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[Untitled talk on anti-Semitic shootings at Jewish Community Center and Village Shalom in Overland Park, KS]

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I welcome you tonight with an outstretched hand, and before we go further, I ask you to turn toward someone you don't know and reach out your hand, and introduce yourself.

Thank you. When I was asked to say a few welcoming words a month ago, I had no idea how welcoming each other across faiths would resonate with so much more purpose and intensity since the actions of April 13, when three people died as a result of the kind of hatred meant to divide and diminish us. Our coming together tonight is imbued with this story, in which hope, sorrow, grief and faith break our hearts open even more.

About a week ago, many of us came together for a vigil at the Lawrence Jewish Community Center, where Rabbi Moti reminded us that the killer, who had studied and plotted extensively on how to find and kill Jews ended up killing Christians. That he couldn't tell us apart shows how much our fates are entwined -- Muslim, Jew, Christian, Hindu, Agnostic, Buddhist, Spiritual or however our faith names us or we name our faith. The day of the shooting, I was driving home from Topeka, where I had just presented a talk on the Holocaust and my book *Needle in the Bone*, on the extremes of the kind of hatred that took the lives on April 13th of a man, woman, and teenager. History is alive, and its lessons wrap around us more closely during times like this, which means we need look more closely at history and wrap around each other more tightly. I felt this so fully during the vigil last week when many of you and others sang some of the songs of my traditions, my people, as if they were your own songs too -- and this moved me and still moves me immensely. While I do feel more vulnerable as a Jew right now, I also feel more grateful to be part of events like this, in which we come together in friendship and respect to listen to and learn from each other.

Yet the real and enduring loss and pain for all who knew and loved Terri LaManno, Reat Griffin Underwood, and Dr. William Lewis Corporon is beyond our power to heal. What we can do, we must do, with an open heart. So let's take a moment of silence to send our deepest wishes and prayers for comfort and peace to the families and friends of Terri LaManno, who her daughter calls "a beautiful soul"; Reat Griffin Underwood, a high school student who loved singing and life; and Dr. William Lewis Corporon, a beloved physician and family man.

May their memory be for blessing.

With An Outstretched Hand

With an outstretched hand, you turn to me, and I turn to you
at the moment we're united by what was meant to divide us.
The night cools around us. The next day rises. Still, nothing
we know can speak comfort except the passage of time
behind us, ahead of us, and right now: the lantern that leads us
from here to where we can speak without fear or forgetting
what's inside our roundest words. The tree of life on the corner
powers into blossom. The soft rain welcomes us home
to synagogues, mosques, churches; to clearings in the cedars
or prairies bowed low by wind; to sudden ponds round as the
rounding moon that sheds light to remind us how much is alive

and calling our true names in the darkness. We reach toward
the inexplicable in sorrow, in outrage, in shaken and strengthened
courage, and hold on tight. We hold the loss of those we love
or never got the chance to meet, and find the light shimmering
after the storm, catching our faces at dusk as we turn to each other,
love what teaches us to stretch new ways toward love. The dissolving
sky of one April day reaches out its outstretched hand to lead us
out of the desert where my outstretched heart meets yours,
yours meets mine, and we cross over in the cacophony
of our prayers: Allah, Thunder, God, Great Spirit, Jesus,
First Lily-of-the-Valley, Buddha, Krishna, Expanding Cosmos,
homecoming all to the the world held together
by our outstretched hands.