



**TPI** Transformative Practices Institute.  
**Love Wins!**  
 No excuses!  
 We all have the ability to replace fear with love.  
 We all have the ability to overcome indifference with action and courage.  
 Our brains are lazy. Our brains say, "Tomorrow I will do something."  
 Our insecurities say to us, "I am only one person. What can I do?"  
 Our heart may be covered in fear, but it whispers, "Courage...Act...Try...You can do it!"  
 Shimon Ben Gamliel said:  
 "Study is not the goal, doing is.  
 Do not mistake 'talk' for 'action'  
 Play fills no stomach.  
 Compassion builds no houses.  
 Understanding is not yet justice."  
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**PAUL SUTHERLAND**

recently spoke at a peace conference in Nairobi and handed out six postcards like this. See the others at SpiritualityHealth.com and the S&H Facebook page.

# What has happened to America?

**I can't breathe. What has happened to America? How could Donald Trump get elected? I am so horrified and sad when I think about the next four years.**

**Paul Sutherland:** Trump and the 46 percent who voted for him are not the problem. I see the problem when I look in the mirror each morning and when I meditate at the end of the day. That's when I ask myself, Today, did my every action, thought, and deed reflect living a spiritual life?

Frankly, I don't know what makes us human beings so lazy. We act as if we did something *substantial* and *relevant* because we voted, reposted something on Facebook, chatted up an idea, or tweeted about it.

If you look at the "Trumps" of the world and say they are the problem, well, then that is a problem. We trump ourselves every time we say, "I can't believe Trump gropes women/wants to send my neighbors back to a place they don't know/wants to rid the USA of food, pharmaceutical, environmental, and financial regulations that don't suit him [or fill in the blank here]."

Many who voted for Trump were voting against smug, educated, know-it-alls. Others voted against the status quo, which isn't working for a lot of people. Others voted against abortion rights or other objects of passionate disagreement. I voted for Clinton, and before that I proudly voted for a man who was born in the same Hawaiian hospital as my three-year-old son, William. I still feel that was the right decision. I think most readers of my columns are not Trump supporters and consider themselves spiritually savvy, knowledgeable, justice-oriented, compassionate, caring, and informed, as well as wise decision-makers and good citizens.

But it's not enough. Trump is not the problem.

America was founded by Puritan separatists, the spiritual ancestors of today's Congregationalists. Our Puritan ancestors left England because they did not want someone telling them how to believe or what a relationship with God, Spirit, or our higher self should look like. It was about truth, contemplation, sacrifice, and truly living a spiritual life. Living a spiritual life informed by one's own conscience, as opposed to an external authority, requires humility, honesty, and truth seeking. That type of

spiritual existence is challenging, is inconvenient, and takes work—mental work—and it acknowledges and embraces the existence of suffering. A spiritual path leads through suffering, facing it head-on. It does not attempt to steer around it.

Sadly, it seems, many Americans now feel their overriding spiritual responsibility is simply to vote. Showing faith by a simple vote for a party, and championing that party's dogma, does not seem consistent with any spiritual teaching, but it is simple and compelling to a lazy mind.

Would our separatist ancestors get between an immigration officer and an "illegal alien" and say, "No, she was born here and should be allowed to stay"?

Would our principled ancestors show up to the school board meeting and champion the teaching of virtues, values, tolerance, kindness, and

democracy that were built on such radical notions as the pursuit of happiness, freedom of religion, and justice for all?

Of course they would. It's undeniable that we are able to have these conversations today because our ancestors did much more than tweet their displeasure.

I am truly amazed and somewhat bewildered by the reality that Donald Trump will be our 45th president. I wish I had done more. Maybe complacency and a lazy mind made me think, *No way can he get elected*. I will try to be more engaged. I will try to live a spiritual life. I will try to model those who strove to live a radically happy, energetic, and 100 percent engaged spiritual life. I think of M.L. King Jr., Joan of Arc, Nelson Mandela, Malala Yousafzai, Gandhi, the current Dalai Lama, and St. Francis. These are the heroes I would like to emulate.

How do *you* see the problem? Please tell me, because I don't want my lazy brain and fear of discomfort and suffering to win. I don't want to be a lazy whiner, a victim, and a crybaby who thinks that complaining actually reflects living a spiritual life. I want to be part of the solution for everyone to live a life where love—the action word—wins. And I will remember what one of my Buddhist teachers told me in a moment when I was feeling sad about something. He smiled into my suffering and said, "Paul, suffering exists so we have something to do." I, for one, have something to do. **S&H**

To ask Paul a question, email him directly at [paul@spiritualityhealth.com](mailto:paul@spiritualityhealth.com).



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**As It Is**  
His Divine Grace  
A.C. Bhaktivedānta  
Swami Prabhupada

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