

## Civility in Hunkertown: Staying Civil and Sane in Close Quarters

I do not know when the term, “to hunker down” began. It has a reasonable etymological background. “Hunker” is close to the German and Dutch for to squat or crouch. But with “down” it is about staying in one place for a duration of time. In the Cambridge dictionary, it also says that this “hunkering down” should be done “comfortably.”

But, we are not in a “comfortable” time. Although life is, as the Buddhist saying explains, “fragile as a bubble,” we tend to want to live our lives with some sense of permanence, despite what the reality is. But in the reality of COVID 19 and the massive shutdown of commerce, hence our livelihoods, the precariousness of it all is looking at us up close and personally.

Within just a few weeks more of us are living in the way our ancestors did – in nuclear or extended families or cadres, with the exception of – sadly – many of our elders. Beyond our elders, there are some who live in isolation – like hermits. But, the majority are now in their own homes or apartments, “hunkered down.” Not going to work or working from home, doing school online, sharing the bathroom, the kitchen, the living spaces with greater frequency and duration than any time in their lives. And many of our distractions and forms of entertainment are out of reach – and shutdown as well.

Our domiciles are now the main walls or boundaries in which we live. And so, I would like to suggest that the space be given a proper name: **Hunkertown**.

This reality, living in Hunkertown, is just settling in and we may continue to live in such close quarters for a time far beyond what is comfortable.

Getting use to each other, communicating in person rather than virtually require the resurrection of old skills or the building of new ones. If this is to be done for the greatest peace and cooperation, we need to develop skills to stay sane within ourselves and civil to each other.

In my book, *The Path of Civility*, I look at the teachings of the Buddha as they pertain to communication and communal and community living and the lessons employed by American President George Washington, who used a book written in the 1600s that focused on “The Rules of Civility.”

The purpose of these messages will be to use the quotes of the Buddha or the rules by which Washington lived and offer my commentary for these times in order to make your lives and the lives of those around you more harmonious and fulfilling. Civility is not about playing nice. It is about helping people to work and interact with others to support healthy, productive relationships and collective action.

That will be my job. So, I’ll keep you posted often. You’re in the loop.