

Amazing Grace ~ Barbara Brodsky's Healing Journey Continues

By Barbara Brodsky

(This is the third in a series of essays we've published by Barbara Brodsky. These essays are travel reportage of the highest order --- Brodsky is on a healing journey, and her trips to a Brazilian shaman, to overcome 36 years of deafness, are intensely personal and full of the joys and sorrows of a life being lived deeply. We've been proud to publish these essays. Barbara Brodsky is well-known and respected among meditators and consciousness explorers in the Ann Arbor region. She is the founder and guiding teacher of the Deep Spring Center for Meditation and Spiritual Inquiry, a vibrant Vipassana meditation community (from the Theravadin Buddhist tradition). She's also an ordained interfaith minister. She's been practicing meditation since 1960, and teaching since 1989. She is the author of the Presence, Kindness and Freedom, published in 2003.)

Out my window is a view of melting snow and mud, a typical mid- February day in Michigan. I returned home yesterday from my sixth trip to Casa de Dom Inácio in Brazil, the healing center run by João Teixeira de Faria, or John of God as he is affectionately called. The trip was part of my quest to overcome 36 years of deafness, and to find healing in various aspects of body, mind and spirit. My mind is still full of Brazil, of flowers, smiles, and the amazing love and energy of the place and people.

"You will hear," the numerous Entities who incorporate into João's body have told me for the past three years. "Be patient." And, "What would you like to hear first?", people have often asked me when they learn about my travels there. "My children's voices," I reply, "or the song *Amazing Grace*." Although that song was written when I could still hear, I only came to know it after I was deaf. I learned all the words, and loved them, but I had no idea of the melody or even of the rhythm of the music. Somehow I've always trusted, "I will hear this song some day."

The first day at the Casa I was sent to surgery, my usual first experience there with each visit. After several quiet days recovering in my room, and the surgery review, the Entity incorporated in João's body told me to sit in his "current," as they call the meditation room where the Entity does his work. This is also what usually happens for me, sitting there through the current sessions for the remaining weeks. We sit with eyes closed in meditation for between 2 and 4 hours each Wednesday, Thursday and Friday morning, and again in the afternoon. They do the majority of their healing work in these current rooms.

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The very powerful energy has a reciprocal basis; the Entities support us and work on us while we meditate, and we support each other, João and spirit as we meditate and hold the energy field. The third week, I sat in the Entity's Current on a Friday morning feeling a little low in energy and also a bit sad. My group was leaving the next day (I bring people to the Casa as a guide), I was three weeks into my five-week trip and little had happened. They continue to tell me, "You will hear," and I do

believe that, but sometimes it's harder to have faith in that statement. So I sat in the current with these feelings, just noting as they became predominant, "low energy, lethargic, sad, contracted." Emotions and physical sensations will arise and fall away. My practice is just to note them and not become self-identified, not to create stories about these mind and body states.

Then I felt a higher energy in the room, and some perception of music. I was literally hearing musical sounds, melody. I can't say how I was hearing it, whether in the body or the ears, but it was not just tinnitus, but true music. I opened my eyes to find the gathered group singing. One man was standing, and it was his voice I was hearing.

I was drowsing a bit when the touch came, a firm two hands on either side of my head. Sometimes, not often, the Entity gets up from his chair and walks across the room, touches someone sitting in the Current or even leads them to another place. I sat, eyes still closed, feeling like a bolt of lightening had touched me. The hands held on both sides of my head firmly for about 10 seconds, and then gave it a small shake. Needless to say, I was no longer sleepy. Mind became very still and focused. I sat up straight and had a deep and energized 3 hours of meditation.

Beside the energy experience, I also felt deeply loved and seen, that my needs were truly known and recognized. I was told later that it was Dr. Valdivino incorporated at that session, the Entity who has been working with me most consistently through these years. He knew how I was feeling and gave that support. It's a good reminder that the Entities do know my needs and are helping me, as they keep reminding me verbally. As the hands released, a flow of my tears also released, and tension I didn't know I was feeling. My head continued to tingle there for the rest of the afternoon and evening and into the weekend. Doubt dissolved. I know that right there with deafness is hearing. My practice the past few visits has been to focus less on "getting" hearing, but on knowing that which can already hear and supporting it. There is no denial of the deafness, just simultaneous acknowledgment that the basis for hearing is also there.

Every Sunday morning there is an English language Interfaith Service held at the Casa. I often go when there is someone willing to sign for me, but have never gone alone, as I would just sit with no way to know what was said. That Sunday I felt moved to attend, though I struggled with it a bit, thinking I would regret it since I could not hear anything. The pull was strong though illogical, but my heart said, "Go." When the service started, the man leading it began to talk and I just closed my eyes and sat meditating for half an hour. Then I felt a higher energy in the room, and some perception of music. I was literally hearing musical sounds, melody. I can't say how I was hearing it, whether in the body or the ears, but it was not just tinnitus, but true music. I opened my eyes to find the gathered group singing. One man was standing, and it was his voice I was hearing. I recognized him as a man I had seen singing several times during the preceding week, on the stage in the main hall, and elsewhere.

As my eyes focused on his face, I began to lip-read the words, "How precious did that Grace appear, the hour that first I believed." He was leading

the group singing *Amazing Grace*. I was hearing the music! I turned to face him and let the music come deep into my heart. Each note reverberated there. We went through all seven verses. Each note had clarity and a purity of sound. My body was shaking so hard I could hardly control it, and tears were streaming down my face. As the closing notes sounded, I had to run from the room, sobbing. A friend came out to help me and learn the cause of my tears, then hugged me and cried with me when she heard the story.

When spirit opens doors, she does it in a whole-hearted way. The singer, Stephen, is a well-known baritone opera singer. One person who read about this in my journal said, "What a classy reintroduction to the musical world the entities have provided by putting you within ear shot of Stephen! I easily admit to some envy there!" Yes, spirit doesn't orchestrate things half way. If *Amazing Grace* is to be the first music I hear, as I had prayed, it will have to be with a world-class singer! When I spoke to Stephen after the service, he was as moved as I was. There are no accidents. We both highly valued this occasion.

Two days later he came to my pousada for a personal concert of *Amazing Grace* and other songs. At one point I had the opportunity to sing it with him; we had no word sheet; I was the only one who knew the words to all seven verses so I had to sing loud. Stephen said of my singing, "She is hearing it!"

The hearing is not consistent and is still connected only to music, not yet words. But in the remaining two weeks I heard enough more music to know it was real, and would grow and continue.

What is healing? How does this process work? Each time I take another step I realize how

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little I understand. We move with faith and the intention for the highest good, and have no idea what will happen next, but need to trust the power of loving intention. My highest intention is not to hear, but is to service and toward whatever is for the highest good of all beings. The intention for hearing is there, but without grasping. Thus, I can't know what may come next, only trust the process and keep my heart open. If spirit is running the show, then spirit is running the show. Can I let go, as Aaron sometimes asks me, sit back and leave the driving to God/ Goddess, whatever power is at the wheel? Perhaps this letting go is the true healing, for only here do we release our identification with fear and the contractions of fear and live in Love. When mind and body are uncontracted, we are truly open to the power of Love in our Selves and the universe.

This afternoon I went to the market, needing to fill my empty refrigerator and pantry. I could feel some small tension, on this first day back to every day life and all the tasks it brings. The body was contracted and my back hurt. I was pushing, not flowing. As I was shopping, a student, not someone I know well, walked up to me with a loving smile and a large bouquet of pink tulips. "These are for you," she said, indicating with the receipt that she had already paid for them. Just that and a hug and she was gone. What a wonderful reminder; be present and Love is here. Let go and live in Love.

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