

# JOURNAL



2020 CONFERENCE FOR GLOBAL TRANSFORMATION

Making a Difference | MAY 15 - 17, 2020





# THE JOURNAL OF THE 2020 CONFERENCE FOR GLOBAL TRANSFORMATION

Making a Difference  
May 15, 16 and 17, 2020

## **Volume 20, Number 1**

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This 20th Anniversary Journal of the Conference for Global Transformation  
is dedicated to the ongoing service and immeasurable contribution of  
The Rev. Father Gerard O'Rourke.



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# FOREWORD

MELINDA VOSS, EDITOR

*The authors in this year's journal explore the vast landscape of **Making a Difference**. Some are pulled into action after facing challenging life situations any of us could encounter. Others view the world as it is and boldly invent new realms in such areas as the environment, education, health, communication, world peace and indigenous populations, among others. All began with inquiry, asking such questions as: Who will I need to become to make a difference? How does making a difference show up – and for whom am I making a difference?*

I invite you to consider each article, report and inquiry in the journal as a gift for you and your life. Open each one and you will find it contains precious ideas worthy of your consideration. We begin by honoring the Rev. P. Gerard O'Rourke, known among many in the Landmark community as Father Gerry. At age 95, Father Gerry stands as the epitome of someone who makes a difference – and a profound difference at that – for everyone he meets and the multitudes. We include a tribute from some who know him best, Gordon Starr, Helen Gilhooly, Ann Overton, Allan Cohen and Carol Schurch. For those unfamiliar with Father Gerry's work, we secured permission to reprint an interview and profile that originally appeared in the September 2019 Interfaith Journal. And, we couldn't pass up an opportunity to reprint a stellar contribution from Father Gerry in an earlier journal on the process he developed for forgiveness. Don't miss it. It's a gem.

Shifting to another ontological process, Dolly Costello shares what she has learned so far

encountering a world of tornadoes on her journey into the world of addiction recovery. Brigitte Deneck offers an intriguing view of how calling forth breath and voice can make an unexpected difference followed by Kathy Norman's fascinating take on how communication occurs amidst language and cultural differences, often in the middle of the night with people she's never met in person.

The next three papers deal with one-on-one relationships, which so often are fraught for humans with misunderstanding, upset, make wrong and righteousness while they still hold an undeniable yearning for connection, harmony and love. By being willing to look – that is, really look using the lens of Landmark's developmental course on Relating and Relationships – April Shoemaker gives birth to a new view of her father. Meanwhile, Robyn Maitland and Gordon Martin embark on an inquiry about the eternal only to discover how their differing views require them to deal with their relationship. From an entirely

different angle, Fred Moss assesses the impact of hearing loss on his relationships, ultimately discovering a new level of relatedness with sound and the people in his life.

Beyond one-on-one relationships, Sandi Eaton Richards presents the bumpy road she encountered moving in and out of possibility as she stood for Landmark seminars to be offered via Zoom in north Wales and the northern United Kingdom. And Coral Crew-Noble shares the transformational moments that led her to move to Jamaica to make a difference in the criminal justice system in her adopted country by using Landmark's technology.

The next five authors take on making a difference with seemingly intractable problems involving education, community preparedness, physician well-being, dying languages and waste management. Wendy Eliopolo recounts her growth while encountering the harsh realities for children with emotional and behavior issues and their parents. Focusing on the neglected issue of physician suicide, Eileen Forrestal issues a wake-up call to the medical community and the public at large to attend to physician well-being after uncovering how events early in life led her to hide. Jean Chu explores her evolution from being an earth scientist, who wanted to predict earthquakes, to becoming a community facilitator for all kinds of disaster preparedness. Ruth B. Shields chronicles a moving account of her life's commitment that she unexpectedly discovered while attending a breakout session at the 2016 Conference for Global Transformation. And Jessica Tishue brings possibility alive for a better environment by offering a bold and fun way to dispose of single-use bowls and utensils.

But, is there a universal approach to solving all the vexing problems in the world? Brian McFadin invites readers to explore integral theory as a lens through which we can view our global problems as problems of consciousness in each of us, individually and collectively. Integral theory, he posits, provides an intriguing opening for us to generate communication arts that will allow all human beings to thrive.

MarySue Foster explains how a daily practice of sharing herself turned the wrenching loss of her 47-year-old daughter into making a difference for her online friends and acquaintances. Susie Miles offers another inspiring way to share one's life through autobiographical performances. The roadmap she provides may well tempt you to do the same. Using inquiry and discourse, Susan Hoskins and Marcos Wilson uncover new futures for themselves and their lives after freeing themselves from the trap of expired roles.

Finally, given the worldwide ecological and social crisis that potentially threatens life itself, Ed Stroupe narrates his life's journey to bring the human family together by embarking on his newfound interest in helping to establish a school for indigenous wisdom.

I encourage you to read each piece and discover anew what difference you can make for the world.



# THREE CHOICE PAPERS

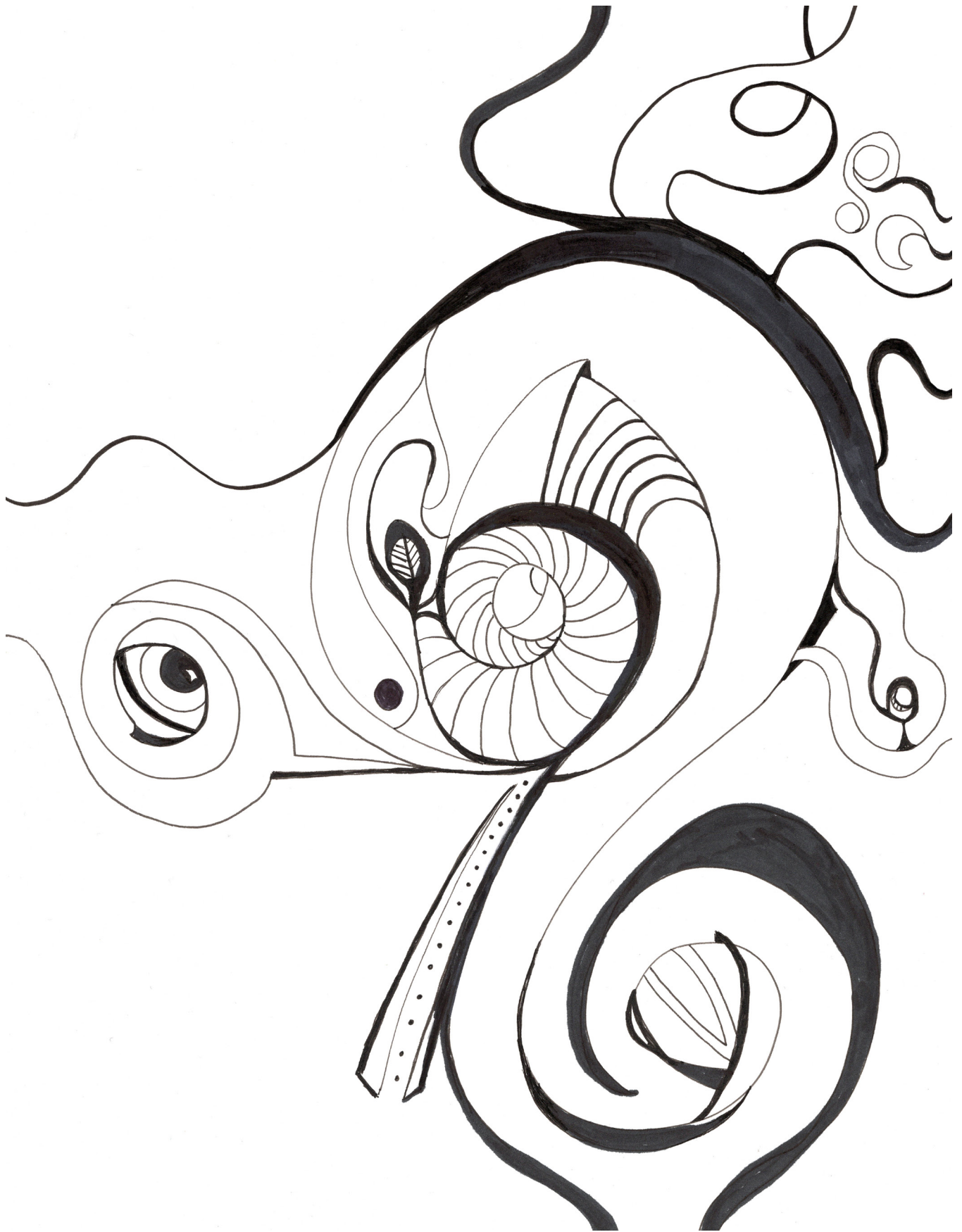
MELINDA VOSS, EDITOR

*As the 2020 Call for Papers and Other Contributions points out, our inquiry for the 2020 Conference for Global Transformation is an opportunity to discover living true to what our lives are about. This discovery is a function of the promises and commitments we have made and the accountabilities we hold. The top three papers clearly exemplify how these three authors go about making a difference by how they have shaped their commitments and hold themselves accountable. They also have a common point of entry that led each author to pursue a particular path and that is: grief and anguish.*

For MarySue Foster, the unexpected death of her 47-year-old daughter led her to move through the heavy morass of sorrow by a daily Facebook posting of five things that made her happy each day. By offering each day's list, she presented what was still available in her life despite such a devastating loss. At the same time, she shared her life and provoked an inquiry for each of her friends and followers. Sometimes, they would let her know the impact of her post on them. The daily practice keeps expanding to a wider audience and offers others an ongoing inquiry too often in the background of our lives: What made me happy today? What a wondrous question to take on.

Dolly Costello also found circumstances in her life that called her to make a difference for a niece struggling with addiction. In taking on this challenge, Costello embarked on an intense ontological journey that ricocheted between chaos and order while obliterating her well-meaning, goody two-shoes version of herself. As she put it, "I soon realized that willing, wanting and desiring to make a difference for another is not the same as making a difference." How many of us can relate to that? She also offers a meaty exploration of the "world of a wicked social mess" and how being addicted is, in many ways, being human.

In looking at her life, Ruth B. Shields discovered how her life's passion began as a 9-year-old schoolgirl. But, she didn't discover that passion until she attended a breakout session at the 2016 Conference for Global Transformation called, "Creating an Impossible Promise." Suddenly, a possibility came into view for her where "Everyone's language is worth learning." Catapulted into action and supported by a team of listeners, she found a new life purpose: to save near extinct languages. She also encourages readers – through a set of provocative questions – to launch an inquiry for themselves around languages. Fascinating! Take it on and report back for the 2021 Journal.





# A TRIBUTE TO FATHER GERRY O'ROURKE

GORDON STARR IN COLLABORATION WITH ANN OVERTON, ALLAN COHEN, CAROL SCHURCH AND HELEN GILHOOLY

Who is Father Gerry O'Rourke?

Father Gerry O'Rourke is a priceless gift for humanity, modeling the rich possibility of being human.

No more needs to be said, really.

Father O'Rourke will be 95 years old this year and celebrates his 70th year as a parish priest. He is my mentor and friend.

Father Gerry's love is boundless. With him, I can be my authentic self. With him, I am totally okay just the way I am and I am not. At the same time, he stands, unflaggingly, for my (and everyone else's) greatness and will kick my ass if I show up as anything short of who he knows me to be – the mark of a true friend.

Father Gerry loves life! I never forego an opportunity to drink wine with him – only the very best, of course, a minimum of two glasses. He lives life with joy, laughter, affinity and a deep satisfaction that expresses his profound love of Christ.

Father Gerry says that his experience of the est Training, which he took in 1973 (Werner Erhard, founder of est, led his first day), was life-altering. His relationship with God came vibrantly alive as never before, allowing him to throw himself headlong into his pastoral work. He has been a close friend and collaborator with Werner Erhard, his organizations and work ever since. One of my favorite pictures is Father Gerry with Dorothy Rosenberg, Werner's mother.

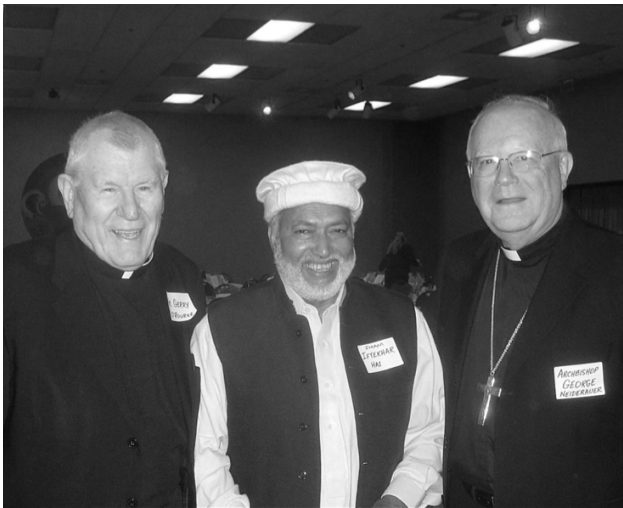
Father Gerry was one of the founders of the Mastery Foundation in 1983 and continues to be at its heart. Ann Overton, the current executive director of the foundation, says:



Father Gerry and Dorothy Rosenberg at her 99th birthday celebration, 2009.

"Gerry was instrumental in bringing together a group of diverse religious leaders to create the Mastery Foundation and then working with Werner to develop the Making a Difference workshop. Gerry is an unwavering stand for welcoming people of all religious and faith traditions. It was Gerry who took us to Ireland and Northern Ireland early on. Thirty-five years and more than 3,000 participants later, his inspiration and leadership can be found in our new professional development program, Access to Forgiveness. Gerry has been and continues to be one of the great blessings of our work, a blessing not only to us but to so many others who will never have the privilege of meeting him personally."

Father Gerry considers that one of his most important contributions was bringing in Werner to work with Catholic and Protestant leaders in Northern Ireland. Today, there is far less inter-religious violence, and many say that Father



Father Gerry at the celebration of his 60th anniversary as a priest, with Iman Iftekhar Haj and Archbishop Neiderauer, St. Mary's Cathedral, San Francisco, California, 2010.

Gerry's and Werner's work there contributed to that outcome. The work of the Mastery Foundation continues to make a fundamental contribution to religious harmony and the creation of a shared future in that region today.

Father Gerry's work on forgiveness is unparalleled, directly or indirectly transforming the lives of thousands of people (including me and people with whom I have worked), through this simple yet profound inquiry, the subject of many a breakout and plenary sessions of the Conference for Global Transformation:

Forgiveness is a matter of will:

Are you willing to forgive X?

Are you willing to forgive X totally?

Are you willing to forgive X absolutely?

Are you willing to forgive X unconditionally?

Core to Father Gerry's teaching is the transformation available to the one who forgives, giving them a new freedom to be and love life.

In 1990, Father Gerry was appointed director of ecumenical and inter-religious affairs for the San Francisco Archdiocese. Among the interfaith efforts he was part of initiating is the United Religious Initiative, now in 106 countries.



Father Gerry's work was recognized by Pope Francis who invited him to the Vatican in November 2015.

I recall vividly the diamond jubilee celebrating Father Gerry's 60th anniversary of ordination to priesthood (and his 85th birthday) at St. Mary's Cathedral in 2010. As many tributes and toasts came from Muslims, Jews, Protestants and Buddhists as from Catholics. (See a picture of him with Iman Iftekhar Haj.) As Father Gerry says, "You cannot love a Catholic without loving a Muslim and a Jew."

Father Gerry's work was recognized by Pope Francis who invited him to the Vatican for mass and celebration of his work in November 2015.

At 95 years old and a cancer survivor, Father Gerry's body is now frail, though his mind can still be as sharp, focused and brilliant as it was 46 years ago when I first met him. Who he is speaks so loudly, it's deafening.

In closing, I offer you an invitation from Father Gerry to join him in his Impossible Promise ...

"Please join in my life commitment that there



be peace and harmony among peoples of all religions, spiritualities and good will by 2020.”

– Father Gerry O’Rourke, June 13, 2015, at the celebration of his 65th ordination anniversary and 90th birthday

Father Gerry is a priceless gift – a man of forgiveness, a master of completion and a safe space for people of all religions and faith traditions. No more needs to be said, really.



Father Gerry waving goodbye to the congregation at the end of mass at St. Catherine's in Burlingame, California, 2020.

# PROFILING FATHER GERRY O'ROURKE

## "WHO ISN'T AT THE TABLE?"

A TIO INTERVIEW BY BETTINA GRAY AND PAUL ANDREWS

*This piece originally appeared in the September 2019 Interfaith Journal. It is being reprinted with permission.*



*Periodically TIO profiles seasoned leaders who have made critical contributions to a developing interfaith culture but are unknown to most people. Rev. P. Gerard O'Rourke is one such pioneer, a man who*

*honed hospitality into an art form. He was an open door for hundreds who became interfaith activists.*

*On August 16th of this year, Bettina Gray and Paul Andrews drove to Burlingame, just south of San Francisco, to visit with one of their mutual interfaith heroes, Father Gerry O'Rourke, who at the age of 94 maintains his delightful, spirited vision of life, generosity toward others, and a willingness to engage with people of all faiths and viewpoints. Fr. Gerry, as he is fondly known by the many he has worked with, was director of Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs for the Archdiocese of San Francisco, and has served communities in Los Angeles, Buenos Aires, Moscow, Ireland, and around the world through ecumenical and interfaith service organizations he has helped found.*

**Bettina:** What got you started?

**Gerry:** I came from a very political family in Ireland, but it was a beautiful form of politicized. My Uncle Dan was in the first Parliament after Ireland left England. In 1918 he represented my county, and he was an extraordinary man. I visited him about a couple of months before he died. There he was in a sick bed dying of cancer, and he was writing a letter to one of the departments in Dublin for a friend of his. You know, when I was in Mill Valley back here in California at Mass one day, an Irish Protestant came looking for me. He says, "I'm here to say to thank you for having such a great uncle. He was my teacher and he treated us Protestant kids as if we were his own children."

I listened to a guy once, a priest, and he spoke about the difference he was able to make in his life because he was a priest, and I said to myself, "Oh, that's something I want to take on, to make a difference and to continue to make a difference."

**Bettina:** What difference do you think you've made?

**Gerry:** Well I've empowered lots of people in different ways. I took on things that were a challenge and then handed them on.

I was asked to be the head of the ecumenical and interreligious work of the Archdiocese of

San Francisco. That opened up huge space for me – a role to make a difference. I was able to work with others, and I was surrounded by powerful women who were making a difference also. This wasn't just a man's job.

**Paul:** Are there times in your life and interfaith work where you saw the actual results of interfaith being transformative?

**Gerry:** Yeah, the work we did in Northern Ireland was huge. At one point we held an ecumenical conversation in Tinakilly, in County Wicklow, south of Dublin. It was a safe space. In that group were two magnificent Presbyterian priests who were on a death list from their own church because they were friendly with the Catholics. So you see how careful we had to be. That was the way things were at that time.

**Bettina:** And how did you get that to happen?

**Gerry:** Just by empowering people. We were an ecumenical group anyway, because the people we worked with in Northern Ireland were always from various denominations. It was so vital to work with others. It took about two years to get that meeting set up in Tinakilly. It was important to make sure we got the right mixture.

**Bettina:** What makes the right mix?

**Gerry:** People who talk to you, people who listen. One of the things we found worked was having dinners. Dinners in different towns with the proper mix. There were people of conflicting views of both sides. I remember at one of the dinners in Derry, there was a guy – an Orange man (Protestant political faction) – who was the top dog among them. The organizer of the dinner had him sit beside me and he said, "This is the first time I've ever been in the same room with a Catholic priest, and is the first time that I ever ate a meal with a Catholic priest."

Now those dinners are happening all over. And why did people come? Because there was an opening.

**Bettina:** What gets people willing to take the risk?

**Gerry:** What was touching us all at that time was the faithfulness – the relationship with God ... and that will do. And that you genuinely respect them.

"No one left out." It's an expression I used to use all the time. This even moved up all the way with Martin McGinnis (IRA) and the Protestant minister, Ian Paisley. The two of them worked together genuinely — you couldn't measure how significant that was.

**Paul:** Can you explain more about what you did in the 1990s in Russia?

**Gerry:** The elderly used to be well fed in the Soviet Union; the state took care of it. But that stopped when the switch came at the end of the Soviet Union. Now there was a real hunger. A bunch of lay people came together and we filled a plane, a 747, with food in 15-pound and 20-pound boxes. The EU was kind enough to send daily shipments of food, but there was no volunteer assistance to receive it. There was a mafia - that got (the food) and sold it, that's how they financed themselves. That's the reason (our contact) told us you can't give us bulk stuff, and she had somehow lined up a hundred young soldiers to distribute the food.

Those are the kind of things, interfaith service, that were happening, and they still happen.

I was privileged to be in Moscow in 1993. Archbishop Anthony of the Greek Orthodox Church invited me to the first Mass that was allowed in the Kremlin Cathedral of the Assumption – the very first Mass that was celebrated there after 70 years of deprivation – and hundreds, hundreds of Orthodox priests from the different Orthodox segments showed up. I was the only Catholic.

**Bettina:** That must have been quite a moment.

**Gerry:** Those are the kind of things that can happen when you leave yourself open to opportunities to serve.

**Bettina:** What do you make of the pervasive divisiveness in our world today?

**Gerry:** By 1990 if you wanted to do anything community-wise anywhere in this country you had to include in the conversation the other churches and the other religions. It was given. I myself was known for asking in meetings, "Who's not at the table?"



**Paul:** How do you manage interfaith relations in such meetings?

**Gerry:** I manage that by giving them permission to be the way they are.

**Bettina:** How do you theologically justify that? You don't try to convert anybody?

**Gerry:** Take the "Our Father" for instance, as an example. I realized this wasn't just a prayer given to us Christians or us Catholics or us Orthodox. "Forgive us." Now who do you think that was for? If you listen to those words, who are they for? They are for the human race. There's no one left out.

If we listen to the Gospels and listen to the Scriptures there is enormous space, there really is. That doesn't mean to say that you'll hear exactly the way I hear. You may get an insight on some of those words that is brilliant for me. And I might have done that for you too.

**Bettina:** Do other Catholics think you are less of a Catholic because of your interfaith work?

**Gerry:** I've never been cast aside in that way.

**Bettina:** It's nice to hear — I'm glad for that.

**Gerry:** People in the church see me as this forgiveness kind of guy. I have a process that I use. If you want to forgive someone or you want to forgive yourself, the most important word is "willing." Don't go to your feelings. Go to your will. Am I willing to forgive? Am I willing to accept forgiveness? This willing, that's where the power exists.

**Paul:** The polarization going on in North America and the United States right now seems almost impossible to overcome, and yet you're talking about a reconciliation between seemingly impossible sides.

**Gerry:** Impossible ... only if you are not open to that miracle. Somehow you have to respect one another despite all of that. I mean, first of all, I was the first Catholic priest the Orange man ever spoke with. It's seeing the value of that and letting the other know that you have that respect.

**Bettina:** We have a generation that calls themselves spiritual but not religious and yet that

position is isolating.

**Gerry:** There is some kind of community going on.

**Bettina:** Explain?

**Gerry:** I don't have to explain it. It's a reality. They are reaching out to one another. You've got to get community where you are, no matter what it is. Don't be shocked at anything. I will keep saying, relationship. Relationship, relationship, relationship, relationship, relationship. And the relationship is with who's there, not who should be there.

**Paul:** Advice for the current generation?

**Gerry:** First of all, I would say never give up. There's so much at stake. When you talk about making a difference, you are saying, "What's at stake?" I never feel that my voice doesn't count, and don't let that happen to you. Don't give in to that feeling.

Always ask, "Who is not at the table?"

**Bettina:** And how do you get young people to the table?

**Gerry:** It's the power of listening, the power of language. That's what we have. That's what distinguishes us. That's our vehicle to get things done – our language.

Acknowledgment is so incredible. If we acknowledge the gift of life, it shows up in all kinds of different ways. It's universal.

**Paul:** What do you think is the vocation of retirement? — Do you have a sense of vocation now? Of what your life is now?

**Gerry:** I mean, you talk about my making a difference. I don't do the formal thing of the Mass, but I participated in two Masses on Saturday and Sunday. You can't do what you used to, but I continue to ask what kind of a difference I can make. It has everything to do with relationships, the possibility of relationship. That never goes away.

---

*When Paul Andrews and Bettina Gray commented that when they showed up for their appointment, they were greeted by a young woman at reception.*

*Wearing a headscarf and most likely Muslim, she lit up like a sunrise when they told her that they were coming to visit Father Gerry. He has obviously made a difference in yet another life.*

**BETTINA GRAY** is a co-founder of North American Interfaith Network ([www.nain.org](http://www.nain.org)), serving on its board since 1986 and as its chair since 2008. As a television producer, she created The Parliament of Souls, 27 half-hour interviews with religious leaders and teachers, including the Dalai Lama, at the 1993 Parliament of the World's Religions. As a composer she has written numerous soundtracks for interfaith and human rights-based video productions, and she continues teaching and performing musically and is composer-in-residence of San Francisco's Slavyanka Russian Chorus. She has lectured on world religions and human rights and been a consultant to the World Council of Churches regarding interfaith relations.

**PAUL ANDREWS** was on the founding staff of the United Religions Initiative. He managed operations for URI's first three Global Summit Conferences and helped organize URI's 72 Hours project – 300 simultaneous local initiatives in 68 countries during the Millennium Weekend, December 30, 1999 through January 1, 2000. During that time, he was the executive producer of Improbable Pairs, two short documentaries about pairs of people who made peace in the face of extraordinary odds. Paul was also the founding director of Slavyanka Russian Chorus.

# FORGIVENESS: A PROCESS THAT WORKS

FR. GERARD O'ROURKE

*NOTE: This originally appeared as a Report from the Field in the 2016 Journal for the Conference for Global Transformation.*

## I. THE BACKGROUND

This article is not about confession! It's not about receiving forgiveness! This article has to do with giving forgiveness and having a process and method to do it.

A few years ago, I needed such a process for a major upset in my life. I really needed to forgive someone and I needed a formula, method, structure, statement or prayer to express my forgiveness of someone in my life. I could not find one! We have in our church an abundance of statements, prayers and formulas to receive or accept forgiveness. But, I could not find one for me to forgive someone! So, I made one up!

It has served me very well ever since and I have shared it with many other people as I do now in this article.

All of us need to have access to forgiveness, at least from time to time. No one escapes the need for it sometime in our lives.

- Forgiveness is abundant. It is not scarce.
- Forgiveness is not about forgetting! The more you or I remember and we forgive, the more powerful will be our forgiveness and our memories can be healed.
- Forgiveness is not a condoning of the evil that is perpetrated on us: a vital point.
- Forgiveness can restore our broken and violated trust in our lives.

- Forgiveness does not come from our feelings and emotions which have been damaged. Forgiveness will heal and re-empower them.
- Forgiveness always includes the need for restitution and compensation when called for.
- Forgiveness will truly heal your urge and need for resentment that you may crave against your perpetrator.
- Forgiveness, of course, is a huge area of contribution to our personal life when we have been hurt, damaged, sinned against, harmed, rejected or cast aside in any way or when and if we have been abused in any sense of that word. The abuse may be sexual, physical, mental or psychological or with any form of demeaning domination. We are indeed blessed nowadays if we escape such demeaning and damaging actions or rejections in our lives. If and when such horrors do enter our lives, forgiveness is a vital contribution to heal and restore us to our well-being. It is then that our feelings and emotions have been damaged and we need to call on our will to take over in the act of forgiveness. When we are willing to forgive our perpetrators, then we begin the process of healing our emotions and feelings and of restoring us to our well-being as we begin to be re-empowered to live our lives fully once again.



## II. THE PROCESS

Forgiveness has two elements:

- a) To receive, accept forgiveness.
- b) To offer, give forgiveness, as in "I forgive you."
- c) In this process, I deal only with b), giving forgiveness: you forgive me/I forgive you.

Forgiveness comes from the core and center of who you are; who we are. That is from our will; our willingness. This is a vital and essential point as we begin the process.

- 1) Are you (am I) willing to forgive whoever is the person or the group of persons or the institution that has hurt you, damaged you or violated you?

Your answer can only be "yes" or "no." Either answer is authentic.

If your answer is "yes," then and only then, you move to the next question.

- 2) Are you (am I) willing to forgive the person/persons/institution totally? That is for all and every item that offended you. That could be a few or thousands of times over years, even decades of evil items.

If your answer is "yes," then and only then, you move to the next question.

- 3) Are you (am I) willing to forgive the person/persons/institution absolutely? This question has to do with untying, loosening, unfettering the rigid and unrelenting way you regard and hold the perpetrator(s).

Your "yes" will allow you to let go of your stuckness and rigidity.

Your "yes" allows you to go to the next question.

- 4) Are you (am I) willing to forgive the person/persons/institution unconditionally? That is, you deprive yourself and give up all of your excuses; your "ifs," "ands" and "buts," all and every condition that you have or could conjure up. You leave yourself no escape!

Your "yes" then is clean and authentic as you forgive unconditionally.

Then, your forgiveness is complete! You have forgiven the person/persons/institution totally, absolutely and unconditionally.

You will experience a great healing yourself and a wonderful opening for a miracle in your relationship with others, maybe with your former enemy(s) and, of course, a re-empowerment in your life to make a difference in the way you live your life.

Congratulations and thanks for your great courage and generosity.

Once you have completed a "forgiveness process" as described above, it will be relatively easy to use the same process over and over in your life, as needed. Indeed, if you are willing, you may become a master of this process.

Do not be afraid to hand off this gift of forgiveness to others!

"Freely have you received, freely give away."

Never be afraid to acknowledge the gifts you receive when you generously forgive. Among those gifts, almost always, your feelings, emotions and memories will be healed or, at least, you will be open to be healed in this vital area of your life. If you have a religious or spiritual commitment in your life, it will be greatly empowered and enhanced if you are a person of forgiveness.

There are many great exemplars of forgiveness and I add a short list of outstanding examples over the centuries. In my own case, I wish to acknowledge, above all, the example of Jesus Christ especially when he included it in the great prayer he gave to us which we affectionately call the "Our Father." It includes the words "Forgive us as we forgive those who trespass against us." These words I acknowledge to be seminal and essential for coming up with the "process." I know that he freely gave these words to all people with no exceptions.

## III. EPILOGUE

If your answer is "no" to one or all of the four questions in the process and you continue to answer "no," it is certainly your privilege.

However, I suggest that it is truly important to ask a further question, and do your best to deal with it. The question is “What is it costing you in your life to say ‘no’ to those four questions?” You are the only one who can answer this question and live with the consequences of your answer. Do not be afraid to look at what your resentment may really be costing you.

## **1. A FEW GREAT EXEMPLARS OF FORGIVENESS**

- St. Patrick
- St. Francis of Assisi
- Pope John 23rd
- Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr.
- President Nelson Mandela
- Archbishop Desmond Tutu
- Dalai Lama
- Sidney Rittenberg
- Pope John Paul II
- Aung San Suu Kyi (Burma)
- Werner Erhard
- Richard Moore (Founder of Children in Crossfire, Northern Ireland)

Please make your own list of those who inspire you.

## **2. SHORT LIST OF BIBLICAL REFERENCES**

- King David’s ongoing forgiveness of King Saul.
- First Book of Samuel, Chapters 18-30.
- Book of Psalms especially Psalm 51 and Psalm 130, both authored by David.
- Gospel of Matthew: Sermon on the Mount, Chapters 5 & 6, Chapter 9: Verses 1-9.
- Gospel of Mark, Chapter 2: Verses 1-12.
- Gospel of Luke, Chapter 15.
- Gospel of John, Chapter 4: Verses 5-40, Chapter 8: Verses 1-11, Chapter 21: Verses 15-19.

# THE WORLD OF TORNADOES AS AN ONTOLOGICAL JOURNEY

DOLLY COSTELLO

## **Abstract**

*In the world of possibility – any and all possibilities – taking on addiction and recovery did not register for me, someone thrown to a “goody two-shoes” view of life. My commitment to the world had been about children from a context of fun, play and ease. The world of addiction and recovery did not occur as fun or play. Never was there ease. This article is about my journey through the world of tornadoes that returned me home to my “self” with a commitment to the world: to bring leadership to the world of addiction and recovery.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Sometimes life presents you with a situation that calls you forth to make a difference in the world. The you that is called forth may not be the you who you think you are. Such a journey is often a stand for making a difference. This type of journey is always a choice.

This paper is about my journey in making a difference in the life of another. I chose my

journey, chose freely. In choosing my journey, I was committed to being a stand no matter what, even when I did not want to, when I adamantly did not want to and, mostly, in the face of no agreement.

My journey did not have signposts, mile markers or an “X” marking the spot of arrival, although I wanted, craved really and, at times, pretended there were signs. My personal two-year journey led me into the unknown and complex world of tornadoes. This is how the world of addiction and recovery occurred for me.

My journey was ultimately an ontological journey, one to make sense of what it means to be in the world. The path was a dichotomy between chaos and order. Chaos reigned most of the way. In this chaos, my beingness and humanity were challenged and confronted, deeply and daily, until I discovered who I am in the matter of my life and in the lives of others. I am emerging, not from the chaos of my personal journey, but into a world or possibly worlds of greater chaos: worlds of addiction and recovery. Join me on my ontological journey into the world of tornadoes. Join me in my inquiry: What does it take to make a difference in the world of addiction and recovery?

## **MY JOURNEY BEGINS**

In August 2017, I invited a tornado to live with me and simultaneously was shocked by the devastation and destruction that accompanied the tornado. A tornado swept up in a lifetime of drug use, including heroin. The tornado was my niece. A month later, her brother, my sister's son,



died unexpectedly from an overdose. This family trauma was the true beginning of my journey. Although initially I remained calm for my family, the stability of who I thought I had become after 40 years in transformational work began to disintegrate. Thus, I began discovering the world of tornadoes, crisis by crisis, day by day and, seemingly, moment by moment, distinct from what I thought I knew.

### **I JUST WANTED TO HELP**

Martin Heidegger, a German philosopher who lived from 1889 to 1976, wrote that humans are “thrown” into the world.<sup>1</sup> In this and in other situations in my life, I can see I was thrown into this world as helper, rescuer, savior and heroine. Thus, it was easy and natural for me to invite my niece to live with me. I chose freely, full of heart and compassion for my niece and our family, full of hope. What I did not know was the world of tornadoes I was entering. At that point, I was totally absorbed in my life, the one I created which I wanted to share with her.

I soon realized that willing, wanting and desiring to make a difference for another is not the same as making a difference. After living with me for a year, my niece was struggling in her recovery. I remembered the sweet but impish girl, who regularly got into trouble for bringing home stray animals. She hid them in the basement so she wouldn't get in trouble. Now, she was in trouble. A history of addiction followed her. She said that she wanted a different life. I could offer her that. Come to California and live with me. Thrown to be a know-it-all, I knew I could help her. I outlined a recovery plan for her before she arrived. Her Healthy Habits Plan contained regular routines for healthful living, nutrition, sleep and exercise as the starting point. I'm helping, aren't I?

The first 18 months of having my niece live with me were difficult and eye-opening. My “thrownness” exposed a cast of characters and roles that I have played throughout my life, a series of inauthentic ways of being that emerge and fade from time to time. Thrownness might be akin to who I wound up being, all the “I am's” that cluttered my life, thoughts and speaking.

A few of my dominant ways of being that arose

included: being a goody two-shoes as in naive, cheerful and having a positive outlook; being responsible as in responsible for others, saving, rescuing, fixing; being a know-it-all, as in always having an answer and knowing what to do, of course, in my attempts to fix her; being a heroine as in rescuing her from herself, which encompassed being a victim of my heroics, i.e., being a martyr. As my core inauthenticities re-emerged, I was surprised and simultaneously oblivious to much of my thrownness other than as an ongoing complaint.

### **THREE WAYS OF ENCOUNTERING LIFE**

My life was full and abundant until I invited the tornado to live with me. Soon, I realized that I had been complacent in my transformation, living a busy, busy, busy and, sometimes, unquestioned life. I see now this is what Heidegger called the “tranquillized obviousness” of life, the normal everyday just-going-through-the-motions in life, taking life for granted.<sup>2</sup>

The second way of encountering life that Heidegger described is “from-the-stands,” standing back from one's life to figure it out, to gain a conceptual understanding of what is happening, based on a non-inquiring question: What has happened to me, to my life? What showed up here was whining as the debris of my thrownness violently swirled and landed. I could hardly face myself, blaming the tornado for all of the destruction.

All too soon, my know-it-all thrownness took over. My indeterminable need to know, read, study and research was both a vice and virtue. It was a vice in that I thought “knowing about” the world of tornadoes would help me deal more appropriately with my circumstances, help me do the right thing. I wanted to know, find answers, quick fixes, a cure, a once-and-for-all answer. I learned a great deal about the world of addiction and recovery. I had lots of explanations about the behavior of tornadoes. I created a library of books and binders of downloaded research.

“Knowing about,” however, did not help me directly in dealing with my situation, my relationship with my niece or myself. My need to know did lead me down the path of becoming present to differing

discourses in this area. Nevertheless, I whined my way through my participation in the Inquiry Explorations program and the Discourse calls of the Social Commons. My need to apologize for my negativity, fears and angst dissipated. When I looked, eyes wide open, I discovered that fear and angst were not just a part of my journey. It was the journey, one of what it means to be human, the being of human beings that Werner Erhard, the founder of our work, is committed to transforming.

The third way of encountering life is free to be and act. As a co-leader of the Being a Leader and the Effective Exercise of Leadership course for Effective Action Consulting, I did not have this level of freedom, not in the world of tornadoes. I discovered a continuing obstacle to my freedom, that with which I cannot be: suffering. There is much suffering in the world of tornadoes. Somewhere along this journey, something in my being shifted. Rather than suffering, I began to look at the world of addiction from inquiry, although my inquiry was competing with my need to know, to have answers. I am increasingly noticing all my biases, prejudices, opinions and pictures of addiction, as well as what I know and have learned, lessening my need to find an answer, once and for all.

### **IT IS NOT ABOUT TORNADOES**

Heidegger uses the expression “Dasein” to refer to the experience of being unique to human beings, a form of being that is aware of, and must confront, issues such as one’s personhood and beingness, mortality and the paradox of living in relationship with other human beings while ultimately being alone with oneself.<sup>1</sup> This was my existential crisis, my crucible event. I had gone into the darkness, my darkness. It had nothing to do with tornadoes.

It is, and continues to be, an ongoing inquiry into the nature and function of being for human beings. My life is transforming. Have I disappeared my personal addictive need to have answers, to fix and cure and help? No, not yet, if ever. The addictive nature of my need for finding answers and being a heroine vies with my unarticulated commitment to the world.

Even unarticulated, my commitment is deafening my inner heroine’s plea to save the world. Inquiry into the nature of addiction and the nature of recovery from an ontological-phenomenological approach is leading to a world unknown to me. “What is the nature and function of a tornado?” “What is the nature and function of addiction and recovery?”

### **THE IMPORTANCE OF LANGUAGE AND DISCOURSES**

To date, we understand a lot more about tornadoes than we do about addiction and recovery. Neither of the latter two has been well-defined. Maybe the best way to begin is for all involved, including researchers, policymakers, medical professionals and others dealing in the world of addiction and recovery, to examine their biases, prejudices and whatever else colors what they think about addiction and recovery.

Most important, I am noticing when conversations reflect a particular discourse about addiction. What is important about noticing the discourse from which one speaks? A discourse about any topic, in this instance, heroin addiction, opens up the world to certain possibilities while simultaneously limiting others, each pointing to, or defining, a distinct model for recovery.

Those with addictions who seek treatment are compelled to follow a recipe for recovery targeted within the discourse that accompanies that view of their addiction. Suspend judgment or criticism of what follows. In fact, there may be some “truth” as a correlation between heroin addiction and some other variable noted in each discourse. Notice that these are not cause and effect, although in conversation they sound like causality pointing to a specific type of treatment, usually accompanied by pressure to recover, which often backfires.

However, none of these is enough to provide an in-depth look at what it takes to recover. Were that the case, we would not be discussing an increasing worldwide opioid crisis. The mania for medicalization of addiction creates treatment centers whose primary mission is to sell a certain approach to those with addictions. Those with addictions, as well as those wanting to help them, pay enormous amounts of money for treatment although research suggests that most addictions

end spontaneously. Is that really true? This is another area of inquiry.

Here is a brief summary of two of the discourses about addiction that I have heard:

"My addiction is a disease. It's not my fault." reflects the bio-medicalizing of social problems. This discourse opened up avenues for destigmatizing addiction and getting insurance companies to pay for treatment. The billion-dollar 21st Century Cures Act, passed into law on December 13, 2016 by the United States Congress, outlined a plan to accelerate the licensing and delivery of medical cures.

Significant amounts of money were allocated for the use of medication to reduce opioid use by certifying more doctors to administer these medications. A major limitation of this model of recovery is that those with addictions are not held at cause in their addiction, but become a victim of it, labeled as a sick person who has an illness with no responsibility for the illness. The poor baby model! Others must rescue those with addictions from themselves, which often includes prescribing more medication. An important part of treatment is creating an opening for those with addictions to take personal responsibility, limited by the mindset that accompanies this model.

"He chose to do drugs and kept on choosing." If addiction is not a disease, then it must be a deliberate and voluntary choice. However, this logic does not hold. If we uncover the assumption that choice is a deliberate, rational function that a person can apply at will, then "all you need is more willpower" is the discourse defining the cure. Actually, choice is most often irrational, executed by the same brain that functions with high efficiency (automaticity) that gives one hope and hopelessness, fear, anxiety and uncertainty, a brain dominated by learned associations and contextual cues as part of its efficiency. I am also present to other discourses in the world of addiction.

#### **THE WORLD OF A WICKED SOCIAL MESS: DRUG ADDICTION AND RECOVERY**

Confronting myself and my beingness afforded me the opportunity to glimpse into the gnarly, entangled, pervasive nature of the opioid crisis.

What will it take to deal with the opioid crisis on a larger scale beyond the level of individual, community, country or the world? My first discovery is that the opioid crisis is a crisis because the media calls it so. I have read the statistics. I have lived with one addicted.

Yet, calling it a crisis is akin to looking at the pointing finger rather than at what the finger is pointing toward. This is fascinating. What is the finger pointing at? What is the finger not pointing at? What is the nature of the opioid crisis? What is its function? More important, what is the nature of addiction that would account for the increase in the use of drugs, alcohol, poly-substances and repetitive activities that are now referred to as behavioral addictions? What contribution can I make in this world? I made a difference in the life of one person. Is that enough?

If you read or watch the news, you are aware of the breadth and depth of this issue which rises to the level of a wicked problem, a term coined by professors of urban design, Horst Rittel and Melvin Webber, who wrote about social policy planning. A wicked problem is defined as:

1. There is no definitive formulation of a wicked problem.
2. Wicked problems have no stopping rule.
3. Solutions to wicked problems are not true or false, but better or worse. There is no ideal or perfect solution.
4. There is no immediate or ultimate test of a solution to a wicked problem.
5. Every solution to a wicked problem is a "one-shot operation" because there is no opportunity to learn by trial and error; every attempt counts significantly.
6. There are no enumerable (or exhaustively describable) set of potential solutions, no well-described set of permissible operations that may be incorporated into the plan.
7. Every wicked problem is essentially unique.
8. Every wicked problem can be considered to be a symptom of another problem.

9. Any discrepancy representing a wicked problem can be explained in numerous ways. The choice of explanation determines the nature of the problem's resolution.
10. The social planner has no right to be wrong (i.e., planners are liable for the consequences of the actions they generate).<sup>3</sup>

If looking for knowledge, research and answers is not the solution to this or any wicked problem, or this "mess," as described by Russell Ackoff, an organizational theorist, where would one look?<sup>4</sup> What question(s), if asked, might give access to this complex, messy world? Robert Horn, a political scientist with interest in public policy, described Ackoff's notion of "mess" as a "social mess," a set of interrelated problems and other messes with a social complexity that makes them resistant to analysis and, especially, to resolution.<sup>5</sup> Horn defined "social mess" as:

- No unique "correct" view of the problem;
- Different views of the problem specify different and often contradictory solutions;
- Most problems are connected to other problems; data are often uncertain or missing;
- Multiple value conflicts with ideological and cultural constraints;
- Political constraints;
- Economic constraints;
- A-logical or illogical or multi-valued thinking;
- Numerous possible intervention points;
- Consequences that are difficult to imagine;
- Considerable uncertainty and ambiguity;
- Great resistance to change; and
- Problem solver(s) are often out of contact with the problems and potential solutions.

### **BRINGING LEADERSHIP TO A WICKED SOCIAL MESS**

If the world of addiction and recovery occurs as

a wicked problem and social mess, what does it mean to be in an inquiry into the nature and function of addiction and recovery as a wicked social mess?

Bringing leadership to this world requires asking: "What is so?" as well as "What is possible?" What are the concerns of the relevant parties of the dominant discourses? What are my concerns? How might I support the relevant parties in accessing the unlimited possibilities available, especially those that are currently unseen, without imposing my opinion and judgments, while simultaneously fulfilling my concerns?

My journey has taken me from the dirty foggy lens of my personal opinions, judgments, assumptions, the language of my thoughts and speech, constraints, etc. to the world of addiction and recovery that is not personal, but universal. The story of addiction is, in many ways, the story of humanity, of what it means to be human, the being of human beings, our thrownness and assisting others with creating a "created future" and living an authentic life. It's not a journey for wimps.

### **IN SUMMARY**

After crying "I'm done with this" many times on my journey, a close friend gently confronted me. "You will never be done with this. That's inauthentic, Dolly." "Yes, I know," explained my know-it-all self. Later, I had my "aha" moment. I discovered something that I already knew, both at a personal level and beyond. My friend was accurate. I would never be done with this journey or my niece. What I am discovering is that questions about addiction are fundamentally questions about the meaning of life. In the world of Landmark, we create the meaning.

The opioid crisis, addiction and recovery fit the definition of a wicked social mess. This journey will require a team beyond tornado trackers, researchers, book writers and proponents of the biomedical and other models of addiction. The final question is: Am I up to making a difference? Making a difference in this world will take all of me, my authentic Self, inauthentic Self, 70-year-old Self, default Self and created Self who is living into a created future. To what else would I commit my life? My commitment to the world is that all people



find peace in their heart, joy on their journey  
and a passion and love for life itself.

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# CALLING FORTH BREATH AND VOICE TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

BRIGITTE DENECK

## *Abstract*

*I do voice work, which can be described as voice coaching or breath-voice-body coaching. In this paper, I will write about the difference it has made in me and others.*

## DIFFERENCE MADE IN ME

In my 20's and 30's, I lived in Paris and was very unhappy in spite of following my passion for creativity and theater. Often, I felt as though I were gasping for air. I woke up at night calling for my mother, tried to find comfort in partying and drinking. As I looked for help, I discovered new therapies, some of which involved speaking, screaming and breathing in certain ways to extract and express hidden emotions.

At one point, I did not know how to move forward.

I heard somebody at a party mention a therapist in Canada who used voice to both diagnose and heal. Then someone whom I had met in therapy gave me the phone number of a therapist who worked with voice in Paris.

From the first session, which involved mainly certain postures, aligning the body on the inbreath and producing sounds on the outbreath, I experienced a new phenomenon: sensations in my body which indicated whether I was true to myself or not, like an inner compass.

It was in 1994. As I was preparing to give a talk at a spiritual community meeting, I found myself struggling with the content and cancelled it. Yet, the experience I was going to talk about involved

becoming aware that if I gave up people-pleasing, I would be able to love. As a way of distancing myself from people-pleasing, I left the community itself because I felt caught up in some kind of conformity. I followed my inner compass.

Until then, I had been recognized as an expert in coaching others for public speaking and vivid delivery. One thing I did not quite find access to was authentic sharing.

## SHARING

In 2008, I participated in The Landmark Forum, and in the course of the three-and-a-half days of this life-altering program, it dawned on me that blaming others and circumstances were in the way of my progress. I began to see that I could take on being responsible and make a difference by apologizing, listening and making promises.

I noticed that people who managed to be authentic where they had been inauthentic expressed themselves with a clearer voice – literally. Freedom of breath and voice came as a byproduct of sharing for myself and others. Speakers and listeners were touched, moved and inspired.

One person I wanted to authentically share with was my mother. I had blamed her in the past and

did not know how to make peace with her. At the time of the Forum, it took several attempts on my part to articulate on the phone my apologies to her for shutting down. Later, I acknowledged her for being somebody who was able to laugh. This triggered a new way of being together. Looking at each other was enough to start us laughing. When she died in December 2018, I breathed with her to the end.

## RESTRUCTURING THE BODY

The training I began in 1994 was called Pneumaphonie. The name Pneumaphonie means Breath-Voice. My training involved being coached and coaching others. It drew from the knowledge that blockages put in place in childhood are present in breath, voice and body.

When a baby is born, its cry testifies to the energy of life. As we stand up on two feet, get socialized and educated, we soon find ourselves reducing our breath and expression. Even the standing position is compromised from the beginning. We take on postures which are supposed to protect us from perceived threats or keep us tall in defiance. This is the inauthenticity we deal with.

In his book *Le Chant de l'Être* (Song of Self), Serge Wilfart shows how Pneumaphonie approaches this on the physical level:

"In the course of the vocal work, this deficient posture is challenged through the play of sound and breath energies, so that the center of gravity and balance are momentarily disturbed. This is a transitory phase which is indispensable to establish roots and through months of training to rebuild a healthy way of standing. This is not about imposing some kind of new center of gravity to the individual, but instead, allowing them to discover through trial and error their own center, a kind of core or focus named Hara in the Japanese tradition. Through the slow destruction of an inadequate muscular memory, old parameters are deleted and a new logic of body posture is recorded, namely the one that matches the authentic self. Upon completion of a long term sustained process, the adult can eventually stand *like the baby who would have grown up properly.*"

Breathing and voice exercises are proposed in certain postures to release accumulated tensions and trigger a shift. Physical and psychological challenges are met in the process. This is a kind of yoga which seeks to ground and center the body. It usually helps to be coached within a group in a workshop setting to get the full benefits.

Here is Serge Wilfart's account of his own experience:

"Being rather short and chubby, I went on to 'shoot upwards' after breaking through the barrier of the throat chakra. Yoga and Zen could not have liberated me from tensions that were very deeply engraved in my individual nature.

To reach such a result, I think more dynamic methods have to be used, which wear out the tightness and redirect the energy. Only then do Eastern disciplines become effective. Otherwise acute muscular and psychological resistance may prevent the experience of an inner awakening in the body."<sup>1</sup>

In the course of my training and in my own practice, I have noticed physical evidence of transformation in participants' bodies.

After not seeing a co-participant for a few months between Serge's workshops, I was surprised by the new appearance from a Mr. Muscle-type in rigid armor to a harmonious presence.

Such a difference was also experienced by a student of mine. Accustomed to lifting weights and other challenging exercises, he found the breath-voice-body work physically intense and ended up discovering how "relaxed, calm and slow" he was capable of being, while other participants marveled at his physical transformation after only one day.

How did this happen? Just as in my first experience in 1994, breath had been called forth, with new awareness and presence as a result.

## PROVOKE (CALL FORTH)

This is a fundamental distinction I have found in making a difference in this field. If I give people fish to eat, it's not the same as teaching them how

to fish. Even teaching is not enough in this field. Showing is not enough. From the leader or coach, it requires provoking or calling forth that which is beyond the limiting identity.

I saw a demonstration of this when a Landmark leader told her apprentice to do exactly that. She said his voice did not reach the participants. When he forgot about himself, he could be with the participants beyond his assessments and beyond their identities and call them into action.

In my work, action is present in the form of voice, which symbolizes and brings about other forms of action.

One of my students (a voice professional who reads audiobooks) shared with me an experience of being “called forth,” in relation to our work together. He is a short, black-haired, bearded man with tattoos, who previously to this work complained of repressed anger, a constricted throat and an incapacity to sing in tune. Here are his own words that I recorded.

“I smoked for 30 years, which had a lot to do with trying to fill a void. The void is pretty much like being in the sea. Last summer, I went on a boat. The captain stopped and encouraged me to swim the distance to the shore, which may have been one kilometer. I gave up my resistance and jumped. With every stroke, I imagined the jaws that were going to get me. As I let go, I experienced something really good, beyond fear; movement in the void.”

Now, he has a new experience of his body. In his seventh session, he felt his pelvis for the first time in his life. He said, “We take our voices for granted, and we don’t realize it’s the most elaborated output that we can produce. The place it comes from is very profound and it’s absolutely linked to our spirit.”

Another student, also in his mid-40’s, could hardly speak when he came for the first time, because of tension in the throat, face and eyes. He suffered from serious anxiety (the word anxiety comes from the Proto-Indo-European root “angh” meaning “tight, painfully constricted, painful”). He had not found a diagnosis or cure for the condition which had lasted for a few years and made it difficult for him to be employed.

Sometimes, I wonder if I am serving him. He says he keeps coming because of the results (he found a job). In the session, he usually gets to a point where his voice resonates fully – a very big voice. He keeps expressing frustration that breathing, speaking and other things are not perfect in his everyday life. He does not like his job. I have given him the task to put something in place every time he notices something does not work in everyday life (limited breathing, tendency to speak before breathing in). I have been more successful when calling forth his anger like the therapist in the film “The King’s Speech.”<sup>2</sup> I have invited him to the Forum, which he has not taken on. While I compare his journey to the story of Sisyphus rolling a boulder up a slope endlessly, I have become aware of my responsibility in it: I have not fully “called him forth” yet.

## **MOMENTS**

In 2018, I experienced something very special which came as a surprise.

While coaching a newcomer within a small group of my students, I made a few attempts to help him let go. Finally, he did. In that moment, while completely focused on him, I had an experience of bliss that lasted for a few hours. I asked him what happened for him and he said that he had the same experience, but it “did not last very long.” I have not seen him since. Where is the difference made? For me, the difference consists of inquiring into what made the experience possible.

## **MAKING A DIFFERENCE TO THOSE WHO MAKE A DIFFERENCE**

I have another student who is a poet and goes to poetry readings. He noticed the difference made when poets inhabited their words. Here is his comment:

“This is what I am interested in. This somewhat elusive, slightly indefinable thing when things come together, when the poem, the poet, the body, the voice all synchronize. When that takes place, something really impactful happens for the person on the receiving end for the listener, as it did for myself.”

Other students are keen to make an impact in the world at large. One says, “I experience that I can

count on my voice as an instrument to deliver my intention in the world. I got to be grounded and to just be free to be myself, to stand for what I want and to communicate with power.”

Another acknowledged a breakthrough in the boardroom, where she found her authentic voice. She was able to “relax and let go; be present and connect with the people in the room and speak from their common commitment.”

Recently, a rapper and musician, who loves writing and singing soulful songs, sang one of his songs in a group session. At the end of the session, he delivered it in a specific posture without moving the body, but with the breath. We were moved. The voice was resonating through the vibration of the whole body. When this happens, human communication is accessible to all, not only to singers and people with vocal chords – another area of inquiry.

### **WHAT I HAVE DISCOVERED AND WHO I HAVE BECOME**

In 1994, I discovered breath-voice work as an access to an inner compass giving direction to my life. Another dimension opened up with authentic sharing as experienced in the Forum.

From the experience of transformation in myself and others, I grappled with the notion of provoking or calling forth as a way of triggering this transformation.

While being engaged in making a difference, I have discovered that there is an inquiry to pursue and a space to create.

The inquiry is about where a difference is made and how. I know that somebody may start the work out of curiosity and become fully involved. I also know it is necessary for me to inquire into my own practice, to keep and restore the integrity of it and my promises.

I have realized that I have brought people together from the worlds of entrepreneurship, healing and changemakers, and I am closer to being literally a network of conversations and a space for self-expression.

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### **ENDNOTES**

1 Wilfart, S. “Le Chant de l’Être. Analyser, construire, harmoniser par la voix.” (Paris: Albin Michel, 2015) (translated by Brigitte Deneck).

2 “The King’s Speech.” Hooper, T., director. (Wild Bunch Distribution, 2010). A film about a speech therapist who worked with England’s King George in the 1930s to help him overcome stuttering and be able to deliver speeches.



# WHEN WORDS DON'T MATTER

KATHY NORMAN

## **Abstract**

*I thought a good verbal communication contains well-chosen words. Wow, was I wrong! This paper explores communicating when you may never speak to, or hear or see the other person or people. And, they may have a different culture and a different language. What is a good communication when words don't matter?*

## **INQUIRE AND STAND FOR THE DIFFERENCE I WANT TO MAKE**

I stand for people knowing they matter, knowing they are a great contribution to the people important to them. I stand for people knowing how great they are.

I stand for my work to positively impact the quality of life for people.

The odyssey of writing this paper has left me wondering "What am I really doing?" and "Maybe this 'taking a stand' stuff just makes me feel good?"

Most of the people I work with do not speak English. When I communicate with my international colleagues, often I am working to make sure my communication makes it through the translation step, remaining simple and direct. If they reply in a way that says they understand my communication, I am happy. I don't care if they get their greatness, I am simply glad and relieved we are moving in the same direction.

Through the process of writing this paper, I see myself as a stand that communications are

"heard" and understood, and everyone has the opportunity to communicate. I am writing this paper from that stand.

## **LONELY IN THE HIGH-TECH WORLD**

Growing up, I dreamed of traveling in space. Sometimes on a Star Trek-type ship and sometimes by myself in something that looked a lot like a recreational vehicle. The thrill was seeing and doing exciting things and getting away from my family. I was never lonely. I was very smart, and I always knew what I should do.

This evening, I will climb into my imagined spaceship. It's the size of my office. I will sit at my desk in my office, in my home, by myself. It is dark outside. It's maybe 2:30 a.m. Since I work with people on the other side of the planet, I spend a lot of nights alone drinking coffee, typing away and talking to my dog. Currently, she is recovering from surgery, so she is asleep. I hear her rhythmic breathing and know I am not alone. (A dog is a good companion for space travel.)

Recently, I spoke to a company partner. He lives

in Wellington, New Zealand. I live in San Jose, California. We used a computer application called Telegram, and I spoke with him over Internet access using my laptop. He was in a park talking to me using his phone over his cellular network. The call lasted 11 minutes and was the first time I had spoken with any of my international partners and colleagues. When he picked up the phone, I introduced myself and I felt an unexpected surge of emotion. I felt sadness and joy, and I felt like I belonged. I hadn't realized I was lonely working for my dream company.

### **COMMUNICATION AIDS FOR A HIGH-TECH WORLD**

I have the privilege of working for a Chinese blockchain startup. Blockchain is a computer technology that can reside on the internet. Its design ensures that already-recorded data cannot be changed. Blockchain provides what's known as smart contracts to enable complex business steps to be successfully executed or backed out. (Backed out is the procedure where each step is undone, leaving the data in the same condition as prior to the invocation of the smart contract.) Smart contracts can handle complexities that today are handled manually. These complexities can cause delays and are inherent in processes, such as international shipping, and food from "farm to fork."

Blockchain is the source of cryptocurrency and has spawned many startups. I believe blockchain will provide inexpensive, simple and secure application and database platforms for individuals and companies. It is a technology that is beneficial for our future.

By its nature, blockchain lends itself to forming international working communities. I work with people in China, France, Spain, Bolivia, New Zealand, Brazil and, recently, Ukraine. I communicate with everyone using the computer applications WeChat and Telegram. With WeChat, I type my text message and the receiver can translate it into their preferred language. Then, they reply, by text. I see their text in the translated English version. Simple, right?

WeChat can be used to communicate a short or long communication and accommodates a

back-and-forth discussion. It offers "meeting rooms," where specific WeChat IDs are invited to participate. My company uses WeChat for internal company communication.

Telegram provides a similar function and is typically used by organizations, groups and individuals. Each "chatroom" is called a channel. Like WeChat, you are invited to join a channel. Typically, channels with a large number of participants have one or more moderators (administrators) and specified rules of engagement.

### **OUR HIGH-TECH HUMAN EXPRESSIONS**

Each platform also has electronic expressions – emojis, stickers and short repeating videos, such as small children jumping and cheering over and over. I was surprised at the prevalence of these visual aids. Now I see them as a necessary and enjoyable component of WeChat and Telegram. The repeated video, such as the bouncing happy baby clapping her/his hands in perpetuity, or the emoji face with a river of tears running from its eyes, or the clasped hand with the thumb extended upwards, convey an internationally-recognized meaning and emotion. In the past, I had never used emojis, stickers, etc. Now I use them all the time and have fun with them.

Please consider that, by adding different emojis to your communication, you can fine-tune a feeling or expression.

### **OUR HIGH-TECH HUMAN IDENTITIES**

Communication also includes the name people assign themselves. I go by "Kathy." Some people, including a few high-level technical managers in my company, use names such as "Thor," "Grim" and "Bear." An image representing oneself can accompany the name and is attached to each communication. Images that I've seen include a cute teddy bear, a cartoonish-masked child typing at a laptop, a picture of a plant, a picture of something I can't figure out what it is and people's initials. Some people include a picture of themselves alone or accompanied by someone or something else, or a drawn version of themselves.

During the first week of my employment, I found

the images and names to be amusing, shocking, sometimes very funny, unprofessional and a contradiction to the definition of the business atmosphere to which I am accustomed. Now, I no longer think of them as inappropriate. It's like taking a subway in a large city. Initially, everything is new and different, and after a while you don't notice the differences. It took a week before I had become accustomed to the collage of images, unique names and inexplicable videos that framed the communications I received.

For Telegram, I have a picture of my dog Bella lying on the floor looking into the camera. In front of her is a multi-colored toy. Bella looks cute and sweet. I thought the picture conveyed something about me, like adventuresome and fun. Later, a friend said to me, "Your dog is a German shepherd. A German shepherd!," she exclaimed. "A toy, even if it is a cute dinosaur, doesn't make Bella look cute. What kind of message are you trying to convey?" I switched to a picture of me, looking – I hope – intelligent and thoughtful. Later, I switched back to using Bella's photo. In this kaleidoscope world, Bella is part of my expression.

### **MY STRUGGLES WITH HIGH-TECH COMMUNICATIONS**

Startups in the blockchain space begin with software developers and maybe one or two business people. As my company grew, they added more software developers and later more developers and a community manager; and later, people who would promote the company and look for partnerships. My company is structured such that, within the next 18 months, the small management team will leave the company and the company will be driven by a group of people who at the moment include 17 blockchain software developers and myself.

We call ourselves the technical team. Right now, we are managed by the management team, though we are beginning to redefine how we will operate when we are the hub of technical direction and expertise and have created ancillary "circles" of people responsible for tasks such as customer and community support. I provide this to you for background and to impress the importance of clear communication between individuals who may live miles apart with different

languages, cultures and technical priorities.

I have a technical sales and customer service background with some software development. However, I do not have the software development proficiency nor the blockchain experience that my fellow colleagues have. When I started, as the first "nondeveloper" to be hired as a member of this evolving technical management team, it was easy to feel inferior since most of the discussions are deeply technical.

One of the technical leaders and the person I communicate with often is referred to as "Thor." Originally, he had a teddy bear image and then he had the image of a masked kid typing on a laptop with the facial expression looking "sneaky." Just recently, he is back to a teddy bear image.

I would send my message using WeChat, adding "@Thor" so I would know he would be alerted. My messages would have one of two objectives, either to alert him about something that needs immediate attention, such as a broken software component, or to make a request for information or action. Usually, he replies. Sometimes, he replies almost right away. Sometimes, the next day. Sometimes, I would give up and that question went unanswered. Sometimes, my thoughts haunt me with "Was my question stupid, so he didn't answer?" or "Did I ask too many questions?" If I could go into his office or cube or wherever he works, I'd ask him. But, he's 6,000 miles away and we communicate via typing. It's much easier to just live with my debilitating thoughts.

Sometimes, I don't understand his reply. What does he mean? Has he figured out I know less than I let on?

These questions would ramble through my head when "speaking" to other members of the team. They were the loudest when dealing with Thor because he is the big cheese.

After a while, I recognized the familiar warning signs of "trying to survive." The difference between this job and my previous job is these three things:

1. Isolation. No one to talk to after midnight. No one to walk down the hall and have a coffee with. No one to ask, "What do you think is going on here?"

2. I never see or hear any of the international people I am working with. When I read a communication, there is no tone, no intonation and no warmth in the voice to accompany it. There is simply black text on the white surface of the WeChat window forming a series of lines that looks like a sentence. Occasionally, there is an emoji.
3. Being tired is fertile ground for survival. It seems I am always tired working nights.

I attribute my success at previous jobs to a few simple tenets I learned from Landmark. They are: “Be in the moment” and “Don’t come from survival.” (That is: don’t always assume that I’m in trouble or something is wrong). Most important – realize my interpretation of what happened or how people are behaving is just my interpretation. I can be informed by my interpretation, yet it is just an interpretation, not the truth.

## COMMUNICATION BREAKDOWNS AND INSIGHTS

### Punishment

I’ve noticed that I will take myself away from a conversation. I am surprised or shocked by something that was said, and I am no longer focused on what I was doing. I have chosen to react to what happened.

Recently, there was a discussion about a “punishment” for those who do not submit their activity report on time. There was no friendly emoji that followed. Punishment is the word the translator provided to me. That word had harsh connotations for me, and I have never heard that word used in the workplace. Perhaps, it has a different meaning in China? How do I ask? Do I stop a meeting of 18 people to ask for clarification? How? Do I present the Webster’s dictionary meaning, which will be translated into various languages, and ask if this is what they mean?

Suddenly, I was no longer engaged in the meeting and no longer motivated in reading people’s comments or moving to a new topic. I had taken myself away.

I leaned back in my chair, alone after 3 a.m. with a coffee for company. I fumed – knowing I chose to fume and be angry.

During the next few days, questions popped into my head. Looking back, I see that was the moment I began to interpret communications differently.

“No one else seemed to react,” I told myself. “Was I the only one who found it offensive? Why am I so bothered by the word ‘punishment?’”

About two weeks later, I found the word “punish” in our blockchain software. It described the list of computer nodes working in the blockchain that would be “punished” by a reduction in credit rating due to a performance issue. I realized that I no longer had an issue about the word “punish/punishment.” It was just another word.

I began to wonder if the deliberate combination of words in a sentence is an important part of communication.

I started to listen for the meaning of the communication and not let the meaning of the words unduly influence the underlying context.

### Nominal

A week later, during our weekly technical community meeting, we were wrapping up a discussion and I made a request to address another topic. The meeting moderator replied with: “Your role in this meeting is nominal, you are controlled by western teams, so it is special.” I knew there was a misunderstanding about what I had communicated, plus his sentence did not make sense. I knew I could easily focus on the word “special.” Instead, I focused on “nominal” and what that meant about me. I knew that it was just a translated word. Just like “punish,” “nominal” was just a word. I crashed anyway. I considered quitting. I considered replying with an inappropriate remark. I fantasized about yelling at this guy whom I had never spoken to. Definitely no more work was done that night.

Two days later, I showed this interchange to a colleague. He said, “It is difficult to interpret what they are saying. Sometimes, the translation comes across harsh and they don’t realize it.”

I had wasted two days being upset over a word.

### The working professional

Sometimes, I attend a meeting scheduled

for Thursday at 6 a.m. my time. During and afterwards, people post happy, playful images such as a baby clapping, a child laughing uncontrollably, a sticker of a villainous, yet funny, looking character and a cartoon rabbit drawing a pink heart with a crayon the height of the rabbit.

I remind myself that my international colleagues are always behaving in a professional manner. I need to incorporate their way of being into my definition of the working professional.

### **The argument**

Another time, one colleague had an argument with another. Both were in different countries, one was speaking English and the other Chinese. It was easy for me to read the English and interpret the accusatory remarks. Then one of the managers interjected with no words, just the emoji with an image of a fist hitting a hand. WeChat provided the interpretation “fight.” He was acknowledging the argument. The argument continued for a few more minutes. They reached an agreement and it was over. I don’t know how each individual felt about the argument. I don’t know if anyone had a red face, or was laughing, or had slammed their fist on the table. All I know is an agreement was reached and each person resumed their job with that agreement in place.

### **My request for a change in policy**

This summer, we hosted a hackathon. A hackathon is a friendly competition that fosters collaboration and creativity in the computer space and usually includes prizes. I had the privilege of being part of the team that evaluated the submissions and selected the winners. After the winners were announced, I felt that two additional teams should have been acknowledged.

I submitted a request to management suggesting they acknowledge the two additional hackathon teams that had worked hard but had not accomplished the hackathon goal. I was requesting a policy change for them. I carefully wrote my request in a Word document. My intention was to make my document easy to translate. I structured my request with a beginning, middle and end. I used simple phrases.

I submitted my request. About 48 hours later,

management accepted my request and the two additional teams received acknowledgements. Management even went beyond my request. They received prizes, as well.

A successful communication.

### **THE PLAN**

Looking back, I realize that I have become more comfortable listening for the context of the communication and dismissing extraneous meanings which conflicted with the context. I appreciate the emoji and other communication aids that contributed to, or dictated, the tone (or, one could say context) of the communication.

I see that I have created a plan on how to listen and speak with my international colleagues. Until I began to compose this paper, my plan was a loose collection of decisions and commitments.

1. Assume everyone is professional, committed to the company and doing a good job.
2. Concentrate on listening for the meaning and context of their communication.
3. Keep it simple: When asking a series of questions or requesting something significant like a proposal change, I compose my request in a Word document, with a beginning, middle and end. I use simple phrases.
4. Keep it simple: If not using a Word document to confine the entire communication, I never ask more than one question, or make one request, at a time. Multiple questions or requests can become confusing.

In writing this paper and always looking for the perfect word, I realize words always matter. It’s the situation that changes why they matter. For this paper, the poetic formation of a sentence and how a sentence can both convey meaning and emotion, are important. For my communications with my Chinese, Spanish and Ukrainian colleagues, the words should form simple sentences that are easily translated and accompanied with symbols to convey the tone of my meaning, when appropriate.



### **SOME THOUGHTS TO WRAP THIS PAPER UP**

I am more productive at work. I have been asked to take on more projects, and I have created more projects for myself. The nights are still dark and long. I am not lonely. I am too darn busy.

I thought that I was accepting of people in my life. After all, I have all that Landmark training. I was not. I think, I hope, I am more accepting now.

Bella is still my favorite space traveling companion.

I am working on acknowledging my international colleagues. For the one international colleague I have had the privilege of getting to know, my acknowledgments are “acknowledged” with a thank you and a grinning face. For my other international colleagues, whom I do not know as well, they have replied with a happy acknowledgment when I say “thank you.” However, when my acknowledgment is more in-depth, I often receive nothing in return. No reply. Not even an emoji, and that’s OK with me.



# ARE YOU FULLY SELF-EXPRESSED, OR IS THIS THE BEST WE CAN EXPECT FROM YOU?

APRIL SHOEMAKER

## **Abstract**

*While participating in Landmark's Developmental Course on Relating and Relationships, I realized that I didn't need to learn how to relate better. I needed to be willing to relate, to be willing to be authentically present and emotionally available. During this course, I began looking into how I related to my dad after 50 years of sporadic and superficial communications with him. I unearthed some startling discoveries as I embarked on a journey to restore love and affinity in my life. I am committed that sharing this story of discoveries will have a positive impact on you, as well.*

*"Be the change you want to see in the world."  
—Mahatma Gandhi*

## **INTRODUCTION**

I have been involved with est and Landmark ideology since 1984, The Landmark Forum in 2000 and many courses since then. I was on staff at world headquarters for five years, an introduction leader, coach for several programs and, for the past few years, deeply involved with the inquiry-based developmental courses. While looking at making a difference and taking on being willing to relate, I dove deeply into my relationship with my dad, intending that I would transform who I am for myself and how I express myself in the world.

In sharing my journey, I reveal my young conversations as they arose, along with my adult analysis of my dad and my sense of things. I found myself reacting to 50 years of unexamined thoughts and feelings, as well as my unmet needs. My intention was not to make him wrong but to understand him so I could restore myself to love and affinity, regardless of how he is or isn't, or whether he even gets my communication. I warn you, the journey is not pretty. My desire is that this will spark healing for you in your key relationships so that you may free yourself from the constraints of the past, too.

This inquiry led me to new vistas of relating, new levels of satisfaction in my relationships and my life and deepened my appreciation of people. Are you willing to explore this idea? You might begin to wonder what holds you back from playing full out and being authentically self-expressed in all your relationships.

As I looked beyond what I thought I knew and really wondered about my relationships newly, I couldn't help but notice my victim conversations. I began to take responsibility for my thoughts, feelings and beliefs. This inquiry tilted my world and parlayed my relationships, transforming them into something greater and more valuable.

### **AM I WILLING?**

In taking on being willing to relate, I realized that I was avoiding most forms of relating as much as possible to avoid the risk of being bored, overwhelmed, hurt or put upon. Of course, I didn't consciously know that, I just knew I preferred to be alone. By taking on the willingness to relate throughout the course, I realized that I was hiding out with my perpetual pursuit for deep introspection and personal growth through journaling, reading and online education. I quickly learned that I can balance out my need for alone time with engaging and fulfilling relating experiences as I continue to find ways to deepen my relationships.

In the beginning of the Relating and Relationships course, we had three questions to answer after we listed our top five relationships. I didn't even look at the first two questions: What is each relationship for? and What are the outcomes/ results of the relationship? Instead, I was riveted and transported by the last question: Do you want more, less, or the same of what you have in each relationship?

After dealing with my willingness to relate to each of the people on my list and calming down my urge to run in the opposite direction, I began to be in the inquiry about each relationship. I asked if I was satisfied in these relationships. For the most part, the answer was a resounding no. In fact, I felt obligated to engage with most of them and was not happy about it. I am sure I was a joy to be around with that attitude. I used to be driven to care for others because I had been well-trained by my mother to take care of her and transferred that way of being to all my relationships. I frequently sacrificed my time and attention for others, putting them before me. Recently, I was sharing these insights with someone who quoted Brian Regnier, the revered creator of many Landmark Wisdom Area courses, as saying that

obligation could be defined as coming from love. I retorted that Brian often has crazy ideas.

I was not feeling love for these people. I was feeling obligated due to my prior commitment to them, a long history and gratitude for their past contributions in my life. However, I was committed to relate in new ways, by being present, authentic and responsive. I was also committed to learning to set clear, healthy boundaries so that I did not sacrifice myself for them while restoring us to love and affinity.

### **RELATIONSHIP WITH MY FATHER**

Although my life is about continually transforming myself, I was startled to discover that I was dead to the possibility of authentically relating with my dad. I was also surprised that I didn't know it. I was showing up regularly to chitchat with him before escaping as quickly as possible, thinking I was being a good daughter who was open and loving. Instead, I discovered that I was dragging my emotionally dead self into his house, pretending to be present. Then, as I was leaving, I secretly blamed him for not providing satisfying interactions.

Inquiring into this relationship sent me on an emotional roller coaster ride, triggering very young conversations about my dad and how he should be. Soon, I exposed my unmet needs, which had me raging at my dad in my head, while I grappled to understand him. At the same time, I worked to figure out how to have a relationship with him that would satisfy both of us.

First, I didn't know that any hope that things could be different had died long ago. However, as many of you know, the Forum encourages us to love our parents unconditionally, to love them for who they are and who they aren't. I was willing to accept my dad on that basis, but love? No. I resisted that coaching and convinced myself that if I got to neutral with my dad, I was on track, and that would be enough. In this inquiry, I discovered that being neutral about someone is very close to being emotionally dead.

If you had asked me before the Relating and Relationships course, I would have said that the relationship with my Dad was fine. I sent him loving birthday and Father's Day cards, and I called him every month or so to stay connected. Besides,

I reasoned, I was the only one out of six kids who was still pursuing a relationship with him.

In an effort to figure out what to do, I talked to one of my friends in the course and said, "I am not sure that I want to be undead in this relationship." She had the audacity to ask what the impact of that choice was on me physically... mentally...emotionally. Drat. Now I had to opt for transforming this immediately, knowing that making the unconscious conscious gives us access to transforming our lives and to making the difference we long to make in our relationships and our lives.

### **BURIED EMOTIONS AND MEMORIES SURFACE**

Soon, the inquiry stirred up a hornet's nest of emotions and memories about this relationship. I adored my dad when I was growing up and tried everything I could to get his attention. I tried being good, interesting, doing what he asked and finding ways to spend time with him until he divorced my mother. I was 15 years old. He disappeared from our lives, leaving my mother emotionally distraught with six children to care for, the youngest in first grade. I can now see that I began the deadening process right then, accepting my fate to stay with my mother without question. I felt obligated to stay and help my family, stepping up to make sure that my 13-year-old sister and I took care of the younger siblings and all the chores, while my mother went back to work. In order to survive, I didn't just deaden myself to my dad—I deadened myself to life.

When I got married at age 18, my dad refused without explanation to give me away. From that time, he responded to my infrequent requests for getting together but never initiated any contact while he was married to someone who didn't seem to want him involved with his children. I learned quickly to expect nothing from him as I adapted to, and endured, whatever happened.

When I was 30 years old, I created a newsletter, typing it out each week on a typewriter. I asked my dad, who was a programmer and one of the bosses at a data entry company, if I could work with him to learn how to use computers, so I could print out my newsletter at his office. I worked with him for 11 months. I called him

by his first name to avoid highlighting our relationship around my co-workers. He seemed surprised by my ability to fulfill on his requests better than he had articulated and spoke his admiration to me as if I were an employee rather than his daughter. I volunteered to write manuals on their office procedures and the prototype computer they were designing. We got along great, yet it didn't create any ongoing relatedness.

Within a year, I was hired as a technical writer, using the experience I gained from working for my dad, moving from Michigan to North Carolina. During the seven years I was gone we had minimal contact. I returned to Michigan in 1991 as a single mother of a 4-year-old. Soon after, my dad made it clear that he didn't have any interest in being a grandfather to any of his seven grandchildren, including my son. I was deeply disappointed with his lack of emotional response and support.

### **RECONNECT DURING THE LANDMARK FORUM**

On Father's Day weekend in 2000, after 31 years of minimal contact, I called my dad Sunday morning of the Forum and stiffly said, "I don't know if you want to be in relationship or not, but, if you do, I don't want to be the one stopping it." He said, "Sure. Let's meet for breakfast," which would have been his response no matter what I might have said to him. We met and then went back to minimal contact.

I continued to take Landmark courses and after a few of the Communication courses, I was easily telling my dad that I loved him before I got off the phone with him until one day he called and said we needed to talk. He told me that "I love you" is only for your spouse, and certainly not for your daughter, especially after she becomes an adolescent or else you would need to provide a legal disclaimer. After patiently listening, I suggested, "How about if you say 'I love you like a daughter?'" That settled him down but he still rarely said it. He might give me a "back at you" or "me too" when I ended our calls with "love you," as he continued struggling with his discomfort.

### **I LOVE YOU TRUCK**

Three years later, his wife of 34 years died and suddenly he was available for contact. For the

first time since he had moved out of our family's home, he allowed me to come into his house, and let me help him clean out the clutter-filled house his wife left. Within six months, at age 74, my dad was busy seeking a new mate. He answered personal ads, went on dates and attended his class reunion for the first time. When I heard that he was planning to drive from Michigan to Florida, more than a 17-hour trip, to clean out the Florida home that he had shared with his wife, I offered to go with him to help. As we were driving, my dad explained that he had become involved in a new relationship with a woman named Penny so fast because he knows that men live longer when they are married. Penny called several times the first day, and, after the fifth call, he admitted that she was saying "I love you," and he felt that you only say that to your spouse.

Capitalizing on what he had just shared about men living longer when in relationship, I quickly asserted that you live longer the more you say, "I love you." I suggested that he tell the phone he loved it, which he did awkwardly. Then I suggested that he tell that truck in front of us that he loved it. He played along and said, "I love you" to every truck we saw, which gave him a lot of practice in a short period with all the trucks on the interstate. The next day when Penny called, she apologized for interrupting us and he said without hesitation, "I love these calls. I love this phone. I love you!" Silence on the other end. "Wow, sure a lot of love in that van," Penny quipped.

During our trip, I walked him through an upset of his that stemmed from his inability to make requests heard by his partners. I helped him see that since he usually just went along with their ideas and wishes that he had trained them not to listen for his preferences. His pattern for dealing with not being heard was to get mad and do the thing by himself while feeling put upon by all that he previously gave freely.

I helped him see he wasn't making clear enough requests for his strong-minded partners to hear. I encouraged him to get Penny's attention first and then make a strongly-worded request. This conversation freed him up in many ways because he didn't like getting upset over anything, and now he had access to making his requests heard. He expressed admiration with the way I was thinking.

That night, he declared that he was graduating me into adulthood, feeling as though he got his job done. He could see I was thinking in a way he valued. Up to that point, he had withheld his approval waiting for me to be married at my ideal weight and have a corporate job.

### **WHY ISN'T MY AUTHENTIC RELATING BUILDING A RELATIONSHIP?**

On that seven-day trip, we had many great talks, insights and experiences. We had easy comradery. I hoped this adventure would have been something we could build upon but, no, things went back to business as usual. I realize now that his focus was always going to be on his mate and never on his children. Nothing personal, kiddo, I reminded myself.

After nine more years of minimal contact, I tried again. I had just returned to Michigan from California and Penny offered me a place to stay. I agreed to stay in the basement apartment in Penny's second house, to make sure her mom was OK all night and to give her mother daily foot rubs. Penny felt she had the right to come and go in my apartment as she pleased, empty my trash, move the furniture back the way she wanted, put food in my refrigerator, etc. This was excessively intrusive for me. I kept telling her not to come into my space and she refused to comply, thinking I was ungrateful, rude and attacking her. My dad told me then that if it came up that he had to make a choice between her and me, he would pick Penny. I moved out.

### **BACK TO THE PRESENT, FIVE YEARS LATER**

All this is to say that when I realized in 2019 I was emotionally dead to relating to my dad and wanted to open up my heart again, I was overcome with an onslaught of grief, sadness and pain from him leaving me when I was 15 years old. I became enmeshed with my younger-age conversations, while confronting the fact that my dad does not know how to relate to me and wasn't particularly interested in learning. Every time I visited my dad, he professed that parents should divorce their kids when they turn 18 because they were complete with their commitment to parenting. He didn't seem to say this to push me away as much as to defend his ideas and voice his objections to the way Penny was overly enmeshed



with her kids in his view. At the same time, he was interested in interacting with me because Penny thought he should.

My question to myself remained, why in the world would I want to be open, vulnerable and emotionally available in a relationship that could go south if I upset Penny? Why would I want to be undead here? Besides, my dad was not offering emotional connection and warmth. Nothing I had attempted in more than 50 years had worked to build a relationship between us. I didn't feel like his daughter. I felt as though I was some woman he did not mind coming to visit. He called me "Shoe" (based on my married name of Shoemaker, not exactly a term of endearment in my world).

In a weak attempt to clear the emotional stress within me, I got up enough nerve to ask, "Do you think we had feelings about you leaving and not having any contact for years?" He answered, "Did I have feelings? Yes, I did." He went on to tell me the long familiar saga of how he thought he was just divorcing his wife and not the kids and that he would live in a house down the street and things would go on as usual. I tried to ask again over the next few weeks with the exact same response each time. He never seemed to consider that I might have feelings about the way he left and the sporadic contact since that time.

### **WHERE IS MY BIRTHDAY CARD?**

After a month of trying various tactics, I was worn out and it showed up when he didn't give me a birthday card. I got upset while I was at his house to celebrate our birthdays together. His birthday is two days after mine. I don't know why it bothered me so much, other than my inner 4-year-old was throwing a temper tantrum to hide her pain. I was there for my birthday for the first time in 12 years and had unconsciously hoped for some fatherly attention. Penny had created a birthday meal for us. He had only sent me two cards over the past 50 years, so I don't know why I had expected it, but my inner child apparently really wanted a birthday card from him this year.

The next time I visited was the day before Father's Day. I had a terrible time finding a card that said nothing. I just could not do my usual hero worship card. As he handed me my mail, which was

temporarily being delivered to his house while I was in transition of moving, I blurted out "Where's my birthday card?" He didn't understand the question. When he finally understood, he laughed. No. This is not funny. He made some joke about it, and I said, "I am going to start boycotting Father's Day since you don't want to be one." He thought that was funny, too. I am not joking. I know I'm acting like a 4-year-old desperately seeking love from my dad but I can't stop myself.

I started wondering if I was obligated to hang in there and relate to my dad. I did feel obligated. I tried again to get him to hear my feelings, and this time I said, "I just need you to hear that I have feelings about what happened. I'm not making you wrong; you don't need to explain anything, just hear me out." I had to stop him many times from interrupting as I let my feelings, fears and concerns out. I also told him that I didn't know if I wanted to open up to relating to him because he might cut me out of his life at any time, if I upset Penny and he felt he had to choose between us.

His face didn't register that he understood me but I felt better finally articulating my feelings. I knew he never understood why I left many of our visits upset because he never considered that he had something to do with the upsets. Thus, it was not surprising that he asked, "Are you manic depressive, have ADHD or need some other kind of help?"

Regardless of how my dad was being, I remained committed to getting back to love and affinity as an adult, even if I had to go back to the love I felt for him when I was a child and make peace with everything that happened after the divorce on my own. I also had to accept the fact that he is 89 years old, losing his memories and would most likely never be emotionally available to me.

### **HE SAYS HE DOESN'T KNOW HOW TO BE A FATHER**

Over the next few weeks, as I pressed in to increase our relatedness, he kept saying that he didn't know how to be a father since his dad died when he was 32. I told him, after he used this story for the fifth time, that that was ridiculous and we learn how to be parents by the time we are 4 when we have totally assimilated how our

parents do everything. I also pointed out he had 12 years of being a parent while his dad was still alive and 12 years of watching his dad be a grandfather. Therefore, his story did not fly. I was hoping that logic would work for a man who once said, "I don't let my feelings interfere with my thinking."

At some point, he said, "Maybe we could be friends since I don't know how to be a father." Are you kidding? I'm not sure I wanted to relate to this guy even though he was my dad. Why would I want to be friends? Besides, he didn't know how to do that either. I blurted out, "Friends send cards, too."

For the entire 13 months I was back in Michigan, he never asked about me or asked why I kept resisting his requests to write for his website. Interestingly enough, once I started to share my feelings, he started to uncover articles I had written 36 years ago and read them as if for the first time. He said that he was impressed with my writing. He began to see similarities in our writing style and feel connected (despite the fact that I related to people in my writings and he mostly does information dumps with a historical bent). He started to feel proud of himself for having such a brilliant writer for a daughter.

After I got my feelings out, I actually got back to love and affinity. I was able to tell him I could start writing for his newsletter, while reminding him, "Neither of us knows how to successfully launch websites, nor do we generally finish projects since we get distracted by the next new topic to learn." He laughed as if being caught. Regardless, we are currently finding ways to work together in ways that satisfy both of us by building his website, "Aging Superbly."

Perhaps, it would have helped me early on in the course if I had looked at these first two questions. What is the relationship for? Wanting a relationship with my dad was driven by the love I had for him as a child and a sense of obligation. What outcome or results do I want? To experience love and affinity for my dad, and, in the spirit of this goal, I redefined "obligation" as ongoing commitment, which removed all traces of victimhood. Answering these questions created a new context from which I began to operate.

## POSTSCRIPT

About six weeks after being upset with the missing birthday card and threatening to boycott Father's Day in the future, I wrote my dad a four-page letter – complete with pictures of his kids and grandkids – detailing the benefits of sending cards and staying connected. I told him it was a great way to remember to share those things that you don't feel comfortable saying in person.

The day I handed him the letter, he handed me my mail with a thank you card from him on the top of the pile. Printed inside the card was this:

Feeling so grateful for you, and hoping you know how much you're appreciated for all you do—and all you are.

In addition, a personal note inside the card read:

Dearest April,

Thank you so much for all the thoughts, tears, cards and gifts you have sent over the years. You are such a thoughtful, loving person that alone would have been enough. You have done so well by Jason, I am super proud of you. I hope you are able to do as well for yourself in your next chapter. I hope I get to watch you for another 20 years. Lots of love, Dad.

## CONCLUSION

In writing this paper, I discovered many new things about my dad and me. It became clear that my younger age conversations were running my show, while my dad's intellectual decisions were running his. While I consider my life's work to keep transforming my inner self, he considers his life's work to keep increasing his knowledge and the capacity of his mental abilities. While he doesn't let feelings interfere with his thinking, I don't let logic interfere with my intuition. None of these ways of being are right or wrong, and each could be said to be consistent with our gender and cultural upbringing. Part of the battle of relationships is that we are literally talking different languages. Part of the challenge is to find a common ground of relatedness.

I wanted to restore myself to love, and he wanted to understand me and have me be happy; thus we both wanted life to work from our different

points of view. We have moved to bantering more like playmate/sibling than father/daughter, which removes his concerns about not knowing how to be a dad, especially to an adult child, and allows us to relate authentically from wherever we are. I now feel free to tease him about his tendency to be more interested in learning new subjects than in completing projects or manifesting anything, which is something we have in common.

For close to a year he was asking me to write newsletters for his website, and he has yet to use the six e-mails I wrote for him, saying, "That will require continued effort on my part." Although he has trouble admitting it, he'd rather go to his tap dancing lesson, teach a Silver Sneakers fitness class or read the next book that interests him. Even I have to admit, this is amazing for someone 89 years young.

### **CHALLENGE FOR YOU**

Where have you given up hope of authentically relating with someone? Where are you attempting to "protect" yourself? Who have you secretly killed off while pretending to relate?

To answer the question, "Are you really expressing fully, or is this the best we can expect from you?" You need to keep checking in with yourself. Check to see if you are fully present, open and loving with another. Check to see if you feel satisfied with how things are going. Find ways to be able to handle any unhealthy demands or behaviors without being triggered. Stay true to yourself.

Above all, keep choosing to be willing to relate, stay open, be authentic and set healthy boundaries as needed, while you keep exploring what's possible in your relationships. Be willing to keep dancing in the conversations and relationships.

### **DIFFERENCES THIS INQUIRY HAS MADE**

From writing this paper, I realized that I was a leader, rather than a victim of circumstance, when I took over the household for my mother at age 15. I made sure that the three youngest kids were up for school, fed and taken care of after school, that dinner was made, the house was cleaned and laundry for seven was washed and folded. I saw how I was a leader at the job I took with my dad

to learn about computers and ended up training myself for a completely new career as a technical writer in less than a year.

By taking on being willing to relate, I have gotten in communication with others, feeling love and affinity to and from others and am happier than I ever remember being. It has given me more energy to be in action in all areas of my life. Good luck on your journey.

# CONVERSATIONS BETWEEN ROBYN AND GORDON WITH GOD: A BRIEF INQUIRY INTO WHAT IF THE ETERNAL IS WITHIN US?

ROBYN MAITLAND AND GORDON MARTIN

## **Abstract**

*We engage in a literary juxtaposition with the sole intention to arouse inquiry into what if the eternal is within us? Staying in inquiry is difficult as witnessed by two writers who set out to explore awakening as a spiritual context of divine magnificence as compared to the access to God offered in the addiction recovery model. Where were these viewpoints different? Where were they similar? Conversations between Robyn and Gordon with God is less about God and more about the examination of the twists and turns of relationship as we bring the conversation of spiritual recovery forward from each viewpoint.*

*"You cannot discover new oceans unless you have the courage to lose sight of the shore."  
— Andre Gide, 19th century philosopher<sup>1</sup>*

## **INTRODUCING GORDON MARTIN**

I live in Paradise, Newfoundland, a small Canadian town on the eastern edge of North America. A father of two, I am an entrepreneur in the vacation rental market, a poet and a grateful addict in recovery. As a child of divorce and someone who experienced a tremendous amount of loss and chaos in my early life, alcohol and sexually acting out became escapes from the pain. Over time, these escapes became more problematic. At age 39 in Fall 2002, I reached out to God to help me.

Almost instantaneously, the answer came. I attended my first recovery meeting that very morning, and, amazingly, within that week of asking God for help, I was invited to an introduction to a transformational conversation and registered for The Landmark Forum. In June 2003 at the Advanced Course, I declared myself to be the possibility of inspirational leadership.<sup>2</sup> That declaration continues to light my path, especially in making a difference for people recovering from addiction.

Robyn and I met in 2015 when she became my team leader on a Landmark assisting team. Assisting for Landmark called to me because of my need for community and contribution after the loss of my marriage and career. The relationship with Robyn grew over the next few years, and I knew I had met a fellow traveler in the quest for God in our lives.

## **INTRODUCING ROBYN MAITLAND**

My name is Robyn Maitland and I live in Richmond, Virginia, a small city nestled about 90 miles outside Washington, DC on the eastern seaboard in America. I am a human resource consultant, an artist, writer and speaker. Born into a conservative religious New York family, chaos and violence impacted my view of life. My family practiced a religion that prohibited participation in worldly events and practiced religious separatism. Rebelling from the church, I was excommunicated after a failed early marriage. I closed the door to God and family alike for a long time. I felt God was cut off from me. Today, I no longer hold membership or practice organized religion, and yet I am present to a connection I feel at moments of stillness that bring me joy and aliveness.

When Princess Diana was killed in a horrific car crash on August 31, 1997, I woke up to my spiritual self. I was her exact same age at the time when Elton John sang at her funeral, "Candle in the Wind."<sup>3</sup> The song echoed the brevity of life. I was hungry for spiritual knowledge and began to devour ancient and modern spiritual literature. Writers, such as Deepak Chopra, who wrote, "... we will remain unfulfilled unless we nurture the seeds of divinity inside us" and the reading of Autobiography of a Yogi by Paramanhasa Yogananda, had a huge impact on me. "Where indeed may man go now, if not to his source and origin, the spirit within him?"<sup>4</sup> I began to practice deep meditation and was in search of "the God I did not make up."<sup>5</sup>

In my spiritual seeking, the transformational work of Landmark showed up and I did the Forum in 2007. The Wisdom Course Area invited me to create a commitment for the world. My promise in language reads, "By 2024, all people will

experience themselves as infinite light, works of art and creations of a master designer, the Creator God as source where bliss and peace exist."

Gordon and I bonded as friends when he said, "Robyn, I am on your team. I will hold you to account that you don't hide and that the conversation for God be in a future world that neither you nor I will see."

## **THE WRITING PROCESS**

It is certainly a point of interest to look at how two people can come together to create anything and especially an inspirational work of writing. Before we began the writing process, there was a weekly call when we would share. That was the intention. We opened those calls with the reading of the Landmark integrity statement. Challenges arose when two writers on different sides of the continent attempted to create one solitary work. The main writing of excerpts in journal entries was more a stylistic choice to organize and collect the viewpoints of each writer.

Reading the integrity statement at the beginning of each call as part of our process was extraordinary. It was interesting to see what happens when integrity is in the space as a context when you read, "Nothing hidden. Being truthful and honest. Doing complete work ..."

## **AN INVITATION**

### **Gordon's Journal**

On May 25, 2019, I left an invitation on Robyn's voicemail for her to join me on a journey to the Conference for Global Transformation. Inspired by another person sharing about the experience of the conference and when I heard that the 2020 theme was "Making a Difference," I knew that I wanted to be there. But, more than being there, I knew that I wanted to play full out.

Leading up to the invitation, I was looking at my mental health newly. I was experiencing episodes of mania and a few close friends had concerns about my behavior. In the past, I used the mania as rocket fuel to chase higher states of consciousness and the heightened creativity that came with it.

Robyn replied to my invitation by text the next day:

*How will your topic of recovery and my topic of spiritual magnificence go together? And I am a yes.*

From my view, the topics of recovery and spirituality seemed a natural fit. I saw that recovery is leaving the world of self behind and connecting to God; leaving the world of “I” behind and coming together in community.

### **Robyn’s Journal**

I notice every time I write or say the words “conversations with God,” I feel the warmth of being.<sup>6</sup> I have a vivid imagination and have always had a deep desire to know the mysterious, the eternal, the deepest part of me and the depths of divinity that I call the spiritual God within. The conversation of God can be such a fretfully triggering conversation. So many people walk around incomplete with the God conversation they were born into or they have decided to call God other things.

Gordon Martin and I are two people who love the conversation of God that includes all things to explore in the invisible spiritual world. Gordon believes all things are God. He frequently sends me text messages that remind me of my own search for the eternal. Here’s a text he sent me of a quote by Marianne Williamson, the American author and spiritualist: “Once we truly understand that God’s will is that we be happy, we no longer feel the need to ask for anything other than that God’s will be done.”<sup>7</sup>

I appreciate that, for some, the conversation of God sparks no joy. I know people have other descriptions of that energetic force that I feel so powerfully, especially when I sit near the ocean or when I look up to see the majesty of a snow-covered mountain. I call this perceptive force that we can all feel, “source energy.” An intelligence that is beyond our thinking mind and bigger than any one of us and, yet, we sense the similarity of that invisible intelligent energy within us.

I write in boldness and courage to presence the divine intelligence within us. For some, it may be obvious that God is within us, and I apologize to those in advance if what I write seems so obvious. God and spirituality have been a discourse that’s

been written about for thousands of years. I am passionate and grateful to share God through my writing.

Gordon, in his recovery, and me, standing in spiritual awakening, are up to making a difference in the lives of others and are active in a variety of communities, hosting the space for God to show up.

It will be fun to create with Gordon. I’m in for the 2020 conference. But, was recovery and spirituality the same conversation? I did not see that they were.

### **Gordon’s Journal**

Robyn wonders if spirituality and recovery are the same conversation. I believe that they are. The 12-step recovery programs acknowledge that they offer a spiritual solution to addiction without people having to adhere to any specific set of beliefs or practices. Also, as I see from my own life, when I live from God, as compared to when I live from “Gord,” I have a different quality of life.

Robyn and I working together was a natural fit ... or so it seemed.

## **OCEAN STORMS SIGHTED**

### **Robyn’s Journal**

Gordon and I have no idea what our writing submission for the conference will look like when we promise to journal. The weekly reading of the integrity statement at the beginning of each call seems like a homing device that flushes and restores and steers the direction of our voyage. Listening for what one hears in the integrity statement sets the context to look at what might be there to say first. I notice that I cringe sometimes as Gordon starts sharing about recovery. Gordon has a lot to say. OK, well, I guess if I tell the truth, so do I.

### **Gordon’s Journal**

I saw us leaving the shore sailing out to discover something together. I quest for that experience of God as one of my favorite authors, Hafiz, a Persian poet from the 1300s, wrote about his love for God: “God and I are like two giant fat people in a tiny boat; we keep bumping into each other and laughing.”<sup>8</sup>



Today, I sent a text to Robyn:

*"When she was asked, what do you do every day in the streets of Calcutta at your mission?, Mother Teresa replied, 'I simply see Jesus Christ every day in all of his distressing disguises.'"*

I believed this to be a quote that would show Robyn that we were on the same page and we were aligned.

Robyn replied by text:

*"Can you try on expressing God outside of all belief systems so no one is left out?"*

**Gordon:** *"Mother Teresa was a Catholic, to her Jesus was God and I was quoting her."*

**Robyn:** *"Yes that is one view. How do I come from not knowing, being present to my God self, connected to the eternal and let each discover for themselves what the experience of God is for them?"*

**Gordon:** *"How come you feel the need to make me wrong about what I said? I shared about what Mother Teresa said about her work with the poorest of the poor. Why do you find it necessary to make that expression wrong? I can speak about spirit, about higher power, universe, Godself, Allah, Buddha, nature, the sun, Shiva, what does it matter? (What does it matter what language I use?)"*

**Robyn:** *"I don't think I made you wrong. I took the inquiry outside of Mother Teresa. I love Mother Teresa. What is it I said that made YOU feel wronged?"*

**Gordon:** *"I think this is going to be a fun year of inquiry."*

**Robyn:** *"Indeed, at least we will get to practice."*

I was hooked into reaction mode. I wanted to be acknowledged for the quote. Looking back, I see that there was no agreement or protocol for sharing our thoughts or the works of others. I am clear that instead of being heard, Robyn was pushing her agenda.

### Robyn's Journal

Two weeks in and it seems Gordon and I were not off the shore yet. I clearly had a view that recovery and spirituality were completely separate

conversational domains. The conversation of recovery seemed messy and emotional, and I had this idea that people share way too much. It was not OK for me to reveal so deeply what I deal with personally and that type of such deep sharing makes others and me uncomfortable.

Gordon keeps talking about a boat. What boat? Is there any boat out there in the ocean of the unknown? How can we sail into nothingness?

### Gordon's Journal

Instead Robyn writes two weeks later, it seems as if it all fell apart. For me, it seemed like two days. I am still upset and feel wronged by Robyn's snooty comments. It occurred as if my contribution was not valued. This is how I show up in life – already ready to argue that my contribution is worthy.

By text, I share with Robyn a diagram of the Golden Rule showing it from all the great wisdom traditions (see next page, Figure 1).

Again, Robyn invites me to look beyond the belief systems.

Why does she keep pushing me outside of the belief systems? How do I even get there? If all of this great wisdom tradition is there for us to explore, what's beyond that?

I kept flinging God over the wall to her. Is there anything that's going to land? Is she going to agree with anything I say?

I share again by text a quote by American author, Alice Walker, from "The Color Purple":

*"Any God I ever felt in church I brought in with me. And I think all the other folks did too. They come to church to share God, not find God."*<sup>1</sup>

Robyn replied:

*"Gordon, I love that quote! We share the God inside us when we come together in community and the light connects us to each other!"*

What is this eternal that we are examining? Was this our inquiry? Or was it simply two monologues? Me talking and then her talking. Me standing in my expression and Robyn standing in hers. She wants an inquiry of God outside of all the belief systems coming from the unknown. How do I even get



Figure 1.

there? Was I in the same inquiry? I don't think I am in any kind of inquiry at all.

### **Robyn's Journal**

What is it that I thought I would get from this journey? What is the conversation I think I knew? Why am I so passionate about God? I was born into belief structures and taught about a judgmental God who lived somewhere up in the sky. In my life, the search for God all tied back to the belief we are separate. I know that I live as though I'm separate. It seems to me that what we are really trying to do is get back to ourselves rather than something separate from ourselves. Gordon said let's bring a spiritual conversation to the conference. We now seem like adversaries. Good God there is another text from this man. Can't he see I am having an epiphany?

Gordon's text reads: *"Can you spell my damn name right? What if I spelled your name R-o-b-i-n! Why did I even sign up for this journey?"*

He seems to focus on the little things, like the spelling of his name rather than the big picture. I am annoyed but that's nothing new for me either—being annoyed is how I show up in life. Admittedly, I have learned to ignore the misspelling of my name. I always notice such careful attention with people who spell my name right. I admire those who take time to be careful and deliberate.

### **Gordon's Journal**

I always do that by the way (take time with people's names to be careful and deliberate).

## **DEATH AND WHY I AM OUT HERE**

### **Gordon's Journal**

On June 10, Carol Dierdorff, a friend in the Wisdom community, reached out to me to share that her beloved youngest daughter, Shannon, at the age of 41, took her own life.

Shannon was a veteran who struggled with depression and addiction. Shannon left behind two beautiful daughters and her sister. Carol reached out to me because she knew I was someone who has been willing to share about my own struggles with addiction. Carol wanted to see if there was anything I had written that she could share that

would help her family deal with the loss.

Instead, I wrote a poem for Shannon called, "I See You," from which a few excerpts are:

### **I See You**

I have never looked into your eyes  
That you would know that I see you  
But so often I have held your hand  
In prayer at the end of a meeting  
Felt your small hand in mine  
Knew the warrior standing next to me

I wish we could  
Have talked  
Had tea  
Sat quiet in the trees

I love to write when I'm moved by God. I recognize being willing to share my story within the Landmark community has helped people heal.

I see now some of the struggle that I have felt in terms of the relationship that I had with Robyn this summer. In the recovery community, we share ourselves and our stories. We share our experience, strength and hope. We do that for ourselves and we do it for the person who still struggles that maybe in the sharing they will see themselves. We share to have the pain felt in that moment clear, like water that runs from dark to clear in the pipes.

### **Robyn's Journal**

Carol was also a friend of mine and my heart felt her loss. I was introduced to the experience of losing someone you love when I was just 14 years old and my father died suddenly. Carol was always someone with whom I could explore deep spiritual questions. Being in dialogue was easy when I wrote to Carol about death and the loss of her daughter. I wrote: The whole language of losing and loss needs to be explored in spiritual terms. A spirit comes through us, love is shared, and the spirit moves on and our lives are changed. It seems we want to hold on forever to the people we love and yet we all move on – not one of us stays in this physical body. I am so sorry for your loss Carol and I have my inquiry for my next lifetime: Is it because we can't see her that we believe Shannon is gone?

## Gordon's Journal

On July 14, I lost my sobriety in a way that scared me. It felt like another manic episode similar to the ones I had earlier in the spring. But, unlike the earlier ones, I did not land safely and instead acted out. In the sex addiction community, "acting out" means a loss of sobriety to compulsive behaviors. I wrote a poem about it called, "Tower of Terror," in which I share the experience of this insanity and a few lines are: "All my life I've been riding the rails" and "I didn't know I was in the park, let alone bought the ticket."

At the same time, a few days later Robyn and I hit an iceberg in our relationship. It was when Robyn brought her upset with recovery out into the open after I commented on a post by Dr. Fred Moss, a psychiatrist, on his Facebook group, Global Madness.

I can see from the post that I am not well. I am trying to reinforce my goodness, yet I am dealing with the pain surrounding the loss of sobriety. My comments were long and revealing. I spoke about working with Robyn to bring a new conversation to the conference coming from her shore and mine.

Robyn responded on my comment on the post page, "I notice that recovery keeps us rooted in the past needing to 'recover' something that was. It keeps us retelling the memories, the story and the self-judgment."

I let Robyn know that her comments were not appreciated. I even removed her name from my post. Recovery is nothing about being stuck in the past. The 12 steps are a spiritual program of living. Why do people criticize that which they don't really know? I also noticed Fred acknowledged Robyn and did not acknowledge me. My state of mind was, "F--- them all."

In our weekly phone call, Robyn repeated her thoughts about what she wrote on Facebook and I hung up on her.

## Robyn's Journal

I send a text to Gordon:

*"I think you deliberately hung up on me. I apologize that I have no idea how life occurs for you as an addict that you call yourself. If you are*

*not willing to explore new things to say, we are stuck on the shore. I apologize if you were left not feeling gotten."*

Gordon texted back:

*"Yes, I did deliberately hang up. You're holier than thou; I am right and you are wrong attitude I cannot abide with this morning."*

Hmm ... Gordon was really upset. I think that I was just thrown out of the boat. It seems I know nothing about exploring and staying in the inquiry, and there was certainly no freedom to say what was there for me. If I gave everything up that I thought I knew or didn't know about recovery and spiritually, could something new emerge? And it did.

## Gordon's Journal

I let some time go by before I reached out to Robyn. Finally, I sent her this text:

*"Have you got any time today for a chat? My body is cold and I am getting a lot of salt water in my mouth."*

It was time to get back in communication. I'm not interested in swimming out here in the ocean of discovery by myself. I took on a commitment to explore this inquiry with Robyn together in partnership.

## Robyn's Journal

Yay! Gordon reached out to me today and we will resume our weekly calls. Where were we failing to keep our word? Certainly, there was no agreement for sharing. I also see that I am an idiot in my righteousness. Here is what I do: I have a point of view and then I tell the other my point of view, thinking my view is right for them or good for their life. Sure, I am earnest in wanting to make a difference. Yet, who says I have any answers? How do I then share my viewpoint and leave the other free to be in the inquiry with me? It took a few hang-ups and missed conversations before we could begin to leave all this boat stuff behind us. Perhaps, the voyage requires only to swim freely in the ocean of discovery.

## Gordon's Journal

I get the out-of-integrity. I get the no workability. This has been a challenging summer. I was extremely

busy with a new business I had set up. I was full of upset because of no contact with my two children and deeply grieving the loss of seeing them.

I had, for the first time, the willingness to look further at the possibility of hypomania. "Hypomanic episodes include inflated self-esteem, grandiosity, decreased need for sleep, flight of ideas, distractibility and excessive involvement in pleasurable activities that have a high potential for painful consequences."<sup>12</sup>

I need to be responsible for how my well-being impacted others. When I am not well, this impacts other people, and this time the impact was on Robyn.

### **Robyn's Journal**

There was a new intentionality in our dialogue after the breakdown. There was a new cadence in how we listened to each other that was rich in discovery. The insights and the shape of a writing experiment began and you are reading the result of a shared experience. Having Gordon as a partner kept me bold, as I heard him repeatedly say, "Let go and let God."

### **Gordon's Journal**

Back in conversation with my integrity restored, I got back in action in terms of my sobriety and caring for my general well-being. I met with mental health care professionals and discussed a plan of action. I organized a yoga recovery retreat weekend in early August where I spent the weekend concentrating on my breath. I am seeing the impact of my commitment in the growth of lives of people around me.

### **Robyn's Journal**

The realization of my promise is a planet of people awakened to the God within. Gordon and I started out so separate, he over there with his recovery and me over here with my spirituality. Yet, now all there is out here is an ocean of exploration. In this writing, I got to express my promise for the world. Yet, I think John O'Donohue, an Irish philosopher, poet and priest, says it best, "Once the soul awakens, the search begins and you can never go back. From then on, you are inflamed with a special longing that will never again let you linger in the lowlands of complacency and partial fulfillment. The eternal makes you urgent."<sup>13</sup>

## **THE OCEAN VOYAGE AFTER LOG**

### **Robyn's Journal**

Rumi, a 13th century Sufi poet and philosopher, said, "Through the wound the light enters."<sup>14</sup> There is a woundedness that I am, that Gordon is, that we all are and, perhaps, it is through that wound that we connect in one universal light. When each person awakens into the light of awareness and looks into the eyes of the other and sees Self, perhaps there in the eyes of the other a healing occurs.

As I surveyed the work that Gordon and I accomplished so far, I realized something was missing from the story. I was missing. In my humanity, I was emotionally unavailable to be with the messiness of it all. I was just a pretense looking at my reluctance to share my own personal struggles, addictions and hidden behaviors, and, in some cases, experiencing that sense of the powerlessness that Gordon talks about.

I shared my fears of being labeled an addict with Gordon and got fully an experience of what a recovery community provides. The love found in acceptance, in mirroring, gave me the space to come out of hiding and altered my view of the parts of me that want to remain hidden. Gordon said the suffering is in the hiding. I renewed my commitment to do my own spiritual work, letting go of the victimhood and bringing my darkness into the light.

### **Gordon's Journal**

I see miracles occur in dialogue, and, where there is no alignment, there is no agreement and possibility. Robyn is a commitment to the world and I said that I was on her team. The things that Robyn kept hidden and wasn't saying were in the way. Robyn is waking up despite her brokenness, despite her story. The beauty is becoming real—not just a woman wanting to share her philosophy and not sharing her humanity.

The more I consider our inquiry, What if the eternal was within?, the more I want to spend time there, to be in the space and in the vibration of God. Rather than just talking and writing about God, my goal now is to experience God.

As Laurence Platt, the author of "Conversations

for Transformation,” who was inspired by the ideas of Werner Erhard, puts it, “Consider that you are the space that God shows up.”<sup>15</sup>

### Sharing Discovery

I have been saying yes lately  
yes to discovery  
yes to contribution  
yes to opportunity  
yes to love  
spring flood  
beauty  
seen  
felt  
heard  
tasted  
birthing new petals  
of my awakening  
soul

— Gordon Martin 2019<sup>16</sup>

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# THE SOUND OF LISTENING

FRED MOSS

## **Abstract**

*Years ago, an auditory injury at a rock concert led to a loss in my hearing ability and a gain in my ability to listen. In short, a dis-ability created an enhanced ability. As a psychiatrist who works remotely over videoconferencing, it was important for me to hear. The wonder I discovered was that lost sounds returned through the aid of technology, and the glorious surprise was a new level of relatedness and listening to the community of human being.*

## **CADENCE, RHYTHM AND SONG OR THE SOUND OF SOUNDS**

I have always adored and endured the sound of sounds. From Leonard Bernstein's "Peter and the Rabbit" on the family Victrola to The Beatles' "Abbey Road" on our stereo system, I have been drawn to music since I was a child. I simply love cadence and rhythm and song.

The masterpieces of the symphony, as well as the sheer beauty of spoken poetry and heartfelt storytelling, have always held a deep attraction for me. The exquisite sounds of nature's animals and phenomena, such as the breeze, ocean waves

and storms, have always profoundly enchanted my soul.

As a teenager in the 1970s, I naturally adored rock-n-roll. Attending concerts was a way to spend evenings with friends and enjoy the true, emerging counterculture. My identity, in no small part, was wrapped up with the newest releases from the newest artists with a level of gravity that few things have rivaled in my entire lifetime. Attending two or three shows a week throughout high school and college, I enjoyed the expression of nearly all of the artists and was moved at levels that would now be very difficult to describe using spoken word.

## **TECHNOLOGY ENHANCED THE SOUND**

The development of earphones and headphones was fascinating to me as brand new technologies emerged. The advances of quadrophonic and high fidelity were exhilarating.

Common vibrations were sweet sounds to me and left me curious and explorative. Bees buzzing, trees rustling, roosters crowing and winds howling gave me extraordinary reverence, while the sounds of trains, planes, fire engine sirens and jackhammers always amused me and kept me feeling present and alive. Frequently, it was just like, "Wow, what was that? How beautiful or weird or loud or soothing or irritating..."—whatever the case may be.

## **THE SOUND OF SILENCE**

I also loved the sound of silence. Once I learned that it was indeed a sound of its own, as white is to colors, I realized with no uncertainty that we are never without sound. Even the vibrational sound

waves of silence travel at Mach 1, which is 761 miles per hour.

Over time I grew more familiar with the nuances of silence. I recall the moment vividly. I was sitting on the lower risers in Indianapolis in 2005 at a concert of one of my all-time favorites—Bruce Springsteen. I was enjoying the music at a decibel level that would now be considered beyond dangerous. Then there seemed to be a soft “pop” and a slight experience that I was no longer hearing all of the subtle tones I had been accustomed to. It was as though an auditory rug had been pulled out from under me. I thought, “Well, anyhow, maybe it will go away, like when my ears ‘pop’ on an airplane and return to normal capacity in a few minutes.”

I would later learn, through some trial and error, and error again, that I had lost some acuity of my conventional hearing capacity. My patients had to repeat things more often. On our videoconference call sessions, they remarked on the whirl of my computer, a sound that I was not aware of. People would expect me to hear things that I simply didn’t.

The most interesting aspect of self-assessment was that I truly did not know what I was not hearing, because, well, I was not hearing it. It would only become clear to me after somebody else heard it and told me, and then I would rationalize that they must have great hearing or some idiosyncratic particular hearing at a specific frequency. Looking back, it seemed that I was compensating for my deficiency by denying it was there. I would ask others to speak up and even blame them for not speaking loud enough for another person to hear them. My children compensated for me by speaking louder to me than to others.

### **I FORGOT WHAT I WAS MISSING**

The details in the content of what people said to me slipped measurably. I was the last to notice. Perhaps, this annoyed some people. Somehow, a new agitated interface arose inside the area of simple communication. It was sourced by my inability to confirm to others that I was hearing what they said to me. The hearing loss was sudden at some level, I suppose, as a result of the auditory insult I experienced at the Springsteen

concert. It was insidious at others, without me understanding what I had lost and to what extent. Since I didn’t know that I had lost it, then I surely didn’t know that it was missing.

One day, a longtime patient of mine brought me information about hearing aids, stating that the technology had improved and maybe I should look into it. For a moment, I was embarrassed and defensive but realized seconds later what an act of love and kindness it was. I have been grateful to her ever since. I soon had a new hearing aid and the sounds of life returned in ways I forgot were missing. I heard that whirl of my computer, the click of my turn signal and those different aspects of music I had forgotten were there. I am reminded of the adage, “If a tree falls in my woods and I did not hear it, did it actually happen?”

My children were seemingly “screaming” at me, but it was the beautiful, compensating baseline that they had gracefully established so we could continue to communicate effectively. When people whispered, I did not have to pretend to hear them anymore because I actually did. A renewed sense of life in the world of hearing had been granted to me and I held it as nothing less than a miracle.

### **ANOTHER SOUND REVOLUTION**

Hearing aid technology has gone through massive revolutionary changes over time and I have been on the front edge of this wave for the last 15 years. These gadgets are sometimes temperamental and can become plugged up or they lose their effectiveness over time. Again, I don’t appreciably notice the deterioration. Nonetheless, I am grateful for the quality of my hearing with the assistance of these tools, though very challenged when it comes to noticing whether or not they are helping as much as they could or should.

To the next point, however, I remain profoundly inquisitive and astonished. You see, as my hearing of content waxes some, I have been exploring the difference between hearing and listening. I have discovered that the power of listening actually exceeds the power of speech when communicating with others. Listening is not a passive phenomenon at all. In fact, it is more important in shaping the context and direction of a conversation than speaking is. Mastering

authentic listening has now become the next domain for me to explore and it is here as a perpetual mountain to climb from now forward. I am grateful to have learned this because a new sense of power and freedom has simultaneously arisen as a natural correlate to this realization.

### **A NEW LEVEL OF ACCEPTANCE AND APPRECIATION**

One might expect that having a conventional hearing deficit would present itself as a hindrance to this endeavor. This has not been the case for me. Given my level of cognizance of this matter, I am certain that I am listening to others better now than I ever have, even as I am less certain that I am hearing each and every word as well as I once did. For instance, on a recent trip to Ukraine, the cadence and song of speech were considerably different than what I am accustomed to in English. Still, I was able to develop a close friendship with people I talked to, even if I barely understood any actual words coming from their mouths.

It seems that in the act of “being with” another and of accepting the universality of what it is to be human beings together, the content of language loses its critical essentiality and communication takes place at a higher plane. It is there that being with another can happen without the aid of a shared spoken language. A new level of acceptance and appreciation arises. The tendency to assess and judge people for nuances in their speech patterns disappears. The easily misinterpreted subtleties when speaking the same dialect no longer exist. Perhaps, being with people who speak a different language and are not depending on the content being translated accurately calls on our humanity to be the unifying force. This can result in a less judgmental, more open form of interactive ease and comfort.

### **BEETHOVEN NEVER HEARD THE NINTH**

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827) became deaf in his later years. His composing, as extraordinary as it had been prior to the decline, seemed to actually improve in his advancing years. The Ninth Symphony with “Ode to Joy” is my favorite piece of music ever written. He never heard it. I listened to it today as done by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra by finding it on YouTube, hitting “Play”

and putting on my noise cancelling headphones (talk about technology explosion). I was once again thrown back by its brilliance. “Otherworldly” does not do it proper justice.

In the process of exploring this topic, I see what strikes awe in me is that a prevailing and perceived limitation is being obliterated. Not only is Beethoven communicating directly to me today through his music, he is doing so after being dead for nearly 200 years. And he is doing it more intimately than nearly anybody I will meet anytime soon. He is not here in Los Angeles where I am, and he has never been in Los Angeles. He never spoke a word of English, and, being deaf, he wouldn't have heard me even if I had spoken to him in German. The Chicago Symphony Orchestra is also not with me in Los Angeles and actually recorded this rendition almost five years ago. I have never met any of the musicians and never heard any of them say a word in any language. Only by passing on what got passed on to them through nonlanguage signs and symbols of music—as well as the essence that was passed to them through six generations of time—were they able to touch my soul effortlessly today. All in a day's work.

### **TRANSCENDING THE BARRIERS OF TIME, SPACE AND LANGUAGE**

In conclusion, I am deeply struck by the level of communication that can, and does, occur when we give up the need to understand every word and expand ourselves to explore all-encompassing communication pathways. These avenues can reliably lead to an extraordinary appreciation for our humanity that transcends the barriers of time, space and language. It puts us together as human beings in ways that might otherwise go unappreciated in our everyday lives.

What would be possible if we were to use these already present channels to be with each other rather than focusing on, and clinging to, our differences?

The Ode to Joy would then be something we all could share together every day.

# THE UNFOLDING OF MY COMMITMENT – A MOMENT WHEN THE IMPOSSIBLE BECAME POSSIBLE

SANDI EATON RICHARDS

## *Abstract*

*This paper focuses on my journey in enabling the North United Kingdom (U.K.) and North Wales to participate in Landmark Zoom webinars; my growth and development as a graduate of The Landmark Forum; the realization of my commitment to transformation in my community; the journey I took moving in and out of possibility; and how the impossible became possible.*

## INTRODUCTION

I did the Forum in London, United Kingdom in 2007, introduced by a friend who had heard about it in South Africa. It was utterly life-changing for me and those around me. My 12-year-old daughter, Bella, remarked that I returned home as if I had a permanent glow of light around me; my new aura.

We lived a long way from a Landmark center, so initially I had not registered for a weekly seminar but I really wanted to participate. I enrolled my sister in looking after my daughter while I attended a seminar in Bristol, which was about a three-hour drive from home. I worked for myself, so I had some flexibility and my sister, Liz, lived only an hour or so from Bristol. Liz registered for the Forum while I was participating in the seminar. She registered because of the change she saw in me. Before every seminar session, I arrived to drop off

my daughter stressed, tired and annoyed and came back from the seminar happy and energized, even though it was getting on to midnight. It made no sense to her, but she wanted it.

Subsequently, I enrolled a friend who lived near me in doing the Forum. He had a brilliant breakthrough reconnecting with his brother after 20 years of being estranged. But the travel distance stopped him from going to his Tuesday night completion session and he did not participate in the seminars or continue participating.

I knew that I was missing regular contact with other graduates. I was not great at talking about my experiences, and I strenuously avoided phone calls so I was not talking to other graduates. Instead, I relied on conversations with myself, and we all know how discouraging or downright

destructive those can be. I didn't know it, but I was not able to use my newfound transformation because I was caught up in my internal monologue.

What I needed was dialogue and a local Landmark community. I knew that when I was with other graduates at the seminar, it made a huge difference to my life and those of the people around me. The breakthroughs kept happening. My darling daughter had been desperate for a horse since the age of six. I was the one who had been stopping this. I saw it as another burden for me. My husband worked away, so in my mind it would be me looking after the horse, on top of everything else I had to deal with.

In my first Relationship seminar in Bristol, I saw the absurdity of refusing my daughter her greatest wish. In one breath, I would say that what I wanted most in the world was for her to be happy and fulfilled, and, yet, in the next breath I was saying no to her utmost desire. For six years, she had read and educated herself about natural horsemanship and was completely committed to working that way with her own horse. Why on earth would I block that? So, we bought a horse – who by the way is still with me and provides me with much comfort, fulfilment and love.

About this time, I persuaded/manipulated/pestered my husband to consent to our daughter doing the Forum and she did. That was amazing. Bella became, and still is, one of my best coaches. But, as a mother, relying on your 13-year-old daughter for coaching does not always work.

A second seminar in Bristol empowered me to take some action around creating a community of graduates. I decided to organize an event near my home to invite other local graduates and for us to invite nongraduate friends and family. Truthfully, my aim was mainly to connect with other graduates locally under the guise of organizing an event. I was desperate. Between the two seminars, I had struggled with my inner voice talking me down. I so much missed who I was being and how I behaved when I was participating in the first seminar. I took actions that otherwise would have remained as ideas. I was fulfilled. I was great with my daughter – and her horse. Looking back, I can see that I was creating my life while participating in the seminar and I was creating my daughter's life.

It was wonderful and what I had always wanted.

So, while in the second seminar, I obtained a list of phone numbers of other graduates near me from the London center. This, in itself, was a major breakthrough. Making phone calls was one of my pet hates, and cold calling was a complete no-no. I doggedly rang around. No takers. There were a few graduates in the areas around me, but many had not participated for a while and the others were not enrolled or still too far away. Amazingly, there was a graduate in the next-door village. This was thrilling, but she stopped returning my calls when we talked about meeting up. The event that I was organizing did not take place. I did not connect with any other graduates locally.

I was hugely disappointed. My experience of really going for something and it not working out was one that repeated in my life – but it was, as yet, undistinguished. I did not see that it repeated. I only saw that I could not have what I wanted, and so it gripped me as “fate” or “This is the way my life is.” My internal voice took over. (Had I had the tools, a “seeming” collage would have worked wonders then.)<sup>1</sup> I became resigned to not being able to participate further until Bella was older or my husband was at home.

Conversations with my amazing daughter continued to keep some of the Landmark tools alive for both of us. I hosted a couple of home introductions which led to great breakthroughs.<sup>2</sup> (I thoroughly recommend hosting home introductions for all graduates.) My daughter and I reallocated our household chores, which meant she learned to cook and I took over some of the “horsey” chores. Cooking did not register on my list of enjoyments. We created partnership and fun between us where there had been distrust and stress previously. I still talk about the soufflé we cooked together – my first and last. With Bella's partnership, the soufflé was a great success. I would never have attempted one on my own. Sadly though, my guests for the home introductions did not register. My main motive of creating a community of graduates was still failing.

#### **THE NEXT STAGE – TRANSFORMATION AND STRUGGLE**

In 2009, an amazing new graduate from the North

U.K., Sally Canello, took it upon herself to make sure we had the Forum and an Advanced Course in Sheffield. Sheffield is in the north of the U.K. and less than a three-hour drive from where I live. This was irresistible and I registered for both. Empowered again, I registered for the Self-Expression and Leadership Program (SELP) and then coached the SELP. Thank you, Sally, for all that you did and continue to do. The impact you have is extraordinary and immeasurable.

The Introduction Leaders Program (ILP) was publicized as a course that was good for graduates living a long way from the Landmark center in London. I attended an ILP introduction with participants from other European countries. There was a suggestion that people outside the U.K. could participate on Skype – but this option was not available for graduates in the North U.K. I was gutted, but still registered for the ILP. My plan was to train to lead the SELP in the North U.K. so that people with less flexibility than me could participate. I was hugely inspired by the possibility of providing this course in the north and my commitment supported me to rearrange my life so that I could travel to London two or three times a month.

I was already causing a community in the North U.K. and North Wales. I had kept in touch with others from my area after reviewing the Forum. I started talking to the London center about using Skype for courses. The answer was no. I got upset. For the whole eight months of the ILP I complained, mostly in my head to myself. Why couldn't we participate on Skype? Why was this so hard? I was so right about how wrong it was! The breakthroughs in ILP were amazing and still support me today. I created a new coaching business and supported my daughter in having much better GCSE<sup>3</sup> exam results than might otherwise have happened. But, the struggle was overriding. I didn't achieve the targets set for becoming an introduction leader, and the dream of leading the SELP in the north crashed.

The disappointment of not being able to lead the SELP weighed heavily on me but I did not give up on wanting to support a graduate community around me. I had discovered a couple of Landmark seminars that were available to purchase and I bought both. I decided to offer these seminars as an informal group participation event in my house

in North Wales and enrolled graduates from four other locations in the North U.K. in doing the same.

We made it clear that it was not an official Landmark seminar. I even enrolled participants that did not live near me to participate via Skype. There were slight technology hiccups, but it worked pretty well. We completed two seminars – the facilitators in each area supporting each other. (This endeavor could be said to be an early form of the current facilitated webinars and Wisdom Unlimited course.) There was some disquiet from the London center though and other Landmark graduates in the North U.K. These were unofficial “courses.” Was it OK? Should we do them again? It became a bit of a battleground and while I wanted to organize another set of the same seminars in my home, it did not happen.

### GROWING COMMUNITY

At the same time, other northern Landmark graduates and I continued to build and connect the North U.K. and the North Wales communities. I developed an e-mail newsletter. In various locations in the north, we organized Christmas do's, introductions, collaging gatherings and enabled an ILP classroom.

My first collaging gathering was in January 2011 at Hilary Pickins' house in Sheffield before I had done the Wisdom course. I made a “create the year ahead” collage, which turned out to be remarkably accurate. Hilary had been the North U.K.'s source person and an introduction leader for all the years we had been creating our north community and many years before. Sometimes, she was the only introduction leader in the north, travelling miles and miles to lead all over the North U.K. Hilary's unwavering stand for the North U.K. is immeasurable and we cannot acknowledge her enough.

At some point, I heard that people in Scotland were participating in seminars on Skype. Scotland is even further north than we are and a very long way from London. Now, this was perfect. If they could participate, we could. I asked London again – no. Guess what? I got upset! To be honest I don't think I had ever really stopped being upset. My way of being was that it was all difficult; an uphill battle. Why could we not join in? It made no

sense. We did not even get an explanation; just no. I expected no. Maybe I created no. I certainly created that it would be hard work and a struggle.

The Skype seminars that the Scottish graduates participated in soon became a specific webinar for Europe.

### **FINDING WISDOM UNLIMITED**

I connected again with Scottish graduates when I participated in the Wisdom course in 2015 and dropped in as a guest to some of their webinars. They were brilliant – just what we needed. How could we get them? A bit of play, fun and ease started percolating into my life – long overdue. For the first time, I experienced my commitment to a northern graduate community being heard by Landmark. Thank you, Helga Christian, for allowing me to host a Wisdom community Saturday at my home, even though I had no experience in leading for Landmark. We had a wonderful day with over 20 guests – more than half of them were not Forum graduates.

I resisted talking to the London center again about the webinars. I was finally getting that my upset was not powerful. But, I didn't trust myself to hear "no" and not be upset again. I was still expecting it to be difficult. I now know about myself, thanks to the Wisdom course, that making things hard work is a conversation that I have existed in from a very young age. It is automatic for me to default to that. So, it isn't really a surprise that the journey to this point had been a struggle and hard work.

I continued with other graduates to cultivate and support our North U.K. and North Wales communities with a growing WhatsApp group, occasional special evenings and other sporadic events in the north.

During the 2017 Year-end Vacation course in Mexico, we looked at areas where we had been stuck for a long time and how we could make a difference to them. I had a breakthrough and declared the impossible. The North U.K. and North Wales would be participating in the Zoom webinars within a year. I had no idea how this was going to happen, but the declaration was out there and, when I returned home, I redeclared it to other graduates who knew me.

At the time, I was still avoiding being in communication with the London center. I forgot my promise – or avoided it – for months and took no action. Some of us in the north participated in phone seminar mocks with Douglas Newbury who was training to be a seminar leader. These mocks were fabulous and having not participated in a seminar since 2008, I got again how powerful the seminars are. Thank you, Douglas, for your stand and commitment to the North U.K.

The Facilitated Wisdom course had just been born. This was perfect for graduates a long way from a Landmark center so, of course, I trained to be a facilitator. In the autumn of 2018, I facilitated a course at my home in North Wales. What a treat to offer this level of transformation to people living near me. Even though the farthest participant was only an hour and a half drive from my home, they all stayed at my house during the course and we had five mini-vacation weekends. It was such fun.

### **HARNESSING MY POWER**

In April 2018, my wonderful sister, Liz Richards, and I went for a holiday in Dublin to support a friend who was doing the Forum there. I should say, in passing, that Liz is hugely instrumental in maintaining and expanding the Bristol Landmark community. We have had many fruitful conversations about supporting and developing Landmark communities at a distance from a main Landmark center. At my friend's Tuesday evening completion session, I saw that the lack of webinars in the North U.K. and North Wales was just a breakdown.

The breakdown only existed because of my unfulfilled commitment to having them. So, at that Tuesday evening, after powerfully clearing my intention with my sister, I had another conversation with the London center manager about the North U.K. participating in the Zoom webinars. The conversation was different, and he agreed to look at what might be possible. No promises, but not a no.

After years, I finally had a conversation where I was not making the London center wrong and it was different. Identifying the lack of webinars as a breakdown allowed me to avoid being significant about the north participating. Seeing that the breakdown was a direct result of my yet-to-be-



fulfilled commitment allowed me to acknowledge my commitment. This was a highly empowering point of view and completely different to the struggle and hard work that I had been operating from previously. Through the Wisdom course and various Wisdom vacation courses, I had become way more practiced at bringing ease to areas of my life that had been a struggle previously. This paid off in the conversation with Per Holmgren, the London center manager.

At that time, I was not taking any other actions to forward my promise of webinars in the north within a year. I was preoccupied with planning to facilitate the Wisdom course in my home and had decided to extend my webinar promise to the following year. Another graduate in the North U.K., Carmel Dungan, wanted to take part in the Autumn 2018 European Zoom webinar and had emailed the London center to request how to participate. Through a misunderstanding about locations (it was thought that her proposed location was in Scotland), the London center approved her participation if six others also registered. Carmel shared this on our northern WhatsApp group a week before the Velocity webinar started.

I was ecstatic.

This was fantastic. If they could participate in Huddersfield, we could participate in North Wales. I called Carmel and read through the e-mails that had been exchanged. I wanted to be certain that the London center really was on board. It all looked clear and amazing. I jumped on the bandwagon. Hilary in Sheffield jumped, too. The requirement was to have a facilitator and six participants in each location. In four days, we generated three facilitators and more than 30 graduates to register in three locations – Huddersfield, Lancaster and Sheffield. No coincidence that all this activity occurred around the Velocity seminar. We even had introduction leaders registered in each group available to lead to guests. The Zoom sessions were set to take place on Thursday evenings. On Thursday afternoon of the first session Carmel received an e-mail saying that there had been an error – a confusion in locations – and we could not participate. Carmel called me and amazingly

I didn't get upset! But I did get in action and called the London center manager. The result of that communication was still no, we could not participate, but I heard myself newly. I was powerful and unwaveringly committed. This was a transformation in my way of being. For the first time, I was able to put forward my case about our participation in the north, without significance, without expecting struggle. I wasn't backing down or giving up. I wasn't upset. I understood that the answer was no right now, but it didn't stop me living in the possibility of it happening in the future.

Carmel was utterly committed to us being able to participate in this Zoom seminar. I am forever indebted to her unstoppable determination and boldness, and so are the North U.K. and North Wales graduates. The transformation that has since occurred in the north is directly attributable to Carmel's courage and resolve. With the support of other senior graduates, she communicated directly with the San Francisco headquarters and a miracle happened. On Friday morning, I got the call from the London center manager that we could participate. I was in the supermarket, shopping, and, in that instant, the whole world changed. The future possibility was now. It had arrived. The major struggle in that moment was in maintaining some composure and not dancing round the supermarket like a five-year-old.

I still think of that moment, instantly smile and "tear up." There is no need for generation. It is there; part of my new being. An unbridled happiness, an exhilaration and inexplicable new real sense of "anything is possible." My automatic brain machinery has been rewired. In this being, I am unstoppable. There is no self-doubt and no inner disquiet. It could be called the feeling of success, but it is way more than that. In that moment, there was nothing else except possibility and a created future that was both everything and nothing. Everything I had dreamed of and nothing because I had no idea what it was going to be like. I had not done this before.

My next conversation was with Carmel. Her exhilaration and excitement mirrored mine. What an amazing conversation that was. We now had to re-enroll all those participants who we had

previously registered. Even though we had called each of them only a few hours earlier to say that it was all off, we had no disquiet in calling everyone back. We were both operating from absolute power. Wonderfully, almost all of them were able to participate in the whole webinar. It was so good. The incredible had happened. I had declared the seemingly impossible and it had come about within the year. The power of declaration. Wow! This is a created life.

As we approached the final sessions of that first amazing webinar it was clear that almost all of us wanted to participate in the next one. We had been told in no uncertain terms that participation in the Velocity webinar was a one-off. But, hey, we were on a roll. I e-mailed the London center manager with the numbers of confirmed participants that we could generate for the next webinar. I had more conversations promising six locations and 60 participants. Other graduates in the north and I promised action and registrations. Meanwhile, the London center manager would have conversations to enroll world headquarters. We were in partnership. No struggle here.

As luck would have it (or maybe it wasn't luck), I had a free weekend just before the next webinar started. I called more than a hundred graduates and registered almost 60 into the January 2019 webinar in six different locations, including North Wales, generating six facilitators, as well. I was truly unstoppable. One call after another. Not all calls went well. Rebuffed and even having the phone put down on me a few times, I continued unabated. Where was the person who feared and hated making phone calls? She was living in that moment of creation – anything and everything is possible. It is such a great place to operate from.

We participated in the Forum in Action series webinar and transformation really took off all over the north. Graduates, who had not participated for years, found us and, in my immediate community alone, six friends participated in the Forum. We now have more than 20 actively participating graduates in just the North Wales community and the same is happening all over the North U.K. What a far cry from my desperate search for one other local graduate. We generated

an ILP classroom in Sheffield in Spring 2019 with very little effort and, in a few short months, have had several special evenings all over the North U.K.

For me, the success of causing that second Forum in Action webinar was, and is still, incalculable. On the northern source team, I was clear that I would be accountable for the webinars. It had been agreed with the London center that the north would not participate in the Summer 2019 webinar and we would look at next taking part in the autumn. I was satisfied not to participate in the summer webinar, and I enrolled the northern source team in this pathway.

However, not all the current webinar participants were happy with this plan and one person on the source team was not convinced. Here it is time to acknowledge Angey Isitt, a long-standing northern graduate who has been an introduction leader and source person for the north. Angey is the definition of being “a stand” for something. For her, it was crazy not to continue the momentum of participation. Against the backdrop of the northern source team and others saying we should leave it until the autumn, Angey continued to stand up for the north participating in the Summer 2019 webinars. Knowing her as well as I do, I saw that it was worth looking at why I was so happy to not run with that ball. I finally realized that I was hugely scared of failing. I was scared of registering fewer people than for the current webinar and scared of looking bad to the London center and World Headquarters.

My fear was blocking transformation and impeding my commitment to an empowered northern Landmark community. How mad was that? Thank you, Angey, for being so steadfast that I had that breakthrough. Thank you for your partnership and friendship over all those years and your unceasing commitment to the north and the transformation of all those around you.

I chose to go for the Summer 2019 webinars, enrolled the northern source team in us participating and enrolled the London center. We registered nearly 40 people into the Commitment webinar in five locations.

Now, there is no question that the North U.K. and North Wales are participating in the webinars.

We have just completed the Autumn 2019 Money webinar and are currently promoting the Spring 2020 Integrity webinar. Excitement in the North U.K. and North Wales is palpable.

### **PROMOTING LEADERSHIP**

Brilliant opportunities for leadership are created by the webinars. Each location needs a facilitator and that person generates the participants, in partnership with the webinar leader, the source team and me. I have designed it in the North U.K. so that teams of graduates create the webinars in their locations. I have enabled 19 different facilitators, all becoming leaders. We have created teamwork – the North U.K. and North Wales facilitators and area teams supporting and inspiring each other. As I am writing this, I recall wanting to lead the SELP in the North U.K. to create leaders and community. I seem to have delivered this in an alternative way.

We now have another ILP classroom in Sheffield – the first time for many years that we have had two consecutively running classrooms in the North U.K. We already have northern graduates wanting to participate in the ILP next year. More leaders are being trained and more introduction leaders are resulting. We have not had so much Landmark transformational activity in the North U.K. for many years.

The teamwork and leadership that has been generated is powerful and far-reaching. I would love to acknowledge everyone who has been instrumental in the current expansion of Landmark's work in the North U.K., but they are far too many to mention individually. Please know that the difference you are making goes way beyond what you can see for yourself and you are known for your leadership and highly acknowledged for everything you are doing.

I should also say that across Europe the webinars are having exceptional results and are well worth their own in-depth study. In 2019, there was a 44% increase in Forum registrations across Europe. In the North U.K., Forum registrations more than doubled in the last quarter. Maurice Van Sabben, the webinar leader, is to be highly acknowledged for his powerful leadership, amazing talent and dedication.

### **SO WHAT?**

What have I got from this journey? First, the power of my word and declaration. I did not expect my declaration to happen – but I did what I said I would do, declared it and put it out there: "We will have webinars in the North U.K. and North Wales within a year."

Even though a few months later I was not pursuing my declaration, the intention came back to me through others. Hence, secondly, the power of team and community is clear. A group intention has great power; group action has great power. Finally, I discovered the power of dialogue and dialogue when I am not making the other wrong. It's simple but not easy. I often say that Landmark distinctions are simple but not easy. I could make myself wrong for being upset with the London center for so long. Maybe we would have had these webinars years ago. But that thought doesn't serve me or the people who are being transformed around me right now. Acknowledging my own commitment, determination and transformation is a far more powerful way of supporting what I can generate in the future.

I would like to finish by saying that Landmark's seminars are incredible. They are the backbone of Landmark's work. Transformation of our communities springs from the seminars. In a few months, since the first webinar in the North U.K., we have had numerous special evenings all with guests registering for the Forum, two ILP classrooms and a Communications course in Manchester. We are aiming for the Forum in Manchester within two years and have two graduates in the North U.K. intending to be seminar leaders.

Having seminars/webinars accessible and available as widely as possible is vital to exploding transformation around the world. I believe that online versions are the key to reaching all locations and transformation can be easily generated without the need for physical centers in that area. Even in towns where there is a Landmark center, physically getting to the center can, and does, restrict participation. Many towns have enough graduates to support small groups of participation. This can enable families with children or graduates caring for relatives, for

example, to participate more easily. Though I am mindful of introducing a whole new conversation, do we not have a responsibility to consider the effect of various modes of travel on our planet? Online participation makes a huge difference to that discussion.

There is still very much a place for in-person seminars – in fact, the online webinars have led to in-person seminars. Scotland now offers a seminar led by a local seminar leader. Italy has had a physical in-person seminar led in Italian as a result of participating in the webinars. Dubai had the Forum in 2019 and now an in-person seminar. With two local graduates aiming to be seminar leaders, the North U.K. will have its own in-person seminars again.

My growth and development have gone hand in hand with being committed to, and delivering, the North U.K.'s participation. I did not set out to transform myself. I set out to create a Landmark community around me. In the process, I have become committed to my own growth and development and have made a huge difference to myself and others. I have generated a community and a team around me. I have created strong and supportive relationships with graduates all over Europe and the world. I have learned what it is to really stand up for something. I have learned the power of my word.

I have seen that it is natural and human to be empowered at times and disempowered at other times. I have seen that being disempowered does not negate my commitment. I have seen that a community is way more powerful than the sum of its individuals. I have seen that the impossible is possible. A single moment irrevocably transformed my perception of the future.

That is maybe the greatest gift I have received from my continuing participation in Landmark's training. Being able to recall that moment when the impossible became possible continues to transform my perception of the future. I know that I can have that at any time.

Anything I want for myself and my life is possible.

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## REFERENCES

- 1 A seeming collage is a tool used in the Wisdom Unlimited course.
- 2 Home introduction: an event at people's homes to present The Landmark Forum to people.
- 3 GCSE exams are the precursor to further education and a milestone in education in the U.K. for 16-year-olds.

# MAKING A DIFFERENCE: THE BEGINNING AND THE END OF AN ERA

CORAL CREW-NOBLE

## *Abstract*

*The intention of this article is to complete on my promise for the world, share the results and the power of having a promise. My life was in no way mundane. It had my life be invigorating and wanting to live life fully. My promise shaped me, made my life sparkle and contributed to the world.*

## INTRODUCTION

In September 2011, I created my Impossible Promise, a commitment to wrap my life around.<sup>1</sup> I declared that: By 2020, there will be world peace, all people will experience being one through communication and all cultures connected through history, life and art. Unknowingly, my promise had now set me up for a life-altering eight years. It was the beginning and the end of an era.

Just three months earlier, I had moved to Jamaica to take care of my elderly Mum. Always strong, independent and resilient, Mum passed away within five months following a series of strokes. She was 88 years old.

Though I often wanted to stay in bed with my head under the covers, my promise had me throw the covers back and haul myself out of bed, sometimes even arguing with myself in annoyance at the audacity of the intrusion. At other times, my promise would appear inside my amazing community, gently nudging, firmly supporting and

holding me accountable. The bottom line is it kept me moving forward.

One morning soon after Mum's funeral, I puttered around the house aimlessly in my pajamas and bed slippers, my bed hair askew. My siblings had returned to their families in various parts of the world for Christmas. The house was quiet again as it had been with Mum and me. I complained to myself about the upcoming videoconference call. "What was I thinking?" I said to myself, "It's Christmas!" "What's wrong with those people at Landmark?"<sup>2</sup> I wondered. Even though it was I who had picked the day, date and time, I continued, "Don't they understand that people are busy with their families at this time of year?" I justified, "Nobody cares about this stuff right now anyway, and people will understand if I cancel."

Suddenly, I heard a voice from the living room. "Coral, don't you have a videoconference call in an hour?" It was Val, a Landmark graduate friend who had accompanied me back to Jamaica.<sup>3</sup> Valeria

Webb was being the voice of reason. A few weeks earlier, she had dropped me off at the airport in Atlanta and then called my mobile phone as I waited to board the plane. "I think I should come wit' you to Jamaica," she had said. "Because, what are you gon' do when your family goes home after the funeral?," she continued. It had made sense. Now, here she was again. "Aren't you getting dressed?," Val asked. I shared my complaining thoughts. Val listened, then slowly and calmly said, "Yes, I got it. Now, go put on some makeup and fix your hair. You need to set up your computer, do a test and be on the call five minutes before it starts."

### **SPEAKING GLOBALLY**

On December 28, 2011, I hosted a global videoconference call from my living room and shared my Big Hairy Audacious Goal with 46 leaders in the United Kingdom, United States, Canada and Jamaica.<sup>4</sup> The event launched a series of 12 monthly global roundtable discussions. The following day, Jamaica had an election and a subsequent change in administration. One of our graduates whom I'd never met before would become the new minister of national security. At the second event, momentum grew so much that we had to make a last-minute change in venue to accommodate 118 local community leaders.

A few months later, at the third global roundtable discussion with community leaders from the inner-city communities of Kingston (Jamaica), a slightly built woman seated in the front row stood up, turned to face the room and stated: "All of us in here know who the gunmen are in our communities, so cut the crap."<sup>5</sup> You could hear a pin drop. After a few moments, I encouraged my team of community leaders to break into small groups. The community was engaged. It was exhilarating. Within 20 minutes, participants asked for the minister of national security, then the minister of justice, to attend the next meeting. I did my part. I made the calls and sent the formal invitations.

Both Peter Bunting, Jamaica's new minister of national security, and Mark Golding, the new minister of justice, were our guests of honor at the fourth event in the series. Peter provided a powerful overview of Jamaica's political realities with a PowerPoint presentation of its history.

The impact of the political divide became evident about 10 years after the country's independence and grew notably during the last 20 years of the Cold War. The statistics were staggering. "Over the past 40 years, the number of deaths per 100,000 was comparable to that of a civil war," he said. This was a very different Jamaica than I knew. Suddenly, I understood what Carl von Clausewitz, the Prussian general and military theorist, who stressed what the moral (psychological) and political aspects of war meant when he said, "War is the continuation of politics by other means."<sup>6</sup> Peter continued, "Jamaica then became ensnared because of its location in the drug corridor between South America and the United States."

According to the CIA Book of Facts, after Jamaica gained its independence in 1962, "deteriorating economic conditions during the 1970s led to recurrent violence as rival gangs affiliated with the major political parties evolved into powerful organized crime networks involved in international drug smuggling and money laundering. Violent crimes, drug trafficking and poverty pose significant challenges to the government today. Nonetheless, many rural and resort areas remain relatively safe and contribute substantially to the economy."<sup>7</sup>

Peter concluded, "Currently, the escalation in violent crimes is related to scamming and we need your help." I began to realize exactly how much my promise aligned with Vision 2030, Jamaica's national development plan to improve education, citizen safety and security, economic prosperity and the environment.<sup>8</sup>

Emboldened, I soon connected with the Planning Institute of Jamaica, met with the director accountable for Vision 2030 and collaborated with his team to produce an audiobook that could drive the conversation among a broader population of Jamaicans at home and abroad. Less than a year later, the audiobook was complete.

### **FINDING HOME**

Although I was born and grew up in London, England, I fell in love with Jamaica when I accompanied my mother on my first trip there some years earlier. We had planned to stay for six weeks but remained there for six months. I did not want to leave. The beaches were even more

beautiful than I'd imagined from the pictures in Conde Nast's "Traveller" magazine.

Now, here I was. The water was warm and clear. I could see the little fish swimming with me in the sea. The people had warm smiles and a fun-loving spirit. They were generous and kind. I was relaxed, at peace and carefree. I also experienced Mother Nature's streetlights; it's what my parents meant when they had reminisced about "moonshine." In rural Jamaica, street lights were few and far between. The nights were quiet except for crickets chirping. Fireflies twinkled in the darkness. Very few people were on the streets after dark, except during a full moon or "moonshine." In London, I had rarely noticed a full moon. Its true glory was lost amidst the brightness of the city lights.

Shortly after returning to London from my initial trip to Jamaica, I was recruited to work as a business manager for an American company in Houston, Texas. My eldest sister, Lee, accompanied me. She remained for three months before returning to London. One year after I had migrated to the U.S., my parents relocated "back home," as they called it, to Jamaica. I visited them there almost every year, often spending a week at an all-inclusive hotel with friends and then a week at home with my parents.

Meanwhile, in America, I climbed the corporate ladder, held positions in human resources, including worldwide manager, director and vice president. In sales, I was an account executive, key account manager, associate manager and acting general manager. I received accolades, promotions and recognition consistently as a high performer. Yet, amidst all of my success, there was something missing.

#### IS IT REALLY ALL TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT?

*"Everyone thinks of changing the world,  
but no one thinks of changing himself."  
— Leo Tolstoy, Russian author of War and Peace*

This all changed during my Introduction Leaders Program (ILP) in 2005. It was cemented when I

later became an introduction leader and coach in the program.<sup>9</sup> For one thing, I got a new relationship with my mum. Since my teenage years, a friction was present in our relationship and we often butted heads. During my ILP, the rigorous coaching of Aqua Boyenne helped me see that my mother loved me and saw my full potential. Our visits together became friction-free and more enjoyable. With deep foresight, for my birthday the following year, Mum gave me a plaque of the Jamaican pledge.

Later, after I decided to move to Jamaica to care for her, I wondered if living with Mum would be a challenge. In Mum's words, she was "becoming frail," and I wanted to be a contribution without adding any stress. While I knew that I was doing the right thing, I was apprehensive. It had been a long time since Mum and I lived under the same roof.

One day, as Mum and I sat on the front patio, we had a tiff. Disappointed at my reaction, I wanted to leave. I immediately called my graduate friend, Wanda Nelson. She and I had taken the Partnership Explorations course together, and we were participating in the Power and Contribution course.<sup>10</sup> Wanda talked me down off-the-ledge as we called it. After hanging the phone up, I went back to the front patio where Mum was seated. I stooped down, took her hands, looked her in the eyes and apologized saying, "I'm sorry, Mum." Seemingly preoccupied with her own thoughts, she replied, "For what?" I started to remind her of our tiff. She quickly dismissed it saying, "Oh Coral, when two people love each other, they have to argue. What's important is that you make up."

"Who is this woman and what has she done with my mother?," I thought to myself. In the past, Mum would have indignantly accepted my apology, as if entitled, and I would have stewed for days. Surprised and grateful for this change, I continued, "I love you, Mum." She quickly and confidently replied, "I know that." "How do you know?," I asked inquisitively. "Because you are here," she said firmly. "Some parents have one argument with their child and they don't see them again for years. You and I argue all the time and you keep on coming back. I love all of my children. But you are my little friend. You never leave me."

In that moment, I experienced peace in my heart



and in the world of my mum and me. If this loving relationship were the only thing that came out of me having a promise, I would have been satisfied, but it was not.

My mum passed away two days before the second weekend of my Power and Contribution course.<sup>11</sup> I was devastated. Fortunately, some elderly neighbors, Mr. and Mrs. Hay, came by the next morning. They asked me what I was up to and I told them I had the second weekend of my Power and Contribution course and I was thinking of canceling. They quickly assured me that there was nothing more I could do for my mum now and encouraged me to go on my trip. During this tragic period, my life began to sparkle.

Two days later, I dragged myself to the airport. While waiting to board my plane, I got a call from the course leader, Helen Gilhooly. She reminds me so much of the good witch of the west in "The Wizard of Oz."<sup>12</sup> Helen had just learned of my mother's passing and was calling to check on me. I experienced so much love in the course that weekend and the angst of my loss was not present.

### **CAP 2012 JAMAICA**

During those five months that I spent with my mum, Paul Bryan, a Landmark graduate in Jamaica, heard that I was on-island and reconnected. We had first met in 2005. Our conversations were always refreshing and full of possibility. This time was no different. By the end of our call, we created the possibility of having the first Communication: Access to Power (CAP) course in Jamaica, the Team Management and Leadership Program (TMLP) classroom and The Landmark Forum return to Jamaica.<sup>13</sup> It was exciting. I contacted graduates that I'd met at the Forum for reviewers in Florida two months earlier.<sup>14</sup> Referred to center division director Jane Wright, I was a bit intimidated at first, because she was a Forum leader. But, I remembered her from Los Angeles; she had an infectious laugh. Jane was great. She listened, addressed our requests and encouraged me. We had our fair share of challenges and we had several conversations for completion.

Paul and I were given tentative dates for a March/April CAP course. After we exceeded the pre-sales goal by 12%, there was difficulty securing

a course leader. Course dates were changed to mid-June. We lost 40% of our pre-sales because many Jamaicans travel off-island during the summer holidays. Further, in the wake of the center manager's public declaration, "I am not managing Jamaica," there was active resistance in the Florida center. Guidance and materials for the course were withheld.

However, I leaned on my community in the Los Angeles and Atlanta centers and our needs were fulfilled. There was irrevocable support from Judy-Lee Chen Sang, Donna MacMillan and other graduates who listened, coached and cheered us on. In the end, Jorge Castro was our assigned Communications program leader. Jamaica had our first CAP course in June 2012. We exceeded all measures except two. It was a success.

Along the way, we resolved and completed all issues inside communication. An apology was received from the Florida Center. I expanded my capacity for resilience, confrontation and completion. The course was a major win for transformation in Jamaica.

### **TMLP JAMAICA**

The graduate body in Jamaica, especially Paul, was inspired. Now in his fourth quarter of Team Two for the TMLP, he convinced me to help him register six graduates into the program and send a full team from Jamaica to the program's weekend in August.<sup>15</sup> We completed our informal research around the possibility of having the program's classroom in Jamaica, which included me leading the classroom. I met all the measures, but we did not yet have alignment from Landmark. This created tension.

If we continued to wait, the team would miss the August weekend and would have to wait for the November program weekend, which was the end of Paul's Team Two program.<sup>16</sup> Having one Team Two was a necessity. We openly shared the difficulty with the six participants. There was consensus and confidence that we would get alignment from Landmark. They booked airline tickets and hotels.

To our dismay, Landmark did not align. Instead, the center's division director declared, "We do not hold Landmark courses where we do not have

a Landmark Forum.” The last Forum that had been held in Jamaica was in 2008.<sup>17</sup> Landmark articulated specific conditions for the return of the Forum to Jamaica. Jane recommended that I lead the ILP instead of the TMLP and transfer the six participants to the ILP. It was a good idea, but the participants had already completed the ILP and had no interest in repeating it.

In addition, based on the series of global roundtable discussions, I had experienced the difference that the communication tools from TMLP could make in Jamaica. However, I also understood business, and Landmark is a business. Their business model is that, “No Forum, no TMLP.”

### THE ILP RETURNS

Disappointed, deflated and confronted, I shifted my mindset from leading monthly TMLP classrooms in Kingston to weekly ILP classrooms. It was a struggle. Both would require a roundtrip commute of 300 miles per classroom. But, I was unprepared to meet the weekly demands. Nevertheless, I went to work on filling the ILP. I held orientations in Kingston, but fell short. At the same time, I searched for an ILP classroom leader. I was sure that I was not the one. The Forum had been in Jamaica for seven years, and there had been 15 ILP programs, but I could not find one willing classroom leader. This was a team sport, but I had no experience of team. I became resigned.

Moreover, it had been a year of conversations and I had yet to discover why the Forum was no longer offered in Jamaica. Eventually, obtaining the statistical data through Joan Rosenberg, a high-level manager at Landmark, I reviewed the numbers. It was illuminating. Over seven years, we had filled only 53% of the Forums held in Jamaica. We also held four Advanced Courses and fell short on all of them.<sup>18</sup> In addition, we had a designated seminar leader and the statistics showed that we rarely filled the seminars.<sup>19</sup> Those were still being held. The results were inconsistent. Jamaica’s performance was inconsistent.

Collaboration on the common goal – the return of the Forum – was also absent. While graduates said that’s what they wanted, their actions were incongruent and that was an integrity issue. It didn’t help that I lived on the other end of the

island from Kingston where the Forums had typically been held.

### THE POWER OF COMMUNITY

Once again, I turned to my global community. Judy Lee Chen-Sang, a graduate friend from Los Angeles, suggested that I host a weekly jump-start call for the ILP participants. I started the calls with two participants. Then, Danny Bloomfield, an introduction leader in London, called me one day. His parents lived in Kingston. Somehow, he had heard about the work in Jamaica and offered his support. Though my resignation may have been evident, he quickly offered to schedule a weekly support call. Being held to account made a huge difference. Things started moving again.

Eventually, we had 18 participants registered in the Fall 2013 ILP. We exceeded the measures. I ended up leading the ILP classroom in the fall of 2013 and the spring of 2014. I rented a studio apartment in Kingston to eliminate the commute. When I had a scheduling conflict for the first ILP weekend in Florida, A.M. Noel, an introduction leader from Washington, DC, volunteered to replace me and accompanied my participants to their first ILP weekend.

It was challenging leading the ILP with no local Forum to offer participants. It made the Forum significantly more expensive. When one guest at an introduction to the Forum pointed out he would have to add a hotel and an airline ticket to the costs, the 13 ILP participants were watching for my reaction. In looking to my promise to the world, I found the gold. I stood for possibility.

Overall, I caused 10 introduction leaders from both the Fall 2013 and Spring 2014 programs. It was exhausting, and, when it looked as though I couldn’t make it, both Judy Lee Chen-Sang and Valeria Webb flew in from Los Angeles and Atlanta, respectively, to help me sign-off participants. They room-captured me as I led three back-to-back introductions to 116 police officers. The participants, my community and the support of the new center manager, Katie Hawkes, made it all happen. The ILP registered more than 150 guests into Forums in the U.S., Canada and the U.K. The Fall ILP 2013 Jamaica classroom led the southeast region in six of seven measures and the

participants generated unprecedented results in their lives and in my life, too.

### **THE RETURN OF POSSIBILITY**

Yet, we still did not meet the conditions to have the Forum in Jamaica. One barrier was its cost for participants. Registration for the Forum was \$645, the same price as in the U.S. Keep in mind that Jamaica is an emerging country with three million people. Using the universal formula to compare wealth, the equivalent cost in Jamaica should be \$285.

Though I was confronted every week and often wanted to quit, it was an honor and a privilege to have led the ILP classroom. I had an excellent coach in Joe Rink. He drilled into me that “there was never, ever, anything wrong” and “anything is possible.” I’m pretty sure that he was a gift from God, especially after the Jamaican ILP participants were told that the Forum we were promised if we caused the ILP would not return to Jamaica. I was not happy. My participants were not happy. While the ILP was a success, Jamaica had not met all of the conditions. We had not filled the seminar, which was also a requirement for the return of the Forum to Jamaica. Devastated, I eventually spoke to Landmark’s CEO Harry Rosenberg. He told me that there were not enough Forum leaders to commit to Jamaica.

### **THE END VIOLENCE PROJECT**

Leading the classroom for the Fall 2013 and Spring 2014 ILP participants stretched me further than I’d ever experienced before. I had to give things up, minute by minute. At times, nothing seemed to go right. Then, our steadfastness paid off. At one point, we registered almost 100% of the people who came to find out about the Forum.

There’s no doubt that Joe Rink, my coach, made a profound difference. He is the executive director of the End Violence Project, a nonprofit that has delivered a leadership development and transformational thinking program inside U.S. prisons since 1991.<sup>20</sup>

When Peter, the minister of national security, shared that he was having challenges with conditions in Jamaica’s prison system, he asked the newly-candidated introduction leaders and me for support. But, Landmark’s policy is that introduction

leaders could not participate in the End Violence Project in the prisons. I didn’t let that stop me. With no Forum in Jamaica, I made a powerful request to Landmark CEO Harry Rosenberg. He aligned and possibility was again present. The introduction leaders were inspired once more with the opportunity of impacting conditions in Jamaica with this powerful technology.

In 2015, we delivered the End Violence Project’s pilot program in the second largest maximum-security prison in Jamaica. We had unprecedented results reducing violent incidents from 60 per week to less than one per month. The program ran for three consecutive years and expanded to four programs in Jamaica’s two maximum-security prisons. By 2017, the staff program was offered to correctional officers in all prison facilities. With a small team of volunteers, I delivered nine programs in seven correctional facilities. The following year, Ina Hunter, the commissioner of corrections, asked us to deliver the End Violence Project’s Leadership Training & Transformational Thinking program in juvenile facilities.

However, Landmark expressed their intentions to contain and not expand the violence prevention program. A new structure was implemented to have approved facilitators. We were allowed only one facilitator for Jamaica, which obviously had to be me. I found it unsustainable to continue making 300-mile roundtrips to Kingston as this would amount to a full-time volunteer job. Given the new restrictions, I completed the 2017 programs and withdrew from participating in the End Violence Project Jamaica.

### **UNITE FOR CHANGE PROJECT**

At the final session of the End Violence Project’s pilot program in 2015, I met the permanent secretary in the Ministry of National Security, Major General Stewart Saunders. He expressed his delight at the results of the program delivered in the prison.

Several months later, I was formally invited by the permanent secretary to take the helm and lead Unite for Change, a collective impact project.<sup>21</sup> The minister of national security shared in a meeting that he created Unite for Change based on the global roundtable discussions, but on a

much wider scale. His presentation to Parliament had received bipartisan support. I led the project in 2016 and 2017. Various barriers emerged towards the end of the project. Regardless, in collaboration with the mayor and the custos of each parish, I successfully launched the Parish Consultative Committee in all 14 parishes. Results began to emerge by the second meetings.<sup>22</sup>

### **NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH MOVEMENT**

After completing the contract leading the Unite for Change project, I returned to my home in Westmoreland. Within a few months, a community leader requested my support in resuscitating the Neighborhood Watch Council in Westmoreland. I took on the challenge.

By the third meeting, we had more than 40 participants and enough to select a new council. I was elected to the board, though I accepted reluctantly. In the first six months, we hosted two fundraisers, raising more than \$100,000 Jamaican dollars and opening a bank account for the first time. Our successes were not without challenges. My life was threatened during a board meeting. My instincts were to quit, but my board wouldn't let me. In the end, the member, who had issued the threat, quit.

In February 2018, I was appointed to the national board although I initially declined. Less than four months later, I noticed something amiss. Many elected national board members were not attending the meetings. After speaking with the president, I called the absent members and got an earful. Over the next several months, I discovered corruption involving the president. Holding the board members to account, we pulled the board back together but then the president refused to attend the meetings. It was a mess. The president decided to strike back by initiating a smear campaign and threatening my life, even in writing. I stood my ground. However, when two of my brothers became concerned, I thought it best to leave Jamaica for a while.

I headed to the Being a Leader and the Effective Exercise of Leadership course in Cancun, Mexico with Dr. Marsha Pabarué. After attending the 2014 course held in Singapore, I had met with Northern Caribbean University officials about

providing access to this technology through the university system. Continued conversations over the years, a jump-start call with eight university professors and a meeting with the university president resulted in the associate dean in the Department of Graduate Education and Leadership participating in the program. It was the perfect place to be.

When I returned to Jamaica in December 2018, I began to wind down all of my commitments in Jamaica and to look for a job. I had not earned an income in almost two years and my funds were dwindling. I withdrew from my community and turned my focus to finding a job in the U.S. with the intention of relocating back home to the U.S. by the end of 2019.

### **THE POWER OF A PROMISE**

My promise had an impact on many things. I would never have lived in Jamaica for eight years. I would definitely not have led the ILP, impacted the participants and them their guests, and all the people that registered and completed the Landmark Forum. Neither would I have made a difference in the prison system. Nor would I have worked in government establishing strong relationships with people who lead the country. My mum would have been proud.

Mine was an "Impossible Promise," thus, nobody should be surprised that I ran into barriers. Yet, at the end of the day, my experience of life with a promise was magical. I oftentimes found myself making statements, such as, "It's like being in a movie." or "This is unreal." or "What an unbelievable result!"

Now, we're in 2020 and there is no world peace. I could argue that all people being one through communication may have peeped its head inside of the "Me Too" movement, but that might be a stretch. All cultures connected through history, life and art may just now be emerging. I spent a month in Canada in Fall 2019 with family. It was during Canada's election and I saw some things that seemed familiar. Stuck in my own world of chaos, I had not been following U.S. news any more than being present to the occasional headline. However, I've been back in the U.S. since the end of October 2019 and have been amazed

by the similarity in behavior of our current U.S. president to that of the president of the national neighborhood watch in Jamaica.

Honoring my promise delivered on the promise of the Power and Contribution course of “being highly sought after and in high-demand.” In May 2019, I was invited to collaborate with the Jamaican government and key stakeholders as they began revising laws affecting the prisons. I was delighted to hear that leadership development would be a key part of the rehabilitation process.

Now what? What I see now is that my life promise is more important than ever. I am in the inquiry of what’s next for me. Here’s where I am with all of it. I need to restore the integrity around my finances and my life.

A lot has changed in the last eight years. Organizational change management, which was formally housed inside human resources, grew into an entire industry. While I am certified with one of the leading providers, I am pursuing additional certification. I relocated to the U.S. Pacific Northwest, where I’ve never lived before, but where they are leading in organizational change management. The work that I’ve been doing in Jamaica on wide-scale systems change is easily transferrable to large global companies. My goal right now is to find a new job inside a global company, apply my skill set toward making a difference with organizations and get commensurate pay.

## SUMMARY

Pursuing my promise to the world was indeed challenging. I went through a myriad of spaces, but my life was enlivened, rich and daring. That is the power of having a promise for eight years, not fulfilling on it and completing it after eight years.

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## ENDNOTES

1 Impossible Promise is a term from the retired Power and Contribution course at Landmark.

2 [www.landmarkworldwide.com](http://www.landmarkworldwide.com).

3 A graduate is a person who has completed The Landmark Forum.

4 Collins, J. “Good To Great. Why Some Companies Make The Leap... and Others Don’t.” (HarperCollins, 2001).

5 Kingston is the capital city of Jamaica, an island in the Caribbean.

6 [www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carl\\_von\\_Clausewitz](http://www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carl_von_Clausewitz).

7 [www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/jm.html](http://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/jm.html).

8 [www.youtube.com/watch?v=uCVMEjhs9pk&list=PLakK8PMC5aBKfPQNLmToC2zcz29jOdc2p](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uCVMEjhs9pk&list=PLakK8PMC5aBKfPQNLmToC2zcz29jOdc2p).

9 The Introduction Leaders Program is a six-month leadership program at Landmark.

10 Partnership Explorations is a year-long course offered by Landmark.

11 Power and Contribution is a year-long course that was retired in 2012 at Landmark.

12 Helen Gilhooly is a senior Wisdom Course leader at Landmark.

13 The Communication: Access to Power course is a two-day communications course at Landmark.

14 The reviewer’s Landmark Forum is for Forum graduates only.

15 The Team Management and Leadership Program One is a year-long program at Landmark.

16 The Team Management and Leadership Program Two is a year-long program at Landmark.

17 The Landmark Forum is the flagship course at Landmark.

18 The Advanced Course is part of the Curriculum for Living at Landmark.

19 A designated seminar leader is someone who has led effectively for three consecutive seminars.

20 [www.endviolenceproject.org](http://www.endviolenceproject.org).

21 Unite for Change is a three-year, wide-scale, systems-change project in Jamaica.

22 Parish Consultative Committees are co-led by the mayor, a political leader and the custos, a nonpolitical leader representing the governor general who represents the Queen of England.

# SAVING OUR CHILDREN BY SAVING OUR PARENTS

WENDY ELIOPOLLO

## **Abstract**

*This paper looks at Wendy's journey as a special educator and mental health counselor and her discovery that all parents are not created equal. With a storytelling bent, Wendy explains how the creation of her parenting course, ESELF, came about.*

## **MY BATTLE AND MY INSPIRATION**

It was the third day of 2009 in my second year of teaching in a charter school just a few blocks from the New Jersey statehouse. I felt powerful and in control of my classroom. My students, all of whom lived in the ghettos surrounding the statehouse, were doing exactly as I asked them to do. I was feeling good. I was in control. Then, a new student named Susan walked in my classroom. She seemed to have the goal of taking the class from me. (Susan is a pseudonym for the student's real name.) Little did I know then that Susan would be my inspiration to create a business focused on training parents to be leaders in their homes.

Susan entered the school year three days after it began on purpose. Among her peers, she was known as a girl who made her own rules. The reasons as to why she strode in days after school began didn't matter. The reality was she was back in school, and she made it very clear

my classroom would be hers to rule. As I used my no-nonsense military spouse voice and told her where to sit, she sneered at me and looked around the classroom as though it were her court and she was the queen. In the span of seconds, I realized that all of my students were watching to see who the queen of this kingdom would be in room #318. My status as a powerful, no-nonsense teacher-in-control was being challenged. Susan had purposefully drawn a line in the sand.

At 41 years old, I had taken 20 years to get to that third school day of my second year of teaching. I had married, raised two kids and worked at a snail's pace to attain a bachelor's degree. I had survived the gauntlet of my first year of teaching in a middle school located in the ghetto of Trenton, New Jersey. Rumor had it that the students of this school were known to eat teachers like little kids eat sour gummy worms. It was a matter of pride to the students in this part of the city that they could behave in a manner that drove teachers to quit soon after they were hired. My first year had felt like a combination of a stint in Navy Seals "mental toughness" training program and on-the-job training as a hostage in a terrorist situation.<sup>1</sup>

I know, I know ... you think I'm embellishing. However, I dare you to ask a teacher who began their teaching career in an inner-city middle school. They'll back me up 100 percent.

What no one knew was that I was a fake. Inside, I was scared silly. I pretended to be the tough, don't-mess-with-me teacher because it was the only way I knew to survive, keep my job and

my sanity at that small school. My confidence in myself was so low that I didn't look for other employment because I didn't think anyone else would hire me. So, I pushed through, constantly looking for a special tool that would help me help my students while saving my sanity. I discovered it in a small two-hour training on "social emotional learning" that I took in 2008, a year before meeting Susan. No one else at my school thought this was an important training.

As a new teacher, I had quickly learned that a regimented routine, structured classwork and a don't-mess-with-me approach worked well. However, embedding social emotional learning into every lesson was what made my classroom work like a well-run machine. That training had given me guidelines for how to increase my students' emotional intelligence by increasing their awareness of how to manage their emotions, respect the perspective of others, make better decisions emotionally and reduce their negative responses to stress.<sup>2</sup>

When I applied this tool with Susan, she, along with many of my other students, flourished. She eventually came to be my advocate as her teacher-leader. She actually turned into one of my greatest assets because she made it clear to her classmates that "we learn in Mrs. E's class." It was not easy but with much trial and error I learned that using social emotional learning along with debate techniques allowed Susan and her peers to grow into social emotional leaders inside and outside of our classroom. I still feel honored to have taught Susan. She eventually became the conflict management student representative for the school and was seen as an asset by our administration in helping other students deal with conflict.

Unfortunately, I could support Susan and her peers only while they were in school. I met a few of my students' parents at Back to School Night or parent-teacher conferences; way too few. Some truly cared and would hang on every word I said, following up faithfully on my recommendations. A few came in to vent and curse me because their children were failing. Most never showed, answered their phones or responded to voicemails pleading to speak to them. One parent came in to tell me

that her child, an exceptional honor student who could have excelled in the local college-prep high school, would not be allowed to accept a scholarship offer. That student had to stay close to home to care for their family. They had no one else who could work and support them.

After four years of teaching, I realized that I could help my students grow into dynamic individuals while in school but they returned to survival mode at home.

Two years after I taught Susan and her peers our school was closed because of low test scores. I swore to leave teaching. By then I realized that I could only help children become their best selves by helping their parents.

### **A NEW CAREER AND A NEW VIEW**

Two years later, after moving with my military husband to Georgia, I began a master of arts program in professional counseling. A few months after beginning classes, my husband was offered the opportunity to attend The Landmark Forum.<sup>3</sup> A few months later, I attended my Forum.

I've lost count of the number of courses that my husband and I have taken and coached to develop ourselves. During that time, I attained my master's degree and began working toward licensure as a professional counselor. My first stint was in several tiny towns outside of Atlanta that seemed to be reality show versions of the television show, "In the Heat of the Night."<sup>4</sup> I worked with many parents who had lost their children to foster care. Frankly, I was stunned by the generational poverty and the apathy of some of the parents. One factor that inspired me to continue working in the area were parents who were willing to do anything to better their lives for their kids. However, as I watched these parents grow as individuals and leaders of their homes, I watched some of them encounter ridicule from their own communities for wanting something better than their current circumstances.

While working with these parents, I discovered the difference I could make as a person and counselor. As they grew, I saw that many young individuals had not had secure and safe role models to teach them how to parent successfully. Thus, I

drew upon what I had learned in my studies to guide me as I searched for empirically-validated materials to help them grow more independent and self-assured. Unfortunately, my counseling job in these areas dried up and I have no idea if my clients were ever able to create those better lives they wanted.

Next, for a short time, I worked as a counselor to foster children in a visitation center. My heart would break each time these little ones came through the door. They would be upbeat and happy to see me, but it was easy to see the effect that trauma, neglect and pain had on these little ones. Some saw me because of horrific incidents you wouldn't wish on a grown adult. Some saw me because their parents had a drug habit they could not control. Each child was, and still is, precious in my heart. We would play games and color until they were ready to talk. Most didn't want to talk about their situations or their foster homes. Being with me was an escape from the reality that they were children in strangers' homes while their parents dealt with their own issues.

However, when I used a sand tray, I would sometimes see the inner thoughts of the children in the way they used and positioned toys in the sand.<sup>5</sup> Many pictures in the sand depicted scenes showing their hope of being back with their parents. Some showed unexpressed feelings of rejection and loss.

Applying Landmark distinctions helped me more than I can ever express. Many times, I was able to put aside my anger, rage and grief to be with these beautiful children. It was only through the use of "being present" and "placing the past in the past" that I was able to be fully present with these children. In those times I was able to meet with their parents, I could put aside my animosity by seeing them as people who had barriers they could not overcome instead of seeing them through the lenses of what they had done to lose their children.

### **A NEW PROJECT**

During this time, and after lengthy discussions about careers and money, my husband and I decided that I needed to go back to teaching because the pay of an associate counselor

was not paying the bills. I continued to work at the visitation center but began working on an educational technology certificate to bolster my teaching certificate while I also worked at another center where my clients were solely children and their families. Many of these kids were adopted foster children. Many were children referred by medical doctors because they had behavior problems at school. With this group, I was able to work with the parents also. Once again, I found that most of these parents lacked basic parenting skills and support systems that could teach them how to be successful parents.

For the final project of my educational technology certificate, I had to create a technology program for an organization. I decided to create a parent training technology program that included proven tools. I also included elements that I saw missing in the parent training programs available in my area. In short, this program taught parents how to be effective parents and included training in how to be empathetic and emotionally available to their children. I decided the course would include some job skills. All the parents I had worked with spoke of needing to increase their job skills to make a better living for their families. Being me, I didn't tell the director about the project until it was almost completed because I had no intention of doing anything with it except getting a good grade, which I did.

When I finally told the director, she was excited. I promised to share it with her when it was completed. From there, I received my certificate and was hired eventually as a full-time high school special education teacher. My technology plan went on the shelf. I forgot about it for two years.

During that time, I taught and stopped counseling. Not surprisingly, I found a similar pattern of ineffective parenting in some of my students' parents. Either they were at a complete loss as to how to parent their child with special learning needs or they just didn't show up to meetings about their children. When I moved to the middle school level, the need for parenting skills spoke to me on loudspeaker. I found myself becoming not only a teacher in the classroom but a leader and guide for my students in teaching the proper way in speaking to others and how to address



a complaint. It's funny to attempt to explain a "racket," a distinction covered in the Forum, to a middle schooler. However, many understood it, and the knowledge would make a difference for a short time. One of my favorite distinctions is "chocolate/vanilla-choose," another Forum distinction. Now, my students are trained in this distinction and even laugh when I bring it up.

Throughout this time, I also rediscovered my leadership outside the classroom. Leading anything or anyone other than children had terrified me until I realized that I allowed a painful experience in elementary school to cause me to see myself as a horrible leader. Once I saw this, I was able to see my leadership as powerful enough to begin the parenting project. I called my former director to discuss the project. She also had forgotten about it but was excited to revisit it.

### FROM PROJECT TO PROMISE

In May 2019, I began the process of copyrighting and trademarking my technology project. I decided someone has to make a difference with parents who feel as though they are failing. I decided that person is me.

The program is called ESELF™. It combines teaching various parenting skills with a college-like class atmosphere. When parents graduate from the course, they will have completed a semester-like course meant to give them the confidence to pursue new avenues of growth they thought were unattainable.

Through the process of preparing ESELF for launching I've discovered a new level of leadership in myself. I'm confident and willing to jump in to manage situations at work that I once would have waited for others to fix. I'm constantly looking for what's missing that can make my classroom a better place for learning and what can make ESELF a better program. The most radical change has been in my full-blown self-expression. Those, who have known me in my seven years at Landmark, have known a quiet and reserved but loving Wendy. I'm not sure where she went but I'm quite happy that the shy and reserved part is gone. I am fully self-expressed everywhere I go now and its exhilarating!

What's even more wonderful is that my husband is now coming on board with me to launch ESELF. We have discovered a partnership that we have never experienced before. Additionally, I have wonderful angels who are creating documents that focus on the business plan and software needs. We are close to launching the business and hope that, by the publication of this paper, the classes will be ready to launch. My director at the visitation center is patiently waiting. Smiling, she says she gets to use it first.

I am declaring that ESELF will train many parents far beyond Georgia. It will be the catalyst for adults to improve their parenting so future generations of parents do not bear the pain borne by the current generation. I am declaring that parents will be the leaders inside and outside their homes. They will provide safe, secure environments for their children. Their children are able to flourish emotionally, socially, physically and mentally. They will take on leadership roles in their communities because they want communities that support healthy children. Finally, my goal is that parents will realize their leadership value not only to their children and communities, but to society, at large.

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### ENDNOTES

- 1 Tabaka, M. "7 Mental Toughness Tips From a Former Navy SEAL Trainer." (September 2019). Retrieved from [www.inc.com/marla-tabaka/hes-trained-navy-seals-to-be-resilient-7-mental-toughness-tips-from-a-former-spe.html](http://www.inc.com/marla-tabaka/hes-trained-navy-seals-to-be-resilient-7-mental-toughness-tips-from-a-former-spe.html).
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- 5 "Sandplay therapy." (2019). Retrieved from [www.psychologytoday.com/us/therapy-types/sandplay-therapy](http://www.psychologytoday.com/us/therapy-types/sandplay-therapy).

# WAKE UP!

EILEEN FORRESTAL

## **Abstract**

*The intention of this paper is to shine a light on the issue of physician well-being and its impact on doctors' ability to deliver compassionate healthcare. As a physician who had ignored my personal well-being for many years, I saw how being busy and well intentioned can negatively impact being well and impact our capacity to be the compassionate healers we want to be.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Recently, I came across the work of Dr. Pamela Wible, an American physician who maintains a registry of physician suicides and a suicide prevention hotline for medical doctors and medical students. As of November 2019, she had 1,363 physicians and medical students on her registry. Reading her book, "Human Rights Violations in Medicine" and her blog posts reignited my interest in this topic despite the fact that I have been retired from the profession more than five years.

Through Dr. Wible, I discovered an American documentary film by Robyn Symon called "Do No Harm." Shown across the United States (U.S.) in medical schools and colleges along with panel discussions featuring both women, this film generated acclaim and criticism. Medical students and residents applauded it for acknowledging their "plight" while faculty and institutions were less than enthusiastic, perhaps because they didn't want possible deficiencies in the system, or institutions, being exposed.

In 2019, I decided it was time to address the issue in Ireland and began to connect with other individuals who might be interested in opening up this subject for a broader conversation. I met

with some interest, but mostly resistance and skepticism. There was a lot of talk about "wellness programs" and "resilience training" but no real interest in an open discussion on well-being and certainly not about suicide. I was told Ireland was "too small" and while everyone knew someone who was struggling, few were prepared to be open.

I decided to host a physician well-being conference that would include a screening of the film "Do No Harm" with the intention of provoking discussion in an empowering context. I wanted to discover what was wanted and needed in this area.

While many felt my efforts were admirable and necessary, few were willing to support or fund the project. Of the 20+ people who expressed an interest in attending a private screening of the film, only five turned up on the day. Following the screening, there seemed to be even less of an appetite to address this difficult subject. Personal well-being and mental or emotional distress is not an area physicians, other than psychiatrists, are comfortable with. While talk of burnout is increasing, suicide among physicians is most definitely an area we don't want to discuss. As with all fatal conditions, a discussion puts into sharp focus the perceived failure of any intervention.

According to the film, U.S. physicians die by suicide at twice the rate of the national average. As a retired female anesthesiologist, I was shocked to discover the rate of suicide among female U.S. anesthesiologists is almost 300% higher than the general population.

I did not want this to go unaddressed. What is it about this group of people or their circumstances that makes them so vulnerable to suicide? Is it because they are female? Is it because they are anesthesiologists? Is it that they have easy access to means? Are they more vulnerable to a challenging working environment and is the career choice to be an anesthesiologist a dangerous one if you are female?

Is it becoming an increasingly dangerous career choice to become a physician?

If “context is decisive,” what is the context in which one decides that suicide is the only option? Could context here be viewed as an environment? Or culture? Is it too easy to blame the individual as weak – “If you can’t stand the heat, get out of the kitchen.” Does the old stigma persist that doctors should be able to withstand the perils of the job and if you struggle or need help, you are in the “wrong” profession?

### **HEALTHCARE IS COMPLEX**

Health care is a complex and demanding field often involving life-or-death decisions that must be made in a flash. It is full of roles, responsibilities, expertise, expectations, demands, frustrations, judgments, objectives, criteria, policies, procedures, deadlines, targets and stats. It is also full of people – human beings! No wonder stress, burnout, depression and self-harm show up.

For those “human beings,” talking publicly about their intensely personal, painful struggles, burnout, depression, mistakes and more requires a huge level of courage. Speaking up about the very things we most want to keep private, in the hope that our stories will help others, is an act of courage and generosity. It requires a willingness to be vulnerable and at the forefront of a changing paradigm for medical education, where we have an opportunity “to plant a tree under which shade we know full well we will never sit.”

As a former anesthesiologist, I can only share my own experience. Talking publicly about my own journey requires me to be courageous. Perhaps, in the process, I can inspire others to take a similar step. There is no greater gift than the gift of encouragement. If I can encourage others to be open and seek help, if necessary, that will be my reward.

Anesthetists are traditionally a “hidden” speciality. Most people don’t even know we are qualified doctors. Our patients usually meet us just before they fall asleep, and we are often long gone before they fully wake up. I am grateful for the gift of my career in anesthesia and the fact that I can use this as a metaphor for how so many of us go through life asleep, even unconscious, and the opportunity I now have to “wake people up” on a much larger scale.

I practiced as a doctor for 32 years and as an anesthesiologist for 20 of those years.

I had considered a career in psychiatry in my early years, being truly fascinated by the workings of the human mind. I was advised against it, however, by those who felt my life would be easier treating physical pain rather than emotional distress. I now wonder if, perhaps, as a profession, we are more conditioned to being numb than open to dealing with the pain of self-awareness. I think that I unwittingly fell into that category.

As an anesthesiologist I discovered that I still had to deal with my patient’s emotions and listen to their fears and concerns: What if I wake up during the operation? What if I don’t wake up at the end? What if I feel pain? What if I talk in my sleep? I tried to allay their fears, but what I said rarely made a difference. After surgery, I would call “Wake up. Wake up. The operation is over. It’s time to wake up.” Awake, they discovered that they no longer had their fears or concerns, and relieved, went back to sleep!

### **NUMBERS DON’T LIE**

My personal wake-up call came in 2013. I was working in Ireland, in a half-time, job sharing position, which allowed me ample time to pursue my other passion – creating The Irish Get Up and Go Diary, an annual, inspiring, motivating

and transformational publication I had started in partnership with a friend, as a hobby, in 2006.

A surprise phone call invited me to a month-long entrepreneur retreat on the island of Bali.

When I returned, in November 2013, in my first week back at work, I was heading to my list in our newly-refurbished operating theater and I stopped to watch a nurse writing something on the new white board. It read:

“Our new operating table in Theater 1 can now take patients weighing up to 350kg (770 lbs.). The new operating table in Theater 2 can now take patients weighing up to 385kg (850 lbs.). And the new operating table in Theater 3 can now take patients weighing up to 450kg (990 lbs.).”

I stared at the numbers – stunned. 450kg. I couldn’t get my head around it. I weigh 64kg (about 140 lbs.). I was trying to visualize it. What challenges would be involved in anesthetizing a patient of that weight? And then I had a thought: What must life be like for that person? And how could a person get to that weight without someone intervening? No matter how you looked at it, 450kg was not a healthy weight and certainly not conducive to living a fulfilled life.

Suddenly, I was frustrated with my profession. Were we not supposed to be leaders in health care? Was this the best we could do for the future – to plan that within the next 20-to-30 years, we would be delivering babies from mothers weighing up to 450kg?

The following year I took early retirement from medical practice. It was time to interrupt my predictable future and allow a new possibility to guide me. Twelve years earlier – in the Advanced Course – I had created the possibility of being courageous, self-expressed and an inspiration to others. I had been experimenting with new avenues of expression in the entrepreneurial world, and now the possibility of being free of the constraints of my profession would allow me to perhaps sound an alarm on what I saw as a failing system and explore new ways of educating and empowering people to be at the source of their own health, wellbeing and happiness, starting with members of the profession itself. This would require courage on a whole new level.

For over 30 years I had lived and breathed the medical world; I thought and spoke as a doctor; I behaved as a doctor; I was listened to as a doctor. I was seen as educated, intelligent, informed, responsible, competent, capable, reliable and successful. Now that I was no longer practicing as a doctor, who would listen to me? This would require me to be seen and heard in a whole new dimension – the dimension of accountability. The playing field just got a whole lot bigger and the stakes a whole lot higher.

I could see we were sleepwalking into a crisis. Could I take on the challenge of waking people up before we went over the edge? I could no longer be silent about a system that said it was OK for a human being to weigh 450 kg. I did not accept that the best we could do was plan for wider doors and bigger CT scanners. If this was the visible 450kg, what about the hidden and silent 450kg? We could see the physical effects of consumption – what about the psychological and emotional effects? People consume more than calories in this world. Something has to give. Is global mental health now at a breaking point?

## THE POWER OF WORDS

Having retired from “putting people to sleep” (with drugs), through my diaries I was now devoting my time and energy to “waking people up” (with words). I started focusing my attention on bringing awareness to what might be making us ill. Why do people inflict suffering on themselves? What causes a person to get to be 450kg? What can we do to help ourselves and others live full and happy lives? My exploration now was what kind of conversations could we have with ourselves and others that would make a difference to our health. What would keep us well? What would support us thinking and speaking kind and caring words, words that heal instead of hurt? Words are as powerful as any drug. Loving words heal the wounds of the heart and ease the suffering of the mind. What might prevent us from hearing them? What could stop us from listening to them? When we have the power to express them, what would have us withhold them?

This journey now presented a new personal challenge for me. I would now have to come out of hiding, to shine my own light, to deliver my own

message. To be willing to be known, seen and heard for who I am. This was the next realization – “I” was still in hiding.

Yes, I had retired from my medical career; yes, we had a company that made products; yes, we had products that made a difference. But, I was still safe in the shadows, unseen and unknown in the wider world. Who was I now, now that I was no longer who I had been – and who would listen to me? I decided to write a book, “The Courage To Shine,” subtitled “Physician, Heal Thyself.”

### CONNECTING THE DOTS

Someone once remarked that it was ironic how I spent my career putting tubes down people’s throats when my first interaction with the medical world was, as a three-year-old, having accidentally swallowed 40 junior aspirin and requiring a stomach washout – via a tube down my throat – as an emergency life-saving procedure.

The washout was a success. I survived the traumatic ordeal with no physical ill effects. and I have no memory of the event. However, the experience left me with a choking sensation, persistent coughing, retching and the beginnings of a life-long speech impediment.

By the time I was 6, my mother agreed with the doctors that perhaps removing my tonsils would help with my speech development. The stage was set for another life-changing moment. The surgery was scheduled but my mother did not tell me I was going for an operation. She told me that I was going on my holidays.

When I awoke with an unmerciful pain in my throat, I was frightened, confused and angry. I tried to communicate my upset but was too sore to scream or even cry. How could she? She lied to me. I had been so good, trying to make up for all the upset I had caused in swallowing the tablets. I was furious. I felt stupid and embarrassed. She brought me a gift – a beautiful black, baby doll with a colorful skirt, big earrings, a necklace and wrist and ankle bracelets. I was unforgiving. How dare she try and buy me off with a doll! Hurt and enraged, I lashed out. I took the doll and tore it apart and flung it to every corner of the room. No. You lied to me. Go away. I hate you. I came to my conclusions: Grown-

ups lie, especially those who tell you they “love” you. You can’t trust people who say they love you; that’s just a trick so they can hurt you.

However bad my stammer had been up till then, it became decidedly worse. The more I tried to speak properly, the more I failed, the more upset I got, the more I stammered. All the children in my neighbourhood were now happily “stammering” along with me as though it were a game. But they could stop, and, try as I might, I could not. I was ashamed, embarrassed and miserable. I struggled at school. I struggled at home. I struggled with friends. I didn’t want to speak anywhere. There were singing lessons, speech therapists and child psychologists to no avail. My misery grew. I retreated into books. Would I ever be normal?

Resigned and exhausted, I stopped trying at 13. A substitute math teacher had come to the school. I had trained most of my regular teachers to ignore me so the occasions of mutual embarrassment were minimal. But this guy was new. He started his class by moving around the room, asking questions of every girl in turn. He went along the rows, one by one. I knew my turn was coming. My anxiety was building to panic. There was no escape and it was suddenly my turn. He asked the question. I couldn’t even hear it. He asked it again. My friend answered for me. He turned to her “I didn’t ask you,” and, pointing directly at me, he said, “I asked her.”

I was trapped. I could feel my throat close, my mouth dry, the tears starting, the anger, the resentment, the hatred, the injustice of it all. I tried to say my name. It was no use. The scene ended in horrifying bewilderment for both of us. I gave up. The room was silent. I thought I heard a laugh, was it mocking, embarrassment, pity? Who knows, who cares! That was it. I had had it. I finally accepted defeat. I was ashamed. I was embarrassed. I had failed publicly. I was exhausted. I just couldn’t do it anymore. I made a decision. No, never again. I will simply refuse. They can’t make me speak, and that was it.

There and then, in an instant, I got my power. The power of resistance. Refusal. I invented a new mantra for myself – a silent affirmation, a realization, a statement, “They can shoot me. They can jail me, but they cannot make me speak.” I

would show them all. They can do their worst. I will not answer in class ever again. In fact, I wouldn't bother trying anymore to speak properly, to anyone, and I would definitely never again speak in public and risk such humiliation.

So, out of my mouth – the design of my life! A life sentence that marked a new chapter in my life story.

### **OUT OF THE FRYING PAN**

As I approached the Leaving Certificate Examination, there were no concerns about my academic ability, but what could I possibly do with my life that didn't involve speaking to people? I had a plan. I had heard about university. What was the longest course in college? Medicine. Seven years. Seemed like a lifetime. Perfect. I would do that. If I could escape the demands of the real world and hide in college, without the stress of people or telephones, perhaps I would be able to overcome this wretched stammer and become a "normal person." When I declared my decision to my parents and career guidance teacher, there was general agreement that a career in medicine was an utterly unsuitable choice as I would be unable to speak to patients. But they gave me no alternative, and, with my general determination and rebelliousness, I won out.

I survived medical school by keeping quiet and working hard. I qualified in 1982 and slipped quietly into my new career. By then I was really expert at hiding. I had mastered one-on-one communication. Relaxed, my stammer was barely noticeable. I enjoyed dealing with patients. Still reluctant to speak, I listened a lot. I understood the world of pain and suffering. I empathized with the feeling of not belonging and the need to hide their fears and failings.

I had become adept at avoiding situations where my "abnormality" could be discovered. Mostly, I did this by lying. Life became a game of avoidance or escape. I flitted from job to job, hospital to hospital, country to country. Fortunately, in medicine, moving jobs is the norm so it was not noticed. I spent many years as a "locum" filling in for doctors who were away. I resisted applying for a permanent position. I knew that would entail departmental meetings and a requirement to voice an opinion and take on a teaching role. I

knew this would never be possible for me. Also, I had changed jobs and specialities so many times that I occurred even to myself as unreliable. Over the years, it was exhausting. I was constantly proving my worth while hiding my fears and wondering just how long it would take before I was "found out."

As it turned out, I never was "found out." Unfortunately, while enjoying the payoff of being hidden, I discovered that I could not avoid the cost. When my marriage broke down in 2001, my career was nonexistent and I found myself alone, lost and confused. How had this happened? Why me? I'm such a good person. I work so hard. I'm so caring and helpful. I had to look at myself. I had some difficult questions to answer.

### **THE CAVE YOU FEAR TO ENTER**

I needed to look inside. I needed to look where I had not been looking. My head was exhausted and out of ideas. I was forced to look in my heart. I saw that I had spent my life trying to prove I was a good person, I was lovable, useful and wanted. Underneath, however, was the deep fear that I was bad, unloved and unwanted. No amount of hiding out or working hard would release the innocent, trusting, loving child I had been, now imprisoned in the angry, resentful and unforgiving child – the "monster child" who hated the mother who had betrayed her. This was the monster who had to be kept hidden, the monster that ate away my love and caused a hole in my heart that nothing would fill and a heaviness on my mind that nothing would relieve.

With some gentle guidance, I realized, this was, of course, not true. I was never a monster child. I accepted the insight that I had made it up and acknowledged the scared, hurt, bewildered child in pain who raged against her mother for her perceived betrayal and took her love away. With this liberating new awareness came the painful realization of so many lost years, but also the opportunity to put things right. I could now forgive my mother for the "betrayal" that had justified my actions and forgive myself for punishing her and closing my heart to her love.

With trepidation, I called my mother and told how much I loved her and apologized for taking my

love away from her and for blaming her for letting them “hurt” me. “I’m sorry I punished you and pushed you away. I love you. Can you forgive me?” I asked her. With profound love and gratitude, I heard her beautiful smile on the phone. “Of course. I know. I love you, too,” she said. I then had an experience of the small black shadow on my chest, just over my heart, that small dark hole, slowly close over and become pink. I was no longer defective. There was nothing missing. I was whole, perfect, complete and loved.

From that moment, my life was back on track. It seemed as though I had found my voice and used it to tell the truth – to express my love, the love I had withheld. What else could it be for? There was no going back. I embarked on a new life built on love, trust and courage.

Free to apply for a permanent post, in 2002, I was appointed to a half-time consultant anesthesiology post in the most beautiful part of the country – a dream job in my small corner of heaven on earth.

I loved it. I loved my job. I loved my life. I was free to be me. I was present to success, happiness and contentment in my life. My career was fulfilling. I was now in a new relationship. All was well. The opportunity to work with the Get Up and Go diaries provided me with much needed balance to the demands of frontline healthcare in a busy general hospital, while making a difference to others in the wider world.

### **NOW WHAT?**

With my personal “wake-up” call in 2013, I declared that, as a matter of personal integrity, I could no longer justify working in a health care system that, to me, did not seem to care about people being healthy and well. Here were patients in front of us – 450kg and large as life – clearly trying to communicate something, but were we listening to them? As a profession, had we become cynical and resigned? “Why are they not listening to us!” Why don’t they care about their own health!” Had we given up on the patient, the human being? Was it just easier to focus on diagnosing and treating the symptoms rather than look for the cause of the “dis-ease?” Did it seem as though we really didn’t care? Were they right? Had we lost sight of

our own values and objectives, our obligations, our *raison d’être*?

Where does “physician, heal thyself” fit into all of this? I was a physician.

I was an anesthesiologist. I could have been a suicide statistic. I had felt trapped, lost and alone in a profession that didn’t seem to care about me. I had worked hard. I had worked nights and weekends, often without proper rest or meal breaks. I had sacrificed my relationships, my marriage, even my chance to have children.

I was encouraged and supported to attend as many continuous professional development courses as I could to get my required points to keep my medical license and stay abreast of new ideas, to stay within the guidelines, adhere to regulations and maintain my registration. It was funded and I received paid time off. None of this addressed the fundamental “missing” that would eventually make the difference for me.

Personal development was never mentioned. When I embarked on that journey through the recommendation of a colleague, others sneered. I’m grateful that I persisted. I owe my life to that. I encourage anyone who struggles to express themselves, to just do it – tell the truth. Let it out. Without self-expression, we have suppression, re-pression, de-pression. We live in an age of consumption. Consuming more of what is causing harm, keeping it all inside, perpetuates the damage. We must learn to let go. Let “you” out. Express your love and let the love in. There is plenty to go around.

### **THE TRUTH SHALL SET YOU FREE**

Letting it out frees us up. We must be brave and risk telling the truth – to say it how it is. Love or fear, we must be willing to say it out loud. What we don’t express consumes us.

My life began to evolve in parallel with my journey of personal development as I discovered the joy of self-expression and embarked on the inward adventure to the source of who I was, who I had become, who I now am and what did I want to create for the future.

The insights and discoveries allowed for

breakthroughs in all areas of my life and shone a light on the difference I wanted to make. I realized that self-expression was a function of responsibility, and, if I wanted to create a new future, I needed to take action consistent with realizing that future. Organizing the physician well-being conference was such an action.

Despite having retired from the medical profession, I still want to address how doctors view their role in health care. I want the listening for personal development to be generous and included in continuing personal and professional courses recommended in the medical school and post-graduate curriculum. I want courses in self-awareness and communication to be readily available in schools and have learning occur as a process of dialogue. I want coaching and mentoring to be seen as valuable resources for learning and not merely relying on didactic delivery of information. I want doctors to listen carefully to what their patients are saying and be willing to prescribe words instead of drugs whenever possible. I want kindness and compassion to return to the heart of medical care beginning with medics themselves being kind and compassionate with themselves and each other.

### **DEAD DOCTORS DON'T LIE**

Times are changing rapidly. We are in uncharted waters regarding emerging technologies and scientific breakthroughs that can impact our daily lives and physical well-being. We are reminded daily of impending environmental disaster, ecological collapse and geopolitical instability that threaten our security and challenge our psychological well-being. The pace of human evolution is slow and not conducive to the rapid adaptations required to meet the scale of such challenges to our internal and external environments.

Having been traditionally trained primarily to diagnose and treat physical illness, doctors are now dealing with an epidemic of mental illness and psychological distress for which they are not well-prepared. Much of this psychological or emotional "dis-ease" presents eventually as physical disease. While the public is being educated in maintaining physical health with new diet solutions and fitness regimes, and general practitioners now legitimately

prescribing these treatments, we are slower to discover effective ways of dealing with the mental overwhelm in the general population, with general practitioners less enthusiastic about such things as mindfulness, reiki and reflexology until a "physical" cause has been ruled out.

Also, our education model has not fully-equipped any of us to deal with the consequences of the exponential rate of change we now experience on so many fronts. Bombarded with an unprecedented level of sensory input and information, our capacity to process it, or express our feelings about it, can be easily overwhelmed. Potentially this may leave us and our natural intelligence in danger of becoming subservient to artificial intelligence or even its potential.

Human beings will need to make a quantum leap in upping our level of consciousness to master our own evolution as we rely more on technology. Now, at the beginning of consciously mastering our humanity, humanity itself is at a crossroads. Failure to master our technology will leave us as its helpless victims. "Guided missiles and misguided men" spring to mind. Future generations of digital natives, tech savvy entrepreneurs and "conscious" (woke) beings may fare a lot better if they do not inherit the fears of their parents. How much time do we have? As Buckminster Fuller, a 20th century inventor and visionary, asked, "Is this the final exam?"

We must now wake up to a changing world, take the actions that make the difference and stop doing what doesn't work. It's also time for women to have their voices heard, loud and clear. The presence of so many women in the profession over recent decades has highlighted the need for a move from a paternalistic system of "fixing the problem" to a maternalistic approach of nurturing a solution. We need leaders in medical training willing to champion a transformation in wellbeing from late intervention to one of supporting prevention and personal empowerment. It's time for a paradigm shift. Starting with physician, heal thyself, we may soon move to patient, heal thyself.

With more than 400 doctors a year ending their lives, this leaves more than one million patients losing their doctor to suicide every year, according to Pamela Wible. The alarming rates of addiction, mental health issues and suicide in the profession



are not made public as this could potentially damage the trust amongst those of us who believe that we are being taken care of in a safe system by healthy, well-supported professionals. At what cost do we maintain this illusion?

I would like physicians to take the lead on this and not wait for the legal system to force “open disclosure.” The fear of litigation haunts every doctor at every waking hour. By recognizing the tip of the iceberg, at least we admit the iceberg is there and that much of what is underneath is yet to be addressed.

Perhaps, if we can address the epidemic of suicide in physicians, we may be able to address the broader issue of suicide in society – so often a very personal response to a not-so-personal trigger. It’s time to look at the source of the “dis-ease” in the health service by looking at the source of the “dis-ease” in health care workers.

Dead doctors don’t lie. What are they telling us? What do we not want to hear?

# PURSuing THE VISION OF MAKING A DIFFERENCE: MY JOURNEY FROM EARTH SCIENCE TO COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

JEAN J. CHU

## **Abstract**

*This paper explores the evolution of my mission that I gave myself more than 40 years ago. It is a time outline of the breakdowns and breakthroughs of my promise for the world: A world where each of us is awakened to our power and grace, in harmony with the Earth and in action to cause our own safety and security ... World Safe. In the process of my own awakening, I morph from a pure earth scientist into a community facilitator intent on bringing science back to nature and the grassroots.*

## **STARTING AT THE CROSSROADS: 1976-2000 IN THE UNITED STATES AND CHINA**

In seeking to cause a paradigm shift, the road is often rocky. Such is my journey, starting as a young scientist at age 26. In 1976, I find myself in the earth science division of Columbia University in New York City.

One day, I enter a graduate classroom with nothing but empty metal bookcases and desks. The room seems rather bleak. Only one window allows daylight in. As the heavy metal door clangs shut behind me, I hear this tremendous wailing: "Don't let us die in vain!"

Startled and alarmed, I look out the window and see nothing but the red brick wall of the next building. Anxious, I turn to search all the bookcases and desk drawers, looking for the source of the crying and wailing. There are no electronic devices...in fact nothing but bare metal bookcases and desks.

I quickly exit the room and run down the hall to my professor's office. He gathers all of us graduate students together to share the news he just received from his colleagues in China. "There's been a terrible earthquake in China with many people hurt," he tells us.

In fact, up to three quarters of a million people perished from the Great Tangshan Earthquake with a magnitude of 7.8 on the Richter scale when it struck on July 28.

Then, my professor said, "Maybe one of you young students can take up the challenge of predicting earthquakes, and electromagnetics may be involved."

His words felt like seeds sprinkled on the fertile soil of my mind, and it was at that moment that my commitment for earthquake prediction took root.

Call it a passion or a mission in life. I did not know how I would pursue making a difference in earthquake prediction, and I knew it would take many years of training for me, about 20 or so I thought.

Fourteen years later, after studying and conducting research in the graduate divisions of Columbia University and Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Cambridge, Massachusetts, I came to realize the complexity of earthquake prediction.

Earth science colleagues said to me, "Jean, if we work with you on earthquake prediction, not only will we not get any grants to conduct such research, but the grants we already have will be cancelled."

Hearing these words awakened me to the hidden aspect of earthquake prediction: it is not solely a scientific issue, but, in fact, a socio-physical challenge. Earthquake prediction is a political and economic "hot potato," little examined and pursued. Why? The fear is that tourism and real estate values would plummet if an area became known for an imminent earthquake strike, and the government would be faced with handling the fear and anxiety of its people.

This aspect is unaddressed even today, more than 40 years later, as earthquakes still remain the most frightening of natural hazards, and the scientific world agrees earthquakes cannot yet be predicted.

This unexamined social side of prediction was a rude awakening for me, occurring not as a rock in my mission journey, but as a huge boulder. It was a major breakdown. The scientific challenge was difficult enough, and now adding the social dimension left me with an impossible task.

In 1994, I ventured beyond academe to participate in the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction, a United Nations initiative. Later in that decade, I met my colleague, Dr. Jeanne-Marie Col from the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. Together, we discovered the miracle of Qinglong County in China, where half a million people miraculously survived the vast

devastation surrounding them from the Great Tangshan Earthquake. That quake destroyed 180,000 buildings in their county and encircled them in a sea of death of three-quarters of a million people.

The United Nations calls Qinglong County's experience a "best practice" in social dynamics at the community level.<sup>1</sup> Over a three-year period, we documented Qinglong County's life-saving actions for the Great Tangshan Earthquake.<sup>2</sup>

This documentation research initiated my exploration into community resilience. I saw that while some science was involved, the awareness, preparedness and social cohesiveness of the Qinglong County community played a pivotal role in having the community handle, by itself, the tremendous destruction and trauma from the Great Tangshan Earthquake.

I knew in my heart that the social dynamics of this best practice for the huge earthquake would be difficult to replicate, as it occurred in 1976 and not in modern times, in a Communist society very different from the Western world. Yet, I sensed that Qinglong County's experience provides us with important clues on ways to see ahead and prepare effectively for destructive earthquakes. (I invite you to view the five-minute YouTube video entitled "Kids Stand Watch – A True Story," accessible at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=3\\_OtZFUenII](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3_OtZFUenII).)

Sharing lies at the heart of the social dynamics that caused the Qinglong County success. Information from science, public administration and the environmental monitoring by community residents flowed to all levels of the Qinglong County community.

With this discovery and a timely private donation, the United Nations Global Program for the Integration of Public Administration and the Science of Disasters was created.<sup>3</sup> The donated funds were used to support several international workshops and conferences.

While I saw the usefulness of these international meetings, my real interests were to have science impact the grassroots, where basic science could be used by local people to save and secure their

own lives. The lessons of the Qinglong County experience in 1976 fascinated me and I wanted to replicate it for the world.

So, as a consultant for the United Nations in New York, I designed a program to set up a nationwide network of community-operated crustal stress monitoring sites for earthquake prediction. The rationale was that a similar network had been set up in Qinglong County in the 1970s. That network allowed the county's administrators time to prepare their residents for the magnitude 7.8 earthquake.

The country we selected for this project was the Philippines, a country with large earthquakes every year. They have more than 200 volcanoes, including 22 active ones, and landslides kill scores of citizens every year.

#### **COMMUNITY-BASED SCIENCE: 2000-2010 IN CHINA AND THE PHILIPPINES**

Then, my second major breakdown occurs. The United Nations administrators say, "Jean, this Philippines project for earthquake monitoring is a million-dollar project. You have yet to bring in any money to support it." They eventually terminated our U.N. global program and my consultancy with them.

The year is 2000. I am upset, depressed and resigned, deciding to end my career and mission for global awareness on earthquake prediction. It seems hopeless, with zero funding and virtually no interest by anyone. Luckily, a close doctor friend of mine directed me to Landmark.

After only two weekends of Landmark's transformative education, I felt that I was shot like a cannonball up into the sky. And do you know what? I am still flying with "anything is possible" as the wind beneath my wings. I discovered that I could somehow continue my mission and passion in life, taking on the Impossible Promise of people being safe from earthquakes.

So, from breakdown into the breakthrough realm of the unknown possibilities, I flew from New York to Beijing, China. There, I enrolled the United Nations office in China in supporting me to build crustal stress equipment and ship them to the Philippines. I then enrolled the entire

Philippine government, including the president, the secretary of national defense and all branches of the military, as well as the scientific and disaster management branches of the Philippine government, to set up the million-dollar project. Even the United Nations Development Programme in the Philippines joined our effort, supporting us in the following years.

The outcome was truly amazing and is documented by two official U.N. Development Programme publications. Our project established the Crustal Stress Community Awareness Network in the Philippines. This network monitored for earthquakes and was totally staffed by local community members, including women and children in different cities encircling the main Philippine island of Luzon.

In little more than a year, the United Nations documented that this network caught six medium-sized earthquakes before they occurred. In a world where earthquake prediction was, and is, not possible, this community-operated network produced unheard of breakthroughs.<sup>4</sup>

Then, a new breakdown occurred. Placing earthquake equipment in local communities with residents and nonscientists operating and analyzing their own monitoring data confronted the Philippine government science agency responsible for earthquakes. They did not understand how the network was able to produce such results and resisted placing the necessary equipment in various communities where network sites were set up. Consequently, the network was neglected over this past decade and no longer functions.

Another breakdown factor was how I was being as the main bridge-maker. My immature responses to various meetings with officialdom did not help at all, and eventually I realized I had to move on to another English-speaking country that I could work with. Herein lies my constant request to be trained and developed by Landmark in interacting with colleagues, friends, family and officialdom.

Despite the various breakdowns in the Philippines, a huge breakthrough occurred in the midst of these breakdowns. I met Rusty Binas, a passionate community organizer/facilitator who lives in Bacolod, Philippines. What I lack in social skills

and training Rusty excels in. His global mission and mine are a perfect fit – empowering local communities to save themselves from the impact of natural hazards.

What I bring to the table is community science, while Rusty offers a modernized version of the social dynamics that resulted in the Qinglong County success for the Great Tangshan Earthquake. Our combined approach creates communities resilient to natural hazards, tapping into their own resources to avoid experiencing disasters. Surprisingly, this shift happens with remarkable velocity.

#### **IMPLEMENTING COMMUNITY RESILIENCE: 2011-2019 IN INDIA AND NEPAL**

In 2011, I took all that I learned and experienced in my decade of work in the Philippines into the new arena of northern India and Nepal. Both regions were overdue for devastating magnitude-eight earthquakes.

In 2013, the head of the U.N. Development Programme in Kathmandu asked Rusty and me to evaluate the preparation efforts of the Nepalese government and the national and international aid agencies there for Nepal's forecasted magnitude-eight earthquake. Our U.N. mission report presented a welcomed and new approach to strengthening the resiliency of Nepalese communities for the hazard.<sup>5</sup> The socio-political setting in Nepal at the time was highly unstable and our report met with silence. Two years later, on April 25, 2015, a magnitude 8 earthquake occurred in Kathmandu, with 9,000 lives lost.

As for northern India, this region is well-known to be overdue for a tremendous seismic event, a greater than magnitude-eight earthquake. Major newspapers in Delhi and the national capital region stated in 2019 that 80% of all buildings in the region will fall and the loss in life will be in the millions from such an event. I sent this news to the head office of Landmark and worked directly with Landmark in Delhi to begin the conversation of community resilience for their staff and participants there.

India was a huge challenge, though little did I know it when I began my work there. I faced ubiquitous

cultural conversations of women existing to serve men, where rape is all too common and unspoken, where the strong caste system and religious strife divide people. Add in the political/historical divide caused by a bitter border war between China and India. As one senior Indian Landmark graduate informed me, "Jean, no matter how much time we spend together this year as course mates, I will never trust you because you are Chinese."

Confronting these breakdown conversations, I deliberately placed myself over a period of five years in Landmark's Team Management and Leadership Program in India. I used this channel of communication to present ongoingly over the years the possibility of community resilience for local communities in Delhi, the national capital region and in the mountain villages of India's Himalayas.

During the last eight years, I have worked with Himalayan villagers in the Tehri Garhwal district of the northernmost Indian state of Uttarakhand, as well as with communities in the capital region. My pro bono efforts are in partnership with Rusty Binas. We combine community monitoring of the environment and train residents to manage their own planning for hazard risk reduction. Our work has now expanded to all-natural hazards, including quakes, landslides, volcanic eruptions, climate change, floods, tsunamis, typhoons and hurricanes.

#### **SUMMARY: THE WHAT'S SO**

When I look over the decades of work in pursuing the vision of making a difference, I can now see that this passion of mine and steadfast commitment has molded me into someone who can indeed make a difference with people, not only in my work, but, in fact, from moment to moment with each and every person I meet.

Performance comes from action, and, for myself, transformative learning has always meant implementation. I have put directly into my work every ounce that I have experienced from Landmark's training and my results, especially in India, show the power of transformative education.

With this 40-plus-year journey, I have learned the power of breakdowns, which, if one does not give up, are always an open door to breakthroughs.

Ah ... and then there is patience.

As a physical scientist, I was trained to conduct experiments that I controlled within definite time limits. Entering into the social science of community development is a completely different realm of inquiry.

At the heart of this realm is learning to have patience and letting go of the need to control. No matter how hard I try to make things happen, especially in India, local communities have their own natural flow, often in directions that I have no intention for my efforts to take.

So, where is my 40-plus-year mission journey now?

- I am confident as a scientist that environmental indicators to earthquakes are real, based on the decades of dedicated research by my NASA colleague, Dr. Friedmann Freund.<sup>6</sup> I am committed to his work being shared and applied wherever I am in the world.
- As a huge earthquake overshadows northern India, with millions of lives at stake, there are now communities in the Himalayas and national capital region of Delhi actively open to using our approach in strengthening their community resilience for hazards.<sup>7</sup>
- It is through the individual effort of local community residents, trained in community-managed hazard risk reduction and sharing their observations of environmental changes around them, that communities will be able to sense impending disasters and prepare well in advance for their hazards.
- Having spent my entire life savings and more in pursuing my passion as outlined above, and with cancer and other serious health issues preventing me from continuing work in India at present, I now realize that my role is to: (1) recover my health and well-being and (2) open up the floodgates to those willing to commit their time and energy/ resources to this vision, which I know is totally doable, for it already happened in 1976 for Qinglong County.

## A WORLD VISION AND INVITATION

I invite all of you to join me in creating this real-

time scenario for communities throughout the world, where:

Residents are ready. Their sensing data and community science networks alert them to take their pre-planned actions. People move outdoors to predetermined sites safely away from any destruction with food, water and other vital supplies to sustain them in the aftermath of the hazard or/earthquake. There is no panic, only calm and deliberate action, stemming from their training in community science and Community-Managed Disaster Risk Reduction planning.

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# LISTENING AND SPEAKING IN THE FACE OF EXTINCTION

RUTH B. SHIELDS

*For Ishi and Loretta*

## **Abstract**

*Working with the “Last Speaker” of Xay Tsnu, a California indigenous language, I have had to face the grief I have felt at not starting this work earlier. We are in the midst of a mass extinction of languages, and I have known this on some level for most of my life. Two years into this work, I find that unearthing my childhood grief has freed me up to take ownership of the contribution I am committed to making. Waking up to how deeply I care about what I am doing, I am beginning to invite others to care, too.*

## **AN INVITATION TO LISTEN**

I invite you to sit down. Pull your chair closer. Bring yourself fully here. And listen.

Let me tell you a story. This all started with Ishi, an indigenous man who lived in California.<sup>1</sup> I was 9 years old – an age when kids start to care about belonging and community – and I heard about who Ishi was and what happened to him. But it wasn't until researching this paper that I learned

more than a child's-eye view of his story and began to appreciate its impact on my life.

In 1911, after forest fires destroyed much of the area he lived in, a 50-year-old dark-skinned man living on his own in the woods was finally so hungry that he came out of the forest looking for food. The local sheriff in Oroville tried to speak to him, but the man knew no English, and the sheriff had never heard the language that the man was speaking. A gathering throng of white men surrounded the man, so the sheriff decided to take him to the Oroville jail for his own protection.

An anthropologist named Arthur Kroeber, who was summoned from the University of California, took the man back to Berkeley and gave him a home in the anthropology museum where he was displayed as a living exhibit. On his second day there, Kroeber sat the man down in front of an early wax cylinder recording machine and recorded him while he talked.

Kroeber started learning the man's language. He soon learned that the man's people were called “Yahi” and his language was “Yana.” He also discovered that in the Yahi culture telling someone your own name just wasn't done. Someone else, who knew your name, had to do the introducing. In other words, you couldn't say, “Hello, my name is Ruth.” Someone else had to say, “I'd like you to meet Ruth.” or “This is Ruth.” The man would not tell Kroeber his name because no one was left to do the introducing. But he finally allowed Kroeber to call him “Ishi” meaning “man.”

Soon Kroeber learned more of Ishi's story – both from Ishi and local historians. White people in the area had said that the Yana language “died

out.” This way of putting it keeps the uglier reality from hitting us in the face. In truth, hundreds of Yahi people died after the Gold Rush started in the 1840s and 1850s from diseases gold diggers brought with them. Almost everyone else in the tribe was murdered – often for a \$5-per-head bounty – by genocidal white people in the dirtiest period of California’s history. A small group, including the boy who became Ishi, escaped massacre in 1865 by hiding in the woods. After 44 years of hiding, Ishi was the only one left, and it had been a long time since he had anyone to speak to or share his life with.

For the most part, no one understood Ishi, but he would sit and talk with people for hours and hours at a time. Many of the 147 hours of recordings of him talking have never been translated. From time to time, the people recording Ishi would get bored as he’d talk on and on for hours seemingly not caring that they understood hardly anything he was saying. At that point, they would get up to leave the room, and Ishi would get angry and make them sit back down. In his culture, no one would ever even think of interrupting someone who was speaking, much less leave before someone was done sharing whatever they wanted to share.

Ishi lived for five years in the museum before dying from tuberculosis that he caught from the people he’d come to live among. During these years, some of the researchers were able to translate some of the recordings with Ishi’s help, and many others have continued trying long after his death. What they soon came to realize is that what Ishi liked to talk about the most was the everyday daily minutiae of life, and he was always very animated and lively in his talking of these things.

I have barely touched the surface of the history of these years, but the glimpse I have had in the past few months brings me to a precipice where I am filled with awe.

Solitary confinement is considered cruel and unusual punishment under international law. The impact on speakers of languages nearing extinction seems horribly similar. Language does not exist in a vacuum; it takes place between people. Referring to Ishi as the “Last Speaker” of his language doesn’t capture the full experience of it. People, who have no one

to speak to, are simultaneously being deprived of the gift of someone’s listening and the space in which to speak. There need to be “new listeners” with whom to speak. Ishi made the most of this very human need, seemingly not caring that he wasn’t understood and demanding people sit and listen.

## THE PREDICTION

In 2002, I came across the following prediction:

*50% to 90% of the 6,000-7,000 world’s languages will have disappeared by 2100.*

As a linguist, I was appalled when I read this. I didn’t know what to do. I knew that I wanted to do something, but I didn’t know what I could do.

Now, looking back, it makes me think of my friend Drew Dellinger’s poem “Hieroglyphic Stairway” about acting, or failing to act, in the face of impending environmental collapse:<sup>2</sup>

*it’s 3:23 in the morning  
and I’m awake  
because my great great grandchildren  
won’t let me sleep  
my great great grandchildren  
ask me in dreams  
what did you do while the planet was plundered?  
what did you do when the earth was unraveling?  
surely you did something  
when the seasons started failing?  
as the mammals, reptiles, birds were all dying?  
did you fill the streets with protest  
when democracy was stolen?  
what did you do  
once  
you  
knew?*

What indeed did I do once I knew?

Well, that depends on when I admit I knew.

Was it in 2002 when I read that prediction? By then, I had already left graduate school in linguistics and had already started collecting books on the subject, so I must have known earlier than that.

Just how early was it that I knew?



1971

My fourth-grade teacher is reading us a book about Ishi. She's telling us how Ishi came out of the woods and was the only speaker of his language left. Everyone else had died from disease or been murdered. They didn't know what to do, so they put him in a museum. I can't imagine living in a museum. It'd be too hot in the summer and too cold in the winter. Was he in a glass case? Could he go outside if he wanted to? Did he miss his family like crazy?

I feel like crying, but no one else is crying. I go home and cry myself to sleep.

Later, we watch "Island of the Blue Dolphins," and I feel like crying again. A girl escapes from a ship that is taking her family away. She swims back to the island where they lived and no one else is there or ever comes back. She has to figure out how to do everything by herself and be very grown up. She makes friends with the birds and other animals. Some of her friends are seals. One day, trappers come and kill them, and later on they see her and take her away to the mainland, and she never sees her island again.

A dozen kids in my class speak other languages at home, but at school they speak only English. Peter is new and comes in the middle of the year from somewhere called Latvia. He doesn't understand me when I talk with him, but slowly he gets better at English.

Esther is Apache and is sent from the reservation in Arizona every year to go to our school. She speaks English like any other kid in my class. She wears different clothes than any of us, and, when she comes back in the fall, she is sad and misses her family.

1974-1980

In 1974, we move to Ottawa Hills in Toledo, Ohio, where I learn about the slaughter of Native Americans in the area and the Battle of Fallen Timbers.<sup>3</sup> My heart breaks again and again.

Meanwhile, I grow close to "Gramps," my great grandfather, who entertains me with stories from his lumberjack days in Upper and Lower Michigan. His second wife, Jane Ettawageshik, regales us with

stories, too. I learn that her first husband, Frank, the father of her children, is an Odawa chief. Their children only know a little bit of Odawa, and this makes me sad. In love with family history and tales of "how things used to be," I learn to prefer the company of elders and sit and listen to their stories. I do a genealogy project that eventually leads to the first of numerous "Howard Family Reunions" from 1980 to the present.<sup>4</sup>

I delve into the life of the family hero – General Oliver Otis Howard – even reading a musty copy of his two-volume, 1,000-plus-page autobiography in the catacombs of the Toledo Public Library. A Civil War hero, head of the Freedmen's Bureau after the war and founder of Howard University, "O.O." Howard holds the dubious distinction of "Indian fighter," negotiating peace treaties with Cochise and the Apaches and forcing the surrender of Chief Joseph and the Nez Percé.<sup>5</sup> Because of Chief Joseph, I don't want anyone to know I'm related to him.

All the "Howards" come to our house for our first Howard Reunion. I fill a giant roll of butcher paper with the family line all the way back to John Howard, Miles Standish's cabin boy on the Mayflower, a British ship that arrived in America in 1620.

1980-2002

I go to college, major in Slavic languages, and go to grad school in theoretical linguistics. I study the range and variation of grammatical patterns and word meanings across languages. In the first syntax class, my advisor uses my cousin Janet's book, "Meet Cree," to expose us to some of these variations.<sup>6</sup> Janet's book introduces the Cree language to English speakers providing services to the Cree-speaking communities in Manitoba, Canada.

I go to Hungary and discover that what I've been studying makes me a way better language learner. I get interested in how I might teach people what I've been learning. I go to Japan and teach for a year, then transfer to another graduate program where my advisors now are.

Back in the United States, I take a course called The Landmark Forum to help me "not flunk out of this new school in my first semester." Instead of "flunking out," I "flunk into" transformation,

ultimately leaving school to teach English in Japan. I travel back and forth from Japan to the States for Landmark's Wisdom Unlimited, Partnership Explorations and Power and Contribution courses every two months for three years. I start engaging for the first time in what kind of "Impossible Promise" or vision for the world I might give my life to. It becomes clear to me and everyone else at Landmark that I'm "the language person," and, whatever I arrive at, I'll be making my particular difference in the area of languages and the teaching and learning of them.<sup>7</sup>

I begin reading about projections for world population, aging and multilingualism in the year 2050, when I will be 88 years old, and I come across the prediction about languages going extinct by the end of this century. I move back from Japan "to do something about it" and it takes another decade and a half "getting ready" before I stop preparing and take action.

## 2016

*You say you hear us and that you understand the urgency. But no matter how sad and angry I am, I do not want to believe that. Because if you really understood the situation and still kept on failing to act, then you would be **evil**. And **that** I refuse to believe.*

—Greta Thunberg  
United Nations Climate Action Summit,  
September 23, 2019<sup>8</sup>

*Concerning all acts of initiative or creation, there is one elementary truth...that the moment one definitely commits oneself, then Providence moves, too.*

—W.H. Murray  
The Scottish Himalayan Expedition<sup>9</sup>

Four years ago, I suddenly, and without planning to, started taking action toward what I am

doing now in the area of endangered language revitalization. I attended Mary Thorp's breakout session on "Creating an Impossible Promise" at the 2016 Conference for Global Transformation, not knowing it was going to change my life forever. Mary led us in an inquiry, and a new world suddenly came into view for me where "Everyone's language is worth learning." I don't know where it came from, but I declared it and it became me. I went home, googled "language revitalization workshops" and, within a week, was serving food for people from 27 California indigenous language communities at the University of California-Berkeley's biannual Breath of Life Workshop sponsored by the Advocates for Indigenous California Language Survival.

In further pursuit of this vision, I started driving Uber the next week to cover my bills. My first day of driving underscored the degree to which Providence was now moving:

*It's a beautiful afternoon and I'm driving around in San Francisco in a brand-new Prius C alternating between feeling nervous and excited. It's my first day on the job as an Uber driver and I haven't had the courage to turn on the app to accept rides yet.*

"OK, here goes," I tell myself, and turn the driver's app on and head toward Daly City. Within minutes, I get my first ride assignment, and I nervously follow the directions on the app to get to where my first passenger will be waiting to be picked up.

*Pulling up to the curb, I unlock my doors, and a young man in his 20s opens the back door and slides into the back seat on the passenger side.*

*"Hi, James!" I say because other drivers have told me I should greet everyone warmly.*

*He says hi back, buckles up and I head back northwards toward his destination.*

*A minute or two later, and completely out of the blue, James says, "I'm thinking of studying Ohlone."*

*"You're kidding," I say.*

*"No."*

*"I just spent a week with a guy who's involved in revitalizing the Ohlone language."*

*"Really? What was his name?"*

*"Vince somebody."*

*"Oh, he's my uncle."*

Five hours later, in North Beach, I pick up Jestina and her boyfriend whose name I didn't catch. They are freezing cold, having forgotten what San Francisco can be like in the summer. They live in the East Bay, so feel foolish for having left their coats at home.

Jestina mentions that she manages a café in Berkeley and I start telling her about my favorite café there from when I was in graduate school 25 years ago.

*"What was it called?," she asks.*

*"A Musical Offering."*

*"You're kidding! That's where I work!"*

She goes on to tell me that the owner of A Musical Offering keeps photos on the wall of all past employees in the manager's office.

*"Really?," I say, "My housemate Tatiana and I started dating 30 years ago when she was working there. In fact, I started going there to visit her at work!"*

Jestina asks for Tatiana's last name. I tell her and she confirms that Tatiana's photo is still on the wall in the back office.

*"So ... what do you do, Ruth, besides driving Uber?"*

*"I'm just getting involved in endangered language revitalization."*

Now it's her turn to say, *"You're kidding!"*

Jestina, it turns out, is Navajo and is actively involved with Navajo language revitalization efforts in California and New Mexico. Her boyfriend, sleeping against her shoulder, is from a tribe in Lake County and has been trying to learn his language from his older relatives. Both of them are familiar with the Breath of Life and have participated in events led by Advocates for Indigenous California Language Survival.

I drop them off, all of us shaking our heads in wonder.

## 2017-2018

It's a year and a half later and I haven't started any actual revitalization work of my own. The other biannual program that the Advocates sponsor – Language is Life – is rapidly approaching in October 2017 and I am trying to find any excuse not to go. The truth is I am scared: scared that I'm not good enough, scared that people won't like me, scared that I'll accidentally offend someone and I'll no longer be welcome.

Over my protestations, my coach Mary Thorp and my friend Linda Rose-McRoy make sure that I go even if only for one day. Bravely, I head there and attend six hours of the weekend-long event. Even in that short a time, I accomplish what I've come there to do. I have Leanne Hinton, a professor from Berkeley, introduce me to a tribe that has been requesting a linguist to work with. Amazingly, I meet a linguist there who is the great great grandson of Chief Joseph. I apologize to him for my ancestor O.O. Howard's transgressions against his ancestors and receive his forgiveness. A month later, I am hired by the Koi Nation, and a few months later, my work with Loretta has begun.

## MOVING FORWARD

As mentioned earlier, when I started working on Xay Tsnu, many people started asking me, "Why bother?" Interestingly, the longer I've been working on the language, the fewer times I get asked this question. I credit some of this decline in questioning to the expansion of public awareness of the state of endangered languages and of the existence of efforts to save them. This is surely due to the United Nations having declared 2019 to be the International Year of Indigenous Languages and the decade from 2022 to 2032 to be the International Decade of Indigenous Languages.<sup>10, 11</sup> They succeeded in getting the word out widely about the existence of endangered languages and are helping garner more federal and nongovernmental funding for revitalization projects around the world.

In addition, I believe that people have stopped asking me "Why bother?" because I am clearer about and more confident in my own story. I'm also sharing what I do in a different way. I'm asking them questions about their own relationship to

these languages, and they are engaging with their own reasons for taking action or not. I share these questions here with you to engage with, too.

## QUESTIONS ABOUT BASIC EXPERIENCES

### Indigenous Languages

1. What languages are indigenous to where you live? (See [www.native-land.ca](http://www.native-land.ca)).
2. How many people speak these languages? ([www.endangeredlanguages.com/userquery/](http://www.endangeredlanguages.com/userquery/)).
3. Are there any endangered language revitalization programs in your area? ([www.unesco.org/new/en/culture/themes/endangered-languages/atlas-of-languages-in-danger/](http://www.unesco.org/new/en/culture/themes/endangered-languages/atlas-of-languages-in-danger/)).
4. How might you create your own participation in your area?
  - Help raise money for a local program
  - Take a class in a local endangered language
  - Host a "Language Party" of storytelling in the endangered languages in your area ([www.languageparty.org](http://www.languageparty.org)).

### Heritage Languages

1. How many languages has your family lost from your great grandparents' generation down to your generation?
2. What forces contributed toward losing them? (war, emigration, schooling available only in a different language, marriage into another language, genocide, etc.).
3. Are you or anyone else in your family doing anything to reclaim them?

### Basic Experiences with Language

#### 1. *When did you first realize there was such a thing as "another language"?*

I'm copying what Mrs. Kennedy is writing on the blackboard into my brand-new French notebook.

"C," I mouth to myself. I look down and press my pencil hard into the page.

I look up and Mrs. Kennedy has written some more letters.

"Apostrophe – E – S – T," I say determinedly, so I won't forget them when I look down.

My mind is screaming at me, "You can't write an apostrophe after a C!" as I write one anyway.

I take a breath, look at the board, then back at my notebook. I have no idea what it means or what I've written.

I look over at my neighbor's notebook and then at the blackboard and continue copying the letters: A-U-J-O-U-R-D-apostrophe-H-U-I. More screaming: "You can't write an apostrophe there!"

I look around and no one else seems bothered one bit, so I clench my teeth and continue: "L-E-space-twenty-four." The 24 is followed by an E with a funny mark over it and then an M and another E.

Again, everyone is unfazed. I, however, am fazed.

Stopped, I look up, and Mrs. Kennedy has written the word "September" next, but she's spelled it wrong and she didn't capitalize the "S."

Watching her move onto writing "1973," my eyes get bigger and bigger as a realization has come over me: Mrs. Kennedy has written today's date!

#### 2. *When have you understood something in another language without having studied it?*

"Ruusu-san!"

I turn toward a young Japanese woman dressed all in black.

She is standing a few feet away from me, her pale-rimmed glasses looking as though they're going to slide off her face.

She straightens up as if coming to attention, hands clasped behind her back, head high.

"Hai!," she says, and chews on her lower lip, seeming to consider something.

Suddenly, she turns and picks up a tissue box from the table at her side. Holding it in her left hand, she pulls out a tissue with her right hand and crumples it up.

A look of uncertainty crosses her face. Then she stands ramrod straight again.

[With] the tissue box dancing in her left hand, she looks directly at me.

"Ruusu-san," she begins again, "Isu wa ..."

She gestures with her head and the crumpled tissue toward the rows of chairs in the middle of the room.

Concentrating, I nod, first at the chairs, then back at her face and hands.

Without breaking eye contact, she continues dancing the tissue box up and down in one hand and adds a mad scrubbing motion with the crumpled tissue.

*"Impeki sh'te kudasai!"* she barks, pressing the box and the crumpled tissue into my hands.

"Im ... peck ... ee?," I repeat while taking them, eyes still locked on her whole being.

"Hai," she says again. *"Pu-ree-zu. May-ku. Im-pe-ka-bee-ree-tee."*

"Eesu ... wah ...," I say, pointing toward the chairs.

*"Hai. Is-u wa, im-pe-ki shi-te ku-da-sa-i-i-i,"* she replies.

Box and tissue held high and ready, I am nodding and beaming. She is nodding and beaming, too.

Snapping to, I turn – hands held high – and run to "make the chairs impeccable."

### **3. When have you had the experience of being able to be yourself in another language?**

It's really, really humid and I can feel the afternoon storm pressure building.

It's the very last class on the very last day of a six-week total immersion Russian course at Norwich University, a military college in Vermont. We've been learning how to talk about *seks*, *narkomania* and rock and roll po-russki today.

My water bottle is empty and I keep looking at my watch.

The women are talking about *seks* with men. The men are talking about *seks* with women. They are talking about pregnancy and *protivo-zachatochnye sredstva* (methods for preventing conception). I have nothing to say. My *sredstvo* has been to not have *seks*.

I look over at my roommate Ada. Our eyes meet. Neither of us is saying anything.

The thunder starts and all of us jump up and say our quick goodbyes.

I look for Ada and find her waiting for me. We flee to the far edge of campus to the only café and grab an empty booth far from the billiard-playing military cadets.

As soon as we're alone, Ada asks, *"U tebya est' liubovnik ...?"* "Do you have a [male] lover ...?"

Here we go, I'm thinking. She's going to start telling me all about her boyfriend. I start to shake my head *"nyet."* But she is looking right at me smiling and turning red, *"... ili ... liubovnitsa?"* "... or a [female] lover?"

Now I'm turning red, too. *"Nyet."*

She looks at me, and bravely I continue, *"... no ya xochu liubovnitsu."* "... but I want a woman lover."

*"Ya tozhe,"* she says quietly. "Me, too."

She is a better Russian speaker than me, and we have no time, but we have found our way to being real.

### **4. How many languages do you speak?**

I'm sitting at the computer terminal just inside the door when Annick De Houwer sees me and sticks her head inside.

"Are you busy?"

"No, no," I say and invite her in.

She is visiting the Buffalo Linguistics Department from the Netherlands and has seen me in several classes related to bilingualism and multilingualism.

"You must be multilingual," she says.

"No, I'm not," I say. "I only speak English."

"Really? You're interested in multilingualism,

so I think you must speak several languages.  
How many languages do you speak?"

"Well," I hesitate. "I had six years of French in junior high and high school. I took two years of German in college and I majored in Russian. But I don't really speak any of them."

She laughs and says, "Americans are so funny. You have a different way of counting the languages you know than Europeans have."

She goes on to explain that Europeans are taught from very young that languages are easy to learn and that they pride themselves on speaking many of them. When they only know a few words in a language or can talk about only one or two areas of life with them, they still count it as a language that they speak. They don't lie about their level of fluency, but they don't discount what they can do with what they know.

Americans, on the other hand, typically equate "knowing" or "being able to speak" a language with being able to pronounce everything like a native speaker, having "perfect" grammar, never making any mistakes and being conversant at a college-educated level of vocabulary in all subjects and topics that they'd ever want to be able to talk about in their own language.

She asks me a new question, "So ... if you were to be dropped by parachute into an area where you didn't know the language and we gave you a pocket dictionary and a phrasebook, would you survive?"

"Yes."

"How long would it take you to get comfortable enough in it to get by?"

"A couple of weeks."

"For any language?"

"Yes." Both of us smile.

"So...how many languages – that you've already studied – do you think you'd be comfortable in within one week?"

"Whoaoh," I say. I start counting them up out loud, holding up fingers for each one. By the

time I get to nine, we are both laughing.<sup>12</sup>

"You're multilingual," she says.

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## ENDNOTES

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3 "Mad Anthony" Wayne defeated the Shawnees under Blue Jacket (another book I cried over) and the Odawas and their British Allies out of what became Northwest Ohio and resulted in Indians having to withdraw from almost all of modern-day Ohio – [www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/](http://www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/)

4 [Battle\\_of\\_Fallen\\_Timbers](#).

5 My mother's mother's father's side of the family.

6 [www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oliver\\_Otis\\_Howard](http://www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oliver_Otis_Howard).

7 Meet Cree ended up being a required text in my first syntax course in graduate school six years later and continues to serve as a model to me for how to communicate the beauty of languages to nonlinguists.

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# FOLLOW YOUR BLISS

JESSICA TISHUE

## **Abstract**

*The following is a story of how I followed my bliss to pioneer a new world at the intersection of food, fun and sustainability.*

## **STORY**

My doe-eyed dream started on a warm summer afternoon in 2011. I was sitting and slurping up an acai bowl at Sambazon Cafe in Cardiff, California. Blissful, I was enjoying how the frozen acai cooled my body and energized my mind. Suddenly, my heart sank as my gaze fixated upon the outdoor trash can. Single-use bowls and utensils from Sambazon Cafe overflowed out of the trash and were swiftly carried off by the wind. My heart sank. I was overwhelmed by the thought that these single-use bowls and utensils seemed destined to end up spoiling our beautiful landscapes and polluting our planet.

In the same breath, my gaze quickly shifted and fixated upon a customer sprinkling granola on top of their acai bowl. Like a NASCAR driver on a speedway, my mind raced feverishly to connect the dots.

Eureka!

In that moment, it felt as though my soul did a pirouette because the doe-eyed-dreamer in me saw such a fun alternative to single-use bowls and utensils. Instead of sprinkling granola on top of acai, I thought to myself, "What if there were edible bowls and utensils made from the granola so we could enjoy a delicious and nutritious treat without waste?"

My heart went from sinking with sorrow to bursting with joy because of the possibility I saw in creating a real-life Willy Wonka factory and celebrating the health and well-being of our planet and people.

In a flash, I raced home to get to work in my "lab" a/k/a. the kitchen. I mixed and I cooked for hours. While cooking, I put everything that I knew about food into practice from my experience growing up in a French and Italian home where we cooked and experimented with food every day, to baking classes, to the countless cookbooks and health food journals I had read, to a molecular gastronomy course I took. Just like the mouse in the movie "Ratatouille," I followed my food instincts and put everything I knew to the test.

Eureka again!

Once more, my soul did another pirouette because I had done it! Within a week, I had created my first prototype – an edible granola bowl that could hold hot and cold liquids and didn't leak.

I soon called six of my closest friends to my kitchen to experience my edible granola bowl invention. I was eager to see how my friends interacted with the bowl and what they thought about the taste. Like orcas to a seal, they circled the bowl. Breathlessly, my friends devoured the edible granola bowl while letting out groans of delight. Upon finishing their last bite, they looked at me pie-eyed and said, "We want some more."

Based on their reaction, I had the intuition I was onto something. I was 24 at that point in my life and had formally studied communications and consumer analytics for nine years and owned a

successful digital marketing agency in San Diego. My educational and professional background, coupled with my intuition, allowed me to quickly identify trends and potential hotspots for market stickiness.

I was inspired by their responses, what I knew and my dream of creating a plastic-free world full of healthy and vibrant people. Similar to drinking coffee, it energized me to see this potential future where people were celebrating their health and our planet, laughing and having fun while eating and having an abundance of energy to pursue their passions and dreams because they were eating nutritious food that fueled them from the inside. With this vision in mind, I immediately went to work. I continued to produce prototypes, draft logos and began to approach all types of food businesses and production companies. I even packed up my entire life in California, left my closest friends and moved to Boulder because I knew Colorado was the mecca of the organic food and environmental industries. I figured that if I could make my dream happen anywhere, it would be in Boulder.

Without being deterred, I approached co-packer after co-packer, engineer after engineer – anyone and everyone who had done something significant in the organic food industry. Much to my surprise, their responses quickly became a predictable feedback loop:

“No machine exists to produce what you want.”

“I don’t know anyone who can build a machine like this. It has never been done before.”

“Too difficult.”

“Too expensive. You are looking at a million dollars minimum.”

“You’re crazy. This is just too difficult.”

“This will be too difficult to produce and ship.”

“Too much of a risk. Never been done before.”

“Impossible.”

Over and over, my heart sank. I felt completely overwhelmed. I felt the walls to achieving my dream go up and the doe-eyed dreamer in me

disappear. Stuck, stopped, stagnant, I felt as though I were a prisoner. In that moment, their words echoed back and became internal imprints as to what I thought was possible for the world and my potential as a human being. I began to tell myself, “They are right. This is impossible. I am not capable of creating my dream. I am not smart enough. This was a stupid idea.”

Even though I had practiced meditation and self-development work for years, these thoughts gripped me. My actions soon followed suit, and I put my dream of replacing single-use plastics with edible bowls, cups and utensils on hold. At the same time, I had another business I had been running for several years. In an effort to escape the disempowering internal dialogue in my head and the failure I felt, I dove in deep to my other business, even though my other business wasn’t my passion or dream.

The more I tried to escape and run away from the failure I had so deeply felt, the louder the voice of my true purpose became. Still, I kept running. I couldn’t face the inadequacy or internal prison I felt. After all, I had tried tirelessly since 2011 to bring my vision for the planet to fruition. Now, six years later in 2017, I still had no production progress or breakthroughs.

Broken hearted, confused and conflicted, I decided that it was time to give up. Following my decision to throw in the towel, the feelings of disharmony grew louder and my happiness faded. I was lying to myself and selling myself short. I knew I wasn’t living my purpose, but I was too scared and defeated to change.

On November 17, 2018, divine intervention stepped in. That was the day I was a pedestrian standing on a sidewalk and got hit by a car. It was in that moment I woke up to a new life. It was that moment which moved me to the core and taught me how life is such a precious gift. From that point forward, I felt my purpose more than ever. I knew I was put on this planet to be an innovator and catalyst for a thriving planet for generations to come. I knew I was meant to vivaciously seek, be fully unleashed and relentlessly pursue my talents and dreams so others would be inspired to awaken their true potential and live happy and fulfilled lives.



The time had come to dust off my dream and fully follow my bliss. After all, I had nothing to lose for life is short and a mere momentary gift.

Due to the injuries from the car accident, I was mostly bedridden for several months. Lying in bed became the perfect opportunity to dive deep into environmental and social research. In the research I discovered:

According to the peer-reviewed journal Science Advances and the first global analysis of all plastics ever made, “91 percent of plastics produced to date either end up in landfills or our natural environments, such as our oceans.” This pollutes our ecosystems, kills our wildlife and harms our own health.

To make matters worse, I discovered after reading an article in National Geographic that single-use plastics are not biodegradable and take more than 1,000 years to decompose. In the process of degradation, single-use plastics (including bowls, containers, cutlery and cups) release harmful chemicals, such as perfluoroalkoxy polymer, a chemical compound, also known as PFA, that further pollutes our food, air and water supply. Due to a plastic-polluted food and water supply, we individually consume a credit card worth of plastic per week.

Compelled by the research, I made a trackable commitment to inspire one billion people to go plastic-free. As soon as I could stand and walk again, I went to work in my kitchen. I mixed and cooked for hours and days. I developed 30 flavors of edible spoons, bowls, plates and cups, ranging from sweet to savory, salty to spicy. I tested my edible tableware inventions with such foods and beverages as hot coffees, cold liquids, soups, curries and more.

It was 2019, and after eight years of countless iterations and product testing on several hundred people, Bliss Foods, which offers edible tableware products, was finally market-ready. I knew that the Bliss Foods products were ready based on tasting scores in our product feedback tests. I knew Bliss Foods cups could hold hot coffee and cold liquids for more than 18 hours and didn't leak and were durable enough to withstand a variety of dining use cases and

shipping tests. I knew the coffee cups could be refilled and used more than eight times. We also had feedback from large companies and organizations approaching us to become customers and engage in partnership together.

The commitment to weaning the world off of plastics and a vision of inspiring one billion people to go plastic-free was big. It was much bigger than anything I had ever dreamed of and something much bigger than me as an individual. The successful actualization of this vision would require participation from people around the globe. I was excited, yet scared, by the magnitude of my vision. I was scared that I would fail or stop somewhere along the way and scared to put myself out there, take a risk, trust others in the process and be vulnerable.

Despite the overwhelming sense of fear – my heart racing and clammy palms – I was hooked by my purpose. Quitting was not and would not be an option. I was committed to seeing this vision through and dedicating my life force to the fulfillment of this possibility. So, I did the only thing I knew to do – I picked up the phone and called one of the most inspiring mentors I knew, Monique Sullivan, now a retired Wisdom course leader and formerly the chief marketing officer of a Fortune 500 company. I called her because I have seen her transform the lives of countless people across the globe and empower their dreams. With that, I knew she would be able to empower my global vision, as well.

I called Monique for guidance on how to take my vision and prototypes to a global scale. On the phone, Monique reminded me how important community and accountability would be in the implementation of my global vision. Specifically, she recommended that I sign up for a nine-month global leadership program called the Wisdom Unlimited course. This course is centered on creating your dream reality from a space of fun, play and ease. She also encouraged me to share my vision of what I see is possible for the world with others and even ask others to join me in the fulfillment of this vision.

As we hung up the phone, once again my heart raced and my palms became clammy. It felt as though I was teetering off the edge of a cliff

because I was deeply afraid of trying something new, facing the uncertainty and potential for failure. I was afraid of the potential criticism I might receive when I brought Bliss Foods to mass market. I was afraid of the embarrassment I might experience if I messed up in the eyes of the public or within my company.

I wanted to win and succeed on a global scale, yet thoughts of potential failure and obstacles consumed me in that moment. After all, it was eight years after I had created my first prototype and I hadn't yet found a solution to bring Bliss Foods to market on a global scale. After eight years of hard and continuous work, I wondered if I would ever be able to really make it work and fulfill upon my dream. I was sitting in my childhood bedroom at my parents' house as my heart sank into the pit of my stomach and I began to tremble. The fear gripped me tight, and, in that moment, I felt like a scared child crying out for someone to hold her and tell her everything would be OK.

As I picked my head up and looked at the four corners of my childhood bedroom, my heart steadied and my body relaxed. In that moment, I was ready to run, ready to run back into the arms of familiarity because I was seeking comfort rather than a desire to face my fears, take a risk and take action towards the fulfillment of my dream.

All at once, my gaze fixated upon the edges of my peripheral vision and I closed my eyes. As I looked inward, I told myself that all this fear and all my thoughts were like a painting I had created in my mind. With that, I began to see the edges dripping like wet paint. They dripped and they dripped until the painting completely washed away. All I could see was an empty canvas staring back at me. Once again, my heart sank into the pit of my stomach and I began to tremble. The words echoed, "Quitting is not, and would not, be an option."

In that moment, I surrendered and metaphorically pushed my feet into the hard ground with all my might. All I could feel was the heat of electricity and the pumping of blood surging through my veins. For the first time in a long time, I felt wholeheartedly alive. For the first time in a long time, I felt free!

Though I couldn't see anything but the blank

canvas staring back at me in my mind, I felt a deep sense of stillness and joy. Every inch of my body and mind beamed with wonder and gratitude for I was chasing my passion and knew profoundly that I was fulfilling my destiny. For this was the reason I was gifted life in the first place – to be a visionary for a new world and be a catalyst for a thriving planet for generations to come.

Without hesitation, I heeded Monique's advice and registered for the Wisdom course. I began to share my vision with other potential "playmates." As I shared my vision with others, a part of me still clung to my past conversations and experiences. As I shared, I could feel myself bracing for the "no's" and the "This is impossible." "Too difficult." "You're crazy."

Much to my surprise, all I heard was "This is an incredible invention." "Our world needs this more now than ever." "This is genius." "People are going to love this." "I want to help." "How can I get involved?" "This is going to be huge." "This is going to change our world for the better." "I want to quit my job and support Bliss Foods." "Let's figure out a way to build this machine."

I was in complete shock and awe. After eight long years, the world was finally shifting and the road of my destiny was wide open. It felt as though space-time reality was bending in my favor and a new future was born. The best thing in all of this was the intoxicating inspiration as others stood up to play. It was as though the road of their destiny was finally wide open, too.

Inspired by the mission of Bliss Foods, my boyfriend swiftly rearranged his entire life and career to join the team and contribute to bringing Bliss Foods to market. My father became an active advisor, and my mother, my biggest cheerleader. Her evangelical words seemed to create a new world for me to step into, a world where I was unstoppable and unyielding in my dreams for what was possible. Every time I was met with a production or sales obstacle or had internal doubt, my mother graciously lifted me up and dusted off my wings for flight.

Throughout the nine months I was involved, participants in the global leadership course Monique recommended inspired me with a

fearless confidence in pursuit of my vision. They challenged my thinking with provocative questions and generously connected me to others who could support the manifestation of my vision from advisors to investors, entrepreneurs and engineers.

I was in an elevated state of bliss from all the excitement and progress, when doubt came suddenly knocking. After eight long and trying years, this momentum felt too easy and too good to be true. The skeptic in me needed more of a challenge to test the freshly painted walls of my newfound reality. So, I set out in search of the “big dogs” and critics, the people who I had no personal relationship with – city council members, presidents of universities, restaurant and food vendor owners and other potential customers.

Yet again, I clung to my initial conversations and experiences and braced myself for the “no’s.”

However, in every conference room I visited, I was simultaneously frozen in shock, yet bursting with joy, when I heard the “big dogs” responses. Warm tears filled my eyes as I heard statements such as:

“This is ingenious” from an owner of a successful coffee chain across southern California.

“We want to support you in bringing this to every college campus in the nation,” from the president of a prestigious university.

“We need this because we are committed to being the most sustainable campus in the nation and are committed to supporting creative social entrepreneurs,” said a vice president of auxiliary services.

“We need to be your first customer. Bliss Foods is completely aligned with our ordinance policies. Bliss Foods is the future,” said one city council member.

“This is going to be huge,” said one restaurant chain owner. “Our customers are going to love Bliss Foods and have so much fun eating your products. I’m actually so inspired that I want to stop managing my restaurant and help you get Bliss Foods off the ground,” he continued.

No words could describe the way I felt. This was a visceral experience that confirmed something

so much bigger than me at play. The possibility of Bliss Foods was no longer about me and my destiny; it was about a new destiny for our people and planet.

I continued to meet with more brand-name organizations, city council members and potential customers. Each and every time I conducted a tasting, I was amazed over the intoxicating effect Bliss Foods seemed to have. As people tasted the Bliss Foods products, it was as though time stopped and their stress melted away. It was such an interesting phenomenon – no matter the person’s social status or age – they beamed with magic and wonder and giggled as they ate. Time after time, I watched adults become kids again as they playfully fought over spoon flavors and excitedly spewed out ideas for various Bliss Foods applications.

One woman’s response stuck with me. Laughing, she tapped the arm of the president of an esteemed university and said, “Can I clean up your plate? Oh wait, I don’t have to because you ate it!”

The entire room erupted in laughter. Inspired by Bliss Foods and his team’s joy, that same president committed to support me in launching Bliss Foods.

That night I felt as though I was floating above the city as I stood by a large glass window overlooking downtown. Then it happened again. My heart sank as I realized that I didn’t have the proper machine to produce Bliss Foods at scale.

I felt like a damsel, doe-eyed dreamer as my eyes widened and steadied upon the golden dome of the library. As I watched a plane soar overhead, an insight awoke every cell of my being. If we have the ability to create these breathless buildings and fly country to country amongst the clouds in a plane – without doubt we have the ability to create the proper machines for Bliss Foods. In that moment, I felt as though I was floating above the city again, weightless from the insight that we, as adults, have the most fun. For we, as adults, create and build the entire world around us – from soaring airplanes to breathtaking cityscapes. We, as adults, shape the DNA of our world and write the stories of our history. Just like movie scripts, we, as adults, create the stories of our societies – past, present and future.

My eyes widened with wonder and every cell of my body danced because I knew that the resources and talent to build the Bliss Foods machines were just waiting out there for me to discover. The time was now to set sail.

This notion moved me to the core. It didn't matter how long it would take; it didn't matter how many no's I heard. I was committed to finding a machine solution and would ask everyone under the sun for support – from colleagues of colleagues, to friends of friends, random strangers, organizations and everyone in between.

I burned the boat of retreat on the other side and set sail with conviction. Conversation after conversation. No after no. Even though I reached out to everyone I could think of, asked for connections and spoke with people all over the globe, I didn't stop. This time the no's only fueled me for I knew their no meant I was one step closer to finding the yes I so desperately desired.

After eight years of persistence, I had finally found my yes. I found a team of engineers who had the experience and desire to build the Bliss Foods production machines.

Today, there are no words to describe the triumph and reward I feel after eight long and trying years. I am excited, yet humbled, as we gear up to bring Bliss Foods to the nation. Yet, I'm aware that there will be challenges that I don't always have the immediate answer to and global transformation required to solve our most pressing environmental and social dilemmas.

What I can do is carry the lessons I have learned like precious treasures as I sail along the great unknown.

Some of these treasures are:

1. Anything can be solved through dialogue.
2. Just by being connected to one person, we are connected to every person across the globe, because that one person is connected to someone who is connected to someone, and so forth. Influence and the manifestation of your dreams for the world starts with that one person.
3. Just by being connected to one person, we

are connected to every person and have access to all the resources across the globe.

4. Every no takes you one step closer to your yes.
5. Every no is a learning opportunity. Stay curious and inquire.
6. Bringing a global vision to fruition requires the alignment and participation of others.
7. Accountability is one of the most powerful antidotes to giving up.
8. Adults have the ultimate fun because they create and build the entire world around us from the cities, to food, what we value, societal systems and everything in between.
9. Our words are the most powerful tool to create new outcomes, experiences and futures. Speak aloud what kind of world you want to see and experience.
10. Don't focus on what is lacking or missing. Focus on the systems and people you need to move from point A to point B.
11. Gratitude really is the best attitude.
12. Follow your bliss and play full-out because life is short and a momentary gift.

### **SUMMARY – ALL YOU NEED IS BLISS**

Once upon a time in a land not so far away, there was a magical kingdom that sailed along the great unknown. In this kingdom, fanciful fairies, mermaids, elves, wizards, mighty gnomes and magical unicorns peacefully coexisted. It was a sacred place where everyone was free to just be.

You see, time did not exist here so the creatures of the kingdom could endlessly wander, connect, create and dream.

Until one day, while cruising, the kingdom crashed into a colossal clock that cast a spell over the land. Time began to tick and the creatures were no longer free to just be. Since they were no longer free to wander, connect, create and dream, the kingdom became disenchanting and the creatures lost their magic.

Time began to spin faster and faster until it became a spiral that swallowed the kingdom whole. While circling the spiral, the kingdom met a creature named Moment, who used her wizardry to lift the spell of time. The kingdom danced into an elevated state of bliss as the creatures celebrated. But, before Moment flew off, she shared her most secret antidote that could cast away any spell ...

She said, "Creatures of the great unknown, anytime you find yourself stuck in a spell, use these Bliss Foods to set you free. In them, I have sprinkled a dash of 'here and now' and a dollop of imagination. This powerful antidote will awaken your magic and take you to any place you ever want to go.

Remember creatures, keep your hearts light and your spirits high because you are forevermore the author of your own adventure."

#### DEBRIEF

This story is a reminder that, as children, we are infinite. But, as we become aware of the rules of society, other limiting beliefs, words and the concept of time, most of us lose our sense of wonderment and magic. Our imagination narrows and potential fades. No longer free to write our own adventure, we become spellbound by our stories and most of us give up on our dreams.

It is my hope that Bliss Foods offers more than tasty treats. It is my hope that Bliss Foods serves as a real-time reminder to slow down and savor the moment. In the moment, possibilities are infinite and we are free to pursue our dreams.

Bliss Foods represents a project I created as a way to author my own adventure and put the vision I see for the world into action. The vision I see for the world: a thriving planet for generations to come. A planet where our people are vibrant, wondrous, healthy and happy. A planet where our natural resources are abundant and our food and water supply are vital and pure.



# THE UPWARD SPIRAL OF LOVE

BRIAN MCFADIN

## *Note from the conference manager:*

Last year Brian wrote a paper for this journal with the somewhat intimidating title, “The Emergence and Development of Consciousness and the Integral Arts of Human Thriving.” I did not think it would be exactly enjoyable. When I got around to reading it, I was pleasantly surprised. Once I got through the initial paragraphs, I realized that the subject matter was very important to those of us with a commitment for the world. So, in an effort to get it out to more readers who may have opted not to read it last year, I asked Brian to do a rewrite for this year’s journal and to make it easier to read. This is the result of that effort.

— Julia Simms

## *Abstract*

*All of our seemingly insoluble global problems are problems of consciousness, and the unfolding of stages of consciousness, in each of us individually and collectively. Revolutionary insights emerging for the first time in history from a variety of theorists offer us the opportunity to bring forth new arts, informed by these insights, for human communication, sharing, cooperation and collaboration that will allow human beings to thrive.*

*Our continued success as a species may well be determined by our understanding that virtually all global problems are created by human minds performing at predictable levels of consciousness. The intention of this paper is to expand the appreciation of integral theory and its critical role in the present moment for human well-being.*

*Our inability or unwillingness to grasp this may spell disaster for us.*

*I suggest a place to start the next phase of inquiry in the increasingly dramatic human story is the study and application of integral maps of human consciousness. I invite you to read, study and engage in discourse to further the understanding, exploration and impact of integral theory in your life and in the projects and possibilities to which you’re committed.*

## INTRODUCTION

*A spirituality is a mode of being in which not only the divine and the human commune with each other, but we discover ourselves in the universe and the universe discovers itself in us.*  
— Thomas Berry

*The mystic is the one who feels that everything that happens is in some way harmonious, is in some way right, is in some way an integral part of the universe.*  
–Alan Watts

I like to visualize the progress of evolution through time as an upward spiral. As we grow as conscious beings, our lives increase in scope, becoming deeper, higher and wider, and it's all in motion as our understanding and ability grow. For this reason, and in light of the emphasis on love found in the ancient wisdom traditions, as well as in parents and children, I like to call the evolutionary impulse of consciousness the upward spiral of love.

We all have things we want for our lives, for others and for the world. As we encounter ever more complex emerging realities in the world on a daily basis, we have the opportunity to engage creatively with the challenges they present. As evolution flowers and human consciousness becomes richer and deeper, the new situations that emerge often outstrip our ability to meet life with equanimity and grace.

Inevitably, difficulties, discord and misunderstandings arise. It seems to me that rather than being unacceptable, such challenges can actually become the pathways for our individual and collective growth and are likely to hold the keys to our spiritual awakening – and now possibly even to our very continuing existence.

Recently, revolutionary new insights integrating the evolutionary sciences, psychology, biology and the study of systems, when married to the ancient wisdom traditions (the “perennial philosophy” as Aldous Huxley called it) began emerging to show us how we might improve our whole approach to relating, and, thus, to having virtually everything we truly want. For me, this is promising and exciting.

It is now essential for our success as a species to explore integrally, to explore as a whole the broad integral frameworks developed by theorists, such as Aurobindo Ghose, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, Carl Jung, Jurgen Habermas, Ken Wilber and many others over the past 100 years, and specifically to

understand the matter of development in humans through stages. This may sound dry, but stay tuned and I'll show it is actually quite juicy.

## EMERGING LEVELS OF CONSCIOUSNESS

The most important area of knowledge to emerge from science in the past century is the evolution of consciousness. We now know that consciousness evolved in stages in humanity at large throughout history and pre-history. It then recapitulates, or repeats, that evolution in precisely the same stage order as it unfolds in the development of individuals in their lifetime. In biology, this is called ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny, in which the development of the individual recaps the evolutionary development of the species, as we see in the biological development of a fetus: it goes through all the earlier stages of life on earth.

This is an unparalleled breakthrough in our understanding of what it is to be human. When we see clearly how the evolution of consciousness works, we are empowered to see the long, broad view and take the high road. Historically, the insight that there are levels of individual and social development is a new one. Life on earth is almost four billion years old. Human beings, depending on how you frame it, are anywhere from 100,000-to-2.5 million years old. History, depending on how you frame it, is 5,000-to-45,000 years old.

Only in the past 125 years or so has the knowledge of stages of development of human beings emerged through the study of psychology. No one had ever seen the stages of human development before that. No one, ever. No one had thought about, or studied, it. No one had taken it into account when thinking about education, justice, communications, ethics, parenting, civic planning, policy, international relations or anything else. No one had written about it. No religion or government incorporated its insights.

Our first glimpse into the phenomenon of stage development came in the wake of Darwin's radical scientific insights in the second half of the 19th century. Only in the past 100 years have we begun to see the phenomenon with any clarity, most prominently with the pioneering work of the psychologist Clare Graves and his protégé, Don

Beck, in the 1950s-1970s, who made a simple and easily graspable model of human development, and with Ken Wilber, starting in the 1970s and continuing today, who made a thorough and evolving integral map.

Scores of theorists, including virtually all who specialize in psychology and human development, agree that all people go through predictable stages of development. These stages have values (aesthetics, what matters and who's in or out), ethics and morality (rules and right/wrong) and ways of being (relationships, practices and modes of integrity). This has been studied in societies around in the world, from remote South Asian islanders to Europeans to Africans to arctic Inuit to Brazilian nearly stone-age indigenous tribes. No exceptions to stage development have been observed, meaning no one skips stages as they grow.

### WHOLE AND PART

Consciousness has two aspects. The first is absolute truth – emptiness or sacred ground, referred to as *Nada Brahma* by the ancient Hindus, *Holy Spirit* by Christians, *Logos* by the ancient Greeks, *Great Spirit* by indigenous people of the Americas and *Tao* by the ancient Chinese, and it is encountered by looking inward. The second is relative truth – all manifestation and knowledge of nature – referred to as *Jnana* by the ancient Hindus, *Episteme* by the ancient Greeks and *Li* (patterns of nature) by the ancient Chinese, and it is encountered by looking outward.

Absolute truth is empty and meaningless. Relative truth is rich and meaningful. Our problems arise in relative truth, where we find meaning, purpose, effectiveness – and problems. And “empty and meaningless,” while it is the primordial truth underlying everything, won't necessarily help us to solve them. For that, only skill with relative truth will help us. For this, we very much need better maps, integral (whole) maps. Science, religion, psychology and spirituality each can offer us types of partial maps. Only when taken together do they approach being whole or integral.

Knowledge of the nature of consciousness (or reality) is most complete when both aspects of truth are combined, the absolute and the relative, the inward and the outward, what have

been traditionally called religion and science. Today, many people speak of “spiritual” instead of “religious.” So, the inward looking path is the path of spiritual growth.

Our understanding of the upward spiral of evolution, with its expansion of consciousness and caring, is now central to understanding human affairs globally. In short, it is the major force shaping our future and destiny. The absence of this understanding leaves us fractured, ineffective and without collective integrity.

Seen in this context it becomes clear that none of our problems are actually precisely what we think they are. Our global problems seem to us to be caused by something outside of us – science and technology, politics and other events pressing in on us. But, the truth is that all of our seemingly insoluble problems are strictly problems of consciousness as they relate to relative truth – to the world. They are problems created by our own concealed nature. As a practical matter, they are problems of people and communication, cooperation and sharing. They are spiritual problems, to use the traditional term for it. *We encounter the problems outside, but their origin is within our own consciousness.*

Without the conscious synthesis of this knowledge, we are stuck with inaccurate and unhelpful maps of reality. We end up working on the wrong things, which generally (though not always) yields poor results. Incorporating previously hidden knowledge of our own consciousness into our understanding and our maps of reality open new ways for us to see how we might better approach our problems, a number of which are now urgent.

Given that all of the stages of human development are necessary for any of us to exist at all, we now have, for the first time in history, a rationally verifiable way to value the diversity of all levels of human consciousness as it manifests in individual human beings and society. We now have a powerful framework for including everyone, creating new possibilities and solving critical problems together.

### THE DAWNING OF INTEGRAL AWARENESS

Over the past century or so, theorists in biology,



psychology and sociology have shown that there are stages through which an individual develops throughout their life, as modeled by theorists, such as James Mark Baldwin, Lawrence Kohlberg, Erik Erikson, Carol Gilligan, Abraham Maslow, Jean Piaget, Jane Loevinger, Clare Graves, Susanne Cook-Greuter and Robert Kegan. Without weaving our best knowledge about stages of human development into our planning, our large-scale and global projects will be unsatisfying and ineffective.

We now encounter a new situation as a species: a shared world where no one and nothing can be entirely separated out from the rest. The emerging understanding of human development through stages of consciousness, if studied and understood, can help us to develop new and workable strategies for working together in unprecedented ways to fulfill on our shared desires with a minimum of violence and destruction. The alternative won't be desirable.

### **THE ART OF INTEGRAL COLLABORATION**

Many people have the clear intuition that something important – essential even – is missing from life today. But what? We have succeeded in creating awesome technologies for resource extraction, food production, energy, health, robotics, transportation, housing, manufacturing and information. Why is all of this so unsatisfying for us?

The bottleneck now, as well as the solution, is us. The bottleneck is our own awareness. It's our human consciousness and the presence, or absence, of its highest product – wisdom.

Our job now, if we choose to accept it, is to align ourselves with what human beings (as a whole) want, leaving no one out in our approach, without first accidentally putting an end to the narrow and fragile conditions for benevolent, organized human society. To accomplish this, we must invent and bring into being new arts for human communication, sharing, collaboration and co-creation.

What would it take to create a world in which we are building trust between people at varying levels of development instead of trying to figure out

who's right? Everyone is right about something. Let's start there. In the reality in which we live, these differing levels of consciousness definitely do exist, what "right" means is different while also being broadly predictable at each level of consciousness.

If we are to succeed, we must grapple with this as we try to solve our biggest problems and fulfill our biggest dreams. As we grapple, new possibilities will reveal themselves to us, but only if we stay with it. We must work from basic but hard-to-implement values, such as "no one left out." The lower down we go on the map of stages, the less willing people are to include others who are not like them. We must include them and this aspect of them. Tricky. Not obvious or intuitive.

In creating new arts of human thriving, we can discover, shepherd and build the next phase of human history. We must name and then create the next chapter in human history, if we want to have a say in it. This will require us to choose to:

- A. Summon the willingness to put at risk everything we've got now for the possibility of a future of human flourishing (a significant risk) or
- B. Resign ourselves to staying the course on a downward spiral of erosion and loss of what is most dear to us (an even greater risk).

Above all, it will require that we take responsibility. What might responsibility look like at the leading edge of history?

### **BECOMING RESPONSIBLE FOR HUMAN DEVELOPMENT**

For one overview of human development (Figure 1) consider a model of development based on the work of Ken Wilber. I am drawing on various maps I have encountered over the years to form this simplified introductory map (Yes, it is somewhat simpler than many more comprehensive maps.). The color scheme is given as a shortcut for referring to the stages, following the colors of the rainbow. Also included is the estimated time of the first significant emergence of that stage in the world. Read from the bottom up.

Each stage originally arrived as a new wave of consciousness in progressive eras of human

## **A MODEL OF HUMAN DEVELOPMENT**

[Based on the work of many pioneering theorists, especially Clare Graves and Ken Wilber]

### **ALTITUDES OF DEVELOPMENT: SECOND-TIER STAGES**

8. Integral (Turquoise – emerging now). Sees the world as alive and evolving. Holistic and kosmocentric. Lives from both individual Self and transpersonal Self.

7. Integral (Teal – emerging 50 years ago). Sees natural hierarchy and systems of systems. Holds multiple perspectives. Flexible, creative and effective.

### **ALTITUDES OF DEVELOPMENT: FIRST-TIER STAGES**

6. Postmodern (Green – emerging 150 years ago). Values pluralism and equality. Relativistic and sensitive. Civil rights and environmentalism. World centric.

5. Modern (Orange – emerging 350 years ago). Values rationality and science. Individualism and democracy. Capitalism and materialism. Risk-taking and self-reliance.

4. Traditional (Amber – emerging 5,000 years ago). Ethnocentric, national-centric. Values rules, roles and discipline. Faith in a transcendent god or order.

3. Warrior/Mythic Spirits (Red – emerging 15,000 years ago). Egocentric, vigilant and ruthless. Courageous, determined and powerful.

2. Tribal/Magical (Magenta – emerging 50-70,000 years ago). Sees enchanted world. Values rituals and deep community. Individuals subordinate to group.

1. Archaic (Infrared – emerging 250,000 years ago). Dawning self-awareness. Survives on instinct, intuition and group bonds.

history, first in a small number of people, then spreading to become prevalent structures of meaning, influence and cultural practice. Each new stage has come more quickly than the one before with the recent appearance of newer stages speeding up exponentially as the sharing of learning and knowledge has spread.

In this model, the first six stages are what Graves calls Subsistence stages, marked by “first-tier thinking.” Then, there is a radical shift in consciousness as the second tier, which is commonly referred to as Integral, emerges. Second tier is the first “being” level, according to Graves. We could say the first tier is essentially about survival and the second tier is essentially about being. The model begins at the bottom with Archaic and proceeds upward to Integral.

First-tier stages all contain a belief that its level has unique access to the truth and all other truths are wrong. “People who are not like me are wrong and therefore less valid, less important than me and my correct beliefs and ways.” This may or may not be said, but it is believed. An important hallmark of the first six stages, the first tier, which comprises 97-98% of the world’s population, is that even when we think we’re not like this, we actually are. The first three stages are egocentric, the 4th is ethnocentric, the 5th and 6th are worldcentric and the 7th and 8th are kosmocentric.

The second tier is characterized by an important new feature of human consciousness, which represents a radical departure from all previous levels. People at the second tier (levels 7 and 8 on our map of development), for the first time at any stage of human development, can clearly see that all people at all stages of development, including all the parts of them that “don’t work” and we don’t like, are valuable and necessary under all circumstances. This is not intuitively obvious to say the least.

### **MOST PEOPLE ON EARTH**

According to this model, most people, about 67 percent of the population, fit solidly into the first four developmental stages, levels of consciousness which, along with many wonderful qualities, have strong tendencies to be egocentric, tribal-centric,

Figure 1.

racist, aggressive, magical/mythical thinking and nonrational. We need to meditate deeply on this reality and develop new ways of relating to all-of-us, if we are to succeed in creating anything like a beautiful future together here on earth.

Each stage casts a different light on what it is to succeed as a human being and what it means to be a person of integrity. The demands for integrity that people actually respond to in their own lives are the demands of their stage of development and not the demands that we put on them from our stage and viewpoint. If we don't understand their stage, we won't be effective relating with them under stress.

When people perceive that we are making them wrong in the absence of enough friendship and trust, we become either irrelevant or an obstacle to their progress, thus complicating and slowing their development and ours. In this interconnected world, we pay a steep price for that. All of our relationships, including our global citizenship, are grounded in trust and virtually nothing else. They are best when informed by spiritual connection, granting being, generosity, invitation and leadership, all bathed in sharing and inspiration.

In terms of who we see as our friends, as well as our greatest global challenges, most of the mischief lies in whatever we avoid, deny, ignore or make wrong. Most of what we make wrong is people who are at stages we ourselves either went through already or will go through if we keep growing; stages of growth that are not only necessary, but inevitable. We must begin to appreciate this if we are to meet our challenges with clarity and power.

### **VARIETY CREATES SOCIAL STRENGTH AND SUCCESS**

Diversity is one of the things most promoted by nature. It is a value of the highest order that proliferates along with evolution. If everyone were the same, the community would be considerably weaker. Together, all the stages of human development, even though some are significantly less capable in important ways, are necessary and as a whole make us more effective and adaptive. This is one of the things that has allowed human

beings to thrive.

We now know that the human family is made up of developmentally diverse people, cultures and societies, all of which must be doing well for any of us to enjoy true well-being. We're at differing stations, but the stages themselves are the same for all of us. In terms of satisfaction, we are truly all in it together. Totally. Wellness means wholeness means integral.

### **HUMAN-CREATED PROBLEMS**

Today, the population of the world is 7.8 billion. When I was born, it was 2.9 billion. This is an unpredictable moment not only in human history, but in the life of the earth. What's happening today has no precedent. It took millions and millions of years for the oceans to form. Now, we're transforming the surface of Earth in no time flat.

We're living out an experiment with biological ramifications for all life on Earth. We are no longer evolving slowly over long periods of time, but extemporaneously and explosively. Our success or failure is dependent on the quality of our relationships and nothing else. This understanding must now be the centerpiece of our collective social, spiritual and political quest.

Humanity faces some wicked problems, and our problems historically give birth to our arts. A very short list of our biggest problems at this moment includes our vulnerability to devastating nuclear war, the rapid, unwise deployment of technology, in general, and artificial intelligence, in particular, and catastrophic climate change. What do all of these problems have in common? They are problems created by human minds. None of them are problems for which there is no solution; they are strictly problems of human choices. They are problems of human consciousness.

Yet, our collective understanding of developmental stages and how they can shape our actions and creativity in response to these existential threats is almost nil. Therefore, we are currently saddled with bad ideas and broken individuals, relationships and societies instead of the fulfillment of the human spirit. It is not yet too late, for sure. But, we aren't yet informed and effective with each other, certainly not globally. Even if you are a genius, if

you don't understand this, your worldview will not work to get you what you really want, and it won't solve our unprecedented problems.

### **BAD MAPS, GOOD MAPS**

Our ability to solve our shared problems is a function of how we understand the underlying issues. Our ineffectiveness is based on our ignorance of the structures of consciousness from which our problems have arisen. How humans think about complex things is with metaphors and maps. We don't do it any other way. There are good maps and bad maps. Bad maps don't get you to the treasure. Good maps are integral. They take as much as possible into account.

Our continued success as a species will be determined by our understanding that virtually all problems are created by human minds performing at predictable stages of development. Their solutions will be the creations of minds, not something we "find."

Virtually every major global problem being worked on today is hampered or stalled by a lack of good maps of the stages of development and the resulting understanding that will support us in implementing enlightened solutions – solutions that won't make things worse. Solutions that include all people at all stages. Good intentions alone will not work. Love alone will not work. We need new skill sets. New arts. New understanding of ourselves, our inner selves, and of each other.

### **FALSE POLARITIES**

We unconsciously frame issues we face globally in false polarities, which disallows direct and effective action. We speak of the environment vs. economic progress, war vs. peace, men vs. women, technological progress vs. tradition, lazy vs. industrious, good vs. evil and rich vs. poor. These are all largely false dichotomies.

For example, feminism is an important topic, which is interwoven with the possibility for long-term human success. But, feminism is currently bogged down in a false dichotomy between men and women. While that notion has some validity, it is secondary. The real issue is stages of development. People (men and women) at lower stages of consciousness are the problem,

not men or women. (That's the first part). The second part is that the people at higher stages, who can see the problem with the lower stages creating oppression and suffering for women, have no penetrating understanding of human developmental stages and are, therefore, ineffective at dealing with the people who could actually solve the problem.

The climate is changing. Suffice it to say that our species is collectively failing to respond to what can be seen by the highest levels of human awareness – and failing to do what clearly needs to be done. Again, we are in thrall to a false dichotomy.

One version of this is between "the greedy corporations and evil governments" vs. some version of "the innocent masses." This polarity may sound likely, but, in reality, is almost completely wrong. Another version – "environmentalists" vs. "regular people trying to feed their families" – is an equally false polarity. The real issue is consciousness, behavior, action and being coming from people at predictable stages of human development.

The problem is not corporations, governments, environmentalists or regular people. Rather, the problem is corporations and governments run by people at lower levels of human consciousness, and environmentalists and regular people who are ineffective at communicating and cooperating to create their desired outcomes in relationship with those people. This includes all of us. If you think you are exempt, check your desired global outcomes against reality and weep.

When we see into the nature of human development, then understanding, effective communication and collaborative creativity become less a matter of being "good" or "kind" and more a matter of working consistent with what is plain to see, what is observably happening. Resistance drops.

When we see clearly, we naturally give up impossible shortcuts and get to work right where we're at, with others right where they're at. Appreciating, sharing and enabling consciousness is our new imperative. As we become integrally informed, our dreams will spring more from our joyous dance with nature (reality) and less from our resistance to it.

## OUR SUPERPOWER: PERSPECTIVE-TAKING

At second tier stages (Integral), people deepen their ability to consciously take the perspective of other people and cultures in profound new ways. We can better understand the workings of the variety of cultures on Earth and embody greater flexibility of interpretation while exploring more workable ways of relating to all groups and individuals.

Taking the perspective of another is one of the most advanced things our minds can do. When we engage from another's view, it is generally very positive for all concerned. I can see more of the truth as I add the perspectives of others to my own. Others are seen and heard and experience belonging, which will definitely be present in any truly workable human world of tomorrow.

Taking another's perspective is often hard and fraught with subtleties, delusions, illusions, quirks and wrong turns. This is understandable since it calls on us to think from viewpoints that aren't familiar to us, and, as such, may not be "true" for us. It calls on us to imagine how others see and experience things, how it is for them.

Each higher step of evolution brings with it increased empathy and the ability to identify and feel others' perspectives. This is related to an observed increase in moral inclusion of more "others" – a key feature in the upward spiral of love.

However, our view of their view is inherently imperfect, and, even with good intentions, our conclusions usually leave a lot to be desired. If we wish to increase cooperation, we need to become aware of our inability to fully see things from other people's viewpoints.

No matter how hard I try, I'll never be able to know fully what it's like for a girl to have a mother, grow into a woman, have girlfriends, fall in love as a woman, navigate procreation, work as a woman or to dream as a woman. I'll never really know what it is to be a native Indonesian, a monarch of a small European country, someone born without hands, my sister, the object of my desire, a shy person, someone born last year, a rock climber, a survivor of severe trauma or my next-door neighbor.

## A RISKY INQUIRY

Looking into the levels of consciousness is a risk for us for four reasons that, until now, have kept us from exploring them further in public discourse.

- First, because we haven't known about, or understood, the stages of development well enough to get started. Since they are new to us, we aren't used to thinking, or talking, about them. And let's face it, it's a challenging subject, complex and multi-dimensional.
- Second, because it can seem like a dry subject – even though it's actually the greatest story ever told – and we'd rather talk about something cool than something potentially nerdy or boring, or people might not understand right away. Our social scanner is tuned to "immediate acceptance."
- Third, because some of the initial conclusions people often reach in the early stages of this exploration are, at best, partial and oversimplified, or, at worst, egocentric, ethnocentric, nation-centric, domineering, fundamentalist, racist, sexist, etc.
- Fourth, because this map, as we encounter its depth (this is just an introduction, I recommend reading further if this subject of integral theory interests you) actually explains a lot and, therefore, risks giving us the illusion that our understanding is greater than it is.

Forwarding this conversation for human self-knowledge will involve risk and we must do it anyway. Darwin didn't want to publish his findings either, because he knew it was a risky thing to do.

## DISCOURSE AND SOCIAL COMMUNICATION

All the ills in this world have too few enlightened (and aspiring) people arguing productively about them. Arguing is where you can best practice listening. If no one is arguing, it's pretty easy to listen. The arguments are coming. We can either plan for it or we will have them in more stressful situations after we have put it off for as long as possible, and that won't go well, I assure you.

All leaders engage in life-altering arguing.

Leadership depends, among other things, on being ready when the time is right. If you can't argue well, you won't be ready. We will have to learn to listen, share and forgive ourselves and others as we proceed. Only in this way can we fully form and hear our own ideas and learn from others and eventually let go of outdated ideas.

Many of us are allergic to argument and debate and it's keeping us all stuck. It's not polite. It's unenlightened. It's selfish; an ego trip. There are many more negative notions about one of our highest capacities as human beings. The trick is doing it well. We don't like debate because we will have to learn and grow in the process and that's always somewhat upsetting to us.

Can you argue while remaining open, related and flexible, or do you immediately collapse into either being right only or giving up? Argument can come from force and manipulation on its low end and from self-expression and power on its high end. Most people are stuck at ages 3, 5 or 7 in how they argue. What the world needs now is healthy adult argument. Are you willing to make mistakes and keep learning and growing as you improve at listening, argument and debate?

Some say that how you do one thing is how you do everything. What does this say about how you argue? Can you love and be committed to contributing and argue? If you don't argue honestly and out in the open, your arguments will get twisted and moldy in the darkness where you keep them.

You can only develop this valuable skill set by first doing it poorly and persisting while opening your heart. If you stay with it, which you'll only do when you truly care, your heart will open. Giving up arguing is self-denial and people only do it to fit in.

#### **EARLIER STAGES ARE MORE ESSENTIAL, RECENT STAGES ARE MORE WANTED AND NEEDED**

The earlier stages are necessary for us to exist at all. These "lower" structures of consciousness are what our own lives are actually made out of, and, if they went away, we would perish at the very same time, in the same way that if we did away

with atoms, all molecules would disappear at the same moment.

As we have seen, while each stage gives us new powers and freedoms, it also gives us new problems and responsibilities. If we wish to pass the human project on to coming generations as the sacred net of jewels we inherited, an embodiment of well-being, then we must give ourselves responsibility for all that has come before us, nurturing and caring for all stages in the present and in our planning for the future.

We can now see that while caring for ourselves is always the first order of business, trusting and caring for everyone else is of the highest importance for our long-term well-being. The truth is that we don't always know how to care for everyone. Even yearning for it, however, makes a huge difference. Have faith in that. Action is most important, but sometimes we can only yearn for what we want on the way to action.

Each stage has its gifts as well as its shadows. Each stage has its possibilities for joy and well-being and for sickness, dysfunction and suffering. You can get sick at any stage and the pathologies grow more complex in the higher stages.

Since we are usually stuck with our viewpoints while reality has no viewpoint, we inevitably make everything wrong in one way or another, and until we see our way to including the "wrong," we will be somewhat sick. We must make friends with what's wrong and tell the truth about it, as there is no shortcut by inauthentically pretending nothing is wrong. That's the height of hypocrisy and counterproductive to our own growth.

I have learned that I must let the spirit of inquiry dislodge me from my stuck survival grooves, get swept away by my love for people and for this precious and unlikely life to face what I most want, but least want to confront. This is a dance of order and chaos; the basic ingredients in creativity. Trusting our creative impulses can feel very vulnerable, and it is.

### **Inner Morning**

By Brian McFadin

If we wish to awaken,  
we must call forth new being,  
born into the sacred marriage  
of emptiness and truth

To celebrate we must now  
fashion new integral arts  
as the most essential activity  
of being human

We will create in the sunshine  
of our daily lives  
and in the solitude of meditation  
upon the mind of god

In our quest to embody  
this kind of creativity,  
we must bow down together  
in awe at the feet of reality

Only in this way will we be able to fulfill  
on the flourishing future that is calling us

Answering this call is the first step  
to opening our own inner spiral of love

And it is this inner spiral of  
becoming we must open  
if we are to be here fully  
and leave here satisfied

In terms of human progress, we are always at the beginning of infinity. This may be the source of faith: Infinity is always right in front of us and right now. We must live forward and understand our life only looking backwards in time. For as long as we're alive, we can practice traveling the upward spiral of love. Our deepest pleasure along the way is in embracing all of it – totality, completeness and integrity – here at the edge of infinity.

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### **INTEGRAL ARTS**

The very nature of consciousness is that it gives us the agency, the power, to awaken in order to fulfill its possibilities. Without awakening and wielding our own consciousness, it cannot fulfill its being.

Our main adversary will be our own resistance to failure. But, as always, failure will be the way of learning and the pathway to eventual success. We will not initially be able to respond perfectly or successfully. Our failures will be the unmistakable mark of real efforts being made. Finding ourselves unwilling to be responsible is a good thing – it is one of the first and most important awakenings on any worthwhile journey.

# FIVE THINGS THAT MADE ME HAPPY TODAY: A DIARY OF GRIEF AND MAKING A DIFFERENCE

MARYSUE FOSTER

## **Abstract**

*When my daughter died unexpectedly in January 2019, I chose to use every bit of training I could bring to bear not only on experiencing my grief as a way to honor her life but sharing that grief and the everyday joy of living with my community. Posting five things that made me happy each day on Facebook turned out to be an excellent practice. This paper contains some of those posts as well as my own reflections on the first few months of grief.*

## **THE BEGINNING**

On Jan. 3, 2019, my daughter Kim died of acute myeloid leukemia at 47 after more than 10 months of chemotherapy, transfusions and long stays at the hospital. She left behind a loving husband, two teenage children and a grieving mother. Nearly 300 friends and family attended her memorial on Jan. 12.

A week after the memorial, I began the practice

of writing five things that made me happy that day and posting the list to my Facebook account each night.

After a day or so of posting lists, friends started to join in. Later still, a few people told me they were making lists privately. As I write this, as my practice is at day #362, half a dozen friends post several times a week, some tag me in their lists or share to my wall. Almost from the very beginning, I asked others to participate and they did. Friends often seek me out at meetings to tell me how much they appreciate my lists and they've made a nightly practice of reading them.

This is a story of that practice and its impact on me and my community, and an exploration of that one way to make a difference. It began as an experiment.

## **MY FIRST POSTING**

January 19, 2019 (one week after Kim's memorial service)

Here are 5 good things that happened today:

1. I figured out a lot of things I didn't know about iPhones, trying to get Ruby's [my granddaughter's] phone online.
2. I had a great time at the Sprint store, doing same. About 10 people came into the store while the salespeople were fooling around with the phone. We all greeted one another, played with the two babies, told funny



(phone) stories, trained one another on the iPhone, found out everyone's name. I left without the phone being activated. And went to...

3. The Apple store where one of the greeters took his break time to get Ruby's phone online AND to help another woman who was about to explode with frustration about her boyfriend's iPad.
4. Saw a GREAT movie, Bohemian Rhapsody, with a friend. What a treat.
5. All the male salespeople at the Sprint store flirted with me while the phone was, presumably, downloading something or other. Which it turned out was not being downloaded. See #2 above.

You?

## BACKGROUND

Not until the final 24-to-48 hours before Kim's life ended had I believed she would die. She was healthy and engaged in rigorous sports and exercise her entire life. She ran a marathon in her 20s and taught aerobic dance up until the month before she was diagnosed. She followed medical instructions almost to the T. She was the perfect, if outlier, patient. Most AML patients are much older men with a history of cancer treatment. The family was ridiculously optimistic.

Her death, at 47, was not only unexpected by our family and her circle of friends, but she was the second to die in her generation from cancer in our family. Thirteen years before, my son's wife Leah was diagnosed with inoperable breast cancer during the first week I was away at seminary in Berkeley, California. Leah died at 43 in 2010 about six weeks after I graduated from seminary and had returned to Dallas.

Leah was diagnosed while in the hospital giving birth to my fifth grandchild. Her pregnancy had hidden her symptoms. When I heard, I committed to my best friend to go right to the edge and beyond in experiencing and processing this fatal illness in someone so close to me, to stay present, to make a difference in my family.

What were the odds of both daughter and daughter-in-law succumbing to cancer within only a few years?

Once again, after Kim died, I promised myself to dig in, to go as deeply as I could, to explore not only the depths of grieving but also the richness of living, remembering and sharing my daughter's life, acknowledging the rough times and celebrating life's joys.

When I started my new practice, I hadn't thought very deeply about it. I just wanted a ritual to end each day and an awareness to guide me in moving through my life, a life forever without my daughter.

My daughter of divorce Kim had been a playmate and companion of mine since she was very young. I divorced her father when she was 5. Like many divorced families, she and I grew very close over the years. She did the est Training at age 10 and completed The Landmark Curriculum for Living as a young adult. She was an introduction leader for a while, followed me into the Wisdom Unlimited course and was generally up for just about anything.

She graduated from college, joined the Peace Corps, fell in love and married in Costa Rica. Kim brought her new husband, Mañin, back to live with our family in Dallas. Two children and several years later, our plans for the future included moving as a family to Costa Rica in 2020. We had found property and spent several weeks in the summer of 2017 in the little town we would call home. All those plans were put on hold in February 2018 when she was diagnosed with AML, a cancer with a very low survival rate.

After 11 months that included weeks in the hospital, batteries of tests, countless transfusions, half a dozen rounds of chemotherapy and a successful stem cell transplant from a stranger in Europe – her liver failed.

January 27, 2019 (24 days after her death)

5 things that made me happy yesterday:

1. Getting the morning routine down, learning the times to allow either kid to get up and get ready. Everyone out the door on time.

2. Another beautiful sunny, not-too-chilly day in north Texas.
3. Successful shopping trip for the house. Got ONLY what was on my shopping list. I always feel smug when that happens.
4. I did swing by the Starbucks kiosk and befriend a little girl who was getting pretty restless with her mom!
5. At school, Ruby had a wave of sadness trying to write a fictional story that included her mom. That sad stuff waylays the best of us sometimes! I picked her up early. The schools have been generous and understanding with both of them.

How about you?

### WHY HAPPINESS AND NOT GRATITUDE?

Why happiness and not gratitude? Or kindness? Happiness seems something generated in the moment. There's no rhyme or reason. It's 100% "in the eye of the beholder." To me, gratitude has always seemed to me to be something assessed and held up against a standard, approved by others. Gratitude seems like a transactional feeling: Here's what I have and I'm grateful for it. Gratitude requires a receiver. Happiness can be a one-person game.

### THIS PAPER MAKES A COLLAGE, BITS AND PIECES

In August 2019, I wrote this introduction for an online course to complete the 2019 year:

I actually am an artist, a collage artist. I thought it was something I did, but I've realized in the past several months, it's also the way I "be." Layers and layers and fragments and little jots here and there that may or may not have meaning unless I say so.

I belong to a community creative group and we are working on a project together. A few weeks ago, while we were planning the project and I kept making suggestions, someone turned to me and said, "You even think collage."

I saw it then.  
Bits & Pieces  
Some of this  
Some of that  
Some beautiful paper

An old map  
Lots of words that don't mean much but I like the way they look  
Especially sideways  
Or with the paper torn.  
A color I've been saving for a while  
A photo I copied of someone's family. Not mine.  
Hard to tell if it's finished. Or done  
Sometimes I just have to tell myself to stop  
And start on another.  
I put this one in a frame.  
Someone wants to buy it  
What does it mean?, they ask  
I just make 'em, I say.  
You say what they mean.



This is my work called, What is the truest song of myself?

Five Things is my daily word collage as life unfolds without Kim. This paper makes a collage.

### FIVE THINGS: A PRACTICE

As time moved on and distinctions about grieving became clearer, I saw that Kim's loss also meant I no longer had a lifelong, intimate friend with

whom to share tiny details of my everyday life. We had shared a love of nature, cats, turns of phrase and ridiculous acts by friends and family – all the minutiae of daily living that one shares with one's closest friends. These instants instead became the content of my five things.

Author Jacqueline Woodson, in a TED talk, refers to reading slowly – “with her finger running beneath the words, even when she was taught not to” – as a way to slow down and savor life.

In her lyrical TED talk, Woodson invites us to slow down and appreciate stories that take us places we never thought we'd go and introduce us to people we never thought we'd meet. “Isn't that what this is all about – finding a way, at the end of the day, to not feel alone in this world and a way to feel like we've changed it before we leave?,” she asks.<sup>1</sup>

Writing Five Things every night is my way to slow down and savor life. Posting the lists is a way to connect with others.

#### **YET ANOTHER LAYER IN THIS COLLAGE**

My list, of the five things I notice, is exacerbated, exaggerated and elevated by the added layer that exists with my grief. After my daughter died, I became the principal-in-charge of the education of her two special needs children. She had always been the parent-in-chief of their learning. A master's level teacher, she knew each child well, kept up with school choices, met with teachers and other educators, compared notes with other parents of special needs children (a realm of its own) and had generally been the go-to person for all things educational. With her gone, I didn't even know who to contact at their schools for planned absences or how to access a Parent Portal designed for parents to keep abreast of assignments, grades and permission slips.

Kim's husband, Mañin, my son-in-law, was still very much involved, of course, but I had officially joined their family after Kim's diagnosis 11 months before she died. I started sleeping over at the hospital or their home, getting my name and phone number added to school and soccer contact lists, being the designated driver for events and shopping for food, clothes and school supplies – being a live-in granny/nanny.

We all thought the arrangement was temporary and she would finish her treatment and ramp back up to a more or less regular life. We thought she would always be available with a phone number or resource for whatever was needed. We didn't think she'd die until our family decided to withdraw all treatment, four days after she was moved to the intensive care unit and about 48 hours before she died, unconscious and unresponsive. Her heart just refused to stop.

Like a collage, my everyday life was now laid over, or concealed under, a hundred details of parenting two grandchildren. Becoming an expert, super-fast, on the particular tribe of special educational needs that each child inhabits. In May, less than six months after Kim's death, we took Max, at 16 the older child, out of public school where he was laboring through a terrible year and transferred him to a private school that we hoped would give him the best opportunity to grow into a fully functioning adult. That experiment is still playing out but seems to have been a move in the right direction. My daily lists reflect that change.

January 31, 2019 (the last day of the first month without Kim)

5 things that made me happy today:

1. It's the last day of January 2019, the hardest month I ever lived through.
2. I took about a dozen of Max's uniform shirts for resale at Great Lakes, a school he really liked. Besides loving Max [my grandson] for years, they are happy to get some large shirts.
3. Got the car washed – which always lifts my spirits. Pretty silly that is.
4. Learned how to save (and saved) Kim's outgoing voicemail message as an MP3 that I can archive.
5. Had a rousing game of developmental rummy – we kept remembering new rules as we played each hand. By the last round, we were really having fun and Ruby had the hang of it. We told Kim stories while we played.

How about you?

## MY 75TH BIRTHDAY

My 75th birthday week came – not the massive party I had been anticipating for a few years, but quotidian events – the ever-present grief, the small celebrations, the steep learning curve of dealing nearly full-time with grandkids and school and the awkward beginning weeks of growing accustomed to a new household, a new routine, new everything. In 2018, my birthday eve was the occasion of receiving Kim's diagnosis, and my 2019 birthday itself was an amalgam of grief, family gatherings, stunning everyday beauty and a field trip.

February 24, 2019 (my birthday – and nearly two months after Kim's death)

5 things that made me happy today:

1. Church. I cried through all the music including the hymns I sang.
2. Gorgeous spring-like weather. Daffodils here and there. An old plum tree in the traffic median near my own house that blooms early every spring.
3. A late morning at In-Sync Exotics. Because Annie [a new step-granddaughter] and her friend had raised money for the wild cat refuge selling hot chocolate, we got a guided tour. What a treat.
4. The early Sunday 7-11 guy had missed me. That's nice. Got to share my bday with him.
5. Sushi with the Soto family for a late lunch. Great bday!!

You?

February 28

5 things that made me happy today:

1. Watching still dozens and dozens of cedar waxwings wheel around in the sky in Dallas and land in just the right tree.
2. Landing in New Orleans for my first Mardi Gras ever.
3. through 10. Watching my first Mardi Gras parade in the neighborhood. Favorites –

about 50 Freddy Mercury's strutting to We Are the Champions (most had facial hair and great teeth), a dozen or so Lady Godiva's on horseback, a few dozen (mostly) high school marching bands from the area with an amazing assortment of dance/drill team performers, the woman I met from Chico, California who had survived the fire [a devastating event earlier in 2019] and shared many [Mardi Gras bead] "catches" with me, and more. Pix coming tomorrow.

How about you?

March 13, 2019

5 things that made me happy today:

1. Max called me to come and watch the cedar waxwings across the street. There must have been hundreds. They were leaving the elm and swarming in the yaupon holly tree. Swarming like a bunch of piranhas. Lordy. What a sight. By the dozens and flying back to the upper branches of the elm. Then,
2. Max called me to the backyard to watch 4 or 5 big bare trees full of cedar waxwings, as they murmured off into another yaupon. Wow. Feeding frenzy. Amazing.
3. The fact that Max summoned me to both these events, only about 10 minutes apart, and we stood, slack-jawed, watching and pointing out the best action to each other.
4. We made art at my house. Ruby set up an easel (she told me on the way that when I saw how many art supplies she brought, my eyes would bleed. Where did she learn that expression?) and went right to work with some of my most expensive paints. She made a great blue piece with mounds of paint.
5. Wyatt, one of the Bengals, was named for my son's boy and Wyatt, the cat, was acting exactly like Wyatt, the boy, this evening. He made me laugh. Kim and I named him together and I remembered some good times with her and those kittens. They will be a year old in May.

How about you? What made you happy today?

## ENCOUNTERS WITH THE EVERLASTING, SPREADING PEACE, IGNITING CONNECTIONS

I can see that my lists could also be called Five Times I Encountered the Eternal today.

Humans are moved by encounters with the timeless and universal – awe, wonder, love, loss, aging, birth. Moving through life awake to those calls transforms my own grief in the moment. If my encounters with the timeless ignite something in the reader, we are also connected for that moment, and for the next moment when they encounter the universal for themselves.

July 19, 2019 (six months after Kim's death)

5 things that made me happy today:

1. Got some things organized in a 3-ring binder. A little thing in the happiness column from, when, 4th grade?
2. Haircut = therapy.
3. Nap. Prednisone lightened up for a few hours.
4. Bi-weekly coaching call for Global Conference 2020 projects. It's good to have something in the works.
5. Moved some potted plants to another, shadier spot in the yard. They seem happier there.

BONUS 6. I'm seeing several new people are listing at night. (You know, "listing" when you're sailing means "leaning over while continuing to move in the desired direction." Think about it.) That makes me happy.

## THE PRACTICE OF PRACTICING

Practicing is the doing part of a good idea. It is being awake to what might be possible. Every course to mastery is founded on practice. Even learning to be a mediocre piano player requires mastery. What could be simpler than writing five things every night that made you happy that day?

## FEEDBACK AND REPORTS FROM READERS

I asked my readers to report on the impact that Five Things has had for them and their circles of friends. Here are some responses:

*I love your 5 things! You see things that others often miss; you enjoy the simple things, yet there's a sophistication in how you interpret those "simple things"; your writing is refreshing and makes me smile.*

*From your 5 Things I gained the inspiration to search out and post my own. Some days the list is so plentiful that I have to prune down to just the 5 "mostest" happy things. Some days, I have to reeeeeeeely dig down deep to find even 5. THOSE are the days I most appreciate this new habit you've given me. Thanks for being my Guiding Star!*

*Your 5 things inspire me to notice and appreciate. I'm climbing out of a long-term, pretty deep state of depression (I've had chronic depression since about the age of 12 – it comes and goes) and reading your Five Things each morning reminds me to bring myself back to the present when my mind strays. It also reminds me to create "All is well," or at least "Hey, this thing is good!" I recognize your commitment to not be dragged under by grief. Your commitment inspires me to keep climbing out of my hole. I have climbed out of the same hole many times, but this is the first time I see it not as return to a functional state but as creation of an engaged state. Big difference.*

*I've shared the idea in some workshops where people talk about practices. Often, they think (or seem to) that all practices have to do with meditation or possibly prayer. I've offered yours as an example that isn't solitary. Just reading your 5 things is somewhat of a practice (or rather, an irregular practice) for me. I like participating but still make excuses about time.*

*To see/watch you find joy in the midst of sorrow has been inspirational. To see that it encourages others (and me!) to participate is very cool. I think it has helped those who participate realize – even in these crazy times where so much is "out of control" ... there are ways to find joy in life's simple daily events that are worthy of smiles and some happiness. Happiness can be a choice – that was a huge life lesson for me many years ago. And a daily focus like this helps prove that such a choice can be infectious!*

August 22, 2019 (Seven months after Kim's death)

5 things that made me happy today:

1. I needed to call my bank (USAA) with a question and they greeted me with how much they appreciate my 31 years as a member. Cool.
2. Fell in bed at 7:30 last night, woke up at 1:45. Not exactly a good night's sleep but I slept like a rock and woke up refreshed. And just got up!
3. I'm in the Facilitated Wisdom course this weekend (meaning it's on Zoom, there is a local facilitator and there are about 10 locations across the country doing the course together). It is so fine!
4. Finally got my car to the garage and they can't fix it. (Not the happy part yet.) They are keeping it overnight and my roadside assistance policy kicks in for someone to tow it to the dealer in the morning. The happy part begins here – setting up the tow was super easy (and I got thanked for 31 years again), the garage is two blocks from my house and they totally took good care of me (they are keeping the car locked in the bay overnight and will hand the keys to the tow truck in the morning). Here's where you come in – wish for a good outcome. That it's a cheap and easy repair and that the car is ready to drive away tomorrow afternoon some time.
5. Finished a long neglected spreadsheet that only took about 30 minutes and produced some real clarity about some finances.

How about you? What happened to make you happy today? I love to hear about it!

Keep going!!

September 2, 2019

5 things that made me happy today:

1. A tiny anole about the size of my index finger who was exactly the same shade of green as an enormous canna leaf he was on.

2. A largish motor home (32'?) towing a car with the same paint job.

3. Max creating a poster about Costa Rica for Spanish class last night. It was fun to see ownership move in.

4. Jupiter the dog having such a great dream that he barked. He is a big dog, but he has a puppy bark!

5. Helping Ruby learn how to read music for a choir test at school. She didn't have it, didn't have it, didn't have it, had it. I love it.

How about you? What made you happy today?

Keep going.

### GRIEVING IS A COLLAGE

Like the collages that I make, grieving is a collage – picking up bits and pieces that I've saved, moving them around, gluing them down, painting them over or hiding them under another piece – never knowing what will develop and never knowing when the work will be "done" if it ever will. I just stop working on it at some point. When a buyer asks me what it means, I say, I just make 'em. You give them meaning.

This year after Kim's death has been grueling and long. It's a break in being that I never anticipated – not just companionship but the future we designed together – all gone. Yet, every day without fail, pieces of beauty and joy and awe and caring float by, there for the capture.

### FIVE THINGS THAT MAKE ME HAPPY ABOUT FIVE THINGS THAT MAKE ME HAPPY

1. The practice is a great way to complete your day. Whether you write little notes to yourself as you go through the day or whether you mentally review your day before closing the books for the night – writing the five things (and publishing) provides a powerful process for completing your daily life.
2. The daily practice provides a built-in prompt for polishing your writing skills. Some items only require a word or two to transmit the happiness they provoke – new grandbaby

smell, ladybug on my leg and my orchid finally blooms – and some things require a little story to set the table and invite others in.

3. Writing and publishing five things each night is a window into your own life (you can choose who to open it to) and an invitation to more sharing among your friends. Several friends immediately took up the practice – some only occasionally, some almost every night. Some tagged me in their posts and I began meeting their friends.
4. It's a nearly pain free way to keep a public journal. I tag my posts #5things and can find them easily. Sometimes I write more than the five things for myself and save that privately. Sometimes I look back at the five things for a particular day.
5. You make your own standards – it's your list. Include what you want. I totally made up five and I totally made up happy although the combination seems exactly right. Five things that make me happy make me happy.

## AFTERWORD

While writing this paper, I moved my household from one part of town to another. In the process, I came across a paper on dying that Kim wrote in 1991 when she was 20. It includes some paragraphs on spirituality, life after death and God, and some specific requests for a memorial service. And this directive:

*Please make it known to the people in your life that do and do not know me, but that you share time with, what you are going through. Share your grief, not to bring pity on yourself, but so people know what is going on and give you room to feel the way you do. Use my death to enhance other areas of your life, not as an excuse to end them.<sup>2</sup>*

How'd I do Kimmie?

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## REFERENCES

Devine, M. "It's OK that you're not OK: Meeting Grief and Loss in a Culture That Doesn't Understand." (Boulder, CO: Sounds True, 2017).

More 5 Happy Things lists are available at my blog: [www.medium.com/5-things-that-made-me-happy](http://www.medium.com/5-things-that-made-me-happy).

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## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Woodson, J. "What Reading Slowly Taught Me About Writing." Accessed: [www.ted.com/talks/jacqueline\\_woodson\\_what\\_reading\\_slowly\\_taught\\_me\\_about\\_writing](http://www.ted.com/talks/jacqueline_woodson_what_reading_slowly_taught_me_about_writing).

<sup>2</sup> Loehr Soto, K. Unpublished paper for Living and Dying class, University of Puget Sound, Tacoma, Washington. Spring 1991.

# MAKING A DIFFERENCE THROUGH AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL PERFORMANCE

SUSIE MILES

## *Abstract*

*Autobiographical performance is a fun, liberating and entertaining art form with potential to make a difference in the world. This article tells the story of my own inquiry into writing, producing and performing my experiences of living as a white woman in Swaziland, Lesotho and Mozambique in the 1980s and early 1990s and journeying through South Africa in mixed racial groups during the era of apartheid. I have identified six stages for creating an autobiographical performance and each stage has its own series of inquiries. Working with a team was an essential element, as was the willingness to risk looking bad. Feeling the fear and doing it anyway were, perhaps, the key to it all.*

## INTRODUCTION

"I am because you are" is the title of my autobiographical performance. Since October 2017, I have performed for about 500 people in England, Finland, Germany and the United States. Many people have asked me how I did this, especially since I am not a trained actress and had no prior experience of performing on stage, not even at school.

In 2019, some Wisdom Unlimited course graduates asked me for specific guidance on how to produce an autobiographical performance. They were committed to a creative writing project which involved co-authoring stories with, and about, refugees in England. This led me to inquire into the steps I had taken in dialogue with others. I have identified six stages that I went through and have given the stages the following titles:

1. The possibility of being a performer
2. Creating a team
3. Writing the script
4. Testing the script in front of a friendly audience
5. Creating a title and choosing costumes
6. Performing the uncomfortable

Writing this article in the present tense is deliberate. I do the same when I perform and find



that it draws the audience into the situation with me, transporting them back in time and space. They have a visceral experience. I also relive each experience as I retell it, and this helps me remember the script. The present tense also sharpens the focus on the “what is so” (the facts). The performance, therefore, does not include all the meanings I have added over the 20 years or so of telling these stories. I have found that audiences are very good at adding their own meanings.

Potential autobiographical performers could consider trying out the following inquiries that I have identified at each of the six stages or use them to support others.

### **1. The possibility of being a performer**

Inquiry: Are you a performer? Would you like to be a performer? Who do you know who has a story to tell?

For me, becoming a performer begins when I have a chance conversation with a stranger in June 2016 at the beginning of Landmark’s Team Management and Leadership Program (TMLP). I declare that I would write my autobiography during the program without any idea how I would fit this into my life.

I am having breakfast in a guest house in London on the first day of the program and I start talking to the person sitting opposite me. Her name is Catherine. When I ask her what she does, she tells me, “I am a lecturer in autobiographical writing.”

I am startled and excited by this miraculous encounter. I tell Catherine about my intention to write my autobiography and ask her whether she has written hers. She tells me that she performed hers. The word perform lights a spark in me. Of course! It is when I am telling the stories that people say I should write my autobiography. Maybe the power is in the live storytelling, not in the writing after all? I love telling stories. They can be as simple as what happens on the train as I travel to work or as profound as the experience of childbirth. Some of my stories are funny, but others are sad and shocking and can move people to tears. These are the experiences that have haunted me and I want to share with a wider audience.

I see autobiographical performance as an

opportunity to resolve the incompletions in my past. These relate to the years I spent living and working in southern and eastern Africa during apartheid when racial discrimination was enforced through the law in South Africa. No one in South Africa or in the surrounding countries escaped the impact of apartheid, even those who appeared to benefit from it. The literal translation of apartheid is separateness and it is pronounced “apart-hate.”

### **2. Creating a team**

Inquiry: Who could you work with to create an autobiographical performance?

In February 2017, many months after the conversation with Catherine, I declare that I will perform my play by November 2017 in Manchester, England. I do this in an uncomfortable conversation with my coach, Lorlett Hudson, and commit to booking a venue. I have absolutely no idea how I will get to that point. I simply accept that it is a done deal – in a future already fulfilled.

But, how can I – someone who has never acted – write and perform a play?

I begin by creating a team. I phone Catherine and she accepts straight away. I phone Helen Scott-Danter, a dear friend with whom I shared a student house at university. Helen is a trained actress and drama therapist who has lived and worked in various countries in Africa. She is excited to be part of my team. She misses being involved in theater and has so much experience to share. I invite Lorlett, and she is also delighted to be asked. Finally, I phone Raleigh Chiwuta, a Zimbabwean who left his home country at age 16. He tells me that the world needs to hear my story. He accepts my invitation but says he does not know what he can contribute. I tell him that I have learned so much from him about getting into other people’s worlds and what it means to grow up as a black child in Zimbabwe. In my opinion, he is an essential member of the team. Since we live in different locations across the United Kingdom, we use telephone conferencing for our regular team meetings.

### **3. Writing the script**

Inquiry: Which scenes in your life would you choose to perform?

For our first team meeting, I share a one-page piece of writing about a moment of trauma at the school for the deaf where I worked in Swaziland in 1983. One day, I interrupt the beating of a young girl being punished by the head teacher for alleged promiscuity. In reality, she had been gang-raped by male pupils. My short account of that moment stimulates a lively conversation about sexual abuse as a possible theme for the performance. My team tells me that I should continue to write short scenes from my life and we will discuss them in our meetings.

Most of the writing of these key moments takes me less than half an hour. I wake up early with a memory buzzing in my head, I sketch out the key people and events in each scene and e-mail them to the team. I write a few scenes from childhood, from the year I spent at age 18 in Austria working with children with severe disabilities and from the years I hitchhiked in Europe. But, I keep coming back to the experiences I had living for 12 years in the so-called “frontline states” of southern Africa.

The team begins to notice that many of the scenes feature journeys. They are long journeys taken through South Africa which involve uncomfortable and, sometimes, dangerous border crossings. Tension and fear are often present. I am young, naïve and, sometimes, reckless. Each scene stimulates lots of discussion in our team meetings. The team members agree that there is definitely something like a play emerging.

#### **4. Testing the script in front of a friendly audience**

Inquiry: Who would you like to perform for? Which audiences could you practice with?

In May, I decide that I will try out one of the scenes at a yoga retreat in Derbyshire, attended by about 20 people, some of whom I know. It is a safe, kind audience. Yet, I consider not doing it at all. I wait until 9:30 p.m. on the last evening. I pluck up courage and explain to the group that I would like to perform and it should only take about five minutes.

I am terrified. My heart is beating fast. I don't have my script or any of the props. I ask for some time

to get myself ready. The audience starts to get impatient. I have the inauthentic fear that I am jumping off a cliff. Why am I so scared? What is the worst that can happen? That I look bad or stupid? That my game of creating a play will come to an abrupt end? That I am a failure?

I take the plunge and perform the scene. I enjoy performing so much that I keep going for 10 minutes. The conversations that follow the acting out of that one scene are exquisite. I hear moving and inspiring stories of extraordinary journeys told by people I have never met before. Their stories are triggered by something I said or did, and we share an intimate and memorable moment. We are together out here. I also hear surprising stories never before shared by close friends. Conversations and relationships blossom. I love connecting with people in this way.

The following weekend I try out a different scene at another yoga gathering, this time in Wales. It is a sunny afternoon, and I am much less nervous. The audience demands more, so I perform several scenes with just one prop and no script. Once again, the performance opens up delightful conversations. This time we talk about traditional medicine in indigenous communities. I have concerns about how the stories might be received – an anthropologist reassures me that I am being respectful of African culture. In August, I do a first full rehearsal at Catherine's house, with my actress friend, Helen, Skyped in. It is exhausting and I am in awe of what actors do when they rehearse and perform.

About a month later, I invite an elderly neighbor to watch me go all the way through the performance in our living room. I have no idea that she knows a lot about theater. She asks me practical questions about lighting, props, ticket prices and public liability insurance – things I had never considered. In the remaining two months, I test out particular scenes on Skype calls with Helen. She asks me to practice the transitions between scenes over and over again, to look straight at her (the audience) on my laptop. I tend to rush through my script and so I miss opportunities for the audience to really get what I am saying. I find the long pauses really difficult – but the practice on Skype makes a big difference.

## 5. Creating a title and choosing costumes

Inquiry: What would the title of your play be? What would you wear? What props and music would you use?

A friend creates a poster with the title, a map of Africa and the time, date and location of the performance. I begin to invite people to come on Oct. 7, 2017.

The title, "I Am Because You Are," was inspired by ubuntu, a Zulu word and concept which reflects a set of values inherent in many traditional African societies. It is about our interconnectedness and what it means to be human. The theme of ubuntu comes from my experience of living in Swaziland, Lesotho and Mozambique and from my reading of the rich southern African concept of ubuntu – it captures the essence of my experience. I am who I am because of the people I encounter in my life, and they are because of who I am.

Ubuntu has been described by Professor John Hailey, an expert on international nongovernmental organizations, in the following ways:

"What it means to be truly human, to know that you are bound up with others in the bundle of life."

"The essence of being human, and that it is part of the gift that Africa will give the world... my humanity is caught up, is inextricably bound up, in what is yours."

"What dehumanizes you inexorably dehumanizes me."

Catherine says that I must aim to perform for no more than 40 minutes because I will get too tired if I perform for any longer. She also suggests that I create prompt cards, one for each of the five scenes, which I can lay out in front of me on the floor. This is such a relief. It means that I have a simple strategy to help me remember the order in which I am performing the scenes. I choose to organize them chronologically. It would be possible to jump around in time and instead structure the performance thematically, but I want to tell my story in the order in which each event happened. I find this easier.

I decide to use simple costumes and props,

the simpler, the better. For each scene, I wrap a different African cloth around my body in a variety of ways, sometimes just round my waist, other times covering most of my body. The change of cloth signals a scene change. I wear plain black clothes so that the bright colors of the African cloths can be seen as clearly as possible. Catherine suggests that I could arrive and leave the stage with a basket on my head. Helen thinks it is a metaphorical basket of memories, which is useful for carrying the cloths and the prompt cards on and off stage.

I choose to play the tin whistle music of Spokes Mashiyane, a South African jazz musician from the 1950s. The tunes evoke happy memories and it gives me the opportunity to dance a little as I walk on to the stage with my basket on my head. This is all new. I am becoming an artist. It is very exciting.



Caption 1

On Oct. 7, I perform to an audience of almost 100 people in a social club in Manchester, as planned – they are mostly friends and family. I receive a standing ovation and the audience asks lots of questions. They also say that they want more. I have just given them a taste. It is as if I had only performed the first half and they are impatient to watch the second half. One audience member asks, “By when will you perform in London?” I hear myself saying, “Before Christmas.” Friends from the TMLP create a team to make this happen and I perform in a community center in London a month later.

## **6. Performing the uncomfortable**

Inquiry: Which scenes in your life have you chosen not to inquire into? What would become available if you were able to write and perform your autobiography to a live audience?

I do the Wisdom course for the first time in April 2018 about six months after the first performance. Around the same time, a young actress with little understanding of the history and politics of southern Africa gives me much-needed critical feedback on my performance. She makes me realize that the script needs upgrading to incorporate factual information about apartheid in South Africa.

As I write my autobiographical pages, I inquire further into my life in Africa. I realize that there are some years I do not want to focus on – especially the breakdown of my marriage and the decision to leave southern Africa with our two children. I begin to write additional scenes to include the events of those years, scenes that I had previously considered impossible to perform in public.

I learn that what I do is performance – it is not a play because there is no fixed script. There is a freedom in owning the script and knowing that I can vary the script in the moment. Each time I perform I tell the stories slightly differently. I feel my way with the audience. I sometimes leave bits out deliberately and, other times, accidentally. Each performance is unique and it is impossible to get it wrong.

I discover that autobiographical performance is a new genre of theater that tends to be inspired by deep hurt. In October 2018, a friend takes me

to see a one-woman show in London by Bryony Kimmings, a British autobiographical performance artist. She is fearless and creative in her approach to taboo subjects. Watching this professional performance gives me more motivation to confront the uncomfortable in my own life. I am even more inspired to continue to develop my amateur production. I begin to see what autobiographical performance makes available for audiences and how I can heal and get complete while making a difference.

In November 2018, I perform the new script to a packed community hall with 100 people and raise lots of money for the community center. The audience appreciates the extra information I introduce about apartheid as well as the extra scenes about the difficult years. I reach a new level of boldness and relaxation in the role of performer.

## **GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT**

Since October 2017, I have performed in a range of settings for diverse audiences: at a university Christmas party in Finland, a restaurant in Los Angeles, an office space in Berlin and a hotel lobby in a small town in Germany. My sister-in-law translated a summary of the script to make it possible for the German-speaking audience in her hometown to make sense of the performance, which was in a café theater. My brother sang me on and off stage in his powerful tenor voice at the café theater and a day care center for elderly people, where I performed in German with my sister-in-law providing occasional translation. The head teacher of the local high school invited me to speak to the children, and this has opened up a whole new set of possibilities. Future audiences could be as young as 14 or at the very end of their lives.

Before embarking upon this journey, I had not considered that there were so many possible audiences for whom I could make a difference simply through storytelling. Yet, people have told me that they have written short stories after watching my performance and gotten in touch with elderly relatives to document their stories. Others have thanked me for “healing something inside.” I am also healing. Performing myself, first as a white expatriate wanting to do good in a rather naïve way, and then as a wife and mother

experiencing apartheid through marriage and motherhood, has been a journey of discovery. It is also contributing to a bigger conversation about creating a world where children grow up without discrimination.

## CONCLUSION

Before becoming a performer, I was a university lecturer who could hold an audience but had never acted and didn't believe that I was capable of doing a solo performance. I didn't know how to create a play. I didn't think that anyone would be willing to give up their time on a Saturday night, buy a ticket and watch me perform. I was playing small.

The experience of becoming a performer transforms who I am. Audiences are bigger than expected. I discover that my story is a contribution to others and that makes a difference. It inspires people to take action and it raises awareness about apartheid in a deeply, personal way.

Adults need to listen to stories just as children do and everyone has a story to tell. The stories I tell resonate with others in many unexpected ways: being a mother, facing discrimination, crossing cultural boundaries, dealing with marital breakdown, journeying in unfamiliar places, and so on. I am no longer afraid of going public and advertising my contribution to the world. I have discovered that it is never too late to do something unimaginable and step into the unknown. I am, at last, being myself.

And this all began during a chance conversation with a stranger in June 2016.

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## ENDNOTES

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# DISCOVERING A NEW FUTURE AFTER YOUR ROLE HAS EXPIRED

SUSAN HOSKINS AND MARCOS WILSON

## **Abstract**

*This article is about two friends, Marcos and Susan, who were stuck in individual journeys. Together, we discovered how inquiry and discourse powerfully released us. We will share the different inquiries that set us free when trapped with an expired role. These inquiries helped us see how our winning strategies bankrupted our effectiveness, how to renew our ability to redefine boundaries and reimagine new shapes to our ultimate commitments.*

*It is our hope that in sharing our inquiry you are inspired to embark on your own inquiry and discover new realms beyond roles, winning strategies and static boundaries.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

With our collective 25 years in leadership roles at Landmark, we thought that we would never get stuck. But, recently, we did. We tried reviewing courses and taking new ones. Yet, we were still fundamentally stuck.

## **THE BLUE JACKET SYNDROME**

Susan: Marcos and I talk every morning creating and declaring an empowering context for the day. Once he told me a story. He has this blue jacket in his closet. Every time he wears it women say he is dashing. He likes to add that it is a chick magnet. He knows that it is the perfect complement to any outfit. However, 20 years and 20 pounds later, it does not have the same effect. We call it the "Blue Jacket Syndrome."

There are many parts of an identity: who I say that I am; who I believe that I am; the skill sets that I say that I have. I realized that all of mine literally fit like a 20-year-old jacket. We also call this the "Blue Jacket Syndrome."

## **AT HOME WITH MYSELF - START WHERE YOU ARE**

Susan: It became clear to me that I needed to start with myself. Not the 20-year-old jacket, but the current me. Who am I now? I started to take an inventory of my physical body, mind, spirit, resources, location, etc. Not where I think I am or should be or could be. (The "shoulds" and

"coulds" way of thinking keeps us ungrounded and attached to the past.) I began to realize that to really get located where "I am" takes locating where my soul is. It had been a while since I had looked to be located where my soul is. I sense it is in the center of me.

I was in the Inquiry Explorations course when Tobin White, the course leader, said, "Commitment follows presence." A light bulb went on in my head. To get a sense of who I am and what currently could inspire me, I must separate commitments from my outdated obligations. To do that I must get present to myself, to the moment, to God, the Universe, to all of it. Then the commitment will follow. First presence, and, then after presence, comes commitment. What I am committed to will show up.

To the reader: For some of us, granting permission to focus on ourselves can occur selfish. So, if you need it: I grant you permission to focus on yourself. You can establish, newly, a relationship to yourself. Who are you now?

Take a few moments to get into your relationship with yourself. You have permission to not participate in the "shoulds" and "ought to's" that have run your life. Be truly committed to yourself for this moment.

Susan: Tobin said another thing that caught my attention: "The universe wants to provide for you, but it cannot if you are focused on your internal states." Internal states are thoughts, feelings, opinions, fears, body sensations, dramas, justifications, make wrongs and explanations. Statements such as: Life is unfair ... I'm not enough...Nobody understands me anyway, etc.

When I think of a higher power or my higher power and make the assumption that "It" wants to provide for me, what opens up is a deep thirst for wanting to be connected, connected to my higher power all the time. I thought about the value of meditating. To have this deep connection I could experience it through meditation. I can connect to that current that is always running through me, but am rarely present to. It was the first time I saw the importance of meditating and connecting to the divine – to establish a flow throughout the day. Standing inside of "The universe will provide,

if I am connected to it," I can be at home, actually located where I am.

During this time of exploration and inquiry, my friend Marcos texted me, "Why don't you take on 'Walking with Spirit and Love' today? He had read this in a book titled, "Pathways to Possibility," by Rosamund Zander.

Repeating I am "Walking with Spirit and Love" throughout the day really helped me stay grounded – present to where I am. There is something esoteric about it. It stopped all the chatter and the "Blue Jacket Syndrome."

Looking from there I discovered my role had expired. So my next exploration was what does my expired role really mean.

### **MY EXPIRED ROLE**

Susan: First, I really got the sense that something had expired. As I kept up the inquiry, I realized that it was a role, and, in some cases, an aspect of a role that has expired.

We all have roles. Merriam-Webster's definition of role: It can be a character assigned or assumed. For example, "She had to take on the role of both father and mother." I find it interesting to remember that sometimes I assign aspects of a role to myself. Other aspects might be assumed by others that I should perform.

It can also be a socially-expected behavior pattern usually determined by an individual's status in a particular society. For example, "As godmother, it was assumed she would take on the role of both father and mother in the absence of the parents."

Now look at the word expired. Merriam-Webster's definition of expire is to breathe one's last breath: die. It can also be defined as to come to an end, such as to exceed its period of validity. For example, "The contract will expire next month." Or to pass its expiration date, such as, "This milk has expired."

For me, I am the youngest daughter of three children. At work, I was the founder, CEO, executive director and, often, program director. Then there was a transition. When there is a transition in areas of our lives, things can get a little wobbly for us.

I had a double whammy. My nonprofit of 28 years came to an end due to multiple factors. Then last year, my father died and my family asked me to take part in handling the affairs with his widow, my stepmother.

Sometimes, things are emotionally deep and difficult and we don't even recognize it. We forget to take care of ourselves. You know, sometimes, we can get burned out; there is a change in position, retirement, the dynamic in your family shifts, a business diminishes and old ways of being just don't seem to work. Does any of this apply to you?

You've heard this before. Often, the accountability of the role and/or position is collapsed in our mind with who we are. This is when we need to grant ourselves permission to get in relationship with ourselves.

As for my roles at work, they have expired. Expired in the sense that those positions have completed. The end date arrived. I was still hanging on, attached, but it really had expired. To let go does not diminish my accomplishments, but I needed to separate my identity from expired roles to move on. It does not work to default to boss in all circumstances or expect things to get done just because I say so. I had not completed with those roles completely which lead to frustration, showing up as – Don't you know who I am? Revisiting this gave me freedom. Are there roles in your life that you are still holding onto?

I will always be the youngest child of three children. On the other hand, the request that I be the point person for my family with my father's widow was temporary. It also had many aspects which were assigned and assumed by both me and others.

We will next look at what drives the insufficiency of a role. It really hit me when Marcos said, "Your role may not be expired, but the way you play it has." This was when I started to see how the way I win in life, my winning strategy, impacts my role.

### **BANKRUPT WINNING STRATEGY**

Let's first look at your winning strategy. We all have our special formula to win in life. We might win with others by being smart, or clever, or nice, or helpful, or strong, or persistent, etc.

Again, I have turned to Merriam-Webster's Dictionary to refresh my memory and interpretation of the words. Winning is the act of one that wins. Victory is the overcoming of an enemy or antagonist, or achievement of mastery or success in a struggle. But, the meaning I like the most is: tending to please or delight. For example, a winning personality.

So, as I was looking at the insufficiency of a role, I became aware that:

1. I may be playing a role that no longer exists (like my work roles) or
2. the way I play my role or some aspect of it may have expired.

Either way I play it, it does not work. I needed to take a deeper look at how my "winning personality" or, as I call it, my "winning strategy" is put together.

Looking at the definition of strategy and taking the parts that apply here – a careful plan or method: a clever stratagem and the art of devising or employing plans or stratagems toward a goal. This can include deceiving or outwitting the enemy. I find this interesting because we sometimes trick ourselves without meaning to.

For me, my winning personality comes in the form of being nice and helpful. Being the youngest in my family, I had to do whatever I could to be recognized. If I could be helpful, smooth feathers, anticipate upsets and fill in the gaps or facilitate action, then people looked favorably on me.

Now, let's look at the definition of bankruptcy: the quality or state of being bankrupt, utter failure or impoverishment.

Susan: For me, where I was utterly bankrupt was in my family. When my father passed away, my mom asked me to spend some time with my sister to make sure she was handling it well. She also asked me to see if there was anything of value to retrieve. We believed our father's will had been changed and there was nothing we could do about it. We didn't think there was anything left. My dad's wife was an attorney and knew all the laws and was in a position to use them to her advantage. She had already sold every heirloom in



the farmhouse. We were not sure what was left.

When I discovered that the will, his inheritance, was left to his three children, it changed the plans. Then I found out that my dad's wife, as executor, gets a percentage. Also, in Ohio, a widow gets one-third of the inheritance plus \$40,000. At this point, my family asked me to be the point person and legally sign that I represented them. I was now taking on different roles with expectations that got commingled.

Once I had made a promise to my dad that I would do whatever I could to keep the farm in the family. So I proposed to my siblings that we combine our portions together, bring my nephew into a new business and save the farm.

Everyone was enrolled and inspired. Since I had founded and run a nonprofit corporation, it seemed logical to everyone that I run it. However, it did not take long before I went from loved, adored and implicitly trusted to an imagined thief, someone to undermine and bypass. Even my mother was involved in financial transactions negotiated by my brother and nephew without keeping me in the loop.

It devastated me. The business plan fell apart. Everyone seemed to want to get their part now! It was as if the idea of money was already spent in their minds on desires. I was the person in the way of their dreams. People stopped talking to me. It seemed to me that I could do nothing to fix it. It was ultimate ineffectiveness. My promise to my father would not be kept.

The farm is currently up for sale. I was so hurt by the experience, I didn't want to talk to anyone in my family ever again; not even my mother. I kept making myself wrong for being so angry. It was embarrassing. I should be better than this ... but somehow I couldn't. Slowly, I began to pull myself out. I had to start with my mother.

### **WORKING MY WAY OUT**

Susan: I had come from a home that gave me the values of fairness, tolerance, justice and decency. I thought the world operated by the rules of fair play and decency; we should all play together. When life did not do as I wanted it to, I was trapped in disappointment with no place to go.

The beliefs I had of a fair and decent world were not to be found. I was left with bewilderment and confusion.

However, if I really want to change this story – that life is unfair, that I have failed and that I am a loser – to a more empowering context, then I could connect to that current that is always running through me I am rarely present to. I had a choice:

1. I could wallow in emotionalism or
2. I could connect to the flow of the universe.

Well, I became interested in that second choice. That is when I discovered my role in my family had expired. I was always the one to save the day and sacrifice when others needed help, cheerfully making things comfortable, filling in the gaps. But, I realized that people were taking me for granted and it even felt like I was being taken advantage of. I no longer wanted to be attached to that role.

### **MY BANKRUPT WINNING STRATEGY CLARIFIED**

I truly saw how my winning strategy was bankrupt when I was at the gym. A lady and I had exchanged pleasantries over some equipment. Later, we ended up in two massage chairs side by side. When I came into the room she was already seated. She was looking for the remote control for the TV and asked if it was on my side. I looked and did not find it. I said I would check at the front desk. I brought it back and handed it to her. She was really touched and thankful.

Simple enough. Nice interaction, yet I was left feeling irritated. That frustration became a nagging wave in the back of my brain. I could not understand it. The rest of my body was fine. I found no explanation. She left expressing a great friendship had begun between us, two strangers who may never see each other again. We smiled.

As I tried to make sense of this "frustration wave," I realized that it was due to my bankrupt winning strategy. I began second-guessing myself. Who went to get the remote was my bankrupt winning strategy. I could have done the exact same thing coming from true authentic service, but, no, I didn't look at it that way. My automatic way of assessing the situation kicked in. She was seated. It was too inconvenient for her to get it. It would

be easier for me to get it. No need for her to inconvenience herself. I could compensate, throw on my superwoman cape and save the day.

The bankrupt part is coming from living in a world where I am not enough and she is not enough. I have to justify my existence by doing whatever I can to be helpful to prove I am worth it. I added other justifications. I don't know how to use a remote control so I don't want to upset her. Best to give it to her so she won't whine. To keep the peace, I will tolerate whatever she puts on because I am better at being tolerant. Again, saving the day by compensating for her, possibly, not being able to be as flexible as me.

If I came into the room with a belief that everyone is capable, I would have just sat down and said, "The remote is probably at the front desk." The idea of this lady needing help would have never even crossed my mind.

I left there knowing that I needed to learn how to draw new boundaries. My automatic way of being was shot. I needed to redefine boundaries, but I did not know how. I stuck with the inquiry. I really wanted to authentically redefine myself. We often think that boundaries are static, but they are not. I needed new boundaries with my family and would first start with my mother.

## **TWO WOLVES – CHOICE**

Susan: What I noticed was that there are two sides to my winning strategy. Most likely I can never get rid of my winning strategy. It is so automatic. But, there is a good side or an authentic side. My authentic side is a natural generosity of service, contribution and desire to make a difference. Not bad, I said to myself.

However, there is a "bad" or inauthentic side. The need to compensate for me not being enough, the other not being enough and the world not being enough. Then I operate on top of "not enough" by being helpful on top of "not enough." It's a vicious circle. I do get to put on my superwoman cape and save the day, but it is inside a world of never enough. This leaves me exhausted, used up, unsatisfied, frustrated, angry and confused.

I started to think about a story I had heard in our weekly Wisdom social gathering. A Native

American said to his son, "In every man, there is a 'good wolf' and a 'bad wolf.' They are always fighting." The son asks, "Which one wins?" The father answers, "The one you feed." The lesson in this story for me is that I need to tend to the authentic side and respect the inauthentic side. Ignoring the inauthentic side only gets me into trouble. When they hold hands, then there is peace.

If you can see that it is your winning strategy that creates your experience of the world, then you can be responsible for how your life shows up. Being responsible frees you from being a victim.

## **RENEWED MY ABILITY TO REDEFINE BOUNDARIES**

So one day, I'm on the phone with my mom. She is going on about how she is putting \$1,500 into my brother's bank account so he can take care of his daughter's issues around her car. My mom was so worked up. She was doing her usual "woe is me" saga but this time she added a bonus, "Maybe I should just put myself into an old folks' home, you kids can fight about the money amongst yourselves."

Luckily, I had done the work. In the past, my winning strategy would have defaulted to either:

1. Feeling sorry for myself – being the smallest – the victim – I'm so insufficient – I must have done something wrong. See I can't even make my mother happy. or
2. Tell myself, "That witch, she's doing it again. She's never satisfied, always blaming others."

However, I had redefined my boundaries. The proof was what fell out of my mouth. I said with ease, "Well, mom, you could choose to do that. You really could put yourself into an old folk's home and be a victim of your children, grandchildren and great grandchildren. Or you could change your role in the family." There was absolutely no make wrong in the space so her answer was clear, "Well, that's something to think about."

I was not stuck in the vicious circle. I had clarified her choice because I was no longer stuck in the vicious cycle. She was in charge of her life. I was no longer compensating for her. We have a new

relationship, a new realm of possibility and it is exciting.

### **HOW BOUNDARIES SHAPE MY COMMITMENT**

When I looked back at my commitment to my role as daughter, I see that I am committed to having a fantastic relationship with my mom and she be happy, healthy and loved. However, over the years, old boundaries have been blurred. Wanting to be needed, validated by being helpful, I had set up the trap of the vicious circle. Unhealthy habits had formed. It didn't matter how much I tried to be helpful, the feeling of being taken for granted had grown to the feeling of being taken advantage of. I actually started to believe that there were many things I had to do for her because she needed me when, actually, it was just easier for her to let me do those things. It became as though she needs me to "breathe" when, in actuality, she doesn't need me at all. She lived many years before I came along. She really doesn't need me. It was the vicious circle that needed me. When I see my part, then freedom starts.

When I really get that she is whole and complete without me, the freedom starts for both of us. Standing there, I help clarify her choices in her life and mine. Suddenly, a new adventure in a beautiful life begins.

### **WINNING STRATEGY LINKS BACK TO ROLE**

Marcos: When I first heard Susan say that her role had expired, I must confess to having been a bit taken aback. It seemed kind of extreme, and, yet, at some level the words resonated with me. I, too, was experiencing something akin to expiration in my professional career.

After many conversations with Susan, I followed her lead. I began to look at my winning strategy or strong suit. Was it a factor in how my world was now?

I like to think of my strong suit/winning strategy as my hammer for success, the one I brandish to take on survival challenges and the demons of circumstance. The more dire the circumstances, the more obvious the need for the hammer, my hammer. My particular hammer is connecting the dots. I not only see the dots, I connect them. Where others saw noise and gibberish, I saw patterns and sense. To contribute, to "make a

difference," what was required was people who could not connect the dots (the nails) and needed me to do so on their behalf.

At times, I would help solve nagging process problems by seeing and connecting the dots in a complex process or system. That was always a satisfying way to contribute, especially when it spoke directly to what was wanted and needed. Alas, I slowly tuned my listening to only listening for what I could turn into suitable nails for my hammer so that I could contribute. (My bad wolf reared its ugly head and roamed everywhere.) I acted as if my hammer was more like a Swiss army knife to be used every time and in any situation. During those times, my "bad wolf" would be roaming on steroids.

Take the time I was walking in my neighborhood with my girlfriend when we came upon what seemed to be a homeless artist sitting on the sidewalk painting small watercolor boards. "Bad wolf" saw the dots and got into action:

Dot 1 – Homeless person painting on a sidewalk.

Dot 2 – Some of the paintings had a flag prominently displayed in the scene.

Dot 3 – It was Gay Pride weekend.

Dot 4 – He obviously could use some money.

Dot 5 – Connect those dots.

Dot 6 – Paint the flags in the watercolor rainbow flags and make a mint selling them to people wanting to show solidarity with gay people with a nice watercolor.

Dot 7 – Priceless.

I suggested this to him and he just smiled in response (I thought in agreement). We walked by some hours later and he had not followed through with my brilliant suggestion. Then it hit me like a ton of bricks. I was not interested in what he wanted or needed. It was more important to feed my bad wolf's wants and needs. Suddenly, I could see and feel how condescending, presumptuous and arrogant my bad wolf could lead me to

be while being totally blind to it. That was the bankruptcy of my winning strategy.

### **CHANGING SHAPE OF MY COMMITMENT – THE BLUE JACKET**

Marcos: I am an engineer, the kind of engineer who always felt the pull of art and innovation. I see them as two sides of the same coin. That landed me in planning, research and development and design-type roles. They were more evangelist and visionary assignments than building or operations. I was the guy who could see and connect the dots. I loved it.

I grew accustomed to be sought after as a consultant. My resume would always “blow them away,” especially overseas where they were impressed with my startup journeys, my experience with MCI, a startup that dared to take on the colossus Ma Bell (AT&T). Higher-ups in my client companies thought I knew the formula of the secret sauce to beat whatever Goliath they were facing.

I had a pretty successful run as an independent consultant, but then it seemed as though I hit a wall. It started to take longer and longer between gigs and, when I got them, they were less of the sexy, cutting-edge projects I loved. They were mundane and boring jobs that didn't inspire or move me. I was getting older and could not help but wonder if this was what it looks like when you are close to being done/expired. Was this how my engineering career would end? In a whimper? This was not the only area of my life where I was feeling this way, but it felt like it was the most vexing and urgent.

I was older and wiser, and there were things I wanted and was willing to do. But, there were also some types of projects I was not interested in doing anymore. Nevertheless, for a while, I tolerated them even though I was bored. I had new boundaries that I had been unwilling to acknowledge or communicate. I realized that the essence of my commitment had not changed, but the shape of its edges had. My commitment had changed in shape.

For a long time, I did not acknowledge the new shape of my commitment, and, this, I discovered,

cannot be covered up or hidden. I could now see that despite me ignoring it, the new shape was a heavy presence in the unsaid part of what I communicated in my interviews and conversations, in general. It was clear for all to see except me. I was confusing the hell out of the universe as to how I wanted to play my role. No wonder I was getting the results I was getting.

I needed to articulate the future that I wanted to create for myself. What was missing was being consistent with who I held myself out to be in the world. I took a deep dive, reexamining who I say I am in the world and how my career role related to that. In other words, my blue jacket.

Out of this exercise, I declared being the possibility of creating teams to build the impossible. It was me. My stand became my business brand and consulting company's tagline. It feels so right.

I rewrote my resume inside of this context. I also noticed my interview conversation and conversations, in general, shifted to listening for who wanted and needed to build the impossible. (I let my good wolf go roaming.)

Things started to loosen up. Then “sexy,” cutting-edge-like opportunities started to come in. Now, there is the feel of a new clearing in the air. The tide has turned.

### **RESISTING WHAT'S SO**

Susan and I shared our role expiration and discoveries with Arnold, a mutual friend. Arnold was intrigued and shared that he felt at an impasse in his role at work. Two years ago, the CEO abruptly left and the executives, who had attempted to fill the vacuum, were not living up to Arnold's expectations. After further conversation, he got that he was resisting the change. The CEO that had moved on valued and validated Arnold's contribution on a daily basis. They had a special relationship of mutual respect. None of this was available from the new crew. He kept expecting it, waiting for it and was disappointed when it did not come.

Arnold was at the effect of the Blue Jacket Syndrome. He resisted the new circumstances and refused to adapt to the fact that the new executive team was not the CEO he missed and might never

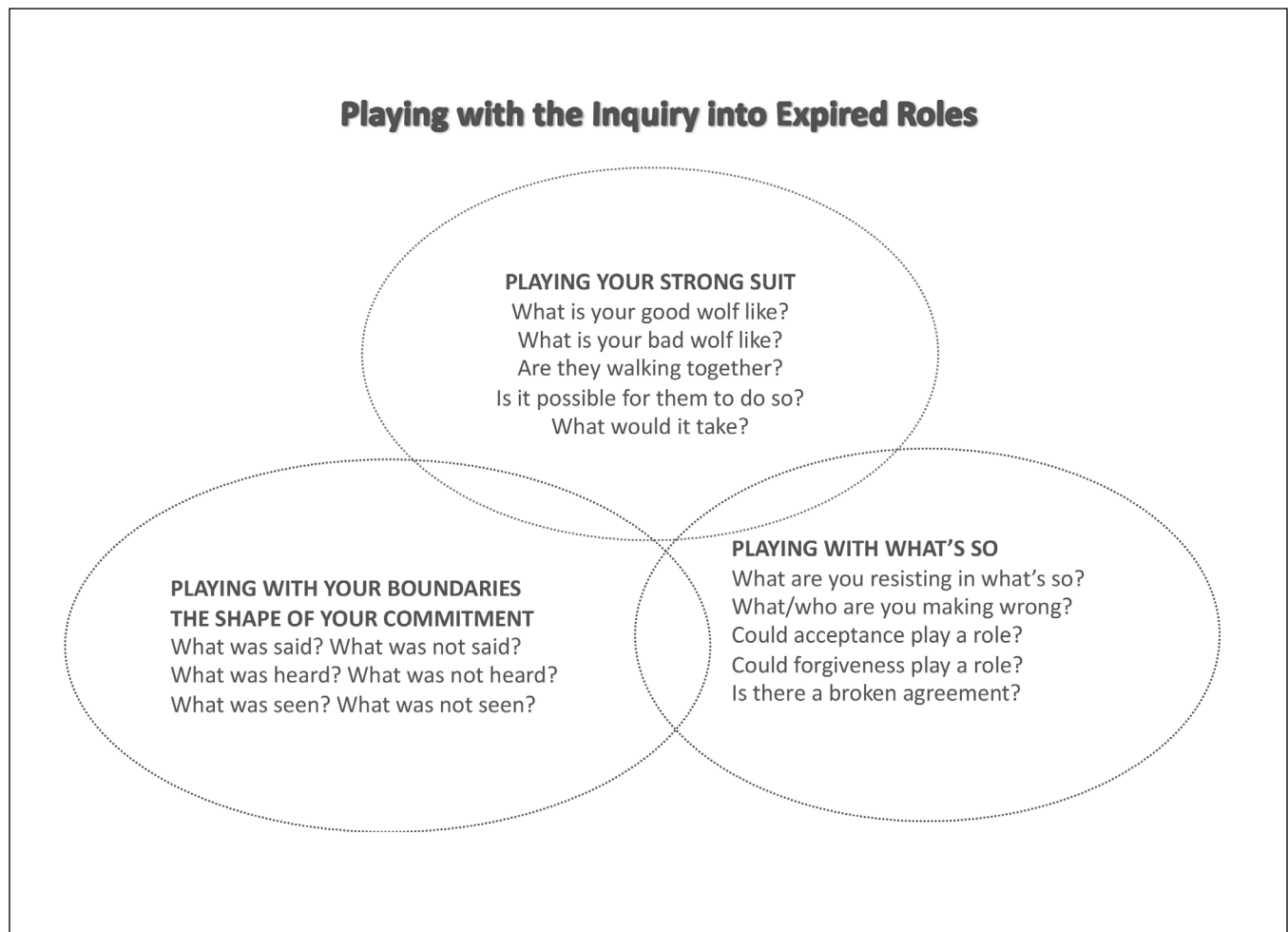
provide the validation he got previously.

Having uncovered that, he now sees the value of taking on a leadership role to crystalize the organization's vision and empower the corporate culture. Also, he now sees the value in accepting and supporting their leadership styles.

## CONCLUSION

It seems to us that, from time to time, we need to review our roles because our winning strategies may have played havoc on our boundaries. Boundaries become outdated, causing a shift in the shape of our commitments. Boundaries may look static but when you look anew at a role in life, then those boundaries can be adjusted. When new shapes form around our commitments, make-wrong disappears.

What shape are your commitments in?



# FINDING ARAWAKA

## THE POSSIBILITY OF A SCHOOL FOR INDIGENOUS WISDOM

ED STROUPE

### **Abstract**

*This paper is about a calling and a response to that calling. Our world is in a crisis—an ecological and social crisis that encompasses the Earth and potentially threatens life as we know it. Some of us at this conference may recognize and understand this more clearly and fully than others. However, whether recognized or not, I say that everyone on our planet feels it. Regardless of background and situation, we are all in this together. We are all indigenous to this Earth. We are all a part of life, and life is at risk.*

### **BACKGROUND**

In 1983, a group of clergy, rabbis, priests, ministers and volunteers working with Werner Erhard founded The Mastery Foundation.<sup>1</sup> In 2002, I learned about the work of Mastery while participating in the Power and Contribution course.<sup>2</sup> While I struggled to formulate for myself an Impossible Promise, something about Mastery called to me.<sup>3</sup> Subsequently, my wife Mary and I committed to be financial sponsors. I soon joined the Mastery Board of Trustees. Then, in 2006, we launched an initiative called the Mastery School for Leadership.<sup>4</sup>

As of 2020, around 60 community leaders, teachers and interfaith leaders have participated in the school, representing Northern Ireland, Israel and the United States. The Mastery School for Leadership is becoming a dream fulfilled, and it has been an avenue for me personally to experience making a meaningful difference. It

has also proven to be a powerful training ground for me to discover distinctions in community, leadership and the power of listening.

In late May 2019, one week after last year's Conference for Global Transformation, something new came on the horizon. A whole new possibility emerged. But, first, I need to set the context.

The year 2006 was a big one for me personally. Not only did the Mastery Foundation create the School for Leadership, but that year I went with Mary on a journey into the jungle of the headwaters of the Amazon River in Ecuador with the Pachamama Alliance.<sup>5</sup> This not-for-profit organization focuses on educating and inspiring individuals everywhere to bring forth a thriving, just and sustainable world. Pacha is an ancient word from the Quechua language that means time, space or time-space. Simply put, Pachamama means "Mother Time-Space, Mother Earth."

Following our journey, Mary and I became donors to help fund the work of the Pachamama Alliance. Until last May, our participation had primarily taken the form of financial support.

A few years ago, we moved from Colorado to make our permanent home in Santa Fe, New Mexico. Having rekindled an old interest in philosophy since retirement from the professional world, I enrolled in a two-year graduate degree program at St. John's College, starting last fall with a commitment to continued growth and development through studying great works of Western literature, history, politics and philosophy. My inquiry has been: "How is it that we (in Western culture) came to see the world the way that we see it?"

And then came Arawaka.

#### **MEMOIR OF A CALLING: MAY 2019**

A week after last year's conference, Lynne and Bill Twist, two founders of the Pachamama Alliance, invited us to attend a three-day gathering for donors at a place called Arawaka, a retreat and ceremony center located among spectacular mesas in the Rocky Mountain foothills about an hour south of Santa Fe. The purpose of our visit was to meet with Arkan Lushwala, the man who had founded Arawaka in the early 2000s.

A colleague of Pachamama, Arkan is a powerful traditional healer and ceremonial leader from Peru who was also trained in the Lakota traditions by his adopted father, Basil Brave Heart. Arkan has written two extraordinary books listed in the references section at the end of this paper. Before meeting him, I made it a point to read and digest as much as I could. The books offer a profound sense of the world of indigenous wisdom in which Arkan and many other people native to North and South America grew up.

As a gift and acknowledgment from the Pachamama Alliance, we were invited to allow ourselves to be contributed to and take whatever form of healing and gifts that Arkan was graciously willing to extend on this visit. As Lynne later summarized in a follow-up e-mail from this visit to Arawaka, we "participated in a sweat lodge together, we walked the land, we sat in ceremony

with Arkan, we had incredible meals that were literally medicine—prepared by his beautiful wife Marilyn. We cried and laughed, we were moved, we soaked in his ancient wisdom, we learned and grew together."

For me, the experience proved life altering. I had always been aware since I was a child that I loved nature and the natural world. Growing up in North Carolina, I spent my childhood and youth playing in the woods. Some of my favorite memories are of biking, hiking, camping and climbing in the countryside near my home and in the Appalachian Mountains. After we were married, Mary and I chose to live for 10 years in a house nestled in the coastal hills of Big Sur, and we later built a home in the heart of the Rocky Mountains of Colorado. Moving to Santa Fe embodied another expression of our shared love of nature. Mother Nature is where I have always found myself able to reenergize and regroup when stressed.

#### **GATHERING**

Upon our arrival at Arawaka, we met Arkan and gathered in a semicircle, resting at ease on a set of adobe and wooden benches under an open-air portico that serves as his main outdoor gathering space. After welcoming us, Arkan lit and passed around a sage ball for us to inhale and bathe ourselves in its fumes. He explained that this was not merely a ceremonial or ritualistic act. Sage embodies a highly evolved genetic code. By dwelling for a few moments and allowing the smoke to wash over one's body, it clears the mind and cleanses emotions and spirit. Thus, a group of people can begin a meeting already lifted to a higher spiritual plane of connection. Doing this effectively short circuits a lot of mental chatter and emotional noise.

Before explaining anything, Arkan asked us to go around the circle and introduce ourselves, to share why we were there and what we were interested in getting out of being together during this visit. When it was my turn to speak, I shared a bit about my love of nature and history with the Pachamama Alliance. Something then came to me, in the form of a realization, and I shared that what I really wanted was to learn to listen to Pachamama. I wanted to be more able to listen with my heart, to all of what Mother Nature and

the Earth have to say to us. I was longing for an old connection that had been covered over sometime during the course of my busy life. Arkan listened attentively to me and to each of us as we spoke what was present in our hearts and minds.

After introductions were complete, Arkan then lit a cigar (or cigarette), puffed a few times and blew smoke into the circle as he gathered his thoughts. One of the things he explained was that tobacco was a sacred plant to the indigenous people of North America and, by smoking, he allowed the spirit of the plant and of the ancestors to speak through him.

Among many things Arkan shared was that Earth and all of life as we know it is in a time of crisis. We see the evidence of this through such phenomena as global warming and climate change, the number of species going extinct, the contamination of our rivers and seas, the fierce storms and rapid deforestations, among many other phenomena. Likewise, we see this reflected in our politics and the relationships among nations and groups. The modern world has gone out of control, and this has been the case for some time now. People have lost their connection to the Earth and their own indigenous spirit. As Arkan so aptly put it, "All of us have been colonized."

As he spoke of these things, I could reflect back and see how we "white people" have not only been colonialists and colonizers—committing genocide in America on the indigenous Americans and enslaving those we brought from Africa. But also, we ourselves had been colonized and enslaved. It just happened a long, long time ago. Somewhere along the line, buried away in our history and probably our pre-history, we lost touch with some essentials. We forgot who we are and where we came from. We lost our indigenous connections with Nature. Once upon a time, we were all indigenous people.

As Arkan saw things, we have now come to a major choice point as a species. We can perish, and in the process take down all of life as we know it with us, or we can transform who we are (my words), lift our spirits and reconnect with Pachamama. When we look at what is so, the picture is bleak. There is not much time for preventing what all of us would agree to be

disaster. This is an emergency. What is called for is operating at a new level of our humanity (my words again), and the odds are stacked against us.

However, as Arkan saw it, there is hope. In ancient times, some people lived at a very high spiritual level. Where he came from in Peru was once a center of wisdom, and the people who lived there traveled all around the mountains and into the jungle to teach people the ways of Pachamama. Today, a reawakening is dawning, and a number of such people on the planet have awakened. If we build a critical mass, the situation will shift (as in the tipping point phenomenon).

I asked Arkan how many of these people would it take, in his opinion, to create such a transformation. Pausing for a few seconds, he looked into the distance and then answered, "I think about 500." Upon hearing this answer, we all sat together in silence for several seconds or, perhaps, minutes. I was stunned.

## CEREMONY

Over the next 48 hours, Arkan led our group through two ceremonies. The first was the Lakota ceremony referred to in my language as a "sweat lodge." As I came to understand it, a sweat lodge is a sacred ceremony that can accomplish many purposes. It can provide healing for those who seek to be supported where the body, mind, emotions or spirit are experiencing disease. It can provide a space for being in touch or communicating with spirits and receiving guidance. It can be a space of worship and prayer. In my experience, all of these elements were present during this ceremony.

Physically, a group gathers in an outdoor enclosure—in our case, a dome-shaped tent. A facilitator, who has been tending a fire, places red hot rocks into a pit dug in the center of the lodge. Once the tent flaps are closed (and inside the tent it is totally dark), the person leading the ceremony (Arkan) pours water over the rocks. This generates steam and intense heat, which naturally causes one to sweat. The leader then conducts the ceremony, which includes drumming, talking, chanting and singing. The ceremony takes place in several sessions. Between each session, the doors are opened and the facilitator adds more hot



rocks to the pit. The entire ceremony lasts around two hours.

To prepare for this ceremony, Arkan invited us to “be selfish” and allow ourselves to ask for what we wanted. Then, once inside the sweat lodge, we each had an opportunity to share that with the group. As each of us spoke, the rest of us listened. In my experience, Arkan addressed all of these requests to the spirits as he sang and drummed during the course of the ceremony. It was a sacred space and one for which I am grateful. I also must confess that I spent a great deal of time resisting the heat, being fearful of losing my breath. I wanted so badly at times to get out of there. After a while, I began to relax and surrender to the experience.

One thing I asked for was to be relieved from allergies. For six months, my body had been barraged with unusually intense and unrelenting allergic reactions. (A few years back I had discovered I am allergic to every weed in Colorado and New Mexico, as well as juniper.) After the ceremony was over, twilight set in. As I walked along a path from the sweat lodge to the main Arawaka gathering facility and dining room, I felt remarkably at peace. Suddenly, I became aware of the grasses, shrubs, juniper bushes and pinon trees around me. I realized these were living beings. They seemed to shimmer and radiate aliveness. I had a flash of awareness that they were me, and I them. I began to laugh, realizing how ridiculous it was for me to be allergic to myself. To this day, my allergic reactions have dramatically abated.

The next afternoon, after another morning session of sharing and listening together with Arkan, he led us through a lengthy Peruvian ceremony that is called the “*despacho*” ceremony. The name of this ceremony refers to a prayer bundle. The ceremony is an ancient one conducted by shamans from the Q’ero or Quechua-speaking traditions from the Peruvian Andes. The bulk of the ceremony consists of building prayer bundles. These can be bundles from an individual or bundles containing the prayers for a whole group.

In this case, we sat together quietly in a large circle in the meeting room, chewing Peruvian coca

leaves. Arkan carefully described each step of the process, while we visualized our commitment for this ceremony, aligning on a group purpose for Pachamama. All of the prayers were dedicated to the Earth—notably the mountains, rivers, animals and plants close to each of our birth places and where we live—as well as important people in our lives. At the end of the process, there were two despacho bundles, one representing the sacred masculine principles and one the sacred feminine. In my experience, what was being activated for each of us was a heart connection with each other, with humanity and with our living planet.

The ceremony concluded by our returning with the two bundles to the same ceremonial campfire site as the day before and contributing the bundles to the fire. Speaking for myself, I found it to be a liberating experience, and, at the end, I once again felt an enormous connection to the land, the plant life, the sky, the wind and all the people in our group, especially my wife Mary.

## COMPLETION

The next morning—our last morning at Arawaka—we gathered again to share our experiences. After performing the sage ritual together, the men and women split up into separate groups with the women going somewhere on site together with Marilyn and the men staying with Arkan to talk.

I don’t know what the women talked about. However, we men talked about what it means to be a man in this world. Let’s call it the masculine principle, or, better, call it the sacred masculine. As each of us spoke, we passed around tobacco, letting ourselves dwell in each other’s presence and listen to each other. I will not attempt to talk about the content of our conversations here, but I will submit for your consideration the possibility that men and women each have something vital, important and unique to contribute inside of the listening of Pachamama. This has nothing specifically to do with gender itself, but lives inside of higher sacred principles.

During our final gathering as a group, after all of us had shared our experiences and expressed appreciation for the gifts we had received, Arkan shared some of his visions and intentions, two of which represent huge possibilities.

First, in July 2019, Arawaka would host a special forgiveness ceremony. Each year, people come from all around to participate in an annual Sun Dance at Arawaka.<sup>6</sup> For the ceremony in 2019, the last day of the four-day Sun Dance would be devoted to an event in which descendants of the Native Americans and the United States cavalry, who had been involved with the famous 1890 massacre at Wounded Knee, could come together in a ceremony of forgiveness. The ceremony would be led by Arkan's adopted Lakota father, Basil Brave Heart. Arkan invited us all to attend and witness this historic occasion. (In July, most of us did, in fact, return to Arawaka to be part of that ceremony. It was a privilege being there and a profoundly moving experience. At some point, I intend to write about that event, but there isn't space to do so in this paper.)

The second vision that Arkan shared was an idea he had been considering for a long time—the possibility of founding a school for indigenous wisdom. He believed that such a school could play a vitally important role in preserving indigenous cultures and representing the wisdom that has been mostly dormant or hidden since ancient times. Such a school could be a key to the success of humanity in the future, as well as the long-term viability of all life on Earth.

Arkan asked us whether we thought white people would be interested in such a teaching and if it could be done in such a way that white people could be included successfully. Note that I am speaking bluntly here, perhaps more bluntly than Arkan spoke with us. Indigenous people, by and large, have many good reasons to mistrust white European ways of operating based upon colonial history. However, he held the opinion that it would be important for everyone to be included. We all agreed enthusiastically and wholeheartedly. Mary and I chimed in immediately that we wanted to be included in whatever way would be supportive for making such a thing happen. In both our minds, we believed that we could at the very least bring our listening and the experiences from the past 13 years in co-creating the Mastery School for Leadership.

Arkan invited all of us to come back in August to put together a first meeting for exploring the

creation of a school for indigenous wisdom. He did put that together and Mary and I attended.

## REFLECTIONS ON A FOUNDING: AUGUST 2019

In August 2019, Mary and I had the privilege of participating in another founding. I am not going to try to speak of that experience in as great detail, because it would be too long an account. But what's more important, I am still digesting it. So, I will offer a few highlights with the intention of sharing at least a taste of the possibility.

I knew that in coming to Arawaka for this gathering, I was the new kid on the block. Despite all of what I had learned from Landmark and Mastery, all of my experiences of our successes and failures of the School for Leadership and all of my expertise from co-founding and building a successful software company, I was well aware that my job was to listen. In terms of the world of Pachamama and indigenous wisdom, I was (and remain) the least spiritually developed of the people in attendance. All of my knowledge and know-how would be useful analogically at best, and I had to be quite open to the probability that I had no wisdom to contribute at all. In this domain, I knew "jack," and, in a real sense, I had nothing to lose.

## FOUNDERS

In Mastery, we have a policy of maintaining the confidentiality of our participants. In this paper, I also consider it appropriate not to name the people who gathered at Arawaka to found this new school. However, I can say that during the four days at Arawaka, about 20-to-25 people, including children, from around the world and across the United States attended.

Several leaders in the conversation included a shaman and tribal representative from Ecuador, the head of the Pachamama Alliance in South America, another shaman from Cusco in the Andes of Peru, a seer and senior leader of an indigenous people who live deep in the Grand Canyon, a spiritual teacher living in Taos, a Peruvian native who does research at the University of Wisconsin, a Lakota musician living in Colorado, along with his two remarkable teenage sons, a Dakota-Lakota man from Nebraska whom I

would also characterize as a gifted seer and, lastly, another native of Peru and longtime associate of Arkan who lives in Santa Fe and has since become a close friend to Mary and me.

In addition, various other supporters and friends of Arawaka, some local and some from other parts of the United States, attended. Approximately half of us were of European or mixed-European descent. As a matter of pure beauty, it became clear to me that we all were equals in each other's eyes and that this venture was going to be a spontaneous community creation.

## PROCEEDINGS

For four days, we ate, talked and engaged in ceremony together. Not one of these activities was more or less important than the others. At each step, and in every session, there was connection and healing. We connected deeply to each other and to the Earth through the food we ate. As much as possible, our food was local and all of it was organic. As Lynne Twist said in her e-mail quoted above, food was medicine.

During our conversation sessions, our indigenous partners shared experiences. They taught us history in the form of facts and legend. Each of us shared our visions, dreams and realizations. What became revealed to me was the depth of what could be possible for all of us, as a whole of humanity, were we to expand our listening way outside the bounds of knowledge and certainty. I learned that our connection lives at a far deeper level than where I normally look and operate. One shaman noted that our conversation itself was taking place in the spirit world, not the material world. While this is not something I can verify or validate through my usual ways of thinking, I experienced in my heart that he was speaking truth.

Lastly, and of equal importance, we engaged in five ceremonies. Two of those were sweat lodges, each different from the one in May and each with its own focus. One sweat lodge I would characterize as a request for spiritual guidance. The other was for healing one of our members. We took part in two despacho ceremonies, each led by a different shaman, each again tuned to distinct purposes, the well-being of the planet

and each other's healing. The last ceremony is one that I can neither characterize nor name, but best describe as a kind of "seeing." I'm not being intentionally mysterious here, but this occurred as a tradition in which I have no foothold, and it is best left now to a saying of Ludwig Wittgenstein, an Austrian philosopher. He said, "That of which one cannot speak, one must remain silent."<sup>7</sup>

In our last meeting, Arkan observed that didn't really know how this event would go or what would be the outcome. But, by his declaration, a new school now exists.

## CONCLUSION

As a modern European-American of Western heritage living in the age of technological science without training or education in these indigenous traditions, I find it challenging to articulate them in a way that does them justice. It's analogous to my experience of trying to talk about The Landmark Forum, which I know that many readers of this journal can understand.

What's clear is something altered for me during the three days in May and the four days in August. It was visceral in my body, emotions and in the realm of my spiritual being. I can only describe it as profound and deep. Unlike a good portion of the Forum, the experience was not intellectual or even verbal. Yet I have since found my intellect attuned to ways I cannot characterize or describe. I also feel that my intellect and heart are more aligned with my body, and I am living in a new listening with a newly evolving vision for the future of human existence on this planet.

Since this past September, I now find myself in three schools, not counting the ongoing exploration and inquiry of more than 40 years of participation in the programs created by Werner Erhard and Landmark. First, I continue to participate on the Board of Trustees for the Mastery Foundation and work with other volunteers in supporting the evolution and delivery of the curriculum of transformational leadership. The Mastery School for Leadership is a clear calling in my life. The people with whom we work and serve are amazing human beings who have created possible futures that go way beyond what I can now imagine. They are making

a difference in Israel, Northern Ireland and the United States.

Second, I am committed to supporting, in whatever way I can best contribute, the ongoing creation of this budding indigenous school for wisdom. At the time of this writing, the school has no name or label, and its formation is clearly in the early stages. However, from my experience with Arkan, Marilyn, the volunteers at Arawaka, my colleagues of the Pachamama Alliance, and all who have participated in one capacity or another so far, a great future lies ahead. This is a future that will make a difference for all indigenous peoples of this planet, including you and me.

Finally, since last September I have been a student in a master's program of the Graduate Institute of St. John's College in Santa Fe. In this program, I am delving and inquiring into the great books of Western civilization, going all the way back to ancient Greece and the Bible. My cohorts there include mostly young people—brilliant young people who have open minds and enthusiasm for learning, growth and development. In many ways, it's a humbling experience; in all ways, it's exciting.

In this setting, I stand with a commitment to follow some advice I received from the Ecuadorian shaman in August. As I read and study these master works, I will look for windows through which I might be able to connect to the deeply hidden, seemingly long lost, but clearly eternal indigenous wisdom, inside of which we, and all our ancestors, arose. In the process, I hope to contribute in some humble way to a new kind of philosophizing. I say that our own Judeo-Christian, Indo-European, Greco-Roman, past and future heritage and Pachamama herself await us. The opportunity is to learn to listen and respond to her call.

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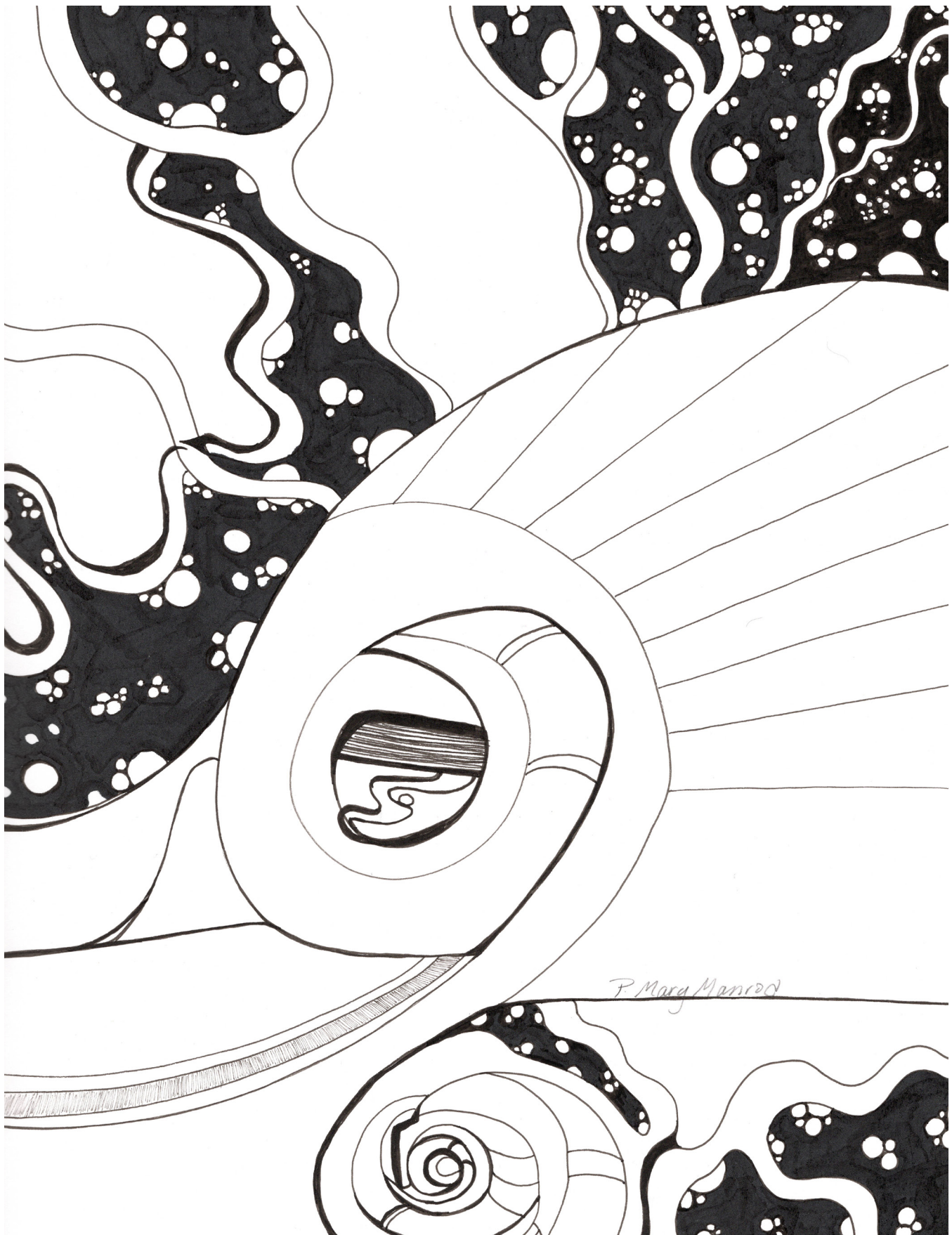
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## ENDNOTES

- 1 The Mastery Foundation is a nonprofit volunteer, interfaith organization whose mission is to empower those who minister and serve others in creating new possibilities for themselves and their communities. For more information, go to [www.masteryfoundation.org/](http://www.masteryfoundation.org/).
- 2 The Power and Contribution course was an advanced program in the Wisdom Course Area of Landmark from 2001 until its retirement a few years ago. The program consisted of five weekends over approximately nine months; the fifth weekend became what is now known as the Conference for Global Transformation.
- 3 "Impossible Promise" is a term used in the Power and Contribution course, representing a large promise for the world to which a participant in that course could choose to commit his or her life. Such a promise required the person to step way beyond what she or he previously considered possible in order to fulfill it.
- 4 The Mastery School for Leadership is a virtual school created by volunteers who have participated in one or more of the programs offered by the Mastery Foundation (see above). Its three-year program has the purpose of providing distinctions to transformational leaders who are up to making a lasting difference in their communities in Northern Ireland and Israel, and religious leaders in the United States.
- 5 The Pachamama Alliance is a nonprofit organization based in San Francisco and Ecuador. Its vision is for a world that works for everyone: an environmentally sustainable, spiritually fulfilling, socially just human presence on this planet—a New Dream for humanity. Its mission is to empower indigenous people of the Amazon rainforest to preserve their lands and culture and, using insights gained from that work, to educate and inspire individuals everywhere to bring forth a thriving, just and sustainable world. See [www.pachamama.org](http://www.pachamama.org).
- 6 The Sun Dance is a traditional ceremony practiced by some indigenous peoples of the North American plains.
- 7 Quoted roughly at the conclusion of Wittgenstein's "Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus."







# DISCOVERIES FROM THE INQUIRIES

For decades now, thinking has been one of my favorite pastimes. As a young newspaper reporter in the 1970s, I loved engaging my mind in an issue or a problem, ultimately to figure something out, form an opinion or learn something. I would realize from time to time that thinking, particularly overthinking, could be a trap. I would be left in doubt, confusion and frustration. In those moments, I used to joke that although my mind was my best friend, it was also my worst enemy.

Then I discovered inquiry, a wholly separate endeavor. In the last few years, it has become a form of play for me. I learned that I could inquire for no reason and with no expected outcome. I learned to begin with wonder. Someone in the 2019 Inquiry Explorations program offered a quote, attributing it to the Direct Access course (no longer offered by Landmark) that explains why wonder is such a great starting point for inquiry:

“Wonder is the unwilling willingness to meet what is utterly strange in what is most familiar. It is the willingness to step back and let things speak to us, a passive receptivity to let the things of the world present themselves in their own terms.”

Several of this year’s contributors have been involved with the Inquiries of the Social Commons or the Inquiry Explorations program, or both. Often, their inquiries are weekly inquiry calls. I now participate regularly with one weekly call and am repeatedly touched by this online community with participants from Asia, Australia, Europe, New Zealand and North America as we listen and speak, speak and listen. The inquiry calls are offered on these topics:

- Contribution: Why busy people listen
- Discourses: The building blocks of meaning
- Living as a Created Self: Carving out new pathways for life
- Measures: The art of comparison
- Public Persona: Who do they think I am?
- Social Commons: The memory you forgot

Each contributor in this section discovered something astonishing. Read on and you most likely will be drawn to embark on your next inquiry. Please share what you discovered from your inquiry in next year’s journal.

– Melinda Voss, Editor

# ON THE ROAD TO LISTENING, THE JOURNEY CONTINUES: HAVING “NOTHING” TO OFFER

CHRIS KIRTZ

Being a custodian for the Inquiry of the Social Commons’ call known as the “Living as a Created Self: Carving out New Pathways for Life” continues to be the best assisting agreement I’ve had in my 46 years of assisting.

I am a lifer, having taken the first est Training in April 1975 and then taken, assisted in and led programs ever since.

Inquiry is a designed conversation where we “park,” “bracket” or put to the side what we think we know or know we know and practice developing the ability to look. Looking involves standing in childlike wonder with no preconceptions or prejudgments, just wide-open possibility and seeing what we discover.

As Brian Regnier puts it, “Inquiry is an access to the immediate transformation of reality.”

In the ordinary course of events, we gather a piece of information or datum, compare it to what we already know – our existing “wall of knowledge” and see if, and where, it fits. If there’s no immediate fit, we either discard it or put it aside for possible future use. It is incremental learning.

In inquiry, we look newly from nothing and into an unlimited opening. Discoveries there are most often exponential, or as Thomas Kuhn, an American physicist and philosopher, would reference it, “... at a different paradigm level.”

Readers of my report from last year’s journal may recall I began with an interest in more effective communication. Until I took my first Communications course over 30 years ago, I assumed this meant more precise speaking.

There, to my surprise, I discovered the real power was in listening. My listening journey began then and has never wavered.

My commitment is that: Listening is as sought after, valued and in demand as speaking.

Last year’s report noted my practice as a custodian and in life was “... listening as the social commons of transformation.”

This year’s report – the one you are now reading – has expanded this practice to include “... with nothing to offer!”

So now, for reasons explained more fully below, it reads, “... listening as the social commons of transformation with nothing to offer!”

Recently this year, Susie Fraser, who heads the custodian program, led an aspiring custodian training. It was designed for those who were interested in developing the capacities of a custodian as well as those who were committed to actually being custodians and hosting inquiries.

As a custodian’s principal duty is listening, a good deal of attention was focused there. We dealt in-depth with the notion of life being “... empty and meaningless, and empty and meaningless that it was empty and meaningless.” In addition, we focused on listening “... with ‘nothing’ to offer.”

## **NOTHING AS “CONTENT”**

I took on “listening with nothing to offer” with a vengeance. A seasoned custodian with considerable “listening” experience, I put my attention laser-like on having “nothing” to offer. I was vigilant about being “out here” with inquiry



participants as a whole – a social commons of transformation. I paid special attention when any one of them was speaking.

I noticed an immediate difference. In the past, I'd often (truth be told all too often) amplified, underscored or built on what someone offered. It was relatively easy to catch myself and simply say, "Thank you, anything more about that?" and listen, simply listen. Participant's discoveries seemed more profound and impactful unembellished by me. The inquiries themselves were richer, more intimate and more participatory.

### **NOTHING AS "CONTEXT"**

Then I discovered there was an even more powerful "nothing" from which to listen and make available. For the first time, I started to listen from the "nothing" of "everything/nothing" – the domain of possibility of anything and everything – rather than the "nothing" of simply having nothing to add to what had been said.

This new "nothing listening" opened an entirely new realm of listening/speaking for inquiry itself to emerge. Participants, who spoke, noticed things from new depths, reported having had greater impacts and found themselves in action newly on their commitments. Participants, who were listening, in addition to simply being touched, moved and inspired, reported noticing new openings for, and actually being in, action in ways they never saw possible or engaged in before.

Moreover, the inquiries themselves took on the qualities of self-generating dances where the conversations took on a life of their own with no identifiable leading or following, just the thrall of discovery and being in action as a natural, spontaneous, life flow.

That's the update from this year's listening journey. More next year in an article or report – likely on the shape of listening – and our immediate, already, anytime, available at-our-fingertips way to know our heretofore unknown and unacknowledged limits.

'Til next year, may your listening expand amazingly and miracles abound.

# IS ANYONE HAPPY ANYMORE?

KATHY FEDORI

It's minus 27 degrees Fahrenheit (-33 Celsius) and dropping. One of my tires is flat reading 200 and losing air. Thank goodness it's a run flat. I can still get out of here.

There is a dead air zone. That's where the frozen snow is waiting to thaw. I live in between the social commons of polar winter nights in the north, in a depressed economy where the fossil fuels are essential to survive the cold and condemned because of their CO2 omissions, and the social commons of the audacious transformation of the conversations on Zoom calls and international vacation courses. I admit, I've lapped up all of it in joy, curled up in misery and wondering how to connect. Only recently, I started to play in the zone that I do not know or do not dare to know.

I spent the year jumping into brilliant discourses and conversations, solo trips that I never imagined I would take and transformational courses next to a beach. I was having so much fun that I forgot to plan what I'd do with the rest of my life. Then, in the silence, I woke up.

Winter hit hard. Everything freezes. But, the zone where something is discovered opens up in the silence of a frozen land. I have moon boots and fake furs to go outside to do my morning Qi Gong meditation. On this frigid night, baby, it's cold outside and in. I sit in my quiet home and listen.

A hidden emotion stirred ... one I did not have the courage to face until I saw the joy of being with the total human experience. That emotion was being sad.

I saw and felt the sadness that I had hidden for many, many years in those deep, dark days of December. That sad badass boy of emotion grabbed my heart and hung it out to dry.

I felt it when the grandchildren didn't come this year, and my friends spent time with their families.

This time I didn't run. I faced it. I swirled in it. I sunk in it. BE sad. Yes, that's all there was. Be sad. Stay with it. Feel it. Know it. Use it. Listen for it. This was my exercise in trying out listening on my own body, on me.

Not too many people knew how to deal with me as I was OK with just being sad. Not my mother's genes. Try to tell the world that being sad is being with humanity. No one goes for it. Once it was done, everything opened up.

When you least expect it, and I imagine when you have finally processed a thought long enough like I did, enough is enough, it's over. Life comes back. I'm out of the zone. Love comes back and the high beams are on. Somehow, a new vision comes with me. Listening. Simple and all that was needed. I listened. Being sad ended as I started to listen beyond who I am.

I opened my ears and was in the 2020s and in a conversation with transformed souls, meeting weekly on Zoom to romp in cutting edge and immersive thought. It was never too soon to be in the social commons where I could talk about the deep dark emotion and the joy of living. There was an astonishing and symphonic seduction of bringing all of the emotion, good and bad, to all the listeners. Everyone brought the world with them and then, like a slice from a frozen winter, boldly shared all of it.

This decade's transformation is not unlike a happening 100 years ago when radio entered the nation's homes. It had a revolutionary impact by bringing voices of the world to the kitchen table. By the end of that decade everyone was humming along and the single most significant mass entertainment in 1929 was movies. There were 700 Hollywood movies and audiences of 90 million a week. The numbers of conversations we hear in each of our lives now will soar past that. Can

we hear it all? We are just the early adapters and, perhaps, listening to ourselves is the first step.

Our lives have expanded exponentially ... the future is streaming to millions and connoisseurs of a new age have a new hypothesis that says the crowd is worth its weight in gold in the internet era. It is a transformational realization that the individual is no longer number one ... that there is a ray of hope for a community with time to listen.

But who has time to listen? But wait a minute, that was then ... what if a worldwide virus stops everything? The Earth flipped on its axis months ago, just as the chatter was growing faster than the silence. We came to a dead stop ... COVID-19 put the brakes on our world. Now, we were listening ... and with the choice to lose your life or stay home, we stopped and were not happy ... at first. Was this a miracle cloaked in darkness?

A captive audience loves to be being sad ... we watched the news three times a day together in misery and then like the Corona virus, we turned on the light. We were in this together! One world. Everyone was happy not to be sick and willing to do drive-bys to wave at someone's birthday. Enter the next big transformation as people around the globe began to enjoy experiencing a new universe based on seeing everything, feeling everything and imagining they can be anything ... virtually. And with a smile. Sadness was getting second billing.

The final shot to sadness came when we remembered we had technology, from Zoom to Instagram to Facetime and discovered that the playing field was equal. We tried social distancing and washing our hands with soap and connecting with a community around the world. One call grew to 15 on Zoom to 3,500, four times a week on webinars. Being alone was transformed. There was no longer any time to be sad.

The COVID-19 pandemic opens even more space than radio did a century ago. It allows me to get that I am humanity ... alongside 7.7 billion people. What if the ticket to a great life is simply being with all of it?

A month into the new world of virtual friends and drive-by waves, what I didn't see coming was how easy it would be to just flip emotions, to let

life come to me, to be with the deep darkness and then be with the brilliant light ... in the virtual commons united in our humanity ... to just be ... to be happy. Is anyone happy anymore? Is there anything else to be?

# THE COMMITMENT THAT I FORGOT ...

GEOFFREY FENN

*"Over two billion people live in countries experiencing high water stress and about four billion people experience severe water scarcity during at least one month of the year. Stress levels will continue to increase as demand for water grows and the effects of climate change intensify."*

*— U.N. World Water Development Report, March 18, 2019*

Fifteen years ago, I was introduced to a new subsurface drainage technology that promised to change how the world managed its water by facilitating rainwater harvesting, reducing consumption and restoring groundwater more cost effectively. I became excited about making an impact on a worldwide crisis – and then I forgot.

This technology is more effective than the ubiquitous slotted pipe that has been in use for longer than most people can recall. It works through surface tension, capillary action and siphoning as well as gravity, and the results from overseas looked very promising. As I looked closely at the details, it occurred to me that it was capable of more than simply draining people's backyards and golf courses. Could it, for instance, be run in reverse to irrigate in a way that might overcome some of the drawbacks of conventional flood, spray and drip irrigation systems? This would lead to more effective and less wasteful water use. Could it also be used in a closed-loop

system to maximize rainwater harvesting?

The more I studied it, the more excited I became about the prospect of these sustainable water management systems. I steered my research and development program in a number of parallel and interconnected projects. At this same time, I was participating in the Self-Expression & Leadership Program. Naturally, I used the skills learned and the tools gained there to build a team of 37 people who committed themselves to my program – in writing and without any guarantees of payment! I enrolled two professors, three senior soil scientists, one engineer, a couple of horticulturalists, landscapers, several turf/pasture experts, some marketing folk, some accountants and even a lawyer.

Things were proceeding rapidly with plans being formulated, tested, costed and reviewed by potential customers, and the whole team was excited. Then disaster (in the form of a crooked investor followed by the global financial crisis) struck and we found ourselves without the funding we expected. Nonetheless, we continued our research and development (R&D) program with a smaller team and with funding from the Australian government. A change of the rules surrounding the funding meant that everything stopped. Not a happy outcome even though, by this stage, we had successfully installed a pilot plant showing a more effective and sustainable groundwater recharge system and had shown that our irrigation system in a vineyard produced the same amount of fruit for about 30% of the water used by the standard drip system.

At that point, I decided that in order to generate money to continue the R&D into sustainable water management, I would create a drainage business. Our research had shown that the technology was, indeed, more effective than the traditional

drainage methods and our development work showed that our installation costs could be about 50% less. It seemed to be an obvious decision.

It seemed, then, that we had lived to fight another day, but my focus began to shift from the exciting possibilities of sustainable water management to the arduous task of creating a business. I am a scientist by inclination and training. I am not practiced as a businessman, and, yet, here I was, attempting to create and develop a start-up business in a very competitive market with very entrenched practices (excuse the pun).

One of my first priorities was to get financial support. I thought that this might be relatively straightforward given the success in enrollment and registration I had experienced at the beginning. I soon found out, though, that while I could clearly see the connection between the success of the drainage business and the continued possibility of sustainable water management technologies, the folks with the money failed to be enrolled in a struggling business. While I could see the “blue sky” opportunity, they could only see the mud in the trenches. I was left with being head-down and the other end up.

When my head is down and my other end is up, my structural language is muffled. My excitement is lost. No one is enrolled, and, even though people may admire my persistence and determination, they certainly don’t want to become part of my team. Five years down this path and the going was tough.

Enter the realm of Inquiries of the Social Commons. I registered into the Inquiries Explorations course in May 2019 and was encouraged to participate in the weekly sessions, the first one of which was called “The Social Commons: The Memory You Forgot.” We were asked to introduce ourselves as our commitment to the world. In that instant, I remembered my commitment to the world which is “to promote and facilitate sustainable water management.” The excitement came flooding back as I recalled those early days and remembered what was, and is, possible.

What’s more, every time I spoke my commitment, either on the inquiry calls or to friends, I experienced the same excitement. I immediately shared it

with potential investors and they got excited. I shared it with my team and they got excited. I have shared it with my community in the Partnership Explorations course and they got excited. I have shared it within the inquiry calls on Zoom and four people have been in touch to talk to me about their own projects dealing with water. My team of distributors has lifted the excitement in the business, not so much as a business but as a guiding light for their involvement in it.

Through my continuing involvement in the Inquiries of the Social Commons, I am reminded of my ability to tap into my community for resources, to develop and expand my public persona, to ensure that I have created and am using appropriate measures as a comparison of where my commitment is heading in contrast to the current situation and how I can impact the discourses around water, its use, abuse and value.

I have responded to the invitation of the inquiries to join a group of people who are up to something significant in, and for, their lives. Together with them, I am rediscovering, celebrating and developing my commitment to the world in a free spirit of human inquiry.

And the results are stunning!

# LISTENING IS

ED STROUPE

What if God said

Open yourself up to me,  
I have something to tell you?  
Would you be listening?  
Would you even hear her?

What if listening was throwing open

All the doors and windows of your soul?  
Would you see the sunshine on the waters?  
Would you hear the birds in the wind?  
Would you feel, smell, taste the fresh air?

What if listening is throwing open

The Clearing

In which you and the world show up,  
In which I show up in your world,  
In which the Saying of language is given,  
In which We show up in the Saying?

As the Ancient One,

The Obscure One said

Listen:

Not to me but to the Saying ...

As the Beloved One,

The Swiftest One said

Listen:

In the beginning was the Saying ...

As the Timely One,

The Radical One said

Listen:

To the movement of the Showing ...

What if in the beginning

Was the Listening?

What if Listening Is?

What if Listening (Is)?

What if (Listening) Is?

# HOW A CONVERSATION CAN TRAVEL BEYOND YOU: THE SPIRIT OF #DANCEBREAK

DANICA LANI

*Once I discovered transformation in 2004, I left my hermitage in the Australian bush at the ripe age of 25 and rode that rollercoaster ride through every program I could, including being a staff member for 2.5 years, a seminar leader apprentice and a Wisdom course leader apprentice. However, it was during my participation in the Wisdom Unlimited course in 2010 that I invented a commitment worthy of my life. My commitment is that people dance.*

I've taken that commitment and created businesses teaching people dance workouts from film clips and movies, choreographing first wedding dances, silent discos, performances and my favorite social experiment – flash mobs. Some of you may have participated in a flash mob that I choreographed for the opening of the Conference for Global Transformation in 2017 in Monterey, California.

During the 2018 Wisdom course, I had a breakthrough in taking an idea from Stage One (Listen/Express) into Stage Two (Remember/Forget) where I remembered about it long enough

to take action. The idea was to put on a favorite song and dance however I felt while live streaming it on social media as a daily practice. This took courage. I felt nervous and vulnerable. I started exactly where I was with the resources I had at the time and began in my loft bedroom/office in Newtown, Sydney, Australia. The access to this breakthrough wasn't in representational language; it wasn't through thinking about it or talking about it. I'd done that. The access was in structural language – in moving my body. "Okay, body, set up the iPhone to video the dance. Find the music, press play. Move your finger and press go live!" I called this daily practice #dancebreak.

Last year, I wrote in the Journal for the 2019 Conference for Global Transformation about discovering a new model of connectedness on social media as I continued my daily #dancebreak practice. Since then, #dancebreak has grown to be a global phenomenon. I have received requests from people all over the world to dance to particular songs, had famous artists like and comment on my videos and had several videos go viral overnight. By the end of 2019, I had done 241 #dancebreaks and 11.8 million people around the world have seen #dancebreak (see Figure 1.).

As such, my public persona has grown beyond my originating circle. People have recognized me at Central Station and commented online that they spotted me. However, #dancebreak has a spirit that is beyond me. It's a demonstration of self-expression, play and joy. There is always an invitation – come join me. It grants people permission to move, express and experience connectedness as human beings.

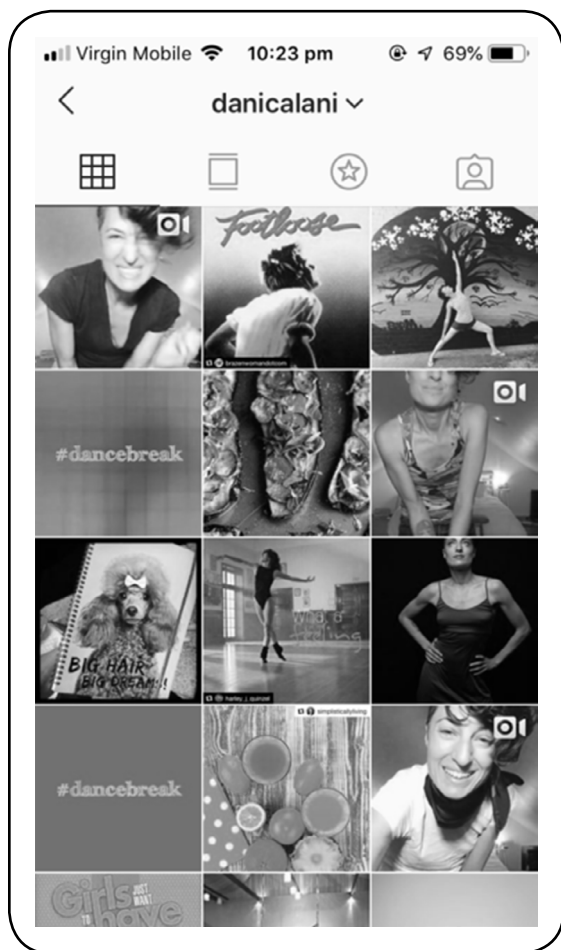


Figure 1.

The ethos of #dancebreak is based on several promises and commitments.

1. That social media is a place where people experience being connected. They are seen, heard and loved.
2. Structural language: That dance is a language and speaks to other humans in a wordless expression.
3. My stand is: If you can move, you can dance. No one left out.
4. That we all belong to the same human family.
5. When we move our bodies, things can shift: our perspective, our experience, the actions we see to take, our mood, our quality of life.
6. That #dancebreak is uplifting. It brings play, fun and it exists to spread joy.



Figure 2.

What I've discovered is that structural language can travel. As #dancebreak grew, people began sending me their own dancebreak videos. I've seen an information technology (IT) department in cubicle offices take a #dancebreak. I've seen a group of friends take a #dancebreak in an alleyway covered in street art. I've even seen a tradesman in a high visibility vest operating a concrete polisher take a #dancebreak. An incredible artist friend of mine and Wisdom Course leader, Andy Monks, created a beautiful oil painting to capture the spirit of #dancebreak (shown above).

Sometimes when we are committed to making a difference, we don't hear from the people we make a difference to. I've discovered if I stand in that I make a difference, then I can broaden my perspective to include all the people I make a difference to that never say so. When someone does reach out to tell me about the difference



I've made, I now wonder how many people they represent who never reach out.

Here's some of the feedback:

Amazing 🥰  
reminder to live life with  
passion! Love the intensity and  
positivity of this post!

You make me  
wanna stop scrolling and dance  
👏👏 Job well done! ❤️

Thank you Dani for  
bringing us light ✨ Always  
wonderful to see you shine! ❤️

Today at 12:33

Your dance breaks give me  
so much life! On my worst  
days of lonely queerness I  
remember I can at least  
dance it out and that  
means everything ❤️💜❤️



Mess...



heart expands. On those days, I find that I have to breathe to let that much love in.

Today, I invite you to take a dance break. Put on a song and move however you feel and let the love and joy in.

Connect with me here:

Insta: @danicalani

Twitter: @danica\_lani

Facebook: @iamdanicalani

And then when someone messages to let me know the profound difference I make to their experience of life, the challenges of having expanded my public persona and dealing with people's assumptions about who I am and my availability to them, showing up to do #dancebreak as a matter of my word versus how I feel, learning how to use new technology and how to behave in a group online environment that comes with agreements, all fade away and my

# TRANSFORMING THE PREVAILING CONVERSATIONS ABOUT AGING STARTING WITH ME AND DANCING MY WAY TO THE END!

ANITA MARK

In 2019, I turned 72. Up to then telling people my age was a definite no-no for me. You never ask a lady her age, right?

I did not enjoy entering my seventh decade in 2017, signaled by all the birthday cards on my mantle with the big number 70 on them. As I looked at them, I vowed never to send a birthday card with a number on it again. Up to then it never occurred to me that people might not like that kind of birthday card, it might upset them. It just seemed the thing to do. But I was unconscious that I had drunk the “old age Kool-Aid,” and it looked pretty gray. Enter the doldrums.

I would tell people to really appreciate and enjoy their 69th year, as all that would change when they reached 70 and they would be old. In my mind, 69 was senior, but still newly minted. Hey – I’m from the generation that was told not to trust anyone over 30. I remember the year that I turned 30 ... uh-oh. Adjust that statement and here I am.

I seemed to notice other things changing around me, too, in keeping with the societal conversations that are currently accepted and promoted around aging. No matter to marketers that I was part of that big group of boomers who had huge spending power. Nothing. No replies from job applications. Feelings of being invisible. No mention of the obvious that, if lucky enough, we will all age. I had been one of those people in my younger years who discounted the gray-haired.

Every now and then I would see photographs of eccentric-looking 90-year-old doyennes in giant black glasses, oversized jewelry and flamboyant clothes in wild colors on social media and magazines. Ridiculous, I thought. Bragging.

Not pretty. Especially at their age. They should know better.

So, in this report I am not saying that I am a convert to that kind of gaudy fashion and eyewear! However, I have had a shift. I understand what the photos are communicating. I have chosen my age and body, and it feels as though I’m taking off an old shroud and putting on my dancing shoes.

It started with an invitation out of the blue from a friend to do the Facilitated Wisdom Course for Elders. It came at the perfect time and looked like this was the place for me in my “despair.” I knew the Wisdom Unlimited course, having been in several in Seattle and Vancouver as a participant and assistant. Fun, ease and play – collaging, autobiographing and playing. I could get into that again, and so this Elders course had potential. It would mean traveling by ferry and car from Victoria to Seattle for five weekends, but the price was right and I believed that I could meet some nice, new folks. (I had even written in my January 2019 creating-the-year intentions that I would make 10 new friends.) Brian Regnier, a Wisdom course leader, would lead. This had to be good. I registered.

It was good beyond expectations. I found myself in the emergence of a new conversation about aging – as opposed to resisting inheriting the culture of age – with a whole new group of people aged 65+, a prerequisite for the course.

This course works almost mysteriously. It is facilitated via Zoom and mostly the participants just talk, with Brian speaking as sharing occurs. Simple so it seems. On the West Coast, we start at 8 a.m. and go until 2 p.m., taking regular breaks and enjoying potluck lunches together, though

I must say that our facilitator Ellen spoiled us. That was how it worked all year. Our group took on having weekly Zoom calls between weekends, and we still do, with one person saying the other day these calls and our little community are so precious that no one is allowed to leave.

Along with the usual tips at the end of Wisdom weekends, we had another one: talk to strangers. So I did. Suddenly, it seemed that all kinds of people were very friendly, fun and easy to talk with, and spontaneous conversations could start up anywhere about anything – opening us up to contribution from others and accessing the eternal through talking to strangers.

My best description of my experience of the Elders course is an analogy: Remember when you were young and visiting family or friends. When the kids got together, they had such fun that they didn't want to go home. Well, ditto for being with my Elders group – a new originating circle with generative listening.

It's nearly a year since then and I have a different outlook on aging. I call it kick-ass aging. We don't say elderly. We say oldsters. We are the elders in our society, and, despite our western culture, elderhood is an honorable position. We elders are a huge untapped resource. We offer the gifts of experience, observation and wisdom. We have time. We are needed. Of course, this is not to ignore that old age is marked by its own challenges – just as growing up into adulthood does. But, knowing and accepting that we are going to die levels the playing field. Aging becomes a freeing and empowering adventure. I got that I can embrace my age but don't have to *be* old.

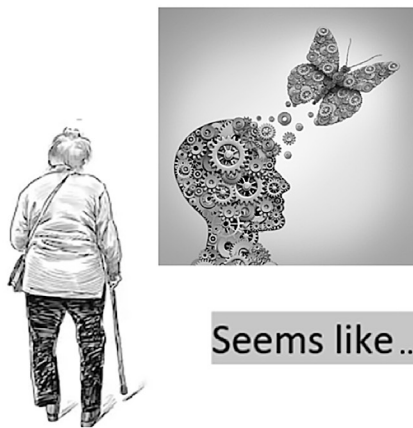
I have lightened up with myself about being older and have fewer expectations of staying young-looking. I can ignore commercial propaganda on how to purchase all the *shoulds* we are bombarded with that try to erase aging. Smiling is my most youthful cosmetic now! Transformative. Erasing the gaps and distances between people. Some examples:

1. I first recognized that my age conversation had disappeared for me when having tea in a café in Vancouver's Chinatown while participating with an international organization of which I'm a member (the

oldest member I think). I joined a table with a woman who I first thought looked tough. She had blue hair, wore a dark hoodie and her hands were completely tattooed, including every section of her fingers. I couldn't make out the letters and symbols without staring but one thing stood out – a little bunny tattoo in the space between her thumb and forefinger. I saw that as my invitation to ask her if she minded telling me about her tattoos. Well, they spelled out her daughter's name and love for her was in the other symbols including the bunny. She went on to share with me that she worked in a safe-injection drug facility and every person in the gritty downtown east side of the city had value, no matter what. Totally appropriate tattoos for who she was. I tear up when I recall this. We had an unforgettable, beautiful moment in time and that was when I lost my old person conversation.

2. One Elders weekend while having complimentary breakfast in the hotel my roomie and I were staying at, I asked the attendant where the milk was. She said, "Wake up," pointing to where it was. I was taken aback and then saw the twinkle in her eye and realized she was teasing me, reaching out to me and we laughed. In that moment, her hijab and ethnicity disappeared, and we began a sweet, short friendship. Her name is Sowda. I learned of her family and life before moving to America and fell in love, clearly seen in this photo.





**Seems like ... I can embrace my age but not BE old!**

This fall I was in Bellingham, Washington, and checking out the Costco there on a small mission for something not available in Canada. Somewhat unconsciously, I noticed a Japanese couple coming toward me seeming to want to speak to me.

They didn't speak English and kept pointing to big bags of baking soda with questioning expressions. Through gestures and pointing to the picture on the bag I was able to confirm that yes, baking soda is used as a laundry additive – even though I'd never known that. (I always use it now and here's a tip: It really works on old-people-smelling clothes!)

It was a very special minute with little need for language to experience this charming, brief interaction. I could go on. Trust me. You can expect miracles talking to strangers.

One other thing Brian asked us to do on one weekend was brag. What? I was taught not to brag. Of course – and I know you suspect something's coming – this was different. At first, I knew I was not going to share – I had nothin'. But, as others did, my rusty door to my memory opened up. Like a flood, my accomplishments spilled out. I shared. This is not about ego. It is about being known. If I don't say anything, well, who am I to people? Part of my Impossible Promise is the world connected.

So, who am I going to be going forward? How can I find out where my access to the eternal lives for me? I learned about dharma, my soul's

essence, in reading "The Great Work of My Life" with my Creation of Freedom girlfriends, and know that finding your dharma is the doorway to authenticity. Useful for old people and everyone.

If we view our life as a work of art, then old age is another developmental stage – a blank canvas or page. We have a choice of what we are living into. At this time of writing, I am organizing a 2020 Elders course to facilitate in my home in Victoria. This delicious conversation of having freedom and grace in the being of aging is one I want to be in to the end. If we are free to be, we are present, and then anything is possible.

I love this quote from Albert Camus, "In the midst of winter, I found there was, within me, an invincible summer."

My collage of my breakthrough is above.

Also at [www.1drv.ms/w/s!ApKCa5h15328gaNSZuoMG4MzSQQu4w?e=24P7Tr](http://www.1drv.ms/w/s!ApKCa5h15328gaNSZuoMG4MzSQQu4w?e=24P7Tr).

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# LIVING DANGEROUSLY: SAY WHAT YOU WANT – AND FEEL IT BEING CREATED IN THE MOMENT!

HAL D. ROSEN

As I explore and discover this past year's Conference for Global Transformation (2019), I have taken on the homework of "living in the messy margins of my life." From this inquiry, worlds have been opening up.

As I speak my commitment to the world, I am creating conscious environmental awareness of all in the now. I see a world that I was not aware of, and, as I wake up, ample opportunities arise all around me. From a very early age, I have lived in a world of fear, uncertainty and doubt. This distinction is called FUD. It created a world of illusion and confusion. Every day from approximately age 3 until 48 years old, I was filled with anxiety and worry. I learned how to cope by creating an evil twin. My evil twin is called "Little David Rosen."

Over the past 30 months within my participation in Wisdom, I have overcome various obstacles – heart surgery, selling a business, creating an inspirational and loving relationship with a partner, the fear of the unknown called "career-free living," traveling across the world, losing 50 pounds and several life-threatening addictions. My wisdom experience began in March 2017. My being was irritable, restless and discontent. My personal and work relations were messy, strained and unsatisfying.

Life seemed like a struggle and a continual annoyance. During my third weekend, I met a man who reminded me of what a racket was ... I had a constant complaint about my sleep and stress. Therefore, I decided to seek medical attention for issues related to heart palpitations I was experiencing daily. Three days later, at the

age of 48, I was diagnosed with a heart condition known as atrial fibrillation. This was my knock to transform myself and change my lens through which I view the world – or at least this was God doing what I could not do for myself.

In July 2017, I underwent my first heart procedure, cardio version, to restore my heart to normal rhythm. In August 2017, I put my business up for sale. In September 2017, I underwent my first heart surgery, a procedure called a cardiac ablation. By January 2018, I sold my business and met the love of my life. Life seemed to be going well. However, I still was unsatisfied and unfulfilled. My heart condition continued to be an issue. In March 2018, I underwent a second cardiac ablation surgery which corrected the issue almost immediately. Although my heart arrhythmia was cured, I still felt as though something was missing: FUD was still present.

From this point, I went on a mission to find myself. I went to India, Greece, Lithuania, Iceland, Scotland and England. I took several courses on mediation and self-exploration. The experiences were extreme. One course had me killing off my existing parents. Another course had me dance naked on a bar, and another had me laugh, sit, cry for hours and weeks at a time, play like a child, talk gibberish and other ludicrous activities. During this part of my exploration, I started to begin to live in the next "now wow," and then the next "now wow." I began to live in wonder and play once again.

In the early summer 2018, I started my journey into the Partnership Explorations course. This is where I began to lose my evil twin ... or at least start to get real and begin to get an awareness of "what's happening within me internally." Since

my participation in Partnership, I was able to learn how to speak, listen and be with others in a new contextual lens. In late 2018 and early 2019, I traveled to Colorado, Hawaii, California, Florida and the Bahamas looking to find more meaning and integration of my life with my new learning.

I went through several transitions and found that what I was looking for was already within me. In my journey to heal my body internally, I went on a 41-day water-only fast. I got to experience all that was happening with me internally: mental state, emotional state, bodily state, thoughts, memories and representations of reality. This awareness amplified the vibrations that I have the power to overcome any addiction. If I can give up food for 41 days, I can sacrifice any unhealthy desire. I became aware of what I put into my body. My body is my temple and food is my medicine. My evil twin was FUD.

Since June 2019, I created and spoke being into the lens called LAV, which stands for love, affinity and vitality. It creates miracles every day in my life! This is what has been inside of me the whole time! I have discovered the tools of speaking, listening and being. My evil twin no longer has power over me. I will speak my being ... and I will listen with fulfillment of others. We all have the power to overcome our addictions and fears. Live dangerously, live out here and, when you get confused, listen to the music within; it will guide you and serve you.

Granting Love, Affinity and Vitality to all,

Be Green Buddha ... Conscious Environmental Awareness to All in the Now!

# THE LISTENING CALL

JANE HAQUE AND MARIE-LAURE LANDAIS

Participating in the Facilitated Wisdom course in 2018, I, Jane Haque, became hooked on developing my own listening. Never had I personally been heard as I felt heard during those sessions. It surprised me that, during the course, I spoke and shared what I never heard myself speak aloud. I spoke on camera, and to a global audience, and they listened until I was complete. I never felt a level of intimacy like this in my life. I felt newly “gotten” and authentically loved. Real power surged in me after those days, and I knew I could connect with anyone on any topic as a result.

How could I make a difference like this with others? For a few months after the course ended, my senior facilitator and I hosted a Wisdom conversation by Zoom and invited others to join us. It was fun to explore and discover distinctions this way. I saw that I could expand “listening to” as well as “being listened.”

In February 2019, I declared that I would host a weekly Listening Call, and I invited another graduate, Marie-Laure Landais, to join me in the initiative for the rest of the year.

Marie-Laure shared multiple times how practicing the distinction “listening” had made a difference in her originating circle. She noticed during her first Wisdom Unlimited course in 2008 that a whole side of her family was absent from her life. She set up to reconnect with them and listen to what conversations were present, as it seemed that they never invited her to family events. It made such a profound difference that, in the last 12 years, the whole family gathers for multiple events each year and stays connected on a regular basis. Marie-Laure is passionate about the difference listening can make in all her relationships, and she has incorporated it as a core value in her business.

She enthusiastically said yes to participating in the initiative of a weekly Listening Call.

Together, Marie-Laure and I committed to hosting a Listening Call for graduates on Zoom every Thursday evening for one hour. Each put together a list of Wisdom graduate friends, and Marie-Laure created an enrolling e-mail including a link to participate and a link to unsubscribe (sample follows). This reminder, including a new listening quote, was sent every week about 24 hours prior to the call. In addition, to increase membership, Marie-Laure posted an invitation on a social media group for local graduates.

We put this together as an “inquiry.” At the outset, we chose a time limit to the inquiry to be somewhat similar to the length of a Wisdom program – somewhere between six months and a year. It seemed natural, so we set a completion date of the end of January after about a 10-month duration.

Each Thursday, we logged on to the Zoom link a few minutes early to clear and hold a space for listening for the next hour. Our structure included: optional participation without a need to register, participants choosing to come and go as they wanted with no make-wrong and participants taking on listening or sharing. We would not offer comment, feedback or coaching unless specifically requested. We wanted to provide a clear space for graduates to be heard, or to listen, for the hour.

On the Listening Call, there was no announced agenda, no chosen topic and each week we did not know who would join the call or how many people might be there. We were ready to listen to anything without comment or interruption. Each week was a complete surprise. And, oh! The things we heard.

Perhaps Wisdom graduates came to the call out of curiosity or support for our initiative; perhaps to

contribute, make a difference themselves or hear something new. Some joined the call only once; a few became regulars; some brought a friend; a few unsubscribed right away. We did not know and did not ask. In the last two minutes of the call, we would request that each person remaining share a phrase or word of feedback to express what being on the call had meant for them.

About halfway through the year, Jane began keeping statistics as a measure. "Initially," I said, "I did not know what could be available from this practice, but now I see this provided some information, like, perhaps, a measure of making a difference."

There were two calls during the year when it was only the two of us logged on and, yet, that too was valuable. We held the space for each other to be heard and listened. A new connection grew.

Most weeks there was an average of three-to-four on the call, not including us. The largest group was eight. Most, who participated, came back at least one more time and a few would return again and again, up to 10 times. There were 46 calls held in total. We had a breakdown once when the Zoom connection failed as Jane was away. Our consistent reward was always the end-of-call feedback comments as they were clear indications of making the difference that we had hoped for:

"the space holds me ...  
generosity and intimacy ...  
being heard ...  
lovingly connected ...  
ease of just being there ...  
like a light in the darkness ...  
I get how difficult it is for me to speak ...  
present to love ...  
safety ...  
listening as contribution ...  
grateful ...  
uplifted ...  
thanks for the platform ..."

Each week the comments were only generous. "From these statistics," I said, "I discovered that

the measures were important to capture as they validated that numbers both did, and did not, make a difference in generating listening." Did we listen more if there were more on the call? Did we make a bigger difference with a greater number?

Or was it the "being of listening" itself that made the difference? What was the impact in our own lives? What could be the impact in the Originating Circles of those who came to the call? All of this was available as inquiry. Our discovery would not end with the last call.

There were unforgettable shares that left us grateful for the privilege of having listened. One longstanding graduate, known for many years as being quiet, spoke generally about a favorite distinction one evening. When we did not comment, but rather allowed some space when his voiced stopped, he started up again, this time with a more personal share from his life. He kept going since we still did not interrupt him. He then talked for a long time without pause, but with increasing vulnerability, sharing intimate moments in his life of long ago, declaring a presence of emotion he had not previously uncovered, and, at last, a brief awkward thank you emerged through tears. The details were inconsequential. His release from what gripped him was immeasurable. His sharing touched the humanity of all on the call.

Participants shared about people gone from their lives or about to go. They spoke about favorite topics, pets, jobs, partners, money, philosophy, programs and journeys – all of it. We got to listen and we saw our role as listeners: Being the space for humans to be heard.

We are left with further inquiry. What would be possible if listening was available to all human beings? What is another context we can create in which to explore listening? (See next page.)





## WEEKLY CALLS FOR WISDOM GRADUATES

Every Thursday 7 pm (ET)

The Wisdom Community is Listening  
What could we talk about?

Dear Wisdom Graduate,

The experience of being heard is so important for human beings. Listening to someone grants being. Doesn't it feel easier to be free and fully self-expressed when we have someone's full attention and listening?

"When you listen, you give one a sense of importance, hope and love that he or she may not receive any other way. Through listening, we nurture and validate the feelings one has, especially when he or she experiences difficulties in life."  
—H. Norman Wright

Many participants of the Listening Calls have experienced connection, relatedness and community, as well as knowing they have a gentle space to share what is going on for them at this moment in their life.

When listening is present, love becomes a possibility. What if every human being on the planet could have access to this experience?

You are invited to join us to practice your listening, inquire or to share, today, September 19 at 7 pm (EDT) on Zoom.

To join Zoom meeting [www.zoom.us/j/407339404](https://www.zoom.us/j/407339404).

Dial by your location.

+1 647 558 0588 Canada  
+1 646 558 8656 US (New York)  
+1 720 707 2699 US

Meeting ID: 407 339 404

You are welcome to forward this invitation to any Wisdom graduate that you know. If you've been invited, you can subscribe to receive a regular reminder of the call each week, please add your e-mail here: [www.mailchi.mp/e03489749ab5/listening-call](https://www.mailchi.mp/e03489749ab5/listening-call).

We hold the space of listening for all participants on the call. Participants may share at will, or not, and will not be interrupted until complete.

If you have any questions, contact Jane Haque at 289-221-5095 or reply to this e-mail.

Thank you! We are looking forward to being with you on these calls.

Let's play in community!

Jane Haque and Marie-Laure Landais



# REPORTS FROM THE FIELD

*Collectively, these 21 Reports from the Field offer overwhelming evidence that graduates of Landmark's courses and programs are hard at work on creating fulfilling lives, empowering relationships and a workable world.*

Their pursuits involve such topics as gender-based violence, health and healthcare, mental well-being, autism, carnism, disaster preparedness and the environmental impact of travel and water management. Whatever the issue, however, most of them report as much on who they were being around their issue as on the issue itself.

Taking a different approach, some contributors report on what occurred for them during the last year. They're concerned with who they're being in the world and how life occurs as they age, encounter a change in life circumstances, face challenging relationships and find time slipping away. They recount what it takes to forgive, to be in a dance with another writer and to end their own suffering and come out of their shell to connect with others.

Two contributors recount how they grew and developed while generating two new Landmark events – an art exhibition at the 2020 Conference for Global Transformation and the Year-end Community Project at the Year-end Vacation course.

Each report offers an opening for you to take some time to consider your own report from the field of your life. Share it now with family, friends and conference attendees, or, better yet, submit a Report from the Field to the 2021 Journal of the Conference for Global Transformation. The deadline is January 15, 2021. Do it. It's fun.

– Melinda Voss, Editor

# OPEN SKIES FOR AUTISM

MERAV RICHTER

Imagine the stress you undergo when traveling on a flight.

From the confusion of an expansive airport with its bright, fluorescent lights and sound-intensifying ceilings to the intimidation of the check-in lines where people's luggage and backpacks create a mess of jumbled disarray to the process of going through security with its strange rules of removing shoes and belts and the imposing number of security guards eyeing you and your belongings as you walk through a structure that looks like something from a science fiction movie.

The passport checks – with daunting uniformed officers peering at you threateningly. The wheels of the suitcases rolling on the floor seem amplified to a deafening level and the strap of the bag on your shoulders as though you're carrying daggers. Then the overwhelm of finding your gate in the maze that is the terminal, and the constant blaring announcements for boarding as you make your way down a cold, metal gangplank-like tunnel toward a 600 ton machine that soon will inexplicably defy the laws of gravity as it hurtles you above the clouds.

This is how the whole process before the flight occurs for someone with autism.

Autism Spectrum Disorder is a neurological processing disorder, and, while each individual case is unique, the sensory processing faculties for someone with this condition can amplify their experiences of catching a flight significantly more than for someone who is neurotypical.

This is what happened to my daughter's best friend, Angelica, a few years ago. Angelica and my daughter, Ella, were both in a special class at

school for children with autism and other sensory processing disorders. Every Thursday, Ella and Angelica would walk home together and play in the afternoon. When Angelica's mom, Amie, would come to pick her up, she would often join me for tea or wine at the kitchen table.

One Thursday, Angelica and Amie told me and Ella the distressful story of the first and only time that Angelica tried to get on a flight. Speaking together, and sometimes finishing each other's sentences (as mothers and daughters often do), the two described the time they tried to go on a family vacation to Florida. The whole process of check-in and security so overwhelmed Angelica that by the time they got to the gate, she ran away from her mom and hid in the airport. Amie shared her panic and distress as the police had to be called, and the airport had to be shut down until they found Angelica. It was a frightful few minutes that seemed like hours. By the time police finally managed to locate Angelica hiding in a bathroom, the damage was done. Amie chose not to travel with Angelica that day, and the family continued without them.

My daughter, Ella, being the child of a flight attendant, had traveled many times and tried to encourage Angelica to try flying again. Angelica excitedly asked if I could do that. Both mother and daughter agreed that they'd be willing to try if I were there. Just as I was contemplating how I could easily make that happen, Angelica added, "... but do you promise the plane won't take off?"

This was a bigger challenge than I was expecting.

Challenge accepted.

I made them a promise that I would find a way to do that.

As I began speaking to people in the autism community and their families, I came to realize that Angelica's experience wasn't unique. Many families had never even tried to travel for fear of how their child would react.

I initiated conversations with people at all levels of the decision-making process – from the airline executives, to the airport control agency, to the security department. All along the way, I was encouraged and guided to the next level. It seemed every person I spoke with had a child or family member who had Autism Spectrum Disorder. Considering that one in 59 children today is diagnosed with autism, that's not surprising.

On November 9, 2019, the inaugural Open Skies for Autism took 100 children and their families on all aspects of flight – from check-in, through security, to boarding, and taxiing around the airport – without ever leaving the ground.

The response from the families was overwhelmingly appreciative. Not only did the families get to experience the aspects of flight in the most comforting way possible, there were service dogs at the airport to greet the families and volunteer pilots even let each child sit in the captain's seat to take pictures and ask questions.

Open Skies for Autism has been approved to continue bi-annually and in multiple airports. My vision is to continue this initiative in every city in Canada by 2021, North America by 2025 and globally by 2030, so that every child can experience the magic of flight.

On a personal level, this whole initiative gave me a fulfilled sense of legacy at my career of 25 years at the airline. Yet, ironically, if I hadn't been in the Wisdom Unlimited course in 2017, none of this would have been possible. Prior to Wisdom, I was carrying a story that sounded like, "My daughter's autism is not my story to tell." Through Wisdom, I came to see that there was no power in that story, not for me and definitely not for my daughter. Since Wisdom, my daughter and I have embraced her autism (we call it awesome-tism). We even wrote a novel together and raised funds and awareness for the autism community.

The greater lesson is that change doesn't come

by doing big things occasionally, but by doing small things consistently – and to always keeping your promises.

# MY HEALTH, YOUR HEALTH

MARIE-LOUISE FREIM

*My health, your health and everyone's health is a concern for me. Some recent events have motivated me to encourage friends, family and others to maintain themselves in all aspects of their lives.*

My sister passed away in September 2018 after two years of palliative care in which she never lost hope to beat the disease that just appeared out of nowhere one day. She had been admitted to the hospital on her birthday in 2016 and it took the doctors and nurses five weeks to find out what was wrong. In the early stages of this process, there were accusations thrown at her, which made her very upset, sad and helpless because they wouldn't believe her. Once they found out the reason, they also realized that it was too late for anything to cure her.

Following my sister's death, my friend Valerie, who lives in northern Florida, went in for foot surgery in January 2019. She had postponed it for years due to certain circumstances. What should have been a somewhat simple surgery with about five weeks of recovery turned into months. In the hospital, she contracted a bladder infection that refused to heal. Valerie became isolated for several weeks due to this and didn't start the recovery from her surgery on time.

I flew to go stay with her in March and she told me she regretted that she had done the surgery and was very disappointed in the physical therapy and in her doctors, so she did things her way. I had a chance to "see" that she needed to eat more than she had so far. Being it was Lent, she insisted on fasting, which I convinced her was not

appropriate. I also got her to do some exercises to improve mobility and reduce the swelling in her foot and improve her balance. We went on small excursions almost every day which really brought her spirit back, so, when I left after that week, she was in a much better mood. She is now able to drive her car herself and has taken to using the walker when she goes out and the cane at home.

However, on September 15 of that same year, Valerie fell out of bed that morning and couldn't get up. She laid there for a very long time until finally her neighbor became concerned and broke into her house. Valerie was admitted to the hospital and stayed there for about two weeks; they found cancer in her lungs. She went to stay with friends for about six weeks and has since returned home. I will visit Valerie in about two weeks, and, together, we will go check out nursing facilities. She doesn't want to go see an oncologist even though I have asked her to go just to get some education on how it looks and what can be done if she chooses to have treatment.

In mid-June of the same year, my brother-in-law was admitted to the hospital for kidney failure. While doing the primary evaluation of him, they found that he had cysts in his stomach. The medical professionals performed the surgery and removed the whole stomach, which they saw was full of cancer. They couldn't remove all

the cysts at that time. He remained in the hospital for two months, where he spent most of the time in the intensive care unit. He suffered at least two strokes while in the hospital and it took a very long time for the surgery to heal and for him to start eating pureed food. He was at home and going for dialysis every other day since his kidneys only had a 30% capacity.

At this time, my husband decided the situation had become so serious to the point that it warranted a visit to his brother, whom he hadn't seen in 20 years. In the days leading up to my husband's flight to Lebanon, we had multiple conversations regarding ours and other people's health. I also asked my husband if he would be okay if his brother passed away before he could make it to Lebanon, and he said that he would.

This brings us to my husband. My husband's health is of great concern to me; he has diabetes, high lipids as well as low thyroid and testosterone levels. I have made a commitment to support him in any way that I can so that he can live his life to the fullest. I supported him in visiting a doctor who specializes in diabetes. However, this doctor doesn't take health insurance and he wanted many blood tests done that weren't part of a normal routine. Fortunately, the consultation we had with him was eye opening and an awakening for my husband. He received plenty of new medicines to treat the problems that were discovered; in fact, the doctor is treating the actual cause of my husband's diabetes and not just the diabetes alone. He also suggested that my husband undergo a few scans and other tests to rule out any damage to the esophagus and cancer. We agreed and one of the tests came back with a not-so-pleasant result, but that issue is also currently being treated.

As for myself, I had to undergo knee replacement in August 2015 and then a second time in April 2018. My muscular ability is still not where I want it to be, but I might have too high expectations of my body. I just turned 60 but want to move like I did when I was 20. When I went in for my physical this year, my doctor told me I was the picture of health itself – this is a great compliment and it is a result of my philosophies: “Anything is possible” and “Maintenance is very important in every aspect of life.”

A start to maintenance in every aspect of your life:

**Oral Hygiene.** Starting with your mouth, you need to maintain your teeth so that they stay healthy and last for a long time. If the bacteria that lives in a mouth isn't taken care of, it travels to the gut and creates issues there. Food is important – the right kind and the right amount. All the things we eat that are highly processed, fast-acting carbs, sugar, sodas, etc., are creating inflammation in our bodies. Inflammation creates poor circulation and a combination of the two creates disease. We need to learn to eat a well-balanced diet that is good for us as an individual. To make a low-fat product taste good, companies are adding more sugar, and all these chemical sweeteners are poison for our bodies.

**Exercise.** It doesn't have to be exercise as we think of it in traditional terms. Just move and do something that you love. Here is also a chance for you to find the balance that you need to stay healthy, where you like to be. I know that I need about two hours of exercise a day for me to be able to eat the way I want to eat. This can be a struggle to fit in to a heavy daily routine, so I am also very conscious about my food intake (and sometimes I am not).

**Sleep.** Sleep is a very important factor in staying healthy. It's important that you get enough rest so that all your organs are able to replenish themselves overnight. The cleaning process starts at about 11 p.m. and if you aren't asleep at that time, the cleaning process isn't as effective. Also getting enough oxygen when you sleep is essential, so, if you snore, a sleep test might be beneficial. Everyone needs different amounts of sleep; it depends from one person to the next, and it is nothing to feel ashamed of. It is something that needs to be accepted, respected and discussed between partners and other family members.

**Body Hygiene.** Hygiene is, of course, a very important factor in our maintenance, but to constantly use antibacterial soap and hand cleaners, instead of soap and water, creates more resistant strains of viruses and bacteria. To maintain your surroundings is also important; clothing, living areas, vehicle, etc. Mold is often unseen and can do severe damage to our bodies.

I know that my sister and brother in-law didn't have the best of diets nor did they exercise. So, in my opinion, their health issues are a result of poor maintenance. My friend's issues are more of the kind that her health wasn't as important as her husband's health, and it wasn't until after he passed that she finally took care of herself.

*I wrote this and left it alone for a while. During that brief pause, life happened.*

When my sister came home from her first initial hospitalization, my daughter and I were there. We stayed with her for a week. She had lost hope, but we were able to encourage her to continue to live. I was there for her, anything she wanted was to be provided and everything that I wanted (for her, big sister knows best) was not to be voiced. I was able to travel to Sweden several times during her illness. We did everything she wanted. Some time passed and my brother sent me a message saying that my sister was in the hospital and it really didn't look good this time. That was September 6, 2018. I went to Sweden the following day, making my way directly to the hospital. She was okay and I took her in the wheelchair for a walk in the park. We had coffee and ice cream at the café. She was discharged the following day. We did things together that week, and other times we had to cancel things. We invited friends and family to come celebrate her birthday early on my birthday and everyone came.

The following day they called my sister from the hospital and said that the result of her latest blood test wasn't good, and she should come in the following day to redo the test and to be prepared to be admitted. I had seen in her eyes that it was getting worse; they were turning more yellow. That evening, we had a conversation about death and funeral planning and she should say hello to our parents when she met them again on the other side. Here is when I think she accepted that life was at an end. She passed away a week later.

My brother in-law passed away on November 30, 2019. Two weeks earlier, he had a major stroke that paralyzed him completely. My husband and his two brothers, who also live in the United States, were, of course, distressed over this, but all of them had been home to visit him and were

aware of the severity of his issues. This coming Sunday, there will be a 40-day Mass at Our Lady of Mt. Lebanon, St Peter's Cathedral in Los Angeles for friends to pay their respect to our families.

My friend, Valerie, went to two oncologists and was not happy with either of them, the first one because she didn't act fast enough to get some medication going and the second one because the medication she was prescribed had an astronomic cost. Valerie told me, "I am not going to talk about my disease anymore. Whatever is going to happen will happen and I will pass away. I don't want people to feel sorry for me and I don't want to talk about it." We found a retirement community that she likes, but she isn't ready to move there. She loves her house and wants to stay as long as she can. I understand her.

Nina, my dearest friend since childhood (in Sweden), closer to me than my sister, disclosed to me on October 28, 2019 that she had cervical and uterine cancer and she would have surgery on November 18, 2019. I said that I would come home to be with her. After some more diagnostics, it was discovered that it had spread to other organs, so there wouldn't be any surgery and instead she would be treated with radiation and chemotherapy for seven weeks.

On January 4, 2020, she had her last treatment. It had been a difficult time for her. Her already skinny body had lost 12 pounds and all her muscle mass had disappeared. She will now enter rehab to get her strength back and learn what she can, or cannot, eat. (Radiation of the uterus also affects your intestines.) I am so thankful for technology; I have been able to FaceTime her and call her whenever I want and to support her from here. I am happy that her daughter was able to come home, as well, since she studies abroad, to be with her and support her during this time.

Three other friends have passed away also, two that had pancreatic cancer and another one that had completely different health issues and her body just couldn't take any more of it.

When my mom was sick for quite some time, I felt hopeless living so far away and she wouldn't accept anything I wanted to give her or provide for her to make her life easier. I had to rely on my



sister and brother to tell me how she was doing, and, thus, leaving it up to my sister to take on the job as a caretaker to our mother.

It is quite difficult to be so far away when someone close to you is sick. I want to be there to take care of them, to listen to them and to help them. I have chosen to live in a different country, which, in turn, has made me feel guilty about not being able to be with them in their time of need when they need support the most.

With this uncovering of “This is how life looks when life is working” and “All is well,” I want to emphasize the importance of keeping oneself as healthy as possible. This looks different from one person to the next. Spend time with each other. Be present, your time is not refundable.

# MORE THAN WORDS

ALMA BOLDIS

There are many layers in being a translator at a Landmark course: the experience of being the leader, the participant, the production team. The translator provides a gateway for all areas of contribution present, giving access to the participant of each experience created in the room. It is a job that requires a lot of patience, concentration, research and, last but not least, curiosity and a thirst for knowledge, the willingness to experience and be part of the journey of the experience that the Landmark course itself is.

Being a translator is not a job, it is an art. Like any art, the industrial fact is emptied of content, and it dehumanizes you, the artist. It is the ability to transpose you in all aspects of being present in the space that implies passion and dedication.

For me, the translation always meant a bet with myself, a sort of “defiance,” as the French say. Can I or should I not translate this text? Weights can be of different natures – difficulty of the text itself, context required for understanding, specialized vocabulary, information to be verified, well-drafted so as to be correct and, yet, not indigestible. Besides all these facets, if there is no maximum interest and passion for the two languages you’re working with, the surprise of a work done in a dull manner, without implication, can appear as a duty. Translating, however, due to the translated text, the language in which it is translated and the affective involvement, gives unexpected satisfaction.

The truth is that working in translation also requires a certain type of discipline. It requires not only gymnastics between the two languages, but also a certain curious spirit and youthful interest. The translator in this case is being an artist-translator versus an employed translator. One of the challenges is including the flow of the course and finding the right conjunction that brings satisfaction, presence and accomplishment – the

experience of the Landmark course itself.

There is no preferred course or text/document, but it is by all means the lived experience as it is in the intention of Landmark space – becoming a unique privilege when witnessing the journey to a live transformation.

When translating, you are into being up to serving the work so that it is properly received. If there is a phrase that is not at all clear, but which you, as a translator, must recreate, you must respect the complexity of the information and any twisted expressiveness of the form.

It requires integrating the experience itself, a good knowledge of the context and a respect for your own language, the one in which you translate, so as to render the specific without altering it or making it ridiculous, dull or mediocre. When I translate into the not mother-tongue language, it is a challenge, be it history, art or other field, and this requires a permanent approach to diction, but also many other readings from which you learn.

Being a translator gives a lot because of the particular style, the metaphysical atmosphere, sometimes pressing, in which each term has a semantic load exceeding the banal. But, it is a bet won with myself and the team, I hope, because I am present to the various positions/roles from the space of the course. It involves study, teamwork, work processes, high standards and skills development on various tools, as well as soft skills.

Translators must understand and adapt without changing meaning. Then, after several attempts, there remains only one variant, which must be the best.

We are always learning new things, using skills we already know and eventually remodeling. And we become better and better each time. Then, we like to take on the challenges.

# LOOKING BACK AND LOOKING AHEAD – A TASTING

PATRICIA COLBERT

## LOOKING BACK AT 2019

I identified five areas of life in which participation has made a distinct difference in my growth and development.

They are: 1) Landmark's Facilitated Wisdom course for Elders; 2) Sai Maa's Awakened Life; 3) Luckow's Cancer Center as a volunteer; 4) Valley Hospital's Breast Center Patient Family Advisor Council (wellness education); and 5) my Originating Circle.

Last year, I heard a knock for "caregiving and partnership." Through inquiries I discovered that my mind was a depository of selected thoughts, knowledge and experiences. This observation led me to investigate "why" these conclusions. Through listening keenly, I released other false "points of view" and was freed up to move forward to experience love, health and intimacy.

I see life as an opportunity to declare agreements that I can be counted on for, thus allowing me to move into uncharted territories and break down edges. I began to play with others, inventing new possibilities. I don't have to pretend anymore. I'm no longer afraid!

The 2019 Elders Wisdom course has no manual. Everything is created in dialogue, in an inquiry of exploration. That's the only way to truly create from nothing. The course encourages you to talk to strangers every day. Do it now. Belonging to a community, I recognized the connection within myself and others. I was encouraged to contribute my learnings (I've lived a long life, share it). In the closing words of course leader Brian Regnier at

the end of session five, he said, "In a world of all is well – there is no wrong way."

My Awakened Life gathering engaged in a conversation with your soul through letter writing: 1) from me to my soul and 2) from my soul to me. The written words were true, sweet and caring.

My world as a cancer survivor brought me face-to-face with recovery, loss and uncertainty. Being engaged in a conversation with people in treatment demonstrated my concerns and theirs by addressing a conversation which offers hope, stability and future.

In the little brown book of aphorisms, which I received in 1978 at completion of the est Training, it states: "Health is a function of participation." I hear words for living in community – take care of myself and others.

## LOOKING AHEAD TO 2020

I am moving to Venice, Florida – a new home, community and environment. I'll get around initially with the help of my GPS tracker. I will continue with my Landmark and Awakened Life communities to further my growth and development. I'll be facilitating the 2020 Elders Wisdom course. We are creating a multi-location program with a group of elders 65 and older. Throughout the five sessions, we'll be coming together in various locations on the west coast of Florida. And throughout 2020, I'll be expanding my Originating Circle. I will take people out of it and put people into it, bringing a possibility of what is beyond now.

# FORGIVENESS – COULD IT MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

MARY ANN GALLAGHER

*I'm committed to all people having access to transformative healing. Here is my experience of intending to open up an opportunity for healing.*

In February 2018, I was in a car accident caused by a drunk driver. In January 2019, I wrote an impact statement to the judge in preparation for the sentencing of the driver. I am sharing here portions of that statement. My intention in writing the statement was to give the driver the freedom to choose a path of healing. I hoped that if he knew I had forgiven him, he might have less defensive anger in the way of choosing healing and transformation.

My statement was written to the judge. In the course of the hearing, I knew the driver had read my letter. He was weeping and sweating. At the sentencing, I stood and addressed the judge and highlighted the salient points in the letter. Here they are:

**Impact of the offense by Thomas M. Woodward of driving under the influence of alcohol, causing bodily injury and leaving the scene of the accident.**

Your Honor,

I am told, Your Honor, that I should tell you the facts, my version and recommendation to you.

On February 25, 2018, I was in robust health – unusually so for age 76. On the sunny Sunday morning of February 25, I was headed in a car out to Pt. Reyes on Lucas Valley Road with my friend driving, my only daughter and my two grandchildren ages 7 and 10 in the car. I was in the middle of the back seat between the two girls (no headrest). We were all belted in and the 7-year-old had a booster seat.

I saw Mr. Woodward's car coming around a curve in our lane at a striking speed. There was no shoulder and we had nowhere to go. I heard and felt a horrible crash and experienced the world spinning with bright-colored geometric shapes. My understanding is that our car was stopped by the crash. Our driver lost consciousness and our car slowly rolled backward and then rolled off the edge and 60 feet down a steep embankment.

When the dizziness subsided and I became more aware, I was surprised to be alive. When I tried to get up and out, I was unable to move any part of my body except to blink my eyes. I couldn't really make out my location. Somewhat later, I realized I could talk. I had an excruciating pain in my neck. I knew that if I moved I would probably be paralyzed permanently. My C-6 (cervical spine) was broken from the whiplash. Thank God, the car stayed put and didn't ignite. My daughter and then an off-duty policeman held my head straight until the EMTs fairly quickly arrived and miraculously saved my mobility and likely my life. They risked theirs. No doubt angels were involved.

After a difficult, skillful rescue and neurosurgery, which included fusing four cervical vertebrae, I

had five weeks of acute rehabilitation. During the very good rehab, I began the very slow process of beginning to move. I recovered control of bodily functions. My hands gained a little strength and dexterity and I could eat left-handed. I frequently choked on my food and couldn't cough. My right shoulder was frozen and I couldn't raise it more than 45 degrees. I learned how to get in and out of bed. I walked unsteadily with a cane or walker. My breathing was shallow and my voice pinched. I was seeing double from injury to the ocular nerve.

I still have a long way to go for full functioning but there is significant, remarkable improvement.

- I am able to walk without a cane or walker.
- I can't get on and off the floor without heroic effort
- I go downstairs very slowly and one at a time.
- I am not yet on a regular bicycle.
- My voice is back in its usual range and I am not choking on my food.
- My eyes have improved considerably – enough that prism lenses allow me to see a single image.
- I am not yet working, and the loss of my occupation is an immense regret.
- I am getting post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) therapy and the experience of thinking that cars are going to hit us is getting less frequent.
- I've had to learn how to ask for more help than I ever expected. I'm often overwhelmed with gratitude for all the generosity.
- My progress requires effort every day and a need to be vigilant and address self-defeating thinking and self-pitying emotions.

I have something to say about Mr. Woodward. In his shoes, I would feel anxious. I hope that hearing this message to you, Your Honor, relieves anxiety.

**I forgive him for hitting us and for leaving us by the side of the road to die.**

I know about alcoholism. While I can't say that I never drove while drinking, I can say that I have abstained from using mind-altering substances for almost 30 years.

If Mr. Woodward admits it and takes action, recovery is possible. I hope that he can use any guilt he may have to prompt productive action. Though, overall, the statistics are poor, recovery can open up an amazing life of good purpose and filled with love. But, it must be practiced every day. No one can make anyone do it and it doesn't work unless it's wanted. It's a choice. I hope that he chooses it and that his honest choice becomes clear to everyone that meets him. If he is committed to transformation, there are many resources available, such as Alcoholics Anonymous, The Landmark Forum or spiritual teachers such as Kenny Johnson.

If there is no progress, jail is the right place. At this point, he is not responsible for making decisions beyond immediate self-interest. The public needs protection.

As to Mr. Woodward's sentence, I am not keen on having the public warehouse Mr. Woodward at the public's expense if there's a genuine effort at reform. You, Your Honor, and parole officers have a hard job discerning true commitment to change that extends beyond jail.

I have an incredibly good family and an extensive, generous, supportive, loving community and a well-established spiritual practice. I have taken healing seriously and it is still my main activity. Prospects for continued progress are good. Perhaps with the grace that saved us and with the justice that you administer, Your Honor, some good can come for all.

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The judge sentenced the driver to 10 years in prison as he had three other Driving Under the Influence charges and 11 arrests. She said that he had used up his chances.

In January 2020, I am miraculously improved physically and still progressing. I have remained free of resentment which has no doubt contributed to my healing. I don't yet know if my intention with Mr. Woodward was fulfilled, but I do know that those in court with me felt that they had witnessed something unusual.

# GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

SOPHIA OLIVAS

"Would you consider training 40,000 women of the Zulu tribe in South Africa?"

As an American woman who has never been married and never had children, South Africa presented me with many firsts. I encountered a village that was over 95% AIDS-infected. Several villages had sexual assault rates of more than 80%. The world of gender-based violence exposed me to femicide (the murder of women based on their gender).

I was given the opportunity to train women on financial sovereignty which is defined as the right to earn and keep one's own finances, independent of parents and/or spouses. It's an inalienable right to exist, survive and thrive under one's own volition.

I was invited to do this training in locations that had no running water or electricity and in areas where married women had to crawl on all fours when at home in the presence of their husbands. These are areas where men believed that, in order to cure their AIDS, they needed to have sex with a virgin, the younger the better, so infants were violated. Many of these assaults resulted in death. I also learned about "corrective" rape, an act of sexual assault that attempts to "rectify" perceived deviant, lesbian or homosexual behavior. I learned that shame here was a killer, that there was a high adultery rate and when men became infected with HIV because of their philandering, they would kill their wives and blame their wives for having given them AIDS. This cleared their names and justified the killing. Dead wives cannot tell their story.

This issue is so pervasive within South African society that 41% of people raped are children, and only one in nine rape cases is reported. Of those

reported, only 4% result in prosecution. Femicide is five times higher than the global average.

I also learned about hypermasculinity, a sociological term denoting exaggerated forms of masculinity, virility and physicality. I learned of four distinct characteristics associated with the hypermasculine personality: (1) the view of violence as manly; (2) the perception of danger as exciting and sensational; (3) callous behavior toward women; and (4) a regard toward emotional displays as feminine.

Overwhelmed at what I was being exposed to and crying with uncontrolled sobs and breaths, I had a woman tell me, "Don't you dare. Don't you dare take on our burdens. They are not yours." In that shade of humanity, while taking on training these women, I became the space for them to move from victim to survivor to thriver.

*"In order for you to fix the world, the world has to be broken." ~ Bill Heinrich*

# ARTISTS FOR GLOBAL TRANSFORMATION: A PATH TO TAKE

GARY BRYSON

For the first time at the Conference for Global Transformation, Wisdom graduates will have the opportunity to display their art at what will be known as “Artists for Global Transformation – Art Exhibition.” 2020 is a significant milestone, being the 20th anniversary of the conference and appropriate for a new area of the conference to come into being.

This exhibition started with a conversation at the 2018 Year-end Vacation course. I approached Julia Simms, the conference manager, about exhibiting my photography at the 2019 conference. Julia has had other artists make this request previously which have been declined. With each request, Julia could see there was interest from the Wisdom arts community in having an exhibition. She did not want to make it an exclusive exhibition but was interested in an event inclusive of the whole Wisdom community.

After a brief conversation, I started looking into what could be created to provide an opportunity for all Wisdom graduates to participate. A call was put out on the Wisdom Facebook page to anyone interested in being part of a committee to cause the art exhibition. A committee was created consisting of Andy Monks, Megan Evans, Linda Summers Posey and Meaghan Miller Lopez. The committee was tasked with creating the foundation of the art exhibition to put a proposal to the Wisdom leadership team for an in-principle approval.

The theme for the 2020 conference is “Making a Difference.” The first step in this initiative was to draft a proposal speaking to the possibility that an art exhibition could bring to the conference inside of this theme. The proposal had artists submitting their work to a selection committee to

determine who would be selected to display their art. This concept was given in-principle approval to move forward.

In the early days, my internal monologue was at full volume. Self-doubt and inaction had me frozen with fear of not getting it right. It was clear that I needed a committed listener. Margaret Jones from the Australia-New Zealand Wisdom leadership team had suggested that initial conversation with Julia at the Year-end Vacation. With Margaret’s years of experience assisting inside of the Wisdom Course Area, she was an obvious choice. Marg accepted my request and we commenced weekly calls. Often, the calls commenced with me in breakdown. Using the Wisdom distinctions, I was able to see actions that were available to take. My favorite distinction was the “Seven Stages of a Project” which would presence me to what stage the project was at, all the while building membership and media.

To create media for this initiative, I had a poster (“Artists in Residence”) at the 2019 conference which raised awareness through our international community of what was being created.

One of the questions raised from the proposal was where the art would be displayed. Initially, we thought that we could utilize space in the common areas of the conference. This would allow the art to be displayed in an area that was readily accessible to all attendees. However, these common areas are also accessible to anyone staying at the hotel, which would create a security issue. The art would need to be set up each morning and then stored after conference hours to ensure the security of the artwork. To me, this seemed to lack workability. To overcome this security issue, it was proposed that a video

be created of the artwork of the successful artists with the video played around the conference venue. To work through some of these unresolved issues, committee members and Julia scheduled a meeting for Sunday of the 2019 conference. Linnie Sterba, Wisdom artist with a poster at the 2019 conference, also made herself available. It was Linnie who asked if we could utilize one of the breakout rooms for the art exhibition. Julia acknowledged that the Elysium Room was only used for two meetings during the conference and the meetings could be moved to another location. We now had a secure room where the art could be displayed for the three days of the conference made available through a network of conversations.

With input from the Art Exhibition Committee and key Landmark staff, selection criteria and other key documents were drafted. Several reviews went to Tobin White and the Landmark legal team for comment. A link to the selection criteria document was included in an e-mail to 6,000 Wisdom graduates inviting them to submit their proposal, and a new piece on the Artists for Global Transformation has been added to the submissions page of the conference.

In the writing of these key documents, I found myself stopped by inherited conversations that sounded like I'm not good enough. Who do you think you are? What do you know about art? When these came up particularly after I had received feedback on a document, I would be stopped, unsure how to proceed.

The insight I got from this was around my need to get it right and how often in life this has stopped me. What I have become present to behind the need to get it right is the background conversation of if I don't get it right, people will see me for the idiot I am. I'd been discussing the project with another Wisdom graduate, Deidre Bryson, and got that there was nothing to get right with the project. It had never been done before, and, as such, there was no particular way it should look. We extrapolated this conversation to the next level and we both got that it's the same with life. My life has never been done before and it will go the way it goes but there is no getting it wrong. There really is just creating the next possibility.

I can either be a victim to my circumstances or I can create my future in the face of my circumstances. Either way, through my action or inaction, I can alter my existing view of reality.

The art exhibition was envisioned at the 2018 Year-end Vacation, developed within my 2019 Wisdom assisting agreement and will be delivered at the 2020 conference. I'm clear that, without the growth and development and the network of conversations available within my assisting agreement, this initiative would not have been delivered. I see that ongoing growth and development is the pathway to creating the life I want.

The vision being created for the Artists for Global Transformation – Art Exhibition is for it to live on in perpetuity being a part of every conference and providing another layer of expression.

*Mission Statement: To provide the place where artists can contribute to global transformation, establishing a connection between creativity and our existing view of reality.*



# SPEAKING MEASUREMENT IN A LANGUAGE OTHERS UNDERSTAND

FIONA PELHAM

"I would never get on a plane to attend a conference, that would mean my job ... my personal development was more important than the planet and it just isn't."

This quote comes from a young protester who throughout 2019 was part of the Fridays for the Future marches where up to four million young people took to the streets to call for action to address climate change. I interviewed this young protestor, along with three of her peers from Scotland, England and Hong Kong, during a webinar to celebrate Global Meeting Industry Day. I gained an understanding that if face-to-face human connections are to continue, there is a need to tell the story of the positive impact of events beyond their carbon footprints.

In my conversation with these young people, I was struck by the awareness that they had never (and maybe would never) experience the delight of unexpected human connection within an event. Those moments at a conference when you are in line for coffee, get drawn into a conversation about the weather with the people around you and all of a sudden discover you have found a new collaborator for the research you are doing. Those unexpected meetings in hallways or bathrooms lines, which impact everyone from political peacemakers to job-seeking students, don't happen on Zoom (or any other webinar technology).

So, how do we measure the positive impact of human connection and compare that with the numerical measurement of a carbon footprint? Is our fascination with the measurement of

carbon footprints jeopardizing our future of human connection? Is it possible to speak about measurements in a language richer than numbers? (It would be possible to measure how many new people one meets at a conference but that doesn't reflect the depth and uniqueness of relationships formed amidst a shared event experience.)

Since 2005, I have led a global not-for-profit launched to provide education, engagement and collaboration to create a sustainable event industry, so I empathize with desire for action to address the carbon footprint of the event industry. During 2019, I was part of a team of enthusiastic and effective Europeans who created the business case for the Conference for Global Transformation to take place at one time over two locations in the United States and Europe. The logistics are all possible. It is possible to livestream a keynote speaker presenting in the morning in Los Angeles to an audience about to have their dinner in London. It is possible for the same agenda to be tailored to time zones and for the same quality of content to be delivered.

The face-to-face human connections would still be there on a local, rather than global, level. And unless all the 2020 participants in Los Angeles decided on a European adventure in 2021, the usual event carbon footprint caused by delegate travel would be decreased. It is impossible for us to be able to speak about the missed opportunities for human connection this approach could cause because we don't measure this. We don't have the language to talk about the value of connection with the person we sat next

to and started an inspiring conversation with during the opening reception.

However, it is clear that although we cannot speak the value of events for human connection, we understand it because events are the method used by global governments and the United Nations (U.N.) to facilitate world change. This was evidenced during the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals Summit which took place in September 2019 in New York. Delegates traveled from around the world and Greta Thunberg created a shift in the conversation that high carbon emissions were unavoidable with long distance travel by sailing across the Atlantic.

In preparation for the summit, the United Nations asked anyone to share “acceleration actions” (i.e., actions which could accelerate progress toward the achievement of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) and their targets). This seemed to be a perfect opportunity to explore how events could be recognized, not for carbon footprints or food waste statistics, but for their role in enabling human connection from which collaboration and innovation would, in turn, enable achievement of the U.N. goals. The challenge, once again, was how to speak the positive impact of events in a language that others could understand.

The SDG are a blueprint to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all. In other words, they offer a roadmap to creating a world that works for everyone. The 17 SDG range from no hunger, to equal access, to education for all.

Two goals, which give language to the unspoken goals of every event, are:

- SDG 4 Target 7: Ensure all learners acquire knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development.
- SDG 16 Target 7: Ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels.

These targets could be the solution to the event industry’s challenge to speak the positive impact of events in a measurement that others could understand. In 2019, the event industry began to learn the language of the measurement

that aligned with the SDG when, for the first time ever, the United Nation’s Global Citizen Survey, called “My World,” was launched, tailored to one specific audience: event planners, a community that inherently understand the positive impact events have in facilitating human connections. In one month, more than 7,000 commitments to action were gathered from 66 countries. The commitments to action enabled event professionals to choose actions they could take to further the SDG. Each of these actions is measurable.

In 2020, the goal is to achieve over 100,000 commitments to action and for at least 200 companies to report on their event impacts within their annual company sustainability reports. The SDG are providing the event industry with an opportunity to speak about measurement in a language that others will understand.

This report from the field does not stop on this page, as it is by no means a given that event professionals will learn to speak the positive impact of events in a way that people understand the power of human connection before the conversations of carbon footprints and technological alternatives start to dominate.

This is your invitation to step outside this report from the field and be part of creating a new language for measuring the impact of human connection through events. As you gather your communities, attend business events or sport competitions, take advantage of your opportunity to speak the measurement of human connection in the language of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. (See [www.events.myworld2030.org](http://www.events.myworld2030.org).)

# THE OTHER SIDE OF SUFFERING: A TRANSFORMATION COMPLETING THE 2019 DEVELOPMENTAL COURSE ON RELATING AND RELATIONSHIPS

TOM MURRAY

*My Impossible Promise:  
"Communication is the source of  
well-being and healing for all people."*

I did not know what transformation could possibly come from being in the 2019 developmental course on Relating and Relationships. I had a long history of participating in the Wisdom Course Area's offerings and was hopeful that, perhaps, I'd meet a perfect mate, fall head over heels in love or make new friends that would improve my business' bottom line.

What I discovered was an ugly side of me. It's important that I establish the nature of my sharing to maintain a sense of integrity throughout this report. This is my experience only. What I went through was unique for my next step in transformation. Landmark's developmental programs seem to produce "What's next for you?"

So, all I share is experiential in nature, not from a platform of authority. It is clearly unique to me. Being in the 2019 developmental course on Relating and Relationships did not fit my pictures. I foolishly expected magical tips and coaching on how to get what I want from my relationships which is more sex and more money. So, I was in for a surprise.

Beginning in April 2019, I listened, took notes and followed instructions. My notions and ideas regarding my relationships became apparent. I wrote down solid possibilities to live into at the conclusion of the four three-day course sessions. The surprise that smacked me in the face was transformation occurs on the playing field of life, not in the bleachers (watching the game).

As I traveled through life, what surfaced for me was an automatic primitive way of being that looked like "I don't like people and people don't like me." All my human interactions seemed dominated by this negative viewpoint. Everyone was just wrong without justification. My whole being, especially my emotional well-being, was suffering unlike anything I had ever experienced. No memories from my past or language could justify what I experienced.

I felt like a baby with no language to describe or release what I was trapped in. So, I called it my "Make Wrong Mechanism," to give myself a sense of knowing, but I had no idea what was happening to me. I was being used by my past, so I developed a faith to keep riding it out. Stay the course and "get off it" when I could stand no more.

In my daily interactions with people, I was being a vicious, unhappy, mean-spirited person. Not so much in spoken language, but in immediate body postures. Strangers that encountered me were often taken aback at my way of being. A couple of

times, cashiers became afraid or actually cried at the cruel look on my face. This was beyond my understanding and way beyond the shallow technique of “looking good.” I was in the middle of something much bigger than my mind’s understanding.

My solution was to isolate, go be by myself and stop hurting myself and others. I felt full of hatred and saw no reasonable release. Avoidance made sense because out in the world I seemed to only make a negative difference. The impact on others was clearly evident. I knew that I had to complete this transformation powerfully because my well-being depended on it. My past pattern of resignation was not going to carry the day. A strong self-discipline maintained my employment and a long-distance love affair with a woman on the phone. And yet, how could I share authentically? I was like a teenager again; no one could understand me. I shared this phenomenon only with the participants in my facilitated group from the developmental course.

They listened generously and always suggested “get off it” and keep getting off it as this comes up. Those words echoed inside my head for the second half of the course. My heart had been giving me trouble for a few years and, after extensive testing and some surgery, I seemed to be mending during the second half of this course. My negativity was disappearing. My spirit was healing. I seemed to be more present. Perhaps things were looking up? The only language that carried me was “get off it.” By the last course session during weekend number four, I had an experience of emotional well-being which I couldn’t explain but was pervasive in my body and mind.

My physical prognosis stated by my doctors was excellent, and I could see some light at the end of the tunnel. What I got – that I had been avoiding my whole life – was, “I impact other human beings and that impact is reflected back to me.” It was embarrassing to get this at age 65, so late in life. This rough patch of transformation seemed complete. I completed the 2019 developmental course on Relating and Relationships powerfully in November. However, I didn’t rush to register into the next course since my survival, both emotional and physical, seemed at stake in 2019. Thirty-five

days later, a dear friend phoned and registered me in the 2020 developmental course on Relating and Relationships. The adventure will continue with me a bit older and wiser, with “get off it” as my new approach to relationships.

# AUTHENTIC SHARING MAKES A POWERFUL DIFFERENCE

ALBERTA ROMAN

*During my Landmark Advanced Course, I created being happy and healthy as a commitment. Simple enough ... right? Worthwhile ... yes. My intention was that if whatever I was doing/being/having was forwarding health and happiness, that is what I would choose ... my North Star.*

That was 1995. Since then, it certainly seemed to me that, for the most part, I was growing in that area with leading my Communication Workers of America union as chief steward, completing 39 years as a registered nurse, enjoying two kids, Paul and Anne, being launched into adulthood, retiring and traveling with my hubby of many years and enjoying regular vacations in the Caribbean with scuba diving and snorkeling.

Then I hit 70 years of age ... boom! Right then, I got the news (in writing) that I had bowel cancer. (It turned out after two months not to be true.) Then came a partially clogged neck artery that I chose to manage with diet and medication for one year. Ineffective! So, I agreed to a procedure called a carotid endarterectomy, affectionately called Roto-Rooter. Next, I fractured my wrist in a fall on ice while walking to the gym. Bad move. Now I have a metal plate and 12 screws in my well-functioning healed wrist. Last year, I fractured my heel after slipping on rocks in Niagara River. I was rehabbing when Paul, my shocked spouse of 52 years, was hearing the results of my cardiac catheterization. Nearly speechless, he managed, "Are you sure we are talking about the same woman?" as my

surgeon reported I needed open heart surgery with four bypasses (turned out to be five).

We were all very, very surprised because I was fit, active and only had the mild symptom of burning when I bumped up to six on the treadmill during my daily workout. No chest burning at two or four. Certainly, it made a difference that I shared this information with my cardiologist who recommended immediate follow-up. During that time, two tools of Wisdom were very useful to me when I remembered them. All is well. And this is what life looks like when it is working. So, that was 2019 and I was 76. "Ah yes ... it's always something," as comedienne Gilda Radner observed.

So, these are some of the many moments of breakdown in my health and happiness. Let me now share with you some of the breakthroughs that were interwoven during those times. I felt the unwavering support of family and friends being right there with me offering listening, companionship, encouragement, adventure, flowers, rides, nutrition, e-mails and fulfillment of any requests I made. The commitment, caring and skill of so many professionals gave me confidence

and good results. During that time, I had a lot of fun, standing up four-and-a-half times on my surfboard during my first visit to Costa Rica, ziplining through the rain forest with friends, visiting Pope Francis in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, driving along the Florida Keys to visit Key West with old friends, creating regular October vacations in the Berkshires with family and loving up our grandkids. Out of the blue one day, our granddaughter suggested, "Grammy, we should just hang out sometime." Just the best.

Recently, I was seized by the new idea for me that sharing was powerful. Someone reminded me that authenticity makes the difference. I came to appreciate how brave it was for people to share with others and authorities how they were sexually abused and harassed. So many people sharing their intimate stories, one by one, created the #metoo movement around the world. Through this, many people were held accountable for their actions that were hurtful to others; culture is altered. So, what is a common thread from my experiences to that of others? I say it is sharing – simple, authentic, vulnerable sharing. The weekend before my open-heart surgery was also the first weekend of the 2019 Wisdom Unlimited course. My initial reaction was, of course, I cannot go to Toronto. Many people encouraged me to go. My surgeon said that I could go. My family said, "We will worry about you no matter where you are, so go if you want to."

At the mic over the weekend, I said to everyone in the room something like this, "I am here with a lot of encouragement from family and friends, and I am really scared to have open-heart surgery on Monday and I am really scared not to. My usual way to be in this degree of threat is to withdraw, so being here today and sharing with you all is unusual for me and feels risky." There was overwhelming listening, warmth and compassion as people shared themselves and their experiences with me. I left with more ease and power than I came with. Going to the Wisdom weekend was the perfect way to spend my time and energy in that moment.

There is a lot more being happy and healthy in my world and in the larger world as a result of authentic sharing and its partner, attentive

listening. I know in my heart this is true for myself and am witness to other's similar experiences. "Health is a function of participation." These are the memorable, often-quoted words of Werner Erhard. Sharing, for me, is a powerful way to participate.

# LAYING ASIDE THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOOD AND EVIL IN FAVOR OF WORKABILITY (FREE OF JUDGMENT) AS A GAME

LINDA QBQ RUSSELL

How we play the "Game." We look, we notice and we become aware of seeing someone, some action or something as good or bad, right or wrong, and we will say, "That is not my job! Hand it back to God or the universe." Then "look" again, and ask, "Is this workable or not workable? Are parts of it workable or not workable?" What opens up for me? What can I discover newly? What opens up in my conversations? What are we all discovering?

In this, my Report from the Field, I have been practicing this game.

This is related to the Landmark distinction of integrity, defined as, "Keeping or honoring your word" without collapsing integrity into morality.

How might I measure what I deliver on my commitment?

Break it down into steps.

Be aware of my judgments of good and bad, in the present, as they occur.

Set aside my "good" versus "bad" judgments.

Look for "workable/not-workable" interpretation and/or context that eliminates judgment.

How would I measure this?

Is it like a bell curve with a percent between 0-100%?

Or is it more like an on-off switch? It is both.

I love "laying aside" or "putting away" or "giving

back to God" the knowledge of good and evil in the Bible's Genesis 3. I know all us humans have "eaten of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil," but what if we gave it back to God and looked at good and bad, right and wrong, as God's job and not ours. What if we considered whether certain actions were "workable" or "not workable?" Would anything open up for us? Could others hear what we're saying more easily?

# SHIFTING PERSPECTIVES: CHOOSING NEWLY TO BE A BEGINNER

CARLA BARROW

I declared at the 2014 Conference for Global Transformation that I would change careers, leaving the role of litigation attorney to embark into the field of marriage and family therapy. I wrote about that experience in the 2016 conference journal, likening the process to a snake shedding skin. At that time, the process of growth and development had only just begun, mile marker 10 we might say – a start. Since then, the process went something like this.

From 2015 to 2018, I traveled 63 times from Miami, Florida to San Francisco, California, taking up residence one weekend per month in Hayes Valley – all so I could attend the school of my choice: the California Institute for Integral Studies. In the fall of 2018, I graduated with my master's degree in integral clinical counseling. Once I graduated, I assumed that finding the right internship would go as it did in my attorney past – rather well and rather quickly. That was an error.

After applying for several positions, three agencies rejected me in final interviews for entry-level jobs. One hiring manager told me my resume looked as though I was a “badass,” a compliment to the old attorney me, but a detriment to the new therapist. I met “what I didn't know I didn't know” about starting over. I got to watch myself resist what was so. I saw arrogance and entitlement rear their heads. Then I surrendered. The new me listened and rewrote resume materials, literally editing out a past that had served its purpose.

I spent most of 2019 working as an outpatient psychotherapist assisting a variety of clients, from ages 4 to 84. Some were teens ordered to undergo counseling after being charged with breaking rules and engaging in criminal ways. Some were undocumented immigrants, facing bitter attitudes and public policies challenging their every move. In one case, I was called to testify and a miracle occurred for the client. His parents were spared deportation.

Some clients required “high supervision,” meaning with past suicidal, homicidal or high-risk behavior. These clients taught me the most about giving up judgments and presumptions. I was never sure whether I would know how to be or whether I would relate to them, finding the answer session by session. They taught me a lot about acceptance and persistence.

Many of my clients have been women heading households, alone, divorced or separated from their significant other, mostly due to violence, such as beatings and rape. These women continue to give me courage every day. With them I discovered the need to “get off it” and to drop arrogance and entitlement.

I saw where I wasn't choosing to be a beginner in a new life that I chose and created, yet somehow expected that of clients whose choices and lives had been stifled and turned topsy-turvy. I created the possibility of being a woman of faith, not just for myself but for every woman and every person starting over.



It was around that time that I landed a steady internship with one of the state's oldest accredited domestic violence shelters. As a Spanish-speaking therapist, I am able to fill a valuable role serving our community. Yet, I remember when I could not speak fluently in Spanish when I was a beginner. Now, I am able to conduct business (be it law or therapy) in Spanish. This reminds me that, in time, we move into new stages of development. I will not be a beginner forever. In fact, I'm nowhere near the beginner I was last year and remain a seasoned veteran with a badass resume that still has kick in it.

While reviewing the Wisdom Unlimited course in 2019, I committed to creating a private therapy practice as an intern – using time after my day job to find clients and begin building a future. I found space to lease with a group practice comprising diverse clinicians. I presented a series of attorney mental well-being workshops at the Miami-Dade Bar Association and at one of my prior firms that experienced grief and loss among the ranks.

I delivered a workshop entitled the “Magic of Journaling,” which took place the weekend after the Year-end Vacation course and is scheduled to be delivered again at a hospital in Jupiter, Florida. One workshop seems to beget the next, and one accomplishment seems to flow from the next, even when fear and failure occupy my thoughts and conversation, at times acutely and intensely.

To address those moments of doubt, I am taking on a practice from the Year-end Vacation. The practice is simple. When you find yourself in recurrent, familiar disempowering conversations: Just stop. And listen. Then recreate yourself and others (the world) in that generated listening. Of course, the key is noticing the cue to stop.

For me, I often become aware of the pace at which I'm moving, how forgetful I become, how often I miss being my word, how crowded my thoughts seem, how on edge I feel in my body and the bark in my voice. It is then, right then, I need the lifeline of stopping and starting over: Being willing to be a beginner, again and again and again.

For me, 2020 is the year for completing licensure as a marriage and family therapist, building a private practice, and exploring family mediation

as a structure for the next leg of the journey to integrate law and mental health. I now call myself “The Integral Therapist,” and am discovering who and what that will be.

So, I say let this year be a year of beginnings and of choosing to be a beginner, moment by moment, day by day and week by week, over and over and over again. One day, in the not so distant future, when I'm an expert again, in new and never-before imagined ways, I hope that, still, I'll be willing to be a beginner.

# URBAN AND RURAL GRASSROOTS ACTIONS FOR COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

JEAN J. CHU

A shocking discovery by the United Nations in 1996 catapulted this writer from pure science into social development work for community resilience.<sup>1</sup>

While the initial loss of life from a magnitude 7.8 earthquake in Tangshan, China, was nearly one-quarter million people, many more were seriously injured and later perished.

Surrounded by a sea of death, how did the 470,000 residents of Qinglong County successfully survive the devastation from this huge earthquake?

The discovery of Qinglong County's 1976 experience provides us with clues to see ahead for natural hazards, including earthquakes. I have pursued these clues since 1996, experiencing many breakdowns and some breakthroughs, as recorded in my journal paper for this year's Conference for Global Transformation, "Pursuing the Vision of Making a Difference."

In this field report, I will mainly focus on my recent activities over the past decade in northern India.

Starting with my original passion for science, I have now expanded into the social science of community development. The hazards that my teammates and I currently work with are many and include landslides, typhoons, cloudbursts, flash floods, earthquakes and tsunamis.

## ON DEVELOPING COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

For the past 10 years, I have dedicated my efforts to awakening individual families and their

communities, spiritual organizations, local and national government agencies and their leaders, as well as heads of schools and their teachers, to the possibility of a huge earthquake in northern India and to the urgency of strengthening community resilience.<sup>2</sup> Most of my efforts have failed to move many in the resilience direction.

I am actively championing a rapid and cost-effective approach to strengthening community resilience, as it closely resembles the social dynamics that brought about the 1976 Qinglong County success. This modern approach, developed by Rustico "Rusty" Binas, is called "Community-Managed Disaster Risk Reduction."

This approach empowers communities in urban and rural settings to handle their hazards by tapping into their own internal resources. Rusty and I have partnered closely in recent years to hold risk reduction training workshops for rural residents in India's northernmost Himalayan states of Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand, as well as in Delhi and the National Capital Region.

Most recently, in May 2019, we held a training workshop for school-managed disaster risk reduction. This workshop was held at the Rajbala Spring Dale Academy in Sikandrabad, Uttar Pradesh, bordering the Delhi/National Capital Region. This primary and secondary school has 600 students and 25 teachers.

Rusty and I worked for five full days with school principal Sunita Nagar and her 25 teachers in a

novel interactive training that directly addressed their deepest fears about a magnitude eight+ earthquake for northern India.

Most of the teachers were initially very reluctant to take the mandatory risk reduction training. But, by the end of five days, they were full of gratitude, joy and excitement, especially about how they could apply their new training in risk reduction to improve the performance of their students in their studies.

My Indian teammate, Harvinder Singh, traveled on Saturday, January 11, 2020, to meet with principal Sunita Nagar and her teachers' team.

There was an open discussion about the workshop training and further actions the school community has taken since May 2019. Almost all the teachers have shared their training in their classrooms and educated the children. Many have taught their own kids and spoken to their relatives and neighbors.

The biggest difference the training workshop made was that their deep fear of the earthquake disaster has gone, and they have learned to be calm and ready to face this huge hazard were it to happen. The renewed discussion on Saturday resulted in the teachers planning an evacuation drill on school grounds in the near future.

For all the years that I have spent in India, with all the heartbreaking effort and toll these years have taken on my health, I find this last statement by principal Sunita Nagar and her teachers to be most fulfilling. I have finally, at least, had a small impact on empowering a community to face a major hazard with courage, pre-planning and sharing.

"Onwards Ho!"

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## ENDNOTES

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# MAKING A DIFFERENCE WITH WRITING “IN DIALOGUE”

DOUGLAS DUNN

Writing even a short story can be a lonely experience. Often there are blocks and pitfalls along the writing journey. For those new to creative writing, it can be a raw experience when a piece is first read by others. Willa Mitchell, a former Landmark staff member and daughter of one of Canada's finest novelists, W.O. Mitchell, runs weekend writing workshops where the only rule she has after hearing a piece of written work is to praise and applaud loudly! I love that. That's what she did for me when I connected with her last summer and asked if she could read part of a book I was planning to publish, "Human Crossings: Nine stories about refugees," written by a group of Landmark graduates.

What I've discovered through writing in a group is that stories are created in the listening of others, in dialogue and by writers with a shared commitment and vision for the book as a whole. Our intention was to practice our creative writing skills by each writing a fiction or nonfiction story about refugees.

Our writing process started with pairing up as buddies and reading each other's stories. We then stored our stories on a shared drive. The next stage was to meet up and read all the stories at writing retreats. Our first retreat was our first editing screening and an opportunity to express our commitment, to express why we chose our topic and the difference it could make for readers. We lived quite far apart so these retreats started with a road or rail trip and became fun weekend events. Two of our writers from the Netherlands Skyped-in and were an important contribution on those weekends.

At the second retreat in Devon, United Kingdom (U.K.), I was excited by the possibility of introducing Syrian refugee Khaled Wakkaa to our group. I met him at his Landmark Forum in Bristol a month before. After enjoying his delicious falafel sandwiches for lunch, we sat down in my living room to hear the extraordinary experiences of his three-year journey from Syria to Lebanon and finally to Exeter in the U.K. We were all moved to hear what he and his wife had been through. At times, Khaled was tearful and spoke in Arabic to our Egyptian group leader Noha Nasser, who then translated for us. We all agreed that Khaled's story had to be included in our book.

Khaled was thrilled at the possibility of becoming a co-author. He wrote his story in Arabic and we posted it to Noha's father, Dr. Alaa Nasser, for translation.

The next retreat was in Southend-on-Sea in southeast England. This is where the editing work started. What I noticed during these collaborative sessions was a detachment from my story and new thoughts about the other stories. We became interested in how they connected the sequence of the stories and the overall intention of the book. Through working together, a common voice was being created.

Our next task was to write our own biographies. These would appear at the start of each story to help connect the readers to the author. I always enjoy reading a story by someone I already know. We all also included a photo for the biography and one for the story.

Next was to write an introduction to give the context for us coming together and a summary of each story. Noha did a wonderful job and included photos that she had taken over the previous two years.

Finally, we needed an editor to finish our book. After weeks of deliberating about editor quotes, a miracle happened! The perfect person to do the editing showed up: my tennis club friend, Stephen Terry. He had many years of experience with paper reviews for Cambridge University Press and coincidentally turned out to be Khaled's English teacher and a Landmark graduate. He was part of my originating circle and very happy to offer his skills for a minimal fee. Stephen was also the obvious person to write our foreword.

The last part of our project was self-publishing and this also happened in dialogue. Pressing that "Publish your paperback book" button was made less daunting with Noha watching on Skype. She noticed some layout issues around spacing I hadn't seen and we decided to shift the acknowledgements page to the end of the book rather than the start. Even though it was my Kindle Direct Publishing account, I had the experience that "we" were self-publishing.

What's next after publishing?

I soon discovered that publishing a book is only the beginning. To make a difference in the world, people have to read it. I had it that this next stage of sales and marketing was for other people, not me (a young-age conversation). For the book to be widely read and to raise funds for refugees, I would need to change my attitude to selling.

The publisher makes "author copies" available at a much reduced price. This gives each of the eight authors an opportunity to give books to friends and family or sell them at a profit. What I noticed was that Khaled was very successful at selling books at the full price, letting buyers know half their money would be donated to refugees. My tendency was to give books away or charge a reduced price. But, to contribute fully to refugees, I needed to give up my "not for me" story. What was needed was to give people the opportunity to hear and read about refugees and make a contribution if they wish. When I saw that, my

sales started to increase.

Creating book-reading events was another step to take. Again, with the help of Khaled, we arranged an event at his local library where members of the public would learn how the book came about and how they, too, could self-publish. They were given the opportunity to write a paragraph about an important event in their lives and read it out to others. Other authors of our book were also planning to create book-reading events at libraries and bookstores.

## LANDMARK FORUM NEWS

As well as promoting through social media, I noticed the Landmark website presents projects created by Landmark graduates. It is called Landmark Forum News. The link is under "About" and then "Resources."<sup>1</sup>

I submitted a short article about how we were inspired to write "Human Crossings," by The Writers Empowerment Club, a group of about 30 people interested in writing and sharing on a weekly conference call created by Noha Nasser. The Landmark Forum News blog editor, Julia Yob, was very helpful by suggesting some improvements and the catchy title – "Graduates who Write Together, Inspire Together."<sup>2</sup>

Discovering the difference writers make through teamwork might encourage more people to express themselves through writing. Perhaps, through writing and in dialogue, more Wisdom course graduates will contribute to the Journal of the Conference for Global Transformation and make a difference through writing out there in the world.

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# MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN THE KINGDOM OF YAY'S

FRED MOSS

*I thought that I had to attend the 2019 Year-end Vacation. I was expected to be there, and I did not like that feeling. If I went, it wouldn't seem as though I had chosen it. My considerations for not going included expenses, time commitment and, more than anything else, too much basking in luxury—including the margaritas, hot tubs and swimming with the dolphins. In other words, too much "Yay!" for my taste. Given all that, I signed up reluctantly and a little late. Aargh.*

Then it occurred to me. I could add another side to this good-or-bad story, an entirely new way of framing things. After all, it was *my* vacation. There were three weeks before it would begin. At previous Year-end Vacations, I had grown tired of all the hedonism by Day Three. I was in the inquiry of what I could do differently this time.

What if I added a community project to the mix this year? Some graduates could join me in getting our hands dirty and giving back to the local community in the act of real service. That is, as long as I planned it for the end of our week in paradise, they would surely be very ready to do what we do best in the Wisdom Course Area: Be source for massive contribution to our world.

Game on!

By the next day after registering, I was on the phone with Cynthia Barnett, the vacation coordinator for Wisdom. She loved the idea. She quickly connected me with Linda, the travel

coordinator, who facilitated a connection with a local agency that could work with us. Within a few days, I was speaking with Edith, the director of Sarahuaro, an extraordinary social service agency in Los Cabos, where we were convening. Sarahuaro is committed to the empowerment and well-being of the women and children and children's children in the area. Where could we be of service? How could we make a difference?

I learned that they had handmade decorative pillows for sale. So, I arranged to have them come to our hotel and set up a booth to sell them on two occasions during the week of the course.

What else? Edith said that the graduates could bring some things with us from home. There was always a need for slightly-used backpacks and clothing, and the like. Okay. Cool. Done!

What else? Monetary donations could be collected. This rather poor community needed some basics that, as of yet, they could not afford.

Okay, I told her, that sounds easy enough.

Since I was late to register, I now had only about 10 days to get into action before the course started. I began to splash all the Facebook Wisdom groups and my personal pages with notices of this emerging project. Several Year-end Vacation course participants promptly responded that they would bring some used items from home. Whatever we were inventing was now moving and being created as something that was now going to happen. We were living into a created future. The momentum, slow as it appeared to be, was margarita-level intoxicating.

I arranged for, and rented, a van for the fifth course day (Friday) so that interested course participants could join me in taking the backpacks, clothes and whatever else we collected during the week directly to Sarahuaro. I was getting excited. I was sure that they would be too.

The course began. The plans for this project were loose and open. I was not clear what was going to happen, but was interested in working with whatever there was, to make it a useful undertaking. Then late on the third night of the course (Wednesday), when I looked at what was so about the project, I realized that I was not creating the enrollment necessary to produce the intended results. Nobody but Alexandra and I had signed up for the Friday drop-off excursion just two days away. It felt like a super well-planned event that zero guests were ready to attend. Flinch!

Fighting back the opportunity to bask in my resignation and cynicism and to just give up, I stayed in the conversation and kept my hopes alive. There was at least one crucial question to ask to get the desired result: What was missing, the presence of which would make a difference? I began to listen to what was being asked by the community. Where could I look, and what could be created such that enrollment was present, and a worthwhile project, in theory, could turn out to be one in reality? I was looking for what was wanted and needed and how I could position myself and any other interested graduates to have an impact in this beautiful Mexican community.

To no real surprise, I found that both the local community and the graduates were interested in

interaction and human connection, above all. Little did I know that in the next 48 hours what would be created would be one of the most impactful community events I had ever experienced.

By Thursday, the fourth morning, the new plan began to emerge. We were going to have a Christmas party for an estimated 100 children on Saturday morning that did not interfere with the regular programming of the course. We would stop at the local supermarket and buy heaps of toys for the children and join the children for an authentic Christmas celebration that included music, dancing and pinatas. The Wisdom graduates naturally became enrolled and many also registered. People saw an opportunity for themselves in this project and wanted to come aboard, any way that they could.

### **THE YEAR-END VACATION COMMUNITY PROJECT WAS BORN.**

I became the project over the next couple of days, experiencing enrollment as a way of being like never before. I did not have to convince or sell anything to anybody. By the fifth night, nearly everybody at the Hard Rock Resort (staff included) knew that we were going to be with at least 100 children the following day. We would celebrate a beautiful cross-cultural Christmas, bridging whatever borders, language and other factors that might have prevented it from happening.

Initially, I had rented one van for us and switched the usage date to Saturday. The seats in that van (capacity 15) were nearly all accounted for, when a fellow participant, Amy, asked if there was room for her and her family of four to join us. Of course, they could join us, I said. Immediately, we then had the challenge of another van to fill with up to 15 more people in less than one day. The conversations with the Wisdom graduate community moved like wildfire to the poolside, restaurant areas and margarita bars. Soon, nearly everybody knew what we were up to, and interested people, who could not join us on Saturday for the excursion, donated enough funds to cover both rented vans and more.

So, there we were, on Saturday at 7:30 a.m., the sixth day of the course with two vans filled with 28 course participants departing for the

Sarahuaro Christmas excursion. We shopped at a department store along the way and bought six carts full of toys. The interest among attending graduates was beyond extraordinary. My good friend, Tom, showed up with his entire Santa Claus outfit. Rosy joined in with her traditional Mexican-flowing dance dress. Adriana showed up with her other worldly Spanish singing voice. She had brought her princess dress and face glitter to sing Disney karaoke with the more than 200 beyond-beautiful children of Los Cabos, all 13 years old and younger. Incidentally, all three of these people were among the last to sign up on Friday night (Day Five), and their contributions were tremendous. The graduates, the children and their mothers gathered together to have a *Feliz Navidad* party like none ever before in this extraordinary setting within this new context.

The party was an intoxicating marvel. The assistance that the universe provided to have the perfect weather, the ideal guides and drivers, the awesome pinata-handlers, as well as the cake-servers, gift-displayers and hug-sharers was way more than words could adequately describe. We had a party that Saturday morning that will not soon be forgotten by anyone who attended. Many attendees have approached me since, sharing that this experience was among the most profound of their lifetime. It certainly was the coolest social event that I have ever created.

The grand event happened, though, of course, it was a product of listening and not being locked into an outcome. It took vision, flexibility, willingness to adapt, deep listening and one-step-at-a-time action to have it unfold so well.

In the end, we were even able to gather around \$1,500 in generous contributions, over and above our costs. We donated this for the needs of the community and the Sarahuaro agency. Additionally, there is no monetary value that can be placed on the people's hearts and souls involved to have the event be so memorably beautiful.

*The Year-end Vacation Community Project* is now a living entity, and I have every intention to create and cause this event for next year's course in Panama City, as well as for subsequent sites for Year-end Vacations. We will start early in the year

with monthly calls, set clear goals and futures and create the resulting contribution for the local community. Specifically, we will gear our efforts toward the considerations, wants and needs of all relevant parties, including participants and local citizens. I am inspired by this prospect and the inherent difference we now get to make for each of these communities as we descend upon them in future Year-end Vacations.

Just imagine what will happen with this extra time, intention and dreams of a few dedicated Wisdom graduates to make this event spectacular. We will use our visions, technology and networks of conversations on our regular planning calls to create possibilities that, to this point, don't yet exist. Left unleashed, there is no limit to what can occur in the world of enrollment.

Now I realize that I "have to" be at next year's Year-end Vacation. This next time though, it is with sheer enthusiasm that I make this choice freely and after consideration. It is an honor to be cause for our work and to bring the gifts that we offer to the real world.

I look forward to December 2020 to see what gets developed for the Panamanian community hosting us for our annual event.

And there is nothing wrong with margaritas, hot tubs or swimming with the dolphins. There never was. I have a new appreciation for the balance and capacity to create a future and live into it. Here I am, standing tall with a big, grateful smile. I can even hear myself saying softly, yay! with my hands clapping gently.

In closing, thank you to all for co-creating the possibility of this ongoing miraculous adventure.



# OH! I'M AN ELDER

SUSIE FRASER

*I'm 75 years old – that's an elder kind of age. In the Facilitated Wisdom Course for Elders (Elders course), we accept people from 65 onwards, although we refer to the 65-year-olds as whippersnappers.*

When I became engaged with the Elders course, I had complaints about how I find elders, like me, are sometimes treated. Here, in Sydney, Australia, where I live, when you get gray hair and wrinkles, some people start calling you “dear” or “pet,” or even “granny,” instead of “miss,” “ma’am” or “madam.” On the other hand, some people start offering you their seat on the train or to put your case in the overhead bin on an aircraft. For some other people, it's as though you've turned invisible, they look right through you; you have to say “excuse me” or “I was next” just to get served. I thought that it was mostly a bad state of affairs.

As we began talking about being an elder and delving into matters that are particularly important to older people, such as wondering when you're going to die and what the circumstances might be, I noticed some of my positions about how elders should be treated started to loosen and even disappear. The more we engaged, the more interested I became in being an elder, talking with fellow elders and exploring matters that interest older people. I started to notice fellow elders more in the street, in the supermarket or wherever I was. I found myself going out of my way to catch their eye and smile, and, sometimes, say hello, and I would alter my direction to get close enough to them to do this. It reminds me of dogs. I like dogs, and, when I see a dog in the street, I'll think, “Oh, there's a dog,” and smile, and maybe even meet the

dog. Well, now, I think, “Oh, there's an elder” and smile and, maybe, even say something like “hello.”

In hindsight, I think that I was beginning to accept, understand and celebrate being an elder – a big deal. I think that I had made being an elder wrong, along with making how elders are sometimes treated wrong.

Toward the end of 2019, I had to apply for a new passport. When I went to the website to complete the application form, I found that I could renew the passport for five years, or for 10 years. I noticed a thought float by, “Perhaps, you only need a five-year one.” I have had plans and projects for years to live to a very old age. I know we can all die any time, but the future I have been creating for myself is for a long life. I chose the 10-year passport that will last until I am 85. And I also decided to make a 10-year plan, which I have called “Ten of the Best.” The plan is not finished and it is well on the way. I'm also exploring what measures I could track for a scorecard for “all of my life.” It needs to be a concise set of measures to represent my version of all of it. What would the measures be to cover everything from daily practices through to successful global action on climate change and the abolition of the death penalty? And without spending huge amounts of time measuring, counting or recording?

Our group of Elders course participants enjoys coming together on the optional weekly call we scheduled. We talk about what we are discovering, and explore life, being an elder, and everything else. We seem to have grown close, we enjoy being together and we are going to continue the call even though the course finished in October 2019 and it is now January 2020.

I think the bottom line is I am happy and comfortable with being an elder, with the age I am now and with whatever life brings in the future.

# A JOURNEY THROUGH CARNISM

DEBORAH KAPLAN

*Most Americans today grew up eating cows, pigs, chickens, eggs and dairy. Moms fed us this food, as their mothers had fed them, and many prior generations had fed their children. Nobody thought about eating animals any more than we questioned wearing clothes or saying “please and thank you.” It was just life. This illustration is carnism.*

Carnism is the invisible belief system that conditions people to eat certain animals.<sup>1</sup> It's the context, largely undistinguished, in which we are taught to eat animals. The specific animals we are habitually conditioned to eat depends largely upon people's cultures, religions and geographic locations.

For 52 years, I was an unaware victim of carnism. Then, in 2011, I took a month-long course which was an adventure into veganism. The course had several health promises, and I attended for the weight-loss and blood pressure reduction. There was no way I was going to continue beyond the 30 days. However, within 10 days, I felt so great that there was no going back. All movement felt easy. I hadn't realized that arthritis had begun to creep in until it was gone, and dare I mention the now-healthy morning movement? There was this new feeling of well-being. My weight and blood pressure levels were lowering, and they eventually stabilized at my target weight and a safe, unmedicated blood pressure level.

I shared my experience of veganism from a health perspective with others. Some were

inspired and became vegan, though most did not. I hadn't yet taken the Four-Day Practices Intensive, nor declared my purpose: We are creating a vegan world.

In 2016, I listened to an audiobook that rocked my world. “The World Peace Diet,” written by est Training graduate, Dr. Will Tuttle, is one of the first books that exposes the hidden connections between our culture, our food and the source of humanity's broad range of problems—and the way to a positive transformation.

Although having heard that eating animals was devastating to our environment, it wasn't present or real for me. I've since learned that renowned lists of best solutions to climate change rate the importance of “Having a Plant-Rich Diet” between second and fifth place, often below refrigerant management, onshore wind turbines and reduced food waste.<sup>2</sup>

Similarly, Dr. Tuttle's book also enlightened me about that other aspect of carnism that I didn't want to know about – the “Voldemort” of our

society which is largely taboo to talk about. Suffice it to say that we, who know ourselves as kind and caring people, do not want to think about the once-living beings who are now on our plates.

*"If slaughterhouses had glass walls, everyone would be vegetarian."*

— Paul McCartney

For a short period of time, I was righteous about being vegan. I got off it, realizing the vast majority of us have been affected by carnism.

I had considerations that I couldn't make a difference. People wouldn't want to participate with me, and I was different. I've let go of these considerations as well as my shyness which stopped me from taking action. I hold the space for the amazing health benefits, world sustainability and animal rights which veganism makes possible.

Through learning to listen to others and to speak coming from my purpose, I've become an effective communicator. Countless people have become vegan or lessened their consumption of animals after speaking with me. In addition, I participate in many vegan groups, am the coordinator for my local vegan advocacy Meetup group, and work with others to create events and take action in other ways to promote veganism.

So far, I've not been successful with making changes at the organizational level. Many environmental, animal advocacy and social justice groups have gatherings which include serving animals as food. I'm determined to have a breakthrough at the organizational level, and I'm grateful for Landmark's education in listening and speaking.

Bringing Landmark distinctions to carnism, we could say that carnism is the habitual, inherited conversation of eating animals. Like many of our automatic thoughts and actions, bringing consciousness to them can make profound differences. In the instance of what we eat, it can literally save the world.

*"A vegan diet is probably the single biggest way to reduce your impact on planet Earth, not just greenhouse gases, but global acidification, eutrophication, land use and water use."<sup>3</sup>*

— Joseph Poore, University of Oxford professor

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## ENDNOTES

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# THE DANCE OF TWO WRITERS

ROBYN MAITLAND

*My Impossible Promise in language reads: "By 2024, all people will experience themselves as infinite light, works of art and creations of a master designer, the Creator God as Source where bliss and peace exist."*

The following Report from the Field continues to update the listeners on my promise to forward a conversation for God in the world. The world will always be better with God in it. It is with joy that I announce a co-authored literary work produced in this journal that not only shares my promise, yet also demonstrates progress as the conversational constituency has expanded from "I" to "we." I am grateful to contribute to the journal by using writing to bring viewpoints forward, and I use this report to summarize from my authoring experience some highlights and insights about co-authoring.

Producing a publishable writing work as a solo writer is no easy venture as any writer knows. It is, therefore, unusual, even remarkable, to accomplish writing a literary work with another. How the heck do you do that? How do you write with another writer?

First, you might ask why bother? Why bother writing with the other when it is difficult enough to find, and hold, your own voice? One view in the listening of this Conference for Global Transformation is that any commitment big enough to affect or effect a planet will require lots

and lots of writing and most likely the writing will represent collaborative voice.

Read on if you want to explore how to find the rhythm in the dance between two writers.

- **Create a guiding sentence that will give vision to the writing** – the guiding sentence is more of an intention. For example, at the editing stage, the editor kept asking us to answer the question: What is this paper really about?
- **Assemble ingredients separately by writing first in your own voice** – How do you know what you will say until you write it or speak it? A journal is great.
- **Fold the writing together (like batter in a cake)** – At some point, the content written by each writer separately must begin to mix together. Folding lets you mix the ingredients carefully such that the individual writer's voice can still be heard.
- **Stir slightly with transitions to guide you** – Of course, folding the two separate writings together may be very disjointed or, as the

editor said to us, lacking cohesion. Allow this to be part of your process.

- **Like in a tennis match, begin to move the body of work back and forth across the net** – By passing the entire content over the fence, you allow the other writer to own the story. This is only after you first carefully folded in the individual writing.
- **You must trust that something wants to give birth and come through the paper** – You must listen closely for what the writing wants to say versus what you, or even the we, think the writing should say. Writing, like any art, at some point takes on a life of its own and is there to say what it is there to say. This is the most exciting part of the process.
- **Finally blend voices** – As you begin to see the guiding sentence has taken on life and the voyage has been set, begin to blend the voices. To blend the voices of more than one writer, you must begin to own all the content as if it were your own. Where were the voices the same, where were they different and was it important to keep that difference and where was it important to co-mingle into one sound? All of these were important questions. When you cannot find “you” from the “we,” the blending is complete. Is that okay? Let it happen, as in synergistic events, there are always three—the agent and the catalyst always causes a third event that stands on its own and becomes something that only exists because of the blend. Let go and trust God. I am still trusting now.
- **Pick your battles and appreciate your readers** – Yes, at some point, you will need to be okay that your co-writer found a way to say what you were trying to say better. It is okay that we cut out the story about your third-grade teacher as we tightened the content to satisfy the reader. The focus toward the last stage of the writing process was always on the edification, and/or inspiration, of the reader. You must appreciate your readers and be willing to let go of one viewpoint and pick up another and to see and feel it, and, yes, even for moments, agree with it. It is an act of service and of great spiritual capacity

and training to be one willing to do this. Yet, it is someone who sees it all and without arrogance—really so humbled to receive so much talent. However, there are places where one should not compromise and one should know their own integrity boundaries for a good life.

Of course, there are many ways to write with another writer. We both agreed that it was a relief to return to solitary writing, yet both of us found ourselves contributing reports because the cadence of writing had been established. So, I leave you with some quick discoveries I found from the privilege of participating at this level at the conference. Here are just a few discoveries I would like to share:

- Recognize that deadlines work for writers. There is nothing like it has to be done tonight.
- Know your writer’s voice intimately.
- Begin to practice public acts of courage. Being a writer/author is public.
- Be willing to say new things. There are very few new things said in mankind’s history. Maybe from time to time we can push the edge, causing new experiences in the world through writing. It’s worth a shot!
- Don’t take yourself too seriously. Yes, learn to laugh at yourself, your work, your intensity and, especially, the critical viewpoint of others.
- Understand writing has power. This might be obvious, yet a good writer can cause and influence outcomes. As Anne Lamont, a recognized writer and writing coach, puts it, “Your job, as a writer, is to tell the truth,” yet be responsible that you have given thought to the world you wish to create for others.
- Create beyond the “I” can lead to remarkable contribution. The juice is in the discovery and the deliciousness of what you learn about each other along the way and mostly what you learn about yourself as you reveal yourself to Self.
- Pick partner(s) who is/are willing to play the

integrity game with you. Integrity is a high-caliber game.

- Forget blame. Things will go wrong. You won't like what your writer wrote. Death and taxes happen. Rather than blame, learn to use the information and the feel of the disappointment as fuel for growth.
- Release and let go. At some point, you have to let go. The deadline has arrived.

In conclusion, it is unusual, even funny, to watch how two or more people come together to create anything. Particularly in writing together, there is almost certain doomed predictability of failure. Writing with another, however, is not only possible but there are great gains to be found. My last text to my co-writer speaks to the experience. "... I am left with the essence of both of us in this paper—not your voice, not my voice, but a combined intention that took the reader on a journey." When you achieve something beyond the predictable, it is a victory. It feels good to share this victory with you as I continue the work of my commitment to share my promise for the world.

# DISCOVERIES FROM CONVERSATIONS BETWEEN ROBYN AND GORDON WITH GOD

GORDON MARTIN

Global Transformation. We set out to explore “Making a Difference” from her shore and mine. Robyn has a commitment to the world that we get connected to our deep spiritual nature, and my interest is in making a difference for people in recovery from addiction. We co-authored the paper, “Conversations between Robyn and Gordon with God: A Brief Inquiry Into What if the Eternal Is Within Us.” As part of our ongoing inquiry, we made a commitment to journal our experience. The intersections between spirituality, recovery and the conversations for transformation live within me as an ongoing inquiry. Added to the inquiry this year was me dealing newly with mental health issues and the impact of them in my life.

As a poet, a lot of my journaling was written poetically. Within the poems, I explore various topics including addiction, recovery, mental health, grief, the writing process of our paper and my experience of God within.

## GORDON’S BACKSTORY

In our young life  
When all around is chaos  
We don’t think that  
The choices we make  
To bring comfort and feelings of control  
Would one day our prison make

And so it would be with me  
Using alcohol, drugs and sex  
Brought comfort  
Eased pain  
Allowed me to be new

Different in my own skin  
Yet over time  
Tightened its noose

Beginning conversations for transformation  
Inviting recovery to the dance floor  
Brought integrity, responsibility, balance

Yet when the dance ended  
The demons emerged  
Stronger  
Their wounds cutting deeper  
Their fires destroying all things precious

Like a Phoenix now I rise  
Recovery  
Leading the way  
Arm and arm  
With transformation  
Blazing new trails

December 2019

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## TOWER OF TERROR

All my life  
Been riding the rails  
Not Thomas the tank engine  
Gently through the countryside  
Space mountaining in the dark  
Breakneck speeds  
Tower of Terror  
I climb level by level  
Trying to achieve some new height  
Yet always, always, crashing down  
Didn’t know  
I was even in the park

Let alone bought the ticket

I would simply awake mid-ride  
When behaviors emerged  
Dredged from sea bottoms  
Cigarettes first  
Overspending  
Confidence and creativity galore  
Climbing foot by foot

Healthy meals  
Boundaries  
Thinking  
Fly out the window  
As speeds increased  
Dangerous turns entered

Downward crashing  
Emotions, anger  
Intolerance rumbling  
Tearing through relationships

Winds low calm  
Eye of the storm

Tunnels  
So dark  
Twisting  
Inverting  
Falling

Seven days ago  
Woke up to find myself  
On the ride again  
One week in – the climbing  
Spinning fun  
Neon dazzling still present  
Friends saw different

Love  
Protective boundaries  
Uploading knowledge  
Kept me safe as the fun  
Unraveled

Descending I plainly saw  
Multiple wristbands  
Scaling my arms  
Showing how it was me all  
Along buying those tickets

Clinical assessment  
Peels back curtains  
Years of destruction  
Riding the rails through Peoples' hearts

Grateful today that I am at Disney  
And not dangerous back alleys  
My soul raped discarded  
Left rotting  
Recovery is a beautiful gift.

May 21, 2019

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"I See You" is a poem written for my friend, Carol Diedorff, after her daughter Shannon, a United States veteran, took her own life after a long struggle with addiction and depression.

### **I SEE YOU**

I have never looked in your eyes  
That you would know that I see you  
But so often have I held your hand  
In prayer at the end of a meeting  
Felt your small hand in mine  
Knew the warrior standing next to me

Never have I shared a laugh with you  
Heard your story  
Your version of the pain felt  
Worn on our bodies  
Clouding our souls

I have felt the darkness  
That peers in close  
That chokes, strangles  
Won't let go

Know the need to hide  
Bury the pain  
Escape the torture of now  
These feelings screaming  
Cutting our skin

I have found escape  
In things and people  
Tried to fool myself  
That this was enough

Numbing myself so long  
That I did not see  
The forest fire  
Burning down my life

Those fires may still  
Smolder  
Yet mostly the earth is cool  
Under my feet



I no longer hide in the shadows  
My head heavy  
With shame

I have come into the light  
Where the darkness hides  
I share my story  
The struggle pain  
The rising and falling

I wished we could  
Have talked  
Had tea  
Sat quiet in the trees

I am grateful now though  
Grateful for your mom  
That she shared you  
With me

Grateful  
Your light  
Shines  
Embraces

June 2019

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### **NOT GREEN EGGS AND HAM**

No this is not some silly rhyme  
About green eggs and ham  
It would be great  
If I could write from there  
It should be called dread head  
And is inspired by your asking me  
To listen deeper:

What a terrible place to be  
Stuck in my head  
Swirling around  
Nothing but dread  
Ideas dead  
Shovel in hand  
Yet no space in there  
Just incessant chatter  
Hiding behind is something  
That matters  
It's just in there  
You may see it  
If you listen in close  
It shines brightly  
Just shyder than most

September 12, 2019

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### **GATEWAY THROUGH THE DARKNESS**

My gateway through the darkness  
Through the mud  
Is by sitting and writing  
By sitting and writing  
Weeds unearthed  
Unclogging my arteries

September 28, 2019

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### **DARK TO CLEAR**

What if  
I just allowed  
Just wrote  
Let love flow through me  
Changing my mood  
Dark to clear  
The poison exiting my veins  
Giving my demons  
No thoughts to hang onto

September 28, 2019

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### **TREASURES**

Sitting, writing  
A secret sanctuary  
On waters' edge  
Opening rusty locks  
Treasures within  
Beyond garden tools  
I discover things newly  
I invited you into the garden  
To play  
Then took all my toys  
And went home  
Today I play without expectations  
Spirit is knitting a pair of winter mittens

September 21, 2019

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### **NOTHING AND WORD**

Locked in  
Buried  
Waves of self-doubt  
Dread wash over me  
Keeping me  
Under covers  
Too hot  
Needing rescue

Where is all that happiness gone  
Gained from a week  
Chanting Holy Names  
Yet this morning  
I refuse to play the tape

God Answers,  
A morning meditation  
From Jeremiah  
No difference made  
Except thinking to  
A poem I wrote  
When God Calls

God answers  
Flips this on its head  
Inviting me to do the calling  
And I do  
Calling for courage  
For serenity  
Wisdom

None matter this morning  
Stuck in my darkened room  
Despite a long night's rest

Perhaps a flu, cold  
Coming on I reason  
And blame could be put  
On that as I stayed  
Buried in the covers all day

Yet this morning an appt.  
Is calling me  
My call with Robyn  
Robyn, Gordon & God  
All on the phone together

Staying in bed no option  
As integrity statement  
Lives, calling me  
To my word  
Beyond thoughts, feelings, opinions

"We are nothing and word"  
She shares  
Said to her by a course leader  
As humans we are nothing and word

The call proceeds  
The ice around my heart  
Melting as words tumble  
And are shared

Reminding me again  
In dialogue we rise

October 2019

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### TEA CUP INSPIRATION

At the heart of the paper Robyn says  
Is your poem written for Shannon  
I see you  
Within which I say  
I wish we could have talked  
Had tea  
Sat quiet in the trees

Moved as a lump grows  
In my throat  
Simply being me  
Simply sharing me

Recently I wrote  
My pen dry  
Yet truth is I  
Have been unwilling  
To pick it up

Linda knows  
That simply doing so  
Spills words on paper

And we are nothing  
And word.

November 14, 2019

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### INVITING VULNERABILITY

Just  
Unravel yourself  
Wool dropping  
From your lap  
They all know you are  
Hurting inside  
Show them that  
They hurt inside too

October 2019

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### **CLINGING TO THE KNOWN**

Even out in the ocean of unknown  
Have I clung to those things I know  
The waves, salt air  
Birds curiously flying overhead  
Whale eyes rising from below  
What's available when  
Letting go of these things  
Perhaps God is curious too

October 2019

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### **WHO IS WITHIN?**

Is God within or are we within God?  
Certainly we are not separate  
How can we be  
As much as we are  
Not separate from the universe  
Yes locked in our house  
Or stuck in our head  
We may think  
We are separate  
As John O'Donohue wrote  
Yet if all this out here  
Is alive different  
Yet the same  
As we are  
Who is within whom?

November 2019

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# A TIPPING POINT FOR TRANSFORMATION

ROBERT WALKER

*Way back in the day I committed to becoming a Landmark Forum leader and, after several attempts at the Introduction Leaders Program, I was candidated as an introduction leader.*

I had thought that once I became an introduction leader, a lot of my troubles would cease. However, that was not to be the case, and I struggled to combine my volunteering as an introduction leader with running my business.

Somehow forgetting my commitment to become a Forum leader, I completed my agreement as an introduction leader early. However, I was still committed to transformation and spent several years assisting as the team leader for the mail out for the Special Evening About The Landmark Forum in London.

Eventually, I found the ideal combination, which was to work for a company that had permission to offer consulting services based on Werner's principles to businesses and organizations.

I am lucky enough to work under Allan Scherr who at International Business Machines (IBM) helped Werner Erhard, the founder of the est Training, develop his first leadership trainings.

Allan is a genius when it comes to business processes and his take on the work is unique.

From what he's created, it can be seen that that every performance metric is impacted by integrity or the lack of it as in "integrity as systems and people doing what's expected of them." If you dwell on this, you will find that there is no aspect of performance that is not covered by this simple approach.

What's even more distinct about Allan's work is transforming what it means to be a team, i.e., people authentically committed to the same specific outcome or outcomes.

Empowering teams, as distinct from empowering individuals, is the secret sauce in creating extraordinary organizational performance.

I'm now located in Manila in the Philippines where, in the last few years, Landmark has ceased operations. I just passed my 70th year on this planet and my 40th since my first est Training. I am committed that our model of integrity becomes the number one performance application in the Philippines in my lifetime. To achieve that, I'm speaking to government ministers and heads of business in the country about the difference that

operating with integrity can make to their results and bottom line. This year, I will also be building a team of local consultants.

At the same time, in partnership with Mike Smith, Mark Krauss and (the now late) Doreen Durney, I have created a venue where both graduates and nongraduates can share their commitment for the world and be listened to by other committed individuals. It's called the "Tipping Point for Transformation." We hold regular monthly calls where both graduates and nongraduates can join to share their commitment, what's next for them and anything that might be in the way. It's made a big difference to people with a commitment bigger than themselves to move forward with those commitments. People can join a Facebook page, [www.facebook.com/thetippingpointprojectpage](http://www.facebook.com/thetippingpointprojectpage), to find out when the calls are and how to join them. It's a stepping-stone on the way to a world that works for everyone.

What I've learned is that besides integrity, persistence and grit are key. While I'm in concentration at the beginning of a project, putting much more in than I'm getting out, the thinking is, "This is not working," and I entertain ideas about quitting (see quitting my introduction leader agreement). The only thing that made the difference was to keep going. What has helped in that regard is: a) in my work, closing the back door on any other options and b) in my volunteering, being part of a true team with a shared commitment.

# SLIPPING AWAY

VIRGINIA BECK

The time always runs faster than I do. The day slips away, dragging a star-spangled scarf behind the sun, slipping over the horizon. It is all so slippery, this life and being alive. You can't catch hold of anything. It all escapes my grasp, even fleeting views of beautiful emotions crossing my husband's face when he is well and truly listening to me, or music, or anyone.

The smiles on slippery children that are sliding into the future way ahead of, and beyond us. It is all a slippery slope, this life. As an elder, I appreciate each second more and more ... but then how can there be any more to life? This unfolding breath, unfolding my slippery body day in and day out. And the perpetual slipperiness of any sensory appreciation.

Tastes, flavors, wine, papayas, chocolate, fresh-baked bread. It is no good trying to capture it, it changes the minute you touch it, cut it, bite it! And then, in your mouth, what happens to the crunchy crust, the crispness melting into the soft airy crumb of the inner loaf, and it all gets smooched to starches, and your saliva runs potently, transforming it into a gooey mess, which you swallow, so you can gobble into the next bite.

Taste the creamy butter, with its faintly salty film coating your lips, and the fatty feel of it on your tongue, our first tool developed to nourish us. But, the taste disappears as fast as the bread, and it is all sliding down into a place we sort of believe in where all sorts of nasty things will happen.

Better focus on the incredible natural organic strawberry preserves. I first tasted them in my grandmother's kitchen in Farnham, Surrey. I was taken to the kitchen by Ruby, the cook, so that Grandmother could talk with Mummy.

I never met a Ruby before, and she explained her

name to me. Forever after, rubies and the glorious strawberries from the garden were one sensory memory. The freshness of bread and farm butter made an airy platform on which garnet-colored jewels of berries sat in ponds of their own sweetened jelly. I have never in my whole life tasted anything like it again. It all slips away.

The rainbow of colors slipping through the waters down at tidepools ... carp in all their multisplendored mosaics of burning orange, alabaster white, coal black and golden, speckled with charcoal. They flame like the coals and embers of a liquid fire. How can solar fire slide into this fickle, freckled fishiness?

They slip through ripples, and their shadows are slipping through reflections dancing back and forth on the slippery bottom. The carp nibble at slippery weeds that wind in the currents, and then they slide on. Such slippery fish, sliding through time. The oldest one has been sliding through the waters for 276 years. The same fish, different waters.

Oh, life is a slippery mess. From the babies that slip and slide out of their mothers, and nearly through the fingers of time. Babies slide from second to second, blooming into every instant, wiggling into every heart, slip sliding into our thoughts and don't last an instant. Changing into slippery toddlers sliding down playground slides, along the halls of school, and then as fledgling adults, they slide out the door before you know it.

Everything is slippery. Even the clocks are not to be trusted; their faces change all the time. You turn to look at them, and they say something different each time. Unreliable, this slippery time element, almost as slippery as laughter. Or love.

Love slides out of your heart before you even

have time to think of it. It runs downhill from your full heart to the nearest empty one. Worse than mercury. You can never hold it or keep it, because it keeps breaking up with you and sliding on to the next one.

We slide through our work and slide through our failures, and then slip into success like we were born with it waiting to slide out of us. And our smiles, my god, the smiles are sssssslipperiest of all! They are insubstantial, flirtatious with other smiles and everyone smiles 'til their faces hurt, and still they won't stay.

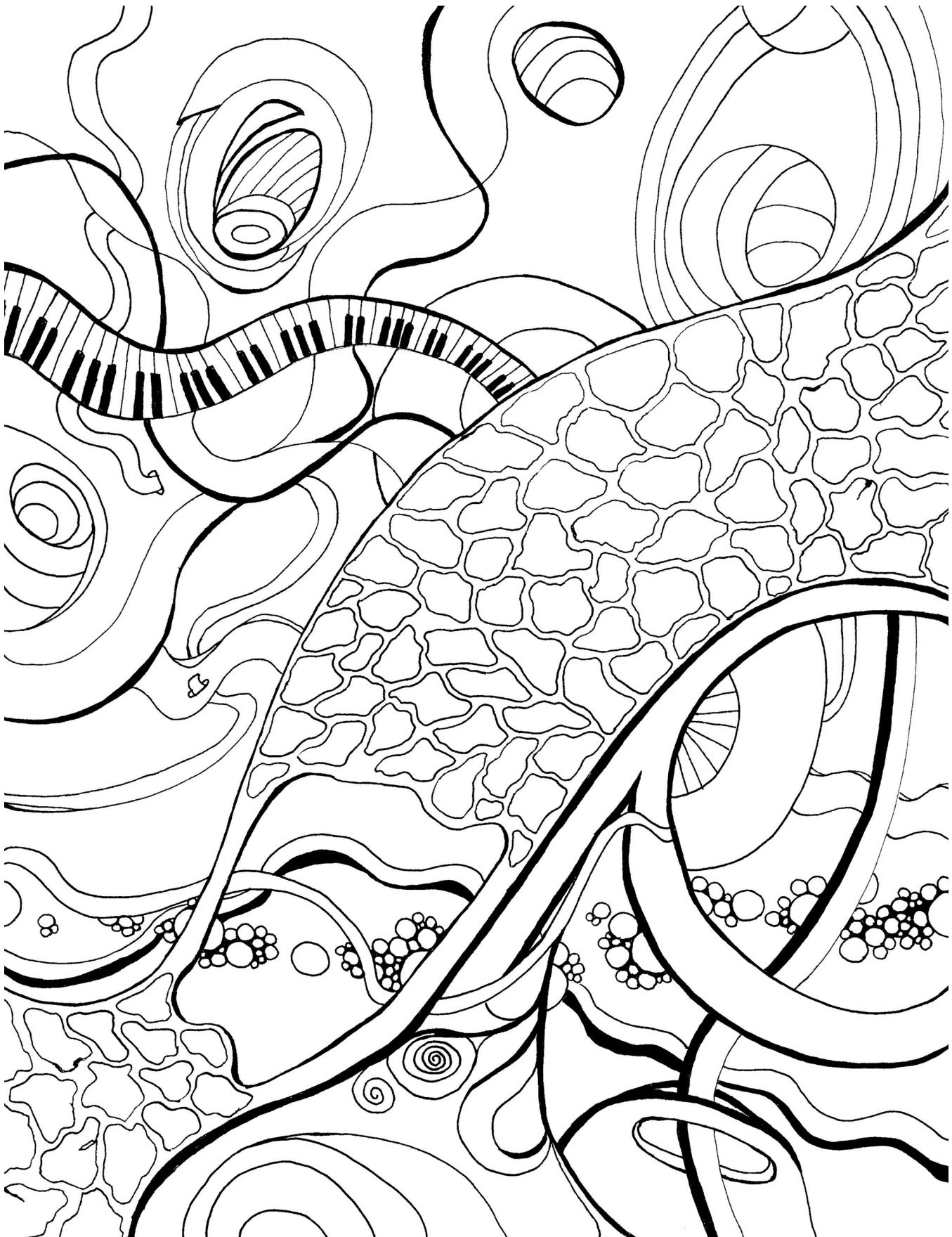
I asked a mirror about this. It said, "Just look at the next person's eyes, and the smile will be waiting there." So slippery, I didn't even know that it left the house already onto the next person. So, I filled the mirror with as many smiles as I could, but, when I was sad, I couldn't find any there. I had to smile to fill it back up again.

Sadness, well there's another slippery one. It comes in many colors, and it keeps changing like the rainbow reflections on the ocean, and even the rainbow won't stay still. The breezes push it along as though it hadn't a care in the world, and it has a different dress for everyone, and no permanent address. Super slippery, and it is just a feckless gypsy, flaunting its colors all over for everyone to see.

It is hard to keep a hold on sadness, it isn't reliable either, and, sometimes, it pretends to be happy and can't keep a smile on its face, or else it is smiling and crying at the same time. Slippery tears. They are the lubricants for sorrow or joy, and, sometimes, you can't tell which is which. If you go to the mirror to check, they stop. They don't appreciate the scrutiny, such slippery little drops.

And words, they are the slipperiest of all. Anyone can conjure up a word or two, but they don't last either. Even the nicest things they say are gone in a heartbeat. How can anyone trust them? The same people slip them out of their mouths and say different things with them. Sometimes at the same time. Now how can they be in two places at once?

And then there is age ... what the dickens do they mean? We are all the same age, the age we are now. It doesn't belong anywhere; it is just borrowed. Eternal is the only nonslippery thing.





# JOURNAL AUTHOR BIOGRAPHIES

**JEAN J. CHU** is an earth scientist trained in the United States in geology and geophysics. She has worked with the United Nations and local communities to implement approaches in disaster forecasting and preparedness. Her present focus is to integrate the most relevant advances in science and society to reduce the impact of natural hazards. Born and raised in New York, Chu has a U.S. passport and resides in New York, as well as in Beijing, China.

**DOLLY COSTELLO, PH.D.**, co-leads the Being a Leader and the Effective Exercise of Leadership course with Effective Action Consulting. Her commitment is to bring leadership to the worlds of addiction and recovery. An educational psychologist, she earned her Ph.D. from University of California, Berkeley, specializing in students with Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder, autism and mental health issues. Costello earned her "Clowning Around" certificate recreating herself as Dr. Dolly, offering alternatives to Prozac and therapy. She plays with Patch Adams on humanitarian tours. Her Impossible Promise is: Children of all ages live life fully and play with a passion for life itself.

**CORAL CREW-NOBLE** is a master consultant in the 21st century global community. Born in London, England, she recently led a systems change project empowering collaboration and facilitating conversations among national leaders in Jamaica. This led to transforming the culture of Jamaica's maximum-security prisons and galvanizing an update of legislation for correctional reform. A human resources professional and change management practitioner for more than 15 years, Crew-Noble supports an expression of leadership as the unquestionable birthright of the human experience. Having studied on four continents, she holds a Global Executive Master's in business administration and a bachelor's degree in management.

**BRIGITTE DENECK**, a French citizen who has lived in London for 21 years, has studied and taught many areas of communication, such as languages, acting and psychology, and holds a British post-graduate certificate in education. She now specializes in Pneumaphonie®, a method which focuses on the power of breath and voice to be and communicate in the world.

**SANDI EATON RICHARDS** is a structural engineer who has run her own businesses for more than 20 years. She first participated in The Landmark Forum in London in 2007 and has been a stand for out-of-area communities since then. Her growth and development have gone hand in hand with causing transformation in her out-of-area community. Working with refugees in Europe has challenged her experience of happiness and making a difference. She has recently taken on causing a World Happiness Team and World Manifesto for Happiness, enrolling community and world leaders to propagate transformational happiness.

**WENDY ELIPOLO** is a special education teacher and associate professional counselor. Her passion is social emotional learning (SEL) and leadership. She brings SEL to every aspect in each of her careers, especially when working with children and their parents. She and her husband, John, live in Georgia and have been Landmark graduates for more than seven years. Eliopolo is actively involved in coaching the Partnership Explorations course and learning how to support the measures needed for successful courses in the Landmark Family Division.

**EILEEN FORRESTAL**, a retired consultant anesthetist, now engages full-time in the business she co-founded in 2006 – producing transformational diaries, journals and events for adults and teens. She is committed to healing the suffering in the world, encouraging awareness and authentic self-expression. Having spent years putting "people to sleep," Forrestal is now

## JOURNAL AUTHOR BIOGRAPHIES (continued)

at work “waking people up,” inspired to make a greater impact on personal health and well-being with words than with one pair of hands. She is an author, speaker, coach and mentor who uses her experience, wisdom and insight to make a difference in the world.

**MARYSUE FOSTER** has enjoyed many years of living. She has been a nonprofit executive and fundraiser, teacher, entrepreneur, artist, trainer and author, and plays the piano medium well. She has participated since 1981 in various Landmark programs as a student and leader. She is a graduate, at 66, of the Starr King School for the Ministry, a Unitarian-Universalist seminary in Berkeley, California, earning a master of arts in religious leadership for social change in May 2010. Foster lives near her multicultural, multigenerational family of origin, volunteers widely, looks after her grandchildren and plays seriously as a mixed media artist.

**SUSAN HOSKINS** has more than 30 years of experience in the government sector, private sector and nonprofits delivering programs that promote economic self-sufficiency for disadvantaged people around the world. She provides coaching and designs trainings to expand the capacity of individuals, entrepreneurs and organizations. Hoskins founded the Coalition for Economic Empowerment in 1996 to provide economically empowering programming that supports parents and youth living in the District of Columbia. In addition to her extensive community work, she has been a staff member for Landmark for two years and has led the Self-Expression & Leadership Program for more than four years.

**ROBYN MAITLAND** has a master's degree in organizational management and 25 years of cross-industry experience providing change and training consulting. She now believes happy, engaged workers are living their vision, mission and passion. Maitland is a public servant providing quality data assurance in the Department of Behavioral Health in the Commonwealth of Virginia.

**GORDON MARTIN** is president of People Places & Things, a vacation rental and experiential tourism

company in Newfoundland, Canada. He chose to do The Landmark Forum in 2003 out of his desire to quit drinking and has been participating or assisting with Landmark ever since. He uses the distinctions of both transformation and recovery as part of his ongoing growth and development. A poet who writes about his everyday encounters with God, he currently assists with Partnership Explorations. He will soon be publishing his first book of recovery poems entitled, “The In-Between.”

**BRIAN MCFADIN**, certified professional coactive coach, is a master-certified professional coach and business consultant, helping solopreneurs, executives and entrepreneurs to clarify the soul of their mission and accomplish it with passion, ease and joy. McFadin lives in Boise, Idaho and Costa Rica.

**SUSIE MILES** teaches courses in equality and diversity in education at University of Manchester. She began her career as a teacher of deaf children working in England and then in Swaziland, southern Africa, where she became a mother of two children and a global networker on issues of disability and education. Since 2017, she has been performing her autobiography inside a context of children growing up in a world without discrimination and raising awareness about apartheid. She is committed to bringing the Being a Leader and the Effective Exercise of Leadership course to universities in the United Kingdom.

**FRED MOSS** is a nondiagnosing psychiatrist, committed to transforming the narrative of mental health and mental illness. He has been in the mental health field for more than 40 years and has promised to create a world where each and every person will know that their voice can be heard and that who they are and what they do matters. Finding ways to unify humanity using communication pathways that are either overlooked or unrealized is a high priority in his life's work.

**KATHY NORMAN** lives with her dog, Bella, in San Jose, California. She is a collection of contradictions. For example, she loves and avoids writing, and she embraces and avoids people and relationships.

She believes everyone makes a difference to the planet and great technologies enable people to make the difference they want to make. Blockchain is one of those technologies. Norman is happy and honored to be part of blockchain. Until recently, she believed that “words matter,” that a communication works because specific words form an intended meaning. Now, she is not so sure.

**RUTH B. SHIELDS** is a linguist working in the area of endangered language revitalization. She has been working with the last living speaker of Xay Tsnu (Southeastern Pomo), a language that has been spoken around Clear Lake, California, for more than 14,000 years. She is creating a board game for people to teach each other their languages. She has been participating in Landmark’s programs for 27 years and in the Wisdom Area for 26 years. She currently lives in Santa Rosa, California.

**APRIL SHOEMAKER** was on staff at Landmark World Headquarters from 2006-2012 and went on to author “Empowering Parenting and One-Hour Potty Training.” After assisting at her first Conference for Global Transformation in 2014, she published various articles in the journal: *Workability and Power: Lessons From Villains* (2015), *Parenting as an Inquiry* (2016) and *Dancing in the Clearing* (2017), and won an award for her poster on villains. She empowers parents to create their unique style of parenting and to gain confidence as a parent, and inspires people to reinvent themselves with her wild adventures and engaging sense of humor.

**GORDON STARR**, CEO of Starr Consulting Group, empowers visionary business leaders through the delivery of the Being a Leader and the Effective Exercise of Leadership course, Werner Erhard’s cutting-edge leadership program. He has worked in organizational transformation since 1985 prior to which he was a senior executive in Silicon Valley. Starr has a master’s degree in business administration from Stanford University. He is on the Pachamama Alliance board and on the faculty for Mastery Foundation’s School for Leadership. Starr and his wife, Lily, have been married 50 years, live in San Francisco and

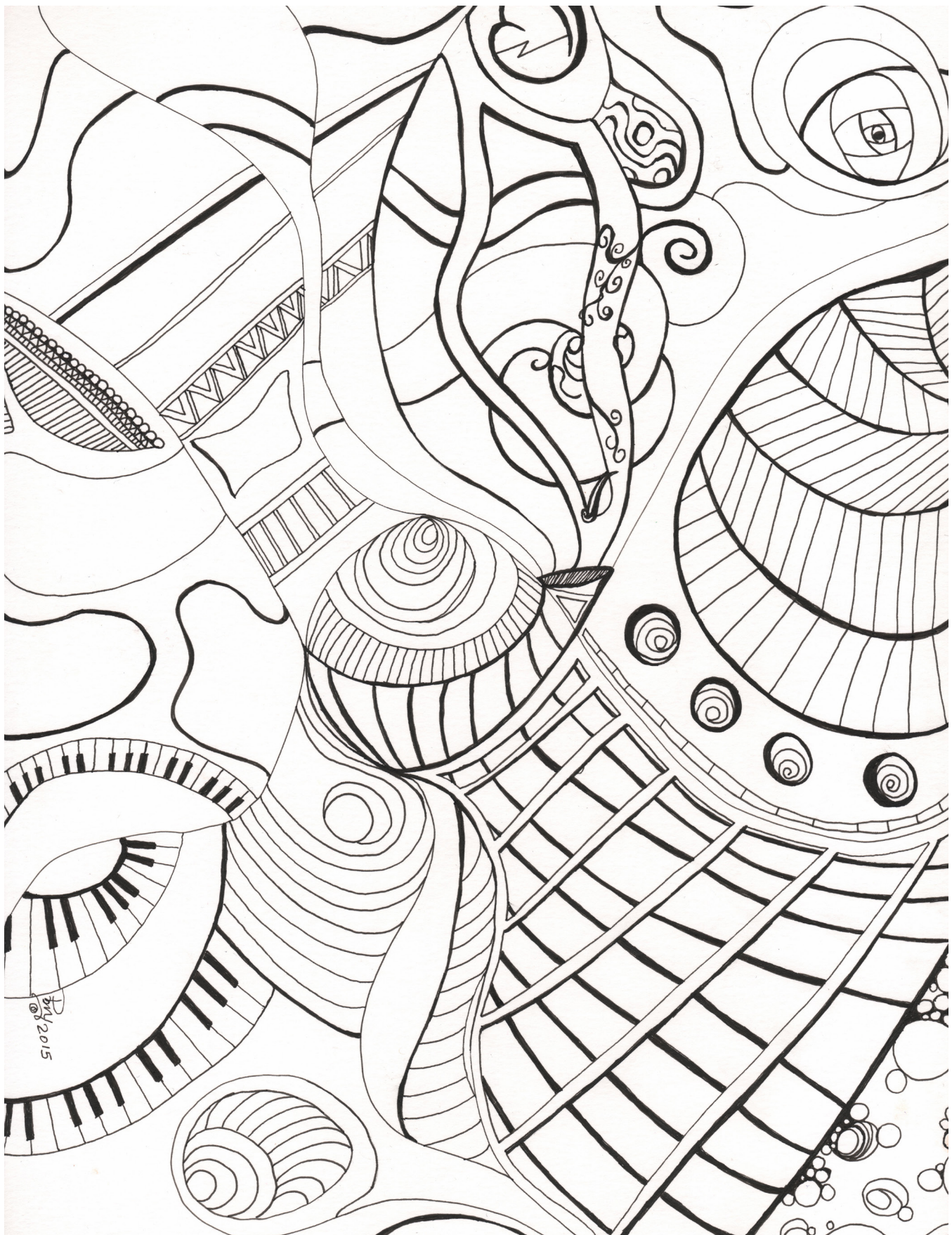
have participated in Landmark’s work since 1973.

**ED STROUPE** spent 35 years as a software developer and designer. With Mary, his wife of 28 years, he co-founded Integritas, Inc. and led their development group to achieving five national certifications of their electronic medical record software. Since his retirement in 2013, he has devoted his time to a passionate study of philosophy, and, in 2017, he published his first novel, “Signaling: A Message from the Future.” Stroupe sees the “Discourse as Access” inquiry as a powerful way to forward transformation in the world. Currently, he is a graduate student. He and Mary live in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

**JESSICA TISHUE** is an entrepreneur, environmentalist and foodie who is committed to inspiring one billion people to go plastic-free.

**MELINDA VOSS** was a 26-year staff writer for the Des Moines Register and Tribune, a co-founder and executive director of the Association of Health Care Journalists and public relations director for the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system before retiring. Her book, “From Mango Cuba to Prickly Pear America – An American’s Journey to Castro’s Cuba and Back,” was published in 2018. She holds a bachelor’s degree in journalism and a master’s degree in public health. A 2001 graduate of The Landmark Forum, Voss has taken many Landmark courses and assisted in various accountabilities. She became the journal editor in 2018.

**MARCOS WILSON** is an immigrant father, known as “Yoda” to his granddaughters. Born and raised in Panama of Jamaican grandparents, he followed his dream to the United States to study engineering at Cornell University. An information technology executive coach/consultant and recovering “startup junkie,” he loves creating teams to build the impossible. This includes the transformation of leadership in Latin America and the West Indies. Wilson took The Landmark Forum in 2006 and served as an introduction leader and Introduction Leaders Program coach for eight years. He is the source person for the Wisdom Course Area in Washington, D.C.





# KEYNOTE SPEAKER BIOGRAPHIES

**ANGELA AMADO, PH.D.**, has led transformational programs for more than 30 years and has been a Wisdom course leader since 1994. She leads the Partnership Explorations course, the Structural Connections Vacation course and is the head of training and development for the Wisdom Course Area. She has also worked professionally in the field of disability for more than 30 years in a variety of capacities, including national research, international consulting and government policy. She has authored key books on inclusion of people with intellectual disabilities into the community and conducted training across the United States, Canada, Australia and Europe.

**JOHN BAKER** is a program manager with more than 30 years of experience at Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena, California. He manages and leads the Planetary SmallSat Program Office in the Solar System Exploration Directorate, which includes missions such as Mars Cube One, Lunar Flashlight and Lunar Trailblazer. His background includes a variety of leadership roles on Space Shuttle payloads and large robotic missions. His current program is developing the technologies and capabilities for small spacecraft for the National Aeronautics and Space Administration to explore new destinations in the solar system. Baker has been participating in Landmark programs since 1991.

climate issues. He founded Citizens Climate Lobby's 100-year plan group, which led to defining the goal of climate restoration.

**KHUSH COOPER, PH.D.**, is committed to a world where governments, organizations and communities fully support excellence and diversity for children and families. Following a successful career as a social worker and nonprofit executive, her entrepreneurial and thriving consulting practice is committed to changing the human services landscape by providing innovations that cause organizations and communities to thrive.

She teaches public policy and the Being a Leader and the Effective Exercise of Leadership course at University of California Los Angeles Luskin School of Public Affairs. She has been engaged in transformational work for 14 years and lives in Los Angeles.

**ERICA DODDS** holds a Ph.D. in interdisciplinary evaluation and a master's degree in international development administration. Her lifelong interest in poverty reduction led her to study abroad in West Africa, intern with a nonprofit in rural India and work for the Evaluation Office of the International Labour Organization in Geneva. She is committed to seeing climate action work for today's youth in addition to future generations, and she believes that the key is setting a goal of restoring a safe and healthy climate.

**PETER FIEKOWSKY** is chairman and founder of the Foundation for Climate Restoration, which is establishing the explicit global climate goal of restoring a proven safe climate by 2050. The foundation for Climate Restoration produced the first Climate Restoration Forum at the United Nations last September, which established restoration as a global goal. Fiekowsky is a Massachusetts Institute of Technology-educated physicist with 27 patents and a Silicon Valley software entrepreneur. He has 30 years' experience as a global lobbyist for poverty and

**VANESSA JOHNSTONE** has worked in sales and marketing in London and on Wall Street for nearly 30 years. She started her career at Salomon Brothers and then went on to work for other banks including Citibank and Goldman Sachs. In 2005, she took her first Landmark Forum and, in the last decade, has actively invested and funded a number of start-up companies and projects. Most recently, Johnstone invested in a project that ended up giving back the most surprising returns for her and the community involved. She lives in London and Yorkshire in England with her husband.

## KEYNOTE SPEAKER BIOGRAPHIES (continued)

**HARRY ROSENBERG**, CEO, Landmark Worldwide, has been on staff at Landmark and its predecessor since 1973. From 1973 to 1991, he held several accountabilities, including those for the training and development of faculty, regional and field office operations and constituency growth and participation. Since the inception of Landmark in 1991, Rosenberg has served as the chief executive officer. In this role, he is accountable for both the future of Landmark as well as its overall operations worldwide. He was designated a Landmark Forum leader in 1992. He has a bachelor's degree in business administration from St. Mary's College in California.

**DYLAN STAFFORD'S** Impossible Promise is "By 2020, we live in a world of organizations that work for everyone, where people go home appreciated, respected and valued for what they say and do." Stafford was a Landmark introduction leader, completed the Wisdom Unlimited course seven times, is a Creation of Freedom graduate and met his wife, Marisa, on a Wisdom Course Area vacation course. He has brought the Being a Leader and the Effective Exercise of Leadership course to University of California, Los Angeles. Author of two books, he also has a podcast. He and his wife have two young sons.

**LORRAINE WARREN, PH.D.**, is described as "God's little girl and the devil's advocate" because of her ability to listen deeply. With more than 20 years' experience as an educator and facilitator in transformation, cultural competency, leadership and coaching, she has worked in over 100 countries. Warren was honored in acknowledgement of having directly impacted the lives of more than 34,000 youth and recognized for her outstanding contributions to the advancement of peace and social justice. She is writing a memoir inspired by her life experiences and research interviewing genocide survivors in Rwanda, Africa.

# BREAKOUT SESSION PRESENTERS

**LESLIE AGRON** did the est Training in 1972 followed by the Communication Workshop in the mid-1970s. In 1986, he took The Landmark Forum and had completed the Curriculum for Living by 2001. Agron took the Wisdom Unlimited course in 2004, the Partnership Explorations course in 2015 and attended the 2016 Conference for Global Transformation with a poster. He also participated in the Being a Leader and the Effective Exercise of Leadership course in 2016. Since 2019, he has participated in the Tipping Point Project; since 2000, he continues to inquire into the conversation of our culture.

**LEANNE ALAMAN** is the founder of Embodied Contribution Consulting where she provides coaching and consulting to individuals and organizations to support self-expression, freedom and aliveness in the area of race and racism. Her exceptional work is skillfully and lovingly delivered to support healing as an access to justice. Alaman has helped start two nonprofit organizations and has designed and facilitated curriculum for social justice programs and schools across the United States. She is deeply committed to transforming our inherited conversations about race.

**LIZ ALLEN** is a hospital chaplain whose work facilitates spirit for patients, families and staff at turning points of life and death. Previously on the faculty of University of Wisconsin Occupational Therapy School, Allen is a certified leader and director of the CareGivers Renewal course designed by Brian Regnier in 1989. She has presented workshops at the Conference for Global Transformation, including "Spirit: The 7th Vital Sign" in 2011 and "Spirituality and Well-Being: An Inquiry with Others" in 2016.

**ANGELA AMADO, PH.D.**, has led transformational programs for more than 30 years and has been a Wisdom course leader since 1994. She leads the Partnership Explorations course, the Structural Connections Vacation course and is the head of training and development for the Wisdom Course Area. She has also worked professionally

in the field of disability for more than 30 years in a variety of capacities, including national research, international consulting and government policy. She has authored key books on inclusion of people with intellectual disabilities into the community and conducted training across the United States, Canada, Australia and Europe.

**INA R. AMES** is a retired professor of communication studies and theory, mass media and drama with concentration in listening, gender and interpersonal communication, film studies theory and media ethics. She was president of the Communication Association of Massachusetts and held two chairs at the National Communication Association. She has been published and served on state, national and international panels. Ames has been participating in Landmark since 1980, having been an introduction leader and seminar leader, and is currently a facilitator for the Facilitated Wisdom course and a custodian of the Inquiries of the Social Commons. She writes fiction and nonfiction works.

**JANE BEST GRANDBOUCHE** led courses and programs for Landmark for 25 years, including the Wisdom Unlimited course for 12 years. Her passions include the environment and yoga. She has grown and/or planted over 100,000 trees and has been a student of yoga and meditation for the past 46 years. Along with her husband, Brad, they have a wholesale book business and consulting practice, and reside on 10 beautiful, lush acres in Sarasota, Florida. She has two daughters and three grandchildren.

**CHET BURGESS** engages in inquiries whenever he can, and one of his joys is hosting inquiries into discourse and living as a created Self. He also brings the opportunity of inquiry to people as they develop themselves in being a leader as their natural self-expression and bringing power, freedom and peace of mind in the face of everything in life. His commitment is that, "Everyone in the world be present to freedom and in touch with the joy and the miracle of life."

## BREAKOUT SESSION PRESENTERS (CONTINUED)

**BRUCE CAMPBELL** is an artist. He studied fine art in London, worked in various art galleries and managed a home decorating shop. He rebuilt a derelict farmhouse and olive grove in Tuscany and cared for his terminally ill partner. Campbell did The Landmark Forum in 2002 and has assisted ever since. He has also been a performance coach for Youth At Risk. He now lives with his husband on Dartmoor, United Kingdom, practicing art and running a smallholding.

**JAY CARPENTER** has been an active member of the blockchain community since 2014 and is the founder of Desert Blockchain, the largest blockchain meetup in Arizona. He was an adjunct professor at University of Advancing Technology and has an extensive background in technology, entrepreneurship and finance. Carpenter has a degree in business from Arizona State University and a master's degree in business administration from University of Southern California, both with an emphasis in finance. He is passionate about the emerging new realms of communications, finance and the societal possibilities associated with a blockchain-centric future.

An Omaha, Nebraska, native, **STAN CARPENTER** earned a university degree in cultural anthropology, ceramics and architecture. Carpenter participated in The Landmark Forum in 1994, opening him to new possibilities that included living and working in England. Since retiring in 2006, he has been working and assisting in the Wisdom Course Area and participating in numerous Landmark developmental programs. His commitments are most recently being expressed by joining the Wisdom Facilitator Program, being a senior facilitator and in developing capacities for crafting conversation and conversational spaces where transformation may occur. Stan is married with Jerry Baden.

Writer/editor **MAUREEN CHARLES** holds a master's degree in fine arts focusing on writing for children and young adults from Vermont College of Fine Arts and assists on the Landmark Marketing Department Storytellers Team. She led graduate programs for Landmark for 27 years,

including 21 years as a Self-Expression & Leadership Program leader, and served on staff in the Los Angeles Center from 1993 to 1998. She serves on the board of Aid Still Required, an international nongovernmental organization, teaches creative writing and co-founded LoveOfAging.com. Her commitment is that women and girls everywhere experience freedom, safety, autonomy, representation and self-determination.

As a Landmark consultant, **OWEN COFFEY** is passionate about transforming life. He first became a Landmark staff member in 2005 and holds a bachelor's degree in philosophy from Columbia University. In his current position at Landmark, he is a personal coach, leads the Facilitated Wisdom course and advanced offerings of the Wisdom Course Area, and is the source of the Facilitators Training Program. Coffey and his wife, Rebecca, live with their three children in Dorset, Vermont.

**KHUSH COOPER, PH.D.**, is committed to a world where governments, organizations and communities fully support excellence and diversity for children and families. Following a successful career as a social worker and nonprofit executive, her entrepreneurial and thriving consulting practice is committed to changing the human services landscape by providing innovations that cause organizations and communities to thrive. She teaches public policy and the Being a Leader and the Effective Exercise of Leadership course at University of California Los Angeles Luskin School of Public Affairs. She has been engaged in transformational work for 14 years and lives in Los Angeles.

**JOHN CORBIERE** has been participating with Landmark since 1975. He was an Episcopal priest for 33 years, graduating from Yale Divinity School and serving parishes and church schools up and down the East Coast. He is a former Landmark staff member. He participated extensively with The Hunger Project and the Mastery Foundation, traveling to West Africa and Ireland in support of the transformational work of these organizations. He is presently part of the Listener Team in the Wisdom Course Area providing the Conversation



for the Difference You Make. He resides in Salisbury, Connecticut.

**DOLLY COSTELLO, PH.D.**, co-leads the Being a Leader and the Effective Exercise of Leadership course with Effective Action Consulting. Her commitment is to bring leadership to the worlds of addiction and recovery. She is an educational psychologist, earned her Ph.D. from University of California, Berkeley, specializing in Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder, autism and mental health issues. Costello earned her "Clowning Around" certificate, recreating herself as Dr. Dolly, offering alternatives to Prozac and therapy. She plays with Patch Adams on humanitarian clown tours. Her Impossible Promise is: Children of all ages live life fully and play with a passion for life itself.

**LOURDES CRABTREE** has a background in computer science and education and is a former business advisor in the high-tech industry. As an entrepreneur, she is the founder of the nonprofit organization, The C.H.I.L.D. Alliance (Children Held In Love and Devotion), empowering children and adults in health, education and social integrity. Crabtree has specialized in personal development and strongly believes in advancing the potential within each person. She has presented on several occasions in the area of personal and spiritual growth. Based in Toronto, Canada, she has participated and assisted in Landmark programs for 10 years.

**JULIA DEDERER** is the director of organizational development for the Foundation for Climate Restoration. She advises on key initiatives and strategic relationship development and is responsible for the internal development of the organization. She brings to this role more than 40 years of transformational leadership, including as Landmark staff for 28 years leading the Wisdom Unlimited course and Partnership Explorations course, and being accountable for the training and development of Wisdom course leaders.

**LIZ DIETZ** has been participating, leading and assisting in Landmark programs for 20 years. She was an introduction leader for nine years and

led the Self-Expression & Leadership Program (SELP) in Los Angeles for five years. In 2009, she led the inaugural SELP in Mexico City and trained a new SELP Leader and coaches. She also served on the board of WISE & Healthy Aging and is a co-founder of LoveOfAging.com. Professionally, Dietz has been a software executive for more than 30 years, working for large publicly-traded companies and fulfilling her promise to transform higher education through technology.

**CHRIS DOONAN** is a custodian of the Inquiries of the Social Commons and has been living in the inquiry of life for as long as he can remember. After graduating from art school, he worked as a potter in the United Kingdom (U.K.) and Canada before stumbling upon the est Training in 1980. He has explored life as a teacher, landscape gardener, Landmark staff member and home-schooling parent and homemaker. He has lived in Australia, the U.K. and New Zealand, and currently lives in Perth in Western Australia where he is discovering life as a contributing elder.

**PATRICIA DOUGHERTY'S** life is used by two commitments: children and families and access to transformation. Currently a trainer and coach with the Illinois State Board of Education, her career began in St. Louis, Missouri and continued in Chicago Public Schools with 20+ years as a teacher and an administrator. Since 1997, when she completed The Landmark Forum, Dougherty has participated and assisted in many Landmark programs and recently completed the Being a Leader and the Effective Exercise of Leadership course. She is a senior facilitator of the Facilitated Wisdom course and in training to lead the Regional Wisdom Unlimited course.

**SANDI EATON RICHARDS** is a structural engineer who has run her own businesses for more than 20 years. She has recently taken on causing a World Happiness Team. The team will create a world manifesto for happiness, enrolling community and world leaders to propagate transformational happiness. The manifesto will be a living inquiry – constantly moving – which is in itself an experiment in being in inquiry. Working

## BREAKOUT SESSION PRESENTERS (CONTINUED)

with refugees in Europe has challenged her experience of happiness and making a difference. She believes that causing and spreading happiness is key to the survival of the human race.

As facilitator, coach, and licensed marriage and family therapist, **MONICA ELDEN** has assisted thousands of people in achieving their personal and professional growth goals. She uses evidence-based, mind-body practices with individuals and organizations. Clients include Anderson Consulting, American Bankers Association, Bank of America, Biogen, Kaiser Permanente, Oracle, and Wells Fargo. She is committed to a world transformed by love, where well-being flows from a profound connection to self, community, and nature. She presented at the Conference for Global Transformation in 2013, 2014, 2016 and 2017 and was the recipient of the 2013 best paper award. Connect with her at [www.WellBeingEmbodied.com](http://www.WellBeingEmbodied.com).

**THE REV. EILEEN L. EPPERSON** has been a Presbyterian minister for more than 30 years. She lives in northwest Connecticut and serves as a hospice chaplain, bereavement counselor, the pastor of a Congregational church and a forgiveness coach. She created The Forgiveness Process® and has developed a certification process for facilitators. Epperson has been involved in multifaith and interspiritual dialogues and conferences for decades. She has given programs at most of the Parliaments of the World's Religions since 1993. Her commitment is that everyone has the freedom and resources to uncover their unique interior life.

**DR. MEGAN EVANS** is a multidisciplinary artist, working in video, photography, sculpture and installation. Her work is informed by social issues, examining the nature of belonging and the impact of colonization on identity. She began her creative life with political murals in the 1980s when she met and married Aboriginal artist and activist, the late Les Griggs, which informed her perspective on colonization. Her work in this area, as a non-Indigenous artist, is ground-breaking. She has exhibited internationally, published in books and journals and awarded international residencies.

Evans won the best poster award at the 2019 Conference for Global Transformation.

**DEE FARRAND** has been a social worker for more than 25 years and a graduate of Landmark's programs since 2008, including the Introduction Leaders Program and as a staff member in Phoenix, Arizona. She began participating in the Wisdom Course Area in 2013, attending the Conference for Global Transformation (CGT) for the first time. Farrand came back declaring herself CGT Champion for life and now leads two teams for the conference. During the 2013 Wisdom Unlimited course, she facilitated one salon a month for the entire year and witnessed how a salon can be a transformational experience for the participants.

**DAN FIEKOWSKY** is a 31-year-old longtime Landmark graduate. He graduated from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in Troy, New York in 2011 with a Bachelor of Science degree in applied physics, and he writes software for his family's small software business. He was a course supervisor for Landmark for four years, among many other assisting roles. He recently moved to Mountain View, California with his wife, Steph, and their dog, Jake. Fiekowsky is now grappling with an Impossible Promise: Everyone experiences being heard and accepted.

**PETER FIEKOWSKY** is an entrepreneur, a physicist educated at Massachusetts Institute of Technology and the founder and chairman of the Foundation for Climate Restoration, working to achieve a proven safe climate by 2050. He has 30 years' experience as a citizen lobbyist for poverty and climate issues. He also is president of a software company providing critical software for computer chip production. Fiekowsky holds 27 patents and lives in Los Altos, the heart of Silicon Valley.

**SHARON FIEKOWSKY** is a nurse practitioner with clinical expertise in intensive care, pain management and palliative care and hospice, and works as a pharmaceutical industry consultant. She sources a three-generation

household and provides support and guidance to those navigating the needs of aging and infirm loved ones. Together with her husband, Peter, Fiekowsky is a co-founder of the Foundation for Climate Restoration and serves as chief relationship officer.

**MARIA JANET FIGUEROA** loves to listen to stories, to dreams and to music as a venue to explore what's so and what's possible in the world. Her formal educational background includes computer engineering, technical management, process improvement and real estate property management. As a senior Landmark graduate, she continues to explore the areas of workability, accountability and letting go. Figueroa's Impossible Promise to the world is that, by 2025, everyone is present to the magic of life and the power of choice.

**MARK FLASHEN** enjoyed a 12-year career in the rock 'n roll business. Yet, within six months of having completed the est Training in 1983, he sold his business and reinvented himself as a business coach. His current clients include artists, real estate developers and Wall Street executives. In 1990, he went on staff in New York to usher in the first Wisdom Unlimited course. Flashen is currently a facilitator for the Facilitated Wisdom Course for Elders and a senior facilitator-in-training for Wisdom offered online.

**JANET FLATON, M.D.,** is a board-certified pediatrician specializing in Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). After completing her residency at University of North Carolina Medical School in 1990, she served a rural community in a practice ranging from general to intensive care pediatrics. In 2003, she refined her practice to caring for children and teens with ADHD, and, later, adults. She founded the multidisciplinary Flaton ADDept Center in 2009, providing empowerment and personal transformation through a combined holistic/traditional medical approach. Dr. Flaton maintains a clinical practice along with writing, speaking and producing online programs for a greater global community.

**DAVID FLATTERY** is a senior manager at a Fortune 100 company with a background in chemistry and statistics. Together with his wife, Judy, he led a poster session at the 2017 Conference for Global Transformation titled, "Religion & Spirituality: What it Provides and Where it Divides," that invited participants to inquire into their own stand in the area of religion and discover what possibilities were thereby made available to themselves and their communities. Flattery is a secular humanist with a commitment to prosperity and equality in all our communities.

**JUDY FLATTERY** is the current president of the Humanist Society of Santa Barbara and has been its publication editor since September 2017. Humanists can be defined as "atheists who care about the world." She has been participating with Landmark programs since 1981. Raised Catholic, Flattery came to see her beliefs as inherited conversations worthy of inquiry. She is now an ex-Catholic atheist humanist. Her Impossible Promise for the world is: People, grounded in reality, free to think for themselves, fully express themselves, and express their leadership in a world that works for everyone with no one left out.

**ANDREA FONO'S** passion for life is expressed through her laughter and paintings that are collected around the world. Her 30-year art career is an inquiry into "what does love look like?" In 2008, she founded Global Coloring: Painting for Peace in which more than 1,400 people in Europe, Africa and Ecuador participated in a community art celebration. Fono and her husband, Frank, a native Fijian, co-founded "The Fiji Reads Project," contributing art supplies and thousands of children's books to villages. Her joy is mentoring artist's hearts. A television segment she produced on "Inspiration" was nominated for an Emmy Award.

**MARYSUE FOSTER** has enjoyed many years of living. She has been a nonprofit executive and fundraiser, teacher, entrepreneur, artist, trainer and author, and plays the piano medium well. She has participated since 1981 in Landmark programs as a student and leader. She is a graduate, at 66, of the Starr King School for the Ministry,

## BREAKOUT SESSION PRESENTERS (CONTINUED)

a Unitarian-Universalist seminary in Berkeley, California, earning a Master of Arts degree in religious leadership for social change in May 2010. Foster lives near her multicultural, multigenerational family of origin, volunteers widely, looks after her grandchildren and plays seriously as a mixed media artist.

Born in Chihuahua, Mexico, **JORGE FRANCO** is a retired mechanical engineer. He went to University of California, Berkeley, and resides in San Francisco, California.

**LARRY FRANTZ** has been director of Landmark's Personal Coaching Division since February 2016 and a personal performance coach since the division's founding in July 2011. He is passionate about working with people and is fully committed to their success in realizing what matters to them. He has led Landmark's programs since 2000, empowering graduates' leadership and commitment to contribute to others, and has trained thousands of people to fulfill their personal and leadership goals. He has founded successful businesses, been the director of training for a real estate company and real estate licensing program and a consultant for nonprofit organizations.

**SUSIE FRASER'S** commitment, a sustainable future for Earth, has three pillars – transformation, stewardship and the elders. She loves inquiry as practice, experimenting with generative speaking and listening regularly. Through focusing on legislation to reduce carbon emissions, she has come to see politics and politicians as resources – a transformation of her worldview that is valuable and fascinating. As a facilitator in the Facilitated Wisdom Course for Elders, Fraser has come to see elders as extraordinary resources for society. She lives in Sydney, Australia, with Paddy Gaul and two small dogs, Zoe and Shell. This is her 20th Conference for Global Transformation.

**MIKE GINN** recently left his pedestrian adult life behind to become a standup comedian and has performed at the Denver Improv and the Laughs Comedy Club in Seattle. He brings humor and transformation to death and life-threatening

illness, child molestation and alcoholic family life, fascism and white supremacy, homelessness and the coming environmental catastrophes. Ginn is a songwriter, for example, the neo-punk rock song "I Wanna Be Forgiven," performed by the Rajones. He is currently writing a multiseason television screenplay that will be pitched to Netflix and the other major streaming services.

**TOBY GOLDBERG** is a social entrepreneur with more than 25 years' experience in roles within the public, private and nonprofit sectors. She has a master's degree in business administration. She recently retired from the Ontario, Canada, provincial public service, where she led the design, delivery and oversight of social programs in various sectors, including accessibility and women's economic empowerment. Goldberg is currently expanding her consulting business, building on her experience with research and strategic planning projects on topics including women's poverty, social enterprise development and the establishment of the first-ever women's employment centers in the Moscow region of Russia.

**GLENN GREENIDGE** started his personal development in 1981, attending and volunteering in leadership positions at what is now Landmark. He co-founded People of African Descent Empowerment Group (PADEG) in 1990, with its initial mission of promoting leadership and training for people of African descent. Greenidge is currently the executive director for Sutphin Blvd. Business Improvement District in Jamaica, New York, chair of Queens Community Board 12 Economic Development committee and board secretary and chairman of the Real Estate Committee for Joseph P. Addabbo Family Health Center. He has been a facilitator for the International Black Summit for 27 years.

**CYNTHIA GUTIERREZ** is a content marketing strategist from San Francisco, California, which really means she is a storyteller with technological superpowers. Gutierrez is a wife and mother of twins and a lover of long walks on the beach with their dog Captain Magic. She has been participating with Landmark since 2000 and is loving it.

**DR. ROLAND HENNES'** vision is: All human beings are responsible for their health; experts from the health sector work together to meet the needs of the people to operate in the context of humanity and peace. Hennes is father to three children, a doctor for general and accident surgery and head of Heidelberg Port Center at University Heidelberg Hospital. With his expertise in the area of port surgery treatment, he is internationally recognized as a resource for patients with cancer and specific nutritional issues. He is the editor of textbooks and gives presentations and lectures worldwide.

**CURT HILL** led seminars at Landmark for 25 years, during which time he served as a city coach and on the seminar leader designation team. He led introductions for 35 years to about 15,000 people. He was a staff member for Landmark for nine years, and, for five of those years, he was the registration manager and trained over 600 people through the Introduction Leaders Program. He's been married to Kirsten for 28 years and has two grown children. Currently, he's the chief executive officer of a company in the healthcare field and he studies jazz piano and golf.

**KIRSTEN HILL** is a longtime graduate who has participated in many programs in the Wisdom Course Area, has been on Landmark staff and was a Self-Expression & Leadership Program leader for 11 years. She has a Bachelor of Science degree in child development and master's degree in early childhood education. She has been married to Curt for 28 years and they have two grown children. She currently works for an organization that purchases conventional farmland and converts it to organic and sustainably-farmed land. She is interested in making a positive difference in the world and loves to read good books.

**SUSAN HOSKINS** has more than 30 years' experience in the government sector, private sector and nonprofits delivering programs that promote economic self-sufficiency for disadvantaged people around the world. She provides coaching and designs trainings to expand the capacity of individuals, entrepreneurs and organizations. Hoskins founded the Coalition for

Economic Empowerment in 1996 to provide economically empowering programming supporting parents and youth living in the District of Columbia, United States. In addition to her extensive community work, she has been a staff member for Landmark for two years and led the Self-Expression & Leadership Program for more than four years.

**SEL J. HWAHNG, PH.D.**, is assistant professor of women, gender, health, and sexuality at Towson University and is pursuing a degree in cardiovascular epidemiology at Johns Hopkins University, Bloomberg School of Public Health. Hwahng has received awards from the National Institute on Drug Abuse, the National Institutes of Health, the American Public Health Association, the International AIDS Society, the Association for Women in Psychology, and the American Heart Association. Publications include more than 30 articles in peer-reviewed journals and edited volumes. Hwahng has led the Being a Leader and the Effective Exercise of Leadership course at three higher education institutions.

Writer and filmmaker **ANA KRISTA JOHNSON** is a graduate of Northwestern University with a degree in theater. She is a published novelist and an award-winning film producer with a commitment that people are empowered to live their lives with creativity, curiosity, passion and joy. She has been an introduction leader for Landmark's Family Division and has assisted around the Los Angeles Wisdom Unlimited course for the past 13 years. Her current project is a documentary on women, reproductive rights and reproductive justice. You may remember her as Scarecrow in the "Wisdom of Oz" at last year's conference.

**JAMES JOHNSTONE** is currently chief operating officer for a start-up company in the United Kingdom (U.K.) that is commercializing advanced materials research for a variety of applications. He holds a Ph.D. in chemistry and has worked in innovation for several prestigious organizations in the U.K. He has been involved with international standardization of nanotechnologies and

## BREAKOUT SESSION PRESENTERS (CONTINUED)

fundraising for projects in the U.K. and Europe. Johnstone has participated in Landmark courses for nearly 20 years and regularly attends the Conference for Global Transformation. He is married to Vanessa and they live in London and Yorkshire where they enjoy many good friends.

**KIMBERLY KEESE** has been a member of the LGBTQ+ community since the early 1980s. She has personally explored gender identity and expression long before it became part of the broader conversation in the queer community. Some of her first creative projects involved the emerging drag king community in Washington, D.C., where she was both performing and documenting the movement. Keese is fascinated by the stories of both the young people who are changing the way we talk about gender and the older generations that forged the way. She is currently producing the documentary, "Beyond Pronouns: Conversations About Gender."

**AMRIT KENDRICK** has worked in nature conservation, ecovillage creation, the Team Management and Leadership Program and across cultures and countries. Her vision is to create a common culture of listening across boreal and tropical forests, temperate and tropical reef coastlines and from deserts to cloudy mountain tops, where other species are respected, where humans meet their basic needs without greed and where ecological sustainability is a top priority in the highest levels of government. She has a post-graduate diploma in science communication and a Master of Science degree in wildlife and fisheries science.

**CHARLES (CHRIS) KIRTZ** did the first est Training in Washington, D.C., in April 1975. He calls himself a lifer, starting to assist immediately after the Training by washing toilets as D.C. opened its first center. He has been assisting, taking and leading est/Landmark courses ever since. Most recently, he completed the Developmental Consultants Training Program in 2016, Mastering your Humanity in 2017 and Service and Contribution. Of his 42-some years with Landmark, he counts being a custodian on the

"Living as a Created Self" and "Discourses" Inquiries of the Social Commons as perhaps his proudest accomplishment.

Contribution, workability and listening are of interest to **TERRY KIRTZ**. In her professional career in public education and her advocacy in local, state and national organizations to promote quality of life for those impacted by brain injury, she has provided opportunities for others to contribute and be contributed to. She holds several degrees and is certified in both general and special education as well as being a certified brain injury specialist. A mother of three and grandmother of four, she lives in Maryland with her husband where she is an active member of several community organizations, both social and philanthropic.

**DENISE KRAUSS** is a mom, coach, professional organizer, a longtime graduate and an ordained minister. She has been bringing peace and calm to clients for more than 20 years. She is a trained grief coach and has walked the journey of mourning and recovery from loss with friends and clients. Krauss specializes in the world of loss and having people move through their loss with peace, grace and calm. She creates a safe space such that her clients are comfortable and able to say whatever there is for them to say.

**MARK KRAUSS** is a custodian of the Social Commons, husband of 40 years, father, engineer specializing in environmental, health and safety of large-scale industrial technology and gentleman farmer. During his career as an engineer, he realized the problems of engineering are easy when compared to the problems of being human. He discovered for himself the value of inquiry in having people expand their views of life and powerfully act on what they discover for themselves. He lives happily in Mariposa, California with his wife, two dogs, five goats, five ducks, three geese and a cat.

**SUDHA KUMAR'S** passion lies in providing excellent care for patients. She works in the health care industry, earned a doctorate in clinical

pharmacy, is board-certified in oncology pharmacy and is a pharmacotherapy specialist. She trains and mentors clinicians in pursuing excellence in health care. She has been married for more than 30 years and has two daughters. Kumar has been participating in Landmark's work since 1996. She is one of the custodians of the Inquiries of the Social Commons calls.

**SUSAN LIVERPOOL** is a published author, poet and songwriter. She was born and raised in Chicago. Liverpool is passionate about the arts and believes that the "arts are a ministry to the soul." She has published three books of poetry and two books: "The Little Liverpool Diaries" in 2010 and "The Lion and the Porcupine" in 2014. She also produced the companion compact disc for one of her books and wrote seven songs for the story. Liverpool has studied and performed improvisation for seven years. She is also a former Landmark program leader.

With a master's degree in organizational management, **ROBYN MAITLAND** has 25 years of cross-industry experience providing change and training consulting. She has come to believe that happy, engaged workers are living their vision, mission and passion. She is a public servant providing quality data assurance in the Department of Behavioral Health in the Commonwealth of Virginia.

**GORDON MARTIN** is president of People Places & Things, a vacation rental and experiential tourism company in Newfoundland, Canada. He chose to do The Landmark Forum in 2003 out of his desire to quit drinking and has been participating or assisting in the work ever since. He uses the distinctions of both transformation and recovery as part of his ongoing growth and development. He is a poet who writes about his everyday encounters with God. Martin currently assists with the Partnership Explorations course. He will soon be publishing his first book of recovery poems entitled, "The In-Between."

**AMY MCLAUGHLIN** has a broad range of experience in developing and delivering programs

designed to maximize self-discovery and personal performance. As a Landmark leader, career consultant and education counselor, she has coached people through career transitions, addressing personal barriers and causing breakthroughs in overall effectiveness and productivity. She is a trained facilitator in both individual and group settings and brings a distinctive ability to listen and empower people in creating what they want in life. She holds a bachelor's degree in education from Loch Haven University and a master's degree in clinical counseling psychology from La Salle University.

**DEBORAH ROBIN MECH**, CEO and founder of Universal Resources Unlimited, has provided a variety of human development and professional growth seminars since 1998. A California School Leadership Academy graduate, she holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in English, a master's in education in Curriculum and Instruction, California Preliminary Administrative Credential, and a Master of Science degree in special education. Mech has presented her pilot program, "Spiritual Diversity in Education," at the California Teachers Association, Human Rights and Equity Conference in Irvine, California, as well as for the Consumer Electronics Show, Coalition of Essential Schools Fall Forum in Seattle, Washington.

**MARTIN MICHAELIS** began his transformational journey 30 years ago at age 25 in two areas: Landmark for transformation and transcendental meditation for holistic energy. Being an information technology consultant, he loves any kind of supporting and teaching. Into his breakout session flows the experience of his workshops in the private sector about pattern recognition, which is the main technique of artificial intelligence modeling the human brain. He took part in the Inquiry Explorations Program and participates regularly in the Inquiries of the Social Commons call "Living as a Created Self."

**SUSIE MILES** teaches courses in equality and diversity in education at University of Manchester. She began her career as a teacher of deaf children working in England and Swaziland, Africa, where

## BREAKOUT SESSION PRESENTERS (CONTINUED)

she became a mother of two and a global networker on issues of disability and education. Since 2017, she has performed her autobiography for audiences of up to 100 people inside a context of children growing up in a world without discrimination and raising awareness about apartheid. She is committed to bringing the Being a Leader and the Effective Exercise of Leadership course to universities in the United Kingdom.

**FRED MOSS, M.D.**, is a nondiagnosing psychiatrist, committed to transforming the narrative of mental health and mental illness. He is the founder of WelcometoHumanity.net and has a promise to create a world where each and every person will know that their voice can be heard and that who they are and what they do matters. Being the source for others to fulfill on their promises is a commitment that represents a key component of the fulfillment of his created future.

**SOPHIA OLIVAS** is co-owner of 1WorldNow, a crypto hedge fund with a nonprofit focused on eradicating poverty, alleviating violence and bolstering mental health by empowering women through technology. An adventurer, Olivas has solo-backpacked in more than 30 countries. She is a United Nations Association member, best-selling author and global speaker. She is also known as a butterfly chaser, tree climber and kite flyer that does cartwheels barefoot on soft grass with an infectious wanderlust glow.

**CYNDI ORTIZ** began her travels before she even reached her first birthday. As a child of a military family, you could say travel and adventure are in her blood. She has visited or lived in 26 countries, nine Canadian provinces and territories and all 50 states. Her career as a television/film/documentary producer and director has also helped feed her travel bug. She solo-traveled North America for three years in her do-it-yourself built camper van, inspiring many other solo female travelers along the way and forging a path as a freedom and adventure coach.

**ANDREA PARKER-SWENSON** has been participating in Landmark for more than 15 years.

She is currently on staff as a Landmark personal coach and is a designated seminar leader and city coach of the Phoenix Center for the past eight years. She owes her life and her marriage to this work and to the Wisdom community! Prior to coming on staff, Parker-Swenson participated in the world of theater and education, creating curriculum, directing programs and developing work to support students expanding their awareness of themselves, their connection to each other and the world.

**FIONA PELHAM** launched nonprofit Positive Impact in 2005 to provide education and collaboration opportunities to create a sustainable event industry. She was the youngest female to chair an International Organization for Standardization (ISO) standard when, in 2012, ISO 20121, a management system for event sustainability was created. In 2014, Pelham received an honorary doctorate from Leeds Beckett University for services to the event industry and, in 2018, chaired Meeting Professionals International, a global association of over 17,000 members. In 2018, she joined the United Nations environment technical expert group for transforming tourism value chains. She is passionate about sustainability.

**PAM PROSSER** is a senior facilitator for the Facilitated Wisdom course. She did the est Training in 1983. She was a staff member, Self-Expression & Leadership Program leader, Wisdom Course leader apprentice and is a graduate of Creation of Freedom. Prosser lives in Minnesota and professionally is a classical homeopath in private practice. She brought two Landmark Forums and three Vanto leadership courses to Haiti. Her commitment is that Haiti become a developed nation. She is founding director for the nonprofit Haiti Outreach, which is known as the organization in Haiti that can accomplish what it promises.

**ROBIN QUIVERS** is best known as the saner half of the "Howard Stern Show." She and Stern have been working together almost 40 years. She was first introduced to transformational learning in the



late 1970s and completed her first Landmark Forum in 1998. She attributes her happiness in life, both business and personal, to Landmark.

**REZA RAZEGHI** helps leaders clarify their vision and strategy for themselves and their organizations. His clients enhance their effectiveness, think more strategically, improve their communication skills, evolve how they think about leadership and understand how to optimize performance. Razeghi has been a coach and consultant, worked in research for a major oil company and as an information technology director in the semiconductor and computer industries. He has a Bachelor of Science degree in chemical engineering and master's degrees in computer science and organizational development.

**DAVID RITSCHER** is a senior consultant with a technology consulting firm, where he helps clients create new devices with a focus on the intersection of consumer health and medical devices. As a scientist and inventor, he holds 11 patents and has presented at numerous scientific conferences. Ritscher is a graduate of both the Developmental Consultants Training Program and Developmental Consultants Training Program II. He has participated in the consultant's developmental courses for several years. He assists Tobin White and Christine Arbor. He is a musician and is active in his Baha'i community.

**DOMINIC SCALES** was born in Leeds, United Kingdom and grew up in the middle of the Bavarian Alps in Southern Germany. As an astrophysicist and quality manager, he deals with measuring all the time. Still, in his role as European Champion for the Conference, he struggled to answer anytime someone asked how things were going. Bringing play and fun to measuring progress against a promise allowed for not only doubling the number of European participants but also for becoming known as the "man with the clipboard." Scales is a private pilot, part-time politician, and did his Landmark Forum in 2007.

All Relationships are Loving, Joyful, Creative, and Healing by 2024. That is **STEFAN SCHRÖDER'S**

Impossible Promise, created in the Power and Contribution course in 2008, led by Helen Gilhooly, in the listening of a group of nine health practitioners, called Health and Happiness for Humanity (HH4H). HH4H has presented in Germany and several times at the Conference for Global Transformation. Dr. Schröder is a university lecturer and head of a psychiatric department in a general hospital in Germany. He has five children and three grandchildren and lives with his family and many animals in the countryside between Berlin and Hamburg.

**RICH SCHUSTER** might be considered one of the elders of the Wisdom Course Area. Having retired from a career in engineering and physics, life is more clearly focused on a single purpose: Around him, people have access to the created dimension of being and are empowered to be up to great and challenging work. He is a student of, and has trained many people in, practices of communication to support aliveness and productivity.

**SAEED SEYED** has been in management for many years in the area of technology and has worked for large corporations in telecommunications, computing, and graphics. He has had responsibility and accountability for managing teams globally and is a leader in innovation with 20 patents. He has been engaged in the area of transformation for more than 30 years and has led courses and presented at conferences. Seyed is a commitment to peace, harmony and quality of life for everyone through innovative thinking and technology. He has been married for more than 30 years and has two daughters.

**HEATHER SHAPTER** is the executive director of Crossroads International and has more than 20 years of nonprofit leadership experience. She started her career in the development sector as a project manager for CARE Canada and later served as the women's economic empowerment advisor for Building Resources Across Communities in Bangladesh. She also spent two years in Haiti as Save the Children's women economic opportunity specialist. Since then, Shapter has worked in senior-level roles for Prosper Canada and Global

## BREAKOUT SESSION PRESENTERS (CONTINUED)

Impact and has managed large volunteer initiatives. Her commitment is the end of poverty and the rights of women and girls fulfilled.

**RUTH B. SHIELDS** is a linguist working in the area of endangered language revitalization. She has been working with the last living speaker of Xay Tsnu (Southeastern Pomo), a language that has been spoken around Clear Lake, California, for more than 14,000 years. She is creating a board game for people to teach each other their languages. Shields has been participating in Landmark's programs for 27 years and in the Wisdom Course Area for 26 years. She currently lives in Santa Rosa, California.

**CANDACE SHIVERS** spent 36 years as a registration manager for Landmark and has trained more than 10,000 people to be Landmark leaders. She also led the Self-Expression & Leadership Program (SELP), seminars and introductions to The Landmark Forum to more than 20,000 people. She served on the design teams for SELP, the Introduction Leaders Program and the Introduction to The Landmark Forum. Currently, Shivers is a program developer and leader for WISE & Healthy Aging, a nationally-recognized nonprofit. She is a facilitator for the Facilitated Wisdom Course for Elders and is co-founder of LoveOfAging.com.

**JULIA SIMMS** is a full-time staff member at Landmark. She manages the Conference for Global Transformation for the Wisdom Course Area and she works as a project manager for Landmark executive Mark Spirtos. Prior to Landmark, she enjoyed a successful 30-year career in marketing and public relations. She has been participating in Landmark's work since 1977 and holds a business degree from University of Phoenix.

**ELLEN SNORTLAND** is a lawyer, author, filmmaker and writing coach. A public intellectual and board member of the National Women's History Alliance, she has been a speaker, United Nations Press Corps credentialed journalist and delegate for major United Nations World

Conferences – the Women's conference in Beijing, Conference Against Racism in South Africa and the Commission on the Status of Women in New York City. Featured on Dateline NBC, her breakout book is "Beauty Bites Beast," also the title of her award-winning documentary screened all over the world, including Pakistan and Armenia. Snortland took the est Training in 1973.

**MARIA STERGIOU** has more than 20 years' experience in higher education and the public sector. She studied art history, anthropology and linguistics and earned a Master of Advanced Studies degree from University of Zurich, Switzerland and Paris-Sorbonne, France. She has participated with Landmark since 1998 and the last 10 years in Landmark's Wisdom and the Well-Being Group courses. Stergiou is committed to a future where ontological and phenomenological training are part of our educational system. She is a course-instructor-in-training to deliver the Being a Leader and the Effective Exercise of Leadership course in the higher education sector in Europe.

**ED STROUPE** spent 35 years as a software developer and designer. With his wife of 28 years, Mary, he co-founded Integritas, Inc. and led their development group to achieving five national certifications of their electronic medical record software. Since his retirement in 2013, he has devoted his time to studying philosophy, and, in 2017, he published his first novel, "Signaling: A Message from the Future." Stroupe sees the "Discourse as Access" inquiry as a powerful way to forward transformation in the world. Currently, he is a graduate student and lives with Mary and three cats in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

**CAT TEWS** has been a staff member for Landmark since 2003 and a consultant since 2015. She is passionate about people getting that they have an impact, make a difference and are the creators of their lives. In fact, that is what her life is about, and that gets fully expressed in her accountability as the coaching supervisor in Landmark's Personal Coaching Division. She lives with her husband, Todd, and her two cats in Redding, California.

Born in Yorkshire, England, **DRÆYK VAN DER HORN** now runs a smallholding on Dartmoor, specializing in heritage apples. He is a chef and has helped develop local food networks. He volunteers for Morecare and 4x4 Force, providing care needs and access to the National Health Service for local people. This year, he became a Parish Councillor and is running as a prospective Parliamentary candidate. He is passionate about our landscape, food and farming. Previously he lived and studied in various European countries and the United States.

**PAOLO VISENTIN** has spent his entire adult life as a customer and person who assists in the programs and ideas associated with Werner Erhard, Werner Erhard and Associates and Landmark. A family real estate business, swimming and cinema are his other involvements.

**AVENA WARD** is an ordained minister in the United Church of Christ, a progressive Protestant denomination. Currently, she creates opportunities for people to connect with Spirit through individual spiritual direction and retreats for small and large groups. Ward and her husband moved to Portland, Oregon from Chicago, Illinois two years ago. She completed the Curriculum for Living in 2009 and the Wisdom Unlimited course in 2012. Since then, she has assisted in the Wisdom course as team leader of the Accomplishment Team. In 2018, she completed the Partnership Explorations course and, in 2019, the Models of All of It course.

**LORRAINE "DR. RAIN" WARREN** has pursued personal growth and development throughout her life. She began her Landmark work in 1992 and has engaged in transformational work covering a wide range of disciplines. She has served as a volunteer in diverse communities from political campaigns, youth mentorship programs and restorative justice initiatives, and being a "cuddler" of infants at hospitals. Dr. Rain has served as a facilitator of the International Black Summit for the last 28 years. She has received international recognition for her work in peace-building and social justice. She is currently a caregiver for her 87-year-old mother.

**LAURA WOLZ** grew up in Italy and came to the United States when she was 21 after living in Israel and Germany. She received a reserve officer training corps scholarship and served in the Army for four years, achieving the rank of captain. Her undergraduate degree is in math, physics and French, with her master's degree in education and teaching credentials from Mills College in Oakland, California. She works with children of all ages (six months to 18 years), being fascinated with how beings develop thinking and how to facilitate the process. She is married and has three grown sons.

**LORI WOSTL** is a senior facilitator, approved-to-lead for the Facilitated Wisdom course. She did the est Training in 1977. She participated fully while raising two sets of children and remaining married to the same man for 50 years. Wostl was on staff for five years in Denver as the manager for the Communication courses and the Team Management and Leadership Program. She also had national accountability for the TMLP. She lives in the suburbs between Boulder and Denver, Colorado. Wostl first did the Wisdom Unlimited course in 1998 and reviewed it in 2014. She has facilitated eight Facilitated Wisdom courses.

**SARASAI YUTUC** is a staff member for Landmark as a consultant, Wisdom Course Area personal coach and leader of the Wisdom for the Arts course. Her commitment is that people are fulfilling on what they came here for, inside of their fullest self-expression. She and her husband, Brandon, live in Manchester, Vermont.

Originally from Bulgaria, **MARIA ZAHARIEVA** has been living in Sweden for the past 20 years. A clinical psychologist with more than 250 hours of psychodrama training and an undernurse with many years of experience in taking care of elderly patients in the last stages of life, she is also a coach, a transformational consultant and a speaker. Called by her clients a Miraclewoman, she has participated in countless courses and trainings at Landmark and at many other organizations for the past 15 years, committed to making a difference, serving and reminding people of the unique greatness inside them.

# 2020 Conference Organization

## CONFERENCE DESIGN COMMITTEE

**Julie Reynolds, Julia Simms, Marci Willems, Tobin White**

## KEYNOTE SELECTION COMMITTEE

**Angela Amado, Jo Blackwell, Khush Cooper, Annette Nathan, Sarika Punjabi, Julia Simms**

## ASSISTING TEAMS

**VIRTUAL CONFERENCE MANAGER – Blair Barnett**

**ART EXHIBITION – Gary Bryson + Andrea Fono, Mimi O’Gara**

**ASSISTING PROGRAM – Ana-Maria Garcia & Rose Hampton + Sally Criss, Kristen Mangione, Ann Wilson**

**CONTENT MANAGEMENT – George Finsrud, Susie Fraser, Stan Carpenter, & Tracy Hunt + Bruce Campbell, Martin Michaelis, Jon Wright**

**JOURNAL – Melinda Voss + Joan Bordow, Doug Dunn, Ruth B. Shields, Scott Wolf**

**POSTERS – Dee Farrand & Melissa Gold + Ian Curtis, Marv Gold, Larry Hui, Ron Kostuik, Judy Lucz, Carol Mark, Gari Thompson, Tina Thompson**

**PRINTING & PROOFREADING – Cecilia Burch + Susan Bouet, Tracy Hunt, Margie Sherman**

## ONSITE AND ONLINE TEAMS

**ACCESSIBILITY – Jerrie Hildebrand & Ariela Marshall**

**AUDIO-VISUAL – Tom Davidson, Al Koscal & Geoff Wheeler**

**CONFERENCE MANAGER SUPPORT – Kerry Jurgens**

**CONTENT 2021 – George Finsrud + Ginger Greenfield, Cecilia Burch, Melinda Voss, Izzy Miller, Kathy Fedori, Caroline Galbally, Ian Curtis, Marv Gold, Larry Hui, Carol Mark, Tina Thompson**

**HELLO APP COMMUNICATIONS – Cathy Tutty**

**HOSPITALITY/FACILITY LIAISON – Jane Bitto, Linda Lawson, Sonda Rocchio + Maryam Farr, Jerrie Hildebrand, Kerry Jurgens, Paige Keck, Puffy Kwong, Diane Lane, Liz Laughlin, Joanne MacLeod, Greg Marposon, Agena Sheik, Adelaide Smith, Mark van der Pol**

## **INQUIRY EXPLORATIONS REGISTRATION**

**FULFILLMENT – Ida-Meri de Blanc +**

Kwasi Akyeampong, Janice Burrell, Janet Lester, Bonny Pongnon

**KEYNOTE SPEAKER SERVICES – Mary Ann**

**Gallagher & Kent Knight + Aaron Bartlett, Kevin Bass, Phorest Bateson, Josh Cohen, Brian Gaudet, Scott Hanan, Terry Kreuz, Sam Krishna, Annemarie Cassidy-Muson, Jessie Muson, Danita Norman, Michael Saperton, Angela Wilson-Turnbull, Geoff Wheeler**

**ONSITE DIRECTORS – Peter Kang & Agena Shiek**

**PRODUCTION – Aaron Bartlett & Megan McNelly**

+ Dana Blencowe, Kaneka Chinn, Ian Curtis, Sandy Glickfeld, Nim Grinvald, Larry Hui, Puffy Kwong, Tina Le, Judy Lucz, Desmond Mosely, Tran Nguyen, Denise Ovaldson, Margaret Packer, Dan Perrie, PK Pranav, Agena Sheik, April Smith, Charles Tam, Gari Thompson

**PROMOTIONS – Chuck Beasley, Marc “Papa J” Malamud + Ada Frazier Turner**

**REGISTRATION – Mary Manrod**

**REGISTRATION ADMINISTRATION – Sue Volpi**

**REGISTRATION FULFILLMENT – Victoria Perry**

**ROOM MANAGERS – George Paganini + Judy Aburmishan, Melvin Allen, Ina Ames, Sean Angier, Lori Bashutski, Mike Blocker, Ben Bonnevis, Chet Burgess, Mark Elliot, Stefan Heinz, Gail Hurlbut, Paul Hurlbut, Gina Jones, Jan Martin, David Novell, Herb Quick, Frank Quinlan, Steve Reinlib, Josephine Tong, Sam Triglone**

**SHOW DIRECTOR – Kevin Bass, Kent Knight & Michael Saperton + Dan Norman, Danita Norman**

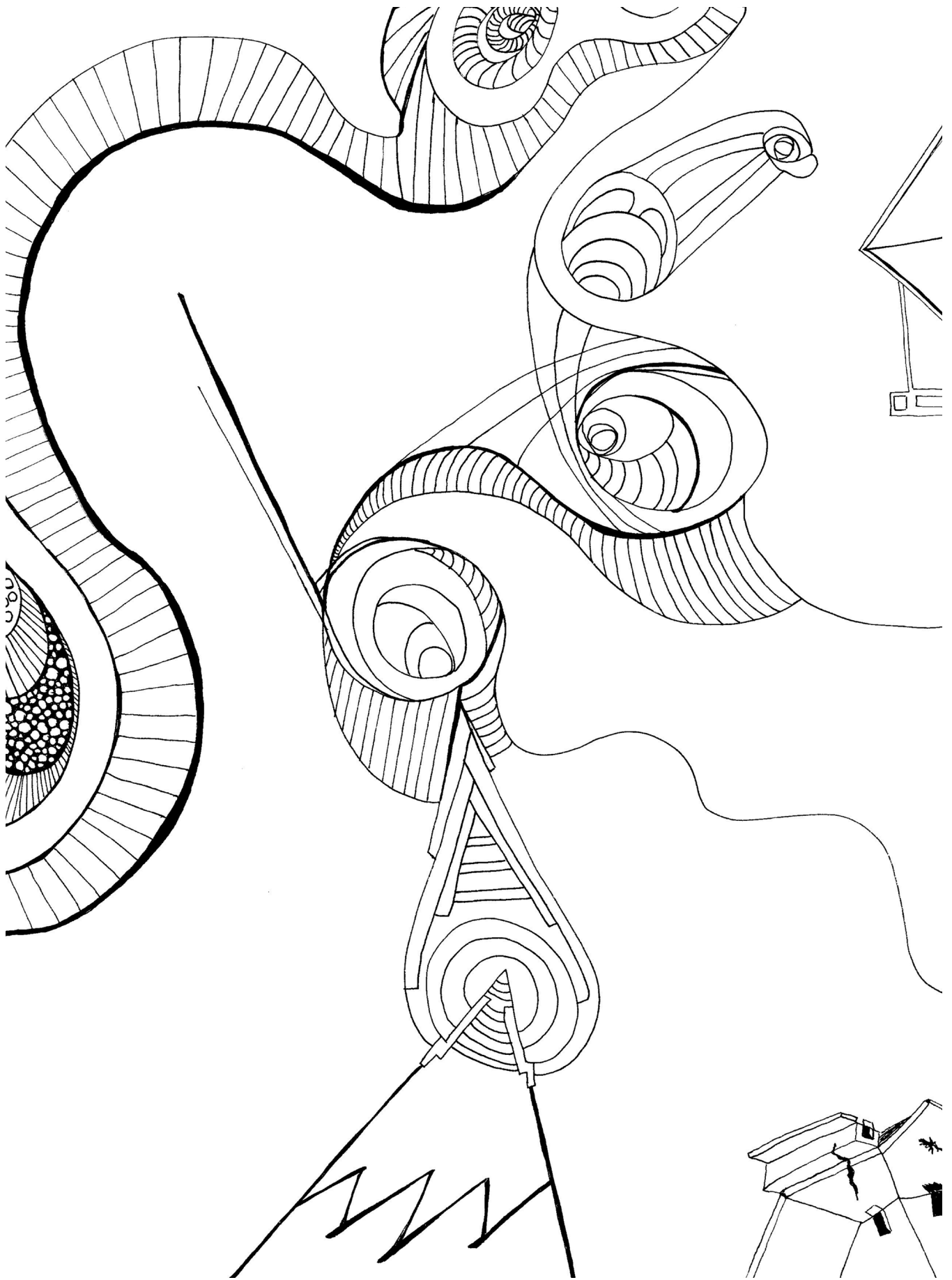
**STAGE MANAGEMENT – Liz Laughlin & Jesse Muson + Mike Campbell**

**STATE OF THE WORLD SCORECARD – Asa Romberger & Tony Graddon + Dave Flattery, James Taylor**

**SUPPLIES – Scott Hanan & Ron Perry**

**WELCOME & REGISTRATION – Barda Allen & Anna Meck + Neal Abramson, Rayne Alexander, Sherrie Allen, Laurelle Chaidez, Romeo Chaidez, David deRussy, Cheryl Gundred, Suzanne Hood, Izzy Miller, Kristine Olson, Asa Romberger, Fatima Shivji, Kaer Southard, Khadija Sunderji, Gari Thompson, Chris Trammel, Sue Volpi**




**ZOOM SUPPORT – Al Koscal**







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