

My Journey

By Jeffrey Bradshaw

Jeffrey Bradshaw is the State Contact for Nevada.

How and when were you introduced to Male Spirituality?

I grew up in a home that followed the Christian Science faith. I attended church, read the Bible, went to Sunday school, and studied the book *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*. As I became an adult, I found that this was not the answer for me. I then began to study a plethora of religions, including Buddhism, Hinduism, New Age-ism, and the list of "isms" goes on. What happened after this exploration of different faiths is that I circled back into a stronger Christian faith. The dilemma, I discovered, was my own problems with organized Christianity. In 2007, after losing a business and becoming bankrupt and almost homeless, I made a complete life change and moved to Las Vegas, Nevada. At that time, I started to attend a non-denominational Christian church and began to teach men's Bible studies. In 2008, I did a study with the group on the book *Adam's Return* by Richard Rohr; this book rocked my world. Everything in my past and the actions I had taken in my life made so much more sense. I had to find out more. In 2010, I attended an MROP (Men's Rites of Passage); this changed my life.

How has your participation in Illuman/M.A.L.Es fostered the use and development of your gifts?

More than anything, my participation has allowed me to be a better listener to other men, my wife, myself, and God. It has expanded my ability to accept situations as they are without needing to have "my way" with everything. After I started this journey, it allowed me to repair a relationship with my own father that had been broken for over 25 years. We began to speak, and actually get along, without any blaming or judging.

Describe a recent Illuman/M.A.L.Es event you attended. What was the impact on you?

I attended two events recently: Soularize, and returning to an MROP to bring another Brother. The events were spectacular. At each of the events, we did an exercise called Way of Council. For me, it was the highlight of both events. It allows men to open up and listen to each other without judgment or trying to "fix" each other, as men tend to do. Egos are removed and inner healing is allowed to take place.

What's the one thing you'd recommend to a man starting on the spiritual journey?

Find that part of God in you! As weird or hard as that may sound, I have found that until *we as men* find that we are part of a larger God, how can we heal or be truly part of anything in this universe? Until we accept God, people, and the world as they are, how can we truly love anything?

What is the best thing about doing this work?

It keeps me grounded in God. It keeps me centered in my life. Since beginning this journey with Illuman, I have started three companies and went back to college for a multi-cultural degree in theology. With so much going on in my life, this work keeps me from turning successes into something all about me. I know I have to play a role in my work every day, but it is only a role. I am not the one really in charge or in control.

Concluding thoughts?

While at Soularize last year, I sat under a tree. As I sat listening to nature, a tree started to speak to me. I would like to conclude with the story the wise old tree told me.

THE LEAF

One day Mother Earth (God) decided to create a tree. She gave the tree everything it needed to grow: water, seed, sunlight, and Love.

The tree began to grow. As the tree grew, Mother Earth told the tree, you will have many children and we will call them leaves.

Well, as the tree grew larger, it began to grow branches, and from the branches it grew many hundreds of leaves.

Each leaf was connected to the tree in its center. But each leaf decided to grow larger, away from its center. They wanted to be vibrant and green, greener than the leaf next to them.

As more time went on, each leaf began to grow older; it began to change color and was no longer green. Along with that, they were becoming very brittle.

Now Mother Earth, seeing each leaf changing, called on the wind to blow. Many of the leaves didn't like the wind; it was shaking them all up; it was making it difficult to stay attached to the tree.

Eventually, one by one, each leaf had no choice but to let go.

To their amazement, the wind caught each of them. The wind brought them down to Mother Earth, where they became still in the bosom of God.