

Noncomplicity
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The asura president makes the people who choose him complicit in his corruption. He wants to maintain control over them, but he's also reassuring himself that the world and everyone in it really is, under the façade, as rotten as he is. He's been trying to do the same thing with those of us who do not choose him : to make us complicit, to prove that he's exactly what we deserve.

One of too many examples is the vicious policy instituted, in our names, at the southern border. This was a miscalculation, because here in the West, people who have come across the border from Mexico and further south are not them, they are us. Ourselves, our ancestors, family members, neighbors, friends, and coworkers. And so the resistance has been swift and sustained, from small towns in Texas as well as the big cities of the left coast — an entire region of the country declining to be complicit.

Learning from that, he's moved on to the Kurds of Northern Syria, a people much further from the reach of our hands. He thinks he can force this new complicity on us because he calculates there's not much the average citizen can do about an ethnic cleansing halfway around the world. Calculates that we'll be too overwhelmed by the sheer volume of his cruelty to be able to keep responding to it.

It's too early to tell if these calculations are correct, but right now, here at the beginning of this fresh calamity, we need to deal with what is being done to us, because it will make us less able to respond if we don't. Clearly, what is happening to Americans is nothing like what is happening to the Kurds, but we are still among the intended victims. Forcing people to accept an atrocity committed in our name, against our will and our conscience, is an assault. It creates trauma. Its hoped-for outcomes are hopelessness and helplessness. Complicity by attrition.

A traditional way of talking about noncomplicity is freeing ourselves from delusion. As a person of a certain age, I often wake up in the early hours, and so I meditate. Outside, the undifferentiated dark becomes an ocean of soft light flowing into the shore. The bell on a nearby buoy rolls in the swells, tolling the day open. With the light

will come more news about Northern Syria. Strange to prepare for it not by buckling armor and girding loins but by waiting in the dark until the defenses that accreted yesterday have fallen away, until the soft light of the waters runs through me again, flowing against the lapping stain of complicity, salving the bruises of assault. Until I am permeable again, permeable to what is actually happening, on no one else's terms.

At times like this, an old practice reemerges. I remember back a million years ago to when I was training in the zendo, shouting NO! with all my might. No is much quieter now, more rooted. Not trying to convince myself of something anymore, but a simple fact of the true world : No, not this. Not this delusion, this made-up thing. That No is a big love, which waits every morning in the vast space just beyond whatever the *this* is. When love has made my heart big again, it's time to rise into the new day.

The true world's terms can be really tough sometimes, but the true world also holds us up. The truth of things might devastate us, but it never manipulates or debases us. It calls to us across anything that tries to make life smaller or meaner, calls us to say No to all that. So that we can say Yes, again, to the true world's big offer.

It's early in the discernment of how to respond to the betrayal of the Kurds, and a place on the Earth, with its humans and animals, towns and wildernesses, plunged suddenly into chaos. Practices that support noncomplicity will help us focus on what matters and respond to what is actually happening. With a quiet, rooted commitment to the real born in the predawn hours, I carry the Great Horse Ancestor's words of big and sustaining love through the day : "Benefit what cannot be benefitted, do what cannot be done."