



Who Is Stone Riley?

April 2015:

I'm an old artist / activist / fortune teller.

Been doing all of that for 50 years.

I practice arts - painting, drawing, computer, poetry, memoir, the novel, teaching, conversation, conversation - some of it quite well. After all, I work hard at it, love a challenge, love doing it myself, first hand, in person. Because, of course, the most beautiful of all beautiful art is supposed to be your life and I love life. You study, study, study, practice, practice practice - of course you do - but this is a dance.

I came up as a working stiff so-called-white boy in a dirty dangerous industrial city in neo-slavery land, the jim crow USA South, came up just in time for the Vietnam War machine to murder a friend of mine in our youth. All that made of me a lifelong pro-peace pro-Earth pro-human pro-democracy agitating activist more or less, at least jumping up into that kind of work when opportunity presents. I am now a Green Party member and I'm optimistic now at last because it seems the tide has turned.

And fortune telling? What? Why that? Well, if life has ever put you in a circumstance to sit with some weeping woman and help her share a last farewell with a loved one lost beyond the veil - and you've judged the ghost there in the room definitely is somehow real although apparently only you can see it clear enough - if fate has vouchsafed you that piece of work just once, that joy and kindly tender pleasure most sublime, then you won't ask me why I also do that sort of job.

And really it's all one.

The great art philosopher Rabindranath Tagore certainly described how I started out. Tagore described the proper way to start an art career like this: First you look around where you are and see what is most horrible there. Then from that you see what is most beautiful. Then, being who you are, you ask how art work there can aid the beautiful. And so you have begun.

When I started work our nation was a prison nation, our every thought a prisoner's thought. So we did enormous crimes. That was the horror. So the greatest loveliness I saw was freedom of the mind, and the broadest cleanest most courageous freedom our young generation did was this: Rebirth the perennial undying spiritual technologies which are common property of human kind and know we are divine. What was there for me to do in that?

I wished to make myself a proper artist. There were some pictures people raved about, very hard profound pictures somehow stacked up neatly in a deck. And then an initial one-year project in Tarot vastly exceeded all my hopes. Tarot proved itself at once to be the most profound of politics: an instrument of mercy shared among us prisoners. And then I grew into it. It became my guide book in the art of democratic life, for it made a healing teaching priest of me.

So here's my advice:

Don't stop walking when there is no way ahead.

Your walking makes the path.

The place you started from was cleared by others

and others will soon follow you and pass and step ahead.