



**Wisdom of our ancestors enhances resilience**

***The Sixth Annual Garifuna International Indigenous Film Festival***

***May 12 through May 27, 2017***

**Fostering the preservation of indigenous cultures and their wisdom**

Alexander III of Macedon, commonly referred to as Alexander the Great, conquered much of the known world by the age of 30. Some have attributed his ability to achieve this great feat because he treasured and utilized the wisdom and knowledge of the civilizations he conquered. Similarly, it is our responsibility to learn from those cultures that predate the dawn of civilization.

Our industrial society—the world we live in—fosters isolation. Although the “Golden Rule” is revered by all the religions of the world, most of the time our society is driven by “Survival of the Fittest,” where it’s all about getting ahead or simply surviving, even at someone else’s expense. This fosters a feeling of uncertainty and defensiveness. When you are in this mode, the expectation is that others are against you. It may even create the desire for others not to do well, since this makes you look or feel better about yourself. The classic joke goes like this:

The two men were running for their lives; chased by a tiger. One said, “We’ll never out run that tiger”. To which the other man said, “I just need to run faster than you.”

This attitude is based on a focus of scarcity, rather than abundance. This orientation that “It’s a cold world out there” and “You can’t trust anyone” fosters a sense of danger and emotional distress. There is greater difficulty letting go and recovering from daily hassles and stress; resulting in the draining of one’s energy and resilience. The United States in fact, is very different even from other industrialized countries of Europe and Asia, in the strong belief in individuality. We believe in the “go it alone” mentality. It’s noble to be independent, and it’s a sign of weakness to ask for help. This may even be in our genes, as we are the descendants of those who left home to come to America, which demonstrated a certain independence that is a part of our culture.

It is the opposite of inter-connectedness, at the heart of my third pillar of resilience, and a sense that “we are all in this together” which is the zeitgeist of indigenous cultures. People living in such a society work hard to contribute their share, but know that they can count on others if they falter. This sense of trust and safety reduces the need to waste precious energy being defensive and on guard.. The resultant husbanding of personal energy yields greater resilience.

### ***Sixth Annual Garifuna International Indigenous Film Festival***

This year, my wife, Freda Sideroff, is producing the sixth annual Garifuna International film festival. She was first guided by her ancestors to help preserve her Garifuna culture. Freda responded with the creation of an event that highlights her cultural heritage – its language, customs and story.

But very quickly she realized that all indigenous cultures needed to be honored and preserved. They all offer lessons. And they all fit with my third Pillar of resilience: “relationship with something greater”, which is my way of identifying the importance of being connected to the larger community through spirituality, purpose and giving service.

In one festival film, “Shamanic Trekker”, filmmaker Emmanuel Itier, follows the path and teachings of Peruvian shamans. The trailer can be found at <https://vimeo.com/212505166> . Shamans take down the veil that separates us from a deeper reality. The process facilitates our connection with Pacha Momma, mother earth. Connecting with the shamanic path is a very integrative process. At the heart of the shamanic path is the connection with the earth and each other.

The festival highlights films from all over the world, offering a window into the wisdom and heart of the indigenous people who live close to the earth.

“The Path” of resilience is entered more easily when there is a sense of safety and security. The less vigilant and suspicious you need to be, the more opportunity you have to let down your guard and relax. The result is a more balanced use of your psychic energy and an increased ability to turn inward and restore resources used during the times when you must deal with the stresses in your life.

Take a look at the larger contexts of your life, the world around you, and your beliefs about your place in this world. Notice the need for and importance of connection that goes beyond your immediate family and friends. Connection, and the feeling that there is something more to life, something greater—that we are all part of the same fabric of life—creates a sense of reassurance and comfort that helps smooth out the daily hassles, assuage our feeling of being alone, and help create a sense of support and foundation.

I invite and encourage you to check out the events of the Garifuna Film Festival at [www.GarifunaFilmFestival.com](http://www.GarifunaFilmFestival.com) . Bring your children and friends. It will be an enriching and rewarding experience.

Dr. Stephen Sideroff is an internationally recognized expert in resilience, optimal performance, addiction, neurofeedback and alternative approaches to stress and mental health. He is Assistant Professor in the Department of Psychiatry & Biobehavioral Sciences at UCLA’s School of Medicine, as well as the Director of the Raoul Wallenberg Institute of Ethics. [www.drstephensideroff.com](http://www.drstephensideroff.com)