



This month's circle tale is by Christina Baldwin, citizen of Freeland, WA and co-founder of PeerSpirit Circle Process with Ann Linnea. Christina is also a prolific author and dedicated Storycatcher—one who values and shares stories that inspire people to be their best selves.

## Circle Tale, November 2008 Shake Hands for a New America

Sometimes it takes a few days to realize we are living through a world event. The disasters of 9/11, Katrina, the Tsunami, Sichuan Earthquake—all jumped from national to global events, becoming reference points that the whole world acknowledges. The US election has gone global in a way we've not seen in decades, perhaps ever before. And instead of disaster, it's a moment of hope.

We at PeerSpirit have been amazed by the e-mails that have flowed into our computers from friends around the world. As part of our commitment to be weavers of communication across boundaries, we share a few of these e-mails and an essay by Christina that challenges all world citizens, and especially Americans, to build goodwill after the election.

Election comments by Friends of PeerSpirit:

*I imagine that being an American this week has been a sweet and joyful experience. How I wish that you could have popped out into South Africa to see and experience what this change and this man means for the rest of us too. People here organised slumber parties so that they could watch the CNN live broadcast, hotels offered special parties for people to come and watch the TV together and have drinks and meals etc. Our radio stations on Wednesday morning were full of his speech, on the radio phone-in programmes people were weeping and as e-mails and conversations started happening as people entered their days, everyone was talking about that speech, this remarkable man and how they had wept at the news and at his words. More than America has longed for this moment.*

*I don't think you can imagine what this means for people the world over. There have been so few leaders in the last 50 years who have transcended their parochial interests and egos. Nelson Mandela was one who gave the world hope of another way, a new possibility and now Barack Obama offers the same hope that maybe we can all dream of the world we long for and believe that it might be possible. --Kerry, Cape Town, South Africa*

*Thinking of you guys and glad to hear of Obama's great news. I rang my sister in Turkey, who hadn't heard yet tonight, but was happy to hear of a change and new hope for the US. May it bring new strength and hope to all our hearts to know that change is possible, that things can and do change for us all. --Rosie, in Canberra, Australia*

*I assume you know that 80% of all Germans are for Obama. I am so glad you did not disappoint us. --Matthias, Frankfurt, Germany*

*When we found out the results here in France, I felt connected to the celebratory victory in a very tangible way. In my mind, I envisioned a circle of people holding hands, from all across America, to France and across Europe, to Kenya and back. I am overjoyed and everyone that I encounter, no matter their nationality, their age nor their knowledge about the elections, shares my joy. --Anna, Paris, France*

*I have been listening to the radio where calls are coming in from all over the world about the celebrations that are occurring, and people's tears at the relief, and I experienced many of my own. Though I only felt the joy of the moment last evening, today I feel the overwhelming sound of our voice. Doesn't even matter who voted for whom anymore, the country and the world is not as divided today as it has been trained to be. And for that, I believe in miracles. --Patti, Clinton, Washington*

We just made history in America and the success of this moment depends on American citizens. If WE don't reach across the divides of fear and rancor generated in the relentless blasting of campaign rhetoric, we will not know how to participate in the new American dream. **What do we have in common that we can build on together?**

The weekend before the election, I was standing on a street corner with other Obama supporters watching the reactions of people driving by. Many smiles, some frowns, the occasional down-thumb or finger salute. The man next to me, kept calling out, especially to the unhappy drivers, "That's okay, just remember to vote!"

Then a big guy on a big motorcycle took the corner slow, all the while shouting obscenities about liberals and the ruination of his America. Why does this biker, who may have children in the local school, whose wife may check out my groceries, feel such entitlement to rage? Why does South Whidbey Island, which prides itself on tourist beauty, espresso stands, and sustainable community, also suffer vandalism to McCain signs, and a lot of "they-ism?"

Later that evening, a friend commented, "I agree with you about the rage thing, but there are just some people in this country who will never change their minds."

"Yes, that's true," I responded, "and I'm one of them." She looked surprised. "Nothing would convince me to vote for the other ticket. **Changing each other's minds is not the point: the point is, underneath one level of difference, where do we connect?**"

So the next day, when I saw McCain supporters standing at another street corner, I got out of the car and started shaking hands for a new America. I now walk up to every person with a McCain button or bumper sticker, and extend my hand. "Hello, I'm your neighbor, Christina. **Now that the vote is over, what do you think we have in common?**"

This *is* the question. In a time of dwindling resources and constant change, all we have at the end of the day is how we have treated each other.

Let's start a movement—a friendly gesture that sweeps across the land. Let's shake hands for a new America. Let's ask someone we don't know, "**Tell me one story of what you love about this country...**" And then let's tell them one story. And pass these stories on.

The vote is over: rebuilding begins.

**What do we have in common?**

**What do we love?**

This is, of course, not only an American activity. In almost every country in the world, huge and often violent divisions occur along racial, ethnic, religious, and political lines. We can start a global movement—a gesture that sweeps across the globe. We can ask everyone we don't know to tell us one story of what they love about the place that is home, about the world that is home. Let's explore what we have in common.

**Join this restorying of the world—and let me know your stories and experiences at the Storycatcher blog: <http://storycatcher.net/wordpress/>.**

*If you have a tale to tell, contact the PeerSpirit office and we'll help you share it.*

*For more information on many applications of circle, visit our web site at [www.peerspirit.com](http://www.peerspirit.com) and subscribe to our monthly Circle Tale newsletter using the subscription mechanism at the top right of the page. Your e-mail address will **not** be shared or used by anyone other than PeerSpirit, and you can unsubscribe yourself at any time.*