

Dr. Stuart C. Lord

President of Naropa University

A Baptist reverend and educator, Dr. Stuart C. Lord worked at DePauw University and Dartmouth College before taking over as president of Boulder's Buddhist-inspired Naropa University in 2009. Here, he talks about walking the talk, meditation and prayer, and why education cuts hurt America.

We are all products of our environments. I am a product of public education, as well as all the mentors, educators, and people in my life.

My high school, in New Rochelle, New York, was very diverse, as was my neighborhood: Jewish, Italian, African-American—there was even a same-sex couple. In a block of 14 houses, the seeds of diversity and inclusiveness were planted. All those people treated me with value.

You can't blame people for where they grew up. But we can determine what we do with our educations, what communities we serve in, and where we study. I want every child in America to have a little piece of diversity.

Students with a focus on heart and mind are everywhere, but we have a great abundance at Naropa. I see students who are not satisfied with who they are. They want to know "How do I get in touch with who I am, and how do I serve the world?"

Those students are going to challenge the status quo, so I have to walk the talk every day. When I don't walk the talk, I get challenged by the community.

We emphasize global education. We don't want our students to spend all their time in Boulder, because Boulder is *not* the world.

I learned two lessons early on: One is that true happiness



comes from helping others. I fundamentally believe that. The second is—and I believe this in my DNA—that there is justice in the world. No matter what happens, justice will prevail.

Why do I believe in justice? Because I see it all the time. Look at the election of President Obama. No matter your political ideology, there was something special inside all of us that night when he was elected, even if it was for just 30

seconds. And I think that's why he received the Nobel Peace Prize—because it was a sign that there is hope.

Praying leads to action. You practice prayer for the purpose of being a change agent in the world. You don't just meditate, but you get up off the cushion and act in the world.

I think a lot of people in all kinds of churches are trying contemplative practices and

meditation (which wasn't encouraged for a long time). They call it "alternative praying," but I see it as part of the richness of religious institutions.

Friendship starts with yourself. Sitting in prayer allows me to be who I am—I learn to befriend myself as I learn to befriend others. It requires self-examination.

A friend is a person with whom you dare to be yourself. You can be authentic with him or her.

Whenever there is a crisis or challenge in America, be it 9/11 or Hurricane Katrina, Americans change their lives to serve others. New Orleans has been rebuilt by volunteers. We have the notion of philanthropy, and that is one of the great things that makes America what it is—we share our resources with others. That's unmatched.

What's America not doing well? We keep cutting education. When we cut our education spending, especially K-12, we are mismanaging our future and our young people. Every time we cut, that's another young person we're saying "no" to.

I don't know what my greatest accomplishment is. As Hegel said, "The owl of Minerva takes flight at dusk." The life of a man cannot be judged midstream.

—INTERVIEW BY PATRICK DOYLE

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