



SIEBENQUELL

---

# Stumbling blocks and Hummingbirds

---



At the beginning of September in Berlin a renewed attack took place on the »stumbling block initiative« in the Friedenau quarter of the city. The group initiative is a project which reminds citizens of the city where former Jewish citizens once lived before and during the Second World War and the fate which befell them. They place these memorial stones in the sidewalks of the neighborhood so that one literally stumbles over reminders of a history we do not wish to repeat. The window pane of the display case of this group was smashed with rocks. Unfortunately, this was no isolated incident. In the last months the glass pane has been repeatedly broken, 55 of these stumbling blocks have been smeared with black paint and one of the organizers has been threatened as a »friend of Jews«. Yet at the end of the newspaper report, there were two lines which restored hope to my heart. »Yet the vandalism does not slow down the project. Members of the initiative, residents and Kindergarten children met in order to scrub the stones clean again« (Sara Schurmann, Tagespiegel, September 10, 2014).

The Nobel Peace prize winner Wangari Maathai knows this story only too well. Everywhere in the world there are people who experience how destruction, violence and mindless hatred destroy their projects, initiatives and that which they have built

---

with the blood sweat and tears of their lives. For all these people she loves to tell »The Story of the Hummingbird«. And this is the tale she weaves:

»One day a terrible fire broke out in a forest - a huge woodlands was suddenly engulfed by a raging wild fire. Frightened, all the animals fled their homes and ran out of the forest. As they came to the edge of a stream they stopped to watch the fire and they were feeling very discouraged and powerless. They were all bemoaning the destruction of their homes. Every one of them thought there was nothing they could do about the fire, except for one little hummingbird.

This particular hummingbird decided it would do something. It swooped into the stream and picked up a few drops of water and went into the forest and put them on the fire. Then it went back to the stream and did it again, and it kept going back, again and again and again. All the other animals watched in disbelief; some tried to discourage the hummingbird with comments like, »Don't bother, it is too much, you are too little, your wings will burn, your beak is too tiny, it's only a drop, you can't put out this fire.«

And as the animals stood around disparaging the little bird's efforts, the bird noticed how hopeless and forlorn they looked. Then one of the animals shouted out and challenged the hummingbird in a mocking voice, »What do you think you are doing?« And the hummingbird, without wasting time or losing a beat, looked back and said, »I am doing what I can.«

Like the hummingbird, we each must do what we can..«

Whether it is Kindergarten child who scrubs stumbling blocks; whether it be people who rebuild houses in the Gaza strip; whether it is a widow who tosses her last two small coins into the collection box (Lk 21, 1-4) or a child willing to offer Jesus his five loaves and two fish (Jn 6, 9): there are people every in the world who have the long breath of God within them. They are more courageous and patient, have greater perseverance and are, therefore, more powerful than tall those who carry fire, hunger, bombs or black paint into the world. Apparently, hummingbirds are not an endangered species.

**Erik Riechers SAC**

*22. September, Vallendar*