

What About The Dog

Sande Hart, Southern California/Southern Nevada

In 1982 I was given 4 tickets to the Peace Sunday No Nukes Rally held at the Rose Bowl stadium in Pasadena California. I was 21 years old, and more interested in the 30 or so bands that were performing than nuclear nonproliferation.

Everyone who was relevant in music from the 60's signed on. From Fleetwood Mac to Stevie Wonder, joined Yoko Ono, Mike Farrell, Jane Fonda, and a host of other environment activist spoke and/or performed

The bands would play 2 songs, and while breaking down, the activists took the stage, and it went that way from 10:00 AM to 10:00 PM when everyone took the stage and sang, John Lennon's "Give Peace A Chance".

Between the first speaker and the 1 band, the MC took the stage and made this announcement, "we just got word from the parking lot that someone left their dog in the car, the windows are rolled up, it's a very hot day, please go let your dog out."

The boos were drowned out by the band and soon everyone forgot, but me! In between the next set, I started chanting, "What about the dog?" thinking I was close enough to the stage and someone would surely hear me. I was soon drowned out by the speakers, and started up again in the next breakdown, but this time my friends and a few people around me joined in. It took about 3 sets before our entire section was chanting. By noon, the entire stadium was chanting, "What about the dog? What about the dog? What about the dog?"

This went on all day long.

During one break around 4:00 I stepped out to the concessions and as I was walking back into the stadium, I heard the crowd, "What about the dog?" Only this time, I was not the one to start the chanting. It was that moment that I realized that one voice, consistent, compassionate, and persistent can capture the imagination and hearts of a critical mass; a reported 100,000 in fact.

Finally, around dusk, just before Stevie Wonder took the stage and asked for a few minutes of silence, that same MC came back and announced, "So, you want to know about the dog? The dog is fine!" I do believe that got as big of a reaction as did Bet Midler singing The Rose acapella.

Some 25 years later I was asked to give a lift to someone whom I deeply admired in the Peace work I do globally. About 20 minutes into our log drive I asked him to tell me his story. He went on to share that in 1956 he started a UN sponsored event in San Francisco called Peace Sunday, but in 1982 some music producer took it over at the last minute and it turned into a big rock concert. He was so disappointed!

The power planted in my voice that day, gave me authority to say, "yes" the morning of 911 when I heard the whisper, 'Gather Women', yet I had no idea what that meant, and 18 years later a women's interfaith group is still alive and growing, and subsequently I developed and run an international women and girls organization and a plethora of other passions.

How can one dog empower one woman? This story stayed in my memory, until one evening at a retreat, everyone was supposed to stand up and tell a story. I said, "I don't have a story." Then I remembered Peace Sunday 1982. Sharing my story actually revealed it's magic to me. The invitation to tell my story was the greatest gift.