

Shrink Rap Radio #288, November 25, 2011, The Buddha Occupies Wall Street with Shoken Michael Stone.

David Van Nuys, Ph.D., aka “Dr. Dave” interviews Shoken Michael Stone, MA.

(Transcribed from www.ShrinkRapRadio.com by Charlie Bathgate)

INTRODUCTION: My guest today is Michael Stone, a Yoga teacher, author, psychotherapist, and founder of the “Center of Gravity”, an urban community in Toronto integrating Buddhist practice, Yoga, and social action. The focus of our discussion is spirituality and engagement as they pertain to the “Occupy” movement. You can read more about Michael in the show notes at ShinkRapRadio.com. Now, here’s the interview.

DR. DAVE: Michael Stone, welcome to Shrink Rap Radio.

MICHAEL STONE: Thank you, its nice to be here.

DR. DAVE: Well one of my listeners called my attention to your work and a YouTube video that you had recorded at one of the “Occupy Wall Street” protests.

MICHAEL STONE: Hmm-mm

DR. DAVE: But before we get into the Occupy movement though, I wonder if you can fill us in on your background? For example, what Buddhist tradition or lineage are you affiliated with?

MICHAEL STONE: Well I started studying psychology, Yoga, and Buddhist practice all at the same time, and so originally the Buddhist tradition that I started practicing in is the Vipassana tradition, or in the United States its often referred to as the “Insight Meditation” tradition.

DR. DAVE: Yes.

MICHAEL STONE: The word Vipassana actually means, literally, “Insight” and I was really drawn to that tradition because it seemed a school really focused on meditation practice, and it was a time in my life, in my early 20’s, where sitting still really seemed impossible, and as somebody who was also studying psychology and so interested in the content of my own mind, what I saw in the Vipassana meditation technique was the ability not so much to focus on the content of my mind but really to see what the mind really is, or what’s the nature of the mind underneath what we think it is.

DR. DAVE: Okay, well you got an early start. And it’s interesting that you were blending all three practices together: the exploration of psychology and meditation. Now notice that you refer to yourself in some places as “Shoken” Michael Stone, what does the term Shoken designate?

MICHAEL STONE: Well after trained in the Vipassana tradition, which is a tradition I still practice and teach in, I met a teacher named Roshi Pat Enkyo O'hara, who runs a Zen center in Manhattan, and I was really taken with her teaching as a Zen master, because she seemed to have this immediacy in the way she taught, where there was no distinction between your work on the cushion in meditation and the rest of your life. And she really embodied that and also she lived in NYC and taught in NYC, and I grew up and live now in Toronto, and to me I was really interested in how these practices can come alive in daily urban life, so I started studying with her in the Zen tradition, and about a year ago I took some vows with her in which you're given a name and she spends a week or longer thinking about a name, and actually to be honest because I have a semi-public life I like my name Michael Stone and I thought, "Oh I write books and I don't really want to change my name and...", but during the ceremony where she gave me a name and wrote a poem about the name and told me why she had spent time choosing this Japanese name, I was so moved that now I use the name Shoken, which, "sho" means "bright" and "ken" means "seeing"

DR. DAVE: Oh wonderful...

MICHAEL STONE: And I really like the name!

DR. DAVE: Sure (laughter). Who wouldn't? That's a wonderful name. You sort of spoke to this already but maybe you can say a little bit more, I wanted to ask you how you were first drawn to Buddhist practice? What is it that kind of spoke to you or called to you?

MICHAEL STONE: When I was a kid, the person who was closest to me was my Uncle Ian, who was schizophrenic. He was put into a mental institution when he was 15, and around the time that he was 30, he was still there, he actually lived there until he was 55 when he passed away, and I would go after school starting at about grade 2, and I would go visit him once or twice a week at the mental institution, and I loved it there! I love the people there! And I liked the time that we spent together where he taught me about meditation practice, and he also would bring out books, primarily the Bhagavad-Gita, which is sort of the um, uh... holy text of the Hindu tradition, and also the Dhammapada, which is the most popular version of the Buddha's teachings, and we would do some meditation practice and then he would read parts of those books, and he would ask me what I thought. And being 8 years old, 9 years old, 10 years old, and having somebody sit with you, read to you, and then really wanting to know what you thought, was really, uh, a powerful kind of apprenticeship. And so right from the start I never really thought that psychology or spirituality or meditation, I never really thought any of these things were separate. So that was, as a kid, and I can talk more about that, but I never really took up the practice seriously until I was 20, when I had quit University and quit a job, and really was at a dead end, and suffering from a pretty serious depression. I really needed to find healing, and I had this thought that I wasn't going to find it by reading books. I really needed somehow to have a mentor to learn how to sit still, and my uncle passed away, and so I went to go find a meditation teacher and a psychotherapist, separate people, to just start to work with so I could learn how to really, um, save myself.

DR. DAVE: What an extraordinary story, and particularly the part about your uncle in the mental hospital and the inspiration and respite that you found in such an unusual setting.

MICHAEL STONE: You know my grandmother and my parents were really worried when I was young that I was schizophrenic, because I spent so much time with him. Um, but one of the things that I really took in as a young person was that I had this hypothesis in away that schizophrenia isn't something that somebody is, just like nobody's angry, nobody's psychotic, nobody's jealous all the time...

DR. DAVE: Hmm-mm

MICHAEL STONE: In certain conditions somebody has the symptoms of schizophrenia, in certain conditions somebody's angry, in certain conditions somebody's jealous, and so they referred to my uncle as this person who was "schizophrenic", but it didn't relate to my experience of him, and I thought about this so much when I was young that we have these ways of thinking about others and thinking about ourselves that really don't match the kind of inner experience we have of ourselves or others, and you know this also a core teaching of the Buddha.

DR. DAVE: Yeah, yeah that's fascinating that you came to that perception so early of course it makes me think of Lang and others in the radical Psychiatry movement who've argued something similar I think. Now I have the impression that you integrate Zen Buddhism with Ashtanga Yoga, and these come out of somewhat different traditions, don't they?

MICHAEL STONE: They do and they don't. I think the Buddha was a Yogi. The Buddha was somebody who experienced this kind of existential kind of disorientation as a young person and he started looking at different Yoga practices so that he could really resolve the question of why he experienced suffering. And he did that really by leaving the kind of theology of his day, which is letting go of his belief that doing ritual and ascribing to certain gods or goddesses would save him. And in the end after many different Yoga practices he decided to sit still. He was doing a practice with one of his Yoga teachers that had to do with fasting and breathing, and he got so thin and frail and realized that those practices of estheticism weren't going to serve him, and then he had this memory, as a psychotherapist I love this part, where he had this memory of being a kid, of being a young boy lying under a tree in an orchard with his father nearby, and experiencing peace. And so he realized in his anxiety that he needed to go find a tree and sit under that tree, because that was where he remembered peace and he went and sat under the tree which has become a sort of famous symbol for being able to sit still and he really started looking at his experience and that move inward (12.15) of being able to really look at one's own heart and one's own body and one's own life without the scaffolding of religion of... of these kind of answers handed to really investigate for one's self from a place of stillness... this was really the Buddha's path, and it's the path that really inspired me.

DR. DAVE: You know I did not realize that Yoga preceded the Buddha... I've not heard that before.

MICHAEL STONE: I think we're learning now through scholarship that many of the Yoga postures that we see in Yoga studios these days are fairly recent inventions in the way that they're practiced but using different postures to be able to find stillness and wake up energies in the body using one's breath to calm the mind, these are practices that definitely precede the Buddha, these are practices that humans have been doing to calm down and to really look at the nature of their lives I think probably since the beginning of human history. How they were put into sequence I think is more recent.

DR. DAVE: You know that makes sense to me, I've, for example, something that I was interested to discover in myself was that when I began to find something out about acupuncture and so on, I discovered that the acupuncture points, many of them were places that I had been spontaneously been pressing on my own body with my thumbs because they seemed to speak to ache or something like that, so I could see how the system was really rooted in human experience...

MICHAEL STONE: For sure, I mean many of the common Yoga postures that we see nowadays are said to have been discovered spontaneously while people were in meditation, and certain energies would arise and they would have to move their bodies in different ways to contain and work with those energies, and those became many of the basic Yoga poses. And I think while different schools have different sequences of Yoga poses, the kind of inner architecture of using your breathing, of feeling the top of your inhale, of exhaling to the bottom of the exhale, of feeling the central axis of the body... these are all kind of archetypal, um, patterns in human physiology, and nowadays they may go by the names "diaphragms" or "fascia", but I think we've always tried to map out our psychological life in our body.

DR. DAVE: Hmm-mm

MICHAEL STONE: I was just going to say this about Freud too... you know many of your listeners are probably familiar with Freud's theory of the unconscious, but I think we forget so often that Freud was a doctor who dealt at the beginning of his career primarily with physical symptoms. And I think although Freud focused so much on language he was always using the talking cure to connect his um patients with the physical symptoms in their body because his first patients came to him with physical symptoms that doctors couldn't cure, and he connected how when they talked about those experiences, or when they saw how they couldn't talk about those experiences, it actually effected the physical symptom. This relationship between language and the body. And the Yogis were doing the exact same thing, not so much with language but with movement and the body.

DR. DAVE: Well this brings us to your own practice as a psychotherapist, where did you receive your training and how would you describe your orientation as a therapist?

MICHAEL STONE: Well I had a little bit of strange education (laughter) because I dropped out of University of British Columbia where I was studying Eastern and Western Philosophy, and I eventually went to University of Toronto where I degree called “Psychoanalytic Thought”, which doesn’t exist anymore, but it was actually an undergraduate course is psychoanalysis that was taught within the religion department, and so it was a fantastic course because we were always going back and forth between people like William James and Carl Jung. And out of that I did a Masters Degree in Vermont in psychoanalysis because in Canada I couldn’t find any way to study psychoanalysis at a graduate level, it was all post-graduate work, and then I came across a kind of maverick psychologist named James Hillman, who just passed away actually a couple of weeks ago...

DR. DAVE: Yes.

MICHAEL STONE: James Hillman took over the Jung institute from Jung after Jung died before Hillman eventually moved to the United States, and his work really inspired me and I started studying with him and attending conferences wherever he was. And so although my academic education really opened me up to many different points of view, Hillman’s work inspired me I think more than anybody else, this ability that he was always, kind of, very clear about which is, kind of, anti-interpretation: how do we let the body, how do let images, how do we let what we’re experiencing unfold without constantly superimposing interpretations on it. And this really, really inspired me. And then from there eventually with some mentors in Toronto I started a private practice.

DR. DAVE: Well unfortunately Hillman died before I could interview him...

MICHAEL STONE: Ahhh

DR. DAVE: ... but he was on my, “to do list” (laughter)

MICHAEL STONE: (laughter)

DR. DAVE: ...which it’s really to bad because he was such a seminal figure. I got to hear him speak on one occasion, he came to Sonoma State University years and years ago, and I did use his book on re-visioning psychology as a text for a course that I taught at one time.

So its very interesting this... what a fascinating background and integration of different traditions you have, and I am so surprised to hear that, you know, that you’ve kind of integrated a psychoanalytic and archetypal background into your structure as a therapist. I would have predicted that it would have come more along the lines of mindfulness and the Vipassana work, which I’m sure is in there as well. And that leads me to my next question, which is how do you believe that your Buddhist belief and practices inform your approach to psychotherapy?

MICHAEL STONE: Well that's a huge question, I mean. First of all, everybody's interested in how to integrate eastern and western models, and to me that was never that interesting. To me, I was always interested in where the Buddhist meditation practices, different Yoga practices, didn't fit with western psychology, and the gap between them. I was always interested how the Buddhist perspective of wholeness or awakening was about not sticking to ways of living that reinforce our identity. And so in psychotherapy there is so much work recognizing how patterns of stories, how old narrative habits, how old addictions repeat themselves until we recognize them, but what I saw in Buddhist practice was how it wasn't just enough to recognize something, we also had to be able to let it go, we also had to be able to not replace one's story with another story but be able to see this aspect of the mind that's always, kind of like a tourist, trying to take a picture of our experience, that's always trying to put whatever's happening for us into a narrative that then reinforces our identity. And to me that's where Buddhist practice and psychology departed.

The other thing that I want to say that we haven't talked about is that one of the biggest differences between Yoga and Buddhist practice on the one hand and western psychology on the other is ethics. That traditional Buddhist and Yoga practices begin with a commitment to ethics, to non-violence, honesty, not stealing, using energy wisely, and really looking at ways that we act out of greed. And to me, working with my teachers in the Buddhist tradition and then wanting to explore with me how ethics worked in my life seemed so different than working with a therapist, who would never ask you about the ethical dimension of your life, so much so that I actually think healing in the eastern tradition might even begin with ethics, before anything.

DR. DAVE: You know that's fascinating because I've also been very interested in Positive Psychology, and before that, Humanistic Psychology, which was really my tradition. And I think that Humanistic Psychology was concerned with issues of ethics to some degree and that Positive Psychology is finding an empirical basis (laughter) for a number of ethical precepts. So... that's fascinating to me...

MICHAEL STONE: I sometimes have the fantasy, you know, "what if you took these basic principles in Yoga and Buddhist practice of non-violence, honesty... and use that as a framework in the training of therapists, where your supervisor or therapist would creatively work to you, with you, to look at your life in terms of ethics?" And what that does is that it tunes you into the relational aspect of life. And I've always thought that this would be a fascinating thing in training programs for therapists, to really look at their relational life through the lens of ethics. Because in Buddhism and Yoga, ethics is not like it is in the Abrahamic religions, where, you know, if you steal something you're not going to get a Christmas present or God is going to punish you in some way. Ethics has to do with relationships, which we call Karma, that when you take an action it has an effect, and so we're constantly looking at the effects of our actions. And I think in a way this is Cognitive Psychology 101.

DR. DAVE: (Laughing in agreement) Okay. Now you founded a Buddhist community there in Toronto, which is called "Center of Gravity". Tell us a little bit about the center.

MICHAEL STONE: Well about 7 years ago I was practicing psychotherapy and many people were coming who knew that I was also teaching Yoga and meditation, and wanted to study with me. And there were many people who were studying Yoga with me who wanted to learn more about psychology, and then there were friends of mine who were Buddhist practitioners who didn't want to study anymore in temples, they wanted a kind of way of having a more non-hierarchical form of study, and I thought, "well what if we just... meet in my garage a couple times a week, and start to do Buddhist practices, Yoga practices... and even study psychology together?" And that's how it started, it was a kind of way of being halfway between a University and a Temple, where people could do serious formal practice but we could do it in a kind of non-hierarchical way, and over time we have developed into a thriving community here in Toronto called Center of Gravity. We also have an online presence with 100's of hours of podcasts and videos... and everything that we do is by donation. So we have people of all walks of life coming to do meditation practice, Yoga practice, study of texts, and also then take their practices into their families and communities.

DR. DAVE: Now what led you to name it "Center of Gravity"?

MICHAEL STONE: I came across a journal that was published in LA, apparently only one was published, that Leonard Cohen made for his teacher Sasaki Roshi, I guess they tried to make a journal and only one was ever produced, and it was called Center of Gravity, and you know I have a kind of anarchistic side where I really wanted to have a community that had no name, but eventually we needed a name because we wanted to create a website, and when I came across this journal called Center of Gravity I thought this was really a great name. Also, the word, "guru" in Sanskrit, that most of us translate as "teacher", actually means "gravity", its actually where via the Latin we get the word gravity, and I've always liked this image of, you know, kind of developing in our lives a sense of gravity, and openness to gravity, not just physical but a kind of openness to the reality and the tragedy of being human, which is kind of relating to our sense of gravity... not being moved. "Not being moved" isn't the right way of saying it.... Not being blown around by our lives, really rooted in the ground of life.

DR. DAVE: Ah, now it makes a kind of sense to me too in terms of the sitting practice of Zen meditation, and you mentioned Leonard Cohen... I have to say that I'm a huge fan of Leonard Cohen.

MICHAEL STONE: (Laughter)

DR. DAVE: So I think the popular image of Buddhist meditation is one of preoccupation with the inner world, and maybe even a certain passivity. However, I notice that the title of your latest book is, "Awake In the World: Teachings from Yoga and Buddhism for Living an Engaged Life". So tell us about your take on spirituality and the engaged life.

MICHAEL STONE: I think a lot of people have an idea that when you sit still you will begin to watch your experience like an observer. And I would actually call that dissociation. What actually happens when we start sitting and connecting with breathing

is we start to feel more but we don't get stuck in it, so a lot of people come to meditation because they want to reduce the amount that they feel, but the paradox is that over the years in meditation, like in Yoga practice, the spectrum of what you feel actually begins to increase, so when sadness arises you learn how to fully be with sadness without clinging to it, when anger arises you learn to really become one with anger, but you sit still. When you joy arises you really feel joy or peace, but you don't cling to it. So, "non-attachment" means non-attachment to the way that you cling to your experience; in other words, non-attachment means engagement. The more that we practice not clinging to our reactivity the more we're engaged, the more we're intimate with our lives... most of us just want to be intimate with pleasure, but meditation practice teaches us how to be intimate with boredom, how to be intimate with sadness, how to be intimate with envy and greed... and then we don't act it out.

DR. DAVE: Now I have the impression that you've attended "Occupy" protests in several cities, is that right?

MICHAEL STONE: I have, I've attended the Occupy movement in about six different cities in the past two months.

DR. DAVE: Which ones and how come?

MICHAEL STONE: Well it started because I was teaching at the Upaya Zen Center, which is a monastery in Santa Fe, New Mexico. And I was invited to come down to the Occupy movement as it began in Santa Fe, and I was really struck by the diversity of people there, and although it was small, I noticed that there was communication happening among very different groups of people, and when that was happening I noticed that there was a conversation happening amongst people who haven't spoken, if ever. And then I got to New York where things had really grown within the first two weeks of Occupy Wall Street, and one of the organizational principles that they used there was to create a circle that they called the, "General Assembly", twice a day, and in the circle they would meet about the issues of the park: how to get food, how to set up a media tent, how to have less drumming so the residents that live nearby weren't upset in the evening, how to reach out to parents, how to reach out to the Bronx... and I saw these conversations happening that reminded me a lot of what we look for as therapists... as psychotherapists we're always trying to get parts of people's personality that are not communicating...communicating. In fact we can say that the heart of healing, whether its in ecology or medicine or psychiatry or psychology, is to get communication happening between parts that have been compartmentalized, and I had this realization in between Santa Fe and New York that our culture has become so compartmentalized, there are people that are treated like trash, and there are segments of the community that are not allowed into the public conversation, and that we're no longer living in what we like to think of as a Democracy, and what was happening in Zuccotti Park and in other parks all over the world--now there's 2025 of them--is that conversations were happening that I hadn't seen happen in my lifetime, and it was so inspiring, and its what's creating Democracy day by day, and this is just so uplifting, its alleviating despair, its creating less apathy, and its really not so much creating a place but creating a space where people

can begin to communicate and we can really start looking at just how much suffering there is in North America.

DR. DAVE: Well the fact that there is 2000 of these that have sprung up around the world is interesting; it suggests that there's some deep sort of need that's seeking expression.

MICHAEL STONE: You could call it, "The Return of the Repressed".

DR. DAVE: Yeah say a little bit more about that.

MICHAEL STONE: Well like I was saying earlier, you know, when we're working with people in psychotherapy we always have this radar for some part of the personality that is being compartmentalized, some part of ourselves or our patients where there is no imagination flowing, and I think the people of North America are really suffering from a real failure of imagination. We're seeing that our economic system has created a serious homeless problem, foreclosures on houses we haven't seen before, and that mostly, terrible ecological degradation, and we haven't known what to do. And so I started thinking, psychologically, that we're really suffering from a failure of imagination and what we're seeing in these parks is an eruption of collective imagination, where young people, people of color, all different kinds of people are coming together to pull the collective handbrake, to say, "where we're heading is no good for our water, for our fish, for our children, for the next generations, and we need to re-imagine a new narrative". And the media keeps saying, "What are your demands?" because the media haven't recognized yet that this not a protest, its not about demands—we're trying to see how big this can get before any demands are articulated, and secondly, the demands aren't going to be made to politicians yet, because first we're trying to kind of, stop, and as many of your listeners will know who have a psychological background, sometimes to just pull the handbrake is the beginning of a process of grief, where we have to kind of feel something come to an end and enter the difficulty and the "not knowing" that comes with loss before we're quick to offer solutions. Its like when you lose a lover and quickly you want a new one, and you don't spend enough time feeling the end of a relationship... the Occupy movement is trying to stop, and bring some sanity, I think, to our collective dialogue, and its too early to say what's going replace our economy, its too early we don't know, but we're trying to create the space for that conversation to start to happen, and if there's anything that that Occupy movement has won, so far, its that they really are beginning to change the public conversation, that its actually possible to talk about money, about economic injustice, without just suddenly being called a socialist or a communist or something (laughter).

DR. DAVE: Yeah what about the issue of "tent cities"? It seems like that's drawn a lot of the attention is the fact that people are camping out, and a lot of the problems that that brings and the response of authorities.

MICHAEL STONE: Well, I think what the Occupy Wall Street movement is right now is that its not just a movement but a space in which people who feel a similar frustration

with the world, as it is and as its coming together, are thinking about ways to re-create it. And I think some people have dug in in these parks and it's really inspiring. And what's happening is that the media are only reporting about the tent cities, and this is convenient so that they don't have to really report about the issues. It's amazing watching the news and hearing how the conversation in the news is whether the mayor is going to shut down the park or not. Well what we've seen over and over again in the past 10 days is that every mayor that's tried to shut down a park has actually spread the movement, because the movement's fanned out afterwards. What really counts is that there are people in these parks who are developing Facebook pages, medical tents, food tents, sanitary working groups, police liaisons, media feeds, winter preparation groups, outreach communities, local residents liaisons... I mean it's amazing to see how much organization is happening in these parks, and that's why I'm hesitant to call this a protest and much more a movement, because although this occupy movement has to transcend these parks what we've seen demonstrated in these parks—a commitment to non-violence, a commitment to communication, a commitment a kind of interdependence, a commitment to inclusion--- these are values that are so inspiring that the first time I saw a general assembly in New York... I cried. I thought, "All the values that I hold in my heart, of how people can come together and communicate are being demonstrated here by the people in these parks". And to me that was really inspiring. And I also couldn't believe the level of organization.

DR. DAVE: To what extent do you feel that this was inspired by the Arab Spring?

MICHAEL STONE: I think it's built on what we saw in the Arab Spring, I think there's no doubt that it's built on the protests we've seen in Spain, I think that also the seeds of how so much of this movement is coming together is built on what happened in North America in the 60's and 70's... I think there were incredible movements, whether they were feminist movements or what have you, that went in directions that were really powerful, but I think what got left out of those movements that we're seeing developed in this movement is not forgetting that the core of what needs to happen in this country is Democracy, and Democracy starts with the kind of difficulty of consensus and communication, and I think we've seen the government really, really fail in terms of being able to communicate and get things done and now people are stepping up to do this.

It's funny someone said to me the other day, you know, "who do you think started this... who is the organizer?" And I'm starting to think now, you know, psychologically, we might say that the organizer is, you know, City Bank and BP (laughter)...

DR. DAVE: (Laughter)

MICHAEL STONE: ...and the Fed, you know? And what I mean by that is when we say, "what affects change in a human personality?" what really affects change is really waking up to our addictions, really waking up to how we're suffering, and I think the American psyche is starting to wake up to the way that we're all interconnected, and if some parts of the social fabric and the ecological fabric are not being served we really feel that, we feel that deeply, and the Occupy movement has in its values all of the values

that we share in Humanistic Psychology, in Existential Psychology, in Yoga, and in Buddhism.

DR. DAVE: I was interested to hear your reference to the 60's and 70's because as you were speaking I was feeling re-vivified, the optimism of the 60's which I was around for, and that very special time, and as I heard you speaking I was sensing, "wow, here's a rebirth of that same sort of hope and energy". I'm worried about the violence, I have to tell you... I'm worried about the violence that we've seen in the Middle East and what's happening in Egypt and Libya and so on in terms of repressive governments, and I know when first saw the uprising in Egypt there was this sense of optimism, but I also had the feeling like... I was saying to friends, "boy this could happen here... we're not so far away from this", and that was before it began to manifest here. And so I guess I'm also somewhat fearful that the situation here could devolve into violence.

MICHAEL STONE: Yeah I mean one of the things that's been most inspiring about this movement is that they're hyper-aware that this has to be a non-violent movement, and we've seen primarily the violence coming from the police over and over again... I mean mayors that are not willing to have conversations with the Occupy movement who try to come in and just shut things down are really being scorned now. I think just a few days ago, I don't know if you've seen this, there was a terrible incident at UC Davis where police pepper sprayed some protestors who were young students sitting completely still.

DR. DAVE: Yes that's very prominent in the local news here.

MICHAEL STONE: And if you watch that clip past the point where... see most the clips we're seeing on YouTube, they stop right after the cops spray these protestors, but what happens next is the most interesting: a kind of hive of humans surround the police and start yelling, "shame shame shame!" which we've seen in protest for decades, but this time they swarm the police and the police started backing away, backing away, backing away, and left, and that non-violent movement of that huge crowd of hundreds surrounding the police and saying "shame"—what we're seeing this week of people in the military and people in the police force actually standing up and saying, "how the police have been handling this is wrong"—is really inspiring. So I want to be careful before we suggest that things change with violence, to also really start to look at how many inspiring non-violent tactics are working, especially in the last two months in these parks.

DR. DAVE: Combining your realism and your optimism, what would you see as the most positive and yet possible endgame?

MICHAEL STONE: Okay, well from the realistic side, our economy, to maintain adequate growth, has to grow about 3% a year. That means that economy will double in size in 24 years. And I think that our water system and the poor people and fish can't handle this kind of growth-based economy. And the realist in me sees that something is going to change very quickly—there is not going to be another bailout, and that scares me

and inspires me. That's the realist in me. The optimist in me has absolutely no idea what's going on (laughter)

DR. DAVE: (Laughter)

MICHAEL STONE:I really don't know where this is going to go, I think that its going to ramp up very quickly, and I think that its going to be met with repression but also its going to be met with creativity, and anybody who says that they know where this Occupy movement is going is lying. It's impossible to know. And I think in any revolution that we've seen anywhere in the world, nobody even at the core knows which direction its going to go from day to day, and so I think those of us who have done inner work, where we're able to really sit in the tension of opposites, where we're really able to be in that space where we're not clinging to fixed perspectives, where we we're doing what Freud calls, "evenly hovering attention", or the Buddha calls Mindfulness, or Zen teachers called Not knowing... I think we really have to bring Not Knowing and Bearing Witness to this movement to really open our hearts to how its possible to meet violence with creativity, to meet violence with love, and this movement is not afraid to use the words, "love" and "kindness" and "non-violence" in every sentence, and that's really, really beautiful. I think what we're seeing is the beginning of a not being able to separate ecological issues, economic issues, social issues, psychological issues, and spiritual issues—this is a spiritual movement as much as it is a movement toward economic and ecological justice.

DR. DAVE: You know Michael I think that is a great place for us to close, a very strong statement for us to reflect on, and I really feel inspired and stimulated by what you've said. So Michael Stone thanks for being my guest today on Shrink Rap Radio.

MICHAEL STONE: Thanks so much David, it was great to have this conversation with you.

DR. DAVE: Wow, what clarity and precision Michael Stone communicates. I'm not at all surprised that a community has sprung up around him. His perspective on the Occupy movement is a good antidote to some of my own more gloomy speculations. He's given me a fresh outlook and hope for what might be possible.

Some of my local friends share his optimism and have voiced similar feelings of hope and potential for some sort of societal rebirth. I'll try to let these voices have more sway in my own head. My good friend Jerry Trumble, who you've heard many times here on ShrinkRapRadio, has been very active with the Occupy Denver movement, especially as a videographer. He was very much an activist in the 60's and I think he's glad to see a broad spectrum of people getting fired up again about social and economic injustices. Some of my local friends and colleagues have been acting as elders for the Sebastopol and Santa Rosa Occupy movements, advising younger people that the tent cities tend to become the focus o the media and therefore public attention, and run the risk of distracting from the more important issues. As you know politics are not the focus of ShrinkRapRadio, and yet I felt that these developments are too important and have too many psychological and spiritual ramifications to not bring in some coverage here. I'm

really happy to have discovered Michael Stone thanks to listener “El Tortugo” because he comes at these events from a perspective that is perfect for my sense of what Shrink Rap Radio is all about. I’ll be sure to put an Amazon.com link in the show notes to Michael’s latest book, the title of which is, “Awake In The World: Teachings from Yoga and Buddhism for Living an Engaged Life”. And of course you can order his others from the Amazon.com sidebar and help support to Shrink Rap Radio at the same time.

Okay this is me again with an addendum. Synchronicity strikes again. I was putting this section of the podcast to bed and went down to have a bite of lunch in front of the TV. This was right on the heels of the interview with Michael Stone, and the TV was tuned to Charlie Rose who was conducting an interview that was the perfect follow on to the interview with Michael. Charlie’s guest was Dov Seidman, and he’s a moral philosopher who works with major corporations to inject humanity into their corporate cultures. In the interview he says that the Occupy movement is creating a new receptivity to his message. Turns out that Charlie interviewed him previously in 2007. If you go to www.CharlieRose.com, you can see the interview. Be sure to catch the 2011 interview. Dov Seidman has also written a book called, “How: Why HOW We Do Anything Means Everything”, and his consulting company can be found at LRN.com. I’m excited about this because it shows very tangibly how this mass movement can trickle up to the top.