

Queer DharmaBuddhism, Healing and Gayness: a personal journey

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Buddhism began with suffering and the perception of suffering. The recognition of the consistency and extent of suffering led the Buddha to seek understanding the ending of suffering. And below the suffering came the discovery of an ocean of boundless compassion.

Gayness, properly understood from a Buddhist perspective, is but another manifestation of mind having, as all manifestations of mind, no actual separate reality. Yet this facile statement only serves to remind me of an anonymous limerick:

"Though I know pain isn't real
When I sit on a pin,
I dislike what I fancy I feel."

My initial intention was to write more about Buddhism and healing than gayness. And yet we must consider gayness, for along with it comes suffering sentient beings, ourselves. So before turning to my last few years of practice and healing about which others perhaps have a far clearer picture than I, it seems skillful to seek some understanding of the suffering which led me to the Buddhist path on which I now find myself.

Watching the anguish of my friends and my self, I have come to believe that gayness in our society comes with more than its quota of pain. Not solely as a result of social evil, condemnation, hostility, ostracism and actual persecution, but because gay people seem to possess a certain sensitivity to suffering, conceivably a certain attraction to it, an admiration of our seemingly heroic capacity to bear it, even perhaps a compassionate willingness to carry the burden for others, gay and non-gay, as well as ourselves. Many times I've noted how the movie and music images of anguished suffering women attract gay men. Anguished, persecuted, powerless, surviving women, suffering for love. Gayness, despite its ironic title, often seemed to me to be about suffering.

The story of one personal journey that follows builds from the personal Journals I have compiled over the last decade.

I grew to adulthood in an agnostic Jewish family, an only child. Mine was an intact nuclear family but one which frequently moved from state to state. Wearing glasses from age 7, good at reading, poor at sports, emotionally reticent, often lonely, longing even then for closeness to other boys, I saw no need for religion, no meaning in spirituality. What I did learn was that a partner relationship was a

necessity and that relationships don't work. And a more general message: a good person and a good son must be happy. My mother, the dominant figure, constantly said I should do what she told me to achieve success while acknowledging that she herself had failed to find happiness. As is usual enough in families, I, the son, was to fill the family need which my mother had been unable to attain for herself. At the time, my father seemed largely irrelevant. [In later years I remarked that my parents had met when my father accidentally knocked down my mother while skating at an ice rink -- and that was the last time he was the top in the relationship.]

In short, I learned that not only is suffering inevitable but was my sacred family duty to find a way out of this inevitable failure. Perhaps, this was the first half of the Buddha's message that life is impermanence and suffering without his discovery of the ending of suffering.

In my teen years, still neither sexual nor spiritual, I remained ignorant of both practices. My mother frequently pointed out my brightness and drew the moral that this gift made it even more incumbent upon me to achieve success and happiness. The ambiguity lay in the meaning of success which seemed sometimes to refer to serving others and sometimes to mean monetary security. In any case, she informed me, college was essential.

Eager to attain my mother's approval and fulfill my family destiny, when she pointed out that to go to college I needed a scholarship and that to get a scholarship I needed good grades, I went in one semester from all C's in the 7th grade to all A's in the 8th, a record continued through the end of high school. Graduating Harvard on a scholarship, going on to another Ivy League college on a fellowship, I thought, with intelligence and sufficient hard work, I would be able to maintain control over my life and finally achieve an end to suffering. Grandiose dreams arose that I would achieve this not only for myself and my family but for all the world -- perhaps as a scientist finding means to end the world's pain. Considerable joy was mixed with the suffering, friendships, achievements, experiences from skiing to travel. Things seemed to be working -- just a little more effort, a few more thoughts, another round of experiences and all would be well. Now and then though I found myself thinking about death, thinking that it was still a long way off, thinking that maybe death and the world was all an illusion and that I was the only live actor in a play with mannequins. I'd quickly push these irrational thoughts from my conscious mind and return to the hard physical reality which, I was told by family, friends and teachers, was all of existence. In the early 80s after my return to graduate school, I remember remarking to one of my Professors with regard to our studies, "Well, it's all just a way of passing the time between birth and death."

In my first year of graduate school I learned that my closest friend was marrying his girlfriend, whom he dated while we were friends in college, because she was

pregnant. I came to the shocking realization that people actually did it; they actually had sex -- and I didn't. And I was attracted to boys.

A few days later I did the hardest thing I've ever done in my life calling student health services at the University of Pennsylvania to ask them for an appointment saying, "I think I have homosexual tendencies." Nine years of therapy later, the last five with a well known kindly but homophobic group therapist, I finally gave up on turning straight as the solution to the end of suffering.

When Dr. Haddon reproached me for abandoning my quest, I riposted, "Well, Dr. Haddon, it's been almost ten years. I can just imagine that someday, when I'm 85 and in a nursing home in my wheelchair, I'll spot this little old lady in her wheelchair and the other end of the corridor and realize, 'Wow, that's just what I've wanted all my life.' Even if it's true I don't think it's worth waiting any longer." By that time I'd noted that none of the members of the group were turning straight and, usefully, had learned from them most of the more popular cruising spots.

"So many men, so little time" was a popular slogan of the nascent gay movement. By the end of the flower-child 60s, I had turned with a vengeance to the pursuit of salvation through bodily friction.

In the early 70s I read *Be Here Now* and tried out mantras and chanting. When the mantras and the chanting didn't solve my problems in an hour or two, never having heard of practice with its hours, months and years of patience, I put them aside and returned to boys. By 1973, I'd found my first lover and moved him in.

This did at least allow me to fulfill one family mandate, to have a relationship. In my family manual, being attached was more important to salvation than even the gender, race or religion of the "attachee". Shortly after, I informed my parents of my gayness who responded with concerns for the durability of gay relationships and my happiness. More fulfillment of desire seemed better and safer. I continued my pursuit of faster and better salvation through many more men on the side.

At the start of the 80s, browsing in a Marin County bookstore while visiting San Francisco, I happened upon Stephen Levine's recently published *A Gradual Awakening*. My spiritual self peeked out. I purchased it and read it quickly I was impressed but quite incapable -- or unwilling -- of following the practices suggested. I kept the book.

By the late 80s, I had 25 years of the daily pain of a sleeping disorder, like that of my mother before me, which left me perennially weary and grasping for some surcease of the pain through drinking before bed and through the momentary forgetting of sex, reading and eating. 20 years of the momentary flashes of joy from sex with many, many partners still left me perennially weary and frequently joyless. Thousands of novels left me distracted only momentarily while rounds of eating and dieting found me ever a few pounds over the weight I thought would attract the playmate and partner of my salvation.

By 1989 I wrote in my Journal:

"I grew up in a family that seemed to me normal and OK; I discovered my attraction to other men; I got an education and found a job. Then came a lover who decided he'd be better off alone, another who traveled down the road to active alcoholism and a third, now dead of AIDS. A couple of more tries with other men who couldn't handle intimacy and many, many 'tricks' (a word I hated but have now come to use) along the way left me in a great deal of emotional pain."

My second relationship starting in 1975 and lasting seven and a half years, began with a wonderful man. Two years later, I found him becomingly an increasingly active alcoholic, a behavior as unfamiliar to my insulated Jewish upbringing as gayness had been years earlier. We went to a gay couple's counselor in Philadelphia, the late David Keller, who said, "Your relationship will never work until you, Rich, give up your alcoholism and you, Lee, give up your sex addiction." I thought he was right about Rich. Still, I did decide to give monogamy a try just to prove I wasn't addicted; I made it successfully through an entire month -- of course for obvious reasons I did choose February in a non-leap year.

Four years later, my suffering led me, desperate, to my first experience with a 12 Step Fellowship, Al-Anon (for families and friends of alcoholics). In the latter half of the 70s and the earlier half of the 80s, I wended my way through the meetings of various of these Fellowships, Al-Anon, later followed and accompanied by SLAA (Sex & Love Addicts Anonymous). By the late 80s, I joined the 12 Step meetings of in ACOA/D (Adult Children of Alcoholic or Dysfunctional Families). Each taught me something. In Al-Anon I learned that the roots of my suffering lay not in another but in myself. In SLAA I learned that what I thought only lust, a sex addiction which left me consumed by too many men and too little relationship, was more deeply a love addiction. Love, not in the Buddhist sense of encompassing unity but rather those feelings of closeness and fantasy which frequently accompanied my sexual trysts.

Those feelings were, I remained all but certain, if I could just learn to make them permanent, the path to the end to my suffering. I never fully surrender to the dictates of SLAA but found the meetings and readings of some help in controlling my pattern of sexual compulsion. This, I hoped, would allow me to find the solution to my pain through successful romantic love.

It was also in these Fellowships that I first come into regular contact with the concept of practice, there called meditation and prayer, a beginning recognition of spirituality. I got the concept of "something" beyond my narrow suffering self, but I continued ignorant of how to connect with this something. The Fellowships mentioned meditation as a worthy and useful practice but said little about how or why or where; it seemed a minor aspect of their "cure".

Then in my Journal of Tuesday, November 15, 1988, I wrote:

"Interesting day. Last night, after my ACOA meeting, I went to hear Patrick Carnes [one of the founders of SLAA] speak at a special SLAA meeting. It was a much more striking experience than I had anticipated. While some of the technical

data was interesting, the part that left me stunned was his spirituality. I realized that I have been seeking a spiritual foundation of life for a long time in many places AND that it can't be expressed in cognitive, analytical terms."

Perhaps this was my first clear recognition of the existence of a different path. I believed then -- and still believe today -- that one path for the healing of the spirit, lies in first understanding the tricks and travails of the mind.

Soon after my encounter with Patrick Carnes, while waiting in a gay and lesbian bookstore, to meet my then roommate and almost-boyfriend, half-available as he was to others and himself, I picked up a book on co-dependance (Co-Dependance Misunderstood, Mistreated by Anne Sheaf). He was late and I devoured Sheaf's short book from cover to cover in less than an hour. As a result I decided to stop living with this person I loved who seemed stuck in patterns of addiction -- an intensely painful choice. Out of pain and desperation, I began attending ACOA meetings.

I soon came to believe that there were remarkable parallels between the family roots of co-dependence with which ACOA/D dealt and the patterns of gay culture. By the late 80s, in the writings of such as Anne Shear, Janet Wolitz and Melody Beatie, a recognition had arisen of certain typical patterns in the childhood family messages and the rules and roles learned by the children of these alcoholic and dysfunctional families.

The remainder of my 1989 journal note read, "I grew up in a family that seemed to me normal and OK; I discovered my attraction to other men; I got an education and found a job. Then came a lover who decided he'd be better off alone, another who traveled down the road to active alcoholism and a third, now dead of AIDS. A couple of more tries with other men who couldn't handle intimacy and many, many "tricks" (a word I hated but have now come to use) along the way left me in a great deal of emotional pain.

I learned that I had come to suppress most emotions, that I hadn't cried in years, that I was rarely able to feel anger or express it, that serenity was just a word to me, that my nighttime drinking allowed me to suppress the pain that followed fleeting sexual encounters, that a great deal of what I learned from my parents just wasn't true."

Later I put together a picture of the parallels between co-dependant families and rules and the patterns then typical of gay culture:

Examples and Parallels*

ACOA/Ds GAY SUBCULTURE

CHILDHOOD Pre-COMING OUT

Chaotic or repressed family with Confusion; learns to
lots of confusion; disguise/distort/repress the

Child withdraws or becomes an actor truth about self as gay

Family ROLES: Gay ROLES:

Hero--but imperfect and resented Community leader, BB, Stud

Scapegoat--takes attention off our faults Nerd, Fatty, Femme,

Lost Child-- "he's never any trouble" "Sweet young thing" (puppy),

Mascot--"so cute", has to always be "up" Jester

Family RULES: Don't trust. Talk about trivia. Don't believe anyone about
Don't talk (about anything serious). love or gay politics or personal details.
Don't feel (don't admit any pain). Appear happy & the life of the party
-- or no one will like you; B.S. is where it's at.

DOUBLE MESSAGES: We love you

-don't bother us; I love you, I only tricked with him.

I'll be there --> not showing up. Don't drink too much BUT meet in gay bars.

ACOA's lie -- when it would be just as "My phone # is . . .". "I love you."
easy to tell the truth "Meet you at the bar, Weds. at 9". -- all lies !

ACOA'S Guess at What Normal Is Gays & Lesbians culture lacks accepted
workable standards.

Be Perfect (judge self without mercy) Have a perfect body, perfect clothes, an
ideal apartment, witty conversation -- then maybe someone will love you. BUY,
BUY, BUY, Try, Try,

ACOA'S have difficulty with intimate Gay relationships are often ephemeral, end
relationships; lack of role models. when lust ends; we're afraid to be
vulnerable; lack relationship role models.

Some ACOA'S learned from family Two extremes: one night stands OR
desperately
models to hang in hopeless relationship staying stuck in destructive relationships.

Excessive impulsivity learned from Changing jobs, lovers, cities, bars, hair styles, chaotic family role models -- all subculturally suggested as "solutions".

ACOA'S constantly seek approval Sexual addiction, "mother"-ing, enabling, paying

ACOA'S don't know how to live Drugs, alcohol, partying, travel, etc.--to avoid through & learn from emotional pain -- result: endless repetition, zero learning

*REFERENCES: Adult Children of Alcoholics, Janet W. Wolitz; Co-Dependance Misunderstood, Mistreated, Anne Sheaf; Co-Dependent No More, Melody Beattie; Presentations by Dr. Ed Ellis, therapist

One of the statements of the Fellowships which members use to remind each other of the positive side of suffering is "No pain, no gain." The traditions of Buddhism -- or at least my own tradition of Vipassana or mindfulness -- responds to our pain by reminding us that the greater the hindrances, suffering, anger, grief, the greater the opportunity for healing. In my own life had I not wearied of my pain and suffering, never would I have come to the practice of meditation and the perceptions of Buddhism.

In 1990 not long after I came to these recognitions, it seemed I still needed more suffering. I began another relationship with someone loving, insecure and needy. Again our three year tryst did not satisfy and I continued "tricking" with others. Again, this relationship led to further steps along the path.

In 1991, after a year together, I encountered my first practice community in a day long yoga sitting at Green Gulch Zen Center near San Francisco. Finding some relief in the practice from my decades long struggle with the surrender of sleep, I determined to continue the practice.

Returning to Pennsylvania, the college where I taught management offered a yoga course and teacher. Attending my first session I learned the teacher offered a Friday evening course in a practitioners apartment just around the corner from my home. My lover, initially reluctantly, joined my exploration but soon became far more dedicated and skillful than I. Impelled by his interest, I continued the practice.

One after another I find the messages of the Buddha in the years of my life. Rereading my Journals for this article, I find again the stories suffering he described. My predominant emotion reading these Journals is sadness -- not

sadness for particular moments or people; sadness that the people and places mentioned are no longer in my life. Sadness and anger at impermanence. Coming out late in the 60s, I found myself driven by a search for sexual satisfaction, an activity much valued and approved not only by the gay subculture but by the larger Western culture in which we were embedded.

Yet I also longed for emotional love and intimacy, for a relationship that would connect me to ... I knew not what. I only knew, I felt disconnected, isolated. Before Buddhism and meditation the only way to alleviate the pain seemed to occupy myself fully with desires and their pursuit.

For me the primary vehicle was boys, endless boys, hot and cold boys, running boys -- running towards me and running from me, Black boys, white boys, playful boys who would distract me, sad boys with whom I could occupy myself with caring, young looking boys perhaps reminding me of the younger self I wished so to heal. Gradually, oh ever so gradually with so much pain, I began to understand my predicament.

First would appear simple discomfort, loneliness, boredom, an urge for excitement. If I didn't distract myself, I would soon tense up in body and mind turning discomfort to pain. Choosing clothes, making plans for success, I would slake my thirst for experience, my hope for joy, cruising the streets, the bars, the ads. Finding a partner after hours or days of effort, the pain would leave to be replaced by joy in the moment of forgetting self. After orgasm discomfort would return but a few drinks often allowed a night's forgetting in sleep. Yet in many of the days which followed these events repeated hundreds if not thousands of times, the pain tension and pain would return. Repeating the mantra which I learned well, "Woe is me.", again moved from discomfort to pain to continuing suffering.

Judaism, my birth faith, seemed to bring no answers even though I helped found Beth Ahavah, Philadelphia's gay and lesbian synagogue. As an ethical base, as a source of friends and community, all these it filled. Emotionally and spiritually I continued to find a void knowing only pleasure and its satisfaction as a center for my life. Suffering continued.

I contributed. Over a decade I supported Philadelphia's first and second and third gay community center, serving on the Boards through political clashes, raising funds, running coffeehouse introductions sessions for newcomers. I joined in building and served as a volunteer for Philadelphia's gay and lesbian telephone counseling hotline, brought the message to Harrisburg and started another hotline there, worked in politics to end discrimination, and later spent three years with the Safeguards in HIV prevention -- worthwhile work but not work which ended my suffering.

In quick succession in less than a year and a half, in 1992 and 1993, came the loss of my job; the imminent prospect of being forced to move from my apartment of twenty years with the sale of the building; the death in California of my mother; and the move of my former lover, now become closest friend and downstairs neighbor, across the continent. My thirst for suffering unslaked, Rich (no

connection to previous "Rich"), my lover of three years decided to end our relationship.

Since my mother's mind filled with dismay at the thought of dying in a hospital, my father and I flew West to attend her during her final illness at their home in California. I brought two of Stephen Levine's books, *Who Dies* and *Healing Into Life and Death*, vipassana Buddhist and eclectic, in the thought these might help my parents. They didn't pursue them; I did.

I began to find the beginnings of practice in my daily readings in the waning weeks of 1992 in my parents' home in Laguna Hills in the apparent spiritual wasteland of southern California. I read Levine's guided meditations on "soft belly" and "loving kindness" to my mother. She didn't comment but seemed comforted. Her practice through years had focused on criticism of myself and others in the belief that this was her duty to impel others upon the path away from suffering. Still, I heard her talk to the visiting nurse not knowing I was listening saying, "I've had a good life. I have a good son." I felt comforted.

After my mother's death on January 8 of 1993, I returned to Philadelphia. I began daily reading and practice of Levine's guided meditations, particularly his beginning metta meditations on loving kindness and soft belly. It was months of daily readings and these meditations before I felt ready to try occasionally the mindfulness meditations on watching breath. Soon I attended several practice sessions with three other practitioners in Philadelphia's tiny zendo, a lovely room in the home of a woman Zen priest. I joined the gay and lesbian Buddhist group. It met only monthly with a half dozen attending and dissolved within months. Nearing the end of my twenty-two years in Philadelphia, I wrote on March 21, 1993:

Spirituality, Love and Recovery

Spirituality! Due to the work I've been doing in this fifty-third year of recovery, catalyzed by early reading in the new guide I've just acquired, Stephen Levine's *Guided Meditations, Explorations and Healings*, I came last night to a renewed recognition for lightening my life.

It is such a paradox. Scott Peck [in *The Road Less Traveled*] points out, following the words of Buddha ÷ "[the first great truth: life is suffering ÷ but once we recognize and accept this truth, suffering is lessened.]" Our "failures" become no longer failures. Neither criticism nor change are required; yet, if these are chosen, they too are perfect. In the words of Zen master Suzuki Roshi, "[though everything is always perfect, it can always be improved]".

Bathing my self in feelings of love, allowing my self feelings of kindness and mercy as if I were a loved one, as if I were "my only child", I put aside the roiling temptations of the mind to correct and plan, to circle in upon itself snapping like an angry dog reaching for its prey. Accepting.

Rejecting even suffering creates more suffering. As death intrudes, as standards are never fully met, as our hearts break and we blame ourselves ÷ and others ÷

creating circling new rounds of suffering. We attempt breaking the chains that bind yet our dearest desires disappear in an instant into death, decay, change and conflict.

Our minds will not disappear while we still live yet their wild energies can be harnessed skillfully to the path of lightening suffering, Meditating upon loving kindness for self, for those for whom I recognize my love and for all beings prepares the way. Watching sensation links body to mind and allows a deeper awareness, focusing on breath or on the words of guided meditation calms the turmoil and allows deeper recognition.

"And then", questions my mind, how "will I 'hew wood and draw water' ?" When will I do the tasks of daily living while this body and mind yet exists? I do not yet know the answer but suspect that as practice expands, the apparent separation of daily task and healing will dwindle away.

And the hindrances which place themselves in the way of recovery? My eagerness to criticize others, my passion to criticize self which often turns me to anger, to hatred, to the pain of assumed failure? These too require acceptance, these thoughts and feelings too are disarmed and made peaceful loving demons not by rejection but by love, more grist for the mill of examination of what is.

Having learned this much, my new perception remained to be forged more strongly. At last I had the basis for the beginnings of a practice. I had found and experienced the words of Thomas Merton, "True love and prayer are learned in the moment when love has become impossible and the heart has turned to stone.

Surviving my depression and anguish with the bare beginnings of a practice, I was not yet prepared to give up my suffering. In the traditions of the "practice" which I had developed, I sought another lover and many casual sexual contacts to lessen the anguish. These soon proved themselves weak reeds and the pain continued. Within a few months, at last I had had enough; in the words of the Fellowships I had finally "become sick and tired of being sick and tired." Even my therapist, who was about to have a child, decided to retire for a time from her practice. It was clear; it was time to leave.

In my early fifties, I left my city and my home and moved across the country to northern California, a shift I had wanted to make for some thirty years.

In San Francisco, center of the nascent gay Buddhist movement, my practice soon deepened; I found the sangha lacking in my prior city including multiple gay Buddhist groups and places of sitting. I explored several groups whose practice I found impressive but whose sangha seemed cool to the point of coldness. After some months I settled upon a unique group of eclectic Buddhist practitioners, GBF, the Gay Buddhist Fellowship.

Founded four years earlier, it met for two hours on alternate Sundays following a 30 minute silent meditation, many on cushions, others on chairs, with dharma discussion and a more social tea break. A smaller group meets mid-week for a similar session of practice followed by tea and discussion. I attended both.

Occasional retreats of one and two days with GBF served to deepen my practice. Some Saturdays spent serving meals to the homeless with a GBF group of volunteers began to deepened sangha.

A year later in this uniquely gay and Buddhist friendly city of San Francisco, I began a short but daily practice of an hour composed of three twenty minute periods of warmth-and-patience breath. Though this lasted only a few weeks, at the end of the first week, through some happy serendipity, I found that which I had devoutly sought, a loving partner. In a day, I committed myself to monogamy, something which I had been unable or unwilling to do over the course of more than four prior relationships of living together as lovers. A few months later I found the teaching job I sought. Two more months and my new partner found another couple with whom to build community and soon found a house to rent together.

In our large home in a quiet section of the city, my practice continued. I invited the Thursday night gay Buddhist group to meet monthly in our home. A few months more and I invited the group to have potlucks before our sittings. Finally some months ago, I changed from my intermittent and casual practice to a commitment again to an hour a day of meditation and now, at last, after some thirty-five years of pain, my sleeping seems to be healing.

Yet the suffering has not departed. I continue to listen, and with more empathy, to the pains of my gay friends. Recently one was contemplating suicide in his pain over the imperfectability of the human race and his inability to fix it (and perhaps his recent breakup with his alcoholic lover), another was in a state of depression for unknown reasons, a third, my closest friend and former lover, suffers daily from his own agony of anger and the pain he sees in his work with PWAs.

The roots of our suffering remain not only in this human plane but more particularly in so many of our families and the parallels in our culture I described earlier. And I myself, by any reasonable standards in a state of bliss, began writing this piece out of my own pain and anger and the need to use Levine's guided Forgiveness Meditation over a debt reneged upon by one I thought a trustable friend. Yet I take comfort in the bedrock strength of our community with its changes built upon the suffering of AIDS with which so many of us dealt so selflessly, so compassionately.

Having a partner is part of my practice. Noting one morning the purple curtains he constructed for our bed canopy and windows to help my difficult morning sleep hours, I knew this apparent cloth of cotton was embodied love. Out of that realization I have come to see that all the artifacts and people and actions and even natural objects are only embodied love. That even the apparently worst of men or the most evil of acts are imperfect strivings towards embodied love, desires to win the esteem of others, to cease the suffering apparently real in the moment, to care for family or friends, to leave something of ourselves to be remembered in love and a thousand other variations of the theme. When, as more frequent, suffering

instead arises and continues for self and others, it is only as in Thich Naht Hahn's poem, "The Pirate", the unskillful acts of he who "does not yet see".

My partner doesn't practice formal meditation so I need to keep alert to moments for learning. One morning, as we were about to leave for our first long vacation together, we talked in bed about how to stay asleep by retaining focus on our dream object when we wake during the night. Sleeping has been my central problem in my adult life with visits to three sleep clinics complete with a dozen electrodes and much advice from doctors which had little effect. Only practice and the perspectives of Buddhism has been helpful.

With wry self-doubt, I commented to him paraphrasing Descartes, "I suffer therefore I am." He riposted, "I love therefore I am -- it's cheaper for the soul." and continued "It's funnier too." It's moments such as these that I am reminded how central this relationship has been to my healing practice.

Today, in the waning hours of 1996, my partner and I have moved to a home with an amazing view of San Francisco's city and Bay. Tonight we'll share the evening around our fireplace with friends and my father and welcome another year.

I continue to be gay. I continue to suffer and practice. I continue to learn. I continue.