Beyond Forgiveness, Reflections on Atonement

David Van Nuys interviews Phil Cousineau

Shrink Rap Radio

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Phil Cousineau: When we attempt to say we're sorry and we seek forgiveness, well what happens is very often the world doesn't believe us, we don't believe ourselves, but there's this missing key. Atonement says you need to sacrifice something. You need to prove with an actual act, a human act, that you can put things right again.

David Van Nuys: That was the voice of my guest Phil Cousineau speaking about the importance of atonement in the process of seeking forgiveness. Phil Cousineau is the editor of the 2011 book, *Beyond Forgiveness: Reflections on Atonement.*

Phil is an award-winning writer and film maker, teacher and editor, lecturer and travel leader, story teller and TV host. His fascination with the art, literature, and history of culture has taken him from Michigan to Marrakesh, Iceland to the Amazon, and worldwide search for what the ancients call the soul of the world.

With more than 25 books and 15 script writing credits to his name, the omnipresent influence of myth in modern life is a thread that runs through all of his work. His other books include *Stoking the Creative Fires, Once and Future Myths, The Art of Pilgrimage, The Olympic Odyssey, The Hero's Journey,* and *Wordcatcher*.

Now here's the interview.

David Van Nuys: Phil Cousineau, welcome to Shrink Rap Radio.

Phil Cousineau: Good morning. I'm happy to be with you.

David Van Nuys: I'm really happy to have you here and to have this opportunity to meet with you and to discuss your work. I've been reading your current book, *Beyond Forgiveness: Reflections on Atonement* and it's a collection of essays by various writers on themes of forgiveness, atonement, and restoring balance in our lives and in the world. It's a wonderful collection and I was gratified to discover that I've actually previously interviewed two of your contributors, namely Edward Tick and Azim Khamisa, and both of those interviews stand out in my mind as just really extraordinary.

How did you come to edit this book?

Phil Cousineau: Again thank you for having me on this show. This is a very difficult but very, very important topic, I'm convinced of that. The roots of the book are curious. I have been hosting a TV show for Link TV available all around the world now, linktv.org, called *Global Spirit*. A couple of years ago I had Azim Khamisa, Ed Tick and his wife Kate Dahlstedt on a show under the theme of Forgiveness and Healing. Ed and Kate told about taking Vietnam veterans back to Vietnam to the points of their trauma and helping them atone for things that had still been weighing deeply, deeply in their hearts.

Azim Khamisa told his tragic story of his 20-year-old son being murdered in a gangland slaying in South Central Los Angeles and then moving to forgive the killer of his son and allowing this young man, who's still in prison, to atone for what had happened.

Shortly after we had this show, Azim called me and said that a friend of his, Rich Mayer from Southern California, was very interested in this topic and he wanted to talk to me about perhaps expanding it into a book. We spoke briefly after that and I was immediately impressed with the depth of Mr. Mayer's commitment to this idea that forgiveness is fine, important, and noble but we need the missing key, the missing element in at least long-lasting, deeply lasting reconciliation and that is atonement.

This is something that he had picked up in his work in AA, Alcoholics Anonymous, and I didn't know that component it, but as he began to speak it resonated very deeply with me in my work with Native Americans it's a common scene, in my work in film criticism atonement is omnipresent throughout movie history. Rich told me that he had a few commitments already to create this book from people like Michael Nagler at the Center for Nonviolence, Michael Beckwith at the Center of Spirituality, Rabbi Lerner, the founder of *Tikkun* magazine, and so on.

Together we've worked for two years on the book and we expanded his original five-essay idea for the book into 15, so now this book, *Beyond Forgiveness: Reflections on Atonement,* published by Jossey-Bass this year, is chock full of deeply moving and enriching essays, it’s I think a very important topic.

David Van Nuys: Yes and I have to say I'm a bit envious that you got to meet Azim and Tick in person. I was certainly impressed by my contact with them over the phone, interviewing them but I certainly had the feeling that both were extraordinary people. It's interesting how those two people sort of were the seed for this idea breaking out. Now, your book is both about forgiveness and as you pointed out that second step important step of atonement but for a moment let's break this out separately if possible and have you talk a bit about forgiveness, because I know that's been an important topic. I've been following developments in positive psychology and forgiveness has been an important theme there.

What's meant by forgiveness and why is it important from your point of view?

Phil Cousineau: Well, first of all I like going to the words themselves that we use. I've done this in all my work, all my lectures. I have great fun with etymology. I've learned how to use dictionaries since I was a boy growing up outside Detroit. My recent book by the way is *Wordcatcher*, a book on the importance of word origin and in this particular discussion it's enormously enlightening, let's put it that way.

To forgive means a couple of things, one, it means to pardon a debt or a wrong. It means to overlook at once the sting of betrayal or wounding of some kind that has come in and yet if you go deeper, deeper into the word there's something subtly psychological about it as well. It means to give for, it's for giving, which suggests that it's actually a gift. You've been wronged and someone on the other side may or may not feel guilty about this, but to offer forgiveness, it's a gift, a gift to that other person, to go on with his or her life. It's a gift to yourself to not be stuck in the wound, to be stuck in resentment or bitterness.

It's a great Chinese saying, if you're hell bent on revenge you dig two graves. It's a very powerful thought, in that forgiveness has been a component of human relationships since the dawn of time. We know that we can very well spend our lives in resentment but we will hobbled by that, so there's this component that says it's a gift. If you can move ... we need compassion to actually overlook, as the word suggests, what has been done and it's not—difficult and nobody can soft sell it. It's a very, very difficult thing to do and it begins in compassion. We have to I think look in the flaws in ourselves and look in the other person and hand this gift over.

There're different kinds of forgiveness of course, it can be acts betrayal or meanness between individuals and also between nations as well.

David Van Nuys: I have the impression that there can be a cost to not forgiving, that if we hold on to our injured feelings that it may cost us something. Can you comment on that?

Phil Cousineau: Sorry can you reword that a bit. I'm not quite sure where you're going?

David Van Nuys: Well, I'm asking if holding on to our sense of injury and not forgiving exacts perhaps a medical cost or psychological cost or some other sort of cost?

Phil Cousineau: Well, definitely that's a very brilliant question. The reason I don't believe there's any one answer for that, everything you suggested takes a part in that, so we can try to deconstruct it a little bit, reasons not to forgive. Pride, is an enormous one. We've been hurt, it may sound curious but to stand in the position of the wounded one, the hurt one, the betrayed one

can actually give us a little bit of moral superiority over someone else who has hurt us. We then get into a game of Uzis with someone, you've been meaner to me than I have been. This goes on between individuals as well as nations. There may also be the psychological or biological component, which I'm not terribly erudite on other than that the capacity for some people apparently for empathy is much stronger than others.

I have a 15-year-old son and so my wife and I have been very careful about this component in his behavior. It seems some children are either born into the world with more empathy than others or it is nurtured along but it's very important to know that first move is a move of identifying something in the other person that is human. This person has made a mistake, this nation, this corporation, this business has made a mistake, and the question is whether or not we can go on from here. There was a beautiful letter I saw in the *Dublin Times,* Dublin, Ireland, last fall when I was in Ireland, and it was about the Troubles in the North, which of course are still plaguing people.

If you've had someone murdered through what they call the Troubles in Northern Ireland, it's very, very difficult to let go of that, but this one woman wrote in to the *Dublin Times* and said, we must allow someone who has asked forgiveness and has tried to make amends to go on with their life. We need to go on with our lives and that's a major point of it, that brings up this mystery element in the whole reconciliation question. I deeply believe and I'm so glad you asked me this question Dave that some people will not make that next move of forgiveness if they see in the other person or the nation, let's say it's a political ambassador. If there's no effort to prove the forgiveness, in other words, to offer to make amends. To make an offer of somehow restoring the balance that been thrown asunder.

In my experience studying the work of Desmond Tutu in South Africa or the restorative justice movement, I have noticed that people are much, much more likely to forgive if the offer on the other side, the person who has oppressed you, the person who has turned you into the victim has said I'm not only asking for your forgiveness but you know what I want to make things right again. It seems to be that offer of atonement is what will often seal the deal if it's difficult for someone to forgive.

David Van Nuys: Well, we'll be getting to the other side of the coin there, atonement, in just a bit, but sticking with forgiveness a bit longer here. You've indicated that there's personal forgiveness and there's collective forgiveness and you've mentioned South Africa, which certainly is an example most of us are familiar with in terms of collective forgiveness. Are there similar or other examples of collective forgiveness?

Phil Cousineau: Well, certainly, for me, just in case the listeners have forgotten or don't know some of the details I believe part of the genius of Desmond Tutu and Nelson Mandela's attempt to bring not only peace to South Africa but to bring a bloodless peace. A peace that was achieved with very little

blood letting, especially in proportion to what was expected, and that is because Tutu from his 1989 biography on, said, "When apartheid ends, when we do have peace between the whites and the blacks in South Africa, we're not only going to offer forgiveness but we're going to ask for restitution." That is his word for atonement. His notion was if you murdered someone as a police officer with those death squads or if you stole land or cattle, we will forgive you in the all-forgiving notion of peace, we need eventual peace, but you have to meet us halfway and make some kind of restitution.

In that light there has been for the past 30 years or so a really strong movement in many places for this kind of restorative justice thinking. There have been efforts, for example, in Germany since World War II not only to ask for forgiveness for what happened underneath the scourge of the Nazis but to offer amends. I write in my book in my introduction to the *Beyond Forgiveness* book a brief anecdote about what I saw living in Israel on a kibbutz in the 1970s and that is every two weeks there was a group of young German students who came to our kibbutz. It was one of my jobs to help train them, working in the olive, date groves and banana groves and so on.

They had been sent there by the German government, all expenses paid, to meet Israeli Jews and to begin to break down that whole process of demonization of the other, which could lead to death camps and so on. Beyond the idea of offering money for what happened under the Nazis in World War II, I find this to be a very emotional and very gratifying and let's say life-affirming effort at atonement, where you try to make amends and make a gesture towards the future so that what had happened in the past may not happen again.

David Van Nuys: You mentioned your introduction, which I thought was really wonderful, and in it you quote Huston Smith as saying, you quote him saying “So the power of the act of forgiveness is the recognition of the flaw in all of us.” Can you say a bit more about that?

Phil Cousineau: Yes this my friend Huston Smith, the great historian of religion. We worked together for the last 20 years, a number of book projects and some projects surrounding Native American spiritual issues. Currently I'm working on his memoirs with him, which very exciting. I was honored to have Dr. Smith write the forward to this book *Beyond Forgiveness* and in there he blessed me, he blessed really all of us, with his uncannily psychological insight that often it's a difficult, if not impossible, for us to make this move into forgiveness. If we refuse or cannot recognize that what someone has done to us, either individually or collectively, isn't something that we could do.

For example someone hurts us, steals money, steals our car, betrays our friendship in some way. We can either say I'll never speak to that person again or you look into that person's heart and you see that what has happened is something we may have done ourselves in the past or that

we have the potential to do, or even if it's something that's beyond our comprehension, as Mother Teresa says, forgive them anyway. I think is a remarkably benevolent thought. Huston's idea, I think goes back to the ancient Greeks, the idea of the human flaw, what they call the hamartia, is what is visible there in all heroes, in all dramas throughout human history, that's what the story revolves around. Every human being has a flaw and if you can identify that and take a deep breath, take a deep sigh and say that flaw in that person, greed, or lust, or moral superiority, is the equivalent of the flaw in my own heart, in my own character, then it's much easier to meet someone halfway.

I have found that there's one line from a fairly obscure and important philosopher from the first century, someone named Philo of Alexandria, a wonderful Jewish philosopher in ancient Egypt, who said something that has given me a lot solace over the years and it says, Be kind to everyone you meet because he or she is also enduring a great struggle. That can change the way you walk down the street, it can change the way that you arrive at work in the morning, if you realize or acknowledge, maybe that's the better verb here, acknowledge that you aren't only one in the world with problems, that that person on the other side of the desk, who may be trying to take your house in a mortgage deal, and so on.

Everybody's enduring a great struggle. It comes up to a very curious crossroad there, there are some things that seem to be beyond forgiveness, genocide and so on, what happened with the lost boys of Sudan, there are some horrific things that human beings can perpetrate on one another. One of the essays in our book I think helped us address this. Jacob Needleman, the great American philosopher, said that, growing up as a Russian Jew and having to deal with the memories of what occurred in Europe in World War II, Jewish philosophy help him a great deal, in this way, that you learn to hate the act but not the actor, so we can despise what is done to children in abuse situations or we can hate what happens in war, the depredations of war, but hate the act and not the person.

That seems to be pretty common in human psychology. I've noticed this a great deal in Native American situations, where you can hate the act of someone stealing something in a small community on a reservation somewhere in the Amazon or here in the America, but it's very, very, very dangerous and corrupting to hate the person. We don't know the circumstances. It could be chemical as you suggested, Dave, it could be psychological in a way that is beyond our comprehension, so to move that rancor into the act rather than the person I think is very helpful.

David Van Nuys: Yes I'm so glad about all these points that you're making, and also earlier you mentioned compassion and that's certainly a strong theme coming from Buddhism and that would seem to relate very much to what you've just been saying. I'm not sure if you heard me there?

Phil Cousineau: No, no can you ask that again please?

David Van Nuys: Yeah, it wasn't so much a question as an observation that earlier you had mentioned compassion and certainly Buddhism would seem to address this issue similarly, as you were pointing out, that Judaism has.

Phil Cousineau: Yes exactly, and there again is an opportunity go into the etymology of the word to help us garner some deeper understanding. To be compassionate literally means to feel the struggle with someone else. Passion is struggle, the heat is a struggle; com-, to feel with someone, to feel their deep struggle, and being a human being and dealing with their own troubles, with their own sorrows.

If we can make that magical act, then it is easier to forgive, not necessarily to forget because we need to learn what has happened in all of our experiences even the destructive ones, even the hurtful ones, but compassion from the Buddhist point of view is very curious. On one hand, their cosmology, as Reverend Heng Sure, in the interview that he writes for this book of mine, *Beyond Forgiveness*. He suggests at some level we have already forgiven ourselves and we need to lead our lives, or you can look at the hurt someone has perpetrated in the world as karma. They are working out their karma, so we need to understand that and then move beyond. But on the other hand there's a marvelous story that the Dalai Lama tells about an old Tibetan scholar that had been imprisoned by the Chinese for somewhere in the realm of 20 years. A terrible brutal imprisonment, where he was forced to live, I believe the story is under a staircase, a small room, for 20 years. A very humiliating imprisonment.

When this man was released from prison, His Holiness the Dalai Lama met with him and asked him a curious question, one that most of us wouldn't even consider, but he said, were there any moments when you felt your moral fiber weakening? Did you feel any moments of weakness towards your tormentors? Apparently this Tibetan scholar told the Dalai Lama, yeah, there one moment that was very, very terrible in those 20plus years of imprisonment. Then of course the Dalai Lama says that's when I was expecting him to tell me, they physically tortured me, this is what most of us would think about, right? But instead the Tibetan scholar said, "It was a moment when my compassion begun to wane a bit, began to fade a bit for the Chinese and I began to hate them," and then the Tibetan scholar said, "And of course I have deal with that and I learned to meditate and I worked my way through it."

But I find it very very instructive that part of the strength that can help us endure a terrible torment on an individual or a collective level begins there, with our ability to identify with the humanness of other people, including, including those who have hurt us. Dave, I'm glad you brought that up because you see what I've tried to accomplish here in this book is approach this very powerful topic of what I think of as deep, long-lasting, reconciliation from two points of view, combining forgiveness and atonement. To do this from the Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Native American, psychological literary points of view. I really tried to cover the

bases with this book and I believe that all the major traditions are covered in these 15 chapters.

What happens then when you get to the end of the book is you realize that this has been a long-standing concern for human beings. We need to know how to live together, right? In an apartment with our families, in a neighborhood with our tribe, or in a country and long deep-seated resentments over problems of betrayal and meanness can poison that, and yet I find it very inspiring to know that every religious spiritual tradition in the world has had an atonement process that deals with this.

David Van Nuys: Let's look at that other side of the coin that you've been referring to, atonement. I have to say that I've been away of the importance of forgiveness, much as has happened for you, but hadn't given as much thought to atonement, and just reading the title of your book that I think has atonement in the subtitle, it was like a shock of recognition: Oh yeah, of course. So say a bit about atonement and why if important?

Phil Cousineau: Sure of course thank you. First of all the word itself is very powerful. It goes back to William Tyndale, someone who did two important things: he wrote one of the first dictionaries, a dictionary before Samuel Johnson's famous English dictionary, and he was a also a translator of the Bible. As he translating from the Latin into English he was searching for a word for, guess what? For reconciliation, and he couldn't find one that satisfied him, and so he took this old word that goes back much longer, atone, which originally meant "at one, to be at one." The inference, the suggestion, there of course, is to be in a state of accord, to be in a state of harmony or peace. He stretched that out to suggest "at onement," which is the state of being at one, not divided in ourselves, schizophrenic so to speak, or not permanently divided, let's say with a brother that we're fighting with or with a teacher, a philosopher, an employer, a politician. It is very easy for our sense of oneness with our spouse, with a best friend, it's very easy for that to be cut asunder, so to speak.

One of the dreams of course in psychology and mythology and human relationships and political relationships, to move from that idea of being separate, the idea of being split asunder from people we know or love and somehow become at one again. The idea of atonement up until recently unfortunately has been used almost exclusively by theologians. If you look it up through Google, if you look it up in your local library you'll find hundreds of books on the Christian theological notion of at onement which is very, very briefly the idea that we were all born with original sin. Jesus was born, died on the cross, atoning for all of our sins and because of that one act we will all be resurrected and we will go to heaven and so on. That's it very briefly said but that's essentially it. Even if one doesn't, isn't in accord so to speak with that reading, it does have the seed of something that is enormously helpful for all the rest of us and that is if we sacrifice something, often our pride, our sense of shame, our sense of humiliation, our sense of being hurt and then holding that hurt over other people, look I've been wounded more than you. We say that as friends,

we say that as nations to each other, you hurt more of us than we hurt of you. If you can move past that, if you can sacrifice, that's the element in Christ dying on the cross, if you can sacrifice that sense of pride you might be able to be at one again and it's that form of atonement which leads us into the whole second half of our show, which is what is just thrilling to me about this book and how it might possibly help. Let me give you an example. This man, Ed Tick and his wife Kate Dahlstedt, they're two psychologist who specialize in posttraumatic stress for war veterans, prisoners, and so on. This is not lightweight consideration here, this is as heavy as it gets. They deal with veterans often from Vietnam who have been in therapy, they have said they were sorry, they've even been forgiven let's say by some of the Vietnamese and yet, Dave, they still aren't healed. What is going on there? When we attempt to say we're sorry and we seek forgiveness, what happens is very often the world doesn't believe us, we don't believe ourselves, but there's this missing key.

Atonement says you need to sacrifice something, you need to prove with an actual act, a human act, that you can put things right again and so what the soldiers are encouraged to do, in this one example of Ed and Kate taking their soldiers back to Vietnam, is they need now to prove their sorrow, their remorse. What do they do? They build an orphanage, they buy water buffalo for some local farmers in Vietnam, because they remember, I know two examples of this, they used to use water buffalo for target practice. How do you ever say you're sorry when you killed a water buffalo and you can destroy an entire tribe's way of life or a village's way of life for a short time, so you back and you make amends. And that what atonement is.

You try to make amends. You make something up, you offer a gesture, to try to make things right again. To bring things back into accord, to set things right again.

David Van Nuys: This is all wonderful. Let me get personal here, having rubbed elbows with these folks and with this topic now at such a deep level, I'm wondering if forgiveness and/or atonement have been important in your own life?

Phil Cousineau: Yes, certainly, in two cases. One of course and the deeply personal, my family broke up when I was 17, growing up in Detroit, and for many, many years I was very angry with my father for some of his behavior at home and for my mother for precipitating the divorce. Yet I knew as I grew older that I had to let that go I started doing some work with Robert Bly, a great poet and one of leaders of the men's movement, to this day I remember the tone of his voice when he said, "You don't grow up until you stop blaming your parents." Wow! That was an arrow quivering in my forehead.

I learned to forgive them and especially as I got older I saw how hard it is to be a parent. I've recognized the flaw in them, I recognize that they were

doing the best they could, and then I recognized all of that in myself as well, as I got older and I become a parent on my own. The time I made a move beyond that and ever since I knew that there were years of bitterness when I was mean towards them in a very human way that we will be mean towards people who have hurt us. This is our response to them. And so I've tried to make amends all these years by making visits to them, by giving them gifts, by talking to them about our early life together, and that's been important. To try to make up for lost time, to try to make things right, and it all begins with this idea of compassion, understanding that they were also enduring a great struggle, like that famous philosopher Philos said.

On the collective level it happened to me in a couple other ways, this may be helpful for listeners as well, I found it very curious when I was traveling around Europe, first in the 1970s and then ever since I lead pilgrimages around Europe. I lead tours, I've been there on film shoots and so on, and I continue, for 30 years, I have met people who refuse to go to Germany or Japan because of what happened during World War II. They may have heard a story, or seen a movie, or read a book, or maybe they fought in those wars and they have refused to let go of that anger for obviously terrible depredations, things that happened there. Yet in my way I try to say that we need to let go of this because I was angry at the same time about what America was doing in Vietnam and then in Central America.

Much of my life as a writer and as a film maker has been to try make amends to help foster some kind of understanding between nations. A lot of my work is involved international causes much of it's in Native American issues. I, like many others, have been very angry about what happened to American Indians in this culture and yet it's not enough just to be bitter or angry or ashamed. Instead is there something we can actually do about it? Can we make amends? Now in that light, my film partner in all this projects was a fellow named Gary Rhine from Malibu in California. Gary told me once that, again being born Jewish, there wasn't anything he could do about what happened under the Nazis in World War II; however, there was something that he could do about what he called the American holocaust that it happened here in America to American Indians and so he devoted the whole second half of his life and asked me to work with him to help make amends, to help atone, for what had happened here in our land, in our own country.

We ended up making six films together with Huston Smith, and many of these by the way on Native American issues, and through the years, Dave, I've found it very interesting that many people in art, in the world of theater, in dance, in literature, in the movies have this notion of atonement in them, that something has happened in their lives, personally or collectively, that has so deeply embittered them, and they realize that the creative act itself can be a form of atonement, can be a way to make amends for things that happened in the past.

David Van Nuys: Fascinating, really fascinating. Phil, I'd like to take the time we have left to talk about your own very fascinating career. You've written a whole raft of books, I think you're up around 25, but one enduring theme in your work seems to be myth and story telling. I see you've even written a book about Joseph Campbell. How did you come to be interested in myth and stories and did you have contact with Campbell?

Phil Cousineau: Sure, my fascination with mythology goes all the way back to my boyhood. I grew up in Detroit in a family that was all about cars. My father worked for Ford Motor Company there in Detroit in public relations for 33 years. He helped launch the Mustang, so we loved those cars, but at night we often read books out loud together as a family. We actually went through classics one page at a time ...

David Van Nuys: Wonderful.

Phil Cousineau: ... my father, my mother, my brother, my sister and myself, and this whole love of mythology got into me back then. We would go to museums in Detroit or Toledo or Cleveland, all the way to New York, to see exhibitions on the ancient Greeks and Romans. That love of those stories stayed with me my entire adult life and then in the late 70s I got a chance to meet Joseph Campbell, the great scholar of mythology. Lo and behold, after a few years of casual meetings at seminars here in San Francisco or at the Clift Hotel, in the Redwood Room we would meet for a glass of Glenlivet.

I eventually got the chance to co-write and produce a movie about his life called *A Heroes Journey,* which, after 20-plus years is still a staple on public television. I got to work very closely with Campbell for three years, 84 to 87, on the story of his life and that documentary film ended being a launching pad for my literary career because I was able to parlay the film into my first book deal on Campbell I called *A Hero's Journey,* which is still in print after all these years. What was it I learned from Campbell, one, of course it's the whole notion of the Hero's Journey, that all of us with a pulse, so to speak, those of us who're avidly curious, those of us who have a sense of passion about the world are on a journey. Campbell isolated this as the hero journey, which essentially this isn't just a story of Rocky, Sylvester Stallone, it's the search for the self.

If you refuse to take all the models of behavior that have gone before you, when dad says be a lawyer or mom says, be a housewife, or someone says who the heck are you to go and live in Paris? If you say no to all those social strictures and simply try to find your own way in the world, your own path, you're on the hero's journey. It's curious I find, when I go back to reread Campbell's classic, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces,* it's one of the most important books of the 20th century.

David Van Nuys: Yeah I've taught out of that book for years, just one of my favorite books.

Phil Cousineau: Well, it's essentially trying to find a model of behavior in mythology, fairy tales, legends, theater plays, and all the way up to modern movies, so

here's someone, Campbell, who saw Buffalo Bill and Annie Oakley performing at Madison Square Garden in New York in 1910. He was spending his last few years with The Grateful Dead and George Lucas of *Star Wars* fame, because what he had tried to do with all this time, is there anything, Dave, that we all have in common in human history, and Campbell's notion was it's the search for the self. But to find yourself and really forge your own way, your own path, I find it amazing that he has a whole stage there in *The Hero's Journey* on atonement.

David Van Nuys: That's right.

Phil Cousineau: What it says is if you want to separate yourself, let's say from your parents, from your tribe, from some social mores that you may not agree with, that you may even be morally wrong, you have to find a way to let go. You have to find a way to sacrifice and let go of that other world to become yourself. I found it an amazing kind of synchronicity when I was working in my book on atonement here, this new book *Beyond Forgiveness,* that Campbell, my old teacher, my old mentor had actually explored this a great deal.

David Van Nuys: Yes you know this is a little bit of a diversion but I have heard Campbell accused of antisemitism and I find that very difficult to believe. Can you say anything one way or another about that?

Phil Cousineau: I'd be happy to, it's been an old charge, but it's a curious one because I spent eight years with him and what I found in him was what one of the producers on *The Hero's Journey* once called Campbell's loose cannon behavior. In other words he was so passionate about this idea of the individual standing up against society to say “I am different, I am unique, I have my own destiny” and eventually of course you come back with that gift that's called the boon in mythology and you rejoin the community. It's not like you're a rebel forever, but when you come back ... and so what Campbell did disdain, if he had a disdain in his life, it was for what he called the Chosen People mentality. What he was referring to, if you spent enough time with him like I did, was the Chosen People's mentality that could be the whites over the blacks in the deep Southern America, or the whites over the black in South Africa, or the Chosen People mentality of the Vatican, when the church was perpetrating its own form of evils during the Middle Ages, or it could even be the Chosen People mentality, Campbell I heard say this a few times, in the New York literary world where there was a kind of disdain or a condescension of the East Coast establishment, the Chosen People, if you will, of the literary world towards the bourgeois in Middle America, the little people all across the country.

Campbell would often use this phrase, and if you didn't know him and know his work and know what he was alluding to, you would think that he was using a kind of code for Jews. I found that deeply distressing because there is this element there of the Jews as the Chosen People but that's usually a very, very old reading of it. Most modern contemporary Jews would not agree with that whatsoever. There's much more of an

emphasis on our common destiny and that was Campbell's huge message and that's why I think it's very important to read him and his message of the hero journey as the search for the self. Who am I? Where do I fit into the world community, and is there a way that I can add some kind of creative work out there in the world to really battle this old mythology so to speak. The old mythology of the chosen people, which as we know, leads in one direction, it only leads to war and violence. Doesn't it?

David Van Nuys: Yes, well thanks so much for giving that added perspective, because that's something that's troubled me and I'm really glad to get your view on that. Now, the film series that you worked on, is that the same series that Bill Moyers was the interviewer?

Phil Cousineau: No, no that was *The Power of Myth,* that's the six part series of interviews that Bill Moyers did with Professor Campbell in 1986 and 87. The film that I'm speaking about is called *The Hero's Journey, the world of Joseph Campbell,* and that's the biographical film that we did on Professor Campbell and it explores his life from New York, going to live in Europe, and then later on in life being a tremendous influence in the world of literature, in movies, modern music, and that film is still available and my book is still in print, it's called *The Hero's Journey, the World by Joseph Campbell.*

David Van Nuys: I'm sure that I've seen that film and I just need to go back and look at it again. Now before we wrap up here, you mentioned this online video series that you've been doing and I guess it's still going on, *Global Spirit*. You want to say a little bit about that?

Phil Cousineau: Yes, of course, about 10 years ago or even the late 1990s, a man named Kim Spencer saw the Americans were losing their access to international news. When I was growing up and Walter Cronkite was on the air, Americans might have 8 to 10 minutes of international news in a 60-minute program at 6 o'clock every evening so we would know what was happening around the globe. These days its down to under a minute, it's sometimes 30 seconds of international news and that it's. Only 14 percent of Americans even own passports, for goodness' sake, so we're the least linked people in terms of knowledge about the rest of world of any Western culture.

Mr. Spencer founded this new satellite TV station called Link, Link TV, which is available on Direct TV and the Dish Network all around the country and it's now available on the Internet as well, LinkTV.org, you can find it anywhere. It's 24 hour programming about the entire globe. It's some of the best TV, it also has some of the best music videos available anywhere, world music. Two years ago one of his producers, Stephen Olsson, thought that he might do for culture, psychology, spirituality what Kim had been doing for politics for these last 10 years, and so he brought me on as the host and co-writer of a series called *Global Spirit.* It's now nicknamed the first internal travel series, that was a pretty clever moniker,

and briefly what it is, it's a weekly program in which I had two to three guests from other cultures around the world and we strain hard to make sure that we're representing the other states, the other traditions, and a good balance between men and women in the program as well.

We have now shot 16 programs and we are about to launch on the second series. We have guests like Karen Armstrong, her book *The Battle for God* is very, very important for understanding the world after 9/11. Robert Thurman, the great scholar of Buddhism. Deepak Chopra and Riane Eisler were on a recent show of mine. We also have shamans, I had a shaman from Greenland on a show about shamanism recently, and Bill Harney, a visionary painter from Australia, an Australian aborigine elder, in conversation with Stephen Aizenstat, the president of Pacifica Institute, talking about dreams, the deep reality of dream time.

David Van Nuys: Wonderful.

Phil Cousineau: If listeners are interested they can see our show every Sunday night at 6PM on Link TV or they can also go on the World Wide Web. They can go to the Web and look at Global Spirit TV or LinkTV.org and see the show. We're about to start a whole second season of 16 more shows and the word is that PBS will be picking us up next year.

David Van Nuys: That's wonderful. That's wonderful. Phil, I really want to thank you, Phil Cousineau, thanks for being my guest on Shrink Rap radio

Phil Cousineau: I'm very happy to be in conversation with you. It's the way of the world, peace is possible as long as we're still in conversation.