

# Can Rosen Change the World?

by Marjorie Huebner

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At an intensive in Calistoga with Marion Rosen, she told a story about looking back at her personal experience in Germany before World War II. As a Jew she saw the words “Juden Verboten” on store windows. It was painful to her to be forbidden without being known. She said that this experience influenced her so deeply that she came to know that no one should ever have to feel verboten - not wanted. This story helped me continue to study Rosen bodywork because I felt Marion Rosen understood something about the relationship between personal experience and what goes on around us in the world.

Rosen has helped me to reveal parts of myself that I had to hide when I was growing up. And because my parents were aware of, and involved in, the larger world -- the world outside of our family -- they asked me to look at how *I* was to be a part of the human community. The flow between these two things, the personal, or microcosm, and the whole of life, or macrocosm, is what I call “living in my truth.”

The personal part of Rosen is talked about all the time and, indeed, my Rosen training helped me to be more in touch with and less afraid of my own feelings, particularly my shame. I realized that in order for me to be more present in my relationships I would have to *choose* to expose myself. The loving nature of Rosen helped me to feel safe enough to reveal myself rather than hide myself. While I have come a long way on this painful journey of discovering and acknowledging my shortcomings, ineptitudes, and fears to myself and others, I have also come to know and value how deeply I am committed to being in the world, to living more and more in the largeness of my love.

Living in the world with an awareness of both the personal and the whole of life is to live a very conscious life - personally, politically, socially, environmentally, and spiritually. Some people seem to think that this means that I am going to go to protests all the time, or that I will reject all of our cultural norms; it does not. It might involve doing those things, and it certainly does involve an awareness of how my social class affects my view of the world, or how I am racist or homophobic, or any number of other things. It's like the chicken and the egg: My personal work of transformation results in my taking new action in the world which produces more personal transformation...

Our bodies are meant to move and express our insides. The body is the concrete expression of the soul in the world. I need to allow my body's wisdom to lead me to a more relaxed and accepting place; the learning that occurs in that deeper place will help me to understand the actions I need to take in the larger world, actions that make sense for *me*. There is not one way to do this. Taking action may be “not doing” something (like not being violent) or it could mean showing how I feel, or just feeling itself. But, whatever form the doing takes, it is important to give form out in the world to what I have learned about myself.

It makes sense to me that we would look at how to engage with and try to change the ways our lives are limited because of the forces that work against us in the larger society. Looking at influences like my ethnic, familial, and cultural origins is like witnessing the holding patterns in my body. Just as each of our bodies have unconscious places and stuck places, I wonder how I am a stuck or unconscious community member. Our society is reluctant to deal with the unfinished business that it has with its historically oppressed members – children, elderly, disabled, racial and ethnic minorities, and others. Knowing that, I wonder about the unfinished business in my own

body, and how I have learned to deny or oppress those parts of myself. For example, how do I hate my body in some way *because I am a woman?* I can choose to look at the ideas in the dominant culture about nature, money, race, class, religion and sexuality, and what they tell us about how to be. When I do this, I am moved to question them: How do those ideas conflict with my own truth?

To be able to look at different ways of being and not to be thrown off by them is to let them educate us in ways that we might not otherwise have allowed. My experiences learning in this way have not always been comfortable. As in Rosen, when I begin to feel something that I have put away, it can be unfamiliar, uncomfortable, even unbearable at first. Bernice Reagon of Sweet Honey in the Rock once stated that coalition building is uncomfortable, since it involves working with people who are different from ourselves. She says that, in order to do this uncomfortable work, we need a place that we call home, a place we can relax and be ourselves. Rosen can be such a place, where we can safely begin to work on the ways we have learned to function that are no longer useful, and begin to develop ways to find our homes inside ourselves, so we can bring more of ourselves – our true selves – into our interactions and relationships. Being able to see how Rosen is like Yoga philosophy or like the principles of democracy allows me to see the connections between seemingly different parts of my world. All of this knowledge deepens my ability to meet my clients, because it has helped me to be more in touch with myself. It is the ground underneath my touch when I work with people. It is what I bring to the table.

Others speak about these connections between the microcosm and macrocosm. Albert Pessó, talking about Pessó Psychomotor bodywork, said, “we need the externalization of experience, the interaction with people, the experience to become internalized so we can then go out into the world without needing validation and face adverse conditions from that place of internal strength.” Wendell Berry, agrarian, said, “Our sense of wholeness is not just the sense of completeness-in-ourselves, but is the sense also of belonging to others and to our place; it is unconscious awareness of community, of having-in-common.... I believe that the community....is the smallest unit of health and that to speak of the health of an isolated individual is a contradiction in family or community or in a destroyed or poisoned ecosystem.” Joanna Macy, Buddhist and environmentalist, creates the word “ecopsychology” to mean a way to lift “the aims and means of psychotherapy into larger concerns of social pathology, and helping us to question our acquiescence to the destruction of the world.”

The Rosen Method is holistic, asking us to sense the connections between the physical, emotional, spiritual, and intellectual. I believe we live in a society that makes it difficult to feel our body’s wisdom, or to live in accord with it. For example, a woman who blossoms in our misogynist society is like a flower forcing its way through the cement of a parking lot. Some flowers will do this, but we’re surprised when we see them because we don’t look for flowers in a parking lot. I believe that Rosen work can help me and others to be able to blossom in our parking lots; I also believe that my life and my clients’ lives together can begin to transform those parking lots into gardens, so that all of us can grow and flower. As we bring our unconscious places to consciousness individually, we can also bring ourselves to consciousness socially – in this way Rosen work can help to build a better society and help us to be better citizens, better family members, better community members, and better Rosen practitioners.