's-1970's helped to change public perceptions of women's roles in society.

Why bother with rehumanization? If we treat others as less than human, then we open ourselves to be treated as less than human. Criminals are punished because they have treated others' lives or rights with less respect than their own. And, if society punishes someone like a criminal without knowing that he/she treated others as less than human, then WE are the ones who are acting as criminals. If we act like a criminal, then, in the eyes of those who see us that way, we can be treated like a criminal, meaning without respect. One of the basic rules of morality is to treat others as we want to be treated. Is it right to be stalked by law-enforcement and dragged away from your family and children? Is it right for marginalized communities to be more afraid of police officers whose duties are meant to keep peace?