

## ***Fierce Vulnerability* by Kazu Haga**

### **Moving Forward**

There's a lot I don't know, but in the years I've been exploring fierce vulnerability and listening to what it tells me, I've arrived at seven hypotheses I continue to experiment with:

**One—We need a fundamental transformation of society and everything we think we know about what it means to be human.** Fierce vulnerability isn't about waging years-long battles to win one piece of legislation or change the face of who gets to sit on the throne of a broken system. To be honest, it doesn't even mean changing the system. It's about changing how we, as a species, relate to each other and to the rest of the cosmos. Our work, ultimately, is about healing. About belonging. About wholeness.

**Two—A transformation is coming, whether we're ready for it or not.** With the escalating climate crisis, an increasingly isolating society, and technological advances that give us the potential to destroy the planet 10 times over, we've reached a threshold and are living in times of major shifts that will fundamentally alter our social, political, and economic systems forever. Human-made systems and natural ecosystems are in the midst of collapse. There is no "stopping climate change" or "saving the world." The level of destruction and amount of suffering caused will depend largely on our readiness to accept the coming challenges. As Movement Generation says, "Transition is inevitable, justice is not."

**Three—We can't think our way to an answer, and we can't control change.** The crises we face are far too complex to "figure out" with our intellect alone. Change at that scale is not something we can control. We aren't creating the change, but we can be in right relationship to it. We can slow down and sense and respond. Our movements need to be guided by sources other than power maps, data analysis, and strategic plans. We need to learn to sit in silence, watch the stars, be with the wind and the birds, align our work with the seasons, sing and make art together, and, instead of trying to solve anything, simply listen.

**Four—Without knowing, we need to act.** Despite not having all the answers, we need to have the courage to take the next step, to step outside the comforts of our own movement spaces and use our bodies and hearts to intervene in the places where systemic violence and injustice manifest—through direct action, public witness, creative interventions. The goal of our actions isn't to change legislation, and the targets of our actions aren't inanimate systems. Our goal is to help society feel repressed emotions like grief so we can wake up from our collective delusions. Our "targets" are living systems—humans, non-humans, and ecosystems.

**Five—There is an inseparable connection between personal and collective healing.** The more I heal my own traumas, the more I get a sense of what it means to heal collective trauma. The more I heal, the more I can contribute to creating healed movement spaces. And the more healed our movement spaces are, the more healing we can offer the world. There's no separation between personal and collective healing. They're the same processes simply taking place at different scales.

**Six—Social injustices and systemic violence are not political issues, but manifestations of collective trauma.** These systems don't emerge in our world because certain people are simply "evil" and want to make others suffer. Deep down, we're all hurting, and that unseen, unhealed hurt humanity is holding manifests in the many forms of violence, oppression, and injustice we see in our world. The nature of injustice is not political. It's the manifestation of a deeply human experience.

**Seven—You can't "shut down" injustice any more than you can "shut down" trauma.** You can't go to someone acting out of trauma and tell them, "Stop it!" Yes, if you use enough force, it may work temporarily, but it's never a sustainable solution. Yet in our movement spaces, because we believe injustice to be a political issue, we try to "shut it down." We need movements. We need people who have the courage to put their bodies on the line and organize for large-scale change. But we need to do it radically differently than what many of us are used to. If injustice is a sign of collective trauma and healing is our goal, we have to find a more skillful and inviting way to stand up.

If we can continue to live into experimentations with these kinds of hypothesis, I have so much faith we can affirm life, create beauty, cultivate connection, and move toward healing, even in the midst of collapse.



**Kazu Haga** is a trainer and practitioner of nonviolence and restorative justice, a core member of Building Belonging, the Ahimsa Collective and the Fierce Vulnerability Network, is a Jam facilitator and author of *Healing Resistance* and *Fierce Vulnerability*. He works with incarcerated people, youth, and activists from around the country. He has over 25 years of experience in nonviolence and social change work. He is a resident of the Canticle Farm community on Lisjan Ohlone land, Oakland, CA, where he lives with his family. You can find out more about his work at [www.kazuhaga.com](http://www.kazuhaga.com).