DESMOND TUTU & DAUGHTER: HOW TO ASK FOR FORGIVENESS

2 THINGS WHITE PEOPLE SHOULD NEVER SAY

THE RITUALS THAT HEAL US

MAKE IT RIGHT

WHY HEALING HISTORY BEGINS WITH THE TRUTH

ALICIA GARZA GAVE US A HASHTAG FOR LOVE AND JUSTICE

ONE POEM THAT SAVED A FOREST

5 MEDICINES GROWING IN YOUR BACKYARD
“I want to know, as fully and exactly as I can, what the wound is and how much I am suffering from it. And I want to be cured; I want to be free of the wound myself, and I do not want to pass it on to my children. ... I know if I fail to make at least the attempt I forfeit any right to hope that the world will become better than it is now.” —Wendell Berry, Page 23

Images from Joshua Kristal’s “Lynching Memorial Project,” which attempts to bring recognition and reckoning to these unmarked sites of historical racial violence.
machupicchuthis.wordpress.com
How Can We Make It Right?

The cover of the magazine you are holding might be a photo of #BlackLives-Matter co-founder Alicia Garza making a hands-up-don’t-shoot gesture. Or it might be a photo of Garza with activist friends Ashley Yates and Robbie Clark. We are publishing both to acknowledge two realities.

One is that legitimate anger is energizing much-needed change. News arrived as we were going to press that the Baltimore police officers involved in Freddie Gray’s death will be charged with manslaughter and murder. Prosecutor Marilyn Mosby acknowledged the calls for justice when she announced the prosecutions, saying: “I heard your call of ‘no justice, no peace.’”

It’s an important step, but there is so much more to do. More than 50 years after the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s “I Have a Dream” speech, and six years after the inauguration of an African American president, Freddie Gray’s neighborhood suffers from unemployment rates above 50 percent, and life expectancy is 10 years shorter than the national average. The exclusion and impoverishment of people of color continues, as does state-sponsored violence against them.

So is there hope of taking on racism?

Noted civil rights leader Fania Davis guided us as we explored this question. Davis believes that restorative justice processes can be used to forge new futures based on transformed relationships, recognition of one another’s humanity, and new social structures. Her restorative justice work—which she practices in the Oakland, California, school system—involve s truth-telling encounters, deep dialogue, acknowledging harms, and taking action to make things as right as possible.

That gives us a roadmap. It means we own uncomfortable truths: That this country’s wealth was created by the forced labor of kidnapped Africans using land taken by violence and duplicity from Native peoples.

That the trauma continued after emancipation through convict labor, lynching, land grabs, Jim Crow laws, job and housing discrimination, and other practices that excluded African Americans from economic opportunities. Native peoples saw the intentional destruction of their culture and livelihoods, their children taken away to residential schools where they were physically and sexually abused.

The result of this brutality is enormous wealth for some (almost exclusively white people) while others are left impoverished.

Acknowledging these truths is a first step toward reconciliation. Just as important is looking for the many ways injustice continues in our communities, workplaces, relationships, and in the criminal justice system—and working to make it right.

And that’s where the second cover comes in—the one of Garza and her friends. Love, Garza told us, is at the heart of #BlackLives-Matter. The sustaining power of that love and compassion opens possibilities not only for rebellion but for transformation.

If we want to someday live in the Beloved Community envisioned by Rev. King, it will mean acknowledging the pain and anger, along with the love. It will mean the descendants of slaves and slave traders meet face to face and make peace. It will mean acknowledging that some of our revered universities were founded by men who fostered genocide. It will mean making real change in our police system and in the systems that create poverty, and ending mass incarceration. And it will mean drawing upon the best of our spiritual teachings on healing wounds. If we do that hard, challenging work, day by day—with anger, at times, and with compassion—we can begin to make it right.

Sarah van Gelder
Co-founder and Editor in Chief
THE MISSION OF YES!
is to support you in building a just and sustainable world. In each issue we focus on a different theme through these lenses:

NEW VISIONS
Solving today’s big problems will take more than a quick fix. These authors offer clarity about the roots of our problems and visions of a better way.

WORLD & COMMUNITY
New models that foster justice and real prosperity, and sustain the Earth’s living systems. How can we bring these models to life and put them to work?

THE POWER OF ONE
Stories of people who find their courage, open their hearts, and discover what it means to be human in today’s world.

BREAKING OPEN
Infographics, visual storytelling, and the arts—taking you into unexpected spaces where business-as-usual breaks open into new possibilities.

18
Healing History’s Wounds, One-on-One
The story of a slave descendant and a slave-trader descendant as they mourn, confront their fears, and hear the story of the “Other.”
By Sharon Leslie Morgan and Thomas Norman DeWolf

28
The Moral Case for Reparations
They are a means to a more just society, not an end to attain absolution.
By Dr. Shmuly Yanklowitz

30
Founded on Genocide
Two universities are answering for their founder’s role in the Sand Creek Massacre. By Ned Blackhawk

32
Alicia Garza on #BlackLivesMatter
A hashtag-turned-civil-rights-movement sparks a national conversation about racism—and love. By Liz Pleasant

25
Just the Facts: Centuries of Theft
A nation built on the back of slavery and racism.
43
Interview: Desmond Tutu and Mpho Tutu
Can we create racial peace in America? *Interviewed by Sarah van Gelder and Fania Davis*  
47 :: How to Ask for Forgiveness

35
When Cops Are Part of the Community
Successful community policing says law enforcement isn’t the only goal. *By Christopher Moraff*

40
Rules for White People
How white people can be real allies: self-reflection and honesty. *By Robert Jensen*

38
Rituals That Heal Us
The medicine wheel’s traditions and ceremonies can mend community trauma. *By Patricia St. Onge*

58
The Homes We Choose
As our lives take surprising turns, one thing is constant: the search for a comfortable place to stretch out on the couch. *By Norman Allen*

43
ON THE COVER

52
IN REVIEW :: Radical homemaker Shannon Hayes on Scott D. Sampson’s *How to Raise a Wild Child*, Jade Snow on the documentary *Kumu Hina*

62
YES! BUT HOW :: 5 Medicines in Your Backyard

64
ANOTHER WAY :: Debt Is Not the Problem
Ned Blackhawk
Page 30
A professor of history and American studies at Yale University, Blackhawk coordinates the Yale Group for the Study of Native America. A graduate of McGill University, he is the author of Violence Over the Land: Indians and Empires in the Early American West, an award-winning study of the American Great Basin. He served as one of four external faculty members for the Northwestern John Evans Study Committee and wrote for The New York Times about the Sand Creek Massacre, calling for a National Day of Indigenous Remembrance. Originally from Detroit, he is a member of the Te-Moak Tribe of Western Shoshone Indians of Nevada.

Fania Davis
Page 45
Davis is a civil rights attorney and co-founder and executive director of RJOY, Restorative Justice for Oakland Youth. She came of age in Birmingham, Alabama, during the civil rights era; the murder of two childhood friends in the 1963 Sunday School bombing crystallized within her a passionate commitment to social transformation. She is the sister of civil rights activist Angela Davis. She has a doctorate in indigenous studies and has served as counsel to the International Council of Thirteen Indigenous Grandmothers.

Norman Allen
Page 58
Allen’s work as a playwright takes him to some far-flung places. Last summer, he found himself in Tokyo for the opening of a musical based on Merrimee’s Carmen and in Ljubljana to lead a writing workshop and to see his play Nijinsky’s Last Dance performed. “It’s fascinating to experience your work in a language you don’t know,” he says. “In a good translation, you can recognize the original rhythms of the piece, and it’s always fun to hear the audience laugh exactly where you meant them to.”
Together, With Earth, Spring 2015

It’s Not About Returning to the Past—We Need to Be Better Than Our Ancestors

For several years now, I have enjoyed YES! and anticipate enjoying it years from now.

Mr. Paton this month, however, touched on a cultural belief that I find troublesome. I take issue with his interpretation of human history and our relationship with the Earth. It’s vital that our species change, but it’s a mistake to look to our ancestors for an adequate example of how to make those changes.

Our ancestors were not simply innocents that “lived in balance with nature … acknowledging our kinship with Earth and with other living beings.” They were the people who invented agriculture and organized religion. They must have had reasons for doing so. The lives of most of our ancestors were brutal and short, giving motivation to create easier, less demanding lives. We craved rules about how to please the gods. Western civilization is not the only culture that has decimated regions. It seems to be a pattern with our species. Truthfully, it seems to be the way of a number of species.

There are so many of us now, though, that we can no longer simply move on to the next spot.

It’s a mistake to look backward for our vision of the future. We do not need to get back to what we were, but to transform ourselves into something more. To grow up and become not enemies … of the Earth and the Divine, but partners. I truly believe this is possible. Let’s not sell ourselves short by believing that we used to be better than we are now.

Rev. JJ Crow
Beaverton, Oregon

More Conversations to Cross the Divide

I love the latest issue, particularly the dialogue between a progressive and a conservative. I think every issue should feature similar dialogues. Progressives and conservatives all want a better world for their grandchildren. This is their common ground. We need to find more common ground and fewer divisions.

Nick Page
Melrose, Massachusetts

I’d like to thank you for writing a fabulous quarterly publication that renews my sense of hope and joy. I would like in particular to thank you for the article “The New Left-Right Alliance Against Corporate Rule” in your spring issue.

I have my feet in both of these worlds (I am essentially a moderate when you average it all out), and I really appreciate such a beautiful, subtle way of framing how progressives and conservatives differ in some areas and find unity in others. I live in an area where being conservative can be considered a bad word (the San Francisco Bay Area), and that interview put into such eloquent terms how I sway between those two worlds; I should hand it to people every time I try to explain myself and the person I am talking to has a stereotype firmly ingrained in their mind. Thank you so much. Keep up the good work!

Chiara Jacobus
Richmond, California

Send your responses to editors@yesmagazine.org. Or mail to 284 Madrona Way NE, Suite 116, Bainbridge Island, WA 98110.
In 1974, a bored teenager picked up a book about bees in the library. Immediately fascinated by bees and the people who loved and cared for them, she went to work for a commercial beekeeper in New Mexico. “I never looked back,” Dr. Marla Spivak says.

Spivak, who now holds a doctorate in entomology from the University of Kansas, has recently turned her efforts to raising awareness of the declining bee population over the last decade, a situation with serious consequences. “Bees are the most important pollinators of flowering plants, which includes most fruits, vegetables, and nuts in our diet,” she says. “Our nutrition, health, and food supply depend on bees.”

In her lab at the University of Minnesota, Spivak breeds bees for hygienic behavior. “Hygienic bees are able to detect diseased and parasitized brood—immature bees—and weed them out of the nest,” she says. The Bee Squad, an extension and outreach program that runs from the lab, provides beekeeping services to businesses and helps educate and mentor urban beekeepers. But for those of us who aren’t scientists or beekeepers, Spivak offers a much simpler way to help bees: “Plant flowers.”

Rob and Chelsea McFarland didn’t choose the bees; the bees chose them. “One day, we were out in the garden and a swarm showed up,” they say. Years later, the founders of the Los Angeles nonprofit HoneyLove are dedicated to training urban beekeepers and raising awareness of bees in cities.

As they learned more about—and fell in love with—honeybees, the McFarlands realized promoting bee habitat in cities was an important part of health and food sustainability. “We need to grow more of our food closer to home. That means growing food in the urban environment,” Rob says. “That means honeybees.”

Cities can even provide a safe haven for bees, Chelsea adds. “There are fewer pesticides in the city than in the traditional farmland setting,” she says. “Our bees are actually healthier in the city.”

HoneyLove’s mission is to spread that message through outreach and media presence. If there’s something he hopes they accomplish, Rob says, it’s “that the narrative has been changed from fear of bees to one of really embracing bees and welcoming bees into our community.”

In the battle for conservation, it’s nice to have someone like Lori Ann Burd on your side. Burd is the environmental health director at the Center for Biological Diversity, a veteran activist turned seasoned lawyer.

After advocating against Keystone XL and mountaintop-removal coal mining, Burd is now fighting the chemical industry’s use of pesticides, notably neonicotinoids. “They’re a new class of insecticide in which the entire plant is insecticidal,” Burd explains. “The plant is fine, but all parts of it are poisonous to bugs.”

In March, Burd helped draft a letter urging President Obama to take action against the widespread use of these poisons and filed a lawsuit against the Environmental Protection Agency for failing to fulfill its obligations under the Endangered Species Act.

“It’s hard to overestimate the importance of pollinators,” Burd says. “One out of three bites of food that we take requires pollination. What I’m trying to do is help people understand that the fate of humans is intertwined with the fate of all species.” And when asked what keeps her going in the face of constant challenge, she replies, “Winning.”
SARAH HATTON
Activist’s Message Beautifully Written in Dead Bees

Sometimes you can’t understand the battle until you see the bodies. Quebec-based artist and beekeeper Sarah Hatton’s mathematical arrangements of dead honeybees are an entrancing and sobering reminder that human activity, like the use of neonicotinoid pesticides, is responsible for the death of bees on a mass scale. After losing two of her own beehives, Hatton coped by transforming her dead bees into art. As the project gained attention, she saw the opportunity to raise awareness and help people understand the implications of bee colony collapse. Now other beekeepers donate their own casualties to her work.

Below left, “The Circle,” patterned after crop circles. Below center, “Florid,” made up of 500 dead bees following the Fibonacci curve in the same arrangement as seeds on the head of a sunflower. Below right, “Cluster (Flower of Life),” recreates the cluster pattern that attracts bees to flowers, a survival instinct turned death wish if the flower has been exposed to pesticides. “Cluster” is also the word for the starting point of an epidemiological investigation.
One Poem That Saved a Forest  Jacqueline Suskin

1.
What can a single poem inspire?
What can one verse induce?
One poem can offer an outlet for healing.
A distinct lyric can allow connection to occur.
One poem can lead to the most unlikely friendship.
A single stanza can change the fate of a forest.

2.
I'm Jacqueline Suskin.
The past four years I've performed Poem Store:
a public project that consists of exchanging on-demand poetry
about any subject, composed on a manual typewriter, in trade
for any donation.

I've done most of my work in Arcata at the Saturday Farmers Market.
I lived in and around this northern California coastal town for
three years. The community embraced me and treated me as their
unofficial town poet.

I think of this place as the throne of the earth.
Where I go to wander through ancient forests, stroll the edge
of the continent and kneel along the lip of clear cold rivers.

3.
Here I learned the language of landscape.
Here I became acquainted with a history
of harvest. Everywhere I looked the trees
were owned, considered a crop, nurtured
and prepared for our consumption.

Folks would camp high up in the old growth
redwoods trying their hand as saviors, but
nothing can stop the might of human need.

I wanted to know more about this system.
I wanted to look the whole of it in the eye
and ask it to transform. No matter how much
I read, no matter how many tree-sitters I
talked to, I still felt a huge section of the
equation missing. I still felt there was
something I could do that wasn't being done.
This is Neal Ewald.
Neal is the Senior Vice President of Green Diamond Resource Company.

Green Diamond is a five-generation family-owned and highly controversial timber harvesting company that possesses 400,000 acres of land in California.

Green Diamond has a reputation for its clear cut logging practices, use of toxic herbicides, and issues with mass privatization of land. Lesser known and hardly celebrated are the recent sizeable adjustments the company has made, including receiving a Forest Stewardship Council certification for improved and responsible forestry.

In 2010 at the Arcata Farmers Market, I wrote Neal this poem per his request on the subject of Being Underwater.

Of all the things to do in life, all landscapes to believe in, all ways of proving anything is possible, with the weight of water around us we pay tribute to the finest possibility. When below the surface we take moments to look up and know that be it making life or not, all the force of the world lies deep and well in such an unknown place.
This poem inspired Neal to solicit another, this time through the mail.

He sent me a package. Inside was a book. He explained that he had lost his wife to cancer and this was a collection of her correspondence with friends and family for the five months before she passed away.

He wanted me to study the book and then compose a poem for him and his children to read as they finally spread her ashes in the ocean. He hadn’t been able to do this because he hadn’t found anything that he felt was good enough for such a moment. He didn’t want to choose a song or a poem from an anthology. He wanted something unique, something just for Wendy. When he met me, he felt he’d been led to me for a reason. I was to write this poem for his wife.

7. 
-Everything’s A Gift-

Here, we pay tribute to the teachers of wisdom. All who choose to recreate the standard way of leaving, who carefully hurl away grief in the name of celebrating the greater weave, who allow experience to shine as it should, the beauty of all things held high and seen well,

even in the darkest of times.

It is these guides who recognize the fickle ways of the body, knowing that all life is not bad in the mind, who discover the sturdy ground is in the kith and kin, in the loves we nurture with the simple give and take that can only be had through such constant connection.

It is those who settle on patience in the face of mystery and misfortune, knowing that we are but provided with words as explanations and everything’s a gift. And so beyond trying to figure answers and find ends, we should instead honor the circle we’ve been offered, allow for its turns and delivery to come with grace and acceptance so that we might leave it all behind knowing how perfect it was in all directions.

-For Wendy, Neal, Zach and Annie and all who continue to be touched by Wendy’s love and wisdoms. Written July 25th, 2010 by Jacqueline Suskin with honor and thanks.
8.

It wasn't until I composed and delivered
Wendy's poem that I even realized who Neal was.

He holds the key to the forest
and there isn't much that I care about more
than the forest. Neal presented a way for me
to be directly in service to the earth.

I was overwhelmed with the feeling
that we could collaborate and create change.

9. The Most Unlikely Pair:
The Poet & The Timber Baron.

Our friendship grew based upon the inherent trust
that comes from sharing such an intimate
experience. Our poetic exchange about Wendy
allowed for a comfortable and familial alliance.

We began having dinners, we started a book club,
I was invited to Green Diamond walks in the woods,
and always every encounter was full of discussion.
We mused about the future of the company, what
revisions could occur, what the public needed
to know, what problems needed solving.

Neal expressed great interest in my ideas.
He listened enthusiastically and his intrinsic
desire to explore the unknown was very clear.
He never once seemed unavailable, never like
a fat-cat businessman, but a true seeker,
an open-hearted wonderer.
10.

We created a shared language.
We developed themes to talk about each time
we saw one another: Grief, Activism, Poetry,
Women, Love, Corporate Accountability, Polarity,
Native Americans, Environmentalism, Dehumanization.

We shared inspirations and lessons:
I read stories about his father.
He taught me how to shoot guns and use a chainsaw.

We made plans:
I would help him create a permaculture homestead
design for his personal land. We would swim
in the ocean on anniversaries and honor Wendy
together, spreading lilies in the water,
and I would recite her poem.

11.

Above all we focused on one word: yes

Neal is dedicated to the discovery of how to say
yes. He wants to disrupt the concept that there
needs to be opposition. Throughout his career
in forestry he has strived to find a way to
dismantle dichotomy and meet his adversaries
in the middle.

This is extremely difficult when your opponent
chooses not to view you as a human being,
but simply as greedy and power hungry.

Green Diamond is a business
and Neal's job is to run this business.
If only objectors could form requests that he
could say yes to instead of far fetched
demands that fail to leave room for his connection
to his career. Neal is passionate about living
outside of the box. He is available, although
under the construct of his position, and he does
have a Yes Zone as he likes to call it.
He wants to experiment and do things differently.
Perhaps my experience with Neal could have ended with the deep exchange we had over the poems I created for him. If that were the only outcome of this connection I'd be completely satisfied. To see how those poems brought him healing was enough. But because of our trusting relationship, something else occurred.

The history of the McKay Tract, a piece of land that contains a grove of old growth redwood in Cutten, CA, is much too complex for me to tell here. Folks have dedicated years of their lives trying to preserve this forest. A young man named Farmer was the voice of this particular protest. He had been covertly living in the trees for a long time. He hated Green Diamond. Yet, with Farmer I saw possibility in his passion. After various promptings and considerable conversation, with my support Farmer took the initiative and reached out to Neal.

After a few in-depth meetings an arrangement developed. Green Diamond was already working on plans for the McKay Tract and Neal saw this common thread of interest as a way to connect with his adversaries. These two rivals figured out how to meet and discuss the forest while avoiding dehumanization. It didn't matter that they disagree about so many things. They chose to hear one another, to consider each other's perspective and not simply make demands. They worked within one another's Yes Zone.

The McKay Tract will not be cut. The nonprofit Trust for Public Land is working on turning a great deal of it into a community forest. This agreement caused a new communion, no matter how subtle. Forest protesters were able to see Neal's willingness. They can now credit his character and his obvious wish to say yes.

In each conversation I have with Neal he likes to remind me that this change occurred because of us and our discussions. I follow it all the way back to the fact that a single poem created a spark.
With this story, a reminder bursts brilliantly before us all. This is that age-old concept that one person can truly make a difference.

May we remember that everyone holding a place of power is still simply human. They may be grieving, they may be in need, they may be sitting with an ache that only we can help ease. They may be nothing like the picture that society paints of them and they may want to do something extraordinary.
Jacqueline Suskin is a writer, performance poet, and artist based in Los Angeles. She is the author of two books, the latest titled Go-Ahead & Like It, available from Ten Speed Press of Penguin Random House. Known for her ongoing work with Poem Store, Suskin composes on-demand poetry for customers who choose both a topic and a price in exchange for a unique verse. Poem Store has been her main occupation since 2009 and has taken her around the country with her typewriter in tow.
Number of bike trips in the United States in 2001: 3,314,000,000
Number of bike trips in the United States in 2009: 4,081,000,000
Increase in biking as a share of personal trips for white Americans, 2001–2009: 20%
Increase in biking as a share of personal trips for Asian Americans, 2001–2009: 60%
Increase in biking as a share of personal trips for black Americans, 2001–2009: 90%

Year the Clean Air Act was amended to expand government regulation of toxic air pollutants: 1990
Annual decrease in U.S. toxic air emissions since 1990: 3 million tons

Percentage of people from high-income families (top 25 percent) who earned a bachelor’s degree by age 24 in 1970: 40
Percentage of people from those families who earned a bachelor’s degree by age 24 in 2013: 77
Percentage of people from low-income families (bottom 25 percent) who earned a bachelor’s degree by age 24 in 1970: 6
Percentage of people from those families who earned a bachelor’s degree by age 24 in 2013: 9

Population immunity level needed to prevent sustained spread of measles: 92–94%
United States measles vaccination rate in 2013: 91%
Number of countries with a higher measles vaccination rate than the United States in 2013: 113

Median net worth of United States black households in 2013: $11,000
Median net worth of U.S. Latino households in 2013: $13,700
Median net worth of U.S. white households in 2013: $141,900

Number of Swedish homes currently heated by burning trash in incinerators: 950,000
Percentage of garbage in Sweden that now ends up in the dump: Less than 1%
Tons of trash Sweden imported from other countries to meet heating demands in 2014: 800,000

Percentage of wealth the average American believes to be owned by the top 20% of U.S. households: 59
Percentage of wealth actually owned by the top 20% of U.S. households: 84
Percentage of wealth the average American believes to be owned by the bottom 20% of U.S. households: 9
Percentage of wealth actually owned by the bottom 20% of U.S. households: 0.1
Percentage of Americans who cite income inequality as a major problem in the U.S.: 5

Complete citations at yesmagazine.org/ptc
2. People for Bikes and the Alliance for Biking and Walking, Mar. 2015
4. Pell Institute, 2015
8. Al Jazeera America, Mar. 2015
HOW TO MAKE IT RIGHT

The harms caused by centuries of wrongdoing are deeply ingrained in our cultural psyche. These include the original sins of the founding of our country—the ethnic cleansing of Native Americans and building an economy on slavery. This issue looks at how to right wrongs and embark on a journey to a more inclusive and equitable society.


Just the Facts. A nation built on the back of slavery and racism.

Righteous Debt. Reparations for slavery are a means to a more just society, not an end to attain absolution.

Founded on Genocide. Two universities answer for their founder’s role in the Sand Creek Massacre.

#BlackLivesMatter. Someone had to ask: Why are black lives consistently undervalued?

Protect and Serve. Successful community policing says law enforcement can’t be the only goal.

Rituals That Heal Us. How to use the medicine wheel for repairing our relationships.

Racial Etiquette. How white people can be real allies: self-reflection, honesty, and a few simple rules.

The Way to Forgiveness. Desmond Tutu and his daughter Mpho Tutu on creating racial peace in America.
Healing History’s Wounds, One-on-One

Sharon Leslie Morgan and Thomas Norman DeWolf

Sharon’s Story

I burst into tears in the parking lot of the Lowndes County Interpretive Center in rural Alabama. Tom and I were five days into the 6,000-plus mile “healing journey” that informed Gather at the Table, the book we wrote about healing the many wounds Americans inherited from the legacy of slavery. We had just crossed the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma where, in March 1965, John Lewis (now a 15-term U.S. congressman) and more than 600 protesters tried to begin a 54-mile march to Montgomery. On a day that came to be known as “Bloody Sunday,” Alabama state troopers confronted the peaceful marchers and viciously attacked them with billy clubs. I watched these events unfold on television as a 14-year-old child embraced in the warm comfort of my family home in Chicago.
THE HARD TRUTH IS THAT MY FACE DOES REPRESENT THE FACE OF OPPRESSION. I’M WHITE. I’M MALE. I’M HETEROSEXUAL. I’M ABLE-BODIED.
Tom and I had just heard the story recounted in epic detail at the National Voting Rights Museum and Institute at the foot of the Edmund Pettus Bridge. As we sat in my Jeep in the parking lot off of U.S. Highway 80, I could not contain my emotion any longer. I gripped the steering wheel and cried like a baby. I was so angry and overwhelmed; what I most wanted was for Tom to get the F*** out of the car.

My great-grandparents were enslaved in Lowndes County, Alabama, which is at the heart of the historic march route. They lived a lifetime of Bloody Sundays. My great-grandmother Rhoda Reeves Leslie was alive when I was a child. I knew her. I loved her. I had no concrete idea, until that very moment in the parking lot, what anguish she and other members of my family had suffered as slaves, and then as people who were terrorized by Jim Crow laws, disenfranchised from voting, and kept from becoming full citizens in “the land of the free and the home of the brave.” In 1965, there were zero black voters in Lowndes County because of voter suppression through poll taxes and intimidation. Even today, it is deeply impoverished. Tom’s face morphed into a representation of all white people and everything they had done to people like me.

**Tom’s Story**

I didn’t know what to say. So I said nothing. I sat in the passenger seat next to Sharon while she sobbed. Twenty minutes earlier, on the drive from the Voting Rights Museum, I had asked her, “What would you do if you had lived here then?”

“I would kill them,” she said, staring straight ahead as she drove, clutching the steering wheel in a death grip. I watched the first tear roll down her cheek.

I am often accused of being a Kumbaya kind of guy. I believe seriously in love and peace and want everybody to get along. I also believe that people are born with a basic sense of humanity that can enable them to change—not just themselves but the communities in which they live. I know Sharon shares that belief, but it is sometimes hard to keep the faith.

We first met in 2008, through Coming to the Table (comingtonothetable.org), a nonprofit organization founded by the descendants of both slaveholders and enslaved people in partnership with the Center for Justice and Peacebuilding (CJP) at Eastern Mennonite University in Harrisonburg, Virginia. [Tom is currently executive director of Coming to the Table.] The founders were inspired by the vision of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in his historic March on Washington speech that one day “the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slaveholders will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood.” The work of Coming to the Table is to acknowledge and heal wounds from racism that are rooted in the United States’ history of slavery.

In 2009, Sharon and I embarked upon a journey to test whether two people—an African American woman from South Side Chicago who is descended from enslaved people, and a white man from central Oregon who is descended from the largest slave-trading dynasty in U.S. history—could come to grips with deep, traumatic, historic wounds and find healing. We had no idea where we would end up. We were just lost souls looking for direction and relief.

So there we were, sitting in a car in Alabama, bearing witness to yet another example of the great American trauma that keeps all of us mired in the misery of racism. Grappling with that awareness isn’t easy, especially when sitting next to a woman crying her heart out over something I couldn’t totally comprehend.

The hard truth is that my face does represent the face of oppression. I’m white. I’m male. I’m heterosexual. I’m able-bodied. I was raised Christian in a middle-class home and community. Until the summer of 2001, when I joined members of the DeWolf family on a mission to retrace the triangle slave-trade route of our ancestors, I was blissfully unaware of my unearned privilege. On that journey I was exposed to horrific truths about the foundations upon which America is built and the systems that continue to benefit people who look like me and discriminate against people who look like Sharon.

In spite of that understanding, what Sharon said did not seem fair. I am not my slave-trading ancestors. I helped expose their sins when we made the PBS/POV documentary *Traces of the Trade* and when I wrote my first book, *Inheriting the Trade*.

One great revelation along the way came from Coming to the Table co-founder Will Hairston, who said to me, “Guilt is the glue that holds racism together.” We build walls with bricks of denial to protect ourselves from feeling it. In the end, guilt is divisive and counterproductive. Instead of the destructive feeling of guilt, what I do feel is profound grief over the enormous damage done. I feel a responsibility to acknowledge and address the consequences of our historical inheritance. That is why I dedicate myself (and encourage other white people to do the same) to using my privilege to expose the truth and make a positive difference.

During the three years after that day in the parking lot, Sharon and I drove thousands more miles and waded ever deeper into the morass of history. Along the way, we laughed, cried, argued, and shared transformative experiences that changed the way we both look at the world. We subsequently participated in STAR trainings (Strategies for Trauma Awareness & Resilience; www.emu.edu/cjp/star/) through CJP to seek ways to make sense of it all. Through STAR, we learned about terrifying social patterns exhibited by deeply traumatized societies and what we can do to heal their effects.
TOM’S FACE MORPHED INTO A REPRESENTATION OF ALL WHITE PEOPLE AND EVERYTHING THEY HAD DONE TO PEOPLE LIKE ME.
The hidden wound

In 1970, poet, essayist, and environmentalist Wendell Berry published “The Hidden Wound,” a 137-page essay on race and racism. He wrote: “[Racism] involves an emotional dynamic that has disordered the heart both of the society as a whole and of every person in the society.” He said, “I want to know, as fully and exactly as I can, what the wound is and how much I am suffering from it. And I want to be cured; I want to be free of the wound myself, and I do not want to pass it on to my children. ... I know if I fail to make at least the attempt, I forfeit any right to hope that the world will become better than it is now.”

A foundational American belief is that certain people are less than human, singled out for disdain, undeserving of respect, and certainly not entitled to equal representation in the “American Dream.” The short list of atrocities that define the African American experience shows those beliefs in action: African people were enslaved in all 13 original colonies. Ninety-five percent of all American trans-Atlantic slave-trading originated from northern ports. Rhode Island, home to the DeWolf slave traders, was responsible for 50 percent of it. More than two centuries of brutalization during slavery were followed by 100 years of Jim Crow. Slaves were formally liberated, but African Americans were subjected to the terrorism of the Ku Klux Klan, lynching, and other atrocities. Beginning in 1910, in two waves over 60 years, more than 5 million people joined the Great Migration from the South. They sought opportunity in the “promised land” of the North, but found only a veneer of equality. The Red Summer of 1919, a wave of riots initiated by whites against blacks in both Northern and Southern cities, proved the point.

Today, relative to white people, people of color fall on the negative side of virtually all measurable social indicators. In 2014, the Pew Research Center reported that “the median white household was worth $141,900, 12.9 times more than the typical black household, which was worth just $11,000.” Poverty rates for African Americans are more than 160 percent higher; unemployment is double. White and black Americans use and sell illegal drugs at remarkably similar rates, but African Americans are incarcerated at 10 times the rate of whites for drug offenses. Seventy-six unarmed black people were killed by police from 1999–2014, including—just in the last year—Michael Brown (Missouri), Eric Garner (New York), and John Crawford (Ohio). According to ProPublica’s analysis of federally collected data on fatal police shootings, “young black males in recent years were at a far greater risk of being shot dead by police than their white counterparts—21 times greater.”

Cycles of violence

The STAR program emerged in the aftermath of the World Trade Center and Pentagon attacks of September 11, 2001. As described in STAR: The Unfolding Story 2001–2011, the Center for Justice and Peacebuilding at Eastern Mennonite University and Church World Service partnered to create a training program for religious leaders and caregivers working to support traumatized communities. The program evolved into trainings that were useful to anyone working with traumatized individuals and communities. It is grounded in a multidisciplinary framework that integrates neurobiology, psychology, restorative justice, conflict transformation, human security, and spirituality. More than 7,000 people working in more than 60 locations around the world have received STAR training.

The illustration below of the “Cycles of Violence” shows how people typically respond to traumatic wounds. We become caught up in a seemingly infinite loop of victimhood and aggression that is fueled by reenactment. Our conscious and unconscious beliefs about how and why we’ve been harmed and who caused the harm often result in a desire for retribution. As STAR trainers say, “hurt people hurt people.” Traumatic wounds result from a variety of sources and impact individuals,
families, communities, and societies. These impacts fester in wounds that have never healed—like the legacies of slavery, racism, sexism, and religious intolerance. Trauma affects the well-being of the whole person: body, mind, and spirit.

No one can “just get over” traumatic wounds. That’s not how our bodies and brains work. If we don’t do the work we need to heal, we end up trapped in cycles of violence. But that’s not inevitable. The STAR approach offers ways to break the cycles.

Recovering from trauma and building resilience

Without intervention, our thoughts and feelings become beliefs. Our beliefs direct our actions and inform the reality of our everyday lives. If we are stuck in cycles of violence, our thoughts, beliefs, and actions become mired in fear. Breaking cycles of violence and building resilience (see graphic at bit.ly/1DWLzoe) requires fully engaging our brains with the conscious intention of healing.

The actions that lead toward healing and reconciliation center on acknowledging the harm through mourning, confronting our fears, hearing the story of the “Other,” choosing to forgive, and incorporating principles of restorative justice in ways that proffer dignity for all who have been harmed by stressing responsibility and restitution.

The STAR approach connects personal and community healing with organizational and societal well-being. It rests at the foundation of the Coming to the Table approach to healing the lingering wounds that emanate from the American institution of slavery. The four interrelated activities involved in the Coming to the Table method are:

First: Researching, acknowledging, and sharing personal, family, and societal histories of race with openness and honesty. Truth and reconciliation commissions in countries like South Africa, Brazil, Colombia, and Canada are model attempts to reveal the whole truth of egregious wounds that afflict modern societies. They are typically combined with attempts to implement restorative justice to correct the wrongs.

Second: Connecting with others within and across racial lines in order to develop deep and accountable relationships. As an example, the original intent of the founders of Coming to the Table was to connect “linked descendants”—people who have a joint history in slavery (i.e., descendants of slaves and their slaveholders)—with a goal of engaging them in communication with one another and coming to terms with their shared history. In our own case, we are not as directly connected as that, but were able to find a way by “making friends on purpose” to cross the breach.

Third: Exploring ways to heal together. Support groups help people build meaningful relationships by sharing stories about traumatic experiences and responses. Rituals related to acknowledgment of the past help create connections between past and present in order to understand where harms originated, how they affect us in contemporary times, and how we can move forward to heal.

Fourth: The model challenges us to actively champion systemic change that supports repair and reconciliation between individuals, within families, and throughout society. The persistent inequality between races results from structural systems in which people are treated differently based on difference (race, power, privilege, etc.). From the recent Department of Justice report damning the pervasive, discriminatory policing practices in Ferguson, Missouri, to the persistent disparities between black and white people in wealth, education, health, employment, and housing, the effects are before our eyes if we are willing to see. The greatest challenge is eliminating disparities so that all people are treated equally and without prejudice based on their race, religion, gender, or sexual orientation.

There is no particular sequence to these four activities. In the final analysis, all are essential to move forward from trauma to healing. With regard to racism, white people often want to rush toward reconciliation without doing the necessary hard work that is required along the way. We are here to tell you: The road is not easy, but the benefits are enormous.

What you can do today

Racism. Sexism. Religious intolerance. Inequality. Violence. It is easy to feel overwhelmed. What can one person do?

Engage your rational brain. Think about things in different ways. Examine your subconscious beliefs. Act in ways that lead toward positive change. Open your eyes to the injustices around you. Open your heart to see others, not as the “Other” but as brothers and sisters in the human family. You will find that others who believe as you do will congregate together and build social and political power to change the institutions that presently seem to control our fate. When people’s hearts and minds change, collectives like Coming to the Table can be empowered to bring change to society at large.

In 49 B.C., Julius Caesar stood on the northern bank of the Rubicon River in Italy, leading an army in defiance of the Roman Republic. It was an act of treason. The phrase “crossing the Rubicon” has survived to refer to any individual or group committing itself irrevocably to a risky or revolutionary course of action. It has come to mean “passing the point of no return.”

In 1965, John Lewis and more than 600 others crossed the Edmund Pettus Bridge, the Rubicon of their day. We stand on the shore of today’s Rubicon—the Rubicon of racism. We have a choice to make. We can choose the difficult task to acknowledge and heal our nation’s historic, inherited wounds and break free from the Cycles of Violence. Or we can do as our ancestors have done to us: pass the wounds on to our children. How will you choose?

Sharon Leslie Morgan and Thomas Norman DeWolf co-authored Gather at the Table: The Healing Journey of a Daughter of Slavery and a Son of the Slave Trade (Beacon Press). Sharon is a pioneer in multicultural marketing and a founder of the National Black Public Relations Society. She is founder of OurBlackAncestry.com. Tom is the author of Inventing the Trade (Beacon Press). He is executive director for Coming to the Table, a STAR Practitioner, and a Certified Trainer for “Infinite Possibilities: The Art of Changing Your Life.” Sharon and Tom thank Elaine Zook Barge, Assistant Professor of the Practice of Trauma Awareness & Resilience, for her invaluable input to this article.
A NATION BUILT ON THE BACK OF SLAVERY AND RACISM

Why Reparations?

It began with 246 years of legal slavery in which we extracted wealth from the lives of African Americans. At the time of the Civil War, close to 4 million African Americans were enslaved, 13 percent of America’s total population. After the war, institutional injustices focused on stealing their land and jobs and ensuring that African Americans did not build wealth as fast as the rest of Americans. The economy we have today was built on this.
1. **Slavery launched modern capitalism and turned the U.S. into the wealthiest country in the world.**

- **Slave-harvested cotton dominated the 19th-century international market.**
  - **U.S. Cotton Production**
    - 1859: 2.25 billion pounds
    - 1870: 1.5 million pounds
- **Cotton built New York City into a commercial and financial center.**
  - For every dollar of cotton made, about 40 cents ended up in New York as the city supplied insurance, shipping, and financing.
  - **New York’s Share of All Cotton Revenue**
    - 1865: 33%
    - 1867: 58%
    - 1869: 64%
- **At the outbreak of the Civil War, the market value of slaves in the U.S. exceeded that of banks, factories, and railroads combined.**
  - **Slaves’ worth**
    - $3 billion
  - **Currency in circulation**
    - $450 million
  - **48% of total wealth of the South in 1860**

2. **Emancipation did not bring economic freedom to former slaves.**

- **The nation paid reparations to slave holders—not to slaves.**
  - **No 40 Acres and A Mule**
    - President Andrew Johnson overturned Gen. Sherman’s famous promise, which would have redistributed roughly 400,000 acres to newly freed black families.
- **Vagrancy laws allowed police to sweep up black men and then rent them out as convict labor.**
  - Following the war, convict leasing programs shifted the Southern prison populations to predominantly black.
  - **Black Convicts in Nashville, Tennessee’s Main Prison**
    - 1865: 33%
    - 1867: 58%
    - 1869: 64%
- **Discriminatory business policies kept white people economically ahead.**
  - **Business Licensing Fees Under Black Codes in 1870**
    - Black entrepreneurs: $100
    - White entrepreneurs: $0
  - Southern merchants used unfair credit to impede black wealth building.
  - **Interest Rates Charged by Merchants 1881–1889**
    - 44%–74% Georgia
    - 7% New York City

**Slavery launched modern capitalism and turned the U.S. into the wealthiest country in the world.**

**The nation paid reparations to slave holders—not to slaves.**

**Emancipation did not bring economic freedom to former slaves.**

**Discriminatory business policies kept white people economically ahead.**
Social safety nets have missed African Americans.

Social Security originally excluded domestic and agricultural workers—mostly African Americans, especially in the South.

**INELIGIBLE FOR SOCIAL SECURITY IN 1935**

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In 1933, the Home Owners' Loan Corporation was created and helped more than 1 million homeowners. The HOLC was the origin of "redlining" maps.

Racist policies contributed to the decline of black farmers.

By 1982, only 1.5 percent of farmers were black, and the USDA’s Civil Rights Office—which investigated loan program discrimination complaints—was closed.

Money meant for distressed homeowners supported segregation.

In 1933, the Home Owners’ Loan Corporation was created and helped more than 1 million homeowners. The HOLC was the origin of "redlining" maps.

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Discriminatory policies then kept African Americans from receiving help other citizens received.

The income gap has not budged since 1970.

For every dollar of assets white households have...

... black households have a dime.

African Americans have barely any of the nation’s wealth, and therefore little to pass down to future generations.

Economists estimate that up to 80 percent of lifetime wealth accumulation depends on intergenerational transfers.

**MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME in 2013**

- **White:** $58,000
- **Black:** $35,000

**NATIONAL WEALTH Owned by African Americans**

- 1865, just after Emancipation: 0.5%
- 1990, a full 125 years after Emancipation: 1.0%

**GOVERNMENT LOANS TO AVOID FORECLOSURE**

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<td>0 loans to blacks in white neighborhoods</td>
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Can we calculate the economic damages?

Estimates range from:

- **$59 trillion**
- **$24 trillion**
- **$15 trillion**
- **$6.4 trillion**

That’s MLK’s $800 billion in today’s dollars.

Martin Luther King Jr. calculated that making good on the promise of 40 acres and a mule ($20 a week since the late 1700s for 4 million slaves) would total $800 billion.*

*They owe us a lot of money."

Source citations at yesmagazine.org/JTF74
YES! Infographic by Jeff Neumann and Tracy Loeffelholz Dunn
Research by Heidi Bruce and Clo Copass. Images from Library of Congress.
“And when thou sendest him out free from thee, thou shalt not let him go away empty: Thou shalt furnish him liberally out of thy flock, and out of thy floor, and out of thy winepress: of that wherewith the LORD thy God hath blessed thee thou shalt give unto him. And thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in the land of Egypt, and the LORD thy God redeemed thee: therefore I command thee this thing to day.”

Deuteronomy 15: 13–15

The Moral Case for Reparations
Rabbi Dr. Shmuly Yanklowitz

Hanging in the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston is an indelible, haunting painting. It’s a maritime scene: a yellow sun setting above a blood-red sky while hurrying, unruly waves carry an 18th century ship. These elements don’t stir an emotional response, but the foreground does. Among the flotsam are shackles, limbs reaching out from beneath the water, forms of human beings struggling for survival. This is no accident. These remnants are of kidnapped slaves—cruelly thrown off the ship, left to the elements to suffer an ignoble death, brutally rendered in J.M.W. Turner’s masterpiece “The Slave Ship.”

Like the provenance of the Turner work, American slavery’s origins can be accurately traced. An estimated 10 to 12 million kidnapped Africans were transported and shipped via the “Middle Passage” to the New World. About 4 million slaves were sent to the American colonies from the late 17th through the early part of the 19th century. With a conservative estimate that 1 to 2 million died on the ships, conditions on board are inconceivable to conjure: dignity stripped as humans were chained together, packed tight as if ordinary chattel. Disease was commonplace, the dead and dying (indeed, some of the living) thrown overboard. Only about 400,000 of the millions of kidnapped Africans ultimately landed in North America (millions went to Brazil), but the legacy of the trans-Atlantic slave trade had a profound impact on the developing American colonies. By the early 1700s, for example, the population of slaves in South Carolina outnumbered the number of free people.

When we’re faced with an image like this one, we are reminded of the barbaric past that influences race relations in the United States today. Could this have been simple greed? Or something more pernicious? Though we are centuries removed from these practices, we are still coming to terms with their legacy. Today, a critical question remains for everyone who enjoys living in a free America: What is my debt to those who involuntarily suffered in the name of liberty and democracy?

This is a difficult question to reconcile. Yet it’s clear that the trauma of slavery continues to impact the contemporary American psyche. It is simply not enough to claim an abdication of blame simply because centuries have passed and society has progressed. Even the election of the first black president, while admirable, is only a single step in the right direction. To be truly accountable, forward-thinking citizens of a liberty-loving nation, we must rectify these inequities. We need reparations.

All too easily, the concept of reparations can be dismissed as a fanciful notion or anti-American. But look at what is happening: America has never addressed past debts in a satisfactory manner, and the strange fruit of our reticence is injurious, de facto discrimination. Eric Garner, Michael Brown, Freddie Gray, and the ensuing strife in Staten Island, Ferguson, and Baltimore are just a few of the examples.

Looking below the surface, the economic disequilibrium between whites and blacks is stark. The lack of wealth and economic power in the black community is linked to racial injustices, both obvious and subtle, motivated by unconscious bias. We need a shift in American moral thinking.

There have long been efforts to bring reparations into focus, but it is a difficult and unpleasant task. This is why the conversation around reparations has to be altered substantively. In Jewish religious and philosophical thought, there is a framework that addresses the concept of not being excused from past debts. Reparations are not punitive; they’re restorative. This idea is mirrored by Professor Mary Frances Berry of the University of Pennsylvania in her call for reparations. “Reparations for unpaid labor are restitution,” she says. As the leading advocate for a proposed “reparation superfund,” Berry calls for “payment for damages to make whole for harm done.” She goes on: “No restrictions should be made on how the money is spent. If their ancestors had received wages for their labor, they too would have bought what they wanted, invested it as they desired, or given it to churches or schools or charities.”

There are historical precedents for making reparations. One of the most notable is how Germany acts decades after the events of the Shoah, the Holocaust. Even though German society has evolved considerably and is far removed from those dark events, there is still a desire to show a deep sense of contrition for the evil deeds performed in the name of the nation. Not so long ago, the American government under President Ronald Reagan apologized and gave some compensation to Japanese individuals and their families forced to suffer imprisonment during World War II.

Reparations for slavery are a means to a more just society, not an end to attain absolution. Should we continue to ignore the original turpitude of our founding generations, then we remain complicit. As a Jewish educator, I teach the importance of practicing not only empathy but also action to liberate the enslaved and formerly enslaved. Reparations are our moral responsibility. We must fashion a society that reflects the justice we want to see in the world.
November 29, 2014, was the 150th anniversary of the Sand Creek Massacre, one of the most violent days in American Indian history. On that fateful morning, a force of American cavalry officers, led by Colonel John Chivington, and settler militia forces mounted an attack in southeastern Colorado. Through the day, into the night, and again the next morning, nearly 700 soldiers raped, mutilated, and killed peaceful Cheyenne and Arapaho Indians allied under the leadership of Black Kettle. Accounts at the time noted the brutality of the attack, with soldiers taking scalps and body parts as trophies. At least 163 community members perished, accelerating a process of ethnic cleansing that ultimately cleared all equestrian Indians from the eastern half of the state. A territory that held few English-speaking communities in 1850 would, by 1870, become dominated by them.

In the lead-up to the 150th anniversary, both Northwestern University and the University of Denver issued detailed reports on Sand Creek. Those investigations were inspired by the demands of students and community members that the universities examine the role of John Evans, Colorado’s

"Battle of Sand Creek" (1936) by Robert Lindneaux portrays his concept of the assault on the peaceful Cheyenne and Arapaho village by the U.S. Army.
second governor. Evans helped found Northwestern before moving to Colorado, where he subsequently founded the University of Denver.

Evans had ordered the recruitment of his territory’s volunteer militia and had fanned the flames of racial hatred in the region beforehand. A Methodist doctor from Illinois, Evans became territorial governor shortly after the election of his close friend Abraham Lincoln, whose administration worked to expand the Republican Party’s influence in the West. Evans had hoped to bring the Colorado Territory into the Union as a free state, and the University of Denver became one of the first universities established in the West. His name figures prominently across each institution as well as their respective metropolitan areas. Northwestern has the John Evans Alumni Center. Endowed professorships carry his name. Evanston, Illinois, home of Northwestern, as well as Colorado’s Mt. Evans are named after him.

Both universities lack Native American Studies programs, which may partly explain why they were so unprepared for student and community concerns. Neither institution had ever recognized Evans’ involvement with the massacre. University leaders were unaware of their founder’s ties to Native American massacre and dispossession, and few American Indian history or studies courses have ever been offered at either school.

The National Park Service has declared the massacre site a National Historic Site, and tribal members from across the West have long participated in annual commemorative runs to honor and remember those lost. As the state of Colorado formed the Colorado Sand Creek Massacre Commemorative Commission, students, faculty, alumni, and community members asked how their universities could not know about, let alone acknowledge, their founder’s connections to such potentially genocidal actions?

The appalling actions of the past appeared mirrored in the present by the shocking underrepresentation of Native American students, staff, and faculty on both campuses. Native American students and faculty comprise less than one-half of 1 percent of the Northwestern campus community, although Chicago is home to tens of thousands of tribal members. Both Chicago and Denver have decades-old Indian communities and have attracted Native people for generations. Each served as a major urban relocation center for government programs that subsidized the one-way migration of reservation community members to urban areas as part of the U.S. Termination policy. Prominent community centers, pan-Indian associations, and annual powwows, including the Denver March Powwow, are located in each.

In response to the protests, administrators on both campuses established review committees that exposed the deep moral culpability of Evans’ actions. While he was out of the state at the time of the massacre, Evans had both authorized and encouraged settlers to “kill and destroy” Plains Indian communities, had pleaded for increased military units, and, as the region’s foremost state leader, had fatefuly informed Cheyenne leaders that retribution for summer raids was forthcoming. A subsequent committee at Northwestern attempted to outline institutional remedies aimed at commemorating the victims of the massacre. In addition, each university committed to increase recruitment, retention, and advancement of Native students and faculty. These processes continue, as do discussions about how best to commemorate the Sand Creek atrocities. Inviting prominent speakers, suggested freshman common readings, and preliminary commitments to build centers for Native American Studies characterize such efforts. The institutional commitment needed to maintain these undertakings, however, is unclear.

Nationally, Indian students and community members have worked to commemorate the legacies of the massacre as well as to recognize the larger history of atrocities against Native peoples. Throughout November, Native American community members held vigils and observed moments of silence to commemorate these atrocities. Such events, social media campaigns, newspaper editorials, and related activism brought heightened attention to the subject. On December 10, 2014, Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel and the Chicago City Council passed a resolution recognizing the city’s place in the massacre, sending notice to the board of trustees at each campus. The resolution drew upon both universities’ committee reports, as well as historic coverage from the Chicago Tribune which noted 150 years ago the acts of “hideous cruelty” that occurred during the massacre. Acknowledging as well the “genocidal mission” of Chivington, the resolution states, “we, the Mayor, and members of the Chicago City Council … do hereby reflect upon that day of sorrow and extend our deepest regrets and sympathies to the descendants of the men, women, and children slain at Sand Creek.”

Such efforts of commemoration begin a process of acknowledgement and recognition, but are by themselves insufficient for a full reckoning of the legacies of U.S. state violence against Indian communities. Sand Creek is seared into the cultural heritage of Cheyenne and Arapaho communities and into the regional as well as institutional identities of these universities. While astonishing, the historical amnesia surrounding the racial hatred and violent practices of U.S. leaders remains comparatively insignificant in the face of the incalculable losses of life, land, and possibilities on that fateful day. "

Ned Blackhawk is a professor of History and American Studies at Yale University. He is the author of Violence Over the Land: Indians and Empires in the Early American West.
Black Lives Matter

Too bad we have to say it, but it’s bringing people together.
Liz Pleasant

Following the police killing of Walter Scott in North Charleston, South Carolina, TIME Magazine hit newsstands with a cover dominated by large, block letters: “Black Lives Matter.” #BlackLivesMatter has infiltrated America’s modern vocabulary. It’s the rallying cry for a movement that began getting a lot of national attention after the police killing of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri.

But #BlackLivesMatter began before Ferguson.

When George Zimmerman was acquitted of murder charges after killing Trayvon Martin, Alicia Garza of Oakland, California, turned to Facebook to express her anger and sadness. As a longtime social activist, Garza, who is now 34 years old, had been working for years to end systemic racism. She had led activist movements in the San Francisco Bay Area, from efforts to expose and end police violence to actions to secure free public transportation for youth. Currently, Garza is the special project director at the National Domestic Workers Alliance, where she works to protect the rights of black women employed in positions like housekeeping, childcare, and in-home aid.

Garza says that the moment she logged onto social media after the announcement of the Zimmerman verdict was eye-opening. She was bombarded with defeatist comments like “What did you expect?” or “I knew they would never convict him.” Overwhelmingly, these comments all pointed out the same thing: It’s treated as acceptable for unarmed black boys and men to be killed without consequence.

Garza knew that the criminal justice system was not going to address this problem. To fill that void, she and her friends Patrisse Cullors and Opal Tometi founded #BlackLivesMatter to spark nationwide discussion of the way black lives are consistently undervalued in America and what people can do to change that. “We really felt like there needed to be a space that people could relate to that didn’t blame black people for conditions we didn’t create,” explains Garza.

“When we began, #BlackLivesMatter was a series of social media platforms that connected people online to take action together offline,” says Garza. At the time, the three women were involved in Black Organizing for Leadership and Dignity (BOLD). Access to that national network helped their message spread quickly, and soon activist organizations across the country were using #BlackLivesMatter to shine light on underreported incidents of black people being attacked or killed by police.

Now, more than three years after the death of Trayvon Martin, the phrase has become a rallying cry for a new wave of resistance in places like Ferguson; Staten Island, New York; and Baltimore, after the police killings of Michael Brown, Eric Garner, and Freddie Gray. And it’s more than a hashtag—it’s a civil rights movement.

#BlackLivesMatter has inspired important in-person gatherings and conversations around race, prejudice, and police brutality across the country. Garza saw some of those conversations firsthand when she traveled to Ferguson as a participant in the Black Lives Matter Ride.

The ride, largely coordinated by Cullors and fellow activist Darnell L. Moore, was an effort that got more than 500 black folks from across the country to Ferguson through organized transportation and lodging. Once they arrived, participants offered their skills and expertise to the cause, including medical aid, legal assistance, and advice and support for the new group of organizers developing in the wake of Michael Brown’s death.

“It was incredible,” says Garza. “Black people of all stripes coming together to love on one another, committed to our collective transformation.”

One reason the reach of #BlackLivesMatter has spread so far is that it’s more inclusive than traditional civil rights movements. “Our diversity in leadership is an important component,” says Garza. “We have diverged from a model that is about following one charismatic leader, usually a man who is straight.”

Leaders of the movement include, for example, many black, queer women. In part because of that diversity, #BlackLivesMatter is changing the landscape of the modern black civil rights movement in America. It has brought people together who have traditionally been hard to get on the same page.

There are elders, mothers and their children, queer people, and straight people, all united around this movement and determined to bring black lives to the center of the conversation and demand that black voices be heard. “Love is what sustains us through all the hardships that come with this work. Even love for people..."
“LOVE IS WHAT SUSTAINS US THROUGH ALL THE HARDSHIPS THAT COME WITH THIS WORK. EVEN LOVE FOR PEOPLE WHO DISAGREE,” SAYS GARZA. “LOVE IS WHAT WILL ULTIMATELY GET US TO A PLACE WHERE WE CAN CHANGE THE WORLD WE LIVE IN.”

Photographed with Alicia Garza are members of the Bay Area chapter of #BlackLivesMatter and the “Black Friday 14”—protesters arrested on Nov. 28 for shutting down the West Oakland BART Station and four of five transit lines for three hours to protest the killing of unarmed black men by police officers.

who disagree,” says Garza. “Love is what will ultimately get us to a place where we can change the world we live in.”

Everybody is gathering around one basic concept: #BlackLivesMatter. All of them. And whether it’s in our small, daily interactions or by our biggest governmental institutions, every life should be valued.

Although her work requires her to travel often, Garza says her local #BlackLivesMatter chapter in Oakland still feels like home. Twice a month, the group meets to organize around topics like political education, faith and spirituality, long-term movement strategy, and direct action plans.

“It’s such an incredibly beautiful space to see emerging leaders and seasoned leaders supporting and nurturing one another,” says Garza. “And to see blackness celebrated and valued.”

The story of this movement’s inception is proof that their mission is possible. Three years ago a group of friends got together to share their grief and frustration. Now, they’ve sparked a national conversation about racism and unlawful police force and inspired people across the country to stand up and fight against injustice.

“It’s really special to me that if I’m wearing my #BlackLivesMatter shirt, brothers on the corner ask me how they can be involved,” says Garza. “I’ve been praying for a moment like this one my entire life.”

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When Cops Belong to the Community

AND ENFORCING THE LAW ISN’T THE ONLY POINT

Christopher Moraff

It’s been nearly 10 months since a fatal police shooting in Ferguson, Missouri, ignited a vigorous debate on the need to reform policing practices. But the path to reestablishing community trust in law enforcement seems no less fraught with obstacles now than it did on that transformative day last August when 18-year-old Michael Brown fell dead in the street.

In a span of just three weeks this spring, a police officer in South Carolina, a reserve deputy in Oklahoma, and a veteran police officer in Pennsylvania were charged with criminal homicide in the deaths of unarmed suspects.

These events take their place on a growing list of controversial police killings that have focused national attention on the need to bring law enforcement back to its original mission: “protect and serve.” To this end, no fewer than three national bodies—the President’s Task Force on 21st Century Policing, the U.S. Conference of Mayors, and the Department of Justice (DOJ)—have issued reports this year calling for expanded investments in so-called community policing.

Community-oriented policing is not a new concept, nor has it lacked strong federal advocacy since the DOJ adopted it as a formal strategy in 1994. To date, the DOJ’s Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) has distributed more than $1.4 billion in grants to thousands of law enforcement agencies to advance a broad range of strategies ostensibly organized around community policing principles.

While many of these initiatives have borne fruit, the program has challenges. Since community policing is more a philosophy than a standardized set of practices, departments have a lot of flexibility in how the term gets translated on the street. And they don’t always get it right.

Still, it’s hard to find a police department today that doesn’t at least pay lip service to the ideals of community policing. A few stand out as notable success stories; however, even among successful agencies, many have learned the hard way that community policing is not an end in itself, but an ongoing process that requires regular fine-tuning.

“Nobody changes the police from the outside”

Community policing operates on the core principle that citizens are most likely to respond positively to law enforcement efforts that mesh with their own concerns—in other words, something that is being done for them, rather than done to them. The philosophy is grounded in the belief that an emphasis on procedural justice and responsive problem solving leads to improved public perceptions of the police, and that leads more generally to better law enforcement outcomes.

The agencies that get it right invariably share one thing in common: progressive leaders who are committed to thinking outside the box.

“Nobody changes the police from the outside,” says David C. Couper, who spent 21 years as the chief of police in Madison, Wisconsin, a college city of just under 250,000 people. “The only people that can change the police are police themselves and their leaders, and absent that, not much is going to happen.”

Couper was an early pioneer of
Changing demographics have challenged the Anaheim Police Department to reinvent its community policing program over the years with an eye toward improving community engagement.

“WE NEED TO BE OUT IN OUR COMMUNITY, ENGAGING WITH CITIZENS, ACTIVELY BREAKING DOWN THOSE BARRIERS SOME ARE TRYING TO BUILD.”

decentralized policing, and by the mid-1980s had used his tenured leadership post to transform the core mission of his department. On his watch, the department walked back an emphasis on code enforcement and started dedicating officers long-term to specific neighborhoods, giving them the discretion to work with community members to choose which crimes to prioritize. At one point, he says, the result was the de facto decriminalization of possession of small amounts of marijuana.

“Community policing is about how officers define themselves,” says Couper. “If police see themselves solely as law enforcement officers, then they’ll spend all their time looking for some broken laws to enforce.”

Madison’s community policing strategy was expanded and formalized after Couper’s departure, largely under the tenure of his protégé, Noble Wray, who led the Madison Police Department (MPD) from 2004–2013. A survey of community partners conducted in the months before Wray’s departure showed an above-average level of trust in law enforcement and a high degree of two-way interaction between police and citizens.

By all accounts, Madison stands as one of the nation’s community policing success stories. But it also serves as a warning against the dangers of complacency. The city’s decision in December 2012 not to file charges against a Madison police officer with a history of recklessness who shot an unarmed drunk man angered many in the community.

According to Sue Williams, Madison’s assistant chief of police, the department has been taking proactive steps to repair the rift. She says Madison’s new chief, Michael C. Koval, meets regularly with a Community Advisory Council, and the department has a “living” document outlining its trust-building initiatives posted on its website that is updated four times a year in response to community feedback. This year, the city began
deploying an officer in each of its five districts who is trained to handle interactions with the mentally ill.

Nevertheless, the MPD faced yet another setback in March when the fatal police shooting of an unarmed 19-year-old biracial man named Tony Robinson put Madison in the national spotlight and sparked a series of #BlackLivesMatter protests in the city. As of this writing, the district attorney had yet to decide if charges would be filed against the officer, a 12-year veteran of the force with a checkered history.

Williams says the crisis offers an opportunity for the department to prove its commitment to community policing.

“We need to be out in our community, engaging with citizens, actively breaking down those barriers some are trying to build,” Williams says. “We have to be open and accessible.”

“The journey of problem solving”

To Lieutenant Tim Schmidt, a district commander in Anaheim, California—another early adopter of community policing—Madison’s experience underscores the provisional nature of community policing programs.

“Community policing is not a destination, it’s a process you have to keep working each day,” he says. “It’s the journey of problem solving.”

Anaheim launched a limited community policing pilot in 1995 that emphasized code enforcement and crisis intervention over long-term relationship building. The city has seen its COPS efforts evolve over the years and continues to refine them.

Anaheim is a larger, more ethnically diverse city than Madison. Since 1980, the percentage of residents of Latino heritage has grown from 17 percent to 53 percent. The changing demographics have challenged the Anaheim Police Department (APD) to reinvent its community policing program over the years with an eye toward improving community engagement.

A 2009 report commissioned by the DOJ found that the APD’s community policing efforts, combined with a citywide effort to facilitate community governance, had succeeded in fostering improved levels of neighborhood leadership and sustainability.

In the wake of violent protests in 2012 incited by a pair of controversial police shootings, the department doubled down on its community policing effort. The APD hired 13 new officers and assigned them to community policing “teams” that concentrate on proactive relationship building instead of responding to calls.

“I’m not talking about a guy just getting out of his car and just talking to people,” says Schmidt. “It has to be constant two-way interaction, and that feedback needs to find its way back to our regular patrol officers.”

In 2013 Anaheim hired its first Latino police chief, Raul Quezada, who promised to prioritize civic engagement. He started by establishing a program called “Coffee with a Cop,” designed to facilitate informal police-community interaction, and says he is committed to seeking civilian input on important issues.

“The key is listening to the community to determine what their problems are instead of having us tell them what their problems are,” said Quezada, in an interview with an Orange County policing blog in 2014.

Fighting crime or building trust?

Gauging whether a community policing program has been successful ultimately depends on how you define success. For the DOJ, community policing sits at the nexus of three primary elements: “organizational transformation,” “community partnerships,” and “problem solving.” But federal auditors, as well as many police agencies themselves, tend to overemphasize the latter of these variables, which, in practice, frequently gets simplified into “crime solving” at street level. That’s probably because it’s the easiest metric to track.

In Schmidt’s view, for instance, community policing is primarily a crime-fighting strategy that has the added benefit of building good will with residents. When asked for examples of community policing in action, he tends to cite standard law enforcement metrics like reductions in call volume and drops in nuisance crime. For Couper, and many other early community-oriented policing pioneers we spoke to, community policing begins with officer discretion and civic engagement and ends in increased public safety.

While the difference between these two approaches may seem like one of semantics, in practice they often manifest in contradictory policing strategies. There are lots of ways to solve the problem of crime, and not all of them facilitate healthy police-community relations. As the nation faces the crisis of a breakdown in community trust for law enforcement, departments will face more pressure to measure their community policing programs against something other than crime data.

“It’s about satisfaction and trust—that’s the first place we should be looking,” says Charlotte Gill, a community policing researcher at George Mason University.

The COPS office has already begun this evolution. Since the launch of its Collaborative Reform Initiative for Technical Assistance in 2011, the DOJ has been gradually realigning its mission to prioritize trust-building initiatives.

Ronald Davis, the current COPS director, calls this a critical component of effective community policing.

“Earning the trust of the community and making those individuals stakeholders in their own safety enables law enforcement to better understand and address both the needs of the community and the factors that contribute to crime.”

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north: Action, resistance, Winter, keeper of the body

west: Introspection rebuilding, Fall, keeper of the mind

south: Repairing relationships, Summer, keeper of the heart

east: Vision, re-imagining, Spring, keeper of the spirit
Rituals That Heal
A MEDICINE WHEEL TO GUIDE US

Patricia St. Onge

When she was three, my daughter Bre ran to me crying. We were in a park, and as I sat nearby reading a magazine, she was happily talking to herself in the sandbox. Another mom arrived with her two young children. A few minutes later, my bright-eyed baby had tears streaming down her face. “What’s wrong?” I asked. “They won’t play with me ’cause I’m brown,” she said. My heart stopped. Then tears spilled out from my eyes, and my heart broke open.

What happens when the pain of the world breaks into our lives? In recent years, as I’ve watched the unfolding stories of the murders of unarmed people (overwhelmingly men, women, and children of color), the wounding is fresh with each one, and it sits on the scars of generations. Burned, lynched, force-marched, dying along the way. What heals the collective broken heart of a community that has experienced injustice?

The Medicine Wheel is a framework for communities and individuals that seek transformation. As we seek wholeness, we need to attend to our bodies, minds, hearts, and Spirits. Each direction of the Medicine Wheel has gifts to offer. Many indigenous traditions have unique frameworks for the Medicine Wheel. This is the framework that I use in my work as a consultant and coach, a framework I’ve developed from my background as a person of Mohawk descent.

In the East, the direction of Spirit, the work is to reimagine the world we want to live in. This work is being done by individuals and groups dedicated to social justice across the country. At the Full Harvest Urban Farm in Oakland, California, for example, people recently out of prison reimagine themselves in a living, sustainable, healing world as they work on the farm.

In the North, the direction of the body, the work is action. It’s here that we resist destructive structures. This work is happening in movements like Black Lives Matter and Idle No More that resist oppression and racism.

In the West, the direction of the mind, the work is introspection. Here, we design alternative structures that move us toward the world we imagined in the East. When communities establish local currencies or municipal ID cards, for example, they are doing the work of redesigning structures.

And in the South, the direction of the heart, we attend to the work of healing and repairing relationships. Here, ceremony plays an important role.

For the healing work in the South, I turn to the condolence ceremony. The ceremony is rooted in the story of Aionwahta. There are many ways this story is told; this is how I remember it from Tom Porter, Mohawk of the Akwesasne community:

This story is about Aionwahta, whose wife and daughters were murdered. Heartbroken, he wandered the Earth until he came to a lake filled with quahog shells, white and purple. Here he began to string the shells onto a thread of sinew.

As he beaded it, he spoke his blessings of condolences for the sad and brokenhearted.

He said: “If there is anyone in the world who feels as brokenhearted as I do, I will go see them. I will take an eagle feather and wipe the dust of death from their ears so they can hear the children talk, laugh, and sing. I will take a soft deer skin and wipe the tears from their eyes so they can see the beauty of Mother Earth and see the joy of their family. I would console them by taking the death from their eyes. And I will take medicine water and offer it to them so that when they drink, it will dislodge the grief and sadness so they will be refreshed, and can live again, and speak, eat, and be nourished.”

Today, when someone loses a loved one, we use the condolence ceremony. As communities are devastated by the trauma of murder, police brutality, and climate destruction, we can dislodge the grief from our throats through shared ceremony.

On our land in East Oakland, we have a sweat lodge for healing rituals. When we enter the deep, dark belly of the turtle, we are cleansed by the heat, water, medicines, and prayers. In sharing ceremony with each other, we mend broken hearts, fragile bodies, troubled minds, and wounded souls.

To transform our communities that have suffered from racial injustice, work in all four quadrants of the Medicine Wheel is important. We move around the Medicine Wheel, resisting structural injustices, reimagining the world as healed, redesigning and building structures that support our vision, and repairing the damaged relationships that keep us from seeing ourselves and all beings as a part of one community.

Patricia St. Onge is founder of Seven Generations Consulting. She provides training and consulting in community organizing, social justice advocacy, and consensus building. She lives in East Oakland with her partner and six children.
I am white, and the woman I’m meeting is black. I have lived in Austin, Texas, for more than two decades, and she recently moved here. We bumped into each other at an event and learned we have similar political interests. I invited her to coffee to talk about local organizing, and after introductions the first thing I say is, “Don’t worry, I’m not going to ask you to join a nonprofit board.” Thankfully, she laughs at my attempt at white self-deprecation. Non-white people in progressive politics are used to being asked to join boards or speak at events to diversify an otherwise all-white group. Such invitations often come too early, before people have worked together long enough to know if the invitation makes sense. Sometimes, as my joke suggested, the invitation comes right after the coffee is poured.

How do I know about this problem? Because I’ve been part of it. In my first organizing efforts in the anti-war movement in the 1990s, I sometimes found myself in meetings with other white people, looking around the room and saying, “There are no people of color here. Where can we find some?” But if cross-racial alliances don’t already exist, last-minute efforts to find a non-white speaker for the rally
RACIAL ETIQUETTE

“I’M NOT A RACIST, BUT ...”
AND OTHER THINGS TO NEVER SAY
or a non-white committee member are not only transparent tokenism but corrosive to creating meaningful connections.

So, my first rule for myself as a white person is: Avoid tokenism. No matter what the issue, think about the question of racial justice at the start of a project, not when it’s too late to create a real coalition.

Here’s my second rule. Listen up homies. Don’t sprinkle “street” terms picked up from movies or songs into conversations in an attempt to sound hip.

OK, enough rules. There are lots of guidelines for white people that cover everything from complex tasks in building cross-racial solidarity to simple reminders about avoiding racialized rudeness. For instance: “Twelve Ways to Be a White Ally to Black People” in The Root, “Guidelines for Being Strong White Allies” on author Paul Kivel’s website, “Code of Ethics for Antiracist White Allies” on author JLove Calderón’s website, and “11 Rules for New Anti-Racist Allies” at Forward Progressives.

Such guides can be helpful, but I’m skeptical of checklists, fearing that having rules to follow can replace the endless struggle to be strategic while remaining a decent person.

So, rather than a list, I want to offer two phrases that white people should never utter.

The first: “I’m not racist, but ...” Whatever follows is almost guaranteed to be racist; if a statement isn’t, there’s no need to announce its non-racism. If you hear yourself forming that phrase, shut up and think about what you intended to say and why.

The second: “I know I’m a racist, and ...” This is a different evasion, a more subtle attempt at inoculation. Yes, it’s true enough that virtually all white people are socialized into some kind of white-supremacist thinking (myself included) and that the struggle to unlearn those lessons is not simple and never completed (again, personal experience here). And all white people, even those who might legitimately claim to have purged all that racist training, still retain the advantages that come with being white.

But invoking the “I know I’m a racist” trope is dangerous. Instead of suggesting you have transcended white supremacy, you confess immersion in it, as if the confession is evidence of clarity and therefore whatever comes next is beyond challenge, given your heightened level of white self-awareness. But the “confession” is disingenuous; if we cannot distinguish between progressive white people working to achieve racial justice and members of the Klan—if all white people truly are “racist”—then the word has no meaning. It’s dishonest for progressive white people to claim to be beyond racism, but it’s counterproductive to pretend that none of us have made meaningful progress.

As long as I’m focused on words to avoid, let me nominate two more phrases: “white ally” and “doing the work.”

If one is white, being an ally to non-white people in a white-supremacist society is a good thing. But “white ally” too often becomes a merit badge to mark that one is on the right side. No matter how much we remain critically self-reflective, merit badges tend to lead us to think of ourselves as superior to those without the badge. That leads, understandably, to people of color being wary of self-proclaimed white allies.

“Doing the work” feels plain self-righteous to me. What exactly is the work that needs constant marking? Often the most effective white people in a community organization simply model anti-racist behavior without trumpeting it. I’ve seen the phrase misused enough that I shy away from it.

Checklists can remind us of important rules. But the main rule is to cultivate the instinct for critical self-reflection—which we too often suppress because it can be painful—so that we believe in ourselves enough to be honest with others. Instead of striving to be white allies doing the work, we can do our best to avoid the many traps white supremacy lays for us and struggle to be fully human. We white folks cannot expect others to treat us as if we are fully human until we believe it about ourselves.

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The Way to Forgiveness

“What you do to me lives on in you.”

Desmond Tutu & Mpho Tutu

IN CONVERSATION WITH SARAH VAN GELDER AND FANIA DAVIS

MAKE IT RIGHT | RITUALS AND RELATIONSHIPS

PHOTO BY ANDREW ZUCKERMAN
Could there be racial peace in the United States?

Can we recover from the legacy of slavery, lynching, land theft, disenfranchisement, redlining, job discrimination, and mass imprisonment? We turned to Archbishop Desmond Tutu and his daughter the Rev. Mpho Tutu for wisdom on this question. Desmond Tutu led the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission, formed in 1995. Many people anticipated violence and a breakdown of society as decades of apartheid ended. Instead, the country transitioned relatively peacefully to a multiracial democracy, in part because of the truth and reconciliation process.

As Archbishop Tutu describes, the process was tough but redemptive. Those seeking amnesty for human rights violations had to fully disclose their actions. Some apologized and asked for forgiveness, but not all; in the end, only 850 of the 7,000 amnesty applications were granted. Across the nation, South Africans watched the televised proceedings, witnessing the grief of survivors and regret of perpetrators, and the discussions within the formal proceedings were mirrored in discussions throughout every level of society.

Enabling the spirit of forgiveness was Ubuntu, an ancient southern African belief. Ubuntu holds that individuals exist only in relationship with other living beings: I am because we are. It is our responsibility as relatives to take care of one another.

Might truth and reconciliation, informed by the ideals of Ubuntu, play a role in the United States? Is it time—as Fania Davis proposed in an article for yesmagazine.org—for truth and reconciliation processes to examine and attempt to heal the police violence aimed at black people?

Archbishop Tutu, a Nobel Peace Prize laureate, claims to be retired at age 83, although he continues to be sought out for his wisdom and counsel. The Rev. Tutu, is an Episcopal priest, the executive director of the Desmond and Leah Tutu Legacy Foundation, and coauthor with her father of The Book of Forgiveness.

Fania Davis and Sarah van Gelder interviewed the father and daughter via email questions; the two answered with an audio recording. An edited version of the conversation follows.

You speak of the idea of Ubuntu. That concept seems like one that we in the West should understand better. Could you explain what it means?

Desmond Tutu: Ubuntu speaks about how we need each other. God, quite deliberately, has made us beings that are incomplete without the other. No one is self-sufficient.

Mpho Tutu: Ubuntu recognizes in the most profound way that we are interdependent, and that any action that I perpetrate against you has consequences for me and for my life. And so, the golden rule—do unto others as you would have them do unto you, and do not do unto others as you would not have them do unto you—is a more Western expression of the concept of Ubuntu. What you do to me lives on in you.

Can you speak of a moment that brought you to your deep appreciation of Ubuntu? And how has Ubuntu informed your work?

Desmond Tutu: One is constantly aware of it, but I think many people would be able to appreciate this instance: People who had been ill-treated, subjugated, instead of seeking revenge, were ready to speak about reconciliation, forgiveness. Of course, they were given a wonderful example by the magnanimity of a Nelson Mandela, who came out of prison not spitting blood and fire, but saying we need to understand the other person and we need to forgive. And our country was saved from devastation by this willingness to understand and to forgive.

And it’s not a one-way thing—the generosity of spirit from one side provokes a response in kind from the other.
Mpho Tutu: For it to work in the United States, there has to be either a willingness for both sides to engage in the process, or there needs to be some sort of carrot and some sort of stick. In South Africa, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission offered the carrot of amnesty to perpetrators, and the stick of possible prosecution.

What is the role of truth-telling, and how do we get to reconciliation from truth-telling?

Desmond Tutu: Obviously, if we want a reconciliation, it’s not going to happen if you tell half-truths. That is why here in South Africa, for people to be granted amnesty, it had to be quite clear that they had made a full divulgence, and you had people who were checking the veracity of those who were applying for amnesty.

Reconciliation is often disdained as something that comes from a position of weakness, of making up and letting bygones be bygones, and as surrender and giving in. How do you view reconciliation?

Mpho Tutu: I think that reconciliation is actually a demonstration of...
strength. It takes incredible courage to go through the process that will lead you to reconciliation—to tell the story, to be able to articulate how you have been injured in ways that may feel excruciatingly painful and shameful. To name the hurt: shame, feeling disdained, feeling belittled or demeaned. And then to be able to grant forgiveness!

You get to tell your own story in your own words and to say that the perpetrator is not the person who describes who you are. Because when somebody injures you, it’s as though they define you. If somebody slaps your face, they then define you as the person whose face can be slapped. When you are able to forgive someone for slapping your face, what you’re then saying is, “No, actually, I’m better than what you say I am. I am not the person whose face can be slapped. I am the person who can say, ‘That doesn’t happen. I’m done with you, or I’m done with being in this kind of a relationship.’”

How do we get to a common understanding of history, especially when the experience of whites and blacks has been so different? Is it even important that we come to a shared understanding?

Mpho Tutu: I think I would call it a shared narrative rather than a common narrative. We’re not telling an identical story. We’re telling the same story from different perspectives.

In the United States, in Richmond, Virginia, there is a statue of an unknown Confederate soldier. Richmond was the transshipment point for slaves—first slaves coming from Africa, and then, once the trans-Atlantic slave trade stopped, it was the place where black slaves were sold down the river to the plantations in the South. And the Richmond slave trail begins at what is now that memorial to the Confederate dead.

The story of slavery and the story of the American Civil War is not only a story of a war that brought an end to slavery, but is also a story of hundreds of thousands of white Southerners whose brothers, fathers, sons died by the thousands and by the tens of thousands. These, too, are people who have a story and a perspective and a passion.

When my son dies, it’s my son who dies. I don’t frame my son’s death in your narrative; I frame my son’s death in my narrative. You frame my son’s death in your narrative.

You talk about the South African Truth and Reconciliation process both revealing “an extraordinary capacity for evil” and “a marvelous magnanimity” on the part of victims. What has that insight led you to believe about human nature?

Desmond Tutu: That we are extraordinary beings! All of us have the capacity for the greatest possible evil. All of us! None of us can predict that under certain circumstances we would not be guilty of the most horrendous atrocities and cruelty. That is why, when they said in the newspapers that someone was a monster, I kept saying, “No. That person carried out monstrous acts.” That person can change.

And, yes, it taught me that human nature can plumb the worst possible depths, and race has got nothing to do with it. And human nature can also scale the highest heights of nobility, and, again, race is not a determinant factor.
How to Ask For Forgiveness

The Book of Forgiving, written by Desmond and Mpho Tutu, is a guide for walking what they call “the Fourfold Path.” The path’s four steps—Telling the Story, Naming the Hurt, Granting Forgiveness, and Renewing or Releasing the Relationship—allow someone who has been wronged or harmed to see humanity in their malefactor and enter a cycle of forgiveness instead of a cycle of revenge. However, the Fourfold Path is as much a guide for the perpetrator as it is for the victim. In this excerpt from the book, the Tutus examine a crucial question:

How do we ask for forgiveness?

We assume it is hard for the person being asked to forgive. It may be harder still for the person seeking forgiveness. Why do we reckon it is easier to be contrite than to be forgiving? It is not. When we have done wrong and seek to make it right, we show the depth of our humanity. We reveal the depth of our desire to heal ourselves. We show the depth of desire to heal those we have harmed.

Stefaans Coetzee traveled the Fourfold Path from Pretoria Central Prison. On Christmas Eve 1996, when he was 17, Stefaans and a trio of members of the white supremacist Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging (AWB) planted a series of bombs in a shopping center in Worcester, South Africa. Their target was a venue frequented by the black population of the city. Their goal was to exact the maximum death toll. Only one of the bombs exploded, but it injured 67 people and left four dead. Three of those who died were children. Shortly after the incident, Coetzee expressed his disappointment at the low death toll.

It was a fellow prisoner who set Coetzee on the healing journey. Eugene de Kock, nicknamed “Prime Evil” by the media for his role in numerous apartheid-era murders, became Coetzee’s mentor. “Unless you seek forgiveness from those you have harmed, you will find that you are bound inside two prisons—the one you are in physically and the one you have around your heart. It is never too late to repair the harm you have caused. Then, even though you are behind bars, you will still be free. No one can lock away your ability to change. No one can lock away your goodness or your humanity.” On Reconciliation Day in December 2011, a letter from Stefaans was read to a gathering of the surviving victims of the Worcester bombing. In the letter, Stefaans expressed his remorse and asked for forgiveness. Many have forgiven him for his horrific act. Indeed some of the surviving victims of the bombing have visited him in jail. Some have not yet been able to forgive. Stefaans understands that he cannot demand forgiveness, but he describes being forgiven as “a grace . . . that resulted in freedom beyond understanding.”

When I harm another, whether intentionally or not, I inevitably harm myself. I become less than I am meant to be. I become less than I am capable of being. When I harm another, I need to restore what I have taken from that person. Or make a gesture of recompense. I need to restore what I have lost within myself through my harmful words or actions.

To recover what has been lost requires that we take an honest look at ourselves and confront our past mistakes. It requires that we admit what we have done and take responsibility for our actions. It requires a genuine remorse, which comes from understanding how our wrongs have affected others. It requires that we look into our own souls and realize that a person who hurts another is not the person we wish to be. It requires that we be willing to make amends and to do whatever is required to repair the relationship, even if this means never seeing the other person again. We must be willing to respect our own progress along the Fourfold Path. We must be willing to respect that the one whose forgiveness we seek must make his or her own journey along the Fourfold Path. We cannot dictate that person’s pace or progress. Even if we never find the forgiveness we seek, we make the courageous choice to walk this path because we must make every effort possible to do the right thing.
Truth and reconciliation often takes place after a traumatic period is over. Is this process possible in the United States, where racial violence and exclusion continue today?

Mpho Tutu: Yes, it is possible. Truth and reconciliation are processes, and because they’re processes, they’re ongoing. In a place where racism continues or where the harms continue, we can still engage the process. We go as far as we can go. We tell the truth as much as we can tell the truth. We tell our story as much as we can tell our story. We explain as much as we can explain what the impact of the action is on us, and those who are able, forgive. For those who are not able to forgive, they reset and start telling the story over again.

Would a truth and reconciliation process here in the United States differ from the South African process? And if so, how?

Mpho Tutu: Oh, I think that an American process really would have to be homegrown. The South African process isn’t a template. It’s not a one-size-fits-all pattern. In every society and in every situation, you will tailor the process to fit the realities on the ground.

Many well-meaning white Americans welcome the idea of “forgiveness” and are perhaps too eager to close the door on our history of racial trauma. What has to happen before we reach the phase of seeking forgiveness?

Mpho Tutu: We describe in our Book of Forgiving what the process of forgiving is. It begins with telling the story, so you can’t get to forgiveness without confronting the reality of what happened. And you must name the hurt. You can’t get to forgiveness without saying, “This is how I have been injured.”

It is only after you have done those two things that you actually get to forgiveness. So forgiveness isn’t a cheap “OK, everyone, let’s just forgive and forget!” No, you can’t. You have to actually remember in order to be able to forgive.

What is the role of apologies and reparations?

Desmond Tutu: It’s quite amazing how powerful “I’m sorry, please forgive me” can turn out to be when it is genuine.

But the genuineness will be tested, in fact, by whether you are prepared to make up as far as you can. Are you ready to provide material resources that will seek to redress the balance? In the United States, that’s schools, and housing, and work, job—

Mpho Tutu: Job discrimination, redlining—

Desmond Tutu: Yes. Things that actually you can get to work on.

And those who have been hurt must be the ones who have the right to propose what it is that will begin to assuage the anguish, or you’ll just be repeating the same cycle of the perpetrator, who is a top dog, prescribing.

Why do you say, “Without forgiveness we have no future?”

Mpho Tutu: Even the most cursory glance around the world can show you the difference between countries that have engaged in some kind of process of truth-telling, reconciliation, forgiveness, and those that have not.

In places where no effort has been made to forgive, the cycle of violence continues, generation after generation, century after century. In other places, the leaders have decided that it stops here.

So for instance, Rwanda is not necessarily a shining example of what a country should be, but it is a shining example of what a country can be on the way to being. Having engaged in a reconciliation process and in a truth-telling process, that is a country that is beginning to flourish, as opposed to, say, Syria or Egypt, where the pattern has been retribution that begets retribution yet again.

On a more personal note, I wonder if you can give an example of how truth and reconciliation worked within your family? Was there a time when you as father and daughter had to tell difficult truths within your family and seek reconciliation?

Desmond Tutu: Hmmmm!

Mpho Tutu: I think that our family is, unfortunately, not unique. We’re like every other family. We have fights and struggles. We have times when we turn away from each other, and times when we actually have the courage to face each other, and tell our truth, and seek reconciliation. But, no, it’s not easy. We have to work at it, too.

Desmond Tutu: I agree! (Laughs)

You suffered for years under the apartheid system, and you have witnessed terrible atrocities during your travels to places like Rwanda. How do you achieve the inner peace you seem to have?

Desmond Tutu: I am very fortunate because I know that there are many people praying for me, and I am the recipient of the gift of their praying for me.

I laugh easily, but I cry easily, as well. I cry quite a bit.

And I try to bring things to our Lord. During apartheid times, I used to go into the chapel and remonstrate with God, saying, “How can you allow such and such a thing to happen, for goodness sake?”

Mpho Tutu: The benefits of some wonderful spiritual guides. I don’t know which one it was who said, “You can either be a vacuum cleaner or a washing machine.” If you’re a vacuum cleaner, you suck it all up, and you hold it until you explode. If you’re a washing machine, you let it in, and you let it out. You hand it over to God. It’s impossible to carry all the pain, but God can carry it all.
Why I Named YES! in My Will

You don’t have to be a millionaire to have a will and give money away. We can all leave something behind to carry on our work. Like you, I’ve dedicated a lot of my life to social change. When I’m gone, I won’t be able to do that anymore. So I am leaving some of what I’ve earned in my lifetime to individuals and organizations that will carry on my work for a better world.

When I selected organizations, I chose ones with really solid values and staying power. Ones that promote the kind of community, country, and world that I want to help create. Ones that are not beholden to corporate sponsors, who are free to tell the truth as they see it.

YES! was one of them. I’ve included YES! in my will because I know they’ll continue to work for a better world when my time is up.

Even if you aren’t wealthy, you can leave something behind to make sure that your work and your values continue. Write a conscious will to leave a lasting legacy. Be the wind under the wings of those continuing to work for a better world.

My work and values will live on through YES! What will be your legacy?

—Eleanor LeCain

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You may have noticed. In our political discourse, suddenly the term “populism” is everywhere.

In April, Senate Minority Leader Harry Reid joined 5,000 other political leaders in a call to make “big, bold, economic-populist ideas” the center of the 2016 presidential campaign. Outlets as disparate as The New York Times, The Nation, Time, and Fox News apply the label to politicians across the political spectrum.

Elizabeth Warren, known for her fiery critiques of Wall Street, is termed a populist. Hillary Clinton has a newfound interest in economic populism; Bernie Sanders has long worn the label. Even right-wing firebrand Ted Cruz gets the label, and Bobby Jindal applies it to himself. As Robert Borosage, head of the Campaign for America’s Future, put it, “We live in a populist moment.”

The term populist harkens back to the movement that formed in the 1880s in response to the extremes of wealth and power in the Gilded Age. As Lawrence Goodwyn describes in his book The Populist Moment, farmers found themselves in perpetual debt at the hands of local merchants and corporate monopolies. Many lost their land. They decried the concentrated wealth of the banks and big business and advocated policies that favored working people over the elites. Millions were attracted by the idea of forming cooperatives where they could buy goods and sell their produce at fair prices.

By 1892, the movement had broadened to include urban workers and became the People’s Party. At their founding convention, they enthusiastically embraced a platform that included a progressive income tax, the secret ballot, direct election of senators, the right of citizens to create initiatives and referenda, shorter hours for workers, antitrust legislation, postal savings banks, and shifting the power to create money from bankers to government.

In the 1896 presidential race, the People’s Party made common cause with William Jennings Bryan, the Democratic nominee. Bryan was defeated, and it looked like the populists had lost. In fact, their ideas were only beginning to take hold. The next three decades saw much of their 1892 platform enacted. Their hope for cooperatives flowered in much of the Midwest. But they didn’t get everything they hoped for and they didn’t break the bankers’ hold on creating money.

Since the heyday of populism, many of its policies have been watered down and the flood of money in politics has eviscerated the effects of others. Now, the concentration of wealth and power is much like that of the Gilded Age. Americans are again awash in debt.

So we should not be surprised that populist ideas are making a comeback. We hear those ideas in the Occupy movement’s demands to rein in Wall Street and rectify our country’s extreme inequality. We see them in the grassroots opposition to the Supreme Court’s Citizens United decision that allows corporations to spend at will on our political process. And they are echoed by the millions mobilizing for a $15-an-hour minimum wage. The dangers of concentrated wealth and power have once again captured the public imagination.

The prospect of enacting a populist agenda is daunting. The power of Wall Street banks, giant oil companies, big pharma, and big ag seems overwhelming.

But the original populists also faced daunting challenges—cotton monopolies, Standard Oil, the railroads, and a financial system rigged against them. They came together, learned the issues, and shaped the nation. Now it is our turn to advance the populist call for economic fairness, real democracy, and a dignified life for all.

Fran Korten, Publisher
YES! is a subscriber-supported, independent media organization that inspires people to create a just, sustainable, and compassionate world. We are ad-free and published by the nonprofit Positive Futures Network. By giving wide visibility to stories that fuse powerful ideas with practical actions, we drive profound change through a growing community nationwide, from active citizens to policymakers. Find out more about us at YesMagazine.org.
Science Says What Kids Need Is Outside

WILD CHILD

Shannon Hayes

It is my 11-year-old daughter Saoirse’s first visit to Washington, D.C. She doesn’t know where she wants to go. Museum of Natural History? Air and Space? Then she sees the greenhouse. “Here,” she says with certainty. She drags me by the arm through the glass doors and into the tropical paradise.

Her body transforms. Her smile grows wider, her eyes brighter. She woke up at three in the morning to catch the flight with me. Tomorrow she will accompany me as I speak at a symposium about our family and farming life, so we make the most of this day. Thankfully, her exhausted body seems to draw nourishment from the foliage around us. All signs of fatigue melt away.
My family was never certain that I would be able to complete school. I had a scholarship to attend a private liberal arts college in a nearby city. Once enrolled, I wilted, begging my parents to let me come back to the farm each weekend, pleading with them for their blessing to withdraw. When I subsequently enrolled in SUNY Binghamton, they feared I would meet the same troubles of debilitating homesickness. But I found the campus greenhouse. I spent every waking moment between classes there, potting, pruning, watering. And I got through. I still went home twice each month. I told my friends I was needed on the farm. The truth was that I needed the farm. I hid that truth with shame.

We called it homesickness, and I saw it as my great weakness. But in How to Raise a Wild Child, Dr. Scott D. Sampson gives it another name: topophilia, a love of place. And he asserts it is the key to restoring sustainability on our planet.

As chief curator at the Denver Museum of Nature and Science and host of the PBS KIDS television series Dinosaur Train, Sampson argues that the current disconnect between kids and the natural world is a threat to their physical, mental, and emotional health. One study he cites found that the average American child spends less than seven minutes a day outdoors, but racks up more than seven hours per day staring at screens. Sampson says that children can recognize more than 10,000 corporate logos, but fewer than 10 plants native to their region. He argues this disconnect threatens our planet and the very future of humanity. “If sustainability depends on transforming the human relationship with nature,” he writes, “the present-day gap between kids and nature emerges as one of the greatest and most overlooked crises of our time.”

Sampson revisits his own childhood experiences that led him to dedicate his life to the natural world, taking us back to an early memory when he ventured down a damp forest path with his mother while living in the Pacific Northwest. He recalls the scent of the soil, the patter of drips from the moisture-laden trees, and how the forest gave way to an opening where a frog pond was alive with tadpoles. The walk ended in a full-immersion experience as he waded in above his boots, up to his waist, simply overpowered by his sense of wonder.

Throughout his childhood, this forest became a playground and fantasy world, a stomping ground for him and his dog, a refuge where he and his best friend could work through their teenage angst, a challenge course as they burned off their testosterone-laden energy. Sampson’s career took him, like many Americans, through multiple long-distance moves, but he continued to experience nature in its most raw and rare forms. He writes, “I can’t help but take that Pacific Northwest forest with me wherever I go. It is an indelible part of who I am, more like a lens on the world than a collection of memories.”

Drawing on this experience, Sampson offers the topophilia hypothesis:
that bonding between people and place offers adaptive advantages to human beings. He believes topophilia can become the foundation for the young generation to regain their connection to nature.

Sampson describes how every generation of hunter-gatherers over the past tens of thousands of years was born with the physical and cognitive capacity to live virtually anyplace, yet they were required to learn to live in an intimate relationship with a particular place. “Hunter-gatherer survival from the Pleistocene ice age to the present day may have depended on nurturing a built-in bias to bond with a local place,” he argues. This bonding would have enabled place-specific knowledge to pass between generations. Sampson proposes that topophilia evolved to help humans adapt to a diverse range of settings, each requiring a unique array of life skills to survive.

If correct, this hypothesis has two implications. First, Sampson believes, bonding between humans and nature is most effective when initiated in early childhood. And second, periodic exposure to nature in a diverse range of settings will likely be less effective in fostering bonds with nature than abundant time spent outdoors in a single, local place.

These two premises form the foundation of Sampson’s antidote to our culture’s disconnect from the natural world, and the bulk of his book is dedicated to teaching parents and educators age-appropriate techniques for fostering a deeper bond with nature, whether in cities, suburbs, or the wild. Throughout all the stages of childhood, one steadfast technique that Sampson encourages families to return to is the sit-spot—a place close to home in nature that allows children and their mentors to become quiet and more intimate with their surroundings.

As much as Sampson suggests that the goal is to change the next generation, it becomes clear from the text that the key is not to change the behavior of our children. They innately know what to do. It is the grown-ups who must change, learning to become mentors and to develop new habits of observation so they may help youth move through the phases of childhood bonded to the natural world. Sampson devotes extensive space to this topic, reminding us that becoming experts will not bring our children closer to nature. Instead, the secret to fostering that bond lies in rediscovering our sense of wonder, humility, and playfulness.

My own childhood mentor was an old farmer with a penchant for getting us lost for hours on end as we explored lightning strikes in tree trunks, dug in the ground for hidden springs, or foraged for blackberries. His knack for finding trouble—whether by swinging by his knees from an apple tree, or slipping out the door on cold, rainy nights to track down cattle that had gotten spooked up into the ridges—forced me to push my own boundaries as I went through adolescence. By the time I was ready for college, my roots to the land had grown so deep, the thought of leaving it broke my heart. I was a part of my ecosystem.

I let Saoirse take the lead as we scamper through the greenhouse, following her eyes and her nose as we track down blossoms and take in the scent of each exotic flower. She is not unlike me. She gets to an unfamiliar place, and the first time she is able to relax is when she finds nature.

It wasn’t easy for me, trying to find my way in a world while so deeply rooted to one place. I couldn’t chase career opportunities. I couldn’t chase love. And as I leave the greenhouse with my daughter almost 20 years later, I wonder if the hours of free play she has had in the same fields, woods, pastures, and streams that defined my own wild childhood are a ball and chain, tying her soul to the agrarian fate that tied me. I can leave my unique ecosystem for short periods of time. But I am simply unable to fathom a life permanently disconnected from it. Will she face the same future? Am I working to restore a new generation’s love of nature, or am I limiting my daughter’s future?

We make our way back to the hotel room. As we climb up Independence Avenue, she stops in her tracks. There, growing beside the sidewalk, is a small patch of weeds. They are flowering. “Oh, Mom! LOOK!” Her enthusiasm for her discovery exceeds her joy at the splendor of the orchid room in the botanical gardens. It surpasses the thrill of the 3-D IMAX film we watched at the Air and Space Museum.

“It looks like bluets,” she observes as she bends down over the sidewalk, oblivious to the foot traffic around her, “but it could be gill-over-the-ground. The leaves are similar, but the colors of the flowers are different. Do you see that?” She points. “At home they are darker blue, almost purple. These have white and blue petals.” We stand there, in the nation’s capital, mesmerized by the weeds that some groundskeeper will soon be obliged to remove in a Capitol Hill grooming session.

Her wonder doesn’t stop there. Our path back to the budget hotel is far grittier than the splendors of the National Mall. We must make our way under bridges and highways, past a few derelict city plots. On the journey, she marvels at the resilience of the ivy that hugs a tree in an abandoned lot; she stops to watch a flock of gulls as they fight over discarded pizza, laughing at their antics, imagining with me their dialogue. Inspired by Sampson’s writing, I stifle my own cynicism and allow myself to share her excitement. Maybe the farm is not her ball and chain after all. Maybe, as Sampson suggests, it is her lens on the world. She teaches me there is nature to love. To honor. To protect. Everywhere.

Shannon Hayes writes, homeschooled, and farms with her family from Sap Bush Hollow Farm in upstate New York. Her newest book is Homespun Mom Comes Unraveled. She blogs at TheRadicalHomemaker.net.
Kumu Hina
Directed by Dean Hamer and Joe Wilson, 2014.
77 minutes.

Hawaiian tradition honors those who embrace both male and female spirit

THE POWERFUL MIDDLE
Jade Snow
“Before the coming of foreigners to our islands, we Hawaiians lived in aloha; in harmony with the land and with one another. Every person had their role in society, whether male, female, or māhū—those who embraced both the feminine and masculine traits that are embodied within each and every one of us.” —Hinaleimoana Wong-Kalu

In traditional Hawaiian culture, creative expression of gender and sexuality was celebrated as an authentic part of the human experience. Throughout Hawaiian history, “māhū” appear as individuals who identify their gender between male and female. Hawaiian songs often contain deeper meanings—called kaona—that refer to love and relationships that don’t conform to contemporary Western definitions of male and female gender roles.Expressions of sexuality and gender by māhū individuals were often reflected in Hawaiian arts, particularly in traditional hula and music, which continue today. The 2014 documentary Kumu Hina follows the journey of Hinaleimoana Wong-Kalu (“Hina”), a teacher—or kumu—at a Hawaiian charter school in Honolulu, who is māhū. Kumu Hina explores the role of māhū in Hawaiian society through the lens of a Native Hawaiian who is deeply rooted in the traditions of her ancestors and committed to living an authentic life.

As a 21st century māhū, Hina’s experience is not unlike many others who defy Western gender classifications. Born Collin Kwai Kong Wong, she struggled to find acceptance throughout her youth. Today, Hina presents herself as a female in her dress and appearance, though she embraces both masculine and feminine aspects of her identity equally. And while the film focuses on her journey to become Hina, it characterizes her by more than her gender identity. The film presents a portrait of Hina as a devout cultural practitioner and educator whose most fundamental identity lies in being Hawaiian.

As a kumu at the charter school Hālau Loʻkahi, Hina instills time-honored traditions and cultural values in her students. One student in particular, middle schooler Ho’onani, traverses the ever-treacherous waters of youth with the additional strain of identifying as being “in the middle.” Hina relates to Ho’onani’s journey and challenges the students to create a safe and accepting environment. This proves transformative for Ho’onani, as her determination to define herself and prove her capability garners her the lead role in the school’s all-male ensemble, which the boys do not dispute. Due to the example Hina sets, her classrooms embrace a new “normal” that openly acknowledges all identities. The result is a confident, empathetic community of young people who validate the complexities of Ho’onani’s reality and provide her with a compassionate place to grow up.

“It’s all a natural thing,” Ho’onani explains. “Kumu’s in the middle too.
Everybody knows that, and it’s not a secret to anybody. What ‘middle’ means is a rare person.” Under Hina’s mentorship, Ho’onani flourishes, excelling in all areas of study, including music and hula, and earning the respect of her peers. As she prepares for a school event, Hina instructs that shell leis be worn by students based on color: white for the girls and yellow for the boys. Without hesitation, Ho’onani suggests she wear both, and Hina agrees. “See, you get both—because she’s both,” she explains. This is Hawaiian māhū, unique in its perspective that an individual who has embraced both sides of their gender identity does not require exclusive definition. Those who identify with being māhū may exude more masculine or feminine qualities, but their inner experience is one that ebbs between the two with the grace and subtlety of the ocean tide.

When I interviewed Hina for MANA magazine’s 2014 feature “Beyond the Binary,” she explained: “A māhū is an individual that straddles somewhere in the middle of the male and female binary. It does not define their sexual preference or gender expression because gender roles, gender expressions, and sexual relationships have all been severely influenced by the changing times. It is dynamic. It is like life.” The “changing times” Hina refers to began with the arrival of Christian missionaries in the 1800s and the imposition of Western values on the Hawaiian community. They banned cultural expressions that celebrated diverse sexual views and traditions they believed to be profane, such as hula, and drove them underground. The suppression of traditional Hawaiian values and practices marked a turning point in Hawai‘i’s history, one in which māhū began a struggle to find acceptance.

One of the greatest journeys of the human experience is the struggle to accept oneself and live authentically. Kumu Hina lifts the veil on the misunderstanding and marginalized experience of “other” gendered individuals whose identity cannot be defined by the broad strokes of contemporary Western categorization. For many Native Hawaiians, authenticity is at the heart of the human experience. Living authentically is one of the highest honors individuals can bestow upon themselves, their families, and their communities. By embracing her identity, Hina not only fulfills her own personal journey to find love and happiness, but she is able to positively influence the lives of students like Ho’onani who are grappling with their own identities.

To continue promoting Kumu Hina’s message of acceptance, a 24-minute version of the film and teaching guide were created as an educational resource. This short film, called A Place in the Middle, premiered in February 2015 in Germany and played at Toronto’s TIFF Kids International Film Festival in April. According to co-producer Joe Wilson, the film “has struck a chord with educators and other professionals in need of resources on gender diversity and cultural empowerment.” The film demonstrates healthy ways to address gender identity in the classroom and promotes a safe academic environment for youth to thrive.

Thanks to the determination of Hina and others, the Hawai‘i Marriage Equality Act of 2013 was passed in November 2013. And though further efforts are needed to reach equality, Hina finds validation in her home. “I’m fortunate to live in a place that allows me to love who I love,” she says. “I can be whoever I want to be. That’s what I hope most to leave with to my students—a genuine understanding of unconditional acceptance and respect. To me, that’s the true meaning of aloha.”

Calling All Crows
Chadwick Stokes is an activist and musician who, along with his tour manager and wife, Sybil Gallagher, started Calling All Crows, a nonprofit that partners with musicians and volunteers to “make a difference” in the world. The couple began with a focus on women’s rights but have since broadened their scope to include the struggles of Syrian refugees, which inspired Stokes’ most recent tour, “Forced to Flee.” When not raising awareness on stage, Stokes and company can be found on tour cleaning up parks and beautifying schools. Check out his latest video, “Our Lives Our Time,” on YouTube. —Erin Sagen

Rediscovered
Much has been written about Native North America (Vol. 1: Aboriginal Folks, Rock, and Country 1966–1985), which took 15 years to compile, but the experience will still surprise you. Bittersweet ballads, somber folk melodies, and raucous pop riffs are stitched together to form an anthology of indigenous music that is both gritty and tender, set to a background of pulsating guitars and whining harmonicas. Archival label Light in the Attic released the three-LP set with 120 pages of liner notes, gifting us listeners with not only a Native music compilation but also an American history lesson. —E.S.
THE HOMES
was sitting at a crowded New York café when my friend Anne put my life into perspective. She and her husband had just completed their search for a new home and had brought a singular sense of responsibility to the process. “We don’t need anything big,” she said. “It was just good stewardship to find a house that fit us.”

They were settling into a small college town and needed a place that would hold their books, provide space to be together and apart, and become a gathering place for students and faculty. The result was a two-up, two-down Civil War-era structure that seemed the very definition of home.

In contrast, my partner and I shared a house that sprawled across 4,000 square feet in the suburbs of Washington, D.C. It contained two living rooms, a pair of bedrooms with private baths, and a master suite that included a dressing area the size of a New York studio apartment. We made blank, contemporary spaces livable with oak trim, rich colors, and landscape paintings that evoked my Northern California roots. None of it muffled the echoes in the hallway.

Anne’s words stung. I’d already been mildly embarrassed by the size of my home, but I’d never felt guilty about it. Suddenly it had all the qualities of a suburban Versailles. Returning from my New York visit, I entered the house and stopped at its central crossroads, where a long hallway meets a two-story vestibule and blood-red staircase. Two thoughts hit me: 1) I am a very bad steward, and 2) this is not, in fact, home.

The painful truth is that Eric and I had recently left a perfect house, a Cape Cod-style cottage with two tiny bedrooms and a narrow stair to a livable attic. We squeezed past each other in the hall and bumped butts in the kitchen, always aware of each other’s presence, always touching as we moved through the day.

The decision to move to Versailles was a domestic catch-22. The house had been designed and inhabited by one of Eric’s early mentors, the architect who transformed a bumper-plating garage into the suburban theater that put Eric on the map. When he died, we got first dibs on the place. I knew if we didn’t take it, Eric would always regret it. I also knew that the house had been created for a husband, wife, and two aging mothers-in-law. It was designed to provide privacy and distance, not to bring people together.

Happily, we had a retreat that offered all the things the new house lacked. Tucked among the mountains of West Virginia, it gave us a periodic escape from friends, colleagues, critics, and hangers-on. We played Scrabble, which I won, and gin rummy, which Eric did, and we enjoyed hammock-swinging days of reading and napping.

I named the cabin Wolf House after the home that Jack London built in the Sonoma hills, not far from where I grew up. London’s mansion of stone and redwood burned to the ground just before he moved in—nature’s revenge on a best-selling author’s hubris—but ours was so small that hubris wasn’t a problem.

The house is just one room, 20 feet by 20 feet, surrounded
by 11 acres of forest. A tight spiral staircase leads to matched sleeping lofts that look out on oaks and elms, and beyond to a view that is endless, and endlessly changing. It’s an efficient, livable space easily heated by a single wood-burning stove—the exact opposite of the interlocking expanse of rooms that greeted us each time we returned to the suburbs.

As Eric’s growing success carried him to theaters in New York and London, Wolf House shifted from a romantic getaway to a writer’s retreat. In summer, deadlines met, I dozed on the deck, the trees in constant motion above me. In winter, I stretched on the couch, reading or watching the fire. Leaving became increasingly difficult. It took a death in the family, though, to wake me to the reality of my situation.

T he home my parents chose for retirement reflected their values exactly. Shadowed by redwoods on the lower slopes of the California Sierras, it’s a funky sequence of rooms added haphazardly by previous owners, all of it spilling into a central, firelit living room. In the summer, I arrived to find Mom on the deck, iced tea at hand and an Anthony Trollope novel in her lap. Her grandchildren—my sister’s daughters—slept in rooms lined with the books we’d known as children: Terhune’s Lad: A Dog, Stevenson’s Treasure Island, and the long-forgotten adventures of Richard Halliburton, whom my mother had idolized in her own childhood.

Mom battled cancer for eight years in that house, passing through remission and recurrence three times. At the onset of her last illness, she and my father moved into a senior community below the snow line, and my sister and I walked the minefield of deciding who got the great-grandparents’ oak icebox and who got the piano. We were together when Mom breathed her last, in the bedroom of a prefabricated home on a cul-de-sac in a gated community.

The summer of her death was a busy one. Eric joined us in California for a few days and was there, quiet and supportive, as we spread Mom’s ashes in a meadow high in the mountains. He left quickly though, to oversee a repertory season of Sondheim musicals. I followed close behind to begin rehearsals for a new play and, at the end of August, throw a party for Eric’s 40th birthday. Stephen Sondheim and Frank Rich roamed the halls of Versailles. Hoots and hollers rang out from family and friends. Toasts were made. And I began to look for something that would make me feel at home again.

I cried on the steps of our blood-red staircase when I learned that I’d been accepted to the graduate program at St. John’s College in Annapolis, just an hour from Washington. My mother would have understood better than anyone the draw of a program based entirely in the reading of “great books.” Seated at heavy wood tables near dormant fireplaces, I soon joined with my peers to learn math from Euclid, science from Darwin, philosophy from Aristotle, religion from St. Paul, and poetry from Shakespeare.

While my studies drew me into a thoughtful, quiet life, Eric’s career arced forward on a heady mix of agents, producers, and gala openings. Most of our conversations now took place by phone, usually during my evening drive home from Annapolis. When I declared that I was ditching a freelance job writing for a Disney theme park so I could concentrate on school, there was a long silence—then the suggestion that I keep the gig and quit St. John’s.

A week before my final departure from Versailles, a friend and I loaded a rental van with my belongings and drove them to West Virginia. A van is all it took. Living at Wolf House would be like living on a ship, everything in its place and no room for superfluities. A week later, I made my official and final getaway. In the passenger seat of my Geo Metro sat the companion of my future years, a shelter mutt named Rocket.

A Husky-Lab mix with the diamond-shaped face of a wolf, Rocket is white from stem to stern, and known variously as Rocket, Rocketman, Whack-Job, and Bad Dog. Days before, he had watched one of his masters depart for a preemptive vacation in Mexico. Now, as that newly tanned ex-partner circled over Dulles, the Rocketman and I hurried west, into a blizzard.

I had studied enough spiritual texts at St. John’s to recognize the mythic quality of our adventure. To begin our new life, we scaled icy mountains and forded frozen streams—literally. At the dirt road that carried us the final few miles,
MY LIFE WAS NOW BOUNDED BY OAKS AND ELMS THAT WERE THEMSELVES HOME TO DEER AND SNAKES AND THE OCCASIONAL BLACK BEAR. I EXPERIENCED THE SLOW EVOLUTION OF A SEASON—OR OF A DAY.

the drifts rose halfway to our windows, but we fishtailed forward. Snowbound for three days, we sat and watched the fire.

My life was now bound by oaks and elms that were themselves home to deer and snakes and the occasional black bear. I experienced the slow evolution of a season—or of a day. The valley below and the mountains beyond rolled through wintry shades of gray and blue. The morning came when a songbird appeared, his yellow chest puffing with the exertion of the migration north. A few days later there were two of them. Then three.

The vegetation made the same halting approach. The red bud came and went, the mountain laurel peaked and faded back to green. Every morning Rocket and I walked a two-mile loop of dirt road, wading through the washouts that followed heavy rains. We became accustomed to the black dog that attacked as we rounded the curve, and we waved to its mistress and her grandchild as they drove down the hill to meet the school bus.

Financial demands soon drew me away from the reflective work begun at St. John’s and from the peace of Wolf House. Scripting a series of PBS documentaries submerged me in the lives of Van Gogh and Cassatt, but a constant influx of bills meant that I was also back to writing dialogue for Mickey, Minnie, and the gang. The need for integrity-based, steady income was increasingly apparent.

My thoughts turned, with annoyance, to my mother. She seldom dictated our behavior but gently guided my sister and me to our own discoveries. There was just one piece of advice that she annually proclaimed. She believed that I should be a teacher and insisted that I would be a good one. I bridled every time she said it. “I’m a writer,” I insisted.

As I draft these final paragraphs, Rocket, now 13, lies curled in the winter sun. My partner Gary sits at his desk in the attic three floors above but will soon descend so that we can stroll to our neighborhood lunch spot. My time is split in thirds: I teach, I write, and I’m home every day at 3:30 when my stepson Isaac steps off the bus. We do his homework together at the kitchen counter.

Our row house has the original wood floors from 1911, sanded thin. We’ve got a small backyard, space for our books and pictures, room to be together and apart. There’s a stain in the ceiling of the master bedroom that needs to be addressed, and it will soon become untenable for three men to share a bathroom, but the landscapes blend well with Gary’s more contemporary tastes, and my great-grandparents’ icebox has its place of honor.

On Friday afternoon, Rocket pricks his ears as I retrieve my green backpack from the closet. By the time I throw in a stack of books and a change of underwear, he’s whining at the front door. Outside, he leaps into the back of our family-safe Subaru, then sleeps the length of I-66, waking only when I signal for the exit that will take us west, into the hills. On the final few miles of dirt road, he starts to bark.

Norman Allen is an award-winning playwright. His work has appeared at theaters ranging from the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C., to the Karlin Music Theatre in Prague. His essays have appeared in the Washington Post and Smithsonian, and he blogs for On Being and Tin House.
At its core, most of medicine is still herbology, according to Dr. Jenn Dazey, naturopathic physician at Bastyr University’s Department of Botanical Medicine. And growing your own medicinal garden is easier than it might seem. In fact, you might already have one. Many common culinary herbs have a long history as traditional medicines.

Text by Miles Schneiderman
Illustrations by Julie Notarianni

Sutvia officinalis

USE IT FOR: Cooling and drying body functions because of its phytosterols. This property makes sage useful in treating high fevers, diarrhea, and excessive sweating or phlegm, as well as throat inflammation, asthma, and bronchitis.

HOW: Dry and eat the leaves, or brew them fresh in a tea. For all medicinal infusions, make sure to cover the tea with a lid for at least ten minutes before drinking to avoid the evaporation of critical ingredients.

GROW IT: Sage is a perennial that thrives in hot, dry climates but will grow in some milder conditions. Plant it in sandy soil in a sunny spot.

INTERESTING TO NOTE: Some studies show sage tea is effective for treating diabetes patients.

Mentha piperita

USE IT FOR: Relieving gastrointestinal problems such as irritable bowel syndrome, dyspepsia, colonic spasms, and gastric emptying disorders. Peppermint calms intestinal muscles and improves bile flow.

HOW: The best medical use of peppermint comes from extracting the essential oil. Crush the leaves, pack them into a lidded jar, and cover them with vodka. Leave the jar to steep, shaking occasionally; the longer it steeps, the stronger the extract. Strain out the leaves, leaving only the extract behind.

GROW IT: Peppermint will grow almost anywhere, but thrives in partial shade and in rich, moist soils.

INTERESTING TO NOTE: Like all mints, the primary active ingredient of peppermint is menthol, which is why peppermint tea is an effective decongestant and expectorant. It can also soothe coughing and sore throats.
Nepeta cataria

USE IT FOR: Treating common psychological problems such as insomnia, anxiety, and addiction. It’s also a natural sedative for children, particularly when they are sick, as it helps soothe the stomach and relax the body.

HOW: Dry leaves and mix with honey for eating, or brew in a tea.

GROW IT: Catnip is a perennial that prefers rich, well-drained soil or loam and will grow in full sun or partial shade.

INTERESTING TO NOTE: Catnip can also be used as an insect repellant, although Dr. Dazey recommends avoiding it if you are planning to enter forests or jungles populated by large cats.

Hyssopus officinalis

USE IT FOR: Treating cuts, scrapes, and bruises. With its natural antiseptic properties, hyssop is effective for skin abrasions.

HOW: Dice the leaves by hand or in a food processor to use in a poultice. Alternatively, boil the leaves and soak bandages in the strained mixture.

GROW IT: Hyssop is a perennial, drought-resistant plant. It grows best in warm, dry climates with well-drained soil and full sun exposure.

INTERESTING TO NOTE: Hyssop has many other medical uses that date back to ancient times, though accounts differ on whether the hyssop we use today is the same plant referenced in the Bible’s Psalm 51.

Rosmarinus officinalis

USE IT FOR: Increasing capillary circulation and antioxidant levels. Its anti-inflammatory properties help reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease and other chronic diseases of the heart and blood.

HOW: The most effective way of using it as a medicinal herb is brewing it in a tea.

GROW IT: Somewhere warm and humid. Rosemary thrives in dry, well-drained soil and fails in extreme cold. In climates with heavy winters, plant it in a container that can be moved indoors.

INTERESTING TO NOTE: The carnosic acid active in rosemary helps protect against cellular and brain damage inflicted by free radicals. This makes it an effective preventative for headaches, memory loss, strokes, and neurological degeneration. Research is being conducted on rosemary’s potential use in the treatment of conditions like Alzheimer’s and Lou Gehrig’s disease.
DEBT IS NOT THE PROBLEM, MONEY IS

None of us got here on our own. Billions of years of evolution, chance, and choice wove a path through ancestors, tribes, and civilizations to bring us to our current situation. We owe our very lives to this process, and it seems appropriate to say “thank you” and acknowledge this debt.

We need community in order to survive. Meeting our needs for food, shelter, and safety requires our best efforts, and none of us has the time or talent to do it all by ourselves. Therefore, each community has traditions and rules that guide how we coordinate the work that needs to get done and how we share what we produce. I depend on your gifts and you depend on mine. According to David Graeber, whose book Debt: The First 5,000 Years informs much of this essay, society is debt in this sense.

Something profound changes when debt becomes based in money. In traditional communities, coordinating labor and sharing what we produced did not involve money. Money was present, but it was for use with strangers not otherwise accountable to fulfill mutual obligations to the community. With our economy as monetized as it is today, what does this say about our social relations? Are we comfortable with being a society of strangers?

Although we rarely recognize it, most of our economic interactions today are a lot closer to those of traditional communities than they are to markets and money. As drivers and workers, we follow rules of the road or cooperate with colleagues not so much because of potential punishment or reward, but because we care about keeping each other safe and working together well. A large part of our time and energy is spent with family. In your household, how do you decide who washes the dishes or takes out the garbage? You probably talk about what needs to get done and have a way of making sure someone does it. It’s not about who offers the lowest price or about the exchange of money.

There are two aspects of money that are important here:

1. **Money allows quantification and denial.** By looking at things in terms of price (rather than in terms of our connections to community), we have a way of neglecting the true impact of our purchases. When I buy carrots for $1.98/pound at the supermarket, I don’t have to think about where the carrots came from, the living conditions of the farmworkers, or how many injuries or illnesses may have been involved in the carrots’ production and distribution. I simply buy carrots.

2. **Money ends social debt.** If I help you repair your house or if I loan you my tools, I have some expectation that when I’m in need, you or someone in our community will show up for me. This interdependence is part of the glue that helps communities stay together. However, if you pay me to work on your house or if I rent you my tools, there is no further indebtedness or social obligation. The exchange of money cancels this kind of debt.

When we ask for a loan, we enter into a contractual agreement that spells out the terms of how and when the borrowed money will be paid back. When a borrower cannot repay the loan, the penalties can be severe. In the past, confiscation of property, slavery, prison, torture, and other forms of violence were all accepted consequences for unpaid debts. Much of our legal system is about how financial debt and default are handled. It remains a common strategy for those who control money to encourage financial indebtedness in order to secure the ongoing obedience and dependence of borrowers.

Global warming presents tremendous challenges, and to survive, we must change. We must use fewer resources and create less pollution. Ultimately this means we must produce less stuff, which will mean less profit, less labor, and less money in circulation. We will probably always have some exchange of money, but we will no longer have the access to money that we are used to. To me that means we need to revisit traditional economies. We must relearn how to talk, listen, and fully participate in decisions on how we coordinate our efforts and how we share what we produce. In short, our survival may depend on our willingness and ability to indebt ourselves to each other in networks of mutual aid and obligation with much less dependence on money and finance.

David Berrian has worked as a teacher, planner, and economic development analyst. He is now retired and lives at Port Townsend EcoVillage in Washington state.
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