

VASTA Address

By Arthur Lessac

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Thank you, Beth, for that very generous introduction.

Hello, everyone!

Since in four short weeks I'll be gently tip-toeing into the two zeros of my 100<sup>th</sup> year, I can think of no better birthday gift than this privileged invitation to address my fellow VASTAns, and I thank you heartily. This is an honor as well as an opportunity I shall not easily forget.

And speaking of forgetting...

Did you hear the one about the old man in the park?

An old man is sitting on a park bench, crying bitterly. A young man walks over to him and says, "Is something wrong?" And the old man looks up and says "I have a beautiful sexy wife, 30 years old...she cooks like an angel...we have sex every night." Young man says, "So why are you crying?" And the old man says, "I can't remember where I live!"

"Remembering" is a little harder these days. At 100, my memory is just not what it used to be. I have discovered that growing older is not for the faint of heart. I wear two very expensive hearing aids now, and neither of them are worth a damn. And as far as my eyes are concerned, I'm blind in my right eye, and I have only 20% vision in my left eye. I mean, any one-eyed pirate can see better than I can!

But for all that, my heart is good, my voice is strong, and I can still hold my breath underwater for 90 seconds! That makes me feel like a young man inside. And that's why I'm sorry I have to read this to you. I would rather talk to you. But that's the way it is. So I ask you, please, to indulge me a little if I forget what I'm going to say next, or if I lose my place in my speech.

The full title of this conference is "ORIGINAL VOICES: Voice Methodologies from the Source". And before I begin, I want to share with you my realization that all of us here are involved in training the voice, but for the next few moments, I ask you to think of just the first two words of that title: "ORIGINAL VOICES" and not about a specific way of training. Let's consider an ORIGINAL VOICE in a much broader perspective, as something which is innate, in need of protection, something that should always be encouraged to grow and thrive. Such a voice could help create a better world, a better world which honors communing instead of just communicating.

Let me tell you a story. It's a legend.

And this legend has it that in the very beginning of mankind (and womankind) human communication was carried on entirely through the singing voice, with appropriate melodies, body rhythms and facial expressions. Whenever groups of people got together, the communication process would evolve into original choral exchanges. Their bodies would move into dance forms, and ensemble harmony was a natural occurrence. But, as the many years kept racing by... "time" became more and more frugal and more and more economical and therefore, time itself became shorter and shorter until what was left was just barely enough time for consonants and vowels... and thus speech was born, leaving precious little time for meaningful melodies, for harmony, for expressive sharing... and certainly no time at all for supportive communing.

And that's where the legend ends. (And believe me I had nothing to do with that legend, I'm not that old.) But if we were to continue the story, more and more consonants and vowels would no doubt be eaten up by time. In other words, our ORIGINAL VOICE would get fainter and fainter and possibly could get lost altogether.

Now what do we really mean by "ORIGINAL VOICES"? Not original thoughts, not original words, but ORIGINAL VOICES!

I decided to look up the word "original" and I immediately got out my thesauruses (yes, I do have more than one!). Did you know there are over 60 synonyms for the word "original"? I didn't know that. There's "fundamental", "new", "unused", "native", and "basic", not to mention "cutting edge", "new wave" and "new age"! I was overwhelmed. Finally, I came to "creative". That's it! I thought. Creative—fresh...yes. So I chose "creative" as part of my definition.

Now how about voices? Voice also has many meanings. It can mean freedom of speech, taking a stand, our unique imprint on the world. So, I asked myself the question: What can a voice really do? Any voice?

Well, it can....

- hum a lullaby
- call you in to dinner

But it can also.....

- ring out in protest
- sing out in pure joy
- warn you of danger
- cry out for freedom....

Voice is so much more than tone or timbre, vowels or consonants. It is so much more than the apparatus. A voice that is free, that feels its inherent right to speak, will have no fear of calling out, whenever and wherever it is needed.

But most importantly, a voice can be a beacon in the darkness, something that lights the way for others.

And therefore, for my meaning of “voice”, I chose “visionary”—someone who lights the way for others.

So, an ORIGINAL VOICE is a creative visionary, a remarkable energy. And here, at this very conference, we VASTAns are honoring four creative visionaries, four remarkable energies, who have followed their ORIGINAL VOICES and who have been beacons for others. However, I believe that all of us—all of us here in this room are ORIGINAL VOICES, capable of being a beacon for others.

In fact, I believe that everyone, everywhere, is an ORIGINAL VOICE. I mean, consider the newborn baby, fresh out of the womb. Talk about original! Every single baby born in this world is an original. Like a Stradivarius violin, no two are alike. (You do know, of course, the history of the Stradivarius violins? Stradivarius used only the finest and best woods and handcrafted the violins so that each violin, while essentially the same in appearance, produces an original, unique sound.) I think every baby is a Stradivarius violin, capable of producing unique music—with their ORIGINAL VOICE.

As a matter of fact, a baby’s first cry is a perfectly placed clarion “Call”—it has all the qualities I believe to be part of an ORIGINAL VOICE—it’s exciting, pure, healthy, fresh, singing, and strong.

Why is it, then, that many of us, as we grow into adulthood, suffer an adulteration of our “ORIGINAL VOICES”? What happens to that baby Strad? How does that ORIGINAL VOICE get lost or weakened or corrupted?

I believe the answer lies in a better understanding of our environments. And I’m using the plural, *environments*, intentionally.

So, at this point, I ask you to seriously consider that we are all, all of us, living, functioning, creating and problem solving in two separate, highly significant environments.

On the one hand, there is the huge Outer Environment:

- With everything and everyone in it.
- With all its ecologies, histories and mysteries
- With all its different NRG uses and NRG powers
- With its conditioning and patterning
- With its left brained, quantitative forceful influences
- And with its thousands and thousands of professionally trained ecologists.

On the other hand, we have our very own, vastly infinite, personal Inner Environment:

- With its own ecology.
- With its own mysterious wilderness.
- With its own multitude of personal NRG qualities.
- With its own right-brained qualitative and harmonic sensing.
- And, oh yes, with only one inner trained ecologist.

Every baby is born with this Inner Environment. But eventually the negative forces of the Outer Environment are over-powering. Pretty soon, the awareness of the Inner Environment has diminished so much that we lose touch with it, we lose our ability to feel it. But it still exists, it still exists inside us, inside a far vaster inner milieu or inner domain than anything conceivable in the outside world. It is in this Inner Environment that our ORIGINAL VOICE survives—that our ORIGINAL VOICE lives, though often unheard and unrecognized, even by us.

Too often, we become a “cog in the wheel” of the Outer Environment. Its patterns and its conditioning become our patterns and our conditioning, so much so, that we don’t identify those patterns or conditions for the *poisons* they really are.

Now, friends, I want to make myself clear. You may think I’m being extreme. After all, poisons? Well, let’s see. What are some of these poisons?

Well, there are the obvious ones: over-indulgence in food or alcohol, drug addiction, daily stress. . . . Stress alone causes negative emotions to accumulate in the Inner Environment. Current research indicates significant connections between emotions and disease—anger contributes to heart disease, anxiety causes panic attacks or heart arrhythmia, depression contributes to headaches and back pain. Stress creates more than discomfort in the body—it creates ill-health. It slowly *poisons*.

And then there are the larger, societal poisons which afflict all of us. For example, the Outer Environment asks us to accept “the lesser of two evils”, but my inner voice says a life surrounded by the lesser of two evils still means living under evil. We don’t want to live under the lesser of the two goods, either. Because our inner voices know that that particular ‘good’ just may not be good enough.

It is indeed the Outer Environment that seems perfectly content with half truths, quarter truths, honest truths. On the other hand, the Inner Environment tells us there “ain’t no such thing” as a “half-truth” or a “quarter-truth” or a “perfect truth.” A “half-truth” or a “perfect truth” is a contradiction in terms. The Inner Environment tells us: truth is truth; good is good...and poison is poison.

In our own Outer Environment today, right now, there is the poison of racism, the poison of thievery. Hunger is poison. Homelessness is poison. Being unjustly thrown out of a job is a nasty poison. Paying teachers with IOUs is a sneaky poison if there ever was one and there is no end to this list.

As far as I am concerned, it is the Outer Environment that seems to favor a left-brained democracy with a large, capital “D.” Our Inner Environment, with its heart, gut, soul and spirit NRGs seems to favor an organic democracy with a small “d”. You know, we can go for our entire lives without recognizing all the kinds of poisons that exist today in our outer world. Take the economy, for example. Even with the recent downturn of the stock market, one could say that the average American lives in a fairly good economy. But, do we really know what kind of economy we are living in? We’re not living in a capitalist economy. We’re not living in a socialist economy. We’re not living in a money or people’s economy. But we are, I regret to say, living in a military economy. And all production is expected to feed and expand the worldwide military economy. And one of the most important products of that economy is war. And war, of course, is the greatest poison of all.

Our planet has been poisoned with continuous war for an awfully, awfully long time. And, mind you, war develops its own poisons such as killing, murdering, torturing, hating...

Clearly, as you might guess, I strongly prefer that the Inner Environment influence the Outer Environment rather than vice versa. *Because the Outer Environment stifles and starves the ORIGINAL VOICE that exists in our Inner Environment.* And I believe that we’ve been relentlessly losing our voices.

What can we do? Well, my experience tells me that the answer lies in our Inner Environment...and by developing our awareness of the feeling sense within us, we can become better ecologists for ourselves.

Now, what is the feeling sense?

Well, we all experience the Outer Environment through the five outer senses (touch, hearing, taste, smell, and sight)—which are quantitative (meaning they can be measured) and therefore, they can be limited.

But, in our Inner Environment, we do our experiencing and sensing through one sense only...the feeling sense... we call its workings “the feeling process”. It is very close to that harmonic 6<sup>th</sup> sense and it also takes us a step closer to that elusive “Soul” NRG. Yes, for me, “soul” is the most delicate of all our body NRGs, and there are many of them, many NRG fundamentals and many NRG harmonics.

Now, you may ask, what do I mean when I talk about energy? Well, in very general terms, I am speaking of kinetic energy, the energy of motion. All matter in the universe is in motion; therefore, all of the universe is energy—including us. And in our Inner Environment, we also have definable energy qualities. I’m talking about body NRGs that can be felt neuro-physically.

For example, from my own research, I discovered that:

- There is an inner NRG quality that makes our bodies feel lighter, weightless, floating; we call this inner-felt sensing “buoyancy” NRG.<sup>1</sup>
- There is an inner NRG that gives us a new found strength, power and resilience; which we call “potency” NRG
- There is an NRG that helps us experience the various sensations of cheer-glee-exhilaration which we call inner-felt “radiancy” NRG.
- And there is an inner NRG that helps us feel our vocal and verbal sensations and we call that “tonal” NRG. . . .tonal NRG that incorporates the music of tone –the music of consonants—the music of vowels—the music of speech. . . .a plethora of musical feeling that leads us to a livelier appreciation of random poetic expressions. . . .expressions such as “music is the universal language of mankind” or the expression “voice is the speech of angels”.

We can also learn to feel the energy of courage, of awareness, of curiosity, or the energies of spirit and of love. And when I feel them, I sense a bit of questing, or better still, a bit of mystery. I believe it was Thomas Carlyle who said, “the perception of the mysterious is the origin of discovery”, and I take that to mean the discovery of fascinating qualities and sensations within our Inner Environments.

And may I say that I am not alone in this recognition of the inner feeling process and its importance.

- It was the poet Yeats who said: “God spare me from men who think in their heads alone; he who sings a lasting song sings in the marrow bone.”

Here is a person who recognizes the power of the energy found in the Inner Environment.

- And Nietzsche, the German philosopher said: “There is more wisdom in your body than in your deepest philosophy.”

You see, he recognizes that it is our feeling process that holds the key to learning, not our thinking.

- And Henry Wadsworth Longfellow wrote: “How wonderful is the human voice! It is indeed the organ of the soul. The intellect of man is enthroned visibly on his forehead and in his eye, and the heart of man is written on his

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<sup>1</sup> At this point, Professor Lessac demonstrated the various Body NRGs as he described them in more detail.

countenance, but the soul, the soul reveals itself in the voice only.” (Bless his soul.)

- And then there’s the story of Artur Rubenstein, the great virtuoso pianist. He had thoroughly prepared himself for a very, very special performance, but when he was on the stage performing, he found that part of his creative playing at this concert was outside his carefully practiced repertoire. Later, he said, “If my fingers hadn’t done it, my mind would never have thought of it.”

This is all Inner Environment percept-fullness...and what I hear Rubenstein saying is that this experience happened through a feeling process—not through an intellectual process. His preparation probably included both. But in that moment in performance, it was his feeling process that taught him more about his artistry than all his practicing had done.

My point here is that these artists and philosophers, themselves creative visionaries, perceived the mysterious feeling process within themselves and others, and held it up as a beacon to creativity, originality, leadership, and wisdom. This is ORIGINAL VOICE. It is only found in the Inner Environment. And when the poisons of the Outer Environment invade the Inner Environment, the ORIGINAL VOICE withers and even disappears.

But, here’s the encouraging part (finally!): It is our feeling process that recognizes these poisons, and it is our inner body energies that give us the informational experiences that open the door to health and wellness and humanness and communing. And the really good thing about this is that no poison can possibly co-exist or co-habit with any of our Inner Environment NRG qualities. One or the other must leave. They cannot live together. If, when we walk, we feel the rhythm of dancing and if, when we talk we feel the lilt of singing, our Inner Environment fills up with joy, pleasure, laughter, and spirit-fullness. In such an environment, it is impossible to also harbor hate, fear, jealousy, or rage.

And if, within these parameters, we recognize a poison, the wisest thing to do is to kick the damn thing out! If we don’t, it will continue to do its dirty work. It’s not difficult, either. We recognize fevers, rashes, and pains all the time. If we would recognize that jealousy, hate, or fear are poisons far worse than fever or rash, then we would immediately use our natural NRG resources to get rid of them and, yes, regain our health, regain our posture, regain our voice.

Our world, too, has pains, rash, and fever—but we call them poverty, hunger, and pollution, among other things. As long as those poisons continue to contaminate our Outer Environment, our Inner Environments are in danger. That is why it is in our best interest to combat all poison in the Outer Environment—so that we can all stay healthy. In fact, we must become selfish, very selfish—selfish about health! Individual wellness is very much at stake here.

When we are fully aware of our Inner Environments, when we can use our natural NRG qualities to combat the ever-present poisons of the Outer Environment, then we will feel the stirrings of the true ORIGINAL VOICE: a healthy voice, which, just like our baby Stradivarius voice, is exciting, pure, fresh, singing and strong.

This is the voice that is the beacon. This is the voice that ‘sings from the marrow bone’ in every nook and cranny of our globular planet regardless of the differences in pronunciation, accent or dialect. Peace, health, joy and spirit, work the same way, at any point in the universe. Universal communion may be bathed in different customs, different costumes, but the heart and soul and spirit is the same anywhere in our spherical world.

And while there are thousands of different languages in the Outer Environment, there is only a “communing language” for the Inner Environment, no matter what climate you are in; and most importantly, the fuel for that “communing” language is the feeling process. We should be interested in ‘communing’ rather than feeling that it is perfectly okay to just communicate. The truth is that communing always communicates fully but that communicating very often is inhumane. It is our ORIGINAL VOICE which speaks out for humaneness, and which recognizes all humanness.

We must ask ourselves: Do we want to live with the loss of this ORIGINAL VOICE? Do we want to live in a world community without ORIGINAL VOICES? We all want and need to live with freedom of speech-- with ringing and powerful ORIGINAL VOICES. But, unfortunately, they have weakened. They have become tarnished, tarnished to the extent that freedom of speech is crippled, and we must have freedom of speech for—if we don’t have freedom of speech—we have nothing.

Above all, we need that freedom of speech couched and housed healthfully, and wellfully.....and spirit-fully and colorfully voiced.

We are all born with ORIGINAL VOICES. Let us rediscover them, and then let us use them to create the promise and the potency and the peace of our world. Let us recognize the existence of poisons all around us lest they enter into our Inner Environments and rob us forever of our birthright—our ORIGINAL VOICE.

Our spherical world is currently spinning at a dangerous speed on the very cusp of nowhere, falling downward instead of rolling forward, like any ordinary ball. A ball never rolls backward—it keeps rolling forward—no matter what direction it takes. How can we get our globular planet rolling forward again?

This is where we, the members of VASTA, can play a unique and important role. We VASTA members understand better than anyone I know how important it is to celebrate and grow our unique and individual voices. It is incumbent upon all of us to look beyond the boundaries and limitations of specific styles of training—no matter how treasured or popular—to the far greater question of what we are doing to restore the world’s ORIGINAL VOICES to their rightful strength and expressiveness. I challenge

us to consider every client, every job, and every coaching opportunity with this spirit--the spirit of communing, the spirit of health, the spirit of peace.

As I enter my 100<sup>th</sup> year, I am inspired by the endless contributions that our work can make to a sick and despairing world. We are not a large group, but each of us touches many lives through our work. Together, we can keep this earthly ball rolling forward. Personally, I believe that it's mostly a matter and manner of Inner Environment NRG, of Inner Environment courage, of Inner Environment soul and spirit.

So, I've asked the guy upstairs for 2 or 3 more years. I want to see where all this goes. I want to live, if only for a short time, in a world that rolls only forward. I want to experience the feel of that forward-rolling world. And I would love to see "VASTAns" help to "light the way" with our "ORIGINAL VOICES".

Meanwhile, I'll be like Ol' Man River, and I'll just keep on rolling along!

Thank you, and bless you.