

Hope Wins

We Can Change the World



Cathryn Wellner



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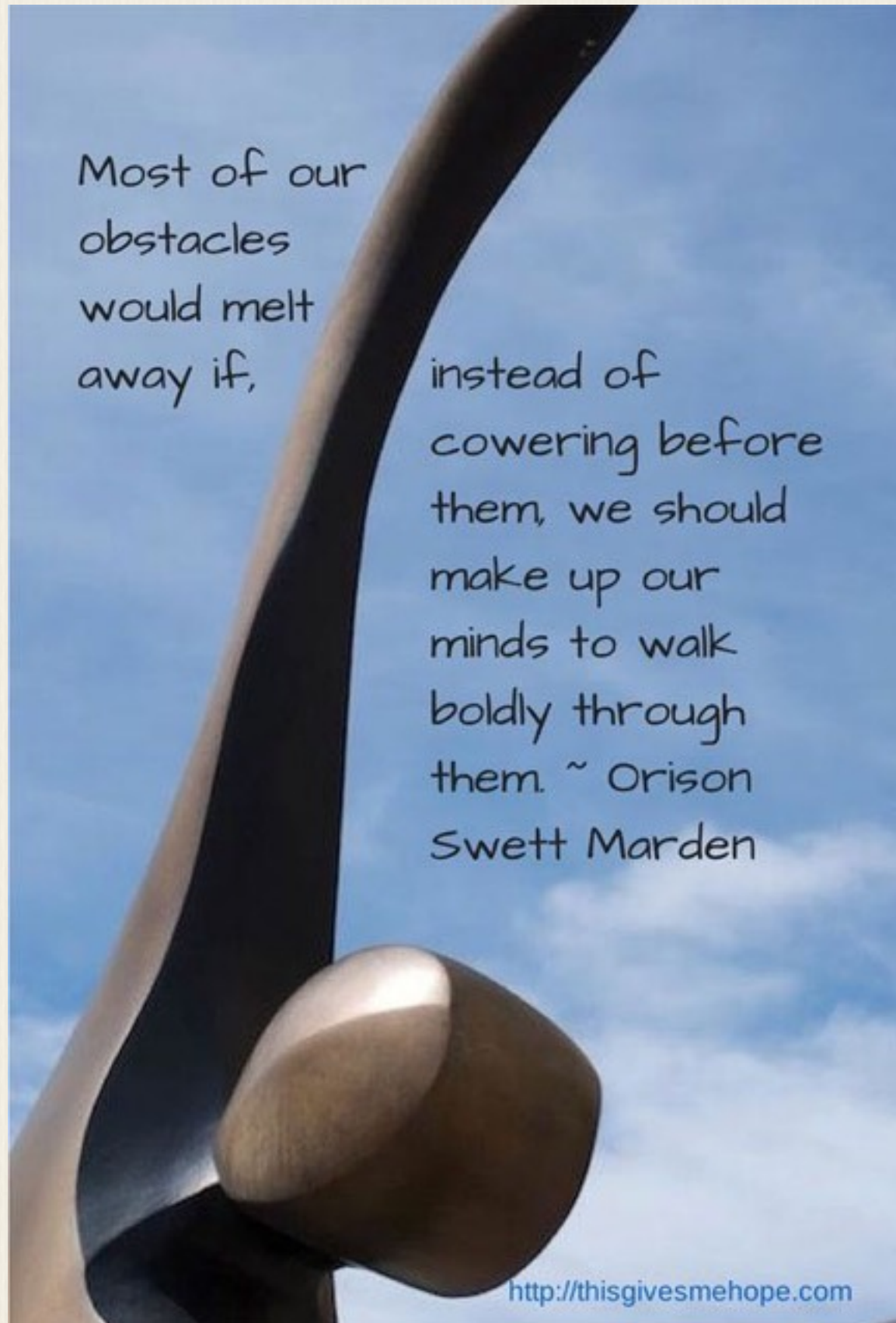
Praise for This Gives Me Hope

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Part One

Starting a Hope-FULL Journey





Take the Seeds of Life And Turn Them into Flowers



Some days our mistakes are so embarrassing they make us want to crawl into a cave. What [Herbie Hancock](#) learned from [Miles Davis](#) was how to turn those mistakes into something beautiful.

Hancock told the story in a CBC interview promoting his new book, [Possibilities](#). He said he was touring with Davis. One night, the music was soaring, the audience enthralled, the performance building.

Miles Davis was playing a solo, the others weaving their notes around his. Suddenly the young Hancock played a chord so out of synch with the rest he was sure he had just ruined the entire evening.

That is when Miles Davis taught Hancock the deep spirit of jazz. Hancock could hear the tiny pause as Davis

internalized the unintended shift in the music. Drawing on his deep and broad knowledge of jazz, he played played around Hancock's chord, turning something "wrong" into a shining detour.

That night Hancock understood jazz in a new way. He understood, in a way he had not before, that for jazz musicians there are no wrong notes, just notes to be explored and built on. What Hancock had seen as a concert-ruining misstep was just one more chance to grow something splendid out of the soil of a challenging chord.

Today, right now, you are enough. You do not have to be perfect to prove your worth. The mistakes of your life are seeds. Plant them in the fertile soil of your being and turn them into flowers.

What happens next is sheer magic. Someone catches sight of your vibrant petals, sniffs the fragrance of your blooming, and is inspired to plant her own seeds. On it goes, each flower showy enough in its own soil yet more brilliant in connection with those around them.

That is when hope wins. The flowers of our lives spring from seeds planted in the darkness of soil enriched by the compost of mistakes, tragedies and mishaps. Seen in the larger context of our lives, those missteps lose their poisonous power and enrich the soil that nourishes us and inspires others.

This little book is a celebration of life's seeds—sprouting, blooming, fading and creating more seeds of hope.



Listen for the Right Notes



During the years I taught storytelling workshops, students kept asking me to be hard on them. They wanted me to ferret out every small failing in their delivery, every tiny stumble in their stories. I was not comfortable with that. I wanted to point out what was right with their storytelling so they would do more of it.

I had believed for a long time that we influence the world by what we focus on. It made sense to me that if I emphasized my students' weaknesses, they would repeat them next time. On the other hand, if I told them where their storytelling was strongest, they would look for ways to bring those elements into their telling. Besides, like everyone else, I had experienced my share of [painful barbs](#) from people wanting to improve me. I had no wish to become someone else's bad memory.

Then I read the story of Pablo Casals and a young cellist. It was one of those pivotal moments when something we hear or read or see affects us so profoundly we never forget it.

The gist of the story is this: A young cellist had the opportunity to play for the master. He tackled a particularly difficult piece and made many mistakes.

He was mortified when the great Casals praised his playing. In fact, he was disappointed his idol did not rip apart what was so obviously a flawed performance. The incident haunted him.

Years later the young man met Casals again. By then he had established a successful career and wondered if Casals remembered hearing him so long before. Casals did remember so the young man asked why he had praised such an error-filled performance. Casals sat down at his cello, picked up his bow and began the piece he had heard the young musician play years before.

“Didn’t you play it this way?” he asked.

The young man nodded, and Casals played another passage. “And isn’t this the way you played this section?”

Again the young man nodded.

“I had never thought of playing it that way,” said Casals, expressing gratitude for the younger man’s originality.

What Pablo Casals taught the young cellist is that anyone can hear the wrong notes. It takes a musician to hear what is right, what is unusual, what is inspired.

That story has stayed with me for more than three decades. It has guided me as a storyteller, a teacher, a community developer, and a writer. It is still the shining star I walk toward as I write about reasons for hope.

Anyone can hear the wrong notes. Our task is to look for what is right.



Part Two

Hope Has Champions





A Rope to the Barn for Souls Caught in a Blizzard



[Parker J. Palmer's interview](#) with Alicia von Stamwitz came onto my Facebook timeline and went straight into my heart. The night before, I had explained to friends that I began the hope blog when I felt the hopelessness of daily news sinking into my bones. I decided if I wanted to see the world in a brighter light, I had to start with myself. I had to spend more time looking at what was right with the world.

Von Stamwitz interviewed Palmer about the book he had just published, [Healing the Heart of Democracy: The Courage to Create a Politics Worthy of the Human Spirit](#). When she asked about the genesis of the book, he told her:

'I started writing it in 2004 or 2005 because I was in a psychological hole. I was in a lot of despair myself about what was happening in our country, about our inability to talk to each other, about democracy going down the tubes. And it was actually a period of depression for me. Part of my journey involves three major experiences with clinical depression, and one of the things I learned in my previous bouts was that if you get a little bit of energy, you have to do something proactive related to what's

causing the depression. Becoming proactive can be therapeutic, can be life-giving. So I started writing this book. I basically argue that what we call the politics of rage [in the United States], if you look at it more deeply, is in fact the politics of the brokenhearted. I believe that there's heartbreak across the political spectrum, all the way to the radical ends."

I read the interview just after another [shooting spree in the U.S.](#), this time in a Maryland shopping mall. Parker told von Stamwitz violence is the result of people's not knowing what to do with their suffering. He said nations do that too, as America did after 9/11, manipulating fear to justify more violence. We see the same phenomenon on large and small scales, all around the globe.

Yet hope is not a luxury; it is a necessity. Parker J. Palmer offers a vivid metaphor. In his book, [A Hidden Wholeness](#), Palmer describes our despair at the storm of violence, environmental degradation or economic injustice as being lost in a blizzard, fearing we have irretrievably lost our way. Then he adds a lifeline:

"But my own experience of the blizzard, which includes getting lost in it more often than I like to admit, tells me that it is not so. The soul's order can never be destroyed. It may be obscured by the whiteout. We may forget, or deny, that its guidance is close at hand. And yet we are still in the soul's backyard, with chance after chance to regain our bearings.

"This book is about tying a rope from the back door out to the barn so that we can find our way home again. When we catch sight of the soul, we can survive the blizzard without losing our hope or our way. When we catch sight of the soul, we can become healers in a wounded world—in the family, in the neighborhood, in the workplace, and in political life—as we are called back to our "hidden wholeness" amid the violence of the storm."

Palmer's metaphor perfectly describes Hope Wins. It is a rope to the barn door of hope. No matter what may happen in your life or the world around you, you can find your way home again.

If you awaken to bad news, if life feels out of control, if you are lost in the storm, grab hold of the rope at any point. Hang onto it, and find your way back home.



Part Three

Hope Starts at Home

<http://thisgivesmehope.com>

To accomplish
great things, we
must not only
act, but also
dream, not only
plan, but also
believe.

~ Anatole France



We All Have a Right to Peace

September 21st is the International Day of Peace (often called World Peace Day). Around the world vigils, prayers and parties bring people together to imagine a world in harmony. In communities, organizations, families and on their own, people are asked to focus on peace. It is a visible celebration of what John Lennon called for in his song, "Imagine."

The idea is that if we come together to focus on peace, personal or political, for one day, perhaps we can learn the peace habit. We may find it easier to believe peace is possible if for one day we cease all hostilities.

Everyone, everywhere has a right to peace. Too many political and religious organizations seem to figure peace is only a right for those who follow their ideologies. It is tempting to look around the globe and despair.

But David Orr has it right. He is a distinguished environmental educator at Oberlin College and the University of Vermont. In **Hope Is an Imperative** he writes that in spite of all the reasons for despair, he believes if we persist, if we dream, if we act, we can free ourselves and our world from greed, hatred and maybe even from our propensity for destroying our planet and each other. For Orr hope is a challenge he is willing to take on.

We can imagine peace, imagine living in harmony with each other and the planet, imagine a world where social justice is everyone's birthright. And whatever we can imagine, we can make real. For such a radical transformation, Orr says we need champions. Some are obvious, like our politicians, business titans, public officials, educators and media. But all of us are needed, and Orr figures ordinary people will be at the forefront, you and I and others who say a loud "Enough" and change directions.

We can do this, Orr believes, and someone must step forward and start.

So let's begin. We can do this...together.



Praise for This Gives Me Hope

"Cathryn Wellner's blog is like YouTube. You read one story then another and before you know it an hour has passed. Love these stories of hope."

~ Amy Potts, [Artographic Images](#)

"On this increasingly polarized planet, I find myself continually gravitating towards lightness, and Cathryn's shines brightly, consistently, and constantly through every post she writes."

~ Aaron Embrey, [Genderful](#)

"If all you are seeing is bad news, then you could really use a dose of [This Gives Me Hope](#)."

~ Kat Tansey, [Choosing to Be: Lessons in Living from a Feline Zen Master](#)

"There is so much ugliness and pain in the world that we can become immobilized by it, overwhelmed. Cathryn Wellner tries to provide the balance. Words carry power and words of hope are very needed."

~ Marilyn Raymond, [poet](#)