

My Journey

By Gene Gallegos

Gene Gallegos currently serves as Co-Convener in the enchanting state of New Mexico.

How and when were you introduced to male spirituality?

I consciously departed from the dogma and doctrine of organized religion over a decade ago and began a spiritual search. I was in enough emotional pain to embrace the spiritual blueprint of recovery, which provided me with the support to give up, clean up, and be willing to grow up. Simultaneously, I began to practice yoga and meditation. Weaving these practices together provided great spiritual nourishment and a more authentic way of living with compassion. The term “emotional sobriety” has been a touchstone of progress for me, but, as my life began to shift radically and painful feelings of grief became prominent, I found peace of mind to be very elusive.

During that time, I attended the 2015 MROP in Northern California. Through the sacred rituals of the MROP, I experienced a profound sense of peace and a deep sense of community with my spiritual brothers. Race, class, gender, LGBTQ, age, failures, successes, religious affiliations, and other ways we create divisions—all became insignificant before the loving truth that sustains us all. The MROP provided a sacred space where I experienced the Luminous Presence of the Divine that has truly expanded my heart and served as a pivotal experience in male spirituality.

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

On any given day, we hear stories of men across the globe who are hurting creation, hurting women, and hurting each other and themselves. The profound grief we experience because of this damaging behavior can be overwhelming and confounding. It is tempting to believe that men are beyond hope. Daily, I choose not to consent to that despair and instead participate in communities like Illuman that are on the cutting edge of healing.

Illuman is one of many spiritual communities striving to open the door to healing through shoulder-to-shoulder relationship and a cutting-edge spiritual journey. Regardless of the dysfunctional societal roles, norms, and expectations placed on men and women and regardless of our personal and collective train-wreck histories, healing happens. It's our spiritual birthright. We acknowledge our

failures, we learn to feel and grieve them, and, through this, we learn to heal and serve together. Our compassion and vulnerability are the touchstones to becoming better human beings.

Describe a recent Illuman/M.A.L.Es event you attended.

What was the impact on you?

Recently, I attended the Convener's weekend in Oracle, Arizona. I heard from our brothers in Europe, who held a spiritual weekend entitled "Brothers Beyond Borders." It got me thinking about how important it is to move beyond borders of all types. I envision an Illuman-hosted conversation entitled "Brown, Black, and Beige: Brothers Beyond Borders," where men can continue the important work of using our collective vulnerability to help heal one another and serve the world. I was also inspired by the presence of an empty chair in each group—honoring and humbly acknowledging that Illuman is a work in progress. Illuman is not complete until all men, from any life journey, are doing their spiritual work, moving toward a willingness to learn about each other and work with each other in groups with similar missions.

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

Identify what area of life is causing you the most pain, sadness, or despair. What "flavor" is your despair? Then, find a higher power that is big enough to work in the nitty-gritty of your daily life. Join spiritual communities with men who are also on this journey.

What's the best thing about doing this work?

Doing this work provides me with moments of profound serenity and love where there was once only despair and grief. The plan is Love. The path is Love. The destination is Love. Love wins.

Concluding thoughts?

I find great wisdom in the suggestion that I lay down the telescope (obsessing on the behavior of others), lay down the microscope (obsessing on control), and instead to pick up the mirror (contemplation). The answers are within.