

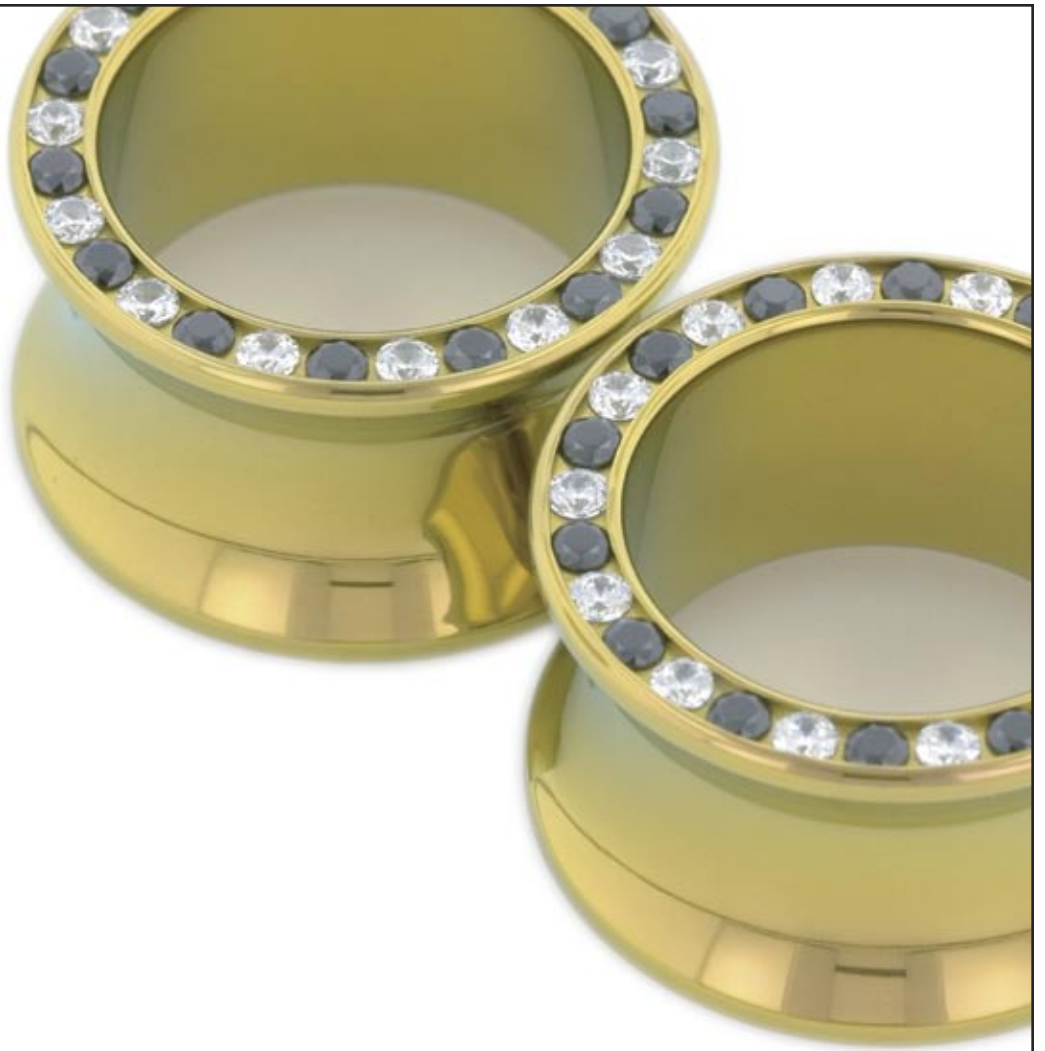
THE POINT

ISSUE 37
FALL 06

The Quarterly Journal of the Association of Professional Piercers

A photograph of two individuals with extensive tattoos and piercings at an outdoor event. On the left, a man with a nose ring and large circular earrings has a large floral tattoo on his chest and a skull tattoo on his abdomen. On the right, a woman with a nose ring and hoop earrings has a large butterfly tattoo on her chest and a colorful skull tattoo on her abdomen. They are both looking towards the camera.

THE
ONE
PROJECT



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FROM THE EDITOR



James Weber
Medical Liaison

Welcome to issue #37 of *The Point: The Journal of the Association of Professional Piercers*. This issue is devoted exclusively to content about the annual ONE Project, which has taken place for the last six years in the mountains near San Diego, California.

While there have been entire issues of *The Point* concentrating on single events in the past (The annual APP conference in Las Vegas, the APP Mexico Conference) there has never been a single issue devoted exclusively to one event, much less an event that was not directly sponsored by the APP. In doing so, one thing should be made clear from the very beginning: The Association of Professional Piercers does not endorse the practices described in this issue, and does not attempt to make statement as an organization on either their safety or legality.

It should also be noted that the procedures described in the following pages were done by body modification artists on peers and others within our industry and community. These are not services routinely offered to the general public inside the participant's studios and/or shops.

Although accompanying piercing and tattooing in the minds of many, the APP does not seek to address the practices of suspension, flesh pulls, ritual cutting and/or scarification as described in this issue or otherwise. The APP concerns itself only with the distribution of practical information about body piercing in the service of public safety and its membership.

That being the case, why are we devoting an entire issue to an event where these practices are the centerpiece? Some of you may argue that The ONE project has nothing to do with body piercing, and you would be at least half right.

As piercers, we are used to walking the line between the clinical and the spiritual, between giving our client the safest and cleanest procedure possible and making sure they have a fulfilling experience as well. While it is easy to quantify a clean piercing (autoclaved needles, aseptic technique with disposable supplies) using proper jewelry (made with implant tested alloys documented by mill certificates) in an appropriate environment (as outlined in the APP environmental criteria guidelines), our success with the second part of the process is not so easy to determine.

Ever since the publication of *Modern Primitives* by Re/Search in 1989, modern body piercing has been inescapably tied to the quest for the neo-tribal. As piercers (and many of us long before becoming one), we have passionately researched the body modification rituals of other cultures to help us in the understanding of our own impulses. As a group, we can never fully understand where we are going unless we begin to understand all those that have gone before us. And as many writers in this issue point out, it is through understanding ourselves as piercers and body modification artists that we will be of the best service to not only ourselves, but to our clients as we attempt to guide them down the same path we have taken so many times before.

There are many different stories and attitudes presented in this issue. My thanks to everyone who was gracious enough to try to put into words what in many ways defies vocabulary. The amount of responses was very generous, and I was saddened to not be able to include all of them in this issue. My thanks to all that submitted writing, and my apologies to the writers of those that were not used. A special thanks goes to Cory Lolley, the organizer of ONE. Without her, none of this would have been possible.

So in the next issue, we will get back to our regular submissions concerning technique, legislation, jewelry standards, and all things concrete. For this issue, we hope to explore something a bit more elusive, less tangible. I, and all those who participated in The ONE Project, thank you for your indulgence. **P**

THE POINT

The Quarterly Journal of the
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THE ONE PROJECT 2006 INVITATION

The One Project

ONE is an organization dedicated to the cultivation, preservation, and integration of community, ceremony, and culture. In an era based upon independence, intolerance, and division, the human heart is awakening to a modern vision of community through a new depth of interpersonal relationship.

We as a collective feel that when people come together with a common intention and an open mind, a support system is created in which anything is possible. Our community is based upon and devoted to cultivating self-awareness. Through the practice of group ceremony, we dynamically engage one another in a renewed growth process, challenge the borders of our egos, and celebrate the one life which connects us all.

In order to transform society, we must first transform ourselves. The ONE project is an opportunity for us to discover ourselves radically supported in an evolving new dimension of community.

OUR FOUNDATION:

The ONE organization is predicated on the contributions and ideas of various life styles, and ways of thinking. It is ceremony, community, culture and a desire to evolve that has brought us together.

The members of the ONE organization come from eclectic and diverse backgrounds. We are a non denominational, not for profit, organization committed to the evolution of ourselves individually as well as the organization as a whole. We are open to each other's philosophy's and life choices and invite the ideas of others.

As a group, we realize that the stronger and more supported we are, both individually and collectively, the more impact we can have within our community and within society. We intend for our group to expand in the diversity of its members, and we are in the momentum of this evolution. This process will be accomplished through integrity, accountability, communication and holding reverence for the space that we have and will create together.

THE CEREMONY:...

The ONE project falls during the full moon of August each year. Our time together will consist of 3 days and nights spent in the mountains of Southern California. The dates of this year's ceremony are August 27th, 28th and 29th. In addition, we will hold a closing ceremony on the morning of the 30th and those who are available are encouraged to assist in the break down of the event.

We intend for everyone to leave the gathering both self-empowered and present to the support of an extraordinary community. The ONE project will enable you to inspire all whom you cross paths with. ONE is an opportunity to be reminded of the extraordinary lives that we live and the possibilities of an extraordinary world.

What allows this gathering to work is participation and group collaboration. There is a small group of us who have been meeting monthly to work on the creation and continuation of this project. In these meetings we remind each other that this should be a daily, not annual practice. We deeply feel that community is now.

To uphold the momentum of the ceremony, we respectfully request that everyone commit to attend the ceremony from start to completion in order to preserve its structure, power and the integrity of community participation.

For some it must be said: if you do not feel that you are able to completely commit yourself, to be on time, remain present and bring an intention of transformation, we would ask that you not attend. This is not a suspension convention, it is a ceremony based on personal and group transformation, holding space and participation.

THIS YEAR'S CEREMONY:

As a group, we will engage in both ancient and modern practices that induce both individual and group transformation. All of these ceremonies require reverence, commitment, discipline and respect on many levels.

Included in this years activities are:...

An opening ceremony

Cleansing ceremonies

Traditional Native American Circles

Intentional discussion groups

Art projects: muraling, Mandala building and the construction of an altar.

Workshops: silent meditation, holding space, interpersonal and group connection, Chi Gone, conscious eating, poojas and diverse speakers and facilitators.

Ceremonies: Sweat Lodges, rebar bending, a cacao ceremony, Kavadi, ball dancing, blood letting, pulls, and suspension and fire walking.

We will also be sharing: vegan meals, hiking, music, dance, yoga, guided meditation, body and energy work.

A closing ceremony

By participating in these practices and ancient rituals, we are both keeping them alive and seeking insight into tools that other cultures use to find connection to both serenity and divinity. When we engage in these rituals as a group, we intend to build upon the incredible strengths, which we already possess so as to create a foundation for success and transformation in each individual life as well as the evolution of our community.

Through these practices, we as a group will educate each other in how to facilitate these types of rituals for others and ourselves in our daily lives. Our intention is to awaken our genetic memories, to remind each other of the extraordinary and fortunate lives we live and to spread this consciousness to all of those who we touch. Everyone in attendance is expected to participate in one form or another. You may take this to any level that you desire, but please bring an intention of transformation.

THIS YEARS INTENTION:

In preparation for this year's ceremony, we ask that everyone be aware of this year's intention. With each ONE project, we metamorphose to new levels. In past years, some of our group intentions were based around: community, personal transformation, stepping up and out of our personal boxes and the transformation of our communities.

The intention chosen for this year's event is: "holding space." What we will create is a safe sacred space and support system for each participant as well as the entire group. Everyone will leave with powerful tools that they may incorporate into their daily lives and practices.

In order to do this, it is critical that each attendee comes with an intention and commitment to his or her own personal transformation as well as the transformation of everyone attending the ceremony. We must learn how to remain in a state of accountability for each other, in addition to ourselves. What this means is remaining present with yourself at all times, with your personal intention and with the groups intention. We encourage each of you to start reflecting upon this: Why are you coming here? What do you hope to gain? What do you hope to leave? Visualize and meditate on the outcome but not the process.

THE ONE PROJECT 2006 INVITATION

THE LAND:

The ONE project is held at Madre Grande Monastery located in the high mountains of Southern California. This land has been used for ceremonies dating back to early Native American times and is profoundly sacred. It is nestled in the belly of a valley of rocks, and at night, it is as if one can see every star in the Universe. And if you listen closely you may hear the hum of the Earth.

This sanctuary is a place where nature is highly valued and respected, where one can find their pace in the greater order and journey back to the world enriched and renewed. This land is kept pure in honor of the ancestors who originally inhabited the land, and those who will for generations to come. All water is untreated and comes from a natural spring. We are blessed to be with this sacred land for the ONE ceremony, and to conduct the ceremony in a way that is consistent with its century old traditions. We must insist that everyone enter the Monastery with the greatest reverence for she is The Great Mother. Please visit there web site for more information at: www.madregrande.org.

WHAT TO BRING:

Camping gear
Light clothing for the day and warm for night (the temperatures are extreme).
Cruelty free snacks
A bottle for well water
(if you choose to bring your own water bring only bottles 1 gallon or larger)
Cup, plate, bowl, knife and fork to cut down on waste.
A towel (showers are provided)
Biodegradable soap
Bug repellent
Sun block
A mat to use for circles and yoga
Trash bags
Music and musical instruments
Love

Also make sure to bring items for the altar. This is an integral part of this year's gathering. These items are to remain on the altar for the entirety of the gathering, and then to be taken home with you recharged with the energy that we will create. If you have friends or loved ones who are not able to join us physically, bring an item for them, or a photo. This is a powerful way to bring a piece of what we create home with you. Any donations that you are able to make such as food, medical supplies, knowledge, extra camping gear or anything else would be greatly appreciated.

WHAT TO LEAVE BEHIND:

Ego
Expectations
Processed foods or meat/animal products
Electronic devices, including cell phones
Please limit photography, as to remain present, and no flash photography
Drugs and alcohol and toxic substances

The ONE organization and the Paracelsian Order respectfully request that no food containing excess packaging, animal products, additives or processed foods be brought to the mountain in order to preserve the land's natural state.

In the past, we have encountered problems with people not respecting this or not being clear about what to bring. Please do not hesitate to contact us with any questions you may have, as to avoid the embarrassment of us asking you to remove these products. Basically, you want to focus on whole foods containing no white sugars or additives.

Vegan meals will be provided throughout the day but snacks to share are always encouraged. Please bring appropriate camping gear, as none will be provided. Please bring your own dining set to cut down on paper and plastic waste. Bring minimal packaging and ensure that you clean up after yourself. We ask that you pack out your own trash. Essentially, we wish to leave the land without a trace that we were there. We anticipate high temperatures in the day and it can get very cold at night so pack accordingly. We have 300 acres of land to hike upon so bring appropriate shoes.

COSTS:

In order for this event to be accessible to everyone, we have worked very hard to keep the costs minimal. However, with all of the rising costs associated with the ONE event, including those fees to be paid to facilitators of special rituals, we are unable to keep the registration as low as it has been in past years.

The registration fee is based on a sliding scale: we ask that you contribute what you are able to pay. In past years the organizers have not broken even. Please pre-register. It is very difficult to plan this event without knowing how many people are going to show up.

Pre-registration: \$200-\$300

Registration after August 1st: \$250-\$300

Nobody will be turned away: if needed, please contact us for scholarship opportunities. The deadline for this is July 1st.

Please check the web site for registration, updated information and scheduling.

You may use Pay Pal through our web site or sent payments to:

Corey Lolley, 3721 29th St., San Diego, California 92104.

Directions:

Madre Grande Monastery

18372 Highway 94

Dulzura, Cal. 91917

Take I-5S to 94E. 94E becomes Campo Road. Veer right at the intersection of Jamacha Road to stay on Campo Rd, which becomes CA94.

Go 11 miles to 18372 Highway 94 on left hand side.

Follow the dirt Road to the top of the mountain and veer right when you reach Madre Grande go behind the main building before the parking lot. You will find a registration booth there.

Local Grocery Stores We Love:

Peoples Organic Food Co-op: 4765 Voltaire St. 92107 (Ocean Beach) 619-224-0115

Whole Foods Market: 711 University Ave. 92103 (Hillcrest) 619-294-2800

Trader Joes: 1092 University Ave. 92103 (also Hillcrest) 619-296-3122

Contact Us:

onefestival@yahoo.com

www.onefestival.org

Corey: 619-318-2882

THE CONCEPT OF THE ONE PROJECT



Corey Lotley
Enigma Professional Piercing
San Diego, CA

I was introduced to modern ritual through piercing in 1999. At that time I had been piercing for 5 years. Through a long, arduous journey I landed myself in a city, which for the first time in my life I called home. I was caught in the arms of those who introduced me to community, piercing as ritual, personal and group ceremony and, most importantly, reverence for the sacred. I found my teachers. I realize now that, although a period of profound experience, all of the time that I spent moving around in my youth was a search for what I had found in San Diego: a tribe.

The shop was called Mastodon, and it was my experience at that studio that brought me to this place in my life. I had heard about Mastodon for years, about the work that they were doing with their clients, the incorporation of yoga, meditation and breath work into their personal and piercing practice. As with many things in my life I knew that this is where I needed to be learning how to pierce, as I truly desired, as a healer. What I quickly learned was that in order to heal one must first be healed.

There is a concept of the wounded healer. I believe that those who are truly compelled by a desire to assist others in the healing process must first endure a path of struggle and through this learn to heal themselves. How can one truly understand something until they have experienced it? It is at this project that we draw the line. We draw the line between piercer and shaman, between wounded and healer, where we are truly faced with what it means to be ourselves and not our label.

For me, piercing and the piercing community awakened this healing process. As a collective, at Mastodon, we began to explore ceremony together, meditating together, practicing yoga, and engaging in intentional gatherings. All of these things culminated in us participating in a community ritual together—a group pull. This was a life changing experience for me. We went into the ceremony very intentionally, performing the rite with reverence for the ritual and for the community.

With all of the research that I had done on body rites practiced by other cultures, nothing came close describing what I experienced that night. A doorway had been graciously opened, which I then stepped through. Many opportunities for the exploration of ritual began to unlock for me, the most poignant being a Native American sweat lodge. I spent the transition of 1999 into the new millennium in a Lakota lodge. In this house I was severally humbled, physically challenged beyond anything that I had experienced with ritual. I found myself capable of understanding prayer for the first time in my life. This experience for me magnified everything that I had been practicing with piercing. It awaked more deeply the connection between the spirit, mind and body and the acknowledgment of the ancestors.

Participating in this ceremony was a catalyst and an inspiration for me. I was instilled with additional knowledge of how other tribes, more ancient tribes than my own, practice and apply ritual. As I continued to investigate this acutely I realized a need to explore these tools within my community and that these practices could be, as they have been in the past, used to strengthen community. This knowledge I acquired became the momentum for ONE, a gathering where we could share knowledge of piercing, ceremony and, most importantly, build community. The seed had been planted and its root became this gathering of the tribes.

In his book *Ritual* (Arkana, 1997), Malidoma Somé writes: “A community is a place of self-definition. Any group of people meeting with the intention of connecting to the power within is a community. People who regroup under a different banner to take care of themselves are attracted to indigenous culture. In these new formations, people seek to explore what has frustrated, betrayed and constituted a deep wound in their hearts. What they are trying to do is restore their inner power, which had been tarnished. Because they are trying to fight the servitude in which corporate power holds them prisoner, they are redefining themselves. They are moving themselves away from the magnetic visibility of externalized power. But to regroup against the machine is to get out of control. However, one must not only be aware of this moving away, one must also be prepared to go all the way. To leave behind society and culture, one has to be prepared to do battle in order to be who you want to be.”

“Without community you cannot be yourself. The community is where we draw the strength needed to effect change inside of us. Community is formed each time more than one person meets for a purpose. Development of community depends on what the people involved consent to do. What one acknowledges in the formation of community is the possibility of doing together what is impossible to do alone. This acknowledgment is also an objection against the isolation of individuals and individualism by a society in service of the machine. What we want is to create community that meets the intrinsic need of every individual. The individual can finally discover within the community something to relate to, because deep down inside each of us is craving for an honoring of our individualism.”

In culture, ritual is often the medium used to bring people together. It strengthens the human bond through trial and tribulation, allows us to be humble with each other and to understand our role within the community. Ritual is also an individual rite of passage. Often this rite must be witnessed and acknowledged by the tribe; in this the tribe holds space for the individual community member. Above anything else ONE is an exploration of the self within community. What we practice at the project is an intentionally calculated unfolding of processes, which leads us to self. What makes this work is profoundly

sharing oneself without ego, while the community holds space for the individual. There is not many times in our society that people truly remain present in what a person is sharing or participating. When we hold space we are creating a place for the person to expand within. This is similar to what we practice in the piercing room, when we stand with our client, coaching them through the process. We are holding space for their experience; sharing our space allows them to become stronger.

The root of ritual is intention. When we engage in ceremony we do it for a reason, with purpose. The first thing we share at ONE is our intention for being there. For some it is the most challenging aspect of the event. It is here that we experience having space held for us, where we speak our truth or prayers to our peers. I have learned that the louder and more clearly that one speaks their purpose, the more quickly they will witness its manifestation. Everyone comes to the ONE project for a reason, whether they realize it or not. If you don't know what your intention is, or are seeking intention, you will receive it walking through these rituals with purpose. ONE, more than anything in my life, has reaffirmed in me the power of intention, manifestation, visualization and commitment.

As with most ceremony, the ONE project is an unfolding process. In order to get to the root of one's intention, often we must release the veil of illusion that we have created. We must incorporate all aspects of self in order to get to this source. We must work with the spirit, the mind and the body. Although most of us are used to reciting "the

mind, body, spirit," I feel there to be a great misconception here. We can relate when we think about piercing and the work that we do with the body. The root of what we are attempting to get closer to in life is the spirit. Most often the things that limit us have nothing to do with our body, and what usually gets in the way of this process is our mind. The ONE project is three days, one held in honor of each of these aspects of self. The exercises that we practice together lead into each other through the next day.

I realized a need to explore these tools within my community and that these practices could be, as they have been in the past, used to strengthen community.



Corey takes her turn pouring sand for the mandala to be used for the cacao ceremony.

The ONE Project has evolved with me. During the first few years of the gathering our main focus was body ritual. We would hold traditional Native American circles each morning and hold ceremony in the evening. The first night doing a fire walk, the second a group energy pull and the third for those who wished engaged in suspension. As the community evolved, so did the project. Although the event was built from the piercing community and still primarily attracts our peer group, there has been a shift in the people who attend. The type of people attracted to ONE are a mirror of its evolution. Among the current attendees are: healers of all kinds, activists, artists, people of all religious backgrounds, people of no religious background, hippies, punks, those who work 9 to 5 desk jobs, lawyers, and health care professionals. Each attendee of the project is by no means definitive. The intention of ONE is to remain expansive in who it attracts. We go there not only to learn, but also to teach. This creates a space where all kinds may share information. Although as piercers we realize the importance of diversity, I find that we often find ourselves rotating within the same social circles. If it is only our peer group who attends then there is no evolution of knowledge—it's preaching to the choir. It is my foremost goal that eventually we have as many attendees who are not in our immediate community as are.

One of the most remarkable aspects of ONE is the space in which it is held. At its inception, you could imagine how challenging it was to

find a space to hold a three-day outdoor ritual with all that it entailed. When I talk of Madre Grande, I can only say that this land found us. What used to be Native American land continues to be used for the Sundance, vision quests, sweat lodges and other ceremonies throughout the year. This land is a physical representation of space being held. The caretakers of the land are very selective with whom they allow its use, and for what. It is there that I have witnessed what some may call paranormal. One of my first nights sleeping there I heard the sound of OM, thinking it was power lines I did not see in the day. When I inquired about it upon awakening, I was informed that there are no power lines—I had simply heard the sound of the Universe. Others have had similar experiences, many people physically purging just stepping foot on its soil.

Ceremony most often involves sacrifice. Sometimes this sacrifice is given in what we find comfortable, sometimes we sacrifice for others—what we always sacrifice is some part of ourselves. When we step out of our comfort zone we are forced to look at ourselves and at our addictions and crutches with an inwards-facing gaze. There is a cleansing that occurs in this space. At the ONE project, all of our meals are prepared with attention to what we put into our bodies and how it will affect the energy of the day's activities. All of the food is vegan, with the option of eating completely raw. Although extremely difficult for some, this detoxification through diet can completely change one's constitution (and clearness of mind). Additionally, ONE is a sober event. For many of us this is also a sacrifice. When we find ourselves engaging socially as a community, it often involves the use of substances. To stand in a place of clarity together is one of the most sincere ways to respect each other and ourselves.

Most of the ceremonies that we engage in are largely based around the body. Stepping through these physical feats allows us to connect with our bodies, which becomes an opening to the spirit and mind. In these ceremonies there is also a realization that we are not our bodies. The strongest of the human senses is the sensation of pain. Some believe pain to be the resistance to change. We often register pain as a sensation that we must stop, when we choose to walk through these sensations we attempt to find the source of stagnation. In this, these rituals of physicality are gateways to our root.

In addition to the physical activities that we participate in we also have invited guests who come and speak. Over the years we have hosted many wonderful people. For the first project we had a Lakota gentleman who stopped by on his drive home from Sundance in South Dakota. His emotional state was still so high you could



During the opening ceremony, attendees take time to place their personal items on the altar and quietly connect to their intention.

One of my main intentions with ONE is to inspire others to realize and act upon their purpose, to feel empowered, self-realized and to step into a role of leadership.



feel power emanating from him. He spoke to us about his personal struggle and how he used the power of the Sundance prayer to come closer to overcoming that. Last year we were blessed to have a Lakota Chief named Hawk join us. His message was remaining present with our ability to choose our destiny. This year we were pleased to host Dr. Barry Green, an author who has written on the topic of holding space. He shared with us knowledge on breaking down human development, how that effects our perception as adults, and how we can weed through these learned behaviors to create an unpolluted way of being.

Each facilitator chosen to speak at the project is selected based on the premise of each year's event. Some of our intentions in the past have been: creating community, self-realization, leadership, transformation, and this year: holding space. Holding a theme for the event is a simple way to intentionalize and focus the group.

What we have been concentrating on over the past few years is moving past physicality. I believe these physical things that we engage in to be tools. Once we are able to understand how these tools work we can then get to the same point without being so aggressive with our bodies. We learn that there are other modalities that allow us to get to the same outcome through a more gentle approach. Some of these that we use to unlock the body are: yoga, meditation, intentional conversation and the simple act of slowing down.

The ONE project is a not-for-profit event. Although there are monies collected, this event is run primarily by volunteers and group participation. As anyone who organizes knows, this is one of the

most difficult aspects—estimating how many people will attend, what amount of supplies to buy, budgeting, etc. Each person attending the event pays a registration fee, which is used to make the event possible. It goes back to the concept of community: everyone contributes to for the greater good of the whole. This money is used to pay for the land, facilitators, medical, and supplies. Without the support of the community this event would not be possible. At the inception of ONE, it was only me attempting to make this possible. As other people began to hear about what I was doing they stepped up to help. The first year there was only 5 of us: Eddie Castro, Spike Darajorn, Bhava Das and the woman who encouraged me to follow my vision: Mary-Lynn Price, activist turned criminal defense lawyer. Since then those contributing has grown exponentially. This year I had a crew of around 20 who would meet at my house for monthly meetings, workshops and gatherings. In this we were able to keep our small group alive and in practice.

One of the most unique things about this event is that the community is responsible for its creation. What we are essentially doing is building a village for our tribe to create ceremony. The event is literally run on the participation of the attendees. In fact, our peer group facilitates most of the ceremonies held at the project. Allowing us to teach each other creates a space of indifference to the separation between teacher and student. It is amazing to watch the process unfold. As people return each year they become increasingly involved, eventually stepping up into a role of leadership. We walk amongst an amazing tribe. Each person who comes has something

to share and it is this village that we create which brings this out of people.

Many people donate hundreds of hours of their time to see this project come to fruition. We also receive contributions from local farmers and co-ops, generous donations from My Med-Source, and each year our needles are donated through Industrial Strength Needles. These people, and businesses, have our enduring gratitude. Thank you.

One of my main intentions with ONE is to inspire others to realize and act upon their purpose, to feel empowered, self-realized and to step into a role of leadership. I believe self-realization to be the key to personal triumph. In this country we are blessed with abundance and opportunity. I feel that many of us do not realize the responsibility we have to do something with this affluence. With the amount of excess we hold, volunteerism and sharing should

What we are essentially doing is building a village for our tribe to create ceremony.

be instinctive. I wish to be a mirror for other's truth. To see the reflection of others creating due to the inspiration given by this project is the highest gratitude I could receive.

Many of us feel that we are living in what can be seen as the most profound time in history. We are witnessing an acceleration of humanity that is increasingly difficult to keep pace with. In this, many of us are searching for where we stand, why we are here, and how we can be most effective in shifting things for the greater good. The ONE project is a catalyst for the understanding of the answers to the question: who am I?

As piercers, we facilitate this process for our clients every time that we work on them. We are the catalyst of change for many people. What people realize while going through this process is that they are more powerful than they once believed, that they are responsible for themselves and their bodies, and that they possess freedom to choose what and who they want to be. In that moment they are acting on what they inherently know themselves to be. The ONE project is an opportunity for us as piercers to give that back to ourselves, to our community, and to the world.

The One Project is not a festival about piercing. In truth, it is not a festival at all, but a ceremony not about, but inspired by piercing and the piercing community. The ONE project is a realization of our path. It is a collection of teachers and students who view each other as equals. The ONE project is a place where we recognize each other and ourselves for what we truly are. The ONE project is a gathering of the tribes. **P**



THE ONE PROJECT: BREAKING IT DOWN



Tomma Mueller
Reign Custom Design
Raven Ink Tattoo and Body Piercing

When we were all sitting around the fire and someone started with the “The first time I was at piercing camp...” joke, I think I might have come close to dying with laughter. Then again, that happens a lot there—the laughing. Trying to explain to people where ONE came from and what ONE is can be very difficult. I generally just tell them it is amazing, and leave it at that. For you, dear reader, I will try a bit harder.

The first year I went I had no idea what I was getting myself into. I was very angry about things going on in my life, and pretty lost spiritually. I arrived early to help Corey, as that was my nature—to show up early and tell everyone what to do. But I was not a piercer, and I initially didn’t feel like I fit in. That feeling was quickly squashed when I learned there would be several non-piercers there. In fact, there were several non-modified, non-industry people there. This was a very refreshing concept in general.

I had been introduced to suspension many times, but always in a performance aspect. I had never had a “ritual.” The word itself led to images of naked hippies and pagans dancing around a bonfire during the full moon chanting to their gods and/or goddess. I never really grasped the concept of making one of my own, to mean my own things. I really wasn’t sure what to think about going up a mountain for four days with no meat, no cheese, and no animal products of any kind. No cell phones, no computers, no MySpace, no BME, no TV. Did I mention yet that we would be camping? In Tents? In Southern California in August? The only thing that was solid in my mind at this point was “What the hell am I doing here? What has Corey dragged me into now?” (Anyone that knows Corey knows that she can drag you into some pretty screwy stuff, all the while telling you it’s okay.)

The first few days of preparation were filled with nothing but non-stop phone calls and running all over town trying to buy things like 20 lb. of unbleached jasmine rice and cases of soy milk and tiki torch fuel and quick links and hooks and tools and unrefined sugar and 100 bundles of sage and ...the list went on forever. People started to slowly trickle in, and that is when the real excitement started. I was beginning to meet all these very interesting people, and we were all excited about the same thing.

When we finally got to the mountain a few days later, I was sure we had lost our minds—but we came out seemingly unscathed on the other side. Madre Grande was beautiful. The land seems to go on forever there. The outside kitchen is always buzzing with energy when we are there. There is the amazing bathhouse with lots of windows and skylights (but a surprising lack of stalls, which really took me off guard at first). There are many sacred spots—the first is the grove. It is a place where the trees naturally

grow in a circle, that people of all walks of life have been using to do their ceremonies for years. Different tribes have been traveling to Madre Grande for centuries to visit the fertility rock, the yoni rock. (It’s absolutely amazing.) If you stand on the platform by the bathhouse closest to the yoni rock, you can see the mountain that forms the shape of a woman lying on her side. The yoni rock and that mountain range is how the land got its name. (Madre Grande, or “Great Mother.”) There is a tree of life where Lakota Sun Dance ceremonies are held yearly, and then there is the space where all of the sweat lodges are.

The main group of facilitators (about 14 of us) went up that first night to do a sweat lodge. I had never done this before, and did

.....

It’s surprising how many people come there ready to defeat something undesirable in them, and then realize they aren’t even looking in the right direction.

.....

not think much of it. It would be kind of like going to the sauna room and the gym but with rocks and no lights, right? Wrong! Have you ever attempted to come to the terms with the fact that one day you are going to die? How about coming to terms with it because you think it is happening to you at that moment? That is what it was like for me the first time. (Although I do not say that in a bad way.) I thought I was “hard”—I get suspended all the time, I wasn’t afraid of anything, right? Wrong! It was a mind-altering experience for me. Now it’s something I now look forward to every year.

I think that this is the most important thing I learn from ONE: Face and conquer your fears, whatever they may be. It’s surprising how many people come there ready to defeat something undesirable in them, and then realize they aren’t even looking in the right direction.

I thought that it might all stay up
on the mountain, but the next few
times I saw everybody I realized
we get to take this with us.

There were 3 days of different group rituals. They can be very hard to explain without actually experiencing...

On the last day each year we do the body rituals. This is the day we bleed. Every year the numbers of people that show up to participate in this event astound me. There are people that have been piercing and doing suspensions for over a decade, holding the most knowledge of anyone on these subjects. The fact that we are outside presents us with several different problems that must be overcome. (It is very hard to organize ritual piercing between 60-



Joshua Davis prepares Bryce for his suspension.

100 of your closest friends in the middle of a dirt field.) Most of the piercers are APP members and follow a very strict regimen for cleanliness. I have been participating in suspension shows for about 8 years now, and every year I go to ONE I learn new techniques for piercing outside of the nice clean rooms all of us are used to—if you have ever been around a group of good piercers, you know that there are at least 50 different ways to do the same thing correctly. There is also a friendly knowledge exchange constantly happening. The only time that I have seen anything like this is at the annual APP Conference. This is simply more hands-on.

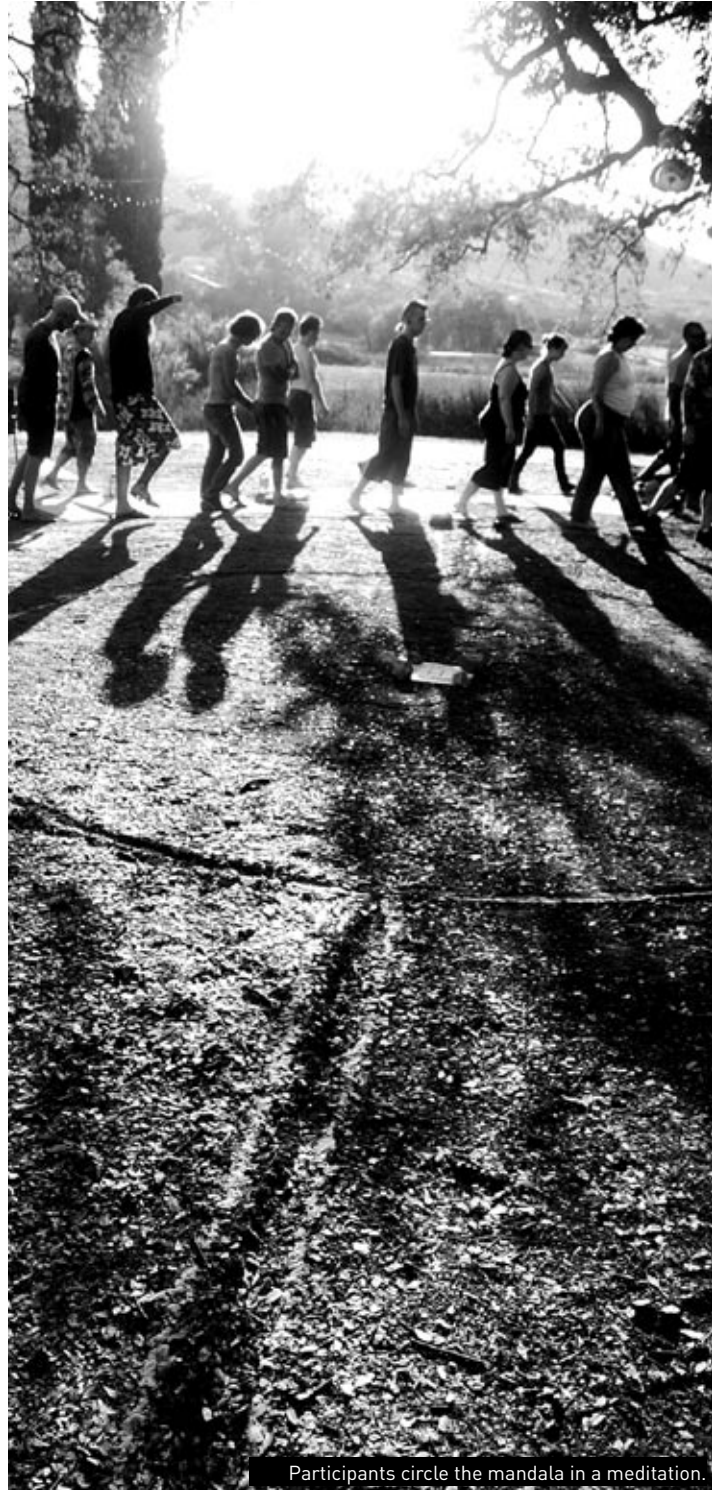
The suspension and pulling ritual generally starts around noon, and continues until all are done. It is a crazy and amazing day. The first year ONE had 50 people doing a chest pull. Everybody was facing each other, and it was very serene. (The pulls that I've witnessed in the past have all been very violent and aggressive, so this was a welcome change.) So many people experiencing things for the first time or just getting to experience things outside of all the daily routine they normally have. When the suspensions started it was a beautiful scene.

I went that first year with the intention of doing away with hatred and anger that I carried around with me all of the time. I was always blaming it on other people. I was always holding on way too strongly. I needed to be tougher than everybody else. I had very little idea how to conquer this huge outside exterior that I had created to protect myself. I had done many difficult suspensions, ones that made people cringe, but I had never conquered the chest, or Oki Pa style suspension. I was so afraid of that pain. I needed to know how to believe in myself. I found that belief there, amongst the community that we had created. There has always been a lack of community in our industry. I think this stems from the never-ending need to compete inside of it. It is nice to get to go some where with everyone that I hold so dear and have them be a community. I thought that it might all stay up on the mountain, but the next few times I saw every body I realized we get to take this with us. That is one of our biggest lessons each year: We learn that we are a community, and a very strong one at that.

When it is over each time, the hardest thing to do is leave. Every day, we want so badly to be connected to everyone, but we attempt to accomplish this through technology. We are so used to not having to actually see or touch each other and that gives us the ability to not show our true selves. ONE forces us to unplug once

When it is over each time,
the hardest thing
to do is leave.

a year. The first few days after, it's so hard to be assimilated back into the grind. The phones, the computers, the TV's—It seems so loud for weeks afterwards (or maybe it is just my body still ringing from everything that has happened). At ONE we are asked to step outside of our comfort zones and actually think about what we are doing and why. Why are we so connected to this group of people? Where and how do we find the connection in these things? These questions aren't really pressed onto us; we must press them onto ourselves. **P**



Participants circle the mandala in a meditation.

ALICIA CARDENAS



Alicia Cardenas
APP President
Twisted Sol
Denver, Colorado

For the last three years I have made a pilgrimage to the mountains beyond San Diego to meet with, and participate in ritual with, my brothers and sisters from California. This event is called The ONE Project. The ONE has been a cornerstone of my personal survival over the last three years; my year starts and ends with this event. It has made me a better person, piercer, leader and friend.

There are few requirements to participate in this event: You have to be willing to face your fears, face your friends, and open yourself up to healing. This is neither a cult nor a religion; it is an opportunity to connect with your spiritual self. The mountain is sacred; the work on it is sacred. Every conversation, interaction and activity is a part of a spiritual awakening and honoring. It is beautiful that not everyone on the mountain is in the same place, so we learn so much together. Different parts scare and excite different people. There are times when you are asked to express yourself to the group, times where no one says anything for hours, and opportunities to cry your eyes out in the safest space on the planet.

This event makes me a better professional in my studio and among my colleagues. It's the best bedside manner and grounding class--just without the classroom. The only way a piercer can offer comfort to a client is if he/she feels confident, comfortable and well grounded within him/herself. Even the most seasoned piercer struggles with this.

Not everyday is a great day, life happens, and you have to be able to find a way to continue to be that example of a strong, stable guide for those who come seeking a journey. This event asks its participants to explore parts of themselves that make them the leaders in that journey.

Throughout the days on the mountain, each part of the person is addressed: the mental, emotional, physical and spiritual. There are exercises that range from yoga to suspension, each event requiring 100% presence, and fearlessness in trying something new. There are all different types of piercers, piercees and enthusiasts in attendance. It would take me a year of guest spots at dozens of different studios in order to pierce alongside of all these different people, and in one day I get the opportunity to work with all of them. (And I get to lie down and get work done by them all if I want.) Watching everyone work was magical—every move was a conscious one with only love and well being behind it. And on the top of a mountain is a world away from the comfort of our tidy studios; it is a challenge (and a delightful change) to work under these less-than-ideal conditions. It forces you to really look at what is truly necessary in our practice.

Every year I grow as a person, piercer, and friend. I love every part of this gift, and I hope it continues to be a part of my life for years to come. Thank you to each person who attends and facilitates this gathering. **P**



Alicia and Didier

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Tiana suspending.





Spike, Tiana and Wesley at the group pull.

TIANA MCGUIRE



Tiana McGuire
Slave to the Needle (counterstaff)
Seattle, WA

How can I tell this story?

It was almost two years ago that I had my first lip sewing experience. (I had my lips sutured together for a period of approximately ten hours.) As I live in Seattle, and my family is in Los Angeles, I took pictures to share my experience with them and others I held dear. It wasn't long before I received a phone call from my sister letting me know that, upon seeing these pictures my father had become distressed and had begun to cry. He saw the images as his daughter hurting herself and in pain. I called him, and in a lengthy conversation explained how the whole process was something very positive for me and that he should be celebrating my accomplishment and not hurt by my actions. Progress was made, but I could tell that my father didn't quite "get it."

After my father's reaction to my lip sewing—being so hurt and negative—I felt that I couldn't go through a greater ordeal without first really trying to facilitate a fuller understanding to my family so they would be able to comprehend and celebrate my experiences.

There are experiences and reasons that cannot be explained with pictures or with words traded over the phone. I believe that a person must experience some practices with all their senses to fully grasp their magnitude and greatness.

I first heard about the ONE Project at the APP Conference this last May, at a round table discussion on modern ritual. I was taken by the concept of industry professionals taking time to perform and participate in these rituals as a focused and intentional community. And as the event took place in southern California, I began to consider participating, and also asking my father to accompany me. I thought

it could be just the opportunity we needed to facilitate a new level of understanding of each other.

In July, I invited Chuck to accompany me to The ONE Project and he agreed. I flew from Seattle to LA so that he and I would have the drive down to San Diego and back to discuss the events. My Father wanted to know what to expect at the festival, and I had no definitive answers for him. We both were going into a new and unknown space.

Jumping ahead (or back).

In order for me to talk about my experience at ONE, I should share some of my past to give it context. I was born and raised Mormon. When I was twelve my father split from the church and divorced my mother. From then until I was seventeen, I was raised in both households, with two polar approaches to thinking, living, spirituality, and so on. My father began embracing a more nature-based spirituality. He made dream catchers, and taught us about them. He put together his own medicine bag and carved a bear totem out of stone he had chanced upon in his journeys. Talking to him and observing him create his own sacred objects, and designing his own spirituality was a lesson that I took with me as I grew.

Through my own path I have learned that personal rituals and rites are very powerful and productive for me. There are some that I do annually and many others are created as I feel they are needed. I have learned that ordeal rituals are the most powerful for myself. This led me to having my lips sewn, as well as seeking out the needed environment to have my first suspension experience. It also led me to The ONE Project.

Back to the story.

Two days before leaving for ONE, I received a phone call from my sister: She wanted to check in with me about taking Chuck. “Don’t do too much,” she cautioned me. “Keep your feet on the ground. Don’t break dad.” This conversation led me to realize that I had no doubts, until then, about Chuck’s ability to process the events of ONE. I had intended a deep resolution without considering the fact that Chuck may sink instead of swim. I resolved to be conscientious and keep checking-in with my dad about his processing status.

As we drew closer to Madre Grande, anticipation and social anxiety started to set in. I kept thinking about a weekend music festival I once attended where my partner and I were the only people there who were not performers or organizers of the event. We ended up camping away from the rest of the people and having a very isolating experience. I began fearing a similar situation, where we would default into the role of observers instead of active participants. I was especially anxious since the group was to be comprised of piercers and industry people. I only work counter at a shop (with prospects of an apprenticeship in piercing) and my father has only one piercing (and no tattoos at all).

We finally arrived at the monastery and parked the car. I squelched my anxieties and my father and I walked over to a group of tents being set up. There were drums playing as we filled out the release of liability forms and got a first clue about things to come: fire walking, sweat lodges, suspension, rebar bending... REBAR BENDING?!?! I had images of pro wrestler types twisting metal and ripping phone books swarm through my mind. I had no idea what any of this was going to look like.

With that finished, we were enthusiastically greeted by other attendees. We quickly found that the community was already abuzz about the “father/daughter” couple that would be participating. I expected this attention least of all. We were admonished to camp near to others to keep the community energy going. We camped under a tree near where some people had hung a Jolly Roger. We felt that we would fit right in at a pirate camp.

At ONE, my father was immediately embraced and revered by the community. It was remarkable to see the appreciation of an elder, something that isn’t seen often in the mass culture. Being the amazingly social animal he is, Chuck began connecting with every person he spoke with. The community embraced him, and he embraced them back. He was committed to experiencing and learning about the rituals there, and would make participating decisions on an individual event basis.



Tiana McGuire...

After setting up camp the whole group met at the grove, where we were smudged as we entered the sacred space. Each person added to a community altar and a circle was called. For this, everyone was seated with my father and I to Corey’s right. She asked that we go around the circle, introduce ourselves, and state our intention for the festival. There is power in acclamations, and I was terrified of allowing these people I didn’t know the intimate knowledge of what I wanted to work on at ONE. Corey started, and then the circle continued to her left—this meant we would be last. More time for my anxiety and dread to build. In whispers Chuck and I decided that I should state my intent first, and he would follow since he would not have been there if not for me. I don’t remember exactly what I said, but I believe it boiled down to this: My intention was twofold. I wanted

to embrace a community in my spirituality and not be locked into the singularly independent and mundane mode of thought that I found myself to be in. Secondly, I wanted my father to be happy about my accomplishments and to support/embrace my way of knowing as being an integral part of who I am. It was a very intense moment for me, putting everything on the table. Trying to find words that would make clear the feelings I had burning deep inside. I was genuine and non-withholding and I was proud that I did it. This was the most difficult part of the whole ONE experience for me.

People started coming up to me after the initial gathering at the grove. They thanked me for being there and for bringing my father, for sharing my intent, and said that my father was amazing for just showing up, if nothing else. I was amazed at the impact that something I felt was so personal and specific to myself was having on the community. Learning to look beyond the individual process to the effect on others was what I

a tabula rasa, a clean slate. I had cleared away space for the changes that would come in the next days. When I exited the lodge I found my father waiting for me. He gave me a big (and exceptionally sweaty, on my part) hug and congratulated me on making it through the ceremony. He explained that he had to exit the lodge after the second door.

The experiences I had on the second day acted to pull in the sense of community that was initiated on the first day. I felt more comfortable approaching and talking to other people, as they did talking to me, social anxiety be damned. We shared meals and conversations with the community. I discussed with Ed, one of the attendees, that I was interested in suspending. I then discovered that he was one of the people moderating that portion of the festival, and he said it could happen. My heart leapt with delight. I hadn't assumed that my suspension would happen, so to have given that OK made it real for me.



...and her father, Chuck, at the group pull.

We quickly found that the community was already abuzz about the “father/daughter” couple that would be participating.

came to ONE for, and it was happening! I am not just a lone automaton, cogging out an existence, spinning in the machine works of society without moving anything. I was able to see clearly how the movements I make in my decisions, actions, words all move not only within my circle of family but also to those at ONE, and (in writing this) to the piercing community at large. It is quite a bit to take in.

The sweat lodge was our first ritual. As it is the practice to segregate by sex, I parted ways with my father as we lined up to go in. Inside the lodge it was thick with darkness, heat, bodies, energy, voices, and steam. I felt as though the physical barriers between individuals were stripped away in that place and we were working together as parts of a great whole. As the sweat drenched my skin I felt purified of the mundane, of life back in Seattle. Inside the lodge I was recreated as

After the morning meditation on the third day, my father approached me and let me know that he “got it,” and that he would be honored to watch me suspend. He continued to say that he would be even more honored if I would let him work the rope and pull me up. I was floored! I knew he would get it, and in seeing him achieve that understanding I was rejoicing. But in true Chuck form (and being the exceptional human being he is) he surpassed even my expectations. I soon discovered he had more to show as well.

Tomma announced that there was going to be an energy pull before the suspensions began. They requested that all would participate as well as having hooks thrown in the chest--to physically connect the tribe from the heart. I decided that I would pull from my elbows and I invited my father to join. Being pierced was not something my

father had intended earlier in that day. He said he would process it for a bit, and then returned about fifteen minutes later informing me that he had asked Ed if he would pierce him/us for the pull.

Watching the calm come over my father as Ed prepped him for the piercing was beautiful to see. And with several deep breaths my father had two hooks seated in the middle of his chest. Then it was my turn and Ed placed a hook in each of my elbows.

As we walked over to be roped into the hub we decided that it would be nice if we were across the way from each other so that we could have direct line of site to support, and witness the experience together. I have never been a part of such a large and dynamic pull before. The music played as everyone added his or her weight against the hooks. In the center of the pull Alicia asked to permission to do a ritual cutting on Phillip. They were welcomed into the space and as they drew upon the sacred energy of the pull, so too their energy was added.

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Not only had Chuck “gotten it” he was in it and experiencing everything first hand. I observed him reach a point of such intensity that he cried out as the experience filled him. I am touched that he could add his energy so directly into that of the one tribe. He loved everyone there, and loved being in the pull directly linked to each other. It became more than an experience of Chuck and Tiana, or Tiana and Chuck, father to daughter and daughter to father and daughters and sons. He took on the archetypal parental form and embraced the tribe as his children, teachers, peers and compatriots.

For me my suspension was about liminal space. I chose to go up in a ten-point Coma-style suspension, parallel between earth and sky. I was held by a tree, which reaches itself both deep into the ground and far into the heavens. As the sun began its decent behind the

hills of Madre Grande my body began its accent. There was a group of drummers in the center of the grove and their beat serenaded my experience. Ed again honored me by performing the piercing for my suspension and he, along with Robert Michael rigged me--and my father held the rope.

The trust and love and excitement I felt as my father began raising me up by hooks is beyond my ability to explain. Slowly slowly until I let him know I was ready, he hoisted me fully clear off the ground. With a whoop, my comrades celebrated my arrival into full suspension. The drums played on, and I felt as though I was not only being held up by the hooks in my flesh, but by all of the positive intention of the people around me. Time stood still.

I was being rocked, swung gently side to side—and then I realized my dad was playing with me, like when I was younger and he was pushing me on the swing set. Higher and higher he would go, then I would ask for an underdog, where he would hold onto the back of the swing and run with it until it lifted over his head as he ran underneath. Giggling, I would swing down, going higher and faster than possible with just his pushing alone. Chuck actually asked if I wanted an underdog. I laughed; he was in the same place thinking the same thoughts as I was. How absolutely magical. As I was in a much more relaxed than playful place, I declined the underdog. But the offer meant so much to me and was appreciated. Held there in the air I felt the most relaxed, loved and honored in my own body as I have ever as I watched the sun set behind the hills. I felt as though I could have hung there for days.

But as my stomach began to distract me with protest of not eating nearly enough, and I decided it was best to choose when to come down than to push myself till my body could no longer stay up. My father had traveled with me on a long ordeal that day and I decided that choosing my ending was the ending that I desired. And so I told him it was time to come down and slowly slowly slowly my father lowered me into the arms of my mother earth and it felt as if the ground opened up and around me and caressed my entire form as I returned again to the earth.

I was so full of sensation from the event that when my dad came over to touch me I wasn't ready for another person to be in my space yet. I let him know that I needed a little time and he understood and respected my request. I went over to the aftercare table with Ed and he pulled out my hooks and worked out any air bubbles then bandaged me up. I pulled on more clothes, then went and had the most satisfying slice of watermelon ever.

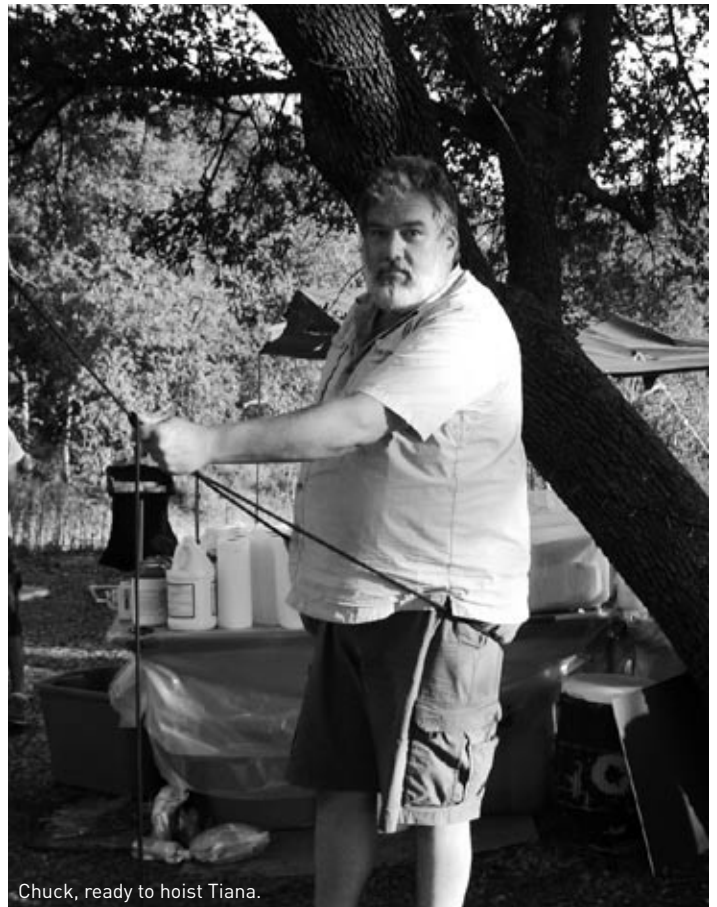
I imagine I gave my dad a big hug and gave Ed a big hug, but at this point I can't recall. I felt uniquely human, invigorated, alive, loved, respected, understood, celebrated, and exhausted.

My father and I had entered the ordeal on two different planes, but with a common intention. Through the work, experiences and belief in each other and infinite potential, we came to walk the path of the final ordeal together, in stride and in the same space. A month later I am still decompressing from the experience. I am still in close contact with Ed as well as my father. The experience drew all of us closer together in support of what we did, and that has changed and will change where we are.

I love you Chuck. You're an amazing father and individual. Your ability to stay flexible, and your continual commitment to learn and grow and love and comprehend has touched more than just myself. **P**



Ed with Tiana before being lifted



Chuck, ready to hoist Tiana.



After an hour, Tiana is helped back to her feet.



CHUCK MCGUIRE



Chuck McGuire

Now for the rest of the story (or just my perspective).

I'm not tattooed, and I have only one itty-bitty hole in my left ear lobe. I felt more than a little awkward as we initially approached the group around the registration table. I had never seen so much inked skin, to say nothing of the rest of the ornamentation. No two people were even remotely alike. "Hello, you must be Chuck and Tiana," greeted us as we approached. I couldn't help but smile; this was going to be a real experience.

Tiana was raised in a very closed social structure. It was very conservative, to say the least. It had taken me the better part of 35 years to gain the strength to leave the church by asking to be excommunicated. I think Tiana and her 3 sisters figured it out by the time they started first grade.

I learned very early not to ask the wrong (or even any) questions—the guy at the head of the church talked to God and that was it. Just believe it, do it, and be happily saved! I long ago made myself a promise: I promised to treat my family like Mrs. Todd next door did her son. Donny was a downs syndrome child just older than me. The other boys called him "retard." He couldn't talk well and just wanted to play with the toy trucks in the sand pile. But when his mom came to get him he always smiled excitedly. She touched him with very soft hands and always smiled right back. I wanted that feeling too. It did not happen too much in my house. Somehow Mrs. Todd understood and loved Donnie even though he was very different.

Tiana is on the other end of the spectrum: She's very smart, an explorer, curious to the max. She found the "earthquake" in the wall socket probing with car keys when she was three. I thought

she was fried, but she shook herself, looked up, and said “There’s an earthquake in there, Dad!” “It can hurt you pretty bad too, are you okay?” Is what I can remember saying. Why freak out and scare her more if she’s not hurt? At least sometimes I think I’m doing the right thing... Her mom was another story--she wiggled right out. Then I had to calm them both down. I remember how scared I was. I never liked it when adults get really harsh with a young child.

I noticed right away that the girls liked to talk and would listen very intently. No such thing as baby talk for me. I don’t get it: How can a person learn anything if everything is “dumbed down” because you are too little to understand? When I was young, I felt like they were telling me I was stupid; I just wanted to know. Other adults looked at me like I was some kind of nut when I’d explain what a flower is to an infant as she tried to taste it. They might not get what a stamen is or what nectar is the first time but they will surely get the context, no problem! And any child I’ve ever interacted with loved the no-bullshit adult interaction as well. We were never stupid, just inexperienced. Donnie wasn’t stupid either--he knew how to love others like no one else on the planet! If you took the time to show him how to do something, he would smile and his eyes would light right up.

So here I am at The ONE Project; I’m the oddball. But, I was the only one who noticed. Just “Oh, you’re Tiana’s Dad...” from a couple

of people. So much for my anxiety. I like being around friendly people: Just say “Hi” and smile my way and I’m fine.

Artistic flair has never been in short supply around my family. I like taking pictures, but Tiana and her sisters take photography to another level. So when Erica was showing me some of the latest photos Tiana had posted on the Internet, my reaction was unexpected. I saw the stitches and thought “Oh God. What has she done now? This beats blue hair, pierced labret, septum and the tattoo all at once.” Then my mind processed the whole frame and small trickles of blood from several punctures were all I saw. I couldn’t stop the tear that dropped from my face onto Erica’s hand on the keyboard. My response surprised her. All I could think was that my Tiana was hurt. The feeling flooded through me filtered by only my experience. I had no frame of reference for these new images. It wasn’t shock, just “Oh my child...” Once you are Daddy’s little girl there is little part I never want to lose. It’s a wonderful feeling to go back to, but it’s not where I should have been at that moment. I was relating to an adult woman exploring sensations and experiences that are very adult. I got caught relating at the level of the 4th grade Daddy/daughter square dance. Ouch! My pain, not hers! Tiana knew right off that I needed to update my frame of reference before I saw pictures of the suspension that had been under discussion for quite some time. There would have been no way to process that in context without some major education on my part.



Nick prepares Chuck to be hooked in to the rest of the circle.

Realize that my knowledge of suspensions comes from the seventies movie “A Man Called Horse” and “Taboo” on the discovery channel. Both intended to shock the living shit out of adult male middle class electrical engineers like me! (It worked, too.) Even though what Tiana was talking about had nothing to do with anything I knew about. I had no positive frame of reference--I do now. I'm glad Tiana trusted me enough to extend to me the invitation to a very special part of her life. That's brave. I'm a chicken. I was going WAY out of my comfort zone. I had to trust Tiana, and that she knows me well enough to expect a positive outcome. It was my turn to grow. Aw shit, I hate this personal growth stuff! It can dredge up some awful feelings. The cliff must be climbed in order to experience the euphoria of the view from the top.

At the opening circle I witnessed the most awesome display of reverence and respect I have ever seen in my entire life. In no church service or temple ceremony, no funeral nor blessing of a baby could compare. Each in turn placed some important symbol or artifact on the stage/alter at one end of the grove. Some prayed, some bowed, some just set their package on the bench and returned to the circle. No one spoke. Each displayed true reverence and respect for the other's process. Everyone was free to participate or not, to pray or not, to bow or not and be completely accepted. Unique individuality was honored with mutual understanding. “To thy own self be true.” was never more evident. I came to understand that I could only understand and respect others if I had first done the same for myself. I don't have to be perfect. Just be me.

The statement of intent served as the best introduction imaginable. Some wanted to be with people, while some wanted to be left alone. In the sweat lodge we experienced a Native American tradition--I'm quite sure no two experiences were the same. It was packed, seventy people crammed into a space meant for less than twenty. Waves of heat radiated outward every couple of minutes. Sage lavender and other aromatic plants were burned on the glowing rocks in the central pit. Time blurred. A few quietly made their way out as they felt necessary. I neither felt nor heard anything judgmental from anyone about leaving in nor after the ceremony was complete. I knew my time was up at the second door (when the door was opened to bring

After feeling the connection with the circle in the chest pull I didn't want to miss the opportunity to feel that with Tiana.

in more glowing lava rocks). I had pushed my self as far as I thought safe for me. As I sat on the ground just outside the door someone poured cool water over my head and gave me some to drink. I felt honored and cared for—I learned something about self acceptance and respect.

Many things happened in the next two days. I did yoga for the first time. We listened to interesting people share perspectives. We sat and talked in the morning sun, listened to each other's stories. Rebecca showed me how to make the three-dimensional dream catcher that I hadn't figured out how to weave. I will always keep a small bag of flower petals in my briefcase that were given to me by the couple under the pirate flag. I got out my dream catcher bag and made gifts for some who I had come to respect. I listened to Ed and others who came to suspend. I did not know about the chest pull until it was happening. I watched as several prepared and joined the circle. I watched their faces. I listened to what was being said. Machismo was completely absent—it wasn't about that. It was about the internal connection, the connection with the others in the circle. Walking around the ten to fifteen already in the circle, Tiana came over and told me she was going to get ready to join. It was then I decided to join too. I knew that no one would think badly of me if I chose to leave at an early time. This was about transcending fear and uncertainty and feeling the movement of the circle. It was about pushing ones self past a preconceived set of boundaries. It was about being accepting and acceptance.

So I went with my daughter and hooks were inserted into my chest, cords attached, and I stood across from her and felt part of the whole. I felt like a tree holding stable and strong as the ring danced in the middle supported by all and at the same time supporting all. Exiting whenever someone wanted—some sat, two were quite faint and lay down. Nothing required, pull or not, it's OK. A half a step forward and you could sit. I will never be quite the same.

As the last two of the circle ended their dance the first suspending started. The first two were suspending from their knees and swung gently. The facial expressions were calm, serene, focused. Earlier in the day Ed had said something about experiencing the sense of connecting with the suspended person while lifting and holding with the rope. After feeling the connection with the circle in the chest pull I didn't want to miss the opportunity to feel that with Tiana. The time came--all the rigging was in place and Ed asked me to take up some slack. Some adjustments were made. Tiana then asked for me to raise her slowly. I backed up and felt the increasing weight in the rope. After a couple of seconds I heard the request to go up a little more. From there I watched her face. I had seen that expression before. She was again exploring, something within this time. A few more seconds brought a deep breath and the look of exhilaration, a little tentative. Then the little smile, a smirk, a yep I've done it and the view from the top is most spectacular. As I pulled the offset in the block and tackle and caused her to swing the rhythm was alive--pure energy of connection of complete trust. I tingle every time I think of the experience. Tiana seemed to be oblivious to the passage of time. Thoughts and feelings were racing through my mind. Quietly--didn't think nor want to explain to anyone--I started the little chant, “Dun...ta dun, dun...ta dun...underdog...” I could see she heard--the smile was distinct.

And priceless. **P**

JESIKA BORNSEN



Jesika Bornsen
Saint Sabrina's Parlor in Purgatory
Minneapolis, MN

The biggest part of ONE I brought back with me is a renewed appreciation for the feeling of accomplishment. As piercers, we often find ourselves rolling our eyes as our clients jump off the table and squeal "I DID IT! I got my nose pierced!" The One Project re-opened my eyes to the power and importance of this feeling.

I am very claustrophobic—to the point where parking ramps and revolving doors throw me into a panic. The sweat lodge at ONE consisted of 80 people crammed into a small wicker hut draped with canvas—and one small door. The lodge was a little larger than the area rug in my living room, but not by much. I got some tips from others who had done this before (it was my first sweat), and I brought my buddy, a shawl to cover my head, and the deeply rooted, life-long fear in my chest. We sat by the door, in case I needed to leave quickly. The sweat was over an hour with the door/flaps being opened every 15-20 min to let more red-hot rocks be brought in. At these times it was permitted to leave the lodge, but it was not encouraged. After all the participants were in the lodge, and the first series of rocks shoveled in from the bonfire, the door closed and I was utterly, horribly, terrified. "I can't do this I can't do this," kept going

I am not just making a hole
and putting jewelry in it.
I am walking someone
from a place of fear
to a place of calm.

through my head. My friend held me back from pawing at the door to escape, saying "Relax. Breathe. Have faith."

I then realized that, back in my piercing room, I greatly underestimate the power of fear. In this, I also underestimate the importance of my roll as a body piercer. I am not just making a hole and putting jewelry in it. I am walking someone from a place of fear to a place of calm. As piercers, we often roll our eyes at "Is it going to hurt? I'm really scared." But in all honesty, a monkey can connect the dots with a needle, but true professional sees the whole picture. Each client may have spent months, even years, working up the courage to walk in our door. As piercers, we must constantly remind ourselves that we are privileged



Jesika pulls from an old oak tree.

to fill this role for people. When we say “Relax, breathe,” we have broken down barriers and have, usually within 10 minutes, asked for that person’s complete trust. It is important that we acknowledge this moment with our client, and give them that celebration space and that growth space with a gentle hand and a patient demeanor.

I tried to bail from the sweat lodge twice more. Both times strong, patient, loving hands steadied me. I was the first one out after the sweat was done—I was dripping with steam, my bathing suit was covered in mud, and I stood up under the full moon by the bonfire and breathed in the cold desert air. I felt as if I had conquered the world. Imagine the power we have, as piercers, to help each client to possess that moment, that breath.

And I continued to be confronted by my fears. The first night there,

as we were getting acquainted with the land we were told “We have Port-A-Johns if you need them, or you can pee in the bushes...” Of course I avoid Port-A-Johns when I can, so I trekked down a path to find some privacy. My friend met me on the trail and enthusiastically said, “Hey, there’s a tarantula over there!” OK. Port-A-Johns it is! Lest I pee on a spider the size of my open hand...

In my career as a piercer, I have always walked a comfortable line between clinical and ritual. My health and safety training was provided by the best in this industry, and I’ve had the privilege to work with many powerful, spiritual piercers. So how did I find myself throwing hooks for 12 hours in the desert? The collective talent, preparation, pre-thought and detailed training of the piercers participating in ONE made it possible.

In principle, I have always disliked piercers who work on clients at



Leo supports Jesika while Steve readies her for her pull.

outdoor concerts or festivals. But I felt what put us at ONE apart from them (besides the fact that we were piercers working on peers) was the preparation of those hosting and the knowledge of those facilitating. It was quickly apparent that piercing people in this environment (using a needle to put temporary hooks in the body to suspend or pull from) was close to a full time career for some of the people there.

There was fine attention to detail: pre-made PVC biohazard trash and sharps containers available at each station, cases of gloves in every size in both nitrile and non-powdered latex, and an abundance of disinfecting wipes and hand wipes. The stations were manned with two piercers each, switching on and off in shifts. One would set up the clean tray; the other would clear the tray once it was contaminated. Each station had a massage table, mayo stand and access to all clean supplies and biohazard stations. The massage tables, mayo stands and trays were each disinfected after each use, and gloves were changed and hands cleaned before setting up for the next person. There were separate stations for people getting hooks put in, and those getting hooks removed. There was open communication among the stations and every person getting pierced had two spotters (not the piercers) with First Aid training to stay with them through the process.

There were no show offs, and no one had anything to prove. No one was in a hurry, and no one panicked. It was truly amazing to watch it all come together.

We had food and water and tea brought to us. The absence of all drugs, alcohol, cigarettes and food toxins brought a professional calm to our work. Having the chance to work with that many piercers from all across the country in such an intimate setting was a high point in my career. Suspension has never been my primary interest (although I did participate in the 30 way hook pull, and I spent some time alone with my hooks hanging on a tree) so this was not the highlight for me. The best part was the bond I found with the participants, especially the piercers I worked with. We say we are a piercing community, and I don't think I fully appreciated how strong this community is until I attended ONE.

I felt as if I had conquered
the world. Imagine the
power we have, as piercers,
to help each client to possess
that moment, that breath.

ONE brings piercers together with a common goal: To raise the awareness of community and to celebrate the power we hold as individuals in our space. This common link we have as piercers sets us apart from any other industry. The ONE project is a celebration, and a reminder of this strength. **P**

LEO ZIEBOL



Leo Ziebol
5 Point Studios
Johnston, IA

The One Project was not something I attended because I understood it. I went because I was drawn to it and the energy of the people responsible for it.

As piercers, we are giving of ourselves everyday. If we are not grounded and solid in our own foundation, how can we expect to have anything positive left for our clients?

For me, The ONE Project was a chance to grow immensely in my own spirit alongside my peers and family.

FERNANDO



Fernando
Enigma
San Diego, CA

English translation by Jesus A Dominguez-Ortiz

Alli Los hijos lloraron sus penas
sudaron sus calpas

Probaron el sabor de sus mieles
bajo el cacao,
escucharon sus ecos
su herencia

Y volaron hacia sus encuentros
hacia su liertad

Alli La Madre los escucho, los cobijo
su Madre Grande.

And there the children wept away their sorrows
sweated out their faults

Tasted the flavor of their nectar
down came the cocoa
they heard their echoes
their inheritance

And flew toward their discoveries
toward their freedom

And there, their mother heard them, and comforted
them their great mother.

STEVE B



Steve B
Cape Fear
Greenville, NC

I didn't know anything about the ONE project before I attended. I hadn't seen any pictures, heard any stories, or much about the event at all. All I had to go from was a brief conversation with Corey Lolley at the APP Conference in May. I only knew it was focused on spirituality and ritual. The best frame of reference I had was right before leaving for ONE, when a friend asked, "That's the thing where everyone gets naked in the woods and bleeds on each other, right?"

I'm very glad I went. I could talk about the ins and outs of the festival forever; about how warmly everyone was received and how comfortable it felt to be with the people there, about the land itself and how at home I felt, or about the energy that brought me and many others to tears on several occasions during our time there. But the experience up on that mountain was indescribable. Words cannot do it justice—there is no way to tell such a story to someone in words or pictures alone.

What made the ONE special was not solely the event itself, but the environment. To be surrounded by so much positive energy from so many different sources was really what made it a wonderful experience. There's not much space today for us to feel safe, in our physical, emotional, and mental states. Times call for expectations to be met, and things to get done. We live in a world where it's

not easy to feel safe being our own person; we're not surrounded by encouragement towards our intrinsic selves. There seem to be institutions and ideologies on every corner telling us that people should be one way or another, be it a positive towards our life or negative. That's what was important to me about the ONE: it was a place that felt safe. The land there encouraged our existence. The people made it a place where you could feel at home with each other. As I sweated with everyone there, as I stared into their eyes, or shared myself with them, I felt like things made sense. There weren't the layers and layers of obfuscation that haunt our daily interactions. Everyone was truly there, truly present.

Most importantly, what has ONE done for me? The festival would have been an empty gesture if I left without being changed—it would have been simply a memorable vacation. The kind of feelings I had on the mountain were ones I want to have and share everyday, always. Things there seemed much more real, and that's how I want my life. I'm very lucky to be a piercer. Throughout the years people have asked (and I've many times asked myself) why I pierce, or what got me into piercing. The answer changes day to day, but one aspect of it has stayed true since the day I started. I feel like I'm carrying on a history that is very important. For thousands of years people have



Cyril with Steve B, as he prepares to bend rebar.

.....

“That’s the thing where everyone gets naked in the woods and bleeds on each other, right?”

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experienced spirituality through the manipulations of their physical bodies, but as time progresses the cultures that embrace these practices are being wiped out and replaced by the dominant ideology that encourages us to shun our bodies and regards manipulation of them as savage and demented. Piercing and body modification carries on the tradition of these rituals, rituals that are timeless and incredibly spiritual. Body piercing (and the practices around it) is a blow to a culture attempting to marginalize spirituality. A culture attempting to turn spirituality into a thing that you do when you can fit it into your schedule, or a room you go to once every week. Spirituality is more than that. It's a responsibility to a state of being, and I feel piercing is important in that. To carry on rites of passage, to connect people to their bodies, to empower people with the ability to alter their physical selves; piercing does all these things, and I feel I forget that a lot. ONE helped me to remember.

All these rituals, all these energies, all these connections are things that I feel should be apparent at all times. My role as a piercer should not be to simply place jewelry in a person's body. The ONE project reminded me that there is more to life than just the motions, the day to day. It reminded me that if one attempts to stay present, to stay connected, than every single second is unimaginably powerful. Through piercing, people can approach me with a goal, a vision, a fantasy, or a desire and I can help them achieve that. This is an enormous tradition to carry on, and in doing so I feel incredibly honored.

There was so much to be gained from the gathering. The people, the relationships, the memories--all these things hold places very dear in my heart. If I had to single out one aspect that I deem the most important, it was the reminder that every second of existence is bliss if the time is taken to experience it. Our bodies and minds are definitely connected, and through the rituals we carry on today as piercers and piercees we can remind ourselves and each other of that. Even on my worst days, with my worst clients, I'm sharing an amazing experience that I'm honored to be having with them, despite how hard it can be to see it. The interactions we share are amazing, and my time at ONE helps me in trying to keep that in the front of my mind.

ONE was the wake up call I needed, and something I think anyone would benefit from. I'm confident in saying no one left there apathetic to the event. The energy and experience shared there was incredible. I strongly encourage anyone to attend—it is an incredibly comfortable environment where I think we can all grow and learn as people and, most importantly, together come closer to the realization of being one. One with each other, one with the world around us, one with the years upon years behind and in front of us, and most importantly, one with ourselves. **P**

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PROUD MEMBERS



EST. 1995

MIKE MARTIN

Mike Martin

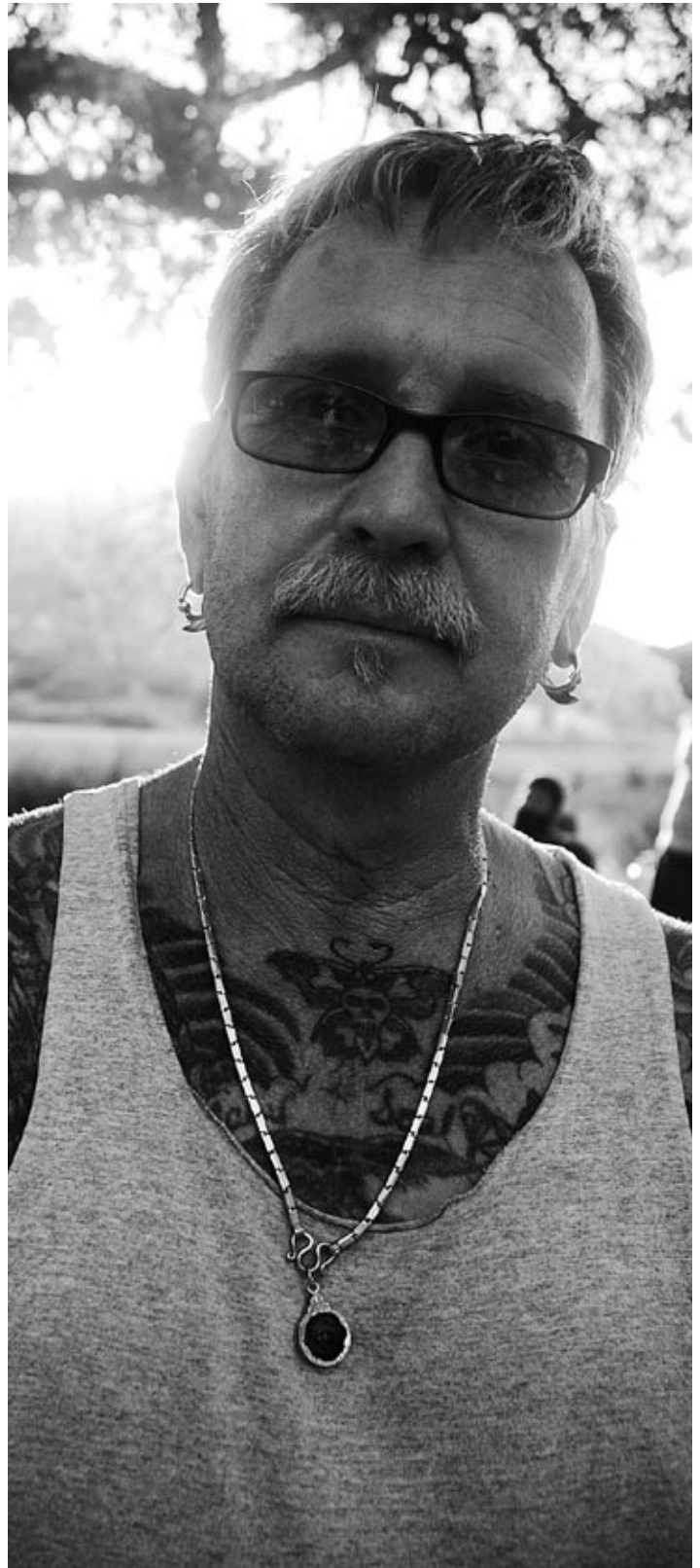
Flesh Skin Grafix Tattoo and Body Piercing
Imperial Beach, CA

I have been around for a while and have been involved with extreme input during my life. As a Navy SEAL, I was a point man for two tours in Vietnam and had the privilege of being one of the few to go through training twice. I got out for thirteen years after my duty in Vietnam. I joined a motorcycle club, started collecting tattoos and had quite a collection when I checked into BUD/S (Navy Seal training). I got my first tattoo when I was 24 years old--that was 1974. Then I got my ear pierced. I came back into a new era in the Teams in 1986, and our deployments took us to the Philippine Islands, Thailand, Malaysia and Korea. It was during one of these deployments that my spiritual side awoke. It was on a little island in a reservoir in Northern Thailand, I stayed the week there with a Buddhist monk, just the two of us. We prayed often and burnt a million sticks of incense. Meditation was a little confusing for me at first, but I did OK. Together we ate the food that was offered by the people who lived around the reservoir. We communicated with gestures and a few Thai words on my part and a few English words on his part. We got along fantastically--he even sent for another monk to come to the island to meet me. He was attracted to my tattoos, and I undressed so he could see them all. He did the same. He was covered with prayers over most of his body, and I was impressed. I was sad when it came time to head back to the USA and I did not realize then how much the short time I spent with the Monk would affect my thinking over the years to come. Since then I've been to war again, but in a much different role than my baptism of fire in 'Nam. Still, it too had its effect on me.

Then came the One Project, I heard about it through the tattoo/piercing community here in San Diego and was intrigued with the whispers I heard about town. I heard names of people I have the greatest respect for: Corey Lolly, Didier (DDA), Bethra and Alicia from APP, to mention just a few. I also heard other words that made me listen harder: Words like spiritual, meditation, and acceptance of all people. I knew that most of the people would be way younger than me (I'm 57) but I was not deterred, I felt that this event was one I needed to attend and I am happy I did. I was not disappointed in any way and I did not feel any negative energy toward me. I participated in all of the events and tried to channel my spiritual strength to a loved one far away from his family. I meditated, I was comfortable in the sweat lodge, I hook pulled, I bent the rebar a couple of times and I even drank of the special CoCo (yummy). I breathed in the silver sage and Cory and DDA hooked me up and hung me from a tree at about midnight. The moon was almost full and I was naked, Wow! I got hugged and hugged back and it was wonderful. I stayed and helped with the cleanup and even enjoyed that. I loved the ONE festival and will be back next year.

The one aspect that I notice the most is what goes on in my mind three months later and the way I feel about people and powers beyond this lifetime. I can't get the One Project out of my mind and I really don't want to. I am sure I will continue to learn from this experience. Thank You Cory, DDA and everyone else that made it happen. Peace, Love and Hugs.

—Mike



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