

The highlight of that first visit was our appointment at the White House. My mother often relayed the story that, as we'd passed it the previous day on a tourbus, I pointed out the window, excitedly exclaiming "there's President Johnson's house!", and the onlookers on the bus all laughed and smiled with me. I remember how beautiful it was as we toured inside with other families who had worked for the government, standing in the Oval Office, how beautiful it was, seemingly vast as a child. I remember walking and looking at the famous portraits on the walls, and finally going outside to tour the Rose Garden, and how beautiful were the flowers. I remember my subsequent visits with my own family and friends, and how I never lost the awe and appreciation of The White House, along with many of the other buildings and museums that Washington DC had to offer. They still hold their magic for me all these years later, especially the White House. It's been a few years since I've been to DC. I certainly owe it a visit or two. I just can't bring myself to visit there now. And I think you know why.

From what's reported, my dear city of Washington DC is the physical manifestation of the atrociousness of the Trump Administration. From the Gilded statues, to the proposed Arch by Arlington National Cemetery, to the horrific desecration of many parts of the White House and Beyond, the city now reflects the aura of the administration, it's blackness, it's lawlessness, and it's disrespect to our nation, our constitution, our laws, and our country as a whole. It has been change, but it still sent Dan's. It needs to be reclaimed as the Sacred Space that we all knew it to be.

Sometimes change happens quickly - blink, and in a moment, your life has changed, with no effort at all. Maybe it's like you've gone through some gate, and the life before you, and the life after are somehow different. You are somewhere in a new place. Maybe it's a new location, or maybe it's a new location in your mind or heart. It's like an act of demarcation. But other times, change comes slowly, over a course of months, if not years. We are that change. Everyone can see it each Saturday in Salem when they drive past our signs and honk. Even those that curse us, disgruntled with coarse, mean looks that could kill. We are the change that is coming, we are the change that is here. While it may not come on a fast timeline, it

is coming, it is real and I believe it. I want you to believe it too. So much can change in the midterm elections, that is why I have had so many activities and rallies focusing on getting out the vote. I have complete faith that Massachusetts will forever be blue. But our sending postcards to other states is a necessary thing, as I believe people across this country are looking for that change which we exhibit each and every week, a change which we need beyond words, Beyond logic, beyond the law and the Constitution and all that we knew as right in this world. Apparently this time change is coming like a whisper, one that grows louder and louder with each week, with each sign, with each activity with each breath . And although we are not the cause for the necessity of change, we are the drum beat that keeps the need for it going, for its culmination to come in the months and year ahead. I do not believe the America we will find there will be like it was in the past, we are part of something that will create something new, embracing the Democracy that worked before and creating a fairer, just, and impartial world with accountability, acceptance and a quest and respect for common goals. I fear the time ahead will not be an end to our efforts, but only the beginning.

For myself, the time between now and July 4th has been a time of reflection for me, a time to look back on what we have accomplished this past year, the mistakes, and what worked and what didn't. It is intensely frustrating to me that we show up week after week, and that Donald Trump and his administration has not had any accountability. If I was a praying woman I would pray for that first among all things, that those who have caused the current status of our country be fully and completely accountable, so that those who would want to repeat their efforts would think twice, at the very least. I realize this may never be reality. But for myself, I like to think of one sign in particular that I've come back to over the course of the past year. Held by our friend Richard, it quotes a line from one of my favorite Nick Lowe's songs: "What's so funny about peace love and understanding?" I remember remarking on the sign to him, and his response was not one I anticipated. He had stated that basically , nothing's going to change until we all learn how to sit down together. I couldn't hear him, and I don't mean physically, I wasn't ready to process those words. I

was too full of anger, too full of anxiousness and distrust, too full of myself to see. But now I do. There are wisdom in his words.

More than anything, I believe we are out of balance in this country. We have forgotten how to listen, we have forgotten tolerance, we have forgotten acceptance, that we are still a land of the free, and that all are welcome here. We need to embrace that with all, but most especially, with those that disagree with us. Yet can there be true peace if they are not recognizing the same? It would appear not currently, but that does not mean that we should forsake our efforts, moreover, we should double down. I personally have tried to extend myself more, to become a more active listener to those around me, even Maga, which is personally difficult for me as I feel I have lost my dear brother to this group. I want to understand them, I want to understand how our country of fellow citizens who I believe are mostly good people like ourselves, could vote for someone who has caused such chaos and Division. Can we really become a nation of judgment, of bigotry? More than anything else Donald Trump has done, I believe the worst thing is to cultivate a nation of hate. In his first Administration within one month of office, there was reportedly a 600% rise in hate crimes. How did we get here? That should scare even the bravest among Us. We can hate Donald Trump and Maga all we want, but the truth of the matter is there's a reason they came to power. I believe that by only through active listening and attempting to understand each other will we arrive at any common ground, if that is at all possible at this point. Let's hope it is.

International Peace Day is Monday September 21st. I sometimes think peace is an ideal, something to shoot for that is not attainable completely. Does that mean we shouldn't work for it? On Sunday the 20th of September we will have a Candlelighting at Riley Plaza at 7:00 p.m. We will recognize International Peace Day, as well as the need for peace in our community, however we define it. We will hold a Peace Circle and gather. We will Listen to poetry, listen to music, and most important of all listen to each other. Maybe we'll make a plan going forward on how we can further bring peace into our community, of what peace means to us personally.

For myself I used to think peace was something soft, like feathers, a state to be longed for, to be appreciated, to be worked towards as a common goal. Now I think peace is not an ending, it is something that needs to be worked for, something that is broken now in our divided nation. I ask you to come and join us, with your listening ears, and your gentle souls.

International Day of Peace: Candlelighting and Peace Circle

Sunday, September 20

7pm Riley Plaza

Please come.