In November 2012, in response to this question from our local American Civil Liberties Union at an award ceremony.

“What have you learned?”

I learn something everyday and some lessons over and over.

I have learned:

that it is always possible to learn more about anything or anyone

that everyone has a story

that all stories are interesting if enough information is shared

that if you don’t understand something or someone, it is generally because you need more pieces of the puzzle.

that the struggle for social justice never ends

that what gets accomplished today may be in jeopardy tomorrow

that there is no hope for positive change if we don’t persist

that there is great joy as well as disappointment and pain in the struggle

that the best antidote to depression is focusing on assisting someone else

that the ways in which we are all alike is greater and more significant than are the ways in which we differ.
that allies come in every human color, in all genders, and in all sexual orientations

that allies are treasures and should not be taken for granted

that every bit of energy spent on achieving social justice is worth it

that all human beings want to be emotionally comfortable

that change does not happen when we are too comfortable

that social oppression hurts us all, even when we don’t know it

that people forget what is said, but not how they felt when the words were spoken

that how we feel about our own behavior matters more than how we feel about someone else’s

that everything we do and everything we do not do matters

that civil rights are part of human rights

that social oppression is a sickness that embraces every other kind of abuse – sexual, emotional, physical, mental and spiritual

that people are many things, some of which may seem contradictory

that sometimes an answer to the question is right around the corner
that periods of silence are essential for spiritual growth
that forgiveness is an essential part of love
that letting go is not the same as giving up
that love matters
that kindness is a gift
that allies and friends sometimes come in surprising packages
that what we hear is not always what is being said
that keeping one’s word and one’s promises is essential to the development of trust
that courage is easy to reach for when commitment and desire are present
that putting one foot in front of the other is a surefire way of moving forward

Ann Todd Jealous