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Registering Accomplishment: What's Possible Now?
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FOREWORD

MELINDA VOSS, EDITOR

Never underestimate the power of the written word. In an era dominated by videos, podcasts and memes, one might assume the written word had lost potency. I’m here to say, with all due respect to our flashy new media cousins grabbing attention, that the vitality of the written word is amply demonstrated in the 21 articles and 36 reports in this year’s journal.

Never mind that 2020 was a year of historic events – a global pandemic leaving nearly three million dead by mid-April 2021, a shutdown of local, regional and global economies, untold political upheaval and widespread racial unrest in the United States following yet another heart-wrenching wave of African-Americans who died unjustly.

Without doubt, these articles and reports reflect much of what the authors experienced, caused and investigated during this tumultuous time.

To begin, we have two papers that focus on the important and timely concept of belonging from different angles. **Ed Stroupe** explores what belonging is and what it means to belong. **Brian McFadin** argues that we must go beyond simply belonging to our groups to standing up – even if we’re alone – to group complacency and demanding more if we truly want to deal with the world’s crises.

Picking up on the state of the world, **Susan Hoskins** relates how she and others – through the development of I AM HUMANITY, a new organization – intends to shift the common cultural conversation centered on “individual” to one focused on “communal societal self-awareness.”

And, speaking of being, several authors dive into ontological inquiries. **Kathy Norman** uses a seemingly simple assignment from a Landmark seminar to examine what it is like to live without judgment. **Fred Moss** takes on the knotty problem of how do we know that what we know is what we know. **Stephen W. Francis** and **Susan H. Hoskins** offer a process for addressing conflicts by moving from a win-lose framework to one of open inquiry. **Sharon Fiekowsky** and **Rich Schuster** delve into an unconventional and fascinating view of “Source” and its relationship to accomplishment.

The next 11 authors explore – from a more personal standpoint – the conference theme, Registering Accomplishment: What’s Possible Now? **Peg Miller** recounts moving from an aversion to the homeless to devoting her life to them, and ultimately, uncovering a hidden addiction. **Robyn Maitland** conducts an uncomfortable examination of how her inauthenticities relate to her race.

For **Andrea Fono**, writing a paper for the journal proved an excruciating task until she enlisted **Amy Weinstein**, a friend, to work through and

write what it means to register accomplishment and transform a longstanding inauthenticity.

Meanwhile, **Carolyn Vincent** discovers the access to her aliveness after her life unravels in Sydney, Australia and she reawakens to her childhood in India. **Liz Laughlin** recounts how she took on collaging during the Wisdom course and mustered the courage to face her gambling addiction. **Paul McMickle** reflects on how a diagnosis of cancer saved his life and how he moved through his situation using 46-plus years of practicing transformation.

While playing full out in the Inquiry Explorations program, **Angela Wilson Turnbull** hears an anguished cry from her daughter following the racial unrest last summer in Washington, D.C. and finds herself propelled to center stage with national media.

Lori Watkins reflects on how her experiences as a third-culture kid who lived in Africa, Indonesia, the United States and Canada shaped her life now as a licensed vocational nurse. Through inquiry, **Gordon Martin** investigates life in recovery from addiction and his calling to be a poet. And **Rose Hampton** shares emotional traumas in her life that lead to her stand for parity in mental, physical and spiritual well-being. **Nina Master** relates how she expresses “being” through the tip of a needle as a practitioner of East Asian Meridian Therapy.

Two authors take a broader view of registering accomplishment by inviting others to the inquiry. **Ina R. Ames** reports on an informal survey she conducted of graduates of the est Training, and **Rain Warren** writes about engaging with friends and family members on their accomplishments and yielding surprising results.

And, finally, we present an interview of Andrea Fono edited by **Alexandra Isaievyich** and **Barbara Holland**. Fono is the first-ever Wisdom community artist selected to contribute images to visually represent the conference. The interview was conducted by Fred Moss, a fellow graduate, for his “Welcome to Humanity” podcast series.

We also must include a sad note: The death of the **Rev. Father Gerard O’Rourke**, 95, on July

29, 2020 in hospice at a care facility in Pacifica, California. Readers of last year’s journal may recall that we dedicated that journal to him in honor of his longstanding service and immeasurable contributions. A priest for 70 years, he was widely respected for his work in ecumenical and interreligious affairs in addition to being well-known and much loved in the Landmark community.

THREE CHOICE PAPERS

MELINDA VOSS, EDITOR

As the 2021 Call for Papers and Other Contributions points out, “In registering accomplishment, we become available to see things we were not able to see and say things we were not able to say; we have new opportunities to play, to add existence and membership, and to restore and create integrity.”

For each of the authors of the three top papers, the path was a winding inquiry that took them into new and sometimes uncomfortable territory. What’s striking about these papers is the starkly different inquiries. However, if you step back and ponder, you will see that all three involve the act of belonging.

Ed Stroupe takes the broadest view, inviting readers to delve into the realm of belonging. An oft-used but typically unexamined term, “*belonging*,” carries several meanings. I dare say, the simple idea of belonging, at least for most human beings, induces some emotional turbulence from time to time during our lifetime. In no uncertain terms, he examines the bright side of belonging and its infinite possibilities, but just know he doesn’t skimp on the dark side.

Robyn Maitland takes a *hard* look, and I do mean a hard look, at who she has been in the world and to which groups she belongs. Initially, she does not find a pretty picture. She becomes uncomfortable when she suddenly sees an

inauthenticity staring her in the face. In any other year, she might not have even conducted this inquiry. But given the racial reckoning that unfolded in the U.S. and the election of the first woman vice president of the United States who exactly reflects Maitland’s biracial heritage, one look in the mirror began the inquiry.

Then there’s Andrea Fono, who with support from her friend, Amy Weinstein, takes readers through the resistance, uncertainty and struggle of “belonging,” if you will, to her accomplishments. If nothing else, it is a step-by-step guide to registering accomplishment by first identifying inauthenticities and then owning them in a way she never had before. Through the painstaking process, which almost seems as though the reader is in the room of a woman in labor, Fono and Weinstein finally get what they’ve achieved and contributed to the world. By the end – to their delight – unexpected possibilities appear for both of them. But, that, of course, is the nature of possibility as we define it in Landmark’s work – always surprising, always inspiring and always enlivening.



WINDOWS OF BELONGING

ED STROUPE

Abstract

In our Landmark work, you and I have developed a considerable amount of power in the arts of listening, speaking possibility and creating a context for living. I consider all of these powerful registers for personal accomplishment. Yet, when we look at the world around us, most of what we encounter continues to show stark evidence of something amiss in relation to our visions and commitments. In this paper, I inquire into one realm of possibility that has emerged out of the “Discourse as Access” inquiry. This is the phenomenon of belonging.

INTRODUCTION

For the past five years, I have been engaging with a number of partners in a directed, focused inquiry into the nature of discourse. I chronicled aspects of this inquiry in papers published in the 2017, 2018 and 2019 Journals of the Conference for Global Transformation. Then, two years ago, I had the opportunity to have several meetings with a Peruvian-American shaman. Out of these encounters, a new question emerged for me—the question of who we human beings are in relation to the Earth and to each other. I found myself

wondering what it means to be an indigenous person. Wherein lies my own indigeneity? My brief experiences with indigenous culture were so powerful that I devoted my 2020 paper to sharing about them.¹

As the COVID-19 outbreak became a pandemic and everyone was forced to face “social distancing” and “stay at home” orders, the world to which I had been accustomed dramatically altered. We now had to invent new practices of relating. At a societal level, interactions had to follow new rules for engaging. People found themselves debating and arguing about who to blame for why this pandemic was happening and our failures to respond effectively. Relationships among people and our social collectives were thrown into upheaval. All this took place inside a larger context of how we—human beings—now stood in relation to the natural world.

When I looked more deeply inside this context, I discovered a question that appears as old as human culture itself, and which I think is profoundly connected. This is a fundamental question for all human beings: the question of belonging, what belonging is and what it means to belong. The more I looked, the more I became convinced that this is a burning question of our day. Last September, our “Discourse as Access” inquiry group took on exploring the theme of belonging as the next step in our ongoing inquiry into discourse.

In this paper, I am going to attempt two things. First, I am going to inquire into belonging as an ontological phenomenon—i.e., looking at the being of the phenomenon of belonging. Within this inquiry, I may touch on the psychological, sociological or other realms such as gender, race,

etc. However, I am not a trained expert in any of those fields. I do have some training in ontological inquiry, as do many of you reading this paper.

My second intention is to begin a conversation to distinguish belonging as a realm of possibility. When I say “distinguish” or “distinction,” I am using the term of art from Werner Erhard.² When I say “begin,” I am very clear that I will not accomplish the goal of creating belonging as a transformational distinction within the confines of this paper. That will require further work. However, I do think it is feasible to take a good initial step in that direction. Hereafter, I will capitalize “Belonging” when speaking of it as a transformational distinction.

What I am committed to in this paper is having new possibilities open up through an inquiry into the speaking and listening that constitutes the discourse of belonging. To this end, I invite you to stand with me in *looking* at belonging from the *inside*, rather than standing back separate from it, *theorizing* from the *outside*. In other words, look at belonging from your experience, rather than theoretically.

Before tackling this, I want to look more closely at what I consider the urgency of the question.

TODAY’S CRISIS

Each of us who participated in The Landmark Forum at some time encountered a phenomenon that the Forum leader termed a “break in belonging.”³ Before we became adults, we experienced some incident or series of incidents that involved a breach in the bond between us and someone with whom we were related. Out of having had that experience, whether we could recall it fully or not, we each made decisions about how to live our lives such that our survival would be guaranteed. We formed certain elements of our identities, i.e., who we considered ourselves to be. For example, I decided that I was skinny and weak and could never be an athlete. Then, I decided I had to be smart, nice and funny. These decisions became part of my identity.⁴

As we learned in the Forum, we could explain our individual experiences in numerous ways. Yet I found this is not an empowering approach

for creating satisfaction in life. In our work with transformation, you and I discovered how creating a powerful context can completely shift our experience of satisfaction and generate openings for action and accomplishment. Living in an empowering context has become an integral part of our experience of individual transformation.

Today, I have come to the opinion that human beings are experiencing a collective break in belonging. As a collective whole, we human beings have become separated and cut off from our indigenous experience of relating to the Earth. We have lost a critically important connection that nurtured and sustained our ancestors from primordial times down through the ages. Global warming and the current pandemic are indicators of this condition. The Earth is giving us a loud turn signal, so to speak, and we need to make judgments and take actions at this crucial, decisive stage.

We could try to explain this global crisis through a psychological, sociological, political, economic or other causal scheme or paradigm. In fact, when we tune into the news, we find ourselves barraged with all kinds of explanations usually accompanied by accusations and finger-pointing. However, I suggest that an approach of explaining cause and effect is probably not going to be effective in this domain, any more than it is in our personal transformation.

Here’s what I wonder: Is there something akin to an empowering context that could bring about a breakthrough at the collective level? This is what I am interested in with this inquiry. If so, how could we go about creating such a breakthrough?

A good place to start is to inquire into what this phenomenon we call “belonging” is all about. Asked another way, what is our inherited, default, mostly unexamined idea of belonging?

OUR INHERITED NOTIONS OF BELONGING

We use the word “belonging” all the time, probably without thinking about what it means. Most people probably consider belonging from the perspective of individual or group psychology. Others might look at it from the standpoint of economics, religion or politics. Yet others focus on relations of power, social classes, gender, race and, perhaps, even sports. So, just what is belonging?

First, let’s look at the ordinary meanings of the words “belong” and “belonging.” What are the common ways that we talk about belonging? What is our default, inherited way of talking about belonging?

The Oxford English Dictionary offers several definitions for the words “belong” and “belonging.” The verb “belong” commonly means:

1. Go along with, accompany, be appropriate
2. Pertain, concern, relate to (archaic)
3. Be the property or rightful possession of
4. Be connected with, through various relations: e.g., a member of family, society or nation; an adherent or dependent of; a native or inhabitant of a place; a dependency or adjunct of; one of a generation

Definitions of the related word “belonging” (or “belongings”) include:

1. Circumstances connected with/relations with
2. Possessions
3. Persons related in any way; relatives
4. A thing connected with, forming a part of
5. The fact of appertaining or relationship, especially a person’s membership in and acceptance by a group
6. Belonging-together(ness); belongingness
7. Appropriate, appertaining, accompanying (as an adjective)

From the perspective of etymology, again according to the dictionary, the rare word “bilong” appears to be related to an obsolete old English word (“ye-lang”) and a middle English adjective (“y-long” or “i-long”), whose “primary notion was apparently ‘equally long, corresponding in length,’ whence ‘running alongside of, parallel to, going along with, accompanying as a property or attribute.’”

It is clear that belonging has to do with a relationship: between or among people, between people and

things or between different things. As I distill these definitions, the word seems to carry three general senses or meanings. First, as reflected by its etymological roots, the word connotes a relation or correspondence among equals, or, perhaps, of things that are somehow alike.

I generalize this sense of belonging together, or belongingness, as a kind of **togetherness**. As the dictionary points out, this encompasses the ideas of fittingness and appropriateness. The idea that a married couple belongs together falls into this sense of the word, as does our expression “like peas in a pod.”

The second general meaning of the word deals with the concept of **possession**. We commonly say that something belongs to us, and we call our possessions our “belongings.” This idea is tied to the notion of “mine” or “mine-ness,” which we learn at a young age. Several hundred years ago, the idea was codified in British law into the formal notions of property rights. Today, this almost exclusively pertains to things.

However, it wasn’t long ago that “belongings” would often refer to people. Enslaved people “belonged” to their masters. Women “belonged” to their men. Parents still think of children as being “theirs”—a linguistic habit that can lead to problems in the relationship. Clearly, the idea of one human possessing another human is a dark idea by rational and postmodern standards. It is worth noting, however, that we “enlightened” moderns and postmodernists still have the linguistic habit of talking about “our land” as part of our belongings—we often call it our “real estate.” This idea is worth questioning.

Finally, the third general sense of belonging—the sense that we touched on in the Forum—has something to do with **membership**. The word can be used to talk about any particular element’s relationship to a set of similar things. However, we most often speak of a person’s belonging to a family, group, nation, people, race, school, club, gang, church, religion, political party or any number of other kinds of collectives. Groups to which one belongs could be considered natural, such as a family. They could be kinds of social institutions, such as nations, clubs or synagogues.

They could be linguistic constructs with little or no basis in reality, such as caste, ethnicity or race. Extreme examples of this last kind of belonging are “white” and “colored.” As the Oxford English Dictionary points out, belonging in the third general sense of membership involves some kind of acceptance, as well as exclusion of the “other.”

When I took the time to consult with a dictionary, I found it both interesting and surprising to see that we use the same word for what appears on the surface to be three distinctly different ideas. How did this come about? All three general senses of belonging seem to be important to us, and at least two of them—possession and membership—are ideas that lie at the heart of many human conflicts. Could there be a universality lying somewhere below the surface that ties them all together?

Possession, membership and togetherness can all have a bright side of creating possibility for one’s life. At the same time, the first two kinds in particular often have their dark sides, which I will speak to shortly. Let’s look for a few minutes at belonging as we normally relate to it in our personal lives, in all its senses of meaning. I’ll speak from my own experiences of belonging, but I invite you to look from your experience. In doing that, however, I want to examine the relationship between belonging and listening.

BELONGING AND LISTENING

One thing that may not be apparent to those whose native language isn’t German is a distinctive linguistic connection in the German language between “listening” and “belonging.” In German, the word for “listen” (and “hear” as well) is *hören*. The German word for “belong” is *gehören*. The concept of listening is embedded in the very word for belonging. Was this an accident? I think not.

What might be a connection between listening and belonging? For that matter, is there even any such “thing” as belonging? Do you or I really belong to someone or some group, as if there is some kind of bond existing in nature or the physical world? From the other side, do we really own things? What makes something one of our belongings? Finally, what makes us say that two people or entities or ideas or other things of any

sort “belong” together? If we look at listening, we can see interesting connections among these questions. Let’s explore listening in relation to two different senses of belonging.

POSSESSION

In the first place, let’s look briefly at belonging as possession. On the surface, this seems like a simple concept. What does it mean for something to belong to me? Well, I own it. I have a special relationship to that thing called “ownership.” It’s “mine.” While we can, and do, get into relationships of possession with other people—various forms of co-ownership or joint ownership, for example—possession, as its first foundation, puts me into the world of “mine-ness.” It’s a relationship between me and something in the world.

When I was a child, I thought that because something belonged to me, I could do anything that I wanted with it. For example, I remember that when I was about five years old, my parents gave me a toy ambulance. When I was playing with it one day, I got angry. In a tantrum, I smashed it to pieces. Even then, in my young mind, I could justify smashing it because the toy was mine. When my father found the smashed pieces under my bed, he spanked me. He taught me that I need to “take care of” my belongings. He reminded me that he used his “hard-earned” money to buy it for me. So, I learned from that experience that maybe we can’t do just anything to something that belongs to us.

Some years later, he also taught me that I couldn’t just take a hatchet that belonged to me and carve the letter “Z” in our neighbors’ doors. Some of you might remember Zorro, the swaggering masked hero in a television show who left his mark with a sword after avenging wrongdoers. From this and other experiences, I learned something important about taking care of other people’s belongings, as well.

How do I know that something is mine? Well, I bought it, or someone gave it to me, or, perhaps, I found it and nobody else claimed it. Regardless of the source of ownership, I established a claim to its being one of my belongings. Such a claim first occurred in my own speaking and listening. What’s more, in most cases, other people in my family or community recognized it as being mine.

Possession resides in some form within familial, communal or societal agreement.

In short, the notion of ownership requires some level of agreement – or mutual listening – among the relevant parties in a society. In that mutual listening, an owner has some understood degree of stewardship or custodianship for their belongings, as well as respect for belongings of others. Furthermore, the mutual listening holds that there can be consequences for destruction or misuse of belongings. Entire fields of law have evolved to address these questions and establish such responsibilities and consequences.

It doesn’t take much to see that the facets surrounding our relationships to people’s belongings are quite complex. To explore further, consider how the expressions of belonging can get very dark indeed. In American history, in particular, the two greatest blemishes in our society have been the white people’s enslavement of the people of African descent and the white people’s theft of the lands from indigenous Americans accompanied by their genocide.

Belonging in the sense of possession is indeed no simple matter. Meanwhile, around the globe, we all face a threat to our own survival and the survival of life on this planet in great part due to the consequences of destruction and misuse of what we call our “property”—that is to say, our belongings—and, consequently, our home planet. Collectively, we have behaved like that 5-year-old who trashed his toy ambulance so many years ago.

MEMBERSHIP

Let’s now dwell, again briefly, in what may be an even more complex phenomenon of belonging as membership. When I am a member of some group, I enter into the world of “we” and “we-ness.” It’s no longer simply me in relationship to things in the world. We are together in a collective relationship. In becoming a member of a group for the first time, we call it “joining” the group.

When I am a member of some group, I generally say that I belong to that group. But it isn’t just me who has to say so. Other members of the group have to agree. I must be accepted as a member, and this acceptance rests not only with their

saying so, but also in their seeing me as so. The saying so takes place as a mutual declaration—a speech act of saying so that creates my being a member. However, before the group declares me to be a member, I have to occur to a sufficient number of members as belonging. In our parlance of transformation, I have to occur as a member in their listening. My membership takes place in a mutuality of listening—mine as well as theirs.

Depending upon the group, some kind of formal rite of passage may be involved, something as simple as being invited and accepting the invitation, or as complex as passing some kind of test to prove my appropriateness as a member. In addition, I might have to make a pledge, take an oath or promise to engage in the right kinds of behavior. Regardless, belonging requires a collective declaration, implicit in which lies a collective listening. Membership, too, can get dark when “peer pressure” weighs on me to conform or change myself to fit in or take some expected action even if it violates my own standards. Rites of passage can get very dark, too. Consider the ritual of hazing in fraternal groups, including rare occasions that have ended in an inductee’s death.

I remember during my college days going through an agonizing experience of deciding whether or not to join a fraternity. In high school, I seemed to fit into the group of friends who were members of the Key Club, a volunteer service club. I asked to join the club, was accepted and went through the initiation process to become a member. But, in college, I became afraid that I would not fit in, or even worse, not be accepted into a fraternity. In the end, I rationalized that fraternities were somehow beneath me and I became an “independent.” This was, for me, a personal crisis of belonging in the domain of membership.

But membership also spans many situations that often don’t seem to have been created by one’s personal declaration. For example, in the United States, we are constitutionally considered citizens of the nation if we are born here or born to citizen parents. The word “nation” comes from the Latin word *natio*, which literally translates as “birth.” Belonging as citizens from birth does not require our explicit declaration of being a

member because that declaration took place in the United States Constitution. It is an inheritance for those of us in this situation. Nevertheless, we face social and legal expectations by virtue of this membership. Expectations are a kind of listening.

Another example of belonging that has recently (and many would say “finally”) come to the forefront of public attention in America today is that of belonging to a larger social group on the basis of one’s skin color. We call this phantasmagorical division “race.” By an incidental combination of genes, one is born into being a member of a “white race,” or one falls by birth into some classification of being a “person of color”—an “other” race. Probably, only a white person would say it in those words. Historians tell us that, until a few hundred years ago, there was no such thing as a “white race.” Biologists and geneticists adamantly agree. Race is an imaginary construct whose sole purpose, if one follows the threads of history, was the propagation of political and economic power for “white” people. The American census tells me that I am a white person. In whose listening am I “white?”

COMMON THREADS

Today, I think that we human beings are struggling to come to terms with the dark sides of belonging throughout society around the world, as expressed in both membership and possession. What I think lies as the basis of our collective struggle is the common element that both of these kinds of belonging are identity-based. In the one, we fall quite naturally into identifying ourselves with the group(s) to which we claim membership, and sometimes others identify us by virtue of the group to which we belong in their listening, even if not in our own. In the other, we often fall into the habit of equating our possessions somehow to who we are as people, and we evaluate each other on that basis.

Thus, I see three common threads emerge from this inquiry so far. The first such thread is this element of identity. The second is the common link of togetherness. When something belongs to me—when I possess something or take ownership—I become linked to that object, and in some sense we belong together. Likewise, when I belong as a member of a group, the “we”

has a kind of togetherness. Third, the element of agreement, which, as I pointed to above, translates into listening and speaking.

Would it be overly simplistic for me to assert here that one thing we human beings need today is a transformation of our relationships to possession and membership? Is the simple idea of sharing sufficient? Will transforming ourselves in relation to scarcity do the trick? Does talking about cooperation and loving our neighbor make it happen? Do we also need to transform our relationship to hierarchy and power? Where can we look?

Here is where I see the potential value of undertaking the conversation for generating “Belonging” as a transformational distinction.

TOWARD BELONGING AS A REALM OF POSSIBILITY

When we were investigating belonging in the “Discourse as Access” inquiry, two members of our group made an astute observation. Belonging seems to have the ontological character of only being present when it is absent or when it is threatened with becoming absent. Said a different way, belonging has a certain quality of invisibility or transparency. For example, when I feel safe and at home in a group of which I am a member, I am not present to belonging. I don’t think about it. I don’t question it. It’s when I feel as though I don’t belong, or find myself rejected or feel like I have to conform in some way that I become concerned about belonging. Then, the need to belong becomes of paramount importance.

It seems to me that pretty much the same thing applies to possession. When I own something, I generally don’t think about the fact that I own it. It’s only when I want something I don’t have, or face the possibility of losing something I have, that it becomes something I put my attention on. Possession then comes to my attention, but in the form of wanting and not having, a concern for acquiring it or losing and no longer having it. Otherwise, my belongings are transparent to me most of the time.

As I now see it, the impetus for this inquiry and writing this paper came as a result of my

seeing “Belonging” as collectively missing in the world today. It’s not that there is no personal belonging—on the contrary, belonging is ubiquitous. But, perhaps, our belongings exist in such limited ways as to constrict or constrain the possibilities for collective satisfaction, or for global health and well-being, so to speak. For example, we all have our limited groups of family, friends, coworkers, etc., just as we all have certain kinds and numbers of possessions. Anyone or anything that exists outside of our belongings in either dimension we experience as excluded, or as being excluded from. In short, I see our modes of ordinary belonging as incomplete, and I now think of these as “fractional belongings.”

Perhaps, there is a higher possibility of “Belonging” available to all of us. Perhaps, we have come to live collectively in a scarcity of “Belonging.” Prior to now, I never considered the possibility of having a world that works for everyone as fundamentally being the possibility of all people “Belonging.” Perhaps, the best starting point in finding a direction while living in the question of “Belonging” resides somewhere in the domain of listening as “Belonging.” To what whole will one choose to belong as part? How much of all-of-it will one allow oneself to own?

There is much to unfold in this inquiry into “Belonging.” I have only scratched the surface in this paper. However, I think that a true experience of “Belonging” is what many mystics, philosophers, poets, shamans and others have expressed through the ages. I’ll wrap things up by sharing a few of those expressions, in hopes that their words might point the way toward distinguishing “Belonging” as a realm of possibility for all humanity.

One of my heroes as a young man was Buckminster Fuller, the 20th century American visionary thinker, inventor, designer and philosopher. I remember his saying that a great realization in his life was the insight that he belonged to the universe. His life was not his to throw away.⁵ This realization helped guide all his work.

A religious master I encountered more recently in my graduate school program was the 12th century Christian mystic Meister Eckhart, who said:

When the soul enters the light that is pure, she falls so far from her own created somethingness into her nothingness that in this nothingness she can no longer return to that created somethingness by her own power. But God places himself with his uncreatedness beneath her nothingness and contains the soul in his somethingness. The soul has dared to become nothing and cannot return to herself by her own power—so far has she gone out of herself before God catches her.⁷

Martin Heidegger, a 20th century German philosopher whose work has been influential on the body of distinctions with which we engage at Landmark, once wrote:

“The great essence of the human lies in its belonging to the essence of Being. It (the human) is needed by the essence of Being so as to guard it (being) in its truth.”⁸

Lastly, I’ll quote Arkan Lushwala, the Peruvian-American shaman who lives not far from me in New Mexico, and about whom I wrote in last year’s journal:

“Good communication is the key to maintaining our connection to Nature, belonging to everything, exposing ourselves to receive the energy that circulates everywhere and later on becoming givers of energy ourselves.”⁹

As a philosopher, I personally find belonging to the “universe” or “God” feels out of reach for my discursive thinking. However, largely owing to my encounter with Arkan, I do think that I might now have some access to “Belonging.” The starting point that I see opening for me is this world we live in right here, our Mother Earth. So, to start, I will declare that who I am in this conversation is the possibility of all people “Belonging” together to, and of, Earth.

I conclude this paper first by thanking you for your listening. Thank you for belonging to this conversation with me. Second, I will share the words of a prayer that came to me while flying across the ocean several years ago:

*Pachamama, speak through me!
Let the light shine through my wording.
Let the Eagle speak the Condor, and the Condor guide the Eagle.
Let Us be Me, and Me be Us.*

Finally, I'll end with a question: Just how big are you and I willing to have “We” be?

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“Saying, Showing and Listening,” Journal of the 2019 Conference for Global Transformation.

“Finding Arawaka,” Journal of the 2020 Conference for Global Transformation.

ENDNOTES

1 “Finding Arawaka.” Please refer to the references above for the titles of my journal papers. You can read them in past CGT journals, or e-mail me at edstro1212@gmail.com if you would like me to send them to you.

2 In Werner Erhard’s work, a distinction is an idea, model or principle that one creates for oneself, and which reorganizes what one already knows and gives powerful access to new possibilities. Examples of distinctions from our work in Landmark include responsibility, choice and authenticity.

3 If you don’t recall this concept, a good place to refresh your memory would be to read “Speaking Being: Werner Erhard, Martin Heidegger, and a New Possibility of Being Human.” In particular, I recommend the conversation on pp. 162-163.

4 In our Landmark training, beginning in The Landmark Forum and more comprehensively in some of the advanced programs in the Wisdom Course Area, we investigate the structures of our identity, which is the person or persona who we consider ourselves to be. There are many facets of this, and the example I am giving here illustrates one aspect that I discovered about how I had put myself together.

5 The Oxford English Dictionary, 2d ed. (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1989).

6 I could not find the exact quote from his many books and tapes in my library. However, you can search and readily find similar sayings of his on the Internet.

7 Eckhart, M., “Selected Writings,” Davies, O. (translator). (Penguin Books, 1994, p. 156).

8 Heidegger, M., “Bremen and Freiburg Lectures,” Mitchell, A. (translator). (Indiana University Press, 2012, p. 17).

9 Lushwala, A., “Deer & Thunder, Indigenous Ways of Restoring the World.” (Self-published, 2017, p. 90).

SURRENDERING TO BEAUTY, GOODNESS AND TRUTH

BRIAN MCFADIN

Abstract
Forming and belonging to high-conformity groups has allowed human beings to succeed in novel ways. However, much of our success is lost when we merely fit in, go along and acquiesce in our social groups. We have a choice between a society which is vital and adaptive, with room for nonconformity, or a weak, maladaptive and overly conformist society.

There is greater depth to life than the prevailing global paradigm of scientific materialism would lead us to believe. If we want a worthwhile future, we must allow ourselves to have a more profound experience of life than we have ever had before, and to create a new kind of meaning, purpose and action for our lives.

Listening, as a creative act, is a celebration of the sacred, displacing

the ordinary and imbuing us with the power of wholeness. The reader will be left listening for a new future in a new way—inspired to stand for it, work for it and be it.

EVOLUTION OF BELONGING

A healthy amount of conformity can lead to increased social harmony, on both interpersonal and societal levels.

The need to belong is deeply wired into human biology. In evolutionary terms, going against one’s group could be costly, and social cohesion was critical for the group’s overall success. Today, the desire for acceptance—or the drive to “fit in”—remains a basic human instinct for the vast majority of people.¹

—“Conformity,” Psychology Today¹

For most of the human past we belonged to small groups, which have more recently evolved into organizations, institutions and societies, allowing us to collaborate in increasingly sophisticated ways. Human belonging demands conformity, and over time conformity, in addition to its many benefits, causes even successful human groups to become unimaginative, maladaptive and eventually irrelevant. So, if we want vital human organizations and institutions, it’s important for us to ask ourselves, “What is a ‘healthy amount’ of conformity?”

Though we have the ability to transcend our originating groups, going beyond mere conformity, we rarely do. What do we ultimately want to belong to? My group, right or wrong? Or is there something deeper? Are we stuck, slaves to fitting in, or can we participate in shaping the groups we care about? Because, as the axiom goes, no one ever accomplished much by merely fitting in.

Conformity is more pronounced in humans than in other primates, allowing collaborative achievements, such as language, technology, religion, agriculture, finance, empire, art, education, medicine and government. On the downside, in order to fit in, we often go along with things that are counter to our collective well-being.

We all belong to several groups, organizations and institutions of different types. They are either worth the price of belonging or they are not. They either measure up to the depth of the discourses we care about or they don't.

Belonging (including consent and conformity) and freedom (including dissent and rebellion) together have given us evolving structures of self. We belong, in various ways, to:

1. Earth
2. Body
3. Family
4. Ego - sense of self
5. Others
6. Groups - made up of others
7. Organizations – made up of smaller groups
8. Institutions – made up of smaller groups and organizations
9. Religions – made up of groups, organizations and institutions (including traditional religions, newer organizations with a similar function or religiously-adhered-to social ideologies such as capitalism, communism, scientific materialism or multicultural pluralism)
10. Societies - made up of 1-9

11. The “Kosmos” (a philosophical term for the being of the universe), all-of-it or god (metaphors for the ultimately impenetrable mystery that life actually is)

Our social relationships are the source of our most intense joys and sorrows. We want to matter; we want to belong. We want to be somebody and to work and play with other somebodies. We want to give and take, benefit and contribute to our groups. Modern society affords us the possibility of interacting powerfully with our in-groups, and most people are free to express unpopular views. But, if you do, your organization or social group will attempt to control your expression in overt and covert ways.

History shows that if you want to contribute to your group, you have to really care, and, at times, defect from its received wisdom. If you want your group to make a big difference, it will have to experiment with what a “healthy amount” of conformity is, so it can become something greater, truer, more relevant, more adaptive—something better than it is now.

An important part of any successful group is correcting itself based on feedback, positive or negative, but especially negative feedback. To adapt, you need navigation. To navigate, you need mapping, planning, steering, acceleration, braking, feedback and correction. Most human groups try to avoid getting any negative feedback, but it's actually crucial for their ultimate success.

We have a strong impulse to grow, individually and organizationally, but also vigorously resist it (and the feedback that allows it) since we intuit that this will mean change and the loss of some parts of our past success, which is true. We don't want to let go of our past successes. But our winning ways are too small for what we really want. What we really want comes from growth, and growth is unfamiliar and uncomfortable.

CONFORMITY AND DISSENT

Conformity matters so much to us because everything is so messy without it. Let's face it, humans can be difficult, possessed of dreams and nightmares, containing multitudes, including demons and angels—it's a strange and wonderful brew. Conformity cuts through differences, getting

us onto the same page together. This is nearly miraculous, and we love nothing more than being part of harmonious and productive groups. However, too much conformity can kill self-expression, so it's worthy of our mindful attention.

If a person fails to attain freedom, spontaneity [or] a genuine expression of self, he may be considered to have a severe defect, provided we assume that freedom and spontaneity are the objective goals to be attained by every human being. If such a goal is not attained by the majority of members of any given society, we deal with the phenomenon of socially-patterned defect. The individual shares it with many others; he is not aware of it as a defect.

What he may have lost in richness and in a genuine feeling of happiness, is made up by the security of fitting in with the rest of mankind, and his security is not threatened by the experience of being different, of being an outcast, as it were. As a matter of fact, his very defect may have been raised to a virtue by his culture, and thus may give him an enhanced feeling of achievement.²

—Erich Fromm

We tend to default toward conformity, while suppressing self-expression, which leaves us vulnerable to emotional, psychological and spiritual flatlands. Spaces where conformity is high can be productive, but they also inevitably become dull and dry, lacking in the resonance of truth, the warmth of goodness and the ecstasy of beauty.

The expression of nonconforming moral bravery—exemplified in various ways by Akhenaten, Lao Tzu, Buddha, Socrates, Jesus, Muhammad, Joan of Arc, Martin Luther, Giordano Bruno, Shakespeare, Voltaire, Washington, Lincoln, Frederick Douglass, Harriet Tubman, Nietzsche, W.E.B. Du Bois, Susan B. Anthony, Gandhi, Picasso, the Marx Brothers, Martin Luther King, Jr., Malcolm X, Miles Davis and Gloria Steinem—isn't about nonconformity for its own sake.

Rather, it's about transcending (and including) the current state of affairs in order to allow for (and then conform to) a higher possibility for all. This includes questioning our group and its ethos. All groups need us to do this, especially those with ambitions to do good in the world. All the worst damage in history has been done by do-gooders.

Over time, all groups, including yours, will do things to which you should not conform and along with which you should not go.

Openness to negative feedback, in particular, as well as critical self-reflection, in general, is rare. Yet, it is the only way ethically, morally and spiritually ambitious people can fulfill their mission. This requires individuals willing to take a stand and give negative feedback to the powers that be *within their groups*.

For most people, this is a hard thing to do, because it will evoke the unthinking defensiveness of the group and cause some loss of agreement, status and belonging. Most people simply aren't willing to pay the price. This is the price our nonconforming heroes and heroines listed above paid.

You might not guess it by looking at the great religious traditions handed down to us, but, according to their founders' stories, they were all revolutionaries and mystics, nonconformists of the highest order. Of course, pure science is essentially a tradition of disciplined intellectual nonconformity.

With later developments, religious and scientific institutions became more conservative and conformist, because inevitably, over time, all human groups become unimaginative, maladaptive and eventually irrelevant. But the great religious traditions still hold invaluable, unmatched possibilities for humanity, if we're willing to wake them up and breathe new life into them.

Of course, most groups and organizations don't listen much, which makes it harder to contribute to them than it could be. But contributing to your group is not about making the group wrong, a common pitfall. The secret is to care a great deal—so that your nonconformity becomes art that elevates it and you. It won't likely feel like art, but that's what it will be—dissent plus love and creativity, shaped by courage, leading to service, contribution and, eventually, trust.

The Romans feared, hated, legislated against, and even killed, the Christians. Then, eventually, became the Christians. It comes down to being in action for what we care about vs. hanging out in our group's comfort zone to fit in. As Nicholas Klein pointed out in his famous speech to the

Amalgamated Clothing Workers Union in 1918, “And my friends, in this story you have a history of this entire movement. First, they ignore you. Then they ridicule you. Then they attack you and want to burn you. And then they build monuments to you.”

SCIENTIFIC STUDY OF CONFORMITY

*The standard of mental health that equates psychological normality with healthy mental functioning has remained unquestioned for a very long time.*³

—Steven James Bartlett

In 1951, psychologist Solomon Asch began what came to be known as The Asch Conformity Experiments, which showed that people are willing to conform at surprisingly high levels under the right social conditions. The experiment required participants to lie publicly in order to conform to their group. Seventy-four percent were willing to do it at least once, and all participants were willing to do it one-third of the time, quickly and easily abandoning their ethics when faced with social pressure.

Asch’s work influenced the infamous Milgram Experiment in which a surprisingly high percentage of subjects followed orders to administer electric shocks in harmful, even fatal doses to others, ignoring the staged screaming of their victims, based on social pressure from a perceived authority figure.

My psychologist told me I was crazy and I said I want a second opinion. He said okay, you’re ugly, too.

—Rodney Dangerfield

We have also learned from neuroscience that getting agreement—confirmation that we are right, we fit in, we are accepted—is neurologically compelling, lighting up the pleasure centers of the brain (which are involved in all addictions) in about the same way as sex, food and euphoria-inducing drugs. We are wired to do it, and it feels good to conform. Conversely, breaking with our group makes us very uncomfortable.

WHAT IT COSTS: THE DAMAGE OF UNHEALTHY CONFORMITY

Although psychopathology and personality traits, such as authoritarianism, may be used to explain the motivations or actions of Hitler and other leading Nazis, one of the enduring questions posed by social psychologists concerns which situational forces may have compelled so many ordinary men and women to follow the orders of the Nazi leadership.

This question has yielded many interesting answers, including self-interest and material gain, a reclamation of national pride following the humiliation of defeat in World War I, a desire for strong leadership following political instability and high unemployment and a history of anti-Semitism, dehumanization and scapegoating. But, perhaps, the most surprising explanation is that of conformity.

Is there any evidence to suggest that ordinary Germans may have gone along with the Nazis’ so-called final solution to the Jewish problem out of a desire to go along with the group? As it turns out, there is plenty.

An important study of the interrogations of 210 members of the Reserve Police Battalion 101 (responsible for the killing of 38,000 Jews and the deportation of 45,000 others) revealed that although the individual members of the group did not have orders to kill, almost ninety percent committed murders by the end of the Holocaust.

Furthermore, their actions could not be attributed to psychopathology or a previous history of violence. In fact, records indicate that eighty to ninety percent of the men were initially horrified and disgusted by what they were doing. However, the desire not to face isolation and ostracism, or not to be perceived as “weak,” motivated many of them to perpetrate truly horrific acts of violence and murder.

*The ordinary desire to get along with their comrades, not to stick out, and to avoid social rejection appears to have been a primary motivating force for many of them.*⁴

—Charles Stangor

The good we strive for is undone when we operate from our desire to be liked and fit in, untempered

by independent, critical thinking—and the courage to dissent. We may feel better in the short run while actually acquiescing to things that will hurt others, and us, in the long run.

Through unhealthy conformity at the systemic level, we create and perpetuate:

- Unearned social opportunity for some and little or no opportunity for others.
- Cultural disrespect for those who are not beneficiary members of the leading societies.
- Unfulfilling corporate and organizational jobs and careers.
- Increasing fantastical and magical thinking, drug addiction, entertainment distraction and other momentary escapes from reality.
- Digital meta-surveillance employed to unfair and even totalitarian ends.
- Growing mental illness, loss of dignity and suicide.
- Poverty, abuse and enslavement for many of the most vulnerable among us.
- Imprisonment, deprivation, torture and capital punishment for certain members of society and not for others.
- Injury, suffering and death due to violent conflict and wars.
- The ever-present and looming threat of chemical, biological and nuclear warfare.
- The destruction of millions of lives annually through corporate, organizational and governmental wrongdoing.
- Increasingly unsafe and unsustainable air, water and food systems.
- The rapid dissolution of the biosphere, where everything we know and everything we care about, takes place.

The status quo sucks.

—George Carlin

We like to think that other groups are the ones doing all the bad things, but that’s not always so. While we talk about being good people, making a difference or taking a stand, when our ideas, speech or actions vary from the party line of our group, they’re not allowed.

We train and develop people who don’t stand up to hypocrisy. The few who do are more likely to be derided or punished than listened to. Whistleblowers are losers in our corporations, organizations and institutions. In order to manage and control group members, we tame people out of their moral courage. This is a flame we’ll need to rekindle if we are to make it as a civilization through the next hundred years.

The meek shall inherit nothing.

—Frank Zappa

The further from conformity you venture, the more you may be positioned to contribute to your organization in areas where it is blind, biased, underperforming or dysfunctional and the more likely you are to be seen as a defector, not trustworthy, not a team player and excluded from inner circles, even though you may be doing practical, emotional, philosophical or spiritual heavy lifting that may greatly benefit the organization.

I’m not worried about the Third World War. That’s the Third World’s problem.

—Jimmy Carr

You can belong to your group by conforming, but you can only truly serve it by also taking the risk to call out unworkability when you see it, or point to a problem or a better way. Ideally, you would do what contributes the most at any given moment. But it’s rarer, and harder, for us to break with our group’s answers, making dissent a rich wellspring for contribution, if you have the courage.

Without deviation from the norm, progress is not possible.

—Frank Zappa

We engender conformity with criticism or praise from leaders, promotion or demotion, granting or denying rewards, ignoring or acknowledging contributions, microaggressions, coercive “correction,” inclusion or exclusion and, in extreme cases, threats, harassment, abuse or killing of dissenters or their loved ones. If you recognize any of these, it may mean you’re actually doing something that matters to your group.

The most courageous act is to think for yourself. Out loud.

—Coco Chanel

Modern national democracy was invented to encourage discourse, normalize dissent and increase well-being across all levels of society. The problem is that, as people entrained to conformity, we are mostly unwilling to speak up in key moments when the greater good would be served by taking a minority position.

We get swept up in the prevailing group-think. We can’t imagine our contribution beyond the group’s current definitions. Democracy can’t work until we do what it takes to express ourselves and be heard. A microphone doesn’t amplify your voice until you begin to speak out.

SHADOW AND LIGHT

*The most dreadful people I have ever known are those for whom the heavenly telephone is endlessly ringing, always with disastrous messages for everybody else. Or people who have been cured by their psychiatrists, a cure which has rendered them a little less exciting than oatmeal. I prefer sinners and madmen, who can learn, who can change, who can teach.*⁵

—James Baldwin

We assume institutions or companies are acting based on their stated goals, but much of what actually shapes their behavior is unconscious.

It’s shadow, not rational, material. Without seeking to understand its shadow, a group can’t live up to its own declared objectives, and may, at times, find itself doing more harm than good.

*No one intentionally makes bad decisions. Yet we make them all the time. In fact, some of the worst disasters in recent history—the collapse of major investment banks, the global financial meltdown—were the result of seemingly reasonable decisions made by a lot of smart people. How does this happen?*⁶

—Michael J. Mauboussain

One important way to understand the group shadow is by listening to negative feedback from defectors, dissenters and rebels, and striving to include, learn, understand and correct. This is a challenging proposition for human beings, due to our tendency to cleave to strongly held views and narratives, immediately dismissing anything that doesn’t conform to them. Most nonconformists don’t get a hearing at all.

THE TABOO AGAINST SOCIAL CREATIVITY

Blind belief in authority is the greatest enemy of truth.

—Albert Einstein

Nothing strengthens authority so much as silence.

—Leonardo da Vinci

Belonging to a group means buying into its agenda in order to reap the rewards of membership. All groups distort reality in some way, putting their spin on things. There are no groups without shadow elements, and the parts that remain in darkness can be powerful causal forces in any given group. This is an important, and not well understood, aspect of human society.

In every society (and organization), it’s taboo to deal with certain things, and taboo to talk about the fact that it’s taboo. Taboos protect shadow material and enforce the status quo. Economist Timur Kuran has pointed out that people hide their true feelings, especially in certain public settings, in what he calls preference falsification, which is the act of misrepresenting our wants under perceived social pressure.⁷ It aims at deliberately

disguising one’s motivations and dispositions.

It occurs in innocent situations, such as “How do I look in this?” or “How’s your meal?” You may say you like it when you don’t, and, in this situation, not much harm is done. But, in collectives, preference falsification has terrible consequences. Because people are not expressing openly what is on their minds, the system of social knowledge development, and, therefore, the conversations for creativity and problem-solving get corrupted.

Social discourse becomes impoverished, doesn’t deal with what people actually want and produces inefficient outcomes, while the primary influencers in the group remain confident everything is going great. Groups do not appreciate being criticized or challenged, least of all from within. It’s generally taboo to criticize your country, company, ethnic or religious group. This creates an irresistible pressure for falsification.

We tend to relate to social norms as if they exist the way objects do. However, most of their rules are made up in language and are, in a very real way, completely changeable by us. But, because humans experience our cultural norms as who we are, we reflexively defend the status quo. Thus, it’s universally taboo to work for the transformation of society. People automatically try to preserve what they’re used to, even if it’s outmoded and should be thrown out.

If you think nobody cares about you, try missing a couple of payments.

—Steven Wright

For example, we think of money as objectively real, but it’s actually nothing more than a complex game, made up by people who may not share your values, in which there are elaborate rules, historical precedents, built-in megawinners (the few) and losers (the many), near universal participation and strong incentives to continue (conform to) the game. We could change the rules to benefit more people if we wanted to. They aren’t written in the stars.

I think it’s wrong that only one company makes the game Monopoly.

—Steven Wright

ACCOUNTABILITY IS THE FABRIC OF CIVILIZATION

Collectively we humans go to work daily and, whether or not we intend to, lay waste to air, water, land and lives—with impunity. This is happening due to ineffective accountability. Accountability is the hardest and most challenging of all human tasks. We’re neither good at holding others to account, nor are we good at being held to account ourselves.

The secret of life is honesty and fair dealing. If you can fake that, you’ve got it made.

—Groucho Marx

But, make no mistake, without better accountability, human society will not mature beyond its current emergency-ridden adolescence. As a species, we need to self-regulate, which is literally the entire function of government. Individuals self-regulate behavior through the ego; collectives self-regulate behavior through governance.

We are currently in a civilization-threatening downward spiral and it doesn’t have to be. Now the planetary system itself, if it is to support human civilization, needs human self-regulation, or we will all lose our very hospitable home in short order. Looking at the measurable results we are producing, it’s clear that you and I would rather say goodbye to the future than to hold our group, organization or institution to account—and risk loss of belonging.



ANCIENT WISDOM

As human beings, we tend to see chaos as bad and human-imposed order as good. Ancient mystical thought offers us an alternative cosmic order. In this view, chaos and order are in a sacred dance together to produce possibility, creativity and new life. Taoism represents this interdependence of dualities in the famous yin yang symbol, the *taijitu*.

Ancient Vedic thought from India sees the cosmos as a self-organizing and integrated whole, with no dichotomy between cosmic and ethical order. Sacred and secular, spirit and nature, are seen as one. The spiritual-creative principle is made up of:

1. **creation**, and **bringing into being**,
2. the **continuation** of what is created,
3. as well as its eventual **destruction** and dissolution, making way for **creation ...**

Last year I got a humidifier and a dehumidifier. I put them in the same room and let them fight it out.

—Steven Wright

Seen from this vantage point, nonconformity can help us by making way for new creativity. A certain amount of disruption can free us from our bondage to falsehoods, habits and biases to which we've grown accustomed.

Religions and other social groups designed to empower people defend themselves from critical thinking in order to maintain the status quo. But this diminishes their ability to actually empower people. No answers shall be radically different from the ones we already have. Why? Because they are woven into everything we do and all of our plans for the future. This is how we know ourselves. Thus, our religions and similar social groups are stuck with their past solutions, and, therefore, largely ineffectual, in this, our time of universal crisis and spiritual need.

We talk about the contributions we'd like to make to society, while essentially doing nothing to upset the apple cart in the groups in which we currently participate, even though they need us to hold them to account if they are to become what they ought to be—in order for them to succeed. We're afraid to upset the apple cart, or, in this famous case of rebellion, the bankers' tables:

And Jesus went into the temple of God, and cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the money changers, and the seats of them that sold doves, and said unto them, it is written, my house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves.⁸

—Matthew 21:12

STANDING FOR SOMETHING GREATER

Today, we are faced with multiple intersecting global crises. Some say it's not healthy to concentrate on our problems or the negativity of events around us; we should be optimistic instead. I disagree. Optimism has its place, but things are clearly not optimal. What we need is action born from a deep sense of the unique value of life on Earth. We must contact our love for creation, and

for our own life. This is missing in the worst way from our prevailing scientific, materialist paradigm, its projects and programs.

The main reason we are not responding intelligently and productively to these crises is that we care more about acceptance—fitting in with family, friends, company, tribe, party, country or religion—than we care for creation itself. We see ourselves as belonging to something which is too shallow for our spirits and too small for the historical moment.

I'm not crazy about reality, but it's still the only place to get a decent meal.

—Groucho Marx

Moderns and post-moderns, liberals and progressives, are mostly non-religious nowadays, and don't have well-developed cultural practices or rituals that help us to celebrate the sacred aspects of life, which religions, of all kinds, used to provide for many people.

I am not optimistic, but I am hopeful. I think hope is very different from optimism. Hope comes out of facing the darkness, facing the despair. We have to face what is happening to us as a people and as a planet. The damage we are doing to Earth is reaching irreversible proportions. We're running out of time and we're still making very unwise decisions. You would think the human race would be smarter than this.

What we're realizing is that, as a species, we're not as smart as we think we are. It could be that we've been doing agriculture wrong for 10,000 years if we want to sustain ourselves and the Earth. And, I think we need to admit that we've perhaps been doing religion wrong for 10,000 years—or doing education wrong for 10,000 years.

We have to learn from the mystics about purifying our longing, living simpler lives, using less energy and getting out from under this incarnational greed that passes itself off as our economic system.⁹

—Matthew Fox

Experience is something you don't get until just after you need it.

—Steven Wright

Our problem is not that there are no solutions to our problems. It's that none of us want to endure the pain of standing up to the problem. We complain, but we don't want to pay the price. We wish we wanted to, but we don't. If our own group is one of the places we'd have to stand up, we usually decide it's not worth it—and go along.

And the ill behavior continues. And our contribution does not get delivered. And the dysfunction of our groups and institutions goes on unabated. And we could turn it all around if we have the courage to belong to something greater than the approval of the group.

THE BLESSING OF URGENCY

The diversity of life on Earth is irreplaceable, invaluable and beyond miraculous. In our consumer society, creation isn't held as magnificent and awe inspiring. Rather, it's a resource to be used and thrown away. It's reasonable to lay waste to anything if there's money to be made. When we cross over the threshold into an unlivable biosphere, we will have lots of money to take with us to our death.

What's the use of happiness? It can't buy you money.

—Henny Youngman

It's time for the next stage now. It's better to have your eyes open, searching for more, than to be artificially satisfied by something false. In the past, the path of love, compassion and wisdom was optional. Now our survival as a species actually depends on it. This is a blessing. It's the blessing of urgency. But, to receive this blessing, we must awaken to the sacred nature of life.

AWAKENING TO THE SACRED

What is awakening? Is it possible to awaken, or is it

just a romantic notion? Awakening is the primary message of every spiritual path, including the great religious traditions, every philosophy, every art and all pure science. Ask yourself, and keep asking every day: *What is awakening?* For me, awakening means opening to the felt presence of mystery and awe at being alive that turns my life on. To awaken, you must first discover that you are asleep.

What is sacred? Is anything sacred? What does sacred really mean? Sacredness is the goal of every spiritual path. To walk on the Earth with reverence for, and a co-creative participation with, what is unfolding within us and around us. This is the easiest thing for us to miss and dismiss in modern society.

When we miss this, we miss everything. As a species, we are getting some of the most important things dead wrong. To recognize the sacred, you must first realize that you are stuck in the flatlands of the ordinary-dull-mind of scientific materialism. For me, the phenomenon of awakening to the sacred arises together with the direct experience of listening, be it through seeing, hearing, the other senses or the intellect.

It begins with a radical kind of openness, beyond instinct, beyond even intuition. Listen to people, listen to pure science (what can be measured), listen to music, listen to art, listen to philosophy, listen to nature—more deeply than you ever have before. Listen to the wind whistling through a pine tree, the babbling of a brook or the musical poetry of birdsong deep in the rain forest.

Make room in your life for what you become aware of from listening within and let everything else fall away. The rest doesn't matter now.

Let your caring break open your heart—that's how you let others in. Remember, even if it may not look like it on the surface, everyone else's heart is broken, too. Each of us yearns to let everyone else in, but we have stops to letting others in. In your life, you're the only one with the courage to do it. Don't wait for anyone.

Some of us are afraid to deal with something, big or small, or bring up a subject that could contribute to someone, or our Self, or our group. Start a conversation. Give more to, and demand more from, the groups you are in, even if you have no agreement yet.

When you serve and you have no agreement with the larger society, you align with the greatest elder masters of humanity, because when they started, they were a line of one, and now you are in that lineage. When you're a line of one, and radically open, listening on behalf of all, the universe listens to you. When you persist in service of something greater than yourself, people will eventually join you. But, first, you will have to face standing alone. What will you listen to when you are alone?

You can stand up and create—new pathways, new life, new community, a new Earth, a new human possibility. Throw away your crutches; you don't need them any longer. You don't need anything to walk now. Have no fear. Look newly at the world. The natural radiance of spirit is always looking out through your eyes.

Everyone is parched and thirsty for beauty, goodness and truth. Everybody wants to quench their thirst. We yearn to experience the sacred, whether or not we use that or any word. It's an experience of listening. To yourself. To another. To life. To the world. To the Kosmos. It's an experience available once the limited Self becomes still.

Let us together create the ground for a new experience of being alive. Sacred ground that transforms us into the kind of beings available to experience eternity, in which success, money and material comfort are no consolation compared to something much deeper—with which we crave perfect communion.

ENDNOTES

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FOR HUMANITY FLOURISHING – A VIBRANT, VERDANT WORLD WHERE PEOPLE THRIVE

SUSAN H. HOSKINS



"We are confronted with the fierce urgency of now."
—Martin Luther King, Jr.

Abstract

This article explores what it takes to recast a cultural conversation. Six months of inquiry has led to the development of I AM HUMANITY, an organization with three objectives: to generate an awareness campaign, to measure the dialogue and to expand membership. These actions are urgent to cause an immediate collective state-change for ourselves and future generations. The author is very interested in creating a language for a cultural conversation that shifts a societal identity from an individual to a communal societal self-awareness; one which opens up through the inquiry of bringing a new

conversation into existence. To do this, we propose recasting our self-concept by declaration and connecting our sense of belonging to others through collective action.

INTRODUCTION

My journey with I AM HUMANITY started in 2020 at the Conference for Global Transformation. I attended the conference with a deep desire to have a carpe diem – seize the day – attitude about the future. Dissatisfied with what I was not hearing in the news or general society, I felt the conversations were mostly "Let's wait and see" if the coronavirus has a silver lining. It seemed to me we should not hesitate. We needed to seize the day – claim a future and bring that future toward us. I had been formulating a campaign to declare **2020s – the Decade of Honoring the Human Spirit.**

At the conference, I heard Peter Fiekowsky, a keynote speaker, say that he was working with a group of people on "I AM HUMANITY." He briefly described it as "Instead of saying 'I am a Jewish-

American,’ I would say ‘I am humanity.’” It sparked a memory when I was five, standing on a green carpet in the family room, wondering what the rest of the world was doing and wanting to help. I suddenly felt my connection to all of humanity. He said anyone interested should contact him after the conference. Well, I thought, this is great. I would be with people interested in the same thing I am – shifting a societal identity from an individual to a communal, societal self-awareness. Count me in!

One of my other big takeaways from the conference was from Dylan Stafford, another keynote speaker. In his speech, he drove home the point that adding key people to your originating circle can make the biggest difference in what you are committed to.¹ So, I wrote down different people I wanted in my originating circle. Peter Fiekowsky was one of them.

Luckily, I was registered in the Developmental Relating and Relationships course, an outstanding course. Even though I had lots of leadership experience, I still had a profound fear of asking for what I want, especially from strangers. In the course, we explore the foundation on which we place all our thoughts and feelings and relationships. We explore the depth of the edges of where we cannot go in relationships. One exercise had me realize that I had made up all my limits. It rocked my world.

Still, I took three weeks before finally contacting Peter. Until then, I had elaborate schemes for how I could get introduced to him or find his number. You can tell that I have not completely conquered my fear of asking for what I want. But, I do have a new ability to identify it and interrupt the pattern of complete stage fright. After all, I did finally reach him.

Peter’s focus is on promoting a global conversation specifically for the survival and flourishing of humanity and has an environmental slant to it. I, on the other hand, am committed to the declaration that the **2020s is the Decade of Honoring the Human Spirit** specifically through collective acts of the human spirit. I have a keen interest in creating a language for a cultural conversation that generates inclusive solutions through collective action. There is a lot of overlap

and common ground. We decided to combine our efforts and ultimately landed that I AM HUMANITY would be the umbrella for like-minded projects.

The rest of this article discusses what the team has accomplished and where we are in the ongoing inquiry of shifting a global conversation. We are currently in Phase One – Formulation. That means: Establish the structures for “I AM HUMANITY.” We have come up with the following:

MISSION

The realization of a new perspective, a new episteme, from “who I am” as individual to “who I am” is an aspect of all of humanity, including future generations.

ACTION

People recognize and declare I AM HUMANITY,” and, in doing so, they experience belonging and take actions consistent with that new global context which calls forth the flourishing of humanity.

INTENDED OUTCOMES BY 2029

- We will provide branding that promotes and nourishes the flourishing of humanity.
- We will spotlight organizations, nonprofits, volunteers, celebrities, foundations and youth who are engaged in programs, activities and events that expand the flourishing of humanity.
- We will provide speakers who share and educate about the flourishing of humanity and what’s available when you declare I AM HUMANITY.
- We will have ambassadors and representation in every state and country who highlight local groups and events aligned under the umbrella of I AM HUMANITY.

STATE CHANGE

The I AM HUMANITY team needed to create I AM HUMANITY, what it means and what is its purpose. It became clear to us that we wanted a state change. To do that, we needed new language – a “giving,” generative language causing an

immediate state change. Something like the word “reimagine,” which is so clear and now so popular. The state change we want is an **awareness of Self as humanity.**

One of our founding team members, Amy Loving, contributed the language of “self-concept,” which I think totally works. “Self-concept” gives an in-the-moment experience, an awareness of a quality of life. I believe that everyone wants to experience a quality of life. It is unique for each one of us, yet it is one desire we all have in common. However, people wake up feeling separate from others and, therefore, focus on finding solutions to their individual needs. This gives a different flavor to one’s quality of life or “self-concept” when what is needed is collective thinking to solve global problems. As a species, we’ve fought for our individual survival, but it is time for us to think of humanity’s survival.

I was listening to National Public Radio on October 17, 2020 when Rebecca Knill’s TED Talk was rebroadcast. She was born hearing-impaired. She had a very difficult decision to make. She was offered a procedure that would assist in her hearing. She actually enjoyed her life as it was and was not necessarily looking forward to a hearing world. Silence is addictive. It is expansive and a space for creativity. The hearing world judges you on ability or accessibility when what we need is connection. The hearing world can be patronizing and has pitying which she would hear in comments such as: “I’m so sorry for you.” “So glad that’s not me.” “I couldn’t live like that.” What I found so profound about her talk was this statement: “The assumption is that their state-of-being is better than mine.”

To me, this story points to “self-concept.” We keep ourselves separate from others for survival but also by judging. We judge each other all the time based on our assumption that our “state-of-being” is superior to x, y or z. What if we were to become interested in other people’s “state of being?” It changes all the time so there is always something to discover. What if we become interested in connecting to our own state-of-being as we connected to others and humanity? What would that open up?

The I AM HUMANITY team determined we want

a structure that has clarity, a bias for action and leaves a climate in which we are proud. Ultimately, we want to move the needle, so more people understand that relating to themselves as I AM HUMANITY is essential for the survival and flourishing of humanity.

DECLARATION

The team knew that declaration generates a demarcation of a new future. It is key that the organization I AM HUMANITY causes a declaration. A declaration creates a stand for and, in standing for, one becomes surrounded by, and ultimately stands in, a context. The context for our end game is the flourishing of humanity: **A vibrant, verdant world where people thrive.** That context shifts our “self-concept.” The immediate shift we want comes from declaration.

In life, we make up the stories that form our reality. So, too in declaration, we can make up a future that inspires and motivates us. We become unburdened by what has come before and by the past.

Declaration allows for an immediate shift, a shift from the status quo future we are living into to a new future that calls to us and includes our neighbors and humanity. It is in that future that we recognize who we are.

BELONGING AND CONNECTION

Monique Sullivan, one of our teammates, focused on belonging and connection. She wants people to expand their capacity to include. To expand our capacity to include, we knew we needed to create connection and being connected. Without connection, fear turns the “we” to an “I.” We abandon the “others” and worry about “me.” Another teammate, Arnold Murray, suggested that we need to flip the “m.” What we are up to is flipping the “me” to “we.”

We want to create a conversation that honors the “reality” that **“We are one. We are connected.”** We are spiritually and physically interconnected with each other, the planet and the universe. We want to create a discourse that **honors human beings;** brings kindness, respect and celebrates our unique expressions. We are committed to developing a brand such that people flock to join a movement for humanity. When we make space for

humanity, it validates all aspects of life.

“We do not believe in ourselves until someone reveals that deep inside us something is valuable, worth listening to, worthy of our trust, sacred to our touch. Once we believe in ourselves, we can risk curiosity, wonder, spontaneous delight or any experience that reveals the human spirit.”

– E.E. Cummings

COLLECTIVE ACTION

Everywhere we looked we saw something missing. “What’s needed is **collective action** and that follows a collective possibility or future,” said Carol Douglis, one of our teammates. What is needed is bringing what humanity wants into focus. To have humanity last through time we need many people boldly standing for the flourishing of humanity.

I thought we were causing a global shift in the conversation from exclusion to inclusion. However, that is not sufficient. It is actually more than that. It became clear that we need to redefine collaboration. If we are dedicated to the recognition that individuals belong to one human race, wholistic solutions to complex problems will naturally occur to further the flourishing of humanity for future generations. To redefine collaboration, we need to source a shift in a societal identity from individuals to a communal societal self-awareness. This brings us back to needing to influence media and global leaders who hold the global conversation. We clearly are doing an awareness campaign.

To have an effective awareness campaign we must harness the power of the media and refocus its energy toward what is wanted by humanity. What’s happening in America is happening in different degrees all around the world. In the United States, we have a highly divided country. Some mainstream media are biased and act as a catalyst in polarizing the country. It happens on both sides of political and cultural discourses.

We also stand for future generations to be free from our current climate crisis. This brings up the “intergenerational ethics” that Michael Mann, an American climatologist, talks about in relation to science denial. How can we have conversations

inside this relatively new field of intergenerational ethics? What are we leaving future generations due to no fault of their own?

MEASURES – BE COUNTED

“Accomplishment, when not ignored or discounted, calls for new language, new listening and new actions. What we say about what has happened has consequences. We could use where we have fallen short as an excuse for stopping, or we could notice, by registering the accomplishment, that we now have even greater openings to act. In registering accomplishment, we become available to see things we were not able to see and say things we were not able to say; we have new opportunities to play, to add existence and membership, and to restore and create integrity.”

– Fred Moss, M.D.

There is something about counting that gives validity. The service we will provide is counting and measuring the discourse. I assert that people may be taking collective actions and we just don’t know it. If we were to measure our collective action, we could produce a paradigm shift just through the recognition of what is so. This brings us to the theme of this conference – “Registering Accomplishment.”

Be counted and included so we see you and you see us. If we begin to become interested and begin to measure the multitude of accomplishments in the world, we could be startled by how much is happening. The deficit thinking or hardwiring we have of self-deprecation could actually shift to one of satisfaction.

I know I want to be counted!

EXPANDING MEMBERSHIP

We are still formulating our business model but I will share the way I see it. My vision is that we are a web-based clearinghouse for social movements, creating the language for a cultural conversation to discover inclusive solutions through collective action. We will target 100 campaigns or movements in the following areas: environment, justice, poverty, peace, human expression and religious freedom.

The website will collect, maintain and measure the number of people willing to declare I AM HUMANITY and their participation over the next 10 years to honor and create the 2020s – **The Decade of Honoring the Human Spirit**. This will cause a tipping point that shifts societal conscience to allow for acts of human spirit to multiply and become the norm. By connecting to four billion people, we will cause a tipping point – ultimately focusing on the magnificence of humanity.

URGENCY

“We are confronted with the fierce urgency of now.”

– Martin Luther King, Jr.

We have distinguished that evolution is not about individuals. It’s about humanity. Greta Thunberg, the young Swedish environmental activist, says we need to treat a crisis like a crisis. We can’t deny or negotiate with the laws of physics. We must take climate action.

But the silver lining is that we can address all the problems that face humanity inside a new context. It is possible to have a **vibrant, verdant world in which people thrive** within our lifetime and beyond. Just think of apartheid in South Africa. There was a time when it was unimaginable that it would ever end. Then along came Mandela.

It is possible and the time is now!

ENDNOTES

1 An originating circle is a distinction from the Wisdom Unlimited course that identifies the individuals who are closest to a person, such as family members, close friends and co-workers.

LIFE AS A COLLAGE

KATHY NORMAN

Abstract

What is it like to live without judgment? The author examines past failures through the lens of acceptance. Can she reconsider these failures as accomplishments? What is available when a failure or an aspect of a failure is rebranded as an accomplishment?

On August 12, 2020, I gave up “making myself wrong.” It resulted from a seminar assignment, “giving up your right to be right – even when you are.”¹ I listened to that constant angry voice in my head, admonishing me for mistakes and missteps. To adhere to the assignment, I gave up being right about myself. I stopped judging myself. I promised, “I’ll do it for one week.”

It was a vacation for me and from me. I remember sharing with my sister and friends two things about that week. First, how wonderful it was to remember something from the past that did not turn out well, or remember something urgent that I had forgotten to do and not feel ridiculously stupid. Second, I fell asleep twice on the grass, under a tree with my dog. It was a hot August day. Bella and I would take a walk each afternoon and sit down under a tree. Twice I woke up to find Bella on the other side of me. She had been free to roam, as I had let go of the leash while sleeping. Each time, I said to Bella, “Wow, am I lucky there was no cat.”

I shared my experience of finding Bella still beside me. My sister reminded me how to hold a leash.

One friend and neighbor strongly admonished me. I laughed; she was so right. How could I have done it twice? I decided to extend my promise not to judge myself for another week. Life seemed lighter.

I did not go willingly down the path of no judgment. Sometimes I thought it was wrong and dangerous to ignore my stern comments on however I was currently judging myself. As if, by letting go, something unexpected and unwanted will happen. Who am I to live without recriminations? Sometimes I felt as though I had stolen something and gotten away with it. Other times, I thought that if I accepted what I had done, then I would forget it and possibly repeat my mistake with even worse consequences. I reminded myself that I could return to judging myself at any moment.

Living without judgment is peaceful. I have many critical moments, yet I think the edges are softer, and I see the humanity in myself and others more plainly. I feel I have more compassion, and I know my blood pressure is lower.

The heat from August seeped into September.

Bella and I continued to sit under the tree in the afternoon. We’d watch our neighbors and the squirrels. It was comfortably hot in the shade. With my mind idling, I would pull out memories and look them over. Sometimes memories would pop into my head as though, without judgment, the memory is more welcome. Compassion had replaced self-criticism. I saw myself standing within the memory, watching what happened and how I had interpreted it.

Perhaps, some of my memories, which were initially banned to the dark side, could come into the light. Can I find the positive in the memory and consider it an achievement?

If I could register a failure as an accomplishment, just as I could register going home for Christmas by buying my airline ticket, what would happen?

My life is a collage of memories and experiences, glued together with love, friendship and a lot of chocolate. Can I welcome everything onto my life collage?

FAILURE #1

My past seven years have been littered with unspoken thoughts. I have spent money I shouldn’t have spent. I am wrecking my retirement. Was I smarter seven years ago than I am now? I have failed me.

In 2014, I quit my secure well-paying job with four weeks of vacation so I could write full-time. I bought myself a Mac laptop as my writing gift. Two days into writing, I found that imagining writing every day is different than actually doing it. I shared with my community that my writing goal was for three hours every day, six days a week. After four months of writing, 288 hours of writing, I stopped. Writing seems “too hard. I mean really hard,” I told myself and anyone else who would listen. I had asked a friend to review a story I had written, and she did not find one sentence of value. When I stopped writing every day, I thought I was taking a break.

I decided to return to school and learn about new computing technologies. I spent the next few years explaining to people I had enrolled in my writing why I was not writing. Then, I did what I am exceptionally good at: I didn’t think about it anymore.

FAILURE #1 TO SUCCESS?

Inside those six years, I looked for a job, then I stopped. I started tutoring math, discovering I was very good at it. And, I discovered blockchain, the record-keeping technology behind the Bitcoin network.²

Accepting that I spent more money than I intended and being OK with it, I turn on a bright light to examine what I did and didn’t do. I see two themes: things got “too hard,” and I stopped sharing. I see two accomplishments: I learned computer programming tools that I use daily in a job I love, and I have transitioned to the gig economy with multiple sources of income.

“Too hard” is a theme I’ve experienced before. Like when I quit taking math courses at university in my twenties and quit looking for a job a few years ago. Could I use “too hard” as a signal that I need to approach a situation differently?

I told myself that “to stop writing after a negative review” is a failure. What an idiot, leaving a secure job, writing for four months and then quitting? What was I thinking? Yet, it was one bad review that I used as the tipping point to stop. I could have eaten a large amount of chocolate (an excellent coping skill), shared my sadness and continued to write. Even as I write this, I am laughing. What an idiot I am. (This is the unexpected consequence of giving up judging myself: I laugh at, and with, myself quite a bit.)

The upshot: I am still committed to writing, and it is still “too hard.”

After going back to school and taking computer courses in different fields, such as machine learning, I found a compelling computing technology: blockchain. Without quitting my job and going back to school, I never would have found blockchain or the skills to navigate it.

Considering “quitting work to write” as an accomplishment enables me to evaluate the outcomes differently.

FAILURE #2

It happened in about 2006. I store my memories of that time in a box in the garage containing legal papers and a few items. Included is a

framed picture of me with this guy, whom I'll call Peter, where I look so happy and very much in the moment.

In 2006, I dated Peter for one year. I was happy. I bought a house that I could barely afford for both of us to live in.

Something changed the day we moved in together. Sometimes, he was the loving Peter I knew, and sometimes he was someone else. It was easier to think “I am not seeing this properly” than to consider a covert intention. My Mom said to me, “Your life will be shortened if you stay with Peter.” Four weeks later, I changed the locks and did not give him a key.

Later, I had to call the police, who arranged for a temporary restraining order. I hired a lawyer, went to court and got a three-year restraining order. I installed an extensive house alarm and only allowed trusted people who had been in my life for years to visit me. I sent him a letter itemizing our finances. Then he sued me and put a lien on my house.

That meant I could not sell the house until the lien, which is a legal document to secure payment of a debt or performance of some other obligation, is removed. I declined to rent a room in the house because I could not trust anyone new. I had self-doubt, financial struggles and a profound disappointment in myself. I was ashamed. I remember telling close friends, “I look at my life and I don't recognize me.”

About 12 months later, I discovered Peter had a history of this behavior. A few conversations between lawyers and he terminated the lawsuit and the lien. It was over.

FAILURE #2 TO SUCCESS? WELL, SORT OF

Remember the year I was happy? I had ignored questionable behaviors and explanations. I enjoyed the laughter, the closeness and chose to ignore the red flags.

Seeing the photo, I look at this younger woman, me, with love and compassion. It's what I did. I own it.

I learned our human ability to love and care is to

be nurtured and cherished. It is a gift to love and to be loved. I learned I could use my community as a barometer, a guideline, for my life decisions.

I forgive Peter, and he is staying in the box. My life collage will hold what I have learned.

IN SUMMARY

I was asked how I “went about remembering to give up judgment each day?” I am a beginner in the field of no-judgment and forgiveness. Sometimes I'm overwhelmed with judgment and there is no stopping. Sometimes I feel disgusted, angry, disappointed, and I catch myself moving away from my center. I let go of the emotion and spring back. Sometimes I let go, and let go, and let go.

Bella and I walk in the morning and the evening. A year ago, Bella got up one morning and fell. She couldn't move her legs. A herniated disk had paralyzed my 8-year-old shepherd. Thanks to the University of California, Davis Small Animal Clinic (at UC Davis, my 80-pound dog is small!) and Ed, my roommate, Bella learned to walk again and she recovered. At the end of our walks, Bella gets tired. I can hear her front paws decisively hit the pavement with a thunk. She is telling herself how to move her front legs. Life is miraculous and fleeting – a powerful reminder to give up judgment.

REGISTERING ACCOMPLISHMENT: WHAT'S POSSIBLE NOW?

By registering these failures as accomplishments, or accomplishments in some capacity, I have reabsorbed them into my life. They are no longer hidden and unshared. They are part of me. And, if possible, I love myself more.

I experience moments of peace. My life is no longer an ongoing obstacle course where it seems I will die if I fail.

I am happy with my productivity. I have more energy to work. Failure is not always looming as a threat. When I find myself avoiding something, I continue to avoid it and then I start. When I am working and feel resistance, I work anyway. I may work at half-speed, and I'm OK with that. If I need a break, I take a break.

I am closer to people in my life. I hide less of myself from them. I share my goals and challenges

with my friends and my sister, and they share back whatever they want to say. I am blessed.

CONCLUSION

By rebranding my failures as accomplishments, the actions in this paper were possible.

I believe accepting myself as I am is the first step in crossing a room or canyon to grasp someone's hand and accept them for who they are.

When I look in the mirror, I see a younger, thinner and happier woman—just a few by-products of giving up judging.

ENDNOTES

- 1 Landmark offers weekly three-hour 10-session seminars on various topics. Usually, participants are assigned homework each week.
- 2 www.investopedia.com/terms/b/blockchain.asp, accessed January 13, 2021.

HOW DO WE KNOW THAT WHAT WE KNOW IS WHAT WE KNOW?

FRED MOSS

Abstract

Now more than ever, opinions are riding high about many issues, and I have noticed that many of us seem more certain that our views are correct, and maybe even that our views should be completely obvious, especially to anybody with half a brain. What seems even more striking, however, is our intolerance of other people's differing views and, even worse, the nearly violent intolerance of those whose views directly oppose ours. Stepping back from all that, the question arises: What leads us to think that we actually know anything when someone else's path leads them to "know" something that's entirely different and incompatible with our view? How do we reconcile these two "seemings" to some degree of satisfaction?

As somebody committed to being a source for others optimizing the lives they live, I have been pondering this conundrum for months now: How do we be with people who hold opposing views?

We know there are three kinds of knowing: things we know, things we don't know and, of course, things we don't know that we don't know.

Look at the first area – what we know. Generally, we agree that we know what we know, but what drives the root of that prevailing thought pattern? What makes us so sure? Is there something here that allows us to reliably know what we know?

How do we get to what we know? As humans, we are always interested in exploring things, finding or figuring out how something works, what things mean and what makes sense. That's how mathematics, the sciences, cosmology and artificial intelligence established their roots and then developed. Specifically, we love to know things.

The process is half the fun. At some point when we think about something, we reach a place where the agitation of not knowing something is simply replaced by the comfortable plateau of peace – thinking we know something we didn't realize moments earlier. Often, this realization evokes a feeling like a breakthrough, as though we have arrived. It is the proverbial "aha moment." Each of us has had many such moments in our lifetime.

Consider that "knowing" something lives on a scale of gradation. Some things we know for sure. Other things fall into the "pretty sure" that we know

category. As such, those "pretty sure" beliefs or "knowings" are still readily subject to challenge by outside influences and can alter with minimal additional input. We are willing to consider alternative viewpoints as at least possible.

In this part of the knowing spectrum, we are available to hear other ideas and adjust our thoughts accordingly. Our listening is more open when we understand that maybe we don't know what it is we think we might know. Some of that lingering "not knowing" agitation comes from not being entirely confident that we know what we know. So, in that space, new information is welcome if it meets some vague qualifications that may not even be clear in our minds.

We like to avoid having new information wholly upend what we think we know for certain.

Once we know something with at least a minimal degree of confidence, we file it into the "I already know that" section of our awareness. But, depending on how convinced we are that we know something, an inverse relationship seems to develop between what it is we know and the potential penetrability for us to accept an opposing viewpoint.

This construct is a rather radical notion in the end. It appears that once we realize that we know something, we go through a process of having that "knowing" become a certainty, based on some vague inner sense of resonance with what already resides in the "what we know" category.

For us, what we know exists as "truth." A different view challenges what we now "know" and call "truth." Thus, the more entrenched our views become about a particular truth being real and what is so, the less willing we are to even consider that other views have merit. Such differences, at their worst, may have us consider certain ideas that contradict our own to be ludicrous, heresy and maybe even psychotic or insane.

In fact, we quickly dismiss any opposing viewpoint and assign the other person's view as "wrong" if only because we "know" that we are "right." Rarely, do we bother or take the time to consider that we may be wrong. This kind of stubbornness among humans has gone on for centuries. Consider the

famous quote from Oliver Cromwell, a British statesman, who wrote in a letter to the general assembly of the Church of Scotland in 1650: "I beseech you in the bowels of Christ think it possible you may be mistaken."¹

From there, we are much less likely to listen to others presenting material that does not directly line up with that which we know. We are left with the essence of self-righteousness, which offers some choices. We have to figure out how to manage the data presented that falls outside of what we know.

For me, this comes in the form of masking (or at least pretending to mask) my internal awareness of my sense of the overt disagreement I am feeling with the person stating something that does not fit with what I know. My "truth," at that moment, to a "differing viewpoint" is that somebody is merely unaware of what is so, is misinformed or not yet enlightened to the truth that I have discovered for myself.

So, I smile and nod my head up and down. In my internal dialogue, I hope it is not too transparent that I see them as merely incorrect in their viewpoint. And, at least for that moment, I am sorry they think something that is so wrong. I also think that their wrong-headed thinking may well adversely affect their whole life in ways they could not possibly be aware of. In short, I often pity their plight.

Meanwhile, I keep nodding and pretending to be open and curious.

After all, I want to appear to be available to the evolved notion that each person is entitled to their own opinion. So, theoretically, I can hear them say anything about anything and not be affected by it. After all, after a lifetime of ontological growth and development, I am well-equipped to be a person who knows how to do that. I have already learned that I can and should do that, so I do my best to do precisely that in an otherwise uncomfortable situation of being with somebody who is essentially pitifully misaligned with my "truth."

On self-reflection and during these difficult times (Are they more difficult than ever, I ask?), there seems to be an epidemic of people committed to saying what they know about things, often things

that have several widespread opposing viewpoints. At times, feelings intensify. Friendships and family relationships are put at stake – all in the battle over what one person knows vs. what another person knows. With a ferociousness and an unwillingness to consider alternatives, fights ensue and stress arises. Relationships can even end.

Think about it. All this can occur over one disagreement!

So, let’s just put this out here right now. I don’t know how I know what I know and how I differentiate that which I know from that which I don’t know with any kind of assurance or verifiability. It usually comes to a dead-end somewhere that looks like, “Well, I just know it, that’s how I know.” Slamming the door shut, that topic is not subject to alterations from that point forward.

When it is me that is right about something, I give myself room to know what I know and to stick to that in my interactions with others, even if I don’t speak what I know openly to them for fear they might think they know something different. It could lead to an uncomfortable moment when I am left with either pretending to give in to what they know as a possibility and acquiescing to end the stalemate (truth be told) or fighting for my point of view.

Also, I sometimes catch myself hoping that the opposer acquiesces or “sees the light” and maybe actually gets what I am saying is simply right and correct. In that specific case, there can even be a sense of victory as I feel I have conveyed a truth to the other person they did not know before they began to speak with me. Now, they are newly and accurately informed about that “truth.” I, self-righteously, assume their life will work better since getting the “truth” that had eluded them until I brought it forward.

But, really, how do I know that what I know is what is so, and why do I become so sure to the point of being willing to risk damaging relationships over whatever it is that I really know that I know, others simply do not know or do not know yet?

After recently turning 62, I am now an elder, or at least a pre-elder by some parameters. With that age comes what we call “wisdom.” Now, I feel even more insulated from most arguments that do not

support my own. After all, what I have learned in my many years should be respected at a new level, even if others know differently. My “truth” has been tested over time and experience and, therefore, what I know is more likely to be what is so. Right?

Perhaps some wisdom I am finding at the source of this paper’s inquiry is: Maybe getting wise is coming to grips with the genuine possibility that what I know that I know is not at all rooted in the reality of any real type. My certainty that I know anything is subject to the test of ludicrousness more than the difficulty of verifiability. So, here’s what I say:

- Just because a group of people supports whatever it is that I say I know does not make it more likely to be accurate in reality.
- Just because when I say what I know, the people that I am talking to act as if they now know whatever I am telling them that I know also does not naturally lead to the truth inherently being more likely to be addressed by whatever it is I am speaking about.
- Just because what I think about what I know leads to an internal sense of peace that comes from finally figuring something out or eventually no longer being in the agitated discomfort of having no idea about something that I wanted to know about, this state of being also does not lead to a greater likelihood of that something being what is right either.

In the end, I don’t really know what it is that I know, and I especially don’t know what it is that I know I know. Strangely enough, that category is less shakable and may be even more dangerous than the first.

Maybe I am right about that, and, perhaps, there is a truth there. But I digress.

I know that I don’t know. At least I think that I know that I don’t know. How do you know what you know?

ENDNOTES

1 www.olivercromwell.org/wordpress/?page_id=1520. Accessed December 29, 2020.

CONTINUOUS OPEN INQUIRY – A PROCESS FOR ADDRESSING CONFLICTS

STEPHEN W. FRANCIS AND SUSAN H. HOSKINS

Abstract

The authors are interested in changing the nature of the problem-solving process between different groups of people. Conflicts may arise within the context of business, politics or community groups. Typically, within these conflicts, the emphasis initially appears as a struggle between vested interests where one side wins and the other side loses.

“Winning is fun! Except when it leaves a trail of broken people and communities.”

*—Valerie Kondos Field,
an American gymnastics coach*

Winning only exists in an artificial context when the goal is to determine a winner and loser. This is appropriate in games, such as football, basketball and the Olympics. These are simple activities that entertain and provide moments of inspiration. Additionally, the outcomes do not have a major impact on law, public policy or human welfare.

The win/lose process is easy to understand and apply to other areas. As a result, this process has been inappropriately applied within education, business and politics. Winning at all costs has become an acceptable mantra within our culture

and the results have been disastrous. When we put critical decisions, such as political elections, inside the context of a win/lose process, the rules become compromised as the emphasis is on the outcome and not the process.

The detrimental impact that the win/lose process has had in business, politics and society suggests a need for an alternative solution, such as open inquiry. Open inquiry places the emphasis on establishing a commitment and moving toward the commitment as an inquiry rather than a strategy to win.

When two groups of people, such as employees and management, become drawn into a conflict, it initially shows up as unrest or disagreement. One side expresses dissatisfaction with the status quo. This scenario starts as a conflict based on assumptions each group has about the other. The win/lose model is held in place by the ignorance each group has about the other. This is the

genesis of the win/lose model, which is maintained by a lack of information, understanding, empathy and ownership on both sides.

Like winning, “knowing” is an assumption that groups of people use as a preconceived notion as to what is appropriate. But taking that “knowing,” which is an outside framework, and applying it to a living, breathing set of human circumstances that are interacting and organically changing over time is inappropriate. When we declare that we know something, we are left with a false sense of arriving and it takes us out of the current moment.

Taking a static set of information formed in an outside framework and forcing it on an organism does not work. Knowledge is useful, but it does not address everything. For example, knowing things as a manager does not help you to be a good one. Being a good manager is a process that requires one to be open and available to an employee’s concerns. To be a good manager, “being present with them” is the key. Being present to your employee and being open to inquiring is what allows for the employee’s investment in the team.

Currently, how we solve community problems is by establishing a goal and timeline and beginning to check off steps. At some point, the problem is declared solved. There is an acknowledgement or agreement about the solution, and the process stops. The moment an agreement is reached, the open feedback loop stops and the process ends. Open inquiry is designed to remain ongoing as a dynamic process in the community even when an issue or “problem” is seemingly resolved.

OPEN INQUIRY AS A SOLUTION

Open inquiry is characterized by the ongoing process of asking questions to gather information so as to understand the other side. This places the emphasis on participating, learning and listening, which generates empathy, and, therefore, ownership of the process. Open inquiry is a dynamic process that provides a live feedback loop from current results to decision-makers and other stakeholders in real time. This process remains unattached to preconceived solutions and allows for input from vested interests at any point in the process.

This model is a mutually beneficial process that is ongoing and addresses the concerns of both groups. The open inquiry process is carried out with the understanding that the solution is not a static goal or endpoint. Rather, it is an ongoing open process that continues to evolve within the community. It never stops. In the win/lose model, a goal (winning) is the solution. In open inquiry, the process is the solution.

THE ELEMENTS OF OPEN INQUIRY

In the Doing column below, activities are listed which generate the necessary ways of being which maintain the open inquiry process.

Doing:	Being:
Inviting	Ownership
Participating	Ownership
Gathering information	Being present, understanding, empathizing
Learning	Being present, understanding, empathizing
Listening	Being present, understanding, empathizing

We can see examples of processes solving problems in the natural world. For example, a tree does not have a goal to be a tree. A tree is a process in the natural world that transforms a seed plus sunlight, water and soil into leaves, bark and branches. This process exists in real time and can only exist as a dynamic feedback loop with the seed, sunlight, water and soil. It also generates oxygen in the atmosphere, habitat for insects and animals, and detritus for the soil when it dies. The process of the tree is a solution for many things.

Continuous open inquiry calls for one to be present and brings about a breadth and depth of “human experience” that can only be lived moment to moment. It is this “human experience” that enhances our quality of life. Each moment is an opportunity for discovery, which often can

feel like uncharted territory. This is unsettling for some, but it is one’s willingness to venture into the unknown that expands our awareness and enhances our effectiveness.

When others sense that you are present and authentic, they invite you in. This generates agency among participants, and they are able to steer the conversation in unexpected directions. This reinforces trust and ownership in the process. They feel included and part of a team.

GOING BEYOND THE MORASS OF POSSIBILITY: AN UNCONVENTIONAL VIEW OF SOURCE

SHARON FIEKOWSKY AND RICH SCHUSTER

Abstract

We've all experienced being in the presence of successful people or being successful ourselves, but what is it to be for the success of another? In this paper, the authors inquire into "Source" from two perspectives: Source as originator and Source as the clearing in which generation can occur. Several questions arise: What does it mean to be Source? Can we source another's success? What does it mean to give ourselves to a cause that's not "our own?" Is there a Source/power dynamic that can be elucidated in a way that provides meaningful access? In this paper, we'll explore these questions and how inquiring into them can make a difference in family and the world at large.

WHAT'S THE USE OF SOURCE?

There are many, many ways to spend a day, to spend a life. A great benefit of participating in conversations for transformation is the clarity that we have a say in the matter. In transformation, the world is perfect; nothing is wrong and anything is possible. We might say that transformation has us awash in possibility. Every day. Every minute. Source, in the space of transformation, makes sense of the morass of possibility allowing for the generation of the world each of us wants.

Source stands as, or with, the generator of possibility as a listening for reality, clarity and support of a desired outcome. Source prunes the distractions of any possibility so an intended possibility can flourish. Without Source, possibilities and actions can become jumbled, distracted and disjointed in the morass of anything is possible. When sourced, a possibility begins to attract and enroll others and, with that, it becomes more real in the world.

Enrollment and registration in a possibility are natural and easy when Source is present. There is clarity of purpose and a clearly defined result to be produced or in which to participate. Source provides a clear distinction of the possibility and brings it into existence in the stand it generates and communicates to others. Source not only acts, but listens a possibility into being.

To reiterate: When we have possibility at hand, pretty much anything is possible. Given that condition, actually getting something accomplished that takes more than a few days or months, that takes more than just me or us, may require someone or something to hold the place of Source. Source listens a possibility into a promise or commitment.

What is it that Source brings present? By generating focus and alignment, Source brings integrity to the conversation that supports and strengthens the possibility. Thus, other possibilities not in service of the intended result fall away. Accomplishments are registered within the context of that commitment. Conversations are generated from the possibility realized. Integrity trues action to support fulfillment of the commitment. Attention to the desired outcome leads toward action that supports it, and the action is a natural outcome of the possibility. Integrity has Source be an unmovable stand for the realization of the possibility.

Inventing the integrity of the project is one of the "jobs" of Source. This includes creating measures and milestones, and tracking progress toward accomplishing them. In 1961, when President John F. Kennedy said we would "send a man to the moon and bring him safely back by the end of the decade," we didn't already possess or even know all the resources it would take to bring that commitment to reality. New distinctions in mathematics, nutrition, fabrication, computers, etc., would eventually be called into being in service of that goal. President Kennedy didn't have to know in advance what resources would be required, but he had access to making those resources available as they were needed. In this way, Source doesn't have to know everything about how to get to the end result. Source enrolls, and at least helps attract, the resources needed to get there.

So, pertinent to the theme of the Conference for Global Transformation, what is this relationship between Source and registering accomplishment? When we began writing, it looked as though we would have to make up something to say there is a connection between the two. Now, it seems the two are integrally related. An accomplishment

lives in the context of what we say is important and provides the opportunity to speak sourcefully. Consider that the way an endeavor is created is with a map of successive accomplishments which Source declares.

SHARON: MOTHER, PARTNER

When my husband, Peter, and I married in 1987, we created a mission statement for our marriage: to be an inspiration to others for the possibility of relationship. This has been the guiding principle of our life together, demonstrating what's possible in relationship. We have raised two amazing children, celebrated their marriages and watched them become contributing, loving adults and parents – managing the ups and downs of life and negotiating their own relationships.

Being a mother, for me, meant being absolutely for the success and happiness of our children. That doesn't mean there weren't plenty of times in their childhood when they weren't happy. I wasn't particularly committed to their being happy in the moment. My commitment was to them finding their own contribution and, through contributing their gifts to the community, finding their own happiness. They knew that I was absolutely for their success and would do whatever it took to make sure they had what they needed to get where they wanted. They also knew that I would not do it for them.

My husband and I are the literal "Source" of our children. However, they are Source in their own lives. My day-to-day responsibility or obligation for them is long past – they're independent, married adults now. However, I still serve as a Source for them – a place where they're known, supported and loved unconditionally. I serve as a place where they know absolutely that when they forget who they are in the moment, I will make sure they generate it newly. That Source creates a foundation for them to contribute their unique gifts to their partners, friends, community and the world. Similarly, I source the work of our foundation (The Foundation for Climate Restoration) and Peter's work that falls outside the foundation. While he attends meetings and – in a normal year – travels, I make sure that all the supporting structures of life continue running at home, in addition to the work I do for the foundation.

OTHER EXAMPLES (LARGE AND SMALL)

The Magna Carta, a document drafted by rebellious barons, was signed in 1215 by England’s King John. The Great Charter, as it is known, is one of the most important documents in history. It established the principle that everyone is subject to the law, even the king, and it guarantees the rights of individuals, the right to justice and the right to a fair trial. It is the foundation of the legal systems for most of the developed world.

In 1776, American colonists formulated a Declaration of Independence and a Constitution to create a nation. Those documents, and the legal culture evolving from them, provide a source for a way to govern.

Werner Erhard, who created the est Training in 1971 which later became The Landmark Forum saw and stood for the possibility of “being” for everyone.¹ As such, he is Source of a world of freedom and expression independent of psychology. Many of the people who participate in that world, perhaps most, are not even aware of its beginnings.

Another Landmark course leader, Brian Regnier, invented the Wisdom Unlimited course with a lot of conversations and a specific intent.² The course went beyond being simply a good idea to something that exists in the world as real. There is a course, and it keeps evolving, with expressions of some common intent. Those expressions provide a bridge or means of conveying the intent to a given audience.

Each of the great religions has something that calls people to be. In each case, there is insight, enrollment and registration. Then there is the dogma that follows. Occasionally, participants in a religion have access to the origins that give the religion being and are sourced by it. Mostly we stop, satisfied to have the culture and dogma.

Many of us have had teachers who nurtured and provided a seed that has been an ongoing resource for life and self-expression. My co-author Rich had a high school geometry teacher, Bernard Pleiman, who reveled in the beauty of mathematical reasoning. As Rich puts it: “I say that set me on a path to become a physicist. There is something very nurturing in noting that his

enthusiasm and my accomplishment in his class provided a resource that has produced a lot of value and has lasted a lifetime.”

WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO SOURCE ANOTHER?

For Sharon, in her life, sourcing another means taking their promise as her own and supporting the fulfillment of their word in the world. “I don’t try to be Peter,” she says. “I work on making sure he’s being himself and moving forward on his commitment to the world – leaving a world we’re proud of to our children.”

Being Source requires being as, or actually, more committed to the success of another than they are to themselves. Sharon recounts that she used to think of Source as some sort of heavenly angel bestowing being and space for those they’re sourcing. Creating a space of pure possibility to allow for the generation of things never said or done before. Actually, it often looks more like being the unwanted reminder of what there is to do and be. When commitment is flagging and success seems uncertain, Source serves to return one to themselves and their promise in the world.

We can generate possibility in a moment but produce nothing. Source hears the possibility and adds integrity and reality to provide an opportunity to produce the possibility in the world. Being Source requires a strong relationship to reality while allowing for the new to emerge.

CREATING SOURCE INTENTIONALLY

In the context of the Conference for Global Transformation, we have a concern for promises and projects created out of whole cloth. Transformation starts with empty and meaningless and the opportunity to be responsible for creating meaning and purpose. One of the questions that launched our inquiry and discussion of Source is “How do you create an existence for something which begins as a saying that merely gives voice to a possibility?”

How do you create sufficient integrity to have that voiced possibility survive the onslaught of current reality, which does not include that possibility being fulfilled?

Source might be said to be the light that guides

the creation of the required integrity. By the way, “integrity,” as used here, does not refer to morality. It is simply wholeness or a measure of workability. We say it is possible to have someone involved in a project of meaningful size that requires large-scale coordination over time be assigned a job called “Source.”

The Hunger Project provides an example that demonstrates that “Source” is transferrable. Founded in 1977, The Hunger Project is a global organization committed to the sustainable end of world hunger. Werner Erhard was the original Source of The Hunger Project. Since then, Joan Holmes and others have successfully taken the role and guided The Hunger Project using what has been learned along the way.

BRINGING THE POWER OF SOURCE TO A SHARED COMMITMENT

As stated earlier, registering accomplishment may be a key to inventing or discovering Source. In our inquiry, we have come to see that being willing to acknowledge Source is integral to being sourced. We simply need to notice what’s so and register accomplishment in order to have consistent access to the power of being sourced. It is only present as an access to power when it is acknowledged.

When Sharon began her journey in transformation, she did it in a somewhat unorthodox fashion. She began assisting before taking the Forum. Her boyfriend at the time, who later became her husband, was in Landmark’s Introduction Leaders Program.³ The only way to see him was to spend time with him at the center, so she began to assist. At the time, the center manager, Carol McCaffrey, was more than happy to have Sharon and her boyfriend enjoy having a place to contribute. Carol once asked Sharon to take on an assisting agreement that she didn’t think she was qualified to do. Her response has always stayed with Sharon. Carol said, “You’re the last person you should ever listen to about what you’re capable of.” In hindsight, that was Sharon’s first experience of being sourced as a deliberate action.

Improving the world is not the immediate goal of transformation. Having a say in how the world occurs might be closer to what we’re about. An

opportunity of global transformation is realizing a possibility for humanity that we are enrolled in. That requires generating the integrity over time that is required for a possibility being realized. Source, and discovering Source by noticing and registering accomplishment, might provide enduring power to bring into reality what may start as a dream.

A POSSIBLE INQUIRY OR HOW DOES THIS APPLY TO ME?

In what you say you are up to, what accomplishment or accomplishments would it be appropriate to register? Are there other things that have happened that “should” be registered as accomplishments?

Standing in those accomplishments, what becomes available to be seen in the matter of your commitment?

Where will you find the next accomplishment? Where will it be registered? Where will it become real as an accomplishment?

Given that commitments are created, and the construct of the world and our place in it was not built for a commitment you now stand for, what register will you trust to measure accomplishment? Where is your source/partner in the grand endeavor you have committed yourself to?

ENDNOTES

1 The Landmark Forum is the flagship course and a prerequisite for all other courses and programs.
2 The Wisdom Unlimited course is a nine-month course offered by Landmark.
3 Landmark’s Introduction Leaders Program is a 29-week program that develops graduates of the Forum to be leaders and lead introductions to the Forum.

LOVING AND BEING LOVED BY PEOPLE WHO ARE HOMELESS

PEG MILLER

Abstract

This article is the journey of the author’s commitment to ending homelessness, beginning with seeing homelessness in 1986 and actively resisting participating until 1995 when, as a result of her mom dying, she joined a church in Los Gatos, California that had a homeless pantry. She then created a Self-Expression & Leadership Program project, “Everyone Homed,” in 1996, which was the same year she participated in the Partnership Explorations course that supported her in 24 years of surrendering to the commitment to end homelessness.

It was the summer of 1986 and I was in Chicago probably for some Werner Erhard and Associates event because I was in the Potential Landmark Forum Leaders Program, and I was participating in everything I could while living in Dayton, Ohio. Also, I was part of the Center Leaders Program, which trained participants to be leaders in Midwestern cities, including Cincinnati, Indianapolis, Louisville,

Columbus, Dayton and Pittsburgh. David Norris, leader of the Center Leaders Program, in which I was the center leader in Dayton, was my coach in the program. At that time in my life, I thought being a Forum leader was my destiny.

One Saturday about 6 a.m., I approached the doorman at the hotel ready to embark on an eight-mile run as part of my training for the Chicago Marathon in the fall. I asked him where I could run for eight miles, and he pointed me in a direction, which I followed.

Approaching an overpass, I couldn’t believe what I saw. People with their belongings everywhere were sprawled on the overpass. I wasn’t scared, simply shocked by what I was seeing. This was my introduction to homelessness in America, and I remember hearing a quiet voice, “Go to the homeless.”

HEARING THE NUDGE

Hearing such nudges had been present for my entire life, and, until that moment, I had listened. “Bury that dead kitten. Bring that filthy child home and give him a bath and dress him in clean clothing. Teach her to read (referring to a classmate in first grade). Be kind to the handicapped children. (I attended a grade school with handicapped children, who were integrated into our classrooms.)”

“Visit the state institution,” now known as the Yakima Valley School, where children with severe disabilities were housed near my hometown

in Selah, Washington. This was a part of a girls’ league service project in high school, and I was the president my senior year. It was on my visits here that I was struck by the value of each and every human being. While sitting with a microcephalic young boy, I knew that each and every person has value and deserves to be cared for compassionately and kindly.

In the summer of 1961, while in the process of choosing a college for the next fall, I met a cute guy at the Yakima Tennis Club where I was a lifeguard and swim instructor. That relationship blossomed. After graduating with a major in physical therapy, I got a job at the Queens Rehabilitation Center, the evaluation and referral center for all the handicapped in Queens, New York in February 1969. In that job, I organized and ran an early intervention program for handicapped babies and children, first in New York and later in Ohio.

The list goes on. I had always followed the nudging. But this one involving homelessness was daunting to me. I was a corporate wife, a Stanford graduate, and quite anal about being neat and fastidious. I hated smelly, messy, being unkempt, disorderly and insanity. I was raised by a mom with bipolar disorder and was terrified of anyone with a mental illness.

So, my life continued, moving to Seattle, where I attempted to engage with the homeless by purchasing a Newfoundland puppy, which ended up weighing 180 pounds. I thought having Bleu at my side would enable me to at least talk to the homeless. Even with Bleu, I was too afraid to talk to any homeless person. I stayed away from them and the areas they inhabited.

“DOING THE BEST WE CAN”

One day, while going to Union Park on Lake Union, I saw a young homeless couple, and I threw a \$20 bill at them. I wouldn’t even open my mouth to talk to them. As I hurriedly fled from them by crossing the street, I did hear the young man say, “We are doing the best we can, you know.” That was probably in 1989, but that comment has stayed with me through my years of working with people with addictions, mental illness and criminal records.

In 1992, my husband and I moved to Westlake Village near Los Angeles. Participating in the Los

Angeles Wisdom Unlimited course, I celebrated 25 years of being a mother of four children, all of whom had launched themselves into the world. Our youngest, the twins, were beginning their freshman year at the University of Washington. I had joined a performance group called Heart Song, which operated out of Seattle, and traveled to Russia in 1992 and 1994, culminating in my performance of a hip-hop song and dance routine entitled “Just Do It.” I loved my Los Angeles years – singing, attending world premieres and enjoying time to myself after raising children. Homelessness wasn’t on my mind at all.

In 1994, my husband and I moved to the South Bay of San Francisco into the small town of Monte Sereno, which was near Los Gatos. In 1995, my mother, who lived in Yakima, Washington, was diagnosed with cancer. I was attending a Methodist church in Cupertino which didn’t have midweek services. Since I was traveling to Seattle on the weekends to manage my mom’s care, I needed to find a church that had midweek services. One day, while walking in Los Gatos, I saw the reader board for St. Luke’s Episcopal Church, which had a healing service and Bible study on Wednesdays. I went into the church office, and the minute I entered, the young female priest said, “We have a homeless pantry.” At that moment, I remembered the voice in 1986 and I reluctantly decided to volunteer. I felt like Jonah in the belly of the whale. I felt as though I had been “nabbed,” swallowed up in remembering the commitment formulated in 1986, “Go to the homeless.”

My first day in the pantry, I was terrified of the homeless who came in. They were disheveled, smelly, toothless, drunk and simply didn’t seem quite right in their thinking and speaking. My terror of these people was palpable. I was so grateful for the other volunteer who was with me. She seemed to know all of them well and spoke so naturally with each of them. I, however, spent nearly my entire shift planning how to escape if I was attacked.

SURRENDERING

The funniest thing, however, about simply surrendering to one’s commitment, is the remarkable transformation in who one becomes,

almost in the exact moment of surrender.

Once I surrendered to my commitment to end homelessness, I became known as the Pied Piper of the homeless in Los Gatos. I then engaged the churches in Los Gatos in participating in our pantry with money and contribution of goods and/or services.

I even invited the homeless to the annual outdoor picnic of the church in the fall. They came gladly. The church people, most of whom weren't that comfortable around the homeless, didn't welcome them so easily. I learned about honoring how people want to contribute, seeing that people have varying degrees of comfort in dealing with the homeless. I encouraged and welcomed contribution in whatever form people wanted to contribute.

My priest could see my commitment, which was beginning to solidify since I was in the Self-Expression & Leadership Program. My project was "Everyone Homed," which included having my church community and the homeless participate together. I continue to fail in that part of my commitment: collaboration and community between the homeless and non-homeless populations.

In my current church, St. Timothy's Episcopal Church in Danville, California, where I have participated since 1999, the church community has been incredible in donating money and goods to Options Recovery Services. When the annual retreat for the employees at Options Recovery Services (where I volunteered for 21 years) was held at St. Timothy's, I invited church members. While a handful of parishioners were comfortable with the Options' staff, most of whom had been homeless as a result of their addictions, the parishioners would say to me, "What would I say to them?" I suggested "hello," but they simply couldn't see the connectedness.

Back to my journey in Los Gatos in 1995, at the suggestion of my priest, I began participating in a homeless advocacy group in San Jose. Thanks to my contacts in Landmark, I found a lawyer who had sued the city of San Jose. The suit involved a small inner-city church in San Jose that was housing the homeless at night and providing meals. The City of San Jose had fined the church

for housing the homeless. The heartlessness of the city made national news, and, in response, San Jose started providing shelter and support for this group of homeless people.

LOVING THE HOMELESS

As part of this effort, I slept in the church and city shelter at night, helped with meals and began to learn from the homeless about their lives. I still remember a severely disabled older woman, who lived on the streets. I asked her, "How do you sleep without fear?" She told me that she simply trusted God. One day, this woman received \$20 from someone. She took me to her favorite barbecue place in San Jose and treated me. That began my absolute love for the people we call homeless. Their generosity for others is unbelievable.

Mostly, however, my thinking was not even all that generous back then. I thought, "I can use my position and power to influence others and teach the homeless how to have a great life." At the time, I was quite taken by my own accomplishments in life, and thought I was, as they say in recovery circles, "all that."

I don't even like remembering this now, but it is part of my story of transformation. I was so arrogant at the time. Interviewed on television, I spoke and dressed in my "accomplishment" garb. I really thought I could use my power and privilege to influence city leaders to end homelessness. I can see my heroic, "I have come to help and save you" spirit at this time. I knew nothing about homelessness. I had leaped before I had looked and had so much to learn. Instead of being open to learning, I was sure I had so much to contribute to the homeless. Little did I know how much they would contribute to me.

In February 1999, my husband and I moved to the East Bay, where I began taking classes about homelessness at San Francisco State University. One class required that I volunteer. So, I began volunteering in the Multi-Agency Service Center, which was a drop-in center for homeless in Berkeley. The homeless could hang out, get fed, shower and do their laundry. While volunteering there, someone said I should meet Dr. Davida Coady, a visionary and physician who helped end smallpox in the world.

A FATEFUL ENCOUNTER

After meeting Dr. Coady later that year, I began the most incredible 21 years of my life. As the director of medical doctors for the United States Peace Corps, she had been in all the major hot spots of the world, including Ethiopia, Biafra and El Salvador, to name just a few. She produced miracles wherever she went. At 59, she decided that she was tired of traveling and just wanted to contribute in her community.

She became a pediatrician at Children's Hospital in Oakland and immediately recognized that none of the children would have been in the hospital if their parents weren't addicts. So, in 1996, Dr. Coady started what would become Options Recovery Services. In the fall of 1998, Tom Gorham, a homeless man who lived under the overpasses in Oakland for 10 years, became a client. The first miracle of Options, he never looked back, thanks, he says, to the love and support Dr. Coady gave him.

Tom began his 14 years of education to prepare him to make certain that Options would be a lasting contribution to the community. His schooling included getting his drug and alcohol treatment certification, his bachelor's and master's degrees and becoming a licensed marriage and family therapist. He did all of this while working full time at Options and developing the treatment program that continues to produce miracles among the least of the least, including homeless addicts, the untreated mentally ill and criminals both in the community and California's prisons.

I met Tom in 1999 when he was a year sober. I let him know that I was committed to ending homelessness, and I was realizing that addiction played a big part in the entrenched homeless population. He asked me that first day, "Do you know anything about addiction?," to which I replied, "no." Like much of the general population, I was blind to addiction and the impact of addiction in our culture.

We laugh about that interaction to this day. Once I surrendered to volunteering at Options, I quickly learned that I was an alcoholic and had alcoholism everywhere in my family. I am so grateful for Options because in my training to treat addicts,

begin the women's program and become a therapist skilled in dealing with the trauma of our clients, I began dealing with all the things that I had buried in my life. Those secrets included childhood sexual abuse, emotional and physical abuse, rape, fraternity rape at Stanford, bulimia, alcoholism, codependency, being an adult child of an alcoholic and being a codependent of a sexual addict. You name it, I had it.

I learned about rigorous honesty, and I learned that life puts you wherever you need to be. I surrendered to being healed by the clients I was serving.

At the beginning of my time at Options when I was a licensed physical therapist and yoga teacher with a commitment to end homelessness, I taught yoga and mopped the floors. I let the clients know that the injuries they were proclaiming were not, according to my physical therapy-based opinion, sufficient to get them out of exercising.

I KNEW NOTHING

I was asked to begin a women's program at Options. I started school at the University of California at the Berkeley Extension Program to become a certified drug and alcohol counselor in 2001. To help train me in leading groups, Davida recruited a senior therapist, Caro Grosvenor, from Berkeley Mental Health, a community-based mental health clinic in Berkeley. Other magnificent women, whom Dr. Coady knew in the community, also helped train and develop me in a field I knew nothing about. In fact, being a therapist of any kind was not even on my list of things I had ever been interested in doing. Once again, I was experiencing the power of commitment to lead one into arenas absolutely unknown, even unwanted.

By this time, I knew that I knew nothing. During my first few years as the most senior and trained drug and alcohol counselor in the women's program, I attended a lot of funerals in Oakland. I got very clear that I had no idea how to help the most traumatized and addicted of women.

At the beginning of my time at Options, many women were murdered or died of an overdose. I attended all of the funerals. I remember one in particular. The young woman had been a

star in the program. Even though she had been prostituted by her aunt at age four and served time in prison for murdering a man who had abused her, she really wanted to be in recovery. By the time she graduated from the program, she had a steady income from a rightfully deserved disability, her own place to live and was reunited with her 12-year-old son, who was an A student.

However, like many women, she had the dream of the “white picket fence and marriage.” Over the years, I have seen that early trauma in a person’s life, often damages a person’s capacity to pick someone with whom they can form a healthy relationship. So, she met a man, whom she knew had murdered someone in his early twenties, brutally raped a woman in his thirties and was now out of prison, on the verge of life in prison if he committed any other crime.

Like many of the women who have survived horrendous abuse, she thought that she could handle him. Unfortunately, she was wrong, and he ended up stabbing her to death. When I walked into the church where the funeral was being held, I was the only Caucasian in the room. The pastor’s wife sat next to me, obviously knowing I had been her counselor and asked me to speak. I simply talked about how well she had done in the program, what a joy it had been to work with her and how sad I was about her death. Her pastor spoke next, and I will never forget what he said, “Please don’t think this is God’s will for her life. This is the result of man, and it must stop.”

THE UNQUENCHABLE HUMAN SPIRIT

In 2007, I began my studies at the California Institute of Integral Studies to obtain my master’s degree in counseling psychology, with a specialty in somatic therapy. My master’s thesis was entitled, “A Program of Recovery for People who have had Childhood Sexual Abuse and Consequent Addiction.” I became a licensed marriage and family therapist in 2014. In the case of women who are addicts, and a lot of men, early trauma leads to addictions as a way to deal with the early trauma. Until our culture protects children from trauma and/or helps them heal from trauma, a large portion of people with addictions will probably persist.

For me, watching women, who had experienced horrendous trauma, live great lives is the joy of the work. The human spirit, I have learned from my clients, in unquenchable.

At the beginning of my time at Options in 1999, we had four staff members: Davida, Tom, me and another man, a former client who had ended up being Tom’s counselor. Since Dr. Coady took on the most difficult clients, she became known as Mother Teresa of the East Bay. Other internationally renowned people in the field of addiction, including Stephanie Brown, Terrance Gorski and Paul Erhlich, joined us in our trainings.

Since Dr. Coady’s international work always involved justice, she had many well-known friends, including Father Bill O’Donnell, Cesar Chavez, Martin Sheen and Mother Teresa, to name only a few. They all admired and supported her.

The late Father Bill O’Donnell, a social activist who The New York Times called a “rebel with a cause” after being arrested more than 250 times for what were then viewed as radical causes, was a daily support for Dr. Coady when she began Options. Our tiny staff used to meet at the rectory for the St. Joseph’s Worker Catholic Church in Berkeley, where Father Bill was a priest.

One day, Paul, an internationally known drug and alcohol studies teacher, consulted with Options’ four staff members. I remember him saying to us, “It would be good, if, on any given day, people could tell who are the staff and who are the clients.” I have never forgotten that, and, I am clear, on any given day, I may be less mature than my clients.

WHAT I LEARNED

So, the big accomplishments during these 21 years include:

- **Surrendering to absolutely knowing nothing useful,** out of which I earned my certification as a drug and alcohol counselor, my international certification for drug and alcohol counselor in 2003 and becoming a licensed marriage and family therapist. At age 63, I began studies for my master’s degree at the California Institute of Integral Studies with a specialty in somatic

psychotherapy, graduating in 2010 and being licensed in 2014.

- **Surrendering to who others say I am.** I am grateful to Tom Gorham, Dr. Davida Coady and all the others who continue to support me in becoming someone I had no idea I was.
- **Trusting another human being absolutely,** which happened in 1999 when I met Tom Gorham. Until then, I had never known such authenticity or had anyone be a stand for the possibility I am. Recently, he said at my church, “We just let Peg do whatever she wants. It works out better.” At my retirement celebration on December 3, 2020, he acknowledged me for my selfless service as a volunteer for the recovery of thousands of traumatized and addicted men and women. Oh, the power of commitment!
- **Developing a women’s program that addresses deep traumas,** some generational, that women addicts have. Most women addicts use drugs and alcohol to deal with trauma, which then increases the addiction.
- **Learning to empower others in their greatness,** being a listening for all my clients and co-workers as they surpass me in their recovery and the work they do.
- **Being blessed to work in an agency** where most of the staff is made up of former clients, many of whom thought they would be incarcerated for life until Options trained them in prison to become certified drug and alcohol counselors. I have learned in my tenure at Options that it seems as though we often lock up and/or let die some of the brightest stars of humanity.

Tom remains my great friend and I look forward to what he will continue to contribute in the days ahead. One part of Options that I haven’t mentioned because I haven’t been involved in that work is the Offender Mentor Certification Program. In 2007, a group of lifers (men who will never get out of prison) asked Options to train them as certified drug and alcohol counselors.

They wanted to contribute since most California prisons have no drug and alcohol treatment programs, even though most people, who commit crimes, are addicted.

THE WORK CONTINUES

That was the beginning of the Options offender certification program, now in nine California prisons. As a result of all the people Options has trained, drug and alcohol treatment programs, led by these trained and certified counselors, are available in all California prisons.

Many of the “lifers” we have trained got out of prison, and many of them work at Options. I have been so inspired by them. Imagine killing someone at a young age because of the terrible circumstances of your early life, and then transforming your life, so you can give back. They are magnificent human beings. Tom leads much of that program in the prisons. We call it the “parallel process.” He lets them know that they can only teach what they have experienced. He is an expert at causing such transformations.

At Options, Tom and I have passed the torch to those who will make certain Dr. Coady’s vision continues. Many of those in leadership now at Options were in the classes I led when they were in treatment. What joy it is to see who they have become. I want to share with you the Options’ vision, so that you can hold it in your heart for all who are suffering:

Our mission is to break the cycle of addiction which causes homelessness, crime and broken families. We believe that to be successful, services must be open to anyone and immediately available. We also believe that treatment for alcohol and drug dependency is a human right, regardless of the ability to pay.

Our goal is to implement and promote an inner-city model for comprehensive addiction treatment and clean and sober living for a lifetime that can be replicated in other inner-city communities.

Our vision is that one day, society will deal effectively and compassionately with addiction and recovery. Every drug-dependent person will have easy and immediate access to addiction treatment and recovery support services with a

resultant decrease in crime, homelessness and family dysfunction.¹

During my retirement appreciation Zoom event on December 3, I really got who I had been for people. I had lived my commitment and people got it. I had learned to fulfill on what I first saw at the age of 18 that “each and every human being deserves to be loved and supported and empowered in their life. At the very least, to not be harmed.”

I will continue to support Tom and the other staff members to fulfill on their vision by staying in relationship with them and continuing the collaboration of my church, St. Timothy’s, on behalf of Options’ mission. I hope to foster collaboration between people who have and don’t have addictions. Together, we can solve these problems of trauma, violence, victimization and addiction. As a member of my church, St. Timothy’s, said, when attending an Options’ graduation, “There needs to be an Options in every community.”

In closing, I will quote one of my favorite lines from a poem I wrote that was published in 2009,²

“Each moment of recovery is a delicious, joyous moment of triumph over the pain of the past.”

I look forward to many more of those moments.

ENDNOTES

1 Options Recovery Services, 1835 Allston Way, Berkeley, CA 94703.

2 “Lifting Women’s Voices, Prayers to Change the World,” edited by Margaret Rose, et al., 2009.

PLEASE FORGIVE ME,
I’M A RACIST

ROBYN MAITLAND

Abstract

The year 2020 proved to be a perfect storm with COVID-19 pandemic conditions enveloping the world all while another crisis erupted. The outcry of racial injustice and social atrocities of police killing Black people became intolerable. The massive protests that followed George Floyd’s death in Minneapolis, Minnesota revealed an old and unhealed discourse about race in America. From this backdrop, the author confronted her own brown face in the mirror and discovered the inauthentic relationship of being of the Black race hidden from her view. Then, the author wondered: What does the conversation of race have to do with forwarding my commitment in the world?

A world pandemic that leaves millions stricken with disease and hundreds of thousands of dead would be enough to declare any year unprecedented. Yet, the peculiar year that I find myself living through revealed the long-simmering, unresolved issue of race in America. Usually, the lexicographers at Oxford Languages (Oxford English Dictionary) choose a single word or phrase to define a year but, in 2020, they couldn’t pick just one. “The pandemic, racial unrest and natural disasters shaped the English language in countless ways,” they said. “...terms [such as] ‘Black Lives Matter,’ ‘Blursday,’ ‘coronavirus,’ ‘lockdown,’ ‘social distancing’ and ‘systemic racism’ became widely used.”¹

This paper focuses on the topic of race as my registering accomplishment. Choosing to write about race and being a Black woman at this moment – in humanity’s timeline – called to me. It is a conversation I have been avoiding. I have a spiritual commitment for the world that all people experience their magnificence. Yet, I am faced with my own lies, pretense and numbness.

In America, the conversation of race is an incredibly old, painful and highly controversial discourse. Yet, in 2020, violent deaths of Black people continued. Three black individuals – George Floyd, Breonna Taylor and Ahmaud Arbery – became household names. With such media attention, the long simmering issues of racial inequities and police

brutality had communities enraged. The term, “Black Lives Matter,” challenged longstanding assumptions in the larger society that police treated people of different races equally. We began to look newly at the discourse of racial inequities. Is the problem race or is it poverty? These inequities often have gone unquestioned. But now, it seems that it is no longer acceptable to allow them to continue unchallenged.

Conversations about racial injustice shape what is critical and what matters. This is, in part, what I have discovered. Race, as a discourse, matters. As a woman of color, a Black woman living in America, this discourse of race matters to me. It matters deeply and profoundly to me, even though I have been unconscious as to the impact of this discourse on my life and the lives of others.

In May 2020, a Minneapolis police officer allegedly suffocated a Black man, George Floyd, on the ground by holding his knee to this Black man’s neck for nine minutes and 29 seconds. A video replayed Floyd’s death millions of times, and the world watched Mr. Floyd say, “I can’t breathe.” He said this 28 times until he slipped into an unconscious state and died. Protests erupted in Minneapolis and spilled into the streets of hundreds of American cities and then around the world, an already angry world tired of pandemic conditions.²

I observed the pandemic health crisis grow bigger while certain politicians encouraged once-hidden white supremacy groups to boldly demonstrate their hate for people like me, a woman of color. According to the 2020 Word of the Year report by Oxford Languages, “This year’s global protest movement has also led to huge growth in discussion and debates around issues of policies that directly relate to the Black Lives Matter movement, such as whether to defund U.S. police forces and how to tackle decolonizing or otherwise reforming the institutions and systems widely perceived as perpetuating systemic racial inequality.”³

The discussion turned to the systemic nature of racism. Many people – surprised by the level of protest – began to examine that perhaps systemic elements of society’s infrastructure perpetuates racism; a societal infrastructure mostly designed

when it was OK to enslave Black people. Although slavery ended in 1863, the continued subjugation of Black people that followed in the form of lawless executions and laws that denied Black people the right to vote, the ability to educate themselves and the means to acquire wealth were examined anew. I have just begun to inquire into my discovery.

Too often, people of color and in lower social positions have been marginalized. For most Black and brown people, achieving equal access to education and resources that build wealth has been nearly impossible. These are very deep issues that the writer of this paper, for the most part, wants to ignore. Even now, as I dare write on this topic, I must say I am not an expert on these issues. There is so much I do not know.

What I do know is: I am a woman. I am a Black woman with brown skin. I am a Black woman with a promise. As I began to write this paper, I could not say boldly that I am of Black skin. It is my promise and commitment that all people experience themselves as a magnificent spiritual space connecting to their genius spirit where peace and bliss live. Yet, to talk about the spiritual space of magnificence without talking about who I am in the social commons and this powerful discourse called race is frankly inauthentic.

In writing this paper I asked myself, what was and what is my relationship to my own race? What is my race? Where am I inauthentic? How does the inauthenticity stand in the way of forwarding my big commitment that people get their magnificence? The process of writing led me to discover the range at which race matters. Avoiding the conversation of race has me weep in my powerlessness. I must apologize for not standing for what I can only see now as how unaware I was to the impact of being Black in America.

Perhaps, I did not want to fully absorb the depth of the societal issue. In a year when the worst pandemic in a century swept the world, it is remarkable that equal or greater attention was given to the rage against racial injustice. Frustrated people of all colors marched in every city. More white people finally understood what the Black Lives Matter movement was about. People cared. Something had to change. The

attention led many people to ask—am I a racist?

I know I asked myself that question as I stared at myself – a brown-skinned woman – in the mirror. What does race have to do with me standing in the commitment holding a spiritual promise for humankind’s magnificence? Am I a racist?

GROWING UP MULTIRACIAL

Am I Black, white or something in the middle? Part of the inauthenticity and numbness to the Black racial experience that I discovered was that I am of mixed race. Raised by a Jamaican grandmother, I had no relationship to the African-American experience. In the past, I would often correct people if they called me “African-American.” Who are they calling African-American, I would wonder? As I look now, I can forgive myself that I was born into a family that did not teach me about the history of the Black diaspora.

As I write this paper, I discover my reaction to being called African-American seems silly. I certainly have all the recognizable characteristics of the African-American woman. Why did I push up against this descriptive label? What was there for me to discover, notice and register? In particular, where could I register accomplishment?

There is something powerful in distinguishing the inauthentic ways that I related to being a Black woman. In particular, my dating preferences began to alter. Previously, I desired a white man more than one with dark skin. Refusing to date men who have similar racial characteristics as me, Black men, now seems racist. I began to get curious how else has race shaped my world?

I can be described as a light, brown-skinned woman born of an American mother with African-American history. My mother said that she had the blood of enslaved people and Native American Cherokee Indian in her veins when she married my father. My father had all the physical characteristics of a man from Southeast Asia. His father immigrated from India and met my grandmother, a fair-skinned Jamaican who also immigrated to New York. They married. My father, who grew up in Harlem, a conclave of Black life and culture in New York City for decades, told stories in my childhood about being persecuted in

Harlem for being neither of Black nor white skin.

My family’s conversations and those of my Jamaican grandmother’s household where I was raised were not about African-American Black people. There were no stories of that plight as my mother’s African-American ancestry. My mother left my life at an early age. I was five when she divorced my father leaving the home.

What I recall now is my grandmother’s switch hitting my backside when I did not sit up straight. I recall my grandmother smiling as she watched me lick the bowl after consuming her most delicious Jamaican-stewed curry. These are the memories that shaped my childhood. She told us about growing up in Jamaica eating mangoes under the Caribbean mango trees until her belly felt as though it was ready to burst. These were the stories that shaped who I saw myself to be.

Later, in school, I learned the story of the enslaved African-Americans who found freedom with Harriett Tubman and the Underground Railroad, and the anti-slavery movement, but I didn’t relate. Those people I read about were not talking about me.

Listening to my grandmother talk about Jamaica, a country where Blacks were the majority in power, I got the impression of an empowered people. Yet, I now realize that story is not fully all of it. Jamaicans didn’t win their freedom from being a British colony until 1962.

Given all this, I am in wonder, finding myself in the inquiry of the huge conversation of race. There is just so much I do not know.

I wonder why we use labels to describe a person of colored skin. I called my very dark-skinned Black friend and asked her the preferred description of her race. Did she mind being called such and such? How does she want to be described in terms of race? My friend, who marched during the George Floyd protests and wears t-shirts that say, “Black Lives Matter,” laughed out loud at me.

“Black people have been called so many things,” she said. “What we call Black people keeps changing. I don’t know,” she continued.

When my friend acknowledged that she didn’t

know the best term that speaks for all, an enormous sense of freedom swept over me. We discussed how the “African-American” label does not represent the international breadth of dark-skinned people found in every continent and within every culture, creed and origin all over the world. This is not to treat the African-American history lightly with the experiences of slave ships and the painful history of Jim Crow laws that required people of darker skin to use separate bathrooms and water fountains.

REGISTERING WHAT I SEE NOW

I am finding peace while looking at the model that I was born into and how it shaped me. What is new is I can fully live into the possibility of being a Black woman – responsible for who they may say I am in the social commons. In fact, inside the magnificence of my spiritual promise and the growing capacity to love what is, I love being a Black woman. Failing to recognize and acknowledge the conversations and who I am in relationship to the discourse had left me powerless. I was born into a discourse that always shapes the conversation I am in. Even if I choose to ignore it, I now know that the discourse always enforces the rules.

What fascinates me is that just as I am going through this personal reckoning on this topic, Kamala Harris, a bi-racial woman like me, has been elected the first woman and first nonwhite vice president of the United States. Surely, Harris, born from a Jamaican father and a South Asian mother, confronted the confusion and difficulties of having nonwhite skin and being of mixed race.

For decades, I did not feel as though I belonged. I was not quite Black enough and I was not quite white enough. I wonder if Harris had a similar experience or felt this way. She certainly seems to let comments about race roll off her back, and she seems to own the occurring world of how others see her. As one commentator put it, “Harris will break many barriers: she is the first woman, first Black person and first person of South Asian descent to become the vice president of the United States.”

For some people, that last part is news: “Wait, Harris is Asian-American? When she was

nominated in August, social and traditional media were abuzz about Harris’ bi-racial identity as the daughter of an Indian immigrant mother and a Jamaican immigrant father.”⁴

Race matters and they call her a Black woman. The world did want to understand Harris’ mixture of races. Race matters and had historically been a sticking point as the first nonwhite president of the United States, Barack Obama, brought to light. I first must look into my own eyes and distinguish – what are my unsaid conversations on race and being a nonwhite person? I do all this coughing up furballs of what might be there to discover for the sake of forwarding my promise. The possibility of all of us interacting with each other as if we were gods.

As Werner Erhard, who created the est Training which led to The Landmark Forum, put it: “Keep interacting with them as if they were god. And every time you get garbage from them, give space to the garbage and go back and interact with them as if they were god.”⁵

WHAT’S AT STAKE: THE IMPOSSIBLE PROMISE

So, now I’m considering what’s at stake during the time of COVID-19 and racial discord. What does it really mean to have a commitment to forward a world promise? I have refused to see my role in the discourse of race. I have avoided being labeled as “African-American” and let people know I’d rather be called a person of color. This way of being is now in the past. I can now choose with freedom calling myself a woman of color.

Being a woman of color represents the way I spiritually see the world. The colors of the wind, wild fields of flowers and all the variety of people are the colors of the world. Although I did not grow up in a household with a conversation of slavery, I can acknowledge my ancestry. I can also no longer ignore the discourse of race. I can no longer ignore this discourse about myself. I can no longer ignore this discourse about others. I can take this stand in the social commons: I am a Black woman.

Owning my Blackness actually is an empowered stance. Nisha Chittal, a journalist and editor at Vox Media, writes about the complexity of being

multiracial in discussing Kamala Harris. “Much of society, especially white society, can look at Harris and perceive her as Black, and she will face discrimination because of that, regardless of which culture she might choose to identify with — and that has likely played a big role in how she views herself in the world.”⁶

I admire Kamala Harris. Regardless of the heritage of both Jamaicans and Asian-Americans, she stands in, “I am a Black woman” as the difference she wants to make supersedes her race as an issue. There is power in being with what is the other’s occurring in the social commons as there is something powerful about owning all of it.

I can now seek forgiveness from those I have made wrong by correcting their descriptions of me and for not listening from their world. Please forgive me. Please forgive me when I spoke violation to others as it was me who divided the world into skin color labels and added meaning in how they were used in language. I blamed others for their racism, and I was doing just that—listening for racism. The author, Anais Nin, wrote in her book, “Little Birds”: “We don’t see people as they are. We see people as we are.”⁷

THE MYTH OF RACE

Race is a myth. Just think about that. The one thing that defines race is skin color. How can such a factor divide us so? It is true there are cultural, national and religious differences, but the conversation of race, e.g., skin color, as separate divisions of people, is contrived from so long ago. In a Harvard study, researchers, who collected and analyzed genomes across civilizations, wrote: “Genetic similarities between peoples of Eurasia, Oceania and the Americas indicate that all non-Africans descend from a small population that left Africa roughly 60,000 years ago.”⁸ Geneticist Joshua Akey of the University of Washington, Seattle, agreed, offering powerful testimony that “the vast majority of non-Africans [alive today] trace their ancestry back to a single out-of-Africa event.”⁹

Another long-standing conversation around race finds the boundaries of the African-American race have been formed by a rule, informally known as the “one-drop rule.” In its colloquial definition, one drop of Black blood makes a person Black.¹⁰ Yet,

DNA tests demonstrate you can’t tell one race from another. “The vast majority of human DNA—we’re talking 99.9 percent—is entirely identical between individuals.”¹¹

What I see is I’m ready to drop this conversation that I can be anything other than a Black woman. The discourse of race, the debates and positioning will continue. What is important here is that I am authentic to whom I am, and I take on being the best version of me. At the end of my 2020 Wisdom Unlimited for the Arts course, I created a piece of art entitled, “Standing in Beautiful Black Woman.”¹² I live in a world where race matters. I now recognize the discourse that I was avoiding and, with these discoveries, I can stand powerfully with all of it.

BEGIN AGAIN – A SPIRITUAL VIEW

Sharing my personal journey as a multiracial woman is a woman standing for a transformed world. My personal experience may not be true for some people and I am committed to being public that makes a difference; that calls something forward. If I had a wish, I’d say let us delete the discourse file called race that lingers on the hard drive of our human heart. Let’s drop the conversation of our differences and get that we are a human race spiritually connecting to each other all the time.

With this spiritual view, I assert the space of God is needed now more than ever. Now I know the God language is not for everyone and some prefer the language that explains their relationship to all of it, the all of it, the cosmos. I can listen for the possibility of all people honoring the god-self, the spiritual nature, in each other. I can listen for each of us being responsible as powerful source creators.

From there, we get to say how the world works with the knowledge that words have power and an energetic impact on the world. What I say can build or destroy. I choose to build a world where there is only the human race. At least once a day, I talk with others about my commitment of all people experiencing themselves as magnificent spirits. I talk about an intentional community where conversations about race and skin color disappear. What kind of world would that be?

More important, what will that kind of world require of me? What can I be in action about now that would have that future occur? Being of value is what I see to create. Being a beautiful Black woman and sharing that space with others in my communities. Contributing my gifts in communities. I am reminded of the profound contributions made by those of the Black race throughout history.

Recently, I read about Dr. Kizzmekia “Kizzy” Shanta Corbett, who has played a key role in developing the COVID vaccine. An American viral immunologist at the Vaccine Research Center at the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases in Bethesda, Maryland, she is an African-American woman who has been praised by top infectious disease experts for her role in the vaccine’s development. She is the National Institutes of Health’s lead scientist for coronavirus vaccine research.¹³ She is just one of many examples of contributions from Black women. It makes me proud to be a woman, a woman of color who is Black and African-American.

There is no fixing anything from my spiritual view. The heart of this writing arose in perfect timing to stand for what is possible. I get to stand in a spiritual commitment and say the space of God is important to me and the world is listening, hungry for heart work. It is an opportunity to forward my commitment that all people experience their magnificence connecting to their genius spirit where peace and bliss live. Whatever you call that space, the point is for you to experience your highest power and have something bigger than you that calls you forward.

In conclusion, becoming my authentic self in sharing the peculiar world I live in this year during 2020 has me getting off of ignoring that I am in the discourse of race and I am Black. The discourse shaped who I am. I can also look for something new to say.

John Lewis, the Black U.S. congressman, wrote in an essay days before his death in 2020: “Though I am gone, I urge you to answer the highest calling of your heart and stand up for what you truly believe....When historians pick up their pens to write the story of the 21st century, let them say that it was your generation who laid down the

heavy burdens of hate at last and that peace finally triumphed over violence, aggression and war.”¹⁴

Let me restate that my commitment is not to fix a problem, but to give access to something new that could be said, the saying of which could make a difference. What is something new that can be said? What is it I can say?

The new thing I can say is I am a Black woman. I am a beautiful Black woman with a genius spirit of magnificence and love. I am lucky to be alive in this magnificent moment of now, in which the world is hungry for spiritual food. I am privileged to hold such a promise and the recognition of Self as the spiritual space of God. I am fortunate to engage in a conversation I get to create. I am committed more than ever to be that space of God bringing the language of magnificence and aliveness.

Magnificence, as a possibility by 2024, for all people, all races, all sizes and color of skin, is a bold statement. To spark divinity and awareness that to be a human being, a spiritual being is so much bigger than the idea that you are your mind or your body. “When you go beyond the consciousness of this world knowing that you are not the body or the mind, and yet aware as never before that you exist—that divine consciousness is what you are. You are that which is rooted in everything in the universe.”¹⁵

I can envision the world of my promise. People tolerate each other’s differences in a friendly way and solve problems together by sharing resources. Each individual contributes their genius. A sense of peace, joy and even bliss engulfs the world. The fulfillment of this promise belongs to the whole world.

Divine love motivates distributing wealth equally. Sustainable housing cares for the earth. Fair trade exists in the delightful gift exchange found in the social commons. Communities collaborate, and abundance is present for everyone. Rather than spending time fixing old crumbling infrastructures, the genius of the individuals contributes in partnership and builds new language, new societal structures.

As Desmond Tutu, the South African bishop, who fought apartheid, put it: “When enough of us link

hands, hearts and minds – when we realize that we are all, ultimately, members of one family, God’s family – we make the undoable doable, the impossible possible and become an irresistible force.”¹⁶

As Ram Dass, an American spiritual teacher, psychologist, and author who died in 2019, put it: “The world that I speak about is not a no-color world. It is a colorful world of all people, beautiful people of every creed and country of origin. The world of spiritual consciousness sees with spiritual eyes the being and there is a wholeness in our connection to each other. When you look at another human being you see old, young, dark, light, you see a physical body ... you go behind all those individual differences and you just see another soul just like you that may have packaging that is different than you but is just like you.”¹⁷

Rest in power George Floyd, Breonna Taylor and Ahmaud Arbery.

You are a child of God, the breath of God, “the cascading breath of God.” ¹⁸

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REGISTERING ACCOMPLISHMENT – WITH A LITTLE HELP FROM MY FRIEND

ANDREA FONO AND AMY WEINSTEIN

Abstract

This paper, by two artists, examines how one artist’s struggle with registering accomplishment resonates with the other. Andrea Fono has pursued art as her career for 33 years. Amy Weinstein began to pursue art as a career after college, starting again and again with large breaks in between for raising a family and pursuing other careers, etc. Also, the paper reflects a commitment to each other’s personal/professional growth and development, the trust built over years of friendship and the shared dedication to being creative, as both a self-expression and a way of contributing in the world. Finally, this paper reveals the minutiae of getting into another’s world of registering accomplishment and the difference that community and sharing make in that inquiry.

I had the pleasure this afternoon of being with my dear friend, Andrea Fono, while she squirmed with a conversation we had about accomplishment. I am always particularly grateful when the growth and development I have gained from my years in Landmark courses and programs, personal coaching and my years in life allow me to engage in profound inquiry, listening and being. This was one of those moments, or shall we say several hours or so, when what I accomplished was allowing Andrea the grace of being herself.

What prompted this was an urgent call from Andrea asking me for guidance as she had

committed to write a paper for the Journal for the Conference for Global Transformation and her deadline was looming. The assignment she gave herself was to consider how an artist registers accomplishment. However, after multiple drafts, Andrea noticed that she was in an argument for registering her life’s unmet expectations instead.

I believe what Andrea discovered, though you’ll have to read on to find out what that is, was being able to see herself as accomplished. She was able to unconceal the misconceptions she had that undermined her view of her career and thwarted her sense of accomplishment, as an artist, for years. This also encompassed many other areas of her life.

I was wondering what was going on for her. I began to ask a bunch of mundane questions hoping something would open up. At the same time, I was able to see myself as someone who could hold the space for the inquiry and not excuse it away when complaints and old habits appeared. When I witnessed my friend squirming, when I knew that moving forward in the conversation was more important than delaying, stopping, postponing, eating, resting, etc., we continued.

Thus, I did not give in to what occurred as uncomfortable for either of us. The experience of being invited into Andrea’s world of travail, to recognize herself as accomplished and what that means as an expression outwardly and a confirmation inwardly was truly a gift for both of us. Perhaps a great part of accomplishment – any accomplishment – is both the awareness and sharing of it.

Andrea embodies artist and is, by various measures, truly accomplished. She, however, does not always see this for herself. In fact, she can be somewhat self-deprecating. After listening to her many justifications for this, we eased into a conversation about what accomplishment really is. We started with the easy things by asking some of these simple questions:

How many paintings or monoprints do you have at your studio?

I do not know ... Let me think out loud ... I own four, five or six flat files. There are four or five drawers in one flat file with 40-60 pieces in each drawer. I need to double check. I have these large portfolio folders, which are four-to-five feet each. I don’t know how many I have leaning against the flat files, if I guessed, I would say 20 folders that have five-to-25 pieces of art in each. I would also say that I have four-to-five folders that have 40 pieces each in them. Then I’m only referring to art since 2012.

So, there is art in your studio from before 2012?

Yes, but I don’t know quite where it is ... the flower art from the 1980s is mixed in with the abstract landscapes of the 1990s...(laughing). When I attempt to count how many paintings

I have in my inventory, I get mesmerized with how pretty the paintings are and I lose my concentration. During the COVID-19 lockdown last spring, I painted and painted, leaving Frank (Andrea’s husband) at home by himself. I had a creative momentum, painting umpteen monoprints every day. I was inspired and couldn’t stop creating for months. Frank is dismayed that I haven’t kept track of my recent output, let alone the art from before 2020. He asked, don’t you count your paintings each year?...(laughing). Not to mention how many pieces are in frames, ready to exhibit and how many I’ve donated to nonprofits for their fundraising purposes ... Someone will have to count them one day. By the way, I haven’t even tallied how many hundreds of pieces I’ve sold in my lifetime.

No holds barred. Andrea is prolific. Her focus and output are stunning. Andrea has so much completed art ready to sell in her art studio, I don’t think she recognizes the value of the goldmine she literally has been sitting on. She hasn’t bothered to calculate, enumerate or even reckon with what she has already created (likely since the 1980s) and the difference that selling her art makes in her life and the lives of others. There are many reasons people engage with, and purchase, art. For Andrea, she could spread the joy and inspiration her paintings are, make money doing what she loves and help others make money by simply opening the drawers of her flat files and releasing more of her work to the public. I think you get the picture.

We went on to look at these other topics:

1. Since we’ve met, how many shows in galleries or open studio exhibitions have you had?
2. How many collectors do you have?
3. How many private home shows have your collectors hosted to introduce your art to their friends?¹
4. How many fine art photos have you sold?
5. How many handmade butterflies have you created?

6. How many corporate or museum collections have your art in them?
7. How many Global Coloring: Painting for Peace community events have you hosted?²
8. How many workshops have you given at the Conference for Global Transformation and at Landmark developmental courses?
9. How many students or professional artists have you inspired?
10. How many art supplies have you donated to kids around the world?
11. How many hundreds of children's books have you and Frank collected and distributed to schools in Fiji that had none?

At this point, Andrea started asking her own questions:

12. How many countries is my art collected in?
13. How many Fono Art greeting cards have I sold?
14. How much money have I earned for framers and gallery owners around the world?
15. How many paintings have I donated to charities for their fundraising?
16. How many other people have been supported by me being an artist?
17. How many other gallery shows, in total, have I had before and after 2012? What is the significance of this?

The answers to all these questions are at the end of the paper.

Do you see how registering measures for these questions are causing us to ease into a conversation for accomplishment? The process certainly was expansive for both of us as commitment to the answers and each other clashed with the emergence of excuses and avoidance.

Andrea might say that she was avoiding answering questions. I would say she was experiencing

emotional discomfort, though she stayed in the conversation. We were on Zoom so I could see her face and hear her voice as she moved through the "interview." For me, I trusted the process. For her, I believe she trusted me. We persevered.

Finally, the inquiry turned to discovery. I could hear the tone of her voice lighten up and see her facial expression begin to relax. She was no longer looking toward something else. She was becoming enlivened in this conversation. No longer hesitant, Andrea was beginning to integrate her accomplishment – as an artist and contributor – with what it is to be confronted by the idea of registering accomplishment and all that means.

What's the disconnect? I wonder, is it that our egos must contend with something? Is it that we remember to rely on our growth and development to deal with all our habitual complaints and regrets that seem to automatically appear? Is it a spiritual crisis of sorts? Is it purely the opportunity taken to really look at something that brings all the mental gyrations in? In retrospect, being an observer of someone else, while dealing with the inquiry, has also given me the opportunity to see that the question about registering accomplishment, as posed for this year's conference theme, is something that deserves my time and attention, too.

I don't doubt that I have my own ways of pushing accomplishment under the rug. What is of interest here is how awareness and sharing can bring a new sense of freedom for the accomplisher when the opportunity to express one's triumph freely exists and how that extends to the contribution we want to make. I doubt that this is unique to artists though stereotypes exist that artists are exposed to early on and throughout their careers.

Left to fester, such stereotypes — the myth of the starving artist, the artist must suffer, and artists should have a plan B — create problems with an artist who seems to be accomplished.

I don't know how to not be cliché here. Describing my joy in being able to listen to Andrea sufficiently that she literally had a breakthrough (seeing a limitation she had been living with for many years) that seemingly opened up a new opportunity to see herself as an accomplished artist also began to lift the limitations involved in my own identity as an artist.



Andrea Fono Being Spring #2, 2018 Original monotype painting on vellum paper, 9" x 12"

Since I met Andrea about eight years ago, we kindled our artist friendship and grew into becoming great friends. Though we have debated about some of these questions for years, we are now taking a deeper cut at them here. An observation is that I have always seen Andrea as very accomplished. In fact, she seems to embody what I think an "artist" really is. Andrea is established. She is inventive. She teaches. She donates. She travels and shows her artwork around the world. She sells her art. She inspires. She is an original.

Though I could see this, I wasn't quite sure that Andrea was seeing her life as an artist the same way. Creativity, in fact, has to do with new things coming into being. So, what gives? I see it three ways: there is the physicality of producing art, the business of art and then there is the intrinsic value and satisfaction of expressing oneself. Beyond that, there is the bigger question of "Now that



Amy Weinstein The Wind Blew Through #1, 2021 Watercolor, 8-3/8" x 11"

I am accomplished in my field of endeavor, what am I contributing?" Another question, "What is the accomplishment of art?"

Andrea has been an artist for 33 years. The path she has taken has had highs and lows, though the one thing that has been constant for her is being able to find solace in the actual act of being creative. I know that solace, that place where painting, playing a piece of music, dancing, solving a mathematical problem or something else right in front of us—something we're engaged with—blocks everything else out and time seems to stand still.

Is this the accomplishment of art? Intrinsically, this alone seems like accomplishment, though there is more.

This opened a new idea. Perhaps, it has more to do with recovering from upsets and disappointments. At 25 years old, Andrea was

invited to exhibit her art in Spain, yet she didn't feel that she was ready. Andrea remarked, "I didn't have an oeuvre and wasn't worthy of having a solo show." Out of that insecurity came an unfolding in her creative process that gave rise to the celebrated *Fono Flower Series*, which launched her professional career and opened the doors to many more gallery opportunities. This is just one example. Along the way, what has been consistent for the past 33 years is staying committed while grappling with uncertainty in the business of art.

At this point in our conversation, things were just beginning to shift. Andrea was able to see something new for herself. In my mind, the mere fact that Andrea quit squirming was an upgrade. It seemed to both of us that accomplishment has to do with an ongoing process rather than suddenly being delivered by it, to it or from it. In fact, part of accomplishment is writing this paper and addressing these various thoughts and topics.

“Amy, what’s the mishigas of my measures?”³

If Andrea enjoys painting so much, what's been going on? I was still curious about what lurks behind her disorganization and resistance to register accomplishment. My interview began to subtly bring up the misgivings Andrea had been holding onto since her early thirties. What emerged was a series of confessions and reasons for why her career didn't turn out the way it "should have." One of Andrea's so-called regrets is that she moved away from New York City after a breakup with her mentor that left her in despair for many years.

It seems that she locked down on this idea, "Amy, if I had just stayed in New York, I'm sure, I would have been unimaginably more successful by now." We can see the danger of dwelling in what might have been. She became interested in, "What is the cost and impact for someone who has succeeded at a whole number of things, yet continues to blame herself for going off-track?" Who cannot see herself in that?

We both realized that in the world of make-wrong, there is no access to registering accomplishment, only stories and emotions.

What occurred to Andrea is that this is all the past,

and the report of the report of the past. What could now show up as ease and trust in herself, that she has done well or simply that she has done her job was beginning to form as a possibility. A quick little grin emerged with this realization. There is more as an artist that she could now aspire to: an exhibit at a New York gallery or *La Biennale di Venezia*, a preeminent show in Italy. Moreover, Andrea pondered, "What could open up by recognizing my accomplishments?"

Whew! It took something to get here. New inquiries began to arise. What opens up by recognizing accomplishment? How would life be different? "It is a whole different picture waking up to possibility," Andrea said. "How would I eat? How would I take care of my health? How could I be successful at marketing my artwork now?"

“Wait,” (she got excited). "I could have a team that successfully markets and sells my art. My husband would be delighted. My mother would be tickled. My community would rejoice." Andrea continued, "Since writing this paper, my new morning mantra is: What could I accomplish today? I've never had a mantra because I woke up in the anxiety of a million things to do."

"Amy, Amy, Amy—this is 26 years in coming," Andrea began our conversation today. "For years, I have not been able to maneuver the turd. I didn't even know there was a turd. You see pictures of animals with a thorn in their paw, and, once removed, they can move again." Andrea did her work and I did mine. We began again and this is what we discovered.

Here is Andrea’s discovery in her words:

Undoubtedly, this paper was a challenge to write. My identity was not suited to answer the question that the Call for Papers posed. It was the most annoying task I ever put myself up to because I've had a *no-bragging policy*.

Instead, what has been revealed is that I am a cynical, suspicious hoarder. I might be dazzlingly attractive to befriend in person, yet at home, in my head, I am a curmudgeon. The impact is I had assigned myself to shame, inaction and vague hopelessness to ever achieving any more success in the art world. It's like this is as good as it gets.

It is ironic because my impossible promise in the world is that all people know themselves as artists of their own lives and realize they are a gift to humanity. Ha! Except me. In the end, it was all about fixing me. What I was hiding was that I felt too feeble to have any measures in the art world. No measures in the art world would ever measure up. I've been a *fait accompli* (French for something that has already been done that you can't do anything about) in a "could of, should of, would of" sort of way disguised as a colorful, happy, human being.

In 1993, I sold \$80,000 worth of artwork. Everything in my life was going swimmingly and my art was in an exhibition every three months somewhere in the world. Then, in 1994, I broke up with my mentor and two art dealers. Those misunderstandings had a ripple effect all through my thirties. I didn't have access to communication skills. I didn't have a place to slog through the relationship disappointments. I didn't have the heart or capacity to forgive their humanity – or mine. I became resigned, secretive and vengeful. I locked into a world of hurt. I became invested in the betrayal of those dramas (and the story about the drama). I impeded my own success as I became faithful to the anger.

That was the crazy part. There never was anything wrong with what happened. There are always conflicts in relationships. But, at the time, I felt entitled to other people behaving perfectly. Due to my inability to negotiate through those misunderstandings, I spent 26 years vexed, stuck. The art world did not leave me, I left it!

I stopped trusting people in the art world. There was a domino effect. I stopped promoting my artwork with intentionality and verve. I essentially welded shut the gates to my thriving career and started to register grievances as a side hustle. No kidding. I could point to achievements before I was 30, and, since then, it has seemed as though I was floundering. I've been playing stupid, claiming my insignificance all because it was too late to resolve the conflicts, so I gave up. Just like a kid, I took my toys and left.

I've realized that unresolved communications activated "stale" incompletions which fomented distrust and how I judged myself in the world. I wasn't

able to perceive my accomplishments anymore!

I am now willing to resolve the conflicts.

I was 39 when I started to review Landmark courses in 2003. I became able to present myself as happy though there was still the self-inflicted curse that my art career could never be as good as it should have been. I could henceforth stop apologizing for the fabricated preoccupations of my perceived failures. What I see today is by being vulnerable and present to how loved and supported I am, I could be measuring the unmeasurable.

The breakthrough is waking up and being present to the idea that the world of humanity is yearning for my participation; my leadership for me to play with them.

Since sharing my frustrations, I've realized I have measured up. My art measures up. What was missing was for me to forgive myself.

The next step is to stop hiding my brilliance and hold myself accountable for my output and performance. I am the one who impeded my success and fulfillment.

This is not an issue about time or disorganization, which is what I thought my problems were. There has been no commitment to resolving the heartbreaks and disappointments. I thought that success would never happen again, and I was going to make damn sure of it.

I am surrendering. I am no longer impeded.

The inquiry of this paper, in hindsight, that my attempts to write this paper by myself, was a folly of reasons for why I hadn't "measured."

We know that Andrea got into communication with me. She was writing for days, but not handing anything to the editor. Andrea heard and saw herself on Zoom—squirming. There was no giving up in meeting the very last deadline for the paper. For three weeks, Andrea stayed in the inquiry of how an artist measures accomplishment, even though she kept bumping up against her own lack of it at age 56. What she discovered, what she noticed was that she was blocked by perceived failure and self-righteousness. None of her self-judgments really mattered now that a blank slate and willingness

were discovered. There is a keen interest to measure and notice accomplishment.

Andrea now can’t wait to find out how many paintings she has, to be held to account, to be “out here,” to inspire more people and herself. Lots of laughter followed. “Imagine, what would be possible if I allowed myself to be fully inspired?” she mused. She has allowed herself to be inspired by making art though not by the person she is now creating herself to be. She had forgiven herself previously although, for the first time, she is now forgiving the conversations related to her art career. “I just hadn’t upgraded the inquiries as applied to my art career,” she said. “The heartbreak is long over, and it is so complete. It has disappeared. If I had not been so entitled to believing, that people should behave perfectly, this would have been over 26 years ago.”

What did Andrea do with her creative calling, the sacred expression of her life, in the years when she wasn’t “painting?” My question is: How did she creatively express herself in those years?

Although Andrea was trying to convince me that she thought she wasn’t painting, this is not true. The way she perceived it in her mind and self-talk was “I ruined my path to success.” The acknowledgment of this occurs as a great sadness for her. Andrea realized that she put a “heaviness” on her ambition, and it seemed as though she was squandering time, talent, money and life force. The impact is that, although she sources her work in love and joy, this has been contrasted by the psychological residue of years.

As she cried and painted, beautiful art emerged at the same time. It is like an imperative for the creative joie de vivre to prevail. This can be for anybody and for what they want to achieve in their own lives. What Andrea began to see was that perhaps this could be the beginning of shedding some of the heaviness in all areas of her life. (The only way Andrea allowed this statement to be included is if it could make a difference for other people—I believe it can). “Looking at the harshness from which I judged myself is allowing for a kind-of bottoming out.” What we came to see is that the paper provided a clearing and springboard to a self-recovery.

Here is what Andrea actually accomplished:

- I visited Morocco three times in search of where Matisse painted in 1912 and 1913. From the inspiration of the Casbah Gardens, I created a series of oil paintings and monoprints that resulted in my sold-out exhibition in Saint Helena in 1995.
- I had an exhibition of paintings based on Les Affiches de Voyage at La Réserve, a five-star hôtel in Beaulieu Sur Mer, France. People from Paris, Monte Carlo and a family of diamond cutters from Brussels bought the paintings. I watched them put them onto their convertible Jaguars and yachts to take them home.
- I had a four-month artist residency with Szasz Endre, Hungary’s noted artist.
- I presented His Holiness, the Dalai Lama, a Peace Painting.
- I was invited to donate a Peace Painting to the American Embassy’s art collection in Tunis, Tunisia while participating in an international arts festival there. This was announced on the U. S. State Department website. Ironically the same week, President Obama received his Nobel Peace Prize.
- While living in Los Angeles, for three years, my artwork was rented by Disney, Warner Brothers and Universal Studios for their feature sets. This included The Jamie Foxx Show and Deuce Bigalow: Male Gigolo movie, among others.
- I devoted myself to the inquiry of art and spirituality. I was inspired to develop a healing-based art practice. I studied Carl Jung’s psychology of art, tapped into the myths of Joseph Campbell and contemplated Marija Gimbutas’ archeological research into the Neolithic and Bronze Age theories about The Goddess that led to studies of the ancient female poet, Sappho. This eclipsed in me going on a goddess painting retreat and holding an exhibit in Lesbos, Greece.
- The Nordstrom family commissioned me to do a series of 80 contemporary floral

paintings, which are displayed in Nordstrom’s department store entryways nationwide.

- I participated in the New York and Los Angeles Art Expos where my art was purchased by art consultants and galleries.
- I walked in the footsteps of the Impressionists and Post-Impressionists. On my journey in the south of France, I visited the homes and now museums of Renoir and Cezanne. I visited Picasso’s ceramic studio, Matisse’s and Chagall’s museums in Nice, the Jean Cocteau Museum in Menton and the glass blowing studios of Biot and Éze. I visited the historic artist colony of St. Paul de Vence and its neighboring Fondation Maeght. Afterward, I ate lunch at the La Colombe d’Or where these artists were known to pay for their meals with art.
- I took an exclusive business course with Tony Robbins at his resort in Fiji and ended up staying nine months. I produced a TV pilot called “Inspired in Fiji.” I achieved one of my goals of bringing art supplies to children in third-world countries. Who would imagine that I would also meet my future husband, Frank, from that act of service?
- I sold 17 paintings to Sutter Hospital; two were commissions.
- I participated in glass-fusing art residencies in Switzerland.
- For one year, I operated a storefront art studio/gallery on Sutter Street which was highlighted with a front-page spread in the San Francisco Chronicle’s Home Section.
- I received a master of arts in culture and spirituality from Holy Names University.
- I participated in six developmental courses through Landmark plus other courses.
- I was one of six creatives tapped to create the 2020 Landmark Year-end Vacation Course’s debut film, “Tribute to Humanity.”
- I am the first artist to have their art selected to be displayed on the cover of the Journal of

the Conference for Global Transformation in 2021.

In case you are wondering, here are the answers to questions above:

1. Exhibitions: 16, including one ridiculously successful solo art exhibition in Tokyo in 2019.
2. Collectors: “I’d have to look at my lists. At least 300 worldwide.”
3. Private home shows: 11.
4. Art photos, “OMG, thousands!”
5. Butterflies: “I’ve made four 52-inch butterflies. I have probably made at least 1,000 small ones.”
6. Corporations and hospitals: I’ll have to check my records.
7. Global Coloring: Painting for Peace—over 4,000 people in five continents.
8. Conference for Global Transformation workshops—“I led a workshop every year for 10 years and for two or three years, I presented twice.”
9. Artists inspired: “I can count you and Eric. I could easily say 100 but how would I count how many ... I’ve been on television three times teaching art lessons ... one of my segments was nominated for an Emmy award!”
10. Art supplies to kids: “Tons of art supplies, mostly to Mexico, Nepal and Fiji. Also, wherever I travel, I spontaneously hand kids art supplies and say, ‘Go be artists ... take these with you.’”
11. Books to Fiji: “15,000+, however there have been hurricanes. We need to bring new ones.”
12. Countries that my art is in: “I don’t know though I once counted. I think it is 42 and that is from eight years ago.”
13. Fono Art greeting cards: at least 12,000.

- 14. Framers: “At least six framers that I brought a lot of business to.”
- 15. Art donated to charities: “I average at least six charities every year and I have been doing this since 1987.”
- 16. Gallery shows before 2012: “Oh gosh, dozens.”
- 17. Other people supported: “Immeasurable. I know I touch people every day. My art is everywhere.”

AMY’S EPILOGUE

I never had a “plan to succeed” as Andrea did. I just had the stereotypical artist’s “Plan B.” At this point in my life, with the encouragement of my dear friend, Andrea, I have ramped up my own artwork. In the past few months, I have created two pieces of political art (one which I submitted to a magazine and one which I entered in a show). I have painted at least 20 watercolors and created the first 10 illustrations for my first children’s book.

Soon, I will be posting art to my new website. And for those of you who have been wondering for 12 or more years, yes, my art is now for sale. I am grateful to have moved through this very raw and honest process with Andrea. She truly wore her heart on her sleeve throughout.

No part of this conversation was out of bounds, and it was miraculous to partner in her breakthroughs. Additionally, I appreciate the value of sharing in community and participating in co-authoring a paper for the conference for the first time. I can see that registering accomplishment, as an artist and in all the areas of my life, is the first step to my creating success and contribution. I will continue to count.

The future is wide open for both of us.

“I can’t believe how successful and well-rounded I am Amy. I am clear that I can just *knock it off* now and *take my head out of the sand*. You have given me a gift and, moreover, you have given my mother a gift. People have resumes of their exhibitions and just because I haven’t been exhibiting in the ‘fancy galleries,’ didn’t mean I

hadn’t measured up to how successful *artists think they should be*. It just didn’t look like the classic path. With that, I can be wholly satisfied and am no longer blind to my accomplishments. What we have done together is a miracle.”

ENDNOTES

- 1 A home show is an informal exhibition sponsored by a collector to introduce your art to their friends. This is a great way for artists, new to exhibiting, to show their work.
- 2 Global Coloring: Painting for Peace. For more information, www.fonoart.com/paintingpeace.php.
- 3 Mishigas is a Yiddish word for craziness, silliness, nonsense.

I HAVE NEVER FELT MORE ALIVE IN MY LIFE!

CAROLYN M. VINCENT

Abstract:
This is the story of my journey from disconnection to connection. As you will see, I have come to believe that as a global family we have before us the greatest opportunity to transform our world via “connection” on various levels. Through my life’s journey and lots of reflection I have realized that I was not authentically connected to anyone. I was not connected to nature, and most important, I was not connected to myself. The more I talk with people, the more I believe many others may face the same situation. I would love to hear what insights you’ve gained from this paper.

INTRODUCTION

Quantum physics has proven that everything in our entire cosmos is interconnected through energy, and, therefore, everything is interdependent.¹ This principle is reflected in the

South African word “ubuntu,” which translates to “I am because you are.”² In other words, everything only ever exists in relationship. We are hardwired that way.

Understanding that the utterly unavoidable interdependence that encompasses all of us at a fundamental level has helped me grow and be mindful of my thoughts, words, actions and interactions on an everyday basis. Whatever affects one affects all.

Simply put, there is only one of us here, and that’s the power that inherently resides in each and every one of us. So, let’s get back to my life.

MY CHILDHOOD

I grew up in a small suburb called Chembur in Mumbai, India. My neighborhood was well-connected because we were part of a Roman Catholic community. The Catholic Church facilitated those connections. If you’ve heard of the adage: It takes a village to raise a child, well, that’s exactly the experience I and many other children in my neighborhood had in the 1980s. We often reminisce about it even though we now live all over the world. Thanks to social media we are still connected but not as closely as 35 years ago. Physical connection far outweighs online connection.

I remember being part of organizing and attending a community event almost every weekend. Mostly everyone in our community would attend, too. The act of organizing these events formed an intergenerational organic web of support for many of us quite effortlessly.

Consequently, I had an amazing childhood full of community events from picnics to sports events, from street competitions around drama and music to summer camps and treasure hunts, Christmas and New Year’s Eve dances. I fondly remember all the summer holiday weekend dance parties we used to organize as teenagers. We took turns hosting these parties in our homes. I am grateful to our parents for putting up with all our blaring teenage music.

Probably none of us appreciated then the value of that support network. At least I didn’t. Just as a fish doesn’t know it’s in water, I assumed that life was that way for everyone. I knew pretty much everyone in my neighborhood. I knew I was never alone. I knew I would have the support I needed if and when I needed it. Yet, I also now believe that I was not authentically connected to anyone. I was not even connected to myself.

What do I mean by that? Well, I remember asking myself some big existential questions as a 14-year-old. Why was I born? What’s my life about? Why all this injustice in our world? But I thought I had no one to talk to. I thought if I asked someone those questions, they would think I’m nuts. In fact, I thought I was a bit of a nut at times.

My questions about life arose because I found the poverty all around me deeply disturbing. If you’ve been to India, you might know what I am talking about. The disparity between the rich, middle class and the poor thrusts itself in your face. I used to walk past beggars on my way to school and smile at them because it’s all I thought I could do at 14 years of age. Little did I know that a smile was a big deal for them. Most people used to just walk past them without even acknowledging they existed. Sometimes, a passerby would fling a coin into their beggar bowls without even looking at them.

One day, I decided to walk to school earlier than my friends so I could sit down at road level and smile at the beggars before putting five paisa (less than a penny in U.S. currency) in their well-worn bowls. I vividly remember, as I looked into a beggar’s eyes, I experienced a fleeting moment of being him. For those few scant seconds, I experienced ubuntu, that we were the same. We were one. The experience gave me great solace at the time, and it has never left me. I felt connected

to that beggar even though I did not say a single word to him. Just a smile and eye contact for a few seconds and I went on my way.

MARRIED LIFE

In 1988, I married and moved to Australia, where my husband lived. Immediately, I faced a huge contrast in the way of life. I remember the day I arrived in Sydney. I remember being driven home from the airport by my brother-in-law. He was excited to meet me for the first time and was busy giving me a running commentary as we drove through Sydney to my new home. Taken aback by seeing empty streets, I wasn’t even listening much. After a while, I asked, “Is there a ‘bandh’ on?” A bandh is the Hindi word for a workers’ union strike.

During a bandh in India, streets are desolate. No cars are allowed on the streets, and, if you dare drive your car, it would most likely be stoned. That’s how it was 35 years ago in India. My brother-in-law burst out laughing at my question. “There’s a bandh every day in Australia,” he retorted.

One of the biggest things I had to get used to was that so few, if any, people were on the streets. Where were all the people? It was opposite from my life in India. Back in the 1970s and 1980s, people were readily observable in my little suburb of Chembur, which has since become crowded with people.

You know, we used to walk our streets every day after work or college. We strolled just for the sake of strolling down the street. On the way, we would meet different people from our neighborhood and stop to chat. I did not realize how important this little ritual of a simple walk was for my well-being.

BUILDING A LIFE: 1988-2005

Within weeks of arriving in Sydney, my husband and I plunged into building financial security. My husband had a goal to make a million dollars before he retired. He was also an astute businessman. We bought and sold several businesses during the next few years. We had a seven-day-a-week takeaway shop, a florist, a business supplying indoor plants to large businesses and, finally, in 1993, we started importing leather goods from India. We worked

crazy long hours doing weekend markets and eventually opened 13 retail stores around Brisbane. By the way, we had zero management experience. Life was hectic. I was a hamster on a wheel.

Throughout those years, whenever I had a few quiet moments to myself, the old existential questions haunted me. Why was I here? What’s my life about? Why is there all this injustice in our world?

Sometimes, the thought occurred to me that I should just move to Africa and work with the poor there. Then, I would remember I had three children, a big business and mortgage. Sometimes, a sense of emptiness gnawed at me that would quickly disappear when my thoughts pushed me to get back to work.

“There is a candle in your heart, ready to be kindled. There is a void in your soul, ready to be filled. You feel it, don’t you?”³

—Rumi, a 12th century mystic poet

I certainly felt it. Something seemed to be missing for me. I could not put my finger on it. The busyness of my life and the expectations of society that I unconsciously inherited filled the void but only temporarily, like a Band-Aid. Nevertheless, something bubbling inside me needed to emerge.

THE EPIPHANY: 2006-2009

In 2006, walking into our warehouse one day, I had an epiphany. There I was – in this huge space of 26,000 square feet (2,400 square meters) with nearly 50-foot ceilings (15 meters). Suddenly, I saw thousands of valentine-shaped hearts of many different sizes floating down from the ceiling in slow motion. It was raining love hearts.

A voice in my head said, “You don’t have to go anywhere to make a difference. You can use your business to make a difference.” As simplistic as this sounds, for me, it was like a lightning strike. Walking briskly to my office, I threw down my briefcase and ran into the main retail area. I called for a two-minute meeting of all 17 employees.

What came out of my mouth that day still astounds me. I did not plan it. “From today on, I am not your boss and you are not my employees.

We are all one big family. Anyone can say anything to anyone provided it is done on a platform of respect.” They looked at me as though I were an apparition.

I continued, “So, I want you all to go home and have a think about that and come back tomorrow with at least one idea on how we could be interacting and relating with each other if we were all one big family.” That was it. That was my two-minute meeting. What followed was amazing. As I continued to act on that impulse, the more the ideas flowed. The whole thing seemed effortless and exhilarating.

Over the next eight months, we created a home away from home. Employees loved coming to work. We established a workplace culture based on community principles, not the traditional hierarchical structure in the business world. This new workplace was nothing short of a miracle. We had a rule that everyone had to do a random act of kindness for someone on a daily basis before they left our warehouse. We left work feeling acknowledged and fulfilled.

As a result, I believe everyone felt valued and respected for who they were and the skills they each had. As for me, I felt alive as though some drug had been injected into me. I could work from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m., skip lunch and still feel energized. During the next six months, we had a 60% increase in sales and reduced sick leave. One employee came to work on her day off and said to me, “I’ve come to get my fix.”

For the first time in my life, I felt fulfilled. Those gnawing questions seemed to fade away. I felt that I was doing the work of my soul. I wanted our business to be a business that spread love. It was raining love hearts, remember? Sounds a bit weird, I know. I wanted every person, who walked into our warehouse, to leave feeling twice as good when they walked out. That meant everyone – our employees, cleaners, suppliers, customers, postman, delivery truck drivers, etc.

Working from instinct and intuition, I felt more connected to myself. I had, in effect, facilitated a true sense of community in our workplace. I felt elated.

Our business was now doing extremely well, and I thought it was time to share our profits with our employees. Since we had made so much money, we could share some of it with our staff so that they could also be financially stable and together we could all start to give back. My husband and I did not think alike on this point. As other unworkable dynamics were already at play in our relationship, our marriage ended in 2010.

During our 22-year marriage, we worked absolutely crazy hours and made lots of money. Through all that, we had three beautiful children. I am so very proud of them. I don't know how they have turned out so well given how much we worked.

THE BUTTERFLY EMERGED FROM THE COCOON: 2010-2013

In the aftermath of our divorce, there were many days when I felt down, alone and bereft. My family had broken down. All I ever wanted was a loving, close family.

I had stopped working as my husband got the business in our financial settlement. I had only ever worked in our family business from the day I arrived in Australia, and, as such, I did not have the confidence to work for someone else. I didn't know what to do to earn an income. What I did know for sure was:

Conscious Decision #1: I was never ever going to do anything I didn't "love" again.

Except for the last few years, I simply had worked to make money. Soulless work. I wasn't going to repeat that unconscious pattern again. Even though I had a reasonable amount of savings from my divorce settlement, it wasn't enough to last a lifetime. But, I was determined to discover what I was passionate about.

I realized that I did not have anyone I felt authentically connected to that I could reach out to for support. Reflecting on my life, my childhood flashed through my mind. I saw clearly that, if I was going through a divorce back in my neighborhood, I would have had plenty of support.

All at once, I realized that I had inadvertently become disconnected from my childhood friends and even my own family. I rarely chatted with my

brother and sister or even my parents except for their birthdays and Christmas. Shocking right? But that's the truth. I felt confronted.

Fortunately, I have one second cousin in Brisbane who suspected what I was dealing with. She reached out to me and supported me big time through my early years after my marriage broke down. I am forever grateful to her. She helped me get back on track. We used to meet every Monday for a coffee and chat. I now realize how much those chats helped me regain my balance.

Then, came Conscious Decision #2: I am to going to build a network of support like I had in India.

I desperately needed it. I became like an octopus, reaching out in all directions. I took every opportunity to meet new people. I hosted gatherings in my home for women and called it "Mothers, Daughters and Grandmothers." The aim was to bring women together to support each other across generations. After three years (2010-2013) of actively meeting new people, I can confidently say that I knew at least 300 people. But, somehow, I still felt unsupported. Something was still missing for me.

MY SECOND EPHIPHANY: 2013

In 2013, my dad was diagnosed with stage four terminal cancer. I went to India to spend time with him. I used to feed him, sit with him till he fell asleep and sometimes just be with him. My dad was a very angry man during his last weeks and no one knew why. One evening, I went to give him his painkillers. I had them in the palm of my hand. He grabbed them and flung them out of the window. Then he turned to me and started abusing me in Hindi. My dad had never spoken to me like that ever. I was his pet.

I stood there staring at him in shock. "What are you staring at me for," he said.

"What are you so angry about dad?" I asked.

I wasn't expecting to hear what I heard next. He said, "I haven't opened myself up to anyone, and soon I'm going to be dead. You can't make yourself vulnerable and fight wars at the same time." My dad was in the Indian Army. He burst into tears and sobbed, and, as I was holding him in my arms

and crying with him, I got that I had done exactly the same thing. That was a watershed moment for both of us. My father released his pent-up emotions that afternoon and the next day he called all his siblings. He apologized for not talking with them and expressed his love for them. A week later, he passed away.

That single incident had the biggest impact on me. I realized that I did not feel connected to others because I had not shared myself vulnerably with them. I thought that I had become emotionally resilient during my marriage. I see now that's a nice way of saying that I had become quite disconnected from my emotions. It was the easiest way to deal with life given my circumstances.

From then on, I began the journey of connecting to my emotions, feeling my sadness. Really feeling it. Sometimes, I would curl up in a fetal position on my bed and sob to be fully present to my sadness. My feelings were raw and tender during the process. But, after a good long cry, I'd feel much better. I began to discover more about myself and how I ended up being who I am, thanks in part to work I began in Landmark programs. The more I connected to my humanness, the more I connected with others. I started to share myself vulnerably and authentically with others for the first time in my life.

CONNECTING WITH MY PURPOSE: 2013-2015

On my return from India after my dad's passing, I initiated a community project in my Brisbane suburb of Woolloongabba as part of the Self-Expression and Leadership Program at Landmark. To kick-start the project, I knocked on 100 doors and had many amazing conversations. I would start by sharing my life's journey briefly and my vision to build a connected neighborhood like the one I had in India. I had a 98% positive response. Fifty-two residents turned up to our first community meeting along with our city council member at the time. The police inspector of our suburb also attended. Pretty awesome. That project still runs today without me.

The more I chatted with people in my neighborhood, the more I realized that I was not the only one who felt alone and isolated

emotionally. I became more and more passionate about building community. The difference, though, was that I wanted "true" community this time. I wanted authentic connection for everyone.

A pretty wild dream I reckon. Imagine a world where everyone feels comfortable to share themselves openly, honestly and vulnerably with others. We could eradicate loneliness, suicide and depression for a start. We could potentially have a world that works.

Meanwhile, I was starting to get excited about my life like never before. I was finally getting to make a difference in the world again since the raining-love-hearts moment in my business in 2006. My life seemed to have a compelling purpose. I felt alive!

In 2016, I moved to Moorooka, a multicultural suburb in Brisbane, as I needed to liquidate the capital from my home and wanted a smaller place for me and my youngest son. My two older kids had moved out by then.

Within a month of moving, I began chatting with people on my dog walks and boldly asked if they would attend a neighborhood picnic. Before long, a few of us got together and started organizing quarterly picnics. Since 2016, I have been involved in a couple of more projects in my neighborhood. The main focus has been facilitating connection. That's all. What I've discovered is that when people come together, they self-organize and collaborate. Then magic happens.

THE UNIVERSE HAS MY BACK: 2016 TO THE PRESENT

Until then, I was eating into my savings because I was still not earning an income. But, somehow, I wasn't too concerned. I just knew I would be looked after. Sounds a bit woo-woo, I know. But, then, lo and behold, connection brought me the income I needed. A young lad from my community told me about an emerging technology and how he believed it was going to transform the world. As I understood it, it was based on community principles. Listening to my own intuition, I believed this technology could have a sustainable future for our financial system. I invested a considerable amount, and, today, I am financially independent.

I can follow my passion and what I believe is my purpose: “To build strong connections in neighborhoods.” As a result of my financial freedom, I have recently set up a charity foundation that funds community projects. So, not only do I get to do my own projects, but I can support others, too.

I’ve discovered, when you have the courage and perseverance to follow your passion, the universe supports you. The right people and opportunities come your way.

It’s as though the universe says, “OK, looks as though she’s serious about this. Let’s support her.” At least, that was my experience.

**CONNECTING TO MY ENVIRONMENT:
2018-PRESENT**

In 2018, I initiated a litter pickup project. The purpose was to pick up litter on my dog walks and share a photo of the same on social media using the hashtag #missionlitterpickup. I wanted to spread an awareness of litter and inspire others to do the same. Within six months, the project inspired many people from Brisbane to the Galapagos Islands and received the people’s choice award in the Brisbane Cleaner Suburbs Contest. As an offshoot of this project, I became more connected to nature and how we have been so very irresponsible with her.

With this newfound realization, I changed my lifestyle considerably. I became more aware of how I disposed of my household garbage. I started asking shopkeepers to not put my purchases in plastic bags. I shopped for food with the least amount of packaging, and lots more. I went on more bushwalks and connected more to the wonder of nature than I had for years. I met some amazing environmentalists after I was invited to present at the first Queensland litter symposium. Currently, we are collaborating on a regeneration project.

As a species, we have become disconnected from Mother Nature. It’s no wonder that we have abused her so badly. If we spent enough time in nature, connected with her, we would fall in love with her. When we fall in love with something, we will do everything to save it. Enough of us need

to fall in love with nature or we might not have a global home to live in.

MY LIFE’S LEARNING

The quality of my life is directly proportionate to the quality and quantity of my relationships.

—Carolyn M. Vincent

Given that everything is interconnected and, therefore, interdependent, it makes complete sense to me that this idea that we are separate from each other is just an illusion. Through my own life’s journey, I have discovered that I could definitely survive on my own, but to thrive, I need people. Lots of people, because we are hardwired that way.

“I can never be who I ought to be until you are who you ought to be. And you can never be who you ought to be until I am who I ought to be. This is the interrelated nature of reality.”⁴

—Martin Luther King, Jr.,
American civil rights leader

Every area of my life transformed though connection, collaboration and community. The result – I feel more alive than ever before. My life has new meaning, and this has given me a compelling reason to look after my health, as well.

Could I ask for more? Always. There is always room to grow and, for me, it’s through connection and community.

**WHAT’S NEXT? LOCAL CONNECTIONS: 2020
AND BEYOND**

“The state of our nation begins on your street.”⁵

—Hugh Mackay,
an Australian social researcher and author

I have come to realize how very important it is to build community in my neighborhood. Even though I reconnected with my family and friends from my childhood, we are now scattered around the world, and that is the same for many of us.

We have moved to suburbs, states and countries in pursuit of better homes, better jobs and all things shiny. Our value system seems to

have shifted from connection, collaboration and community to isolation, independence, competition and wealth creation. That is opposite of how we are wired and, therefore, clearly not a sustainable way forward.

It is important to recognize that there is no wrong here. On many levels, we have advanced the state of life on our planet, and, on many levels, we have gone backwards. In the spirit of “registering acknowledgement,” I would like to acknowledge the many amazing technologies and human beings who have brought us to where we are now. I sense a global awakening on many levels.

I have discovered that authentic connection with my neighbors can be achieved if I am willing to be committed to creating a local network of support for myself. I don’t need to be biologically connected to someone to experience them as family. I have adopted my neighbors on my street as my new family. Why?

Coronavirus, for one, has shown us the importance of local connections. Besides, in the event of an emergency, I know where I’ll be looking. It’s the people in the closest proximity of me. It makes the most sense to develop those relationships.

Imagine a world where neighbors on every street are well-connected, sharing resources and looking out for each other. This, I believe, is the new starting point. This is the easiest place that each of us can look to shift our world; to start to connect with people on our street. Besides, as a connected neighborhood, we also have power in numbers and can hold our local governments and businesses to account, thus restoring balance in our world.

I think we could have a world that works. I think authentic connection with as many people in my life is the starting point. After all, we are hardwired that way. I came home to how I was designed to exist.

The result – I’ve never felt more alive in my life.

“Don’t ask what the world needs. Ask what makes you come alive and do that. Because what the world needs is people who have come alive.”⁶

—Robert Thurman,
an American Buddhist author and academic

ENDNOTES

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COLLAGING: A JOURNEY FROM “SEEMING” POWERLESS TO RECOVERY

LIZ LAUGHLIN

Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to register accomplishment in my learning to live my life in integrity and achieve sustained recovery over addiction. I discuss five collages depicting the way life “seemed” during the 2016 Wisdom Unlimited course. The collages document my progress in the journey and demonstrate the power of collage in recreating and disappearing conversations. These collages revealed barriers that compromised the quality of my life and kept me from living my commitments.

INTRODUCTION

I have been participating in courses with Landmark since December 2000 when I took the entry course, The Landmark Forum.¹ In this course, I was introduced to the idea of integrity that presented people as perfect, whole and complete but merely having barriers to living a life of power, freedom and full self-expression.

Inspired by the Forum’s distinctions, I have registered for nearly every Landmark course available and participated in the Landmark Assisting Program since 2000, as well. The foundation of Landmark’s work is integrity, and I have come to accept, as we say, “Without integrity, nothing works.” The purpose of this paper is to register my accomplishment in learning to live my life with integrity and achieving sustained recovery over addiction.

In 2007, while working as a high school principal at a magnet school for the arts, I developed my

promise for the world: “All people recognize and realize their unique potential.”² At that time, I was actively addicted to gambling and smoking. Although the possibility of accomplishing this promise inspired me, I did not see how it could apply to my life.

The first time that I participated in the Wisdom course was 2011.³ During each Wisdom weekend, a tip for life is offered. The tip for Wisdom weekend four states: “This is the way life looks when it’s working.” Recalling this tip, I found myself in an argument with this statement.

Like many people in the throes of addiction, I had difficulty recognizing, much less realizing, my unique potential. Five years after first hearing the tip, my life was certainly not working the way I wanted. Addicted to smoking a pack-and-a-half of cigarettes a day, I also had been gambling compulsively for years. My life was out of control. My blood pressure was extremely high, and my weight was not in a healthy range for my body

size. I found myself spending time and money that I didn’t have in various casinos in the San Diego, California, area rationalizing it was just entertainment and I deserved to have fun.

In January 2016, I found myself in the hospital after suffering a stroke. As I was lying in my hospital bed, I began to consider another way to look at this stroke event. Was life providing a cause to pause and was my illness a natural consequence of my lifestyle? Was the law of integrity at play in this series of events? I began to question if this really was the way life looks when it’s working? What could I do to end the cycle of misery that I had created in my life?

Louise Hay, an American motivational author of self-help books, provided a way to consider the message of a stroke in her groundbreaking book, “You Can Heal Your Life.”⁴

According to Hay, illness indicates one’s emotional state caused by thoughts and focus. She recommends searching for the causes of symptoms as a good place to start if one is looking for healing. She asserts the causes of a symptom, such as a stroke, are giving up, resisting, being willing to die rather than change and rejecting life. I began to examine my life and came to accept the assertion.

THE WISDOM COURSE AND ITS TOOLS

I registered to review and participate in the Wisdom course that began in April 2016. It wasn’t until reviewing that course that I could see how sustained abstinence from an unhealthful lifestyle and compulsive gambling could restore integrity where there was none. The course uses tools and practices to support participants in fulfilling the course objectives. After nearly a year of self-examination, growth and discovery in the Wisdom course, I could say that I finally got it and began altering my life and reaching for a new life in recovery.

Consequently, I entered the recovery program of Gamblers Anonymous on November 3, 2016. Attaining complete abstinence from gambling and cigarettes took an additional 11 months after the stroke.

In the Wisdom course, weekly tools and practices parties with my committed colleagues provided

support for me to start being honest with them and myself. Eventually, I came to be grateful for the stroke because it was the catalyst to change the trajectory of the path my life was taking.

One of the Wisdom course’s most powerful tools is collaging. For me, a collage is an artistic representation using images to evoke emotions that communicate with the subconscious mind. Pictures are selected that represent a mood, a feeling, an experience or an emotion. There are no words presented in a collage, only images. After viewing a completed collage, a participant uses words to describe it and give it meaning. Through a series of collages that depicted the way life “seemed” in that moment, I documented my progress in the journey toward accomplishing health and abstinence.

From May until October 2016, I created collages that spoke to my subconscious mind and supported me in recreating and disappearing the conversations about how my life “seemed,” yet I experienced as true. I have selected five specific collages to demonstrate this phenomenon. These collages led me to discover barriers that compromised the quality of my life and were keeping me from living my commitments. These collages were created during my group tools and practices parties held weekly with my 2016 Wisdom colleagues.

THE POWER OF COLLAGE

In creating a collage, I selected pictures because they appealed to me in some way. I cut the images from magazines and pasted them on a background. After the collage was finished, I examined the pictures and wrote language to explain what I was thinking and feeling about the images. I wrote on the back of each collage to express how things seemed to me at that moment.

COLLAGE 1: MAY 18, 2016

On the back of the collage, I wrote in the language of a “seeming,” which is a person’s perception about something often viewed as the truth. The text: “It seems like I’m a big, fat liar; it seems that I’m hurting myself and I don’t care; it seems like I’m a monster; it seems like there is a lot of pain in my life.”



Collage 1: The text on the back of the collage was written in the language of a “seeming” as follows: “It seems like I’m a big, fat liar; it seems that I’m hurting myself and I don’t care; it seems like I’m a monster; it seems like there is a lot of pain in my life.”

The images of the thinking woman, the woman with the Pinocchio nose, the fire, the tear-filled eye and the image of the clay monster all created the mood of resignation and the feeling of self-loathing. I knew that I was being dishonest, and I was suffering.

What was happening in my life: I had been telling my group that I was done with gambling, I wasn’t going out to casinos anymore and, yet, as soon as the weekly tools and practices meeting was finished, I would sneak out and drive to the nearest casino to gamble and smoke. Four months after my stroke, I was back out gambling and smoking like nothing had ever happened. I felt unable to maintain integrity and could not honor my word. I did not think about the lies I was telling myself and others.

I was upset with my inability to honor my word. I recalled an article that I had read by Michael C. Jensen, a Landmark graduate and a professor emeritus of Harvard Business School. In this piece, he defines the law of integrity as honoring your word.⁵ He goes on to explain that integrity – as it is used in Landmark – has nothing to do with ethics or morality (such as good vs. bad or right vs. wrong behavior). We can honor our word in one of two ways: first, by keeping our word, and on time as promised, or second, as soon as we know that we won’t keep our word, we communicate with



Collage 2: The text: “It seems like I’m looking for the key to unlock the problem; it seems like I’m protected; it seems like life is a puzzle and it seems like it doesn’t make any sense at all.”

everyone involved and clean up any upset that we’ve caused in their lives.

When we do this, it is considered honoring our word despite having not kept it, and it is a way to restore integrity. Yet, I struggled to restore integrity and felt unable to honor my word. Time after time, I would say that I am finished with gambling and then find myself sitting in front of a slot machine with a cigarette in my hand almost as if I had forgotten how I got there.

COLLAGE 2: JUNE 6, 2016

The text: “It seems like I’m looking for the key to unlock the problem; it seems like I’m protected; it seems like life is a puzzle and it seems like it doesn’t make any sense at all.”

The images of the open master lock, the St. Bernard dog with the medicinal keg around its neck and the dragonflies used in research spoke to me of security. It gave me the sense that someone would be able to figure out the puzzle.

What was happening in my life: I continued to struggle with the addiction to gambling but began rationalizing that the relatively good health I was then experiencing must be a testament to my good fortune. I thought that it meant I no longer needed to be concerned about my health. I wasn’t sure why the stroke had occurred, and



Collage 3: The text: “It seems like I’m in danger; it seems like my life is in jeopardy; it seems like I don’t take care of myself and, by not taking care of myself, I put myself in danger ...”

I was questioning why I should stop gambling. My negative behavior continued, and I was not acting in a manner that matched what I wanted for myself and my life.

COLLAGE 3: JUNE 13, 2016

The text: “It seems like I’m in danger; it seems like my life is in jeopardy; it seems like I don’t take care of myself and, by not taking care of myself, I put myself in danger ...”

Frightening images, such as the great white shark, stinging ants engaged in battle and the big bad wolf spoke to me of danger. Seeing the newborn in the incubator gave me a sense of my own helplessness and questionable ability to take care of myself.

What was happening in my life: I had moments where I was self-aware and observed my behavior as self-destructive. Yet, I still was unable or unwilling to alter it. I continued to live life in the

fast lane, tempting fate and living life as a gamble. Every time I went to a casino, I tried to ignore the warning signs of danger that I was starting to be aware of in my life. Denial is a powerful defense mechanism, and I was responding by refusing to perceive gambling as a problem and denying a problem existed.

COLLAGE 4: AUGUST 27, 2016

The text: “It seems like I’m powerless (over my gambling?); it seems like I can’t push through (my urge); it seems like I’m spinning in circles; it seems like I’m alone in this; it seems like I’m being chased; it seems like I can’t stop.”

I selected images that held a strong charge emotionally. There was a person who seemed to be in danger of drowning in a strong current of red water, another with a lion charging, a third one depicting a diver spinning and another about to enter deep water.

What was happening in my life: My self-awareness was starting to shift. I was beginning to be willing to examine my behavior and willing to try to address it. I recognized that my integrity was out, and, yet, I still seemed unable to restore it. But, now, I was feeling at least willing to do something about it. The mood of the collage was despair. There was also a sense of urgency like a call to wake up or be overtaken either by the raging red current of the storm or the charging lion rapidly approaching in the pictures. I felt as though I was spinning out of control and on my own.

I wanted to stop gambling but still experienced failure every time I said that I wasn’t going to go out anymore. I reminded myself of Hays’ assertion on the cause of the symptom stroke (one would rather die than change). I tried giving my word to myself and was not successful. It seemed no matter what I did I was not able to tell the truth to myself or others about gambling. I did not want to die. I began to consider I was addicted and started to attempt to pray.

COLLAGE 5: OCTOBER 6, 2016

The text: “It seems like I cannot control the urge to gamble.”

I selected pictures of chaotic highway



Collage 4: The text: "It seems like I'm powerless (over my gambling?); it seems like I can't push through (my urge); it seems like I'm spinning in circles; it seems like I'm alone in this; it seems like I'm being chased; it seems like I can't stop."

reconstruction with helicopters circling and the iconic Las Vegas sign with superficial Hollywood personalities featured.

This was the turning point in my life when I recognized the folly of my ways and was now ready to take action to address my life. I admitted that I was powerless over this insidious addiction, and I began to seek additional support. It no longer occurred as a seeming that I could not control the urge to gamble but as a true representation of how I had been living. I felt my life was out of control, and I felt powerless to alter that.

I was now willing to choose my addiction which left me with a new opening for action. Earlier in August, I had begun to read a book of "Prayers for Difficult Times" and I found one prayer that addressed addiction.⁶ I read the prayer almost every night, asking God for guidance, asking to find the right counselor, the right group or right program that could help me. I had a feeling of hope developing and I knew that I needed to take action. I was ready to take on the challenge of integrating my inner world of what I wanted for my life with my outer world of compulsive gambling.

RECOVERY BEGINS

On October 19, 2016, I first sought support from my primary care physician who had cared for



Collage 5: The text: "It seems like I cannot control the urge to gamble."

me during our 20+-year relationship. I had not seen him since February after the stroke. He had supported me for years to quit smoking but had no idea that gambling was an issue for me.

I had kept my gambling a secret and very few people knew it was an area of concern for me. I admitted that smoking was again a problem and confessed I did it most when I was out at a casino where my compulsion to gamble kicked in. My doctor was compassionate with me. He listened and nonjudgmentally accepted all I had to say with kindness.

His care for me occurred as an answer to my prayer. He suggested that I could be suffering from post-stroke depression and prescribed a medication to support me mentally and physically. He also recommended that I attend a meeting of Gamblers Anonymous so I could begin a program of recovery to address the financial and emotional problem of compulsive gambling.

On Thursday, November 3, 2016, I went to my first Gamblers Anonymous meeting and found some of the other things I had been praying for right away. Gamblers Anonymous is like other 12-step recovery programs in that it is a fellowship of men and women who share their "experience, strength and hope" with each other to solve their common problem, in this case, to stop gambling. Formed in September 1957, in Los Angeles, California, the fellowship has increased and groups are flourishing around the world.

By entering a new program, I began a new conversation that allowed me to say things that previously were unsaid and hidden. By attending my first group meeting, I had the experience of accomplishing something that provided new openings for action in my life.

Within the structure of the group meeting, I got an overview of the program and beliefs presented in the literature used in every meeting. The format of the meeting began with a leader calling on various members to read portions of the Yellow Combo Book that presents the history of Gamblers Anonymous, a review of the 12 Steps of the recovery program and unity program, along with several questions and answers about the nature and characteristics of compulsive gambling.⁷

Finally, the leader posed the 20 questions and opened the meeting to sharing on the topic of what brought you here? Individuals took turns answering the question. I was asked to listen and was told I would be given an opportunity to share if I wanted to after the 20 questions were presented.

Sharing was generous and authentic as various members told their stories of what brought them to Gamblers Anonymous. The leader then posed the "20 questions," which are designed to inquire into the causes and effects of gambling in a person's life. They are asked of everyone who attends their first Gamblers Anonymous meeting and the newcomer is told to answer merely "yes," "no" or "not yet."

At the end of the session, I was told to read the statement at the bottom of the page: Most compulsive gamblers will answer yes to at least seven of these questions. I responded yes to 14 of the 20, and, immediately, I was welcomed

as someone who certainly was in the right place. I learned that compulsive gambling is an illness that can never be cured but can be arrested.

My first opportunity to share was publicly taking Step One of the 12 Steps of Recovery. I admitted that I was powerless over gambling, that my life had become unmanageable and that I had been looking for the right group or program that could support me in regaining integrity in my life. I felt powerless to honor my word and recognized I was in over my head. I had been living as though something was wrong, and I went to great lengths to hide my gambling and keep my financial business to myself. I found great relief in hearing from others who shared similar stories.

SUMMARY

Since attending many more meetings over the past four-and-one-half years on a regular basis, I have come to the realization that my problem was not bigger than I am and I can deal with it. I have been able to abstain from gambling and cigarettes one day at a time since my very first meeting. I have worked through the 12 Steps with a committed sponsor. I have accepted service opportunities and have been the secretary of one meeting for three terms.

By listening to others, I learned new ways of thinking and living that previously I had not thought possible. I am grateful for the generous listening of the Gamblers Anonymous fellowship and everything I went through to get to where I am now.

I'm living a life of accomplishment. In addition to maintaining abstinence from negative behavior, I have developed the habit of walking every day. On September 7, 2020, I was awarded the Fitbit Trans-Siberian Railway badge for a lifetime achievement of walking 5,772 miles, which is the entire length of the Russian railway network, since I started walking four years ago. Also, I have shed 20 pounds of unhealthy weight to bring my body into shape and within health guidelines.

My most recent accomplishment occurred this past summer of 2020. I was hired by National University in San Diego, California, as an adjunct professor to work with student teachers to

complete the requirements for their credential in special education. This new future was created out of my commitment and is a testament to what is now possible living life in recovery.

I am grateful to Landmark for fulfilling on the promise of its Curriculum for Living, which is to live a life you love and live it powerfully.⁸ The Wisdom collaging experience paved the way for me to live into my promise for the world: “All people recognize and realize their unique potential.” I am included in that promise. I can register the accomplishment of achieving sustained abstinence from addiction one day at a time and living a life of accomplishment with gratitude. I am confident that my recovery can serve as an example to others.

ENDNOTES

1 The Landmark Forum is the flagship course and a prerequisite for all other courses and programs.

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

3 The Wisdom Unlimited course is a nine-month course offered by Landmark.

4 Hay, L. “You Can Heal Your Life.” (Carlsbad, California: Hay House, 1984).

5 Jenson, M.C. “Integrity: Without it Nothing Works.” University of Toronto Rotman Management Magazine. Fall 2009. pp. 16-20.

6 Sanna, E. “Prayers for Difficult Times – When You Don’t Know What To Pray.” (Uhrichsville, Ohio: Barbour Books Inc., 2012).

7 “A New Beginning.” Gamblers Anonymous. (Los Angeles, California: Gamblers Anonymous Service Office, 1989).

8 The Curriculum for Living includes the Forum, Advanced Course and Self-Expression and Leadership Program at Landmark.

CANCER SAVED MY LIFE – TRANSFORMATION SPED MY RECOVERY

(Words I never thought I’d utter)

PAUL MCMICKLE

Abstract

The author details how one medical event after another required dealing powerfully with what’s so in every moment. To avoid being overtaken emotionally by the gravity – and, in some cases, the absurdity – of the situation, he relied on distinctions and practices gleaned from 40-plus years of Landmark participation to recover.

After 73 years of nearly perfect health, I noticed a swelling on the left side of my neck in 2019. I attributed it to a swollen gland, something that had happened in the past whenever I had some food I was allergic to.

It wasn’t painful, so I paid no attention to it and assumed the swelling would go down over time, since it had every time in the past. Several weeks later, I had my annual in-home nurse visit provided by my health insurance company. During that visit, the nurse noticed the swelling on the side of my neck and asked if it was painful. I replied, “no.” She suggested that I let her measure it, which I did. After measuring, she said the size exceeded the normal range and I should schedule a visit to my primary care physician. That was on a Monday. I scheduled an appointment with my doctor for the next Wednesday.

In the initial examination, the doctor ran an internal scope through my nose into the area of my throat that was affected. The doctor said what he saw

looked suspicious, but inconclusive, so he ordered a CT scan. I went for the scan the same day. When the results came in, the doctor said the scan showed it was cancer of my left tonsil. Due to the tumor’s size, he said radiation and chemotherapy alone had little chance of completely eliminating the cancer. So, he recommended surgery in addition to radiation and chemo.

To say none of this fell into the “good news” category would be a major understatement. The one redeeming factor was that he thought we had caught it early enough, leaving little to no chance of it spreading. Rather than relating to the whole thing as though it shouldn’t have happened, I just related to “what’s so,” along with a tip from the Landmark Wisdom Unlimited course – “This is the way life looks when it’s working.”

After some preliminary blood and heart tests, the surgery was scheduled for a week later. Of course, cancer and surgery didn’t fit into my “plans,” but I remembered the line from a song

that went something like, “Life is what happens while we’re busy making plans.” The only reason the word surgery didn’t send my amygdala into overdrive is because I’d worked in a hospital operating room for several years as a surgical technician. Even though that job was decades ago, I was familiar enough with the procedures that I felt completely comfortable with what was going to happen.

THE O.R. REVISITED

On the day of the surgery, I arrived at the intake area and was taken to the operating room floor. A nurse collected my personal effects, inventoried everything and put them in a sealable plastic bag. She then had me remove all my clothes and gave me the hospital gown that hasn’t changed in design one bit since 1960 when I worked in the O.R.

Next, the anesthesiologist came in, introduced herself and assured me she was going to give me the “best rest I’d ever had.” I thanked her and tried not to focus on the “flashbacks” I had about the cases I’d assisted on when the anesthesiologist screwed up and a patient either flinched every time the scalpel touched them, up to and including when a patient “expired” from an improper administration of anesthesia. (They never liked using the term “died.”)

After an orderly rolled me into the operating room, I looked around to see the various lights and equipment and who was there. It all seemed pretty much exactly as I’d remembered from being on the other side of the table. I waited for the customary countdown after the anesthesia was injected. You know, start from 100 and go backwards. Well, before I could finish saying the 1 part of 100, I was out.

When I woke up, I was in the recovery room, connected to all manner of tubes and monitors. I noticed that I couldn’t talk, so my only form of communicating was writing notes. I also noticed that a note on the wall chart across from my bed instructed whoever was on duty that day or night to not give me anything by mouth, at least no solid food. I was allowed to try “soft foods,” such as pudding or sherbet, but even those were too painful.

Upon a post-surgery X-ray, they determined that I needed an additional “minor operation” of having a tube inserted directly into my stomach so I could receive nutrition while my throat healed. Apparently, the consent form I signed gave the surgeon (I never saw this person before or after the surgery) permission to take whatever actions he deemed necessary once the surgery began. What he deemed necessary was to remove both my tonsils (not just the infected one) and all the lymph nodes on one side. This was the second (and what I hoped would be the only other) surgery.

I went for the stomach procedure, which was so minor they gave me only local anesthesia. I was awake and watched the whole thing. It took less than a half-hour, and I was soon back in my room. I stayed in the rehab area four days and was released with a bag full of prescriptions – another new set of practices. Previously, I’d only ever been on medications for minor infections that usually had just a one-week or so regimen. Now, I had a bunch of pills and liquids I had to take daily and all through the “G-tube” inserted directly into my stomach.

A NEW ROUTINE

Crushing the pills took some getting used to. Then I had to mix them with water, insert them into a syringe and inject the mixture into the tube. After a few times, the process became my new daily ritual. Remembering my past daily practice of having a large cup of Dunkin’ Donuts hazelnut coffee with a few sugars and a massive amount of extra-heavy whipped cream, I told myself, “Gone, temporarily.” (Insert a frown here.)

For “food,” they prescribed a liquid formula that came in small cartons. It was a thick, vanilla-colored bad smelling liquid that clearly wasn’t designed to be tasty. They instructed me to pour this liquid into the feeding bags that I would then dilute with water and insert the tube from the bag into the tube in my stomach, a process that takes approximately one hour per meal. With the first set of bags I was given, the actual tube was so small in diameter that it took 3-4 hours per meal, which pretty much ruled out any other activities besides sitting at my computer.

This routine went on for several months. Eventually, I was scheduled for radiation. On that first day, the technician placed a plastic mask on my head and neck area and then melted the mask to form an identical replica of my head and face, which he then fastened to the table to ensure I did not move during the application of the radiation. Each weekly treatment – scheduled a week apart – lasted only a few minutes. After 16 weeks of treatment, I was ready for chemotherapy.

Chemo consisted of sitting in a recliner while two large bags of the liquid were injected by needle through a port inserted under my skin that went directly into my bloodstream. Each one of these treatments took approximately 1.5-2 hours and also went for 16 weeks. I also received speech therapy on these trips.

A SLIP OR A FALL?

One day, shortly after completing all my therapies and regaining some speech capacity that I’d lost completely due to the throat surgery and radiation, I tried to get out of bed to start my day and fell to the floor. Initially, I thought the fall was due to the fact that I have hardwood floors and must have slipped because I had socks on.

However, when I attempted to get up, I noticed that I could not stand. I made several attempts, all to no avail. Instantly, I had a whole new appreciation for the commercials in which an incapacitated person says, “Help, I’ve fallen and I can’t get up!” Only I did not have one of those gizmos where you push a button and someone comes to the rescue. I didn’t even have enough speech muscle to yell for help to my partner in the next room.

Fortunately, after about an hour, my partner and her brother found me and helped me to my feet. But, even though I was upright, I couldn’t walk normally. I asked to be taken to the hospital, where the admission people looked at my records and said it was time for my follow-up magnetic resonant imaging (MRI) scan from the throat surgery. They offered that I could do the MRI while waiting for the doctor to see me, which I did.

The MRI took a little less than an hour and, by the time it was finished, an attendant rolled me

by wheelchair to see my doctor. He asked me several questions. “Had I ever had falls like this before?” “No,” I replied. “Had I consumed any drugs or alcohol that might have impaired my ability to walk?” Again, I replied, “no.” In the middle of the interview, his phone rang. It was the X-ray department I’d just left letting him know that my results were ready. He stopped the questioning, excused himself and went to his computer.

Returning, he said, “It’s a good thing you had the MRI when you did. What it showed is a massive amount of blood accumulating on your brain, which could result in a fatal stroke. It’s serious enough that I’m scheduling you for brain surgery. Right now!”

YES TODAY!

“You mean, today?,” I asked. “Immediately,” he replied and started making the necessary arrangements. Because no neurosurgeons were available at this hospital, they took me by ambulance (another first for me) to the University of Illinois Hospital, a few blocks away from the Jesse Brown Veterans Administration Hospital where I had been getting most of my medical care.

There, I met the surgeon, anesthesiologist and other support staff and was taken immediately to the operating room. This time, they gave me the anesthesia before taking me to the operating room, so no countdown was required. I barely remember being moved from the holding area. Waking up hours later (I don’t know how many hours), I was in intensive care – once again with tubes and monitors connected everywhere. This time, my marginal return to being able to speak had gone, and I was back to writing notes as my only means of communicating.

After four days in intensive care, I was taken back to Jesse Brown, again by ambulance, to the rehab center, where I spent another six days. They told me the MRI showed the cancer was gone but a couple of pints of blood apparently had been drained from my head, which required getting a blood transfusion. The technical term for what I had is a “subdural hematoma.” They also told me the likelihood of me ever being able to walk or talk again was slim to none and I should consider myself lucky that I had the MRI when I did. They

said that even if I would have waited until after my interview with my doctor, it would most likely have been too late. At least I was alive and cancer-free.

When it was time to be discharged from the rehab center, I received more meds to take, scheduled myself for physical, occupational and speech therapies and arrived home in a wheelchair. My neighbors helped to carry it up the stairs with me in it. I have a second-floor apartment.

ON THE MEND

After successive weeks of in-home physical therapy, I could walk a bit using a walker. That allowed me to do physical therapy visits at the hospital where I used various strengthening equipment. I had to practice how to get myself up if I fell out of bed and how to walk up and down stairs, one step at a time, placing both hands on the handrail.

I must confess, had it not been for 40+ years of transformation, this whole series of events and outcomes could have thrown me into depression and worse. Prior to all this, I had been someone accustomed to, and highly skilled in, such activities as rollerblading, skiing (I was a downhill racer and instructor for years) and playing tennis competitively. Also, I was an accomplished equestrian (training for the U.S. Olympic equestrian team before funding ran out), a private pilot and pretty much being able to do anything requiring physical ability.

Now, based on the prognosis given by all my doctors, those activities were going to be in my past. But, I remembered that I have a say in how it goes from that point forward, so keeping that in mind, I took on the various therapies rigorously and made considerable progress, even ahead of schedule for surgeries like mine.

Two months passed and it was time for a follow-up MRI, this time for the brain surgery to see if the blood-draining that took place a couple of months earlier had held. So, back to the hospital for what I thought was going to be a “routine exam,” but the MRI results came back and not only had the first draining not succeeded, the blood was still accumulating on my brain, requiring a second emergency brain surgery.

OUT OF THE WOODS?

So, just when I thought I was “out of the woods,” so to speak, it was back to the ambulance, another ride to the University of Illinois Hospital and a second brain surgery. This time, I knew all the players and could joke about “being back in the car again,” a line from the movie “Jurassic Park,” where some of the actors, who had fought to get out of the car to escape the T-Rex dinosaur, ended right back there.

Now, I knew the whole routine...leave the holding area, get wheeled to the O.R., back to intensive care for a week and be discharged back to Jesse Brown hospital via yet another ambulance ride. Only this time, there were no open beds in the rehab center at Jesse Brown Hospital, so they suggested an outside nursing home that had a rehab component. I looked at brochures from several facilities and had my partner do a site visit to see which looked suitable.

After the visits and her report, I elected to go to one not far from where we live. From the outside, it looked good. Inside was a different story altogether. They put me as a third patient in a room designed for two, in a bed that didn't function properly, had no nearby electrical outlet and no TV. The other two patients in the room were in really sad shape. Both were veterans. The one on my left was a double amputee who slept most of the time I was there. The only time I saw the other man was when he was on his way to, and from, the bathroom. They each had TVs, which stayed on day and night with the volume up high because both were hard of hearing.

The staff, for the most part, had little to no concept of what good patient care entailed, and once again I had to draw on all the transformation I could muster to keep from getting violent. (Again, I drew on, This is the way life looks when it's working.) After three days, I had all that I could tolerate and wanted to get out of there by any means. Since I had a doctor's appointment back at Jesse Brown on the fourth day, I planned an escape.

THE GREAT ESCAPE

I left the nursing home under the pretense of only going for my doctor's appointment. So, I took another ambulance ride – this time sitting up –

back to the hospital. I had my partner gather all my belongings from the nursing home and take them home. When I got to the hospital, I strongly requested that they find bed space for me in the rehab center there, which they did. Before transformation, I wouldn't have asked for what I wanted and would have just toughed it out at the nursing home.

After three more days in the hospital, I was discharged once again with a bag full of meds. By now, I could have probably opened a private pharmacy. Only this time, I could walk with my walker and, while I still couldn't talk very well, I wasn't as disabled as the last trip home.

After more months of therapies, I progressed from a walker to a cane, and, finally, to walking without any assisting devices. Though I'm still on a feeding tube, everything else is back to normal. I agree with my doctors and nurses that my recovery truly is an amazing accomplishment and I defied all the predictions. I've regained 40 of the 70 pounds I lost during the whole process and, while I'm not doing any of my previous physical activities yet, I'm well on the way.

WELL-BEING AND PARTICIPATION

In case anyone questions whether or not well-being is a function of participation, I offer the following: I'm on the Assisting Program Design Team, doing the Partnership Explorations course, participating in the Participation, Enrollment & Registration Training, Inquiry Explorations Program, the Pre-Apprentice Program for the Wisdom Unlimited course, the Wisdom Registration Team and the Money Seminar, all happening concurrently. During it all, I did the Graduate Forum – Free to Be and Free to Act and Being a Leader: A Foundation.

In addition to all this, I do trauma intervention for people who've experienced any kind of traumatic event and am the director of the mentoring program for BSW (Brain Stimulated Wellness) Homegrown Heroes, a part of BSW Academy, USA (www.bswhomegrownheroes.com). I guess that's enough.

What can I say about the whole experience? What did I discover? First, transformation is a

much more powerful body of distinctions than I'd ever thought in the past. There is something available by distinguishing “what's so” from what I wished was so, and I have a say in what I can and cannot do physically vs. my doctor's prognosis. As I heard many times in church while growing up, ...tomorrow is not promised. So, whatever I'm wanting to do going forward, get busy doing it. Later may not come.

SPEAKING AND ACTING ON YOUR COMMITMENT: WOULD YOU BE PREPARED IF THOUSANDS LISTENED?

ANGELA WILSON TURNBULL

Abstract

When the author’s social activism intersects with several events in 2020, she explores how expanding her leadership in several intrinsic organizations and playing full out in the Inquiry Explorations Program propels her to center stage with national media. Through her quest to eliminate racial and economic injustice, and advocate for equity, affordable housing and sustainable wages, she practices integral human development and ecology, and lives her faith, all while embodying “being with the opposition.”

“Love endures everything, love is stronger than death, love fears nothing.”

—Saint Faustina

One evening in early June 2020, I was sitting at my kitchen table after finishing a call. Suddenly, my 20-year-old daughter, Christiana, ran down the stairs crying, “Mom, they are killing people in the streets and protesters are everywhere,” she said. “You do not even know what is going on.”

She continued, “I am terrified to go outside, and I do not want you to either. People, who are speaking out, are being kidnapped and some lost their lives.” I held her and took in what she had just told me. I had no idea what was happening.

That interaction sparked what I’m about to share. For my daughter and her life, there is nothing I will not do in love.

A few months earlier, I had begun participating in my first Inquiry Explorations Program in 2020.¹ I took on inquiry with my full heart. I cultivated the power to act more boldly as a leader and step more fully into public view, which was far outside my comfort zone. The result is a life that I could barely contemplate and one for which I am deeply grateful.

I became much more intentional in sharing my commitment to reduce violence, transform racism and economic inequities, create job opportunities in neglected areas, care for the environment and ask corporations to help build a more equitable and balanced society.

From my engagement with organizations, including the Washington Interfaith Network,

the Archdiocese of Washington, D.C.’s Office of Social Concerns, St. Augustine Catholic Church’s Social Justice Advocacy, the Archdiocese Care for Creation Committee, United States Council of Catholic Bishops’ Office of Human Development and Office of African-American Affairs, I saw a commitment to something bigger than myself. I experienced living outside my comfort zone in a raw piercing way. Being uncomfortable became the norm consistently.

SHOCK AND HORROR

In May, an African-American man, George Floyd, was killed by a Minneapolis police officer. A video of Floyd’s death went viral, sparking massive demonstrations in dozens of cities in America and around the world. In metropolitan Washington, D.C., where I live, tensions escalated as thousands of young and older adults, multi-race and multi-ethnic took to the streets. On June 1, U.S. and military police drove peaceful, praying protesters out of Lafayette Square, which is located between the White House and historic St. John’s Church. I was shocked and horrified. People I knew were harmed by rubber bullets and tear gas. I joined hundreds of protesters who gathered near the John Paul II Cultural Center. We prayed.

Months earlier, two other horrifying and unjust deaths of African-Americans occurred. Breonna Taylor, 26, was fatally shot by Louisville, Kentucky, police officers in her apartment. Ahmaud Arbery, 25, was chased and fatally shot while jogging by armed white residents near Brunswick, Georgia. These deaths were the latest among thousands of deaths prompted by racial injustice over many generations. With these unconscionable events, I consciously chose to take action even though I was afraid.

As a mother, I was first deeply concerned for my daughter’s well-being and wondered how she and all of us would emerge unscathed from these assaults especially amidst a global pandemic.

WHAT WE SAY HAS CONSEQUENCES

Soon after the unrest started, I was asked to join an emergency meeting to help address what was happening in our nation. Before I knew it and despite great personal protest, I was asked to speak at a press conference to help bring unity to our

divided country. I found myself being a leader thrust into this national conversation for social justice.

In spite of my fear, I kept taking action, being my word and asking myself: Is this something I am willing to die for? I remember driving downtown that day. The streets were empty. I thought to myself, “What if I don’t survive. Maybe I would be killed if I spoke out.”

Connecting to the Eternal, I prayed all the way there. I took on being courageous and taking a substantial risk. I felt that I must do something. My voice was my instrument of action. There was no other time to act than at that exact moment.

I never before had spoken at a press conference even though I have been a strategy team leader for seven years with the Washington Interfaith Network, a broad-based, multiracial, multifait, strictly nonpartisan citizens’ power organization, and at my home parish, St. Augustine Church. This is what I said:

“I am taken back to 1972 when my father, an African-American metallurgical chemist, was taken from his car and clubbed by state troopers on a drive down south to Charleston, South Carolina, from Detroit. I was five years old. I leaned out of the window and yelled ‘Daddy!’ praying to God that they would stop. Thank God they did.

I am committed to a world that honors the lives of all people. My daughter is in tears every day watching, witnessing police murder Black people. I weep for my people, black and brown, indigenous and migrant. Our ancestors cry out from the heavens and say enough! We must stand up in solidarity to address systemic racism and economic injustice. This is about space. This is about being pushed out of our city. Every person deserves a safe place to live, food to eat, a decent job.

The space that St. Augustine occupies was built from free African-Americans and emancipated slaves from more than 160 years ago. Our members marched, organized during the civil rights movement. Built housing for the marginalized. Returned basic dignity to our people. We are connected to this land. This is our land! Built on the backs of our ancestors

from the bondage of slavery. We must claim our space in this country, in our city. We're claiming Reservation 13, RFK Stadium, the Reeves Center, U Street, our Black Broadway, public housing. And we claim, we will not let one more resident, not one, be pushed out!

Our houses of worship, our neighborhoods, we will engage neighbor to neighbor. Turn to your neighbor. Will you engage and fight with us? One by one, are we going to claim power together? Yes! We are going to confront our neighbors and we are going to be 20,000 strong! Are you standing with us? Are you going to be there with us through the hard times? Are you going to be there with us building for years to come? We are taking back our city. We are reimagining a new way forward. Where the needs of those suffering the most are taken care of as a priority, as a daily way of life. To stop the death and to restore and unite our country. This is our commitment. Stand with us!"

Great applause enfolded me. I was in tears. My daddy was a warm, loving father, a sweetheart of a guy. I carry his memory with me. My big brother, Carl Jr., told me I saved our father's life that day. I remember that night, looking up at the stars when I was a child and praying to God that the officers would not hurt my daddy. A covenant and promise with God, the eternal for me, was formed.

I became committed to standing up to injustice in the face of great fear in that moment. This commitment was born within me and I hold it like an internal torch that lives in my heart to this day. This memory was almost forgotten until I was asked what was my very first experience of injustice and it all rushed back to me.

Might you remember the first time you witnessed or experienced an injustice in your life? Did you react, hide, freeze or take another action? Did it shape your life somehow?

The call in speaking that day was to take bold action to keep people in their homes during COVID-19. This was a call to extend the eviction moratorium and protect the most vulnerable. This was also a call to build affordable housing on vast plots of land. This was a call for peace.



Cardinal Wilton Gregory and Angela Wilson Turnbull

What resulted from the news conference was a flurry of media coverage in the Washington Post and more than 15 other national news outlets.² From there, I was invited to participate in podcasts, panels and more news conferences, create groundbreaking agreements and partnerships with many organizations and global initiatives focusing on the environment, equity, corporate collaborations, housing, jobs and diverse academic access. Along the way, I picked up a few awards, new leadership positions and transformed myself and community.

For the first time, I imagined what it must have been like for my daddy to have his children witness such an attack on him. As someone who was rarely in the media, it took something for me to pull this off, stay present and be with all that was happening around me. Each time someone brought up that they read the article, my story, I felt uneasy, vulnerable and exposed.

We think that we need to know how to do what we

don't know how to do to accomplish our dreams. I have learned once we are fully committed and take consistent actions, we may not know "how" it is going to turn out or how to do what is needed. It is OK. I assure you. Results will happen that will blow you away.

In the Inquiry Explorations Program, I also took on a radical distinction, "Being with the Opposition." I lived and breathed this one. I took to heart what Brian Regnier, a Landmark Forum leader, said at the 2020 Conference for Global Transformation: "We don't have a promise for the world if we don't include people who are 'sending people to the ovens' in our world. We are reminded that if you hold on to your promise and don't give it away, it won't happen; that when we enroll others it becomes their promise and that we lose the promise when it becomes real in the world."

I took on talking to the CEO and president of one of the largest utility companies in the U.S. as though he were my neighbor. I shared my commitment in the world: "For the people suffering the most, having their needs met as a daily way of life."

I asked him what was most important for him and his company during this time of the pandemic and what kind of legacy he's committed to leaving at this most crucial period in history? I listened to him intently and recreated what he said to me. He aligned with me and I with him. Then miracles happened. On December 22, 2020, the Washington Interfaith Network signed a breakthrough agreement, and, on January 29, 2021, we had a joint press conference to announce the amazing work we did together in Washington, D.C.³

I learned from the results produced with the support of thousands of people. The results were unpredictable and extraordinary. These accomplishments are not about me at all. This is the gift I am giving to the world. I am unattached to whether you agree with my work or not. I hope you are inspired to expand work that enfolds you into your own bliss.

MY PUBLIC PERSONA

Speaking at news conferences definitely expanded

my public persona. Besides the Washington Post, news outlets that covered the event included CBS, NBC and News Channel 4. The Post reporter said, "I have met thousands of people and, when you started talking, I knew what you had to say was very important. Thank you!" He had tears in his eyes and so did I. This and the events below shifted who I knew myself to be:

- I was featured on the front page of the Catholic Standard along with more than 100 marchers. The headline: "Participants say priests' protest against racism was about prayer, not politics."⁴ I joyfully manage extraordinary social justice advocacy leaders who made 210 nonpartisan Get Out the Vote calls among hundreds of other commitments they tackle to create far-reaching change in housing, homelessness, environment (integral ecology), criminal justice reform, equity, jobs, immigrant rights, community safety, citywide budgets, training organizations and conflict resolution.
- A month later, I spoke at an event presented by the Washington Interfaith Network for the Reimagine DC campaign urging the City Council to attack the root causes and effects of systemic racism and economic inequality by shifting resources. We had more than 3,000+ views, 1,000 Zoom attendees and 1,000 Facebook Live attendees.
- In November, I was elected co-chairperson of the Washington Interfaith Network as the first African-American female, nonpastor/clergy leader of the Strategy Team in Washington, D.C. As the network's representative, I spoke at a news conference for a groundbreaking held by Washington, D.C. Mayor Muriel Bowser for a project to construct 740 residential units, including 518 affordable units. The event was covered on TV 52 and Bowser's YouTube channel. Families had waited for over 12 years for their new homes.⁵

In addition, the Washington Interfaith Network works with sister organizations to increase investment in public transportation, including \$500 million a year for the Washington Metro transit agency ensuring 1.7 million people a day

are out of their cars and into green transit.

We're organizing with residents in the River Terrace neighborhood to clean up an area polluted by the local utility. We're identifying buildings, congregations, community centers and multifamily homes that leak heat and burn inefficient fossil fuels to green them, and create local jobs and business opportunities in the process.

We helped organize to keep sewage out of the Anacostia River while creating good jobs for D.C. residents. We promoted energy retrofits of low-income homes while creating good jobs.

BEING IN ACTION – OVER AND OVER

In other actions, I:

- Took part in meetings with the Washington, D.C. City Council to redirect \$300 million from projects that accelerate displacement of African-American people to projects that create equality and opportunity. The council shifted \$62.8 million to the Housing Production Trust Fund, critical housing repairs, community safety and immigrant legal services for emergency needs during COVID-19.
- Obtained access in August for an engineer who is leading a solar panel installation project for the church school to participate in a closed meeting with decision-makers at the archdiocese. I provided multiple referrals for minority-owned solar panel businesses so they could submit proposals for the school's solar panel project.
- Facilitated meetings in September of Cooperative Purchasing Alliance to explore procuring solar energy solutions for St. Augustine School for broader savings with strategies for full roof replacement, returned energy credits and broader minority service providers.
- Secured a \$10,000 grant in a five-minute conversation in December from the archdiocese for St. Augustine Church and School food services programs to help families during COVID-19. More than 500 families obtained vital food within five

business days with many out of work and this helped hundreds more families from St. Augustine School.

BEING IN ACTION: PART TWO

- Created with a team, the archdiocese's Care for Creation Committee proposal, and helped survey parish members and develop a plan for consideration by the archdiocese to support Pope Francis' encyclical on the environment.
- Participated with Archbishop Gregory in celebrating the fifth anniversary of the pope's environmental encyclical, through a symposium at the archdiocese on the "response of the faithful" with the archbishop, Office of Social Concerns, Archdiocese Care for Creation Committee, Catholic Charities, priests, young adults and lay leaders.

In reporting on the event, The Catholic Standard wrote, "Environmental and racial justice issues underline this disparity, Wilson-Turnbull said, pointing to poorer parts of the nation's capital where people of color, who have been especially hard hit by COVID-19, have a lack of basic access to clean water, green spaces and healthy food, and experience health care deficits, a lack of affordable housing and low wages."⁶

Further, the newspaper said, "She noted how the Washington Interfaith Network has successfully lobbied District of Columbia Water and Sewer Authority to implement a green solution for water runoff that benefits D.C. residents in those wards, with jobs being filled by unemployed, underemployed and returning residents. Highlighting the importance for people of faith to be engaged in those justice issues, Wilson-Turnbull said, 'This is our moment to do God's work.'"

In response, then Archbishop Gregory, who has since been elevated to cardinal and the College of Cardinals, underscored my point about people from different faith backgrounds working together to protect the environment. "This is a prime ecumenical, interfaith opportunity," he said. "This is not a Catholic issue. This is a human issue, and the ecumenical community, if they are invited, would be very helpful partners."

- Participated in the inaugural Green Mass with Bishop Roy Campbell, the archdiocese's Care for Creation Committee and the Office of Social Concerns. The Catholic Standard quoted me, "As we sustain the Earth, we must also ensure protections for the poor. Every single person has the power to make profound change in our families, our Church and our community that will have a lasting impact."⁷
- Featured in a global video campaign developed by the Franciscan Action Network to address restoring dignity to elected leadership and focusing on the environment and separation of children from families affected by the border crisis. The campaign goal was to help influence the 2020 presidential election. From the measures tracked, we made a difference.
- Helped launch the Corporate Accountability and Racial Equity (CARE) for DC campaign. As a co-leader, I was part of the senior team that negotiated a historic agreement signed in December with the CEO and president of Pepco Holdings, an Excelon utility company, to address critically tracked measures. They include:
 - Expanding contracts to minority-owned businesses;
 - Creating capital investment funds for minority business partners;
 - Developing neighborhood energy grids with energy credit returns to the community, local institutions, nonprofits, families and residents to build long-term wealth and expansion of energy payment moratoriums;
 - Adopting green energy solutions aligned with environmental requirements for a green D.C.;
 - Cleaning up 77 acres of contaminated land and creating a business/community development incubator hub offering 10 acres for affordable housing or community needs;
 - Co-sponsoring legislation to set living wages and long-term sustainability for workers; and

- Increasing the green infrastructure cohort and placing people from economically-depressed communities into career and contractor positions.

- Testified in October at the hearing on Pepco's multiyear rate plan by addressing impacts of increasing electric distribution rates by \$173 million in D.C. during COVID-19. Helped bring together environmental experts, pastors and workers who addressed concerns and recommended solutions for green energy and long-term equity strategies.
- Spoke in September before the Fairfax County School Board urging changes in the student admission process to increase diversity of the student body at one of the nation's top high schools for science, technology, engineering and math. By developing critical strategies, we won. Ten-plus news outlets covered the transformation of the academic admissions process at the school. I testified on my daughter's birthday.
- Testified in November at a public hearing of the Committee of the Whole about the critical need for affordable housing in Washington, D.C.
- Served as a panelist with Georgetown School of Medicine and University of Maryland School of Public Health addressing environmental justice, integral ecology and combating COVID-19, and framed Pope Francis' environmental encyclical, Laudato Si, which addresses how faith and health communities can combat persistent threats to economic security, our health and the pandemic.
- Attended the World Meeting of Popular Movements, an initiative of Pope Francis, as part of the D.C. delegation led by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. The meeting brought together nearly 1,000 social justice leaders from around the world to address the crises involving land, labor and lodging.

Also present were leaders from the Flint water crisis, Standing Rock, Black Lives Matter and global migrants and local communities pushed out of their homes from corporate impact, climate

change and environmental degradation. Pope Francis charged us to continue to do God's vital work. Cardinal Turkson inspired us to never give up.

The work we do is tough, overwhelming at times, with little recognition so these bold acts of acknowledgement meant the world to us. It gave us the fire to keep going no matter what. We created a covenant together, returned to D.C. and launched a regional gathering in collaboration with the archdiocese, Catholic University, Catholic Charities and U.S. Council of Catholic Bishops. We went on WPFW 89.3 radio to tell the world of our work and shared Pope Francis' message. Our work in environmental and social justice continues in D.C., which deeply impacts our communities, environment and Earth.

On a personal level, I honored what would have been my mother's 83rd birthday on October 29, 2020 by adapting the opera Aida. I presented it to my originating circle, family, friends and colleagues.

In December, I wrote a short story, "My Community: 300 Years of Shared Memory."

In February 2021, I was honored and experienced sheer joy when a baby girl was born in Ghana and given my name. This broke my heart wide open. I worked with Otu Amponsah, her father, when I traveled with a U.S. Embassy-sponsored delegation, LEAP for Ghana, to help implement United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. At the traditional African naming ceremony on February 8, 2021, Amponsah said:

"We are naming our daughter after someone very special and dear to Grace and I. She is the person of Angela Cherise Wilson-Turnbull, senior advisor and consultant in Washington, D.C. I met her in Ghana about four years ago at Konko Village, a place precisely called Timber Nkwanta, where I am teaching. She is caring, loving [and] hospitable. I worked with her, teaching and going round with her giving gifts to people while taking information from them throughout her stay after she consolidated the village census.

She briefed the village elders on her findings of water, food, medical care insecurities, economic, agriculture and literacy solutions



Angela Wilson Turnbull speaking at Washington, D.C. Mayor Muriel Bowser's groundbreaking for Northwest One, formerly Temple Courts.

for our home. She is a person who believes in us, Africans, that Black is equally important as white, and that all people are equal. She is fighting against racism. I stand to support her. We need people who will stand to save the world in the name of the Lord. We are naming our daughter in honor of her.

We love her so much. I strongly believe that, through Angela, many lives will be transformed. Very soon to come, there is going to be the Angela Wilson-Turnbull International School here in Ghana. Angela is also a believer, a true Christian, who loves God so much. She is a counselor and advisor. We shall see Angela again when the COVID goes away. I showed your photo to those gathered to bring you close to us and the baby."

AWARDS AND HONORS

In 2020, I received awards and honors that include:

Receiving the Leadership Award of Excellence from Washington Interfaith Network in December.

Being nominated for the 2020 Vincent Brooks Award, St. Augustine Parish Pastoral Council as recognition of those who model servant leadership – doing so "behind the scenes."

Receiving the Award of Excellence by the Archdiocese of Washington Care for Creation Committee.

Negotiated as one of three strategy leaders a collaborative model for the archdiocese's first *Laudato Si* plan, which calls for combining the needs of the poor with the environment and impacts of COVID-19.

Being elected unanimously as standing committee chairperson for Social Justice Ministries at St. Augustine Church. The ministries oversee a multimillion budget and are responsible for outreach to 5,000 church members and thousands more in the community.

CONNECTING TO THE ETERNAL

My Catholic faith is important to me. I've been active in St. Augustine Church in Washington, D.C., for more than three decades. In January 2021, I co-moderated the Day of Reflection for an archdiocese Care for Creation Committee Environmental Stewardship and Contemplation.

Right before the pandemic, I worked with the assistant director for African-American Affairs at the Secretariat of Cultural Diversity in the Church, a part of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. As a highlight, I crafted a letter to the Vatican's Cardinal Farrell of the Dicastery for Laity, Family and Life to request his permission as the imprimatur to replicate a series of canonization prayers for African-American "Saints to Be." Many other letters were prepared for the same purpose. Also, I conducted special outreach projects across the country on behalf of the assistant director. The coronavirus pandemic closed the office, a grim and abrupt reality. I took on reinventing myself immediately.

In November, I was invited to attend Cardinal Wilton Daniel Gregory's installation as the first U.S. African-American cardinal in Rome. Travel restrictions due to the pandemic prevented that from happening. My friend, colleague and travel buddy laughed about the meals we will enjoy once we return to Rome; we pray to have an audience with Pope Francis. This is the declaration we made together.

In January 2021, I was invited as part of the Washington, D.C. delegation to the Catholic Social Ministry Gathering for the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.

WHAT I DISCOVERED, WHAT'S NEXT

I discovered the power of my word, being in action, showing up, being courageous, standing for miracles and moving through each obstacle creates the unexpected in life.

In January 2021, I was asked to submit my resume to the Biden-Harris administration for a possible appointment. This process is most fascinating.

My extended family plans to build a family compound with organic gardens, permaculture, a home with a wraparound porch, horses, a pool, an indoor roller skating rink, studio and theater for live and digital entertainment. Ideally, the house would accommodate all five branches of the family, friends and be near a natural body of water. The estate will go into a trust to continue perpetual ownership for the next 150-plus years as my grandfather's original handwritten deed requires.

What's next for the Washington Interfaith Network is improving wages in the utilities industry and developing what's known as Reservation 13, a large parcel of land and making it accessible for homeownership on an equitable basis. It has the capacity for 3,000 units with 1,000 affordable units. We also want to add affordable housing on 250 acres of land at Robert F. Kennedy Stadium in D.C.

GIVING AWAY MY COMMITMENT

Personally, I declare being at source, so my livelihood and life are based on my commitments to the world. I'm standing that those who have similar commitments will benefit from my commitments and can find me, invite me to speak, contribute and work with them with compensation equal to the value of the contributions that I provide ongoingly. I am committed to establishing a business or nonprofit, a social media presence and launching a website so others can find, contribute and support my contributions in the world and I can do the same for theirs.

A SOLUTION WORTH MASTERING – INTEGRAL HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

In my view, what is most important and what will change things is if we all learn about integral human development, so we experience

differences among us and are empowered to have difficult conversations with those with whom we disagree or see the world from a drastically different view than we do.

As Brian McFadin explains in the “The Upward Spiral of Love,”⁸

“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. 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.”

This relates to mending the break in our nation from the insurrection of January 6, 2021. If we all take action to support the survivability of humanity, even if we do not agree, we can breathe again outside in peace.

“Above all, it will require that we take responsibility. What might responsibility look like at the leading edge of history?,” asked McFadin. These are tenets of integral human development that, if taken on powerfully and unabashedly, will allow us to transform this pandemic, our divisions, our lives and the world. Who is now willing to have these critical conversations, listen and create miracles from whatever you discover?

MY INQUIRY IN THE WORLD

What if we explore transforming the pandemic at this most critical time while creating an extraordinary future for every human being, especially for communities most in need. Reimagine with me and take bold action to create a world where the needs of those suffering the most are taken care of as a daily way of life and where fiscal policy and practice support everyone having enough food to eat, a home and a safe sustainable job. The goal allows total self-sufficiency while enabling people to powerfully live into their dreams. Join me in exploring what it takes.

“The truth is like a lion; you don’t have to defend it. Let it loose; it will defend itself.”

—Saint Augustine

ENDNOTES

- 1 The Inquiry Explorations Program is designed for participants who attend the Conference for Global Transformation to be in action all year to create a commitment for the world and begin the conversations to launch that commitment. Each week, calls are available for inquiries on various subjects and make up part of what’s known as the Social Commons.
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- 6 Zimmermann, M. “Caring for creation is a work of faith, speakers say in virtual symposium,” The Catholic Standard, May 22, 2020. Accessed February 18, 2021, www.cathstan.org/news/local/caring-for-creation-is-a-work-of-faith-speakers-say-in-virtual-symposium.
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THE EXPLORATION OF A THIRD-CULTURE KID

LORI WATKINS

“Travel is fatal to prejudice, bigotry and narrow-mindedness, and many of our people need it sorely on these accounts. Broad, wholesome, charitable views of men and things cannot be acquired by vegetating in one little corner of the earth all one’s lifetime.”

—Mark Twain, *The Innocents Abroad/Roughing It*¹

Abstract

The author explores how her view of herself – as the daughter of Peace Corps workers and diplomats – developed from living in economically-underdeveloped countries through much of her childhood and youth. Known as a “third-culture kid,” she also examines how she absorbed the cultures, history and traditions from those countries and how she brings it all to her work as a licensed vocational nurse and to her commitment for the world that all beings are heard, including human beings.

INTRODUCTION

What is a third-culture kid? Third-culture kids are individuals who spent a significant part of their development in a culture different from their parents. Consequently, they develop a relationship to all of the cultures in which they lived but often they don’t have a sense of belonging to any specific culture.²

An American sociologist first coined the term in the 1950s, but it wasn’t until the 1990s that the mass media began using it.³ One of the most prominent third-culture kids is President Barack Obama, who was born in Hawaii, spent a good part of his childhood in Indonesia and then lived in the United States with his grandparents.⁴

I was one of many third-culture kids who grew up in what commonly has been called “Third World” countries. What I’ve discovered is that “Third World” is an outdated and offensive phrase used historically to describe a class of economically developing nations. The term describes the world’s countries by economic status. Third World falls behind First World and Second World but

before Fourth World countries, which are hardly recognized at all. Today, the preferred terminology is a developing nation, an underdeveloped country or a low- and middle-income country.⁵

THE CONTEXT OF MY LIFE

In 1976, I was born in Santiago, Chile during the rule of dictator Augusto Pinochet. On May 27, 1977, at the age of five months, I was adopted by an American couple, diplomats serving at the United States Embassy in Santiago.

My parents, Richard Watkins and Sudie Heitz, grew up in Ohio and met in college in 1967. Their courtship began sitting on the lawn between college classes talking about traveling and living around the world. In 1969, at the age of 23, they married. The next year, my parents entered the Peace Corps, an independent agency founded in 1961 by President John F. Kennedy.⁶

In 1975, my father became a foreign service officer with the U.S. Department of State and served 25 years. I grew up with two siblings. My oldest brother, Jason, was born in 1972 in Jamaica. My other brother, Bradley, was born in Washington, D.C. in 1975, a few weeks before they departed for Ecuador. I joined the family two years later.

During the course of my father’s work, we traveled extensively with assignments in Arlington, Virginia, Ecuador (14 months), Chile (2½ years), Africa (2 years) and Jakarta, Indonesia (4 years). My father had broad ambitions to save the world. Through his foreign service work, he eventually realized that he could not save the world, but his experiences led him to become a worldly person.

When he retired from the foreign service in 1995, my parents were ready to build something different. After being overseas for so long, they chose to be closer to their families, so we moved to York, Pennsylvania. My mother’s passion emerged, and she engaged in a franchise, a Sylvan Learning Center, which tutors school children and adults. By then, I was 23 and had started my career as a licensed vocational nurse in the same town.

Later on, family members settled in different locations: My parents in Williamsburg, Virginia,



Jason in Cape Cod, Massachusetts and Bradley in Bethesda, Maryland. At age 29, in 2005, I made my home in Oceanside, California. But now, back to the beginning.

SANTIAGO, CHILE: 1976-1977

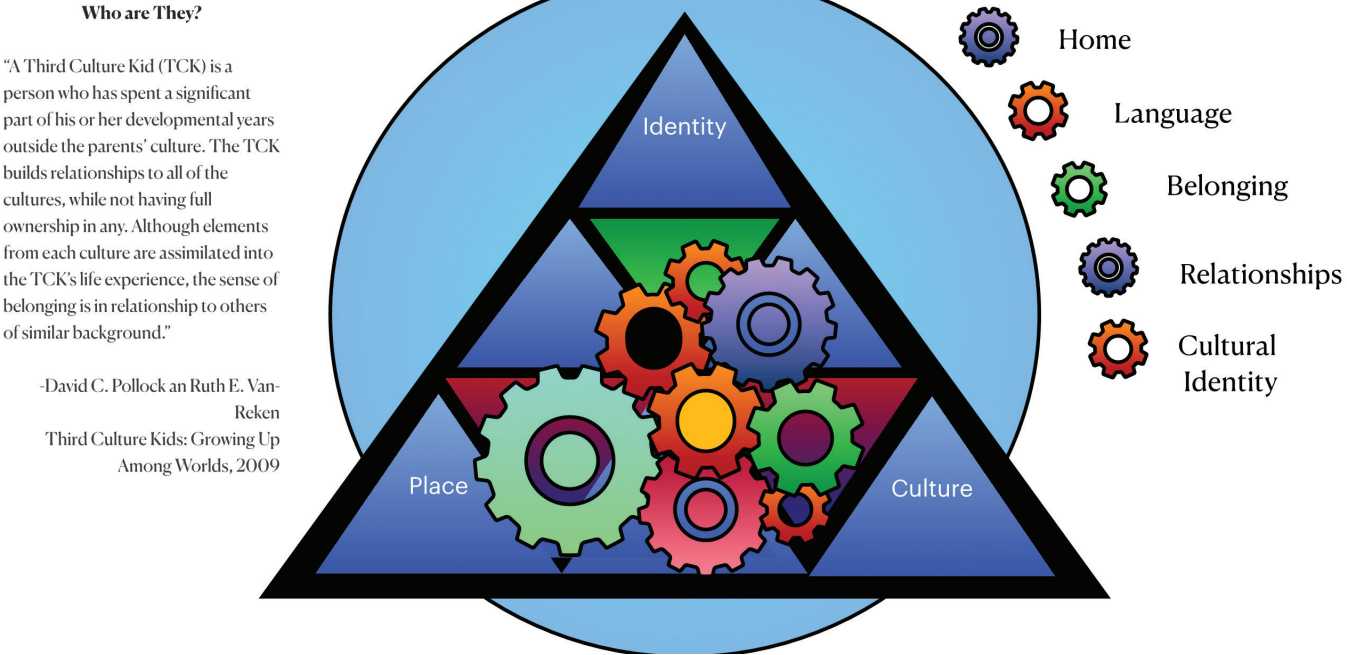
At an early age, I am exposed to Spanish from my caretakers until I’m 2½ years old. Being so young, I learned the stories of Chile as they were passed down in family gatherings. When my parents owned a 1976 yellow Volkswagen with a pop-up roof, my father would drive us into the valley of the Andes to camp and hike together. At the beach, my brother and father would swim out into the open ocean.

Now, at the age of 44, I see how the natural resources of Chile and underdeveloped countries are exploited by international companies. For example, in 1973, Exxon Corporation purchased a copper mine from the Chilean government for \$107 million. It was the first major investment abroad by Exxon that is not in the energy field and the largest American investment in Chile since the military coup of 1973.

MALAWI, AFRICA: 1978-80

Malawi is a landlocked country of about 18 million people in eastern Africa that has high rates of poverty, infant mortality and chronic malnutrition.⁷ Here, I learn another language, Chichewa. As a toddler, I was cared for by Daniel and Katie, our housekeeper and nanny. I recall Africa being the

Third Culture Kids



place where I felt the most loved, although now I can’t even recall the faces of my gentle care keepers. When my father speaks of Daniel’s and Katie’s love for me a tear glistens in his eyes. I am present to how he loved and cherished them.

Some of my most vivid memories from this time are of my parents taking my brothers and me on safari. Traveling in our 1980 white Land Rover, we would see herds of giraffes, elephants and hippopotamuses. One day, we watched as a lion ate the carcass of an elephant. My father, holding his Minolta camera, would click and capture many fascinating photos.

Inside, the truck was super hot. My skin was sticky with sweat and the air was heavy with each breath. I imagined rolling down the windows but was fearful that my family would be eaten. They often told me when the family took a trek in the jungle, I would sit down on the trail and refuse to go further. They walked down the path to entice me to catch up but I would refuse to budge, even with wild animals roaming about.

Life was much simpler in Malawi than in America. The toys we had were hand-carved. You could hand a toy to an old man and he would play with it because it was the toy he had as a kid. Older and younger people seemed more connected than the generations in the United States.

Malawi is the first country where I remember seeing extreme poverty. Sometimes, my father would take me to a shack and he would show me they had no running water. He would say, “See, how lucky we are. We have a roof. We have running water.” Every time we moved, we’d pray and thank God for what we had. But I experienced the culture shock of it. I’m seven. I’m 12. I’m 15. I often felt helpless. How do I tell people in America: Do you know how lucky you are?

ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA: 1981-85

At age four, my family moved back to the United States. Accustomed to the African wild, I was surprised to hear the kids speak of a place called a zoo. It seemed odd to me that the animals were in cages and the adults were not. I wondered:

Why were adults arguing all the time and not working together as a herd? I didn't understand then but here I created my point of view as: I'm not safe, the world is scary. My unanswerable question became: I don't belong here.

In Malawi, I had attended a British kindergarten, so I was surprised when I was placed in kindergarten in Arlington instead of in the first grade. My mother recalls the time I came home from school, and she said, "Your teacher called and said you don't know your colors. Lori, what is this color?" I convinced myself that "I must be slow." This wasn't true. Later, I learned that I couldn't enter the first grade in the United States because I wasn't old enough. Here, a part of my identity of never doing or being enough formed. This was another experience of culture shock, a personal disorientation that occurs for an individual in an unfamiliar social environment.

As Rudo Ellen Kazembe wrote in "Teen Vogue" in 2016, "As a third culture kid, you've experienced cross-cultural transitions that have molded you into an adaptable individual. Regardless of the challenges that you may have faced as a third culture kid, you've been shaped into a multicultural individual."⁸

Sociologists describe culture shock as consisting of at least one of four distinct phases: Honeymoon, negotiation, adjustment and adaptation. Common problems that third-culture kids face include: information overload, language barriers, generation gaps, technology gaps and homesickness for a culture. There is no way to entirely prevent culture shock as individuals in any society are affected differently by cultural contrasts.

At the same time, third-culture kids develop a cultural skill set that includes an openness to experience, a belief in the value of diversity and a cognitive flexibility or ability to adjust. Untold benefits also can result from mastery of several languages, rich experiences from traveling, living and working in different countries and growing up in a multicultural environment.⁹

INDIANAPOLIS, INDIANA: 1985-1987

We are living in Indianapolis, Indiana. I am in third grade attending a suburban school. The



building is a firestone brick, a simple structure. The playground is cement pavement. The school has larger classes with 30 kids to one class and sometimes chalkboards are used to divide the classes. I told my parents I could not think because the noise is so loud in my head.

I am aware that here, in this place, the kids don't know of the lands where the animals roam freely. One day, it's show-and-tell, and my father comes to class. I am so proud of my father standing at the front of the classroom in a stiff polyester suit, handsome with a broad smile, mustache cued and trimmed.

He speaks of worlds that we discovered together. We show dolls, artifacts and carvings from an ancient land. He points at the map and answers questions, then turns to me and asks, "Lori, where were you born?" I stop, look around the classroom, hesitate and at that moment never want to speak again. I reply, "I don't know."

I laugh now, realizing that I was two when I left Santiago, Chile. Why would I know? As I reflect now, I also see that who I was being was a child who wanted everyone to know that they belong in this world.

JAKARTA, INDONESIA: 1988-1992

In 1988, we begin living in Jakarta, Indonesia. Here, at age 12, I learn to use my father's Minolta camera. In practicing photography, I walk around the Jakarta International School campus where I attended school, looking for subjects to capture in photos.

Beneefits and challenges of the TCK experience

Benefits	Challenges
Expanded worldview	"Where is home?"
Resilience	Unresolved grief
Cross-cultural enrichment	Ignorance of home culture
Adaptability	Lack of true cultural balance
Ability to blend in	Accentuating differences
Importance of now	Difficulty making decisions
Independence	Feeling choiceless
Cross-cultural skills	Rootlessness
Cultural bridges	Restlessness
Obsevational skills	Difficulties with identity formation
Empathy	Difficulties with the sense of belonging
Social savvy	Insecurity
Bi(multi)lingualism	Not proficient in mother tongue
Deep relationships	Fear of attachment
Many friends	Many relationship losses
Early maturity	Delayed adolescence
Ability to deal with crises	Emotional withdrawl
Communication skills	Feeling different
Educational opportunities	Lack of full ownership of any culture

Adopted from Pollock & Van Reken, 2009

I pause, raise my camera, turn the lens left and then right, as my pointer finger hits the button. Click, click, click. I capture plants, then scenes, then people. I encourage boys in my class to pose, strut and dance. I entice my best friend to jog, jump and walk back and forth to bring forth moving pictures.

A few months later, I am introduced in another course to the art of batik. I had never seen anything like it before. It is an ancient Indonesian technique that originated in Java. Batik involves dyes, cloth, design and hot wax. Wax is applied to fabric, which is then dipped in dyes. The fabric absorbs the colors except where there is wax. Patterns and designs emerge once the wax is removed.¹⁰

As I sit in the hot sticky studio learning the technique of batik, the hot wax spits and spatters. A drop burns the top of my hand. Each class I attend with the anticipation and excitement of creating my own pattern. I am attentive and engaged in dipping my cloth in the dyes. Here I discover my appreciation of, and desire to create, art.

But, there were adjustments, too. Growing up in Jakarta, Indonesia, simple actions, such as finding a bathroom, is difficult at first. I remember as a young lady, I ask for the bathroom and am escorted to a room where there is no toilet. I learn that a bathroom is a bathing room, and a toilet room is a room for elimination needs. As an adolescent, this was confusing and interesting at the same time.

I understand that I live in countries with different culture, but I don't necessarily understand why things were different. Disorientation is normal in our travels. I remember feeling disoriented from traveling during my youth given by time segments in 8-, 12- and 24-hour plane trips. Sometimes, we experienced culture shock as we explored these exotic lands. It seems a lot like skipping from one slippery rock to another in a babbling brook. In the background, I remember being curious about the United States with its abundant resources and structures. Yet, I wondered why we seemed to be behind the rest of the world.

Over the years, I develop an awareness for differences and am able to be with people who practice Islam, Hindi, Buddhist and Catholic religions. Looking through various lenses, the Buddhist said, "How? How do I build that?" The Jew said, "When? When is the Messiah coming?" The Christian said, "Why? Why is it so?" I embrace it all.

I learn that covering your head with a scarf as a girl or woman shows respect in certain customs. Women in an African dictatorship cannot wear slacks. Dresses must be long enough to go over the knees. Meanwhile, miniskirts were the rage in the U.S. When pop culture was explosive, I see Madonna, the 1980s icon singer, jumping off chairs in a white tutu and rolling around on the ground. In subsequent travels to the historic colonies of Jamestown, Virginia, I realized that the U.S. also had limiting customs when women had to wear corsets, long sleeves to avoid showing bare arms and white gloves when attending church.

Sometimes, the simplest act – without consideration for the culture – can cause a distraught reaction. In some places, shaking hands is a traditional way of meeting and greeting, a public sign of affection. In other cultures, touching or making contact with your left hand was not appropriate. What I learn is the importance of people understanding differences in languages, customs and each other. Those experiences lead me to recognize the humanity of Self.

OTTAWA, CANADA: 1993

It's 1993 and my family is living in Ottawa, Canada. It had been such a long time since we have

been back to the North American continent. I always loved being reunited with my belongings after a move. As a young lady, I enjoy the smell of packing tape and love to rummage in cardboard boxes. Down in the basement in our new house, I find lifelong treasures of a 15-year-old and rediscover cherished childhood objects.

One day, I come across a wooden box. In it, I find paintbrushes, oil lacquer and canvas. The tubes of paint are cemented shut after years of non-use. The paint smells of a long-ago time, like a stale wine. I roll the oil lacquer across my fingertips and find it smooth. I pry the tubes of paint open to knead and soften the paint until it's malleable; a treasure. Something I can use to manipulate, play and create with. My breath quickens as my hands clumsily toy with the paintbrush awkwardly. I spend hours in the basement until my mother finds me. I catch her watching me. "Why are you watching me?," I ask. She replies, "Because I can't do that."

OCEANSIDE, CALIFORNIA: 2008-PRESENT DAY

In 2008, I finally pick up my paintbrush as an adult and start to paint. I realize that I have something to say. I buy 20 canvases that are 16 square feet. I tear open the packaging, sit in front of the canvas and close my eyes, whispering to myself, "Remember when."

Lifting my paintbrush, I see Georgia O'Keeffe and Vincent van Gogh. A splash of paint across the canvas in a split second. Awe, yes. Flowers, big flowers, bright and beautiful, with voluptuous curves, thick broad-brush strokes, all in a negotiation with negative space on the canvas. I flip and twist my wrist with the paintbrush between my fingers.

I merge colors, hues, lights to dark, pulling forth one color then another. I conquer and divide my inner monologue until I experience an internal shift. Created newly is a source of light and energy that I describe as a version of an exotic cha-cha-cha dance. I am enticed into a new inquiry of what can be brought into existence in being a human being.

Here, I also begin to think about using the arts to improve mental health. I paint large flowers



Lori Watkins One Hand Clapping, oils on canvas, 4 by 4 feet.

The sound of one hand clapping is a koan. A paradox to be meditated upon, a koan is used to train Zen Buddhist monks to abandon dependence on reason and force them into gaining sudden intuitive enlightenment. Koans are designed to be nonsensical, shocking or humorous.

on canvas, then contact program managers in mental health resource centers and distribute the paintings throughout Southern California. At this time, when so much of humanity is suffering, I celebrate the collective, the powerful interactions of people in a network of programs, in a network of conversations.

I also discover a new view as a nurse and artist. As Florence Nightingale, the founder of modern nursing, put it: "Nursing is an art, and if it is to be made an art, it requires an exclusive devotion as hard a preparation as any painter's or sculptor's work. For what is having to do with dead canvas or dead marble, compared with having to do with the living body, the temple of God's spirit?"¹¹

Now, I engage in a new type of art, the "People's Art" and the difference I can make for the world. It's as though I am peering into a silent arena, with a sleeping audience and an out-of-tune orchestra. I am taken with a desire to be a composer who can synchronize time and step into a possibility bigger than myself.

For years, on every birthday, I eat my dinner on the Chilean dishes that my mother bought long ago in Santiago, Chile. When I turn 40, my mother gives me the set. She had kept them, even the broken pieces, throughout our international travels.

When I ask why, she says, "Because I know you will create something out of them." In my garage, I still have the dishes and even the pieces of broken pottery. I realize the beauty of my mother embracing all my capacities. I now see why my mother believed that I could change the world. I was a nourished, nurtured, loved human being who has been given by the gift of contribution. I am reminded of my mother's love for show tunes and her commitment to making a difference in life. I am no longer a thing being moved around like an object. I am a being with new capacity.

As my two brothers and I grow up, we are always in the inquiry of what is this place? For us, an inherited conversation is: "The house is where we are now."

As a third-culture kid, changing and adaptation are essential. When describing the capacity of a third-culture kid, I am inspired by the story of Helen Keller and her curiosity. What is the name of this, she would ask. I compare myself to the "not knowing" of a thing, object, place or person when I encounter a new place or inquiry.

In 2017, I hit a pivotal point in my development. I complete my Landmark Forum. In 2019, I register for the Wisdom Unlimited course and I encounter the eternal in putting together my autobiography for the course. I experienced fulfillment beneath the stories and reflections. I fall in love with my childhood. Here, my parents' love shines and shows me the beauty of the world.

At the same time, I am convinced that I do not know anyone. As a third-culture kid, I don't question belonging as much as I question: Could I keep up? Traveling from airport to airport, running from gate to gate to meet canceled flights, sleeping in awkward hotel rooms. Waking up to odd time zones, day is night, night is day. Adjusting, adapting to and from language, conversations, climates and cultures.

But, in the Wisdom course, I have a breakthrough

with the distinction, originating circles, one’s social network of people you interact with on a weekly basis.

Gathering materials for my autobiography, I rummage in my garage for photos. I find three boxes of photographs. I pick up a picture that I took in Indonesia. Memories arise of my best friend who jogged, jumped and walked back and forth to school with me, while I photographed her. Her name is Amanda. I realize that I can’t put her in my autobiography because she died in a motorcycle accident years earlier. I am upset. Then I see the contribution she was to me.

As I look at more photos, I become more curious. In one moment, I get present to who I am. Those three boxes are a visual documentation of my originating circle that covers 43 years of my life. Tucked in the box that holds photographs of people throughout my life and many travels, I find my father’s Minolta. I had never stopped taking pictures, and, to this day, I continue to take snapshots of someone or something that calls to me. In that moment, my curiosity stirs and I go on the hunt for more transformation.

2020

I am in a course called Inquiry Explorations. I participate in the Social Commons calls, which are part of the course and create myself as a poet. Here, I am introduced to listening for the commitment of others. At first, learning to speak a commitment, I spit and sputter like the hot wax in batik class. I trip and stumble over concepts, insights and justifications. But, I have the experience of being heard.

“What is the experience of not being heard? What is the experience of being heard?” As a third-culture kid, my mind is a telescope into an eclectic period in which my many worlds merge into one world. Previously, language has stopped me, but, being in an inquiry, I discover people in a world that has always existed. During the COVID-19 pandemic, each person is experiencing the pandemic’s impact and connecting to a global context. I am present to people from various worlds coming together as one and many human beings being present to the needs of each other.

The past year’s experience is like being on a merry-go-round ride at an amusement park. Intuition, reason and instinct take the forms of horses, elephants and other animals revolving around a fixed center (the planet). The experience resonates for me, and I recall a film, “The Time Machine,” based on the 1895 novella by H.G. Wells, “The Time Machine,” and how it spurred the development of time travel.

THE BEAUTY OF IDENTITY

What I want to create now is wonder and awe. I want my speaking to bring forth inquiry and generate gentle care and love. I see us all on the ship of curiosity anchored in the accomplishment of humanity.

As a kid growing and developing shoulder to shoulder with people in underdeveloped countries, I am present to the beauty of who people know themselves to be individually and collectively. Since I have been exposed to so many cultures, I have seen humans’ capacity to be human take many forms. In sharing this paper with my parents, I rediscovered the stories told over dinners, campfires and family gatherings.

They are cherished stories that shape and form me. It is a belief structure of a child growing up in countries that usually are not the center of the world’s attention and do not hold much political sway on the world stage. Traveling has led me to the ultimate experience of life, which is the need and desire to connect with people. I see so many needs of people in underdeveloped communities and I am committed to meeting that need in everyday life.

Called to a career of nursing, I now see that I’ve been providing a form of “people art” in a bedside manner, continuity of care and a standard of care. In my practice, I see creative arts living and thriving in communities that collaborate and share cultures and conversations.

I pick up my paintbrush again after the Year-end Vacation course and rediscover my creative process in me. I slow down, stop, listen, breathe and regroup with a newfound intimacy of humanity. I am the possibility of bringing creative endeavors into underdeveloped communities.

Who I am for the world is that all beings – human and otherwise – are heard.

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IS BEING STOPPED AND GIVING UP PART OF REGISTERING ACCOMPLISHMENT?

GORDON MARTIN

Abstract

Accomplishment provided an opening for the author to declare something new. An opportunity to explore the power of vulnerability and its inherent possibility. Four months later with nothing written for the journal, I explored whether the resignation I felt is part of registering the accomplishment.

“The light of failure has no mercy on the affections of the heart ...”

—John O’Donohue

At the end of the 2020 Conference for Global Transformation, I was excited and lit up. I had achieved what I set out to accomplish when I registered the previous May.

My goal – to bring conversations of recovery, spirituality and transformation together at the conference – had been achieved through my partnership with two other Landmark graduates, Robyn Maitland, and Jorge Franco. Together, we delivered a breakout session entitled, “What if the Eternal Was Within,” which gave people an opportunity to access the eternal through the tools of meditation, “being with,” inquiry and art.

Separately, Robyn and I had written a paper for the 2020 conference journal entitled, “Conversations between Robyn and Gordon with God: A Brief Inquiry into What if the Eternal was Within,” which explored the importance of our

relationship as we were continually challenged in our inquiry. What is more, I completed a Report from the Field sharing 16 of my poems written during the inquiry process. I was up to making a difference and felt as though I had achieved that.

Through the year-long inquiry, I witnessed the power of vulnerability, the power of being willing to share what is hard to share and the possibilities that result. I see what a difference it makes for others when I am willing to be vulnerable, and I also saw that in my relationship with Robyn.

We started out on opposite shores in our inquiry and, yet, during the editing process of the paper many months later, Robyn shared something that she never shared with me during the five years that we had known each other. Her opening up allowed her to break through and share her humanity along with her point of view enriching our paper, as well. In our breakout session and in other breakout sessions, I also witnessed the power that sharing vulnerability had to offer and I wanted to explore more.

I registered for the 2021 conference and the Inquiry Explorations Program as a support structure for this commitment and looked forward

to what would be discovered . I shared this idea with others and enrolled a couple of people. I also declared in several of my communities that I would participate fully in 2021 by submitting a paper for the 2021 journal, a workshop proposal for the 2021 conference, a poster for the poster session and a Report from the Field for the journal. Over the next four months, I did nothing in terms of this promise.

Five days before the deadline for submitting papers for the 2021 journal, I realized that I could still write this paper. I could inquire into how being stopped had affected various areas of my life this past summer. But, more than looking into where I stopped, I could inquire about whether being stopped was tied into registering accomplishment. In other words, is recognizing failure a part of success?

Immediately, my thoughts went back to 1985 when I was in my last term of university. With only a few weeks left, I had five papers to write and six upcoming exams. I had succeeded with honors then and knew I could achieve in this, as well.

Back to the present, I asked myself: What would saying yes provide? What would I have to deal with during the week to come? When possibility is present, what would I be willing to discover by taking on writing a paper given such a short time to write it?

I wanted to share my own journey – the one-day-at-a-time experience. Perhaps, in addressing the feeling of failure, I could also witness the value of vulnerability. So here goes.

VOCARE HITS HOME

In May 2020, I enrolled in the Inquiry Exploration Program, which includes several day-long workdays and weekly calls. I began to develop my commitment for the world. In its current iteration, my commitment is that everyone knows that who they are matters and that their full self-expression is being called for in the world.

In the program, we engaged in the conversation of who we say we are for the world. On the Inquiries of the Social Commons calls, we started each session by introducing ourselves as our commitment. Previously, my participation in these calls was half-hearted. By registering into Inquiries Exploration, I began to truly recognize these calls

as possibilities.

Apart from giving me an opportunity to develop my commitment, they are a wonderful structure for discovery. I am also looking to impact those, like myself, who are in recovery from addiction.

In this inquiry, I realized that the idea of being called has lived within me since listening to David Swanson, a speaker and career counselor who spoke to a class I attended at Memorial University in Newfoundland in 1984 while working on my bachelor of commerce degree. I was moved by his speech and especially the quote on vocation from the book, “What Color is Your Parachute?,” as defined by Frederick Buechner:

“Vocation” comes from the Latin vocare (to call) and means the work a man is called to do by God. There are all kinds of voices calling you to all different kinds of work, and the problem is to find out which is the voice of God rather than society, say, or the superego, or self-interest.

The kind of work God usually calls you to is the kind of work (a) that you need to do and (b) that the world needs to be done. The place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world’s deep hunger meet (originally published in Wishful Thinking).

This statement on vocation has lived in me for 36 years continuing to call me forward and lighting a path for me to listen for the eternal.

FROM THERE TO HERE

It has taken me awhile to start living my vocation, which is to write and share my life through writing and poetry. Since doing The Landmark Forum in January 2003, I continue to see openings for action.

Yet, I did not do the Forum to find my vocation. I took the course out of a desire to stop drinking after recognizing that my life was not working and I could not figure out how to make it work on my own. Once I reached out to God, a few days later I was introduced to the 12 steps of recovery and attended an Introduction to the Forum.

During those early years after I did the Forum, I chose growth and development over a 12-step recovery program as a tool to quit drinking and did not drink for about seven years. My life improved

as did my relationships and contribution to the world. My wife and I adopted our second child.

I developed a passion for international water and sanitation projects and, through my local Rotary International Club, helped more than 250,000 people have access to sanitation in Nigeria. I helped launch an Adopt a School initiative that continues to grow, and I had a string of successes at work that included becoming the first field sales representative ever to win three consecutive Vice President Sales Club awards.

In May 2006, on the plane ride home from Toronto to St. John's, Newfoundland, after my final weekend for the Wisdom Unlimited course, I created a new reality collage entitled, "I am Being Called." At the same time, I wrote a poem, "My Right Now Declaration." Here is an excerpt:

My Right Now Declaration

*I am being called
into the fray
To speak out
To write
To create beauty
To upset the apple cart
To bring my perspective to the world
To bring access to "all of it"
The access to God
To spirituality
To light
To wisdom
To my communities*



Collage: I am being called.

In 2008, at the Partnership Explorations course, I declared myself to be a poet. This declaration caused a shift in me. Until then, I had only given myself permission to say that I was a person who wrote poetry.

In 2009, I stopped participating in Landmark programs, and it was not long before I relapsed several times into addiction. With each relapse, the consequences became more severe.

The secret life I had led and hidden from most people was coming into the open affecting relationships with my family, work and community. At the end of 2014, I was fired from a job I had in pharmaceutical sales for 23 years. One month later, I walked out on a marriage of 26 years and our two adopted children.

Only then, after using 12-step meetings as an emergency room from my addictive binges for four years, did I show up and finally realize that I knew little about recovery and started to understand the distinct difference between not drinking and being sober. Eventually, I saw the distinction that I had learned in Partnership: "I is bankrupt."

In 2015, I took many steps forward and back. Like a baby learning to walk, I spent a lot of time on my backside. Despite a deep sense of loss from losing time with my children and the shame I felt from being fired, I boldly moved forward in recovery. I chose to document my recovery poetically and started a blog called Beyond the Sandbox. I attended 12-step recovery meetings. I went to rehab for eight weeks and embarked on becoming a financial advisor.

By the middle of the year, I was slipping back into old habits and had quit the job with the financial company. Fear and anxiety reared up. I reached out to Joan Bordow, my Wisdom course leader, who said that whenever she needed a shift in her life, she redid the Forum. I also reached out to Angela Amado, who leads Partnership, to start assisting by stepping into leadership and staying present to conversations for transformation. I met Robyn who was my team leader. Assigned to be the regional leader for Toronto and Denver, I met Lecia Popadopoulus, a writer and fellow poet, who served as a communicator for the course. My life got back on track. I started a sales project position. I joined a Facebook recovery

group called Recovery 2.0.

But, my legs were still wobbly. I stood up and fell. I reviewed the Forum, but then slipped in my sex addiction after a fight with my mom. I got a call from Lecia Popadopoulus and accepted an invitation to work with her and Joseph Barbagallo to create a breakout session for the 2016 Conference for Global Transformation on using poetry as a tool for inquiry. At the same time, I relapsed again in that addiction. I finished my sales project and was once again without work.

Heading to the Advanced Course in December 2015, I experienced an intense uneasy feeling. My recovery was hanging by a thread. Despite the chaos of the previous eight weeks since taking the Forum, I had not taken a drink. Yet, it was finally in that Advanced Course I had a transformational moment I have hung onto.

Ria Bauhofer, the Forum leader, was describing how she led differently from other leaders. Normally she said, a leader will lead for three weekends a month in different places around the world and then have a weekend off. However, she said what she does is lead for a weekend and then spends three weeks in bed recovering from her lupus, an autoimmune disease. But, I do not suffer, she said, I just take action. Walking back to the course the following morning, her statement jolted me, and I said out loud, "Oh, I do not need to suffer ... just take action."

Taking action for me meant focusing on my recovery. Going into a cave, as someone said to me. Going into a cave, as Jesus did after dying, on a Friday, and emerging three days later fully alive. That friend reminded me that he did not know how long I would have to stay in the cave. He was right, I was in there "Longer than Jesus." Taking action in my recovery meant doing the program as it was meant to be done. Getting a sponsor, joining a group and starting work on the 12 steps. The work began.

As I began the work of my recovery, I engaged with Lecia and Joseph, my two fellow poets, and our inquiry. We started weekly calls to discuss our breakout session. We shared poetry, created, and played together. I learned a lot from them about different poetry styles. My writing improved and I began to play a lot more with rhyme. Preparing

for the breakout, I started work on a spoken word introduction and became the creative director for a video that we called “Some of the Many Voices.” In creating that video, my world opened wider to learn about different poets and places where I was uncomfortable. I broke through barriers by contacting poets to ask their permission for us to borrow their voice as we shared ours.

In the end, apart from our breakout session, we also created a Report from the Field in which one of my poems, “Fear Rising,” was published. We also created a poster called “Creating a Poem for the World” that invited contributions from those who dropped by to play with us.

THAT IS THE PROBLEM WITH YOU, GORDON

After restoring integrity in my actions and working the 12 steps, my life began working better. After a few years in independent sales and tourism consulting, I launched a vacation rental company. That was three years ago. My business continues to grow despite this year being a challenge because of the pandemic.

Over the past five years, I have been writing and sharing about my recovery from addiction, the access to God in our lives and how the intersections between spirituality, recovery and conversations for transformation have made a difference in my life. Now, I am putting together my first book of recovery poetry called “From Darkness to Light and Everywhere In-Between.”

Following the 2020 conference, I was excited by my achievement, and I so looked forward to deepening that exploration into the power of being vulnerable.

So, when the shine came off the excitement, I drifted back to earth and my idea started to fade. I felt the sting of defeat and stopped. I remembered this quote:

“You’re only going to do what you’re going to do. People do not do what they want to do; they do what they do. You always do what you do. And you don’t always do what you want, do you? The only time you do what you wanted to do is when it’s coincidentally what you did.”

—Werner Erhard

Of course, I had been stopped many times in the

past. Certainly, over the last five years, I stopped and gave up, staying stuck instead of facing facts. Often, I would retreat, avoid and look away.

I remember so clearly what Angela Amado said to me on one of our coaching calls in 2018, “That’s the problem with you, Gordon. When you are up to your neck in mud, you don’t mind staying there.”

Now it was happening in terms of my inquiry into vulnerability also. I recognized some incompletions regarding the way my 2020 conference journey ended. I was pumped up after we delivered our breakout session. Bringing people to experiencing their “spiritual magnificence” was something that Robyn had expressed as her promise and commitment to the world. The breakout session that we designed and delivered was a wonderful vehicle to provide access to that. Using the tools of being with, creating and sharing art along with meditation, we created a great space for people to experience an access to the eternal. Participants communicated a high degree of excitement to us in the two live sessions that we led.

I believed that we had an opportunity to keep sharing the access to the eternal through that vehicle. My partner did not seem to support that idea. I acknowledge that there was no agreement beforehand to continue the conversation beyond the conference. Despite no agreement, I still made my friend wrong and became frustrated. Communication broke down.

Without my partners, I set out on my own course to explore the power of vulnerability. I did not want to explore this alone, however, not trusting myself to follow through to the end. I sought new people to join this journey.

After making bold declarations about what I was up to, I connected with fellow graduate Heidi Francine Ligouri, a counselor, coach and trained EMDR (eye movement desensitization and reprocessing) trauma resolution therapist in Arizona who was also in Inquiry Explorations. We talked about the possibility of working together. She had taken the inquiry beyond vulnerability to the conversation of disappearing trauma, and I felt as I did not know enough to be playing out there. Of course, that is not the point of inquiry. The point of inquiry is to park what you

know at the door and see what you can discover.

On top of not following up with her, I made up that I was judged for not doing so. I took this opportunity and covered it up with feeling like a failure. Feeling like a failure, my fear of not being good enough or smart enough had me start to shut down and give up on the idea of moving forward.

My past showed up and I started to automatically do the things I do when this feeling of failure covers me like a wet blanket. I hide and make myself small. I also medicate my feelings of inadequacy with food. I stopped going to recovery meetings and buried myself in running my vacation management company. After all, I rationalized that is what is important now.

Constitution of Lies
How does it smell
This feeling of failure
You despise
Does it turn up
Your nose
In its constitution of lies

GM 11-05-2020

I stopped showing up on inquiry calls to avoid looking bad. Though in the Wisdom course, I did not seriously engage in any of the coursework. My creativity started to wane and I stopped writing poetry. I stopped feeling playful. Possibility faded from my view.

Then I experienced regret for declaring what I did publicly. I started to say out loud: Why do I make these commitments and fail to act? Being at the effect of being stopped, resigned or overwhelmed and stuck in my head leaves little room for possibility especially when those feelings start to play a dominant role.

IT IS IN THE NOTICING

During an Inquiry Explorations workday in mid-September, we were asked the questions: What are you willing to discover and what are you not willing to discover? Both questions land in the

world of the known. Being stuck in my head, I could only imagine a negative outcome in terms of what I was engaged in. What I discovered in that inquiry was that there was so much to discover beyond the known.

When I came back to assisting in 2015 for Partnership, I did so to be of service to others and step back into leadership. I never imagined in my wildest dreams that, five years later, I would have participated twice in the conference as a breakout session speaker and would have been published as a poet and author.

When I joined the Recovery 2.0 Facebook group in the summer of 2015, it never occurred to me that I would meet Chantal Linda Hewitt, who was living in Mallorca, Spain. This was not a dating site, and I was there to grow in my recovery. We started talking in late 2015, and, now, five years later, we married on January 8, 2021.

These things would not have been predictable to discover. They were the miracles out beyond the known. What miracles were possible in terms of this inquiry of being stopped and giving up as a part of registering accomplishment?

This question broke the ice for me and invited me to be in this inquiry.

Little Crumbs
There! See!
Little crumbs
Along the path
If I looked closely enough
I would have noticed
The concrete in my boots
No longer solid
Forward movement happening
When was the moment?
Where is the stake in the ground?

GM 9-30-2020

TALKING TO STRANGERS

On September 30, 2020, one day before the

deadline for submitting the paper, I had little time to discover what possibilities exist out of being resigned and asked others to contribute to the inquiry. I reached out to my Toronto Wisdom community and a couple of people expressed their interest in sharing what they thought.

I had a lovely conversation with Margarethe Fink. At 79, Margarethe saw there are things available as a possibility of being resigned. The first thing she saw was to notice whether the commitment is still alive. If the commitment is still alive, then she would find ways to put the commitment into action. Much like the Seven Stages of a Conversation, she would have put in structures to remember rather than forget, strengthen and build support and put in play to enliven her commitment. She also said that she does not make herself wrong.

On the flipside, Margarethe also said that if she looked at the commitment and saw it was not still alive in her that she could declare it complete. Declaring it complete frees you to discover new things.

Another graduate, Francizka Trauttmansdorff, also saw that being resigned pointed out to her places she was uncomfortable dealing with. For example, she saw that she was being resigned about cleaning out her office. She saw that the resignation is there because she would need to deal with the fact she used her office for her business and now her business is no longer in existence.

Too often, we humans make the act of stopping wrong. We make giving up wrong. We make meaning out of it and it limits our growth and development. It is not that stopping is part of registering accomplishment. The important thing is to notice the stopping, notice the places you give up, distinguish those places and then take action once again.

ACCEPTING OUR HUMANNESS

On a morning Wisdom call, course leader Peter Defreitas read from “The Book of Awakening,” by Mark Nepo:

“Sit quietly and recall a lighted moment in which life appeared especially clear to you. Now, recall

a moment in which you hurt yourself or a loved one and feel the result of your clumsiness. Without judging yourself, hold that earthly reminder of your humanness in that clearness and let the two soften each other.

Enter your day with both clarity and compassion for your humanness.”

The author points out that although we aspire to self-mastery and peace of mind, we are only whole moment by moment. As we become willing to discover, more worlds open and surprising new things suddenly appear in front of us.

When I reflect on how being resigned allows me to see if my commitment is alive, I see that wanting to explore the power of being vulnerable is alive in me still, and it is part of my larger commitment to the world.

Being in recovery and looking to make the difference for others, I have witnessed the importance of acceptance and living life on its terms. In recovery, we say that we will neither regret the past nor wish to shut the door on it. Doing the work of listening and sharing allows us to learn from others as well as to be of service. It also allows for freedom from the effect of the experience of failure. Each time we share, the power of the feeling softens.

A close friend in recovery shared with me the importance of being able to sit in your feelings. Sitting in your feelings without looking away, without needing to medicate them, enables you to act despite how you are feeling.

In the conversations of transformation, we say that it is important to be with the what’s so. Then once we can be with how life is in that moment, we can look out here to see what there is to do next.

As we move forward on our commitments, there are many places along the way where we can be stopped. It is in the noticing when we have opportunities to move beyond. It is in these defining moments that we can remember the words of Ria Bauhofer, “But I do not suffer, I just take action.”

After not writing poetry all summer and having dulled my creative expression, saying yes to going for it and writing this paper allows for shifts to occur in other areas.

I have started to choose community on a regular basis. Choosing community for me is exploring vulnerability both in myself and others. Going on the inquiry calls also allows me to refine my commitment to the world and see the places where I am stuck, places where I resist, places which are flowing in me. Miracles are showing up beyond what could be predicted that allow me to create and witness beauty.

When I started in this inquiry, I was still upset at myself for quitting the inquiry into vulnerability, still suffering in the light of failure as John O’Donohue, an Irish writer and poet, speaks about in his poem, “For Failure,” which opened this paper. Yet, he later expresses that the light of failure “invites us to humility. And the painstaking work of acceptance. So that one day we may look back in recognition and appreciation at the disappointment we now endure.”

I, too, am beyond that initial sting. Writing this paper was a cathartic exercise. At times, the light of failure was too bright and I needed to stop and look away. Allowing, reaching for community and sharing cleared the space. Heidi Francine Ligouri and I have reconnected and we look forward to the possibility of continuing the conversation and what is available beyond the known.

My friend, Robyn, is pursuing a new project right now. She is committed to painting a new picture of a hummingbird each day for 30 days as a part of an art project. On the day that I said yes to creating this paper, Robyn sent me some pictures of her hummingbirds and asked if I would write a poem for her.

Hummingbird

*Come talk to me little one
Mighty on the wing
Your soul alive on fire
Whisper me secrets
Of love of union
Your dance with
God and angels*

GM 9-25-2020

ENDNOTES

1 O’Donohue, J. “To Bless the Space Between Us: A Book of Blessings.” (New York: Convergent, 2008).
2 The Conference for Global Transformation is an annual event that brings together Wisdom course graduates from around the world.
3 The Inquiry Explorations Program. Landmark offers a variety of programs and licensed technology. San Francisco, CA.
4 Bolles, R.N. “What Color is Your Parachute.” (Berkeley, CA: Ten Speed Press, 1983).
5 The Landmark Forum is the three-day flagship course and a prerequisite for all other courses and programs. The Advanced Course is a three-day course that follows the Forum.
6 The Wisdom Unlimited course is a nine-month course offered by Landmark. San Francisco, CA.
7 www.gordondrmartinblog.wordpress.com.
8 The Partnership Explorations course is a 10-month course offered by Landmark.
9 www.beyondthesandbox2015.wordpress.com.
10 www.facebook.com/groups/Recovery2point0.
11 “Longer than Jesus.” www.beyondthesandbox2015.wordpress.com.
12 The Conference for Global Transformation is an annual event that brings together Wisdom course graduates from around the world.
13 The Wisdom Unlimited course is a nine-month course offered by Landmark.
14 Nepo, M. “The Book of Awakening: Having the Life You Want by Being Present to the Life You Have.” (San Francisco: Conari Press, 2000).
15 O’Donohue, J. “To Bless the Space Between Us: A Book of Blessings.” (New York: Convergent, 2008).



Hummingbird painting by Robyn Maitland

RECOVERED? NO, BUT RENEWED, REFRESHED, A RECREATED SELF

ROSE HAMPTON

Abstract

Intention: to bring attention to the need for and impact of bringing parity to mental, physical and spiritual well-being. My paper begins by sharing emotional traumas in my life and my unrelenting bravado to keep my promise to myself to “best” my mom. I recount my eventual breakdown and journey with the medical community, then with myself back to wholeness and freedom. I share my insights, discoveries and conclusions, including recreation of my relationship with my mother and shared conversations with others that provoked taking a stand on this issue and generated an inquiry into possibility.

INTRODUCTION

It’s a crisp, September 2020 morning in North Carolina. The clouds in the sky are playful. I can imagine they are puffy cheeks and smiling faces tumbling into one another. In the midst of a worldwide pandemic, air traffic is scant, but I spot one small jet in the far distance making its way to Charlotte Douglas Airport. Nothing is the way it was a year and a half ago.

I’m taking a walk and contemplating what I want to share in this paper. Come. Walk with me awhile and perhaps you will listen to me deeply enough for my expression to arise and we’ll be partners in my fulfilling on my promise to share. Here we go.

I catch myself holding my breath every time I think about what happened to me starting about 11 a.m. one Sunday morning in April of 2019. I characterize it as a near-death experience, the arduous journey back to life and the roadside treasures I discovered along the way. To give you a sense of what happened and how it came to happen, I’ll create the landscape by sharing a few vignettes from my life.

“MOTHERLESS CHILD” ¹

Growing up, I had, at best, an arm’s length relationship with my mother. Mom suffered a nervous breakdown when I was five or six years old and she was hospitalized often over the next 13 or so years of my life. She wasn’t there for me,

not really; she was not like the moms that my girlfriends had.

One Saturday afternoon I was at a neighbor’s home, playing in the yard with my best friend. I was seven, maybe eight years old. My friend’s mom came outside and asked me to go home because it was time for my friend to go in for lunch and they had family plans afterwards. I think that I was embarrassed and feeling hurt.

What about me? No one was at my house preparing lunch. My mom was away, again, and my dad was working. In that moment, I decided, I had to take care of myself and I vowed to do it. I would be obedient, mostly, and outwardly respectful because it was not optional in our family. But, unwittingly, I had declared my independence from my mother. I would be better, stronger, smarter and count-on-able.

As the eldest daughter of six children, I also chose to be caregiver for my younger brothers and sisters. We all deserved better. I had no way of knowing that I had roughly carved my future. Caregiver par excellence for the next 60 years. One thing I did know for certain: I was not going to be anything like my mother. Then, life happened. It’s complicated. I’ll just get to the grit.

At 17, I got pregnant. Oh my God – just like my mom and the next twist of my life journey is set in motion. Then more zigzags. I married against all counsel and barely three years pass. Confounded, I find myself pregnant with my third child, heading a single-parent household, working at an entry-level job and relying on welfare to close the gap. Was this really my life? I didn’t ask myself, “Can I do this?” I just knew I must. “I am responsible, you can count on me and I will be here for you my darlings,” I told myself. “Suck it up, girl,” and I did. Month by month, year by year.

YOU WIN SOME

On a snowy New England Saturday morning, after seven years of living in tenements and housing projects, I move my little family into our first house. It is a charming 101-year-old colonial in the historic district of South Norwalk, Connecticut. My children have a backyard of their own. If their friends were there at lunchtime, they were always

invited to join us.

The purchase of our home is evidence that I have achieved an increased level of financial independence. At the same time, I assumed increased responsibility at work. My daughter, the youngest of three, had been diagnosed as “mentally retarded,” the 1970s terminology for what we now call special needs.

So far, I’m handling all of it. The house, which required a lot of time, attention and resources, was always tidy. I made sure the laundry was clean, pressed and folded. I made nutritious home-packed lunches and home-cooked meals every evening for my children. We attended church on Sunday. I went to Parent Teacher Association meetings, Little League baseball practices and games and took on special work assignments whenever I was asked to. Whew!

NAVIGATING LOSSES

It never occurred in my thinking that I am pushing the boundaries of balance, but my body is keeping score. About a year after we move into our home, I was diagnosed with breast cancer on the right. It didn’t stop there. Two years later, breast cancer on the left. I only wanted to be well and take care of my kids, really. I was still a long way from being enlightened enough to realize that I was playing the starring role in how my life was unfolding. I’ll give you a taste of how I was doing it.

One of my neighbors visited me in the hospital after my first surgery. We talked and laughed. After about 40 minutes, she said, “Wow, I’m so glad I came to see you, and I’m so glad it’s not true.”

“What’s not true,” I asked. “The neighborhood chat is that you had breast cancer and had to have a mastectomy.” “I did,” I say. Obviously stunned, she asks, “How could you be sitting here laughing and talking with me as if nothing has happened?” I replied, “What can I do about it now?”

Now, looking back, I see that I had compartmentalized my grief, anger and upset because I knew I had to get on with life. I had to manage the job, house, single, special parenting and all the accoutrements that were my measures of success. I was intent to handle it all.

Fast-forward another seven years and challenges continue to unfold. A treasured relationship with the someone special who had come into my life ends in upset. My oldest son is incarcerated for drug-related offenses. My second son is barely speaking to me because he blames me for his brother's problems. I blame my ex-husband. We had won a contentious lawsuit against the Board of Education for failure to provide my daughter with an education appropriate to her special needs. Now she is about to graduate from the wonderful private school she had been attending and the structure it provided. I worry, what's next for her? I put our 101-year-old lovely colonial house on the market and intentionally buy a two-bedroom condo that is not spacious enough to be the central hosting place for every family activity or out-of-town visitor. Something's beginning to move in me that whispers: Too much...but what?

MOVEMENT

The lawyer, who represented us in the lawsuit against the Board of Education, had introduced me to The Landmark Forum.² The old colonial is slow to sell and I promise that I will participate in the program when I get free from two mortgage payments. The person that I was speaking with suggested “perhaps registering into the course will presence an intention that life can fulfill on and you can have what you want.” Sounded rather whimsical to me but I'm all for playing a game to see what happens. I registered into the course. Call it coincidence or whatever you like, the house sold the following week. The conversations of the course and follow-up seminars are empowering and offer a degree of freedom from guilt, blame and shame. Likely, this is, subconsciously, a source of some relief from the buildup of emotional baggage from the past.

In the fall of 1992, my company asked me to relocate to Colorado to establish an office there. I declined the offer. Then, on New Year's morning, I awoke, clear that I would inquire and accept the assignment if it was still available. As things happened, my special needs daughter now has a two-year-old special needs daughter of her own, quite against my counsel. Whatever made me think I had a say? I wrestled for custody of my granddaughter through the courts and won. I then

headed for Colorado where all the two of us knew was each other. My daughter eventually followed. Looking back, I say I see my flight to Colorado as my life longing for itself, for true self-expression, for freedom.

A few years and many untold stories later, I was called to corporate headquarters in Richmond, Virginia and offered a senior leadership position. So, here we are, me, my granddaughter and... are you ready for this...awaiting the arrival of a baby brother being sent to us by the Colorado Department of Human Services. It came as no surprise that my daughter was unable to properly care for the child. I was of the mind but not the heart to say no. I threatened her. “You will undergo permanent birth control.” I insisted. How long was I going to be the victim?

Life seemed to accelerate. I accepted the position in Virginia and, in less than two years, found myself supervising 500 people in three cities on two continents. I had this vibrant, prosperous, success story at work. My private life was in tatters. I was, once again, navigating the social services and educational systems for not one but two grandchildren with disabilities. In November 2002, my oldest son was released from prison, but he was not rehabilitated. He continued making poor associations and was fatally shot during a domestic dispute. Choices. The following Christmas Eve, my disabled daughter died leaving her two special needs offspring to my permanent care. I had gained 140 pounds during the previous 15 years. Everything in my closet was midnight blue, dark gray or black. Losing two children in one-year recolored my emotional palette in much the same way and irrevocably changed my outlook on life. My heart starts skipping beats.

SURRENDER

I had 35 years of service with my company and no stamina to resume my corporate accountabilities. Following my leave of absence to attend to my daughter's passing, I requested and was granted an early retirement. I built a house in North Carolina, left corporate life, personal loss and Virginia behind and moved to North Carolina with my two grandchildren.

For the next four years, it seemed all I could

manage was to attend to my grandkids. I was working my way through the depression of “my story” – failed relationships, failed parenting, unable to save my own children – a ruined life.

One February morning in 2009, I awoke and by now I had become so ill I could barely manage my household. I cried out to God, “Tell me what to do to save my life.” Immediately, what occurred to me, like the whisper of the Eternal was “go sit in the Forum.” What? I had lost track of Landmark when I moved to Colorado and not been around their programs for 14 years. I found the New York center phone number, made my way to the phone and registered into the May Forum in Greensboro, North Carolina. Sitting in the Forum I saw that I was heartbroken over not being able to save my children and I was literally breaking my own heart. I had a heart-to-heart conversation with my cardiologist. We recreated my treatment plan, and, so, I began to recover.

At the completion of the Forum, I registered into the Advanced Course.³ This course is an opportunity to apply the new tools and practices of the course not just to your personal life, but bring them to your community. I had my first big opening with my mother.

I saw for the first time that she had mothered me the very best way she could in light of what she was dealing with. I considered and could only imagine what it must have been like to sit in a psychiatric ward, heavily medicated, straining to wonder, worry about the well-being of your children. I wrote my mother a letter, then we talked on the phone and we cried together – tears for all the years we hadn't been friends.

I insist it was my personal growth and development inside of the Landmark curriculum and community that supported me, freeing me to be in life purposefully and even playfully over the next 10 years. I created the possibility of supporting my grandchildren living in the community independently with support and having time for myself to quietly, or not, enjoy my golden years. After more than 60 years of caregiving, I claimed that I had more than earned it.

JUST WHEN I THOUGHT ...

That brings us to a fateful day in the spring 2019

when something uncanny happens to me. It was early on a beautiful Sunday morning. Trees were just beginning to leaf a vivid green. They had such a lovely, lacy elegance about them. I was driving to church on a very lightly traveled stretch of highway, loving the spring day blooming outside the window, listening to a book on tape, totally relaxed and, then, out of seemingly nowhere, the most incomprehensible and frightening experience of my entire lifetime happened.

I have no language to recreate the moment, no words that do it justice. In an instant, every cell of my body seems disconnected and I felt as if I were coming apart and that I could literally dissipate. Crazy huh? Panic! My racing heart had me gasping for air. What can I do? I don't know if it's a good or a bad thing that there is no other traffic on the road. I could crash, hurt somebody but I was too frightened to pull over, fearful that I would just die on the side of the road because no one would even know or notice I was in trouble. So, I rolled down the window, cool air rushed in and I started praying like crazy. I struggled to stay present, to keep the car in one lane. I finally made it to the next exit and, thankfully, my church was just around the corner. By then, it occurred to me that I wasn't going to die imminently so I just sat there taking deep breaths to steady and calm myself, fluttering heart and pounding head.

MY YELLOW BRICK ROAD

Monday morning began my medical journey with five doctors and a physical therapist attempting to unravel what hell had visited me and why. No two practitioners agreed on a diagnosis. The neurologist thought one thing, the ear, nose and throat specialist another. The cardiologist was clear that the problem wasn't anything new with my heart. But, in its own way, it was, indeed, a matter of the heart.

My primary care doctor studied all the possibilities, looking for something conclusive and sided with the ear, nose and throat specialist. They concur: vestibular migraines are the cause. Neurology thought it could be migraines but more likely a panic attack. Drugs, no, no, no. I had never heard of a vestibular migraine, but the physical therapy was improving my balance. Panic? How could that be? I was completely relaxed. Yet, I had

so much tension, my breath was shallow. I saw my chiropractor/naturopath just so she could adjust my body regularly, keeping me from creating new problems from my persistently clenched neck, shoulders and jawline. All in all, this unsettling collaboration attempt didn't answer my questions and in no way provided the relief I was seeking.

There had to be an alternative, something would heal what needed healing. That was all I could think about. I would, once again, have to take care of myself. I began looking for my own pathway back to wholeness. It was natural for prayer, meditation and gratitude to be my foundation because, honestly, every morning that I opened my eyes, I was flooded with thanks and appreciation I was alive for one more day to try to figure it out.

In the meantime, I dealt with a pain in my head that had more color and texture and weight and unfamiliar sensations than I have ever known a headache to have. It seemed to be a headache with no end in sight. Sometimes my heart raced. Sometimes, I was off balance. I worry. In the presence of all the sensations, I couldn't seem to think straight. I can't stay focused and I don't want to.

My only respite is to virtually step out of my body and just be. I was trying to find a place in time and space where I could continue to function, for thinking to occur and allow inspiration to arise in me. I struggled with self-care, to remember to drink water, take a walk and breathe deeply. Then when all else failed, I knew to just pick up the phone and share with someone who would listen and encourage me in the being of "All is well."

One learned colleague suggested, "Rose, you may be more present now than you ever have been." It rang all too true. It is a day-at-a-time odyssey, a pilgrimage searching my body, mind and spirit. I was determined to be present to anything and everything contributing to my dis-ease. Odd to say, but my body was doing exactly what it knew to do in the response to an abrupt unleashing of 50 years of emotional debris. I ended up siding with the neurologist: stress, panic disorder or maybe even post-traumatic stress disorder of a sort (my enhancements, not his).

WHO'S BEHIND THE CURTAIN

By September 2019, I am sufficiently well to travel and do some Landmark coursework. One of the conversations during the course was an inquiry into the possible impact of our primary caregiver, maybe even from conception, on the lifestyle model that we construct. I think it's accurate to say I discovered just how true the adage, "like mother, like daughter," is for me.

After considering, and questioning and digesting, I fully accept that. My mom dealt with her own incomplete and undistinguished emotional turbulence in the only way she knew how, and I did precisely the same – working out life in my way. I misinterpreted our style differences as "nothing like her." My illusion. It occurs to me that pushing her away at such an early age actually prevented me from really knowing her and, therefore, myself. My mom loved me and, eyes opened, I love her back.

I've left out many highpoints of my life such as the opportunity I've had to travel the world and the many accolades I've received for my professional successes. These did help put weights on the plus side of the scale along the way, and that's part of the point. Life seeks its own balance, doesn't it? Guided by an organic "bio" "logical" intelligence of its own, our bodies largely function without any assistance or direction from us. My body sustained me through an unimaginable level of emotional turbulence and trauma built up over many years. I am deeply grateful.

That I finally awoke to the miracle and full appreciation of my body and its management of the assault on my brain that fateful spring day is what got me thinking about how our health care system is currently organized. We seem to live life largely consistent with social norms and, in so doing, accept most social constructs.

Our health care system is one of those. We have a primary care physician and are referred to specialists as deemed necessary. I adhered to that construct, and I believe it failed me. I am not blaming. I take responsibility for my every indulgence and avoidance. I still think the current health care construct here in the United States is woefully short-sighted. The Office of Disease Prevention is a division of the U.S. Department

of Health and Human Services. They publish an annual measure of life expectancy of Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development member countries as a representation of the overall health status of a population. The United States ranks 34th!

I started wondering what role does whole health care – body, mind and spirit – really play in the cultural, political and environmental issues that we face today? I opened up and started talking to people. Here's what I heard:

- One of my guests at a small gathering thanked me for being open with her about what had been going on with me. She shared that she was fairly certain she was experiencing depression as the result of an impending divorce and had been hiding it because she was embarrassed for anyone to know. Her newfound freedom to share made it easier for me to be open about my own life.
- A friend in my neighborhood said, "I think this is very similar to what my husband is going through. However, he won't even entertain the conversation."
- A colleague and I talk most Friday mornings. She listened and then replied, "I know what you're talking about; it happened to me. I was also driving. You made it to the exit, I pulled over and the next thing I remember was waking up in the psychiatric ward of a hospital." What are the odds of that? Greater than expected, it seems.
- A close friend had brain surgery as a teenager. He has undergone numerous MRI scans over the years and has never had an issue tolerating the procedure.⁴ A few weeks ago, he suffered a severe panic attack during the process and was unable to complete the test. Where did that come from?

According to the U.S. Center for Disease Control and Prevention's 2019 statistics, 19% or approximately 48 million adults in the U.S. experience a mental health disorder in a given year. That's one of every five adults and it's actually one in four women. My conversations suggested that number could be even higher.

If we just talk to each other, we can hear for ourselves these issues and challenges are far more prevalent than most of us recognize or want to admit.

When I think about the world we live in – the rate of technological change, global climate change and the impacts, the divisive political and cultural environments – what's the trajectory of what we refer to as mental health in our country and in the world? Harvard Medical School cites mental disorders as the major overlooked challenge to population health both in the United States and globally. It is not in our best interest to continue to tolerate such an important societal construct that falls far short of supporting and making a real difference in our quality of life.

WHO WILL SPEAK FOR US? HOW WILL WE BE HEARD?

I will have a say! I am a stand for a health and well-being structure that focuses on body, mind and spirit. Ah, there it is. The habitual propensity even starts with the word "body" and maybe that's where the shift must begin. I propose spirit, mind and body professionals radically rethink "wholeness" health care and the difference it could make.

WHAT IF?

What if the true north star of our health care construct is "wellness-" rather than "illness-" oriented?

Imagine a scenario where an annual health care visit begins with a spiritual advisor, psychologist or practitioner of Qigong, a methodology that coordinates body posture and movement, breathing and meditation for the purposes of health, spirituality and martial arts training?

On then to the nutritionist, physical therapist or naturopathic team. Then one's composite is given to what I would call a "cumulative" care doctor, who can then address any present or impending body issues based on the analysis of all areas of emotional, physical and spiritual challenges which have been aggregated over the past year and what it might suggest.

Seems to me, if this approach had been in place,

it would not have been possible for me to pack away 50 years of stresses and tip the scales at the apex of my weight gain at 340 pounds. But I did. Could I have avoided the surgeon’s knife time and again or not racked up nearly two million dollars of billed lifetime health care costs if my wellness had been approached from a different point of view?

What if the U.S. Food and Drug Administration was under the direction of that kind of health and human services philosophy? Would the over 10,000 potentially harmful chemical substances currently permitted as food additives persist?

What if comprehensive wellness care was delivered in school starting in kindergarten and continued through high school and even university? What would a curriculum look like in a symbiotic relationship between well-being and well-educated? What might we then learn about healthy development and educational capacity? Would abuse, neglect and malnourishment be detected, addressed and then significantly diminished? Could we figure out how to measure fear and anger? Could that somehow level the playing field of equity, self-esteem, privileged and underprivileged for our young? Could comprehensive wellness care diminish the possibility of a 16-year-old showing up in a school yard with an AK-47?

What if the penal system was “wholeness-” oriented? Punish and heal.

What if we, the people of the United States, in order to form a more perfect union, establish justice, ensure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity...what if? What if?

We could keep this inquiry going looking for the differences that could be made. I posit it is possible that the health care community can take an unwavering stance for change and become the tipping point for the reconstruction of social norms in our country. Some refer to the power that the pharmaceutical industry has keeping things the way they are. I understand. I also believe that unseeable forces of nature, the universe, the eternal, whatever you name it, is pulling for the survival of life itself. If we

are unwilling to settle for anything less than the integrity of life itself, what could be possible? What could that look like? How do we learn how to have our hearts speak and our voices heard? When do we begin?

WALKING, MUSING, THINKING

As I walked the pathway of my healing, I got in touch with my body in a way I had not been present to ever before. I thank my body daily for all the heavy lifting it did for me for years even though I was not present to what was required to store or manage all of the emotional turbulence that I had not distinguished, dealt with or completed over all the years past. I cried. I cried out. I apologized. I have forgiven, and I have let go. I eat better. I start most mornings with a two-mile walk in the fresh early morning air. Oh, that brings us back to where we started this conversation... and nothing is the way it was a year and a half ago. Thanks for walking with me.

I am that – “By 2030, ‘Wholeness’ in healthcare: Spirit, Mind and Body are leading the recreation of the Constitution of the United States of America and key social norms in this country.”

ENDNOTES

- 1 “Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child,” a classic African-American spiritual that first came to wide public prominence when it was performed by the Fisk Jubilee Singers in the 1870s.
- 2 The Landmark Forum is the three-day flagship course and a prerequisite for all other courses and programs in Landmark.
- 3 The Advanced Course is a three-day course that follows the Forum.
- 4 Magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) uses a large magnet and radio waves to look at organs and structures inside your body.

THE TIP OF THE NEEDLE:
CAUSING MIRACLES BY
BEING PRESENT

NINA MASTER

Abstract
A shift in consciousness and life comes in many variations. My quest is to move deeper into discovering how and why shifts occur instantly simply by being present. In studying and practicing East Asian Meridian Therapy, I found a surprising connection between treatments that result in dramatic body changes and the resulting ripple effects on living life. Eighteen years ago, I experienced a miracle. I call it the magic of causing miracles from being present. What followed was an abundance of love, invigoration and connectedness I had never seen and experienced before.

INTRODUCTION

My clinical practice of East Asian Meridian Therapy, a kind of acupuncture, is in Karalee, a suburb of Brisbane, Australia. Over time, I learned that something as simple as holding the tip of an acupuncture needle above the skin can cause a split-second and profound shift that alters the mechanism of the body. Specifically, I could see improvement in the breathing and an invigoration that causes a feeling of lightness as though a great volume of fluid has moved through the veins in the body. In Western medicine, we call this circulation. How does this shift happen and what causes this phenomenon? Eventually, I found out that it is not the needle that does this work. It is the person holding the needle causing the miracles.

In 2002, I joined nearly 50 practitioners from around the world to attend the first Japanese

Toyohari Global Conference. Toyohari is a kind of Japanese acupuncture. Near the end of the conference, I found myself standing in front of an 89-year-old Japanese master who was blind. He offered to treat me in the last three minutes of the session.

I have always suffered back pain. After standing for long periods during four days of intense workshops, I was experiencing spasms, aches and severe discomfort with movement in my lower back. Lying on the treatment table, I saw five other practitioners standing around me.

Our master teacher, or sensei, in Japanese, called Yanagishita, appeared focused and attuned with what he was doing. No one dared intrude on his flow. Suddenly, he spoke, “You may have a sore back now and say you are unable to stand, but in

three minutes of me treating you, you will be like a squirrel running down the steps.” I noticed the sensei placing the tip of the needle delicately to the surface of my skin, holding it gently without movement.

Then I did just what he said. After three minutes of treatment, the pain disappeared. I had no pain, no tension, no sore back.

How did he do that and how is this possible, I wondered.

The sensei continued, “As practitioners, you need to practice what you are giving out to that patient daily. Have patience and then you may develop the technique with the skill I have demonstrated. It will only take 20 years to master that needle technique. So have focus, be one with the other and you will see what miracles will happen in the person’s body in front of you that will create change in their health.”

At that moment, I recognized and acknowledged that there is more to this art of East Asian Meridian Therapy than I could comprehend. I recognized that performance of a skillful technique with utmost focus and being present can create miraculous things. I thought: Maybe this is where I am to find being present in all of my life.

Thus, I was led to this inquiry to assess: Am I being present? Five years later, I experienced what that meant.

What I am about to say comes from a unique and auspicious arena of conversation. Please take your time on this journey to discover the power of producing a shift in another’s physical transformation and in their being present.

I trust, as you read this paper, you will remember situations and moments in your life that were unexplainable but, nonetheless, real. In my past, I have grappled with what it means to be present. So many books and material offer explanations of this subject. From four years of age, I have been in search to “be present.”

I spent my childhood in India with my grandfather while my parents remained in New Zealand. Although my grandfather was generous and loving, I missed my parents greatly and kept

wondering, “When are they going to be flying down from the sky in our car to come and get me?” I felt as though I was being abandoned. In my sadness and yearning for them, I was distracted much of the time and developed a rich fantasy life. I knew something was wrong, but decided it was better to dream than to deal with reality.

Looking back, my assumption is that the mind’s natural tendency when I faced pain was to attempt to avoid it by resisting unpleasant thoughts, feelings and sensations. When we lose love, for instance, we fight our feelings of heartbreak. As we get older, we work feverishly to recapture our moment of that time, in my case, my childhood.

When I was with my grandfather, I always noticed that there was an abundance of love and generosity. When I was with him, I was a princess, not in a storybook, but in real life. At that age, I started differentiating between real and unreal, being with someone in reality as opposed to thinking and being in my dream state.

Still searching in the early 1990s, I read many self-awareness books and attended seminars and workshops in spirituality, Chinese philosophy and growth, training and development. All these things gave me access, but not the actual experience, of being present.

As an adult, my mind usually wandered off to a mythical place when I was not interested, couldn’t comprehend or didn’t want to listen or be told something. I created stories, not from reality, but from memories, judgments, perceptions and illusions that I made up in the moment. Even now, I spend most of my time thinking. I would like to think less.

When speaking to another, I am constantly aware of what is happening around me. It is all about me/I/What do I look like?/How is this coming across?/Why won’t they listen?/Am I saying the right thing?/Am I being heard?/Am I making a difference?, etc. Even though I am constantly engaged in a monologue, I am aware of the presence around me. When I consciously bring myself to the present moment, I can become one with life in its true form. Knowing of this presence around me sometimes has me glimpse an awareness that does not involve any thoughts.

When I notice things around me, I notice things without thinking about another. I just notice.

In the moment, when I am present, then look briefly around me noticing things in what I do, it shifts my attention away from thoughts and puts my attention on what’s happening around me where I am (as in the I in my body) is no longer there.

There is much to be said about having one’s attention on words and thoughts or having attention on what’s actually happening. I notice myself choosing where to put my attention.

If I choose to have attention on my thoughts (my made-up stories in monologue), these thoughts tend to be potent and take over, leading to illusions, which, in turn, conceal and tarnish the truth about what happens around me.

From another perspective, if my attention is on the presence around me or noticing things around me without thought, then those things and the presence will overrule the thought. This creates an opening to have possibilities arise and new beginnings to be created.

I was told by our Japanese master, “If something and someone is important enough to you, you will be present to what you are doing for that human being. It is then that you will master the art of this work. Qi is always there; it just needs to be accessed and distributed appropriately.”

What is Qi (pronounced Chi)? Another word for Qi is energy. Qi flows. It moves in and out, up and down, sideways, in circles or spirals, etc.

Qi resides in everything and everywhere. Qi is in our body, the source that brings life into existence and balance. Qi is the way we move our hands or blink our eyes. It is the way the trees blow, the rivers flow, how mountains develop and everything that makes this universe work and not work. My interpretation is that there is no life without Qi. All living organisms have Qi that flow through them.

The present is when we can be the most powerful as it is “the now,” the “live” moment of time. When Qi is experienced the most, it is in that moment where opportunity resides, choices exist and one

can focus on all their senses to give to another in the richness of life and experience in their own body. For example, when you smile at someone, they will often smile at you.

In 2007, the moment finally happened while I was treating a patient. I realized that I was in my thoughts which had no relevance to the treatment I was to perform. I was not aware of what the patient was saying. The moment I noticed this, shame came upon me. I realized the person in front of me had put total trust in me to do the right thing by them. I realized that I was working on someone’s body, on someone’s life. What right did I have to be thinking outside of the purpose of what I was supposed to be doing for this person?

In that split second, I asked myself, “Am I totally focused on what I am doing with my treatment for this human being? They have put their life in my hands. How am I so disconnected in this work/their space?” This overwhelming realization caused an impact on me. Instantly, I focused my full attention on that human being. I knew in that moment my thoughts needed to be put aside. My purpose was to focus and make a difference for that human being.

I put my all in treating the person. I applied the needle technique at the surface of the skin on the precise point selected for their individual diagnosis.

Here, I discovered what it means to be fully present and cause something profound in my patient’s body. In that split second, I noticed a dramatic breath change. The patient commented, “I’m feeling something weird in my head, and this is the first time in years I have been able to take a breath down to my belly.”

I asked, “Does your head feel better or worse? Is it like a headache or something else?”

The patient replied, “Wow, yes, better, that’s amazing!” She started crying and said, “Thank you, I haven’t been well for years and have done so much to help myself, but this is the first time I have been able to breathe better. Is my body supposed to feel tingling?”

I asked, “What do you mean? Is it a good feeling or is it something else?”

She said, “Not bad. I don’t know what it is because I have never felt this before. I feel weird and haven’t experienced this before.”

For a few seconds, I stood aside in silence. “How do you feel now?,” I asked. “Are you OK?” I continued.

She said, “Oh my! I have never felt this way before. I feel really good. I don’t feel tired anymore. I feel like I want to get up and do something like go for a walk. My head doesn’t feel like brain fog anymore. I feel lighter. I haven’t felt like this for so long. How did you do that?”

I knew then that I got “It” – meaning being present and seeing what it can do for another when I am present to access the Qi through the needle tip to the patient’s body as my master had done for me five years earlier.

How often have we heard the expression “to be in stillness?” For us to stop doing and focus on being. For me, the profound moment had me see something that has moved in another’s physical body. To be present, stillness requires the mind as no mind. We don’t need to push away thoughts or grasp our illusionary ideas. We can allow ourselves to live by awakening to experience.

In the stillness of being present, if I am coming from a neutral place with no thought or emotion, nothing less and nothing more, I submit that another human being can receive something, which could lead them to become happier and more exuberant, feel more security and empathy. In other words, they could experience a self-awareness that they have not experienced before. In my experience in this treatment, I noticed the uniqueness of this oneness.

In my life, I have found being present allows me to create abundance in another from nothing. Not to fight what is in thoughts but to let it be without interpretation or judgment. What will show up are satisfaction, connection, love and affinity for another as they will experience a form of wholeness.

When one is present, people experience a wholeness of being with themselves and you. There are forms inside of this movement, and it is comforting that this form of awakening is

where there are no judgments, no expectations or holding onto thoughts about something or someone. There is oneness.

Have you ever noticed that the space of being present is where one experiences themselves as part of the greater universe, part of humanity and one with all? There is so much joy in seeing another light up and be happy in this space they experience. Such an experience needs no words. Is it always the experience of acceptance and oneness?

Since I had that profound experience, I have seen other patients who felt something in their bodies that filled them with joy when they experienced the shift. Also, I’ve noticed that life works best when I am present.

In trying to explain exactly how this happens, I see that if we decrease our ego and allow ourselves to be present – in my case with a patient – there is a connection, one with what is out there, each other and the universe. The connection increases emotional impulses and sparks action, rebooting responses thoughtfully and without thought, rather than automatically. This creates a powerful effect on interacting with each other.

In my case, I place my awareness on what’s happening at the tip of the needle to the precise point on that person’s body and the energy moves to do its work. This propels me to a powerful momentary interaction of being present for another which causes a shift in their body. This pure intent in my interaction to assist, be and act causes a profound response in their being that they, in turn, notice a magical shift happen not only in their body but in their response.

Being present with intent but no thoughts in the moment is what psychologists call flow.¹ Flow occurs when you are so engrossed in doing something that you have no sense of your surroundings and lose track of everything around you with no thought. Have you asked yourself, “How can you be living in the present if you’re not even aware of what present is?”

You become powerfully absorbed and deeply engaged in what you are doing, keeping the attention so focused that distractions cannot penetrate. Hours can pass without you noticing

the passage of time. An example of this is painting, gardening or surfing and noticing you have been so intent and involved in your activity that hours have moved on.

Since my discoveries in getting a glimpse of what presence is, I have accomplished many things. I have had the privilege of working with various medical practitioners to create holistic health integration in their clinics. Also, I have brought together practitioners of integrative medicine, which combines Eastern and Western medical modalities, to hold a forum for the public to answer their questions.

These forums have now been expanded to Sydney and Melbourne conferences. In the Brisbane Toyohari acupuncture community, I have organized workshops and meetings for practitioners to collect ideas, create strategies and use information to advance their work. Currently, as the academic dean of Toyohari Queensland Branch, Australia, I am leading my community in researching strategies to prevent disease patterns from injuries.

One of the most rewarding achievements is that I have the privilege of connecting with my patients. Together, we cause miracles in their recovery, health and lives. This is making a difference in someone’s life!

ENDNOTES

¹ Flow is a mental state, also known as “being in the zone,” in which a person is fully immersed in an activity with a feeling of energized focus, full involvement and enjoyment, according to Wikipedia. [www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flow_\(psychology\)](http://www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flow_(psychology)), accessed January 13, 2021.

EST GRADUATES SHARE A MEDLEY OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS

INA AMES

Abstract

This article presents the sharing from a survey of graduates of the est Training, which resulted in 82 responses. Offered from 1972 to 1985 and developed by Werner Erhard, the est Training was the forerunner to The Landmark Forum. Most of this article contains the voices of est graduates reporting on what had them take the course, the impact it has had in their lives and communities, and what, if anything, is incomplete for them. Some personal reflections of the author also are included.

INTRODUCTION

The best reason for registering accomplishment is to celebrate and complete accomplishments. I first participated in the est Training in 1980 and in the same month joined my place of worship. I realized that September 2020 was the 40th anniversary of taking my est Training. I still belong to both of my communities for my spiritual and

personal growth journey. As I contemplated these extraordinary milestones in my life, I had to find a way to celebrate it.

I'm retired as a professor of communication studies and no longer publishing, chairing a program or writing papers. Having had the privilege of being able to research my interests in communication theory, I wondered: What could I research about the est Training? It wasn't communication theory. I let it be and one day had a Eureka moment. I'd research what other est graduates say they got out of the training.

In doing the survey, I wanted to discover the impact of the est training on participants. To me, est graduates are heroes. We participated in the est Training because we saw something special available and were trailblazers in the world of personal growth and development in our Western culture. Some of us took the training because of our families and despite our families.

Conducting a survey also seemed natural for me. Now retired, I had spent my career as a communications professor. So, I decided a qualitative research project would inform us of how and why the early adapters took the est Training and would document the impact of the course in their lives and communities.

Then I had to figure out how to do the survey. Without the resources I had as a professor, I eventually decided with the help of my daughter,

Meri, and son, Eric, to use Google Doc Surveys. It seemed like the best method for protecting participants' privacy. My next hurdle was finding participants. I did not have access to Landmark's database. So, I posted on Facebook groups, especially the est graduate group and the Conference for Global Transformation group. I also e-mailed friends and sent Facebook messages to friends asking them to participate. My goal was at least 50 participants but I envisioned that I could reach 100. We ended up with 82. Amazing.

That is how the research that is reported below started. The quotes below are from four of the survey questions. The responses I've selected for this article most reflect the responses I received. Those of us, who have taken the est Training and/or the Forum, will see many of the same responses in the last survey Landmark conducted.

MY BEGINNINGS WITH EST

In 1977, I was pregnant with my second child and was reading a magazine, "Psychology Today," to stave off boredom. Back then, a pregnant woman could not work when one was "showing" so all I could do is sit and wait. I had a part-time job teaching at Grahm Junior College in Boston, Massachusetts. I could not apply for a full-time teaching position because no one would hire me "with child."

So, I was reading what we considered "trash" back then and found this fascinating article about a man named Werner Erhard and the est Training, a course that had you take a look at your life and how you were living it. I found the article fascinating and told my husband that I wanted to go to California and take this extraordinary course after the baby was weaned. He told me no. He did not want me to go to California, the only place it was offered. He definitely didn't want me to take some woo-woo course. Given the way most husbands and wives operated in those days and my background, I complied.

Flash forward to the beginning of summer 1980. Divorced with a 5-year-old and a 2-year-old, I was going to singles' events but not yet dating. One of my favorite weekly events was the "Sunday Singles Brunch Club" held at the Newton Highlands Women's Club. You paid \$5 and brought a potluck dish to share. After the meal, we listened to some interesting lectures.

At the June brunch, I met a man who I thought was incredibly interesting. There was something about him – and I did not know what it was – but whatever he had, I wanted it! I could not have explained it as a way of being then, but I can now. He said that it was the est Training. By July, I had registered into the est Training to start the last weekend in September. What followed was one of the most important 40-year rides of my life.

RESEARCH RESULTS

For this article, I focus on four questions in the survey. Anyone who did not want their name used has been included as anonymous. Some answers are edited for length or clarity. To reduce redundancy, I am grouping answers to some questions into categories.

If you remember, what or who had you choose to take the est training?

Family Members:

My older sister took it first and got me into it. I had noticed just how prevalent the voice of my parents was in my head and the enormous stake I had in the internal conversations.
—Anonymous

My uncle, who is four years older than me, and I saw a huge shift with him. I was also fascinated with The Hunger Project and quickly became a leader in Central Florida.
—Daniel Reale

I had many "invitations," but it was the persistence of my sister-in-law that nudged me to enroll.
—Zeke Holland

Mom. We are four generations of graduates.
—Anne Marie Rivers

My mother and my grandmother took the training before me.
—Julia Simms

My dad wanted me (at age 13) and my older brother to take it, so we did est. And taking the first Teen Training/ropes course with Werner the next year totally rocked my world!

—Deborah Kaplan

Entire family did the work. Led est/Landmark programs from 1981-2015, civil engineer 1980-2019, married since 1980, two children, five grandchildren. Retired, millionaire.

—James Tsutsui, Jr.

Media:

John Denver. I had heard of est when I went to a concert of his. I was knocked out by the integrity of the performance. He had almost a full orchestra with him so he could recreate the complete sound from his records. I told myself that whatever compelled John to live and work that way, I wanted that, as well. I took it to be est and I don't think I was wrong.

—Anonymous

A friend recommended it. Then I read a book about it ("The Est Experience").

—Jay Gold

I enrolled myself based on Luke Reinhart's book ("The Book of est").

—Don Maue

I had read an article in "Family Circle" magazine in 1974; my friend Terrie invited me to a guest event in 1976.

—Marion Rose

The book, "EST – 60 hours that transform your life," by Adelaide Bry.

—Richard Gaule

Seeing results in friends:

I noticed that my housemate, Michael, didn't get upset at the things that he got upset at the week prior to doing the est Training. He said,

"I think you'd like it." I called the San Francisco Center and registered myself.

—Barbara Watkins

Something unusual and attractive I could see/sense, but could not identify, in two female acquaintances (est graduates). That "something" had me attend an est Special Guest Seminar led by Werner and Marcia Martin, where I first registered for the est Training.

—Edward Forbes

I had a teacher friend named Penny Atkinson who was separated from her husband, and, after she did the est Training, they got back together. That really impressed me. She took me to a guest event in Los Angeles with Pat Woodell leading and I registered that night.

—Kathy Ping-Rogers

My friend, Michael Stone, who was also a seminar leader. My daughter had been kidnapped by her father when she was two and had been missing for 11 years. That was the story I was living. Michael helped me see that there might be another way to live and loaned me the money to take the est Training. He was right. My daughter was located between registering and attending the est Training, and I was reunited with her after the first weekend.

—Grace Mackenzie

Events:

No one. I was driving into San Francisco and had the radio on. The disc jockey said a free guest seminar was taking place at the Jack Tar Hotel. I was in the immediate area and pulled in to see what it was about. I signed up a few days later.

—Tom Vance

The fact that the graduates at the Special Guest Seminar in November 1974 at the University of Maryland were all very diverse in race,

education, religion, etc. I saw that if this course is for everyone, it addresses humanity which was what turned me on! I wanted to be a part of this conversation!

—Molly Byock

Guest seminar led by Werner Erhard.

—Michael Kubin

An est coffee led by Sandy Robbins.

—Marjorie Macrae

The sense that there was something more available in life that I had the possibility of discovering outside of the est Training.

—David Hurst

What accomplishment(s) would you like to declare/register out of participating in this work? Feel free to brag!

Ina's personal commentary: I learned almost every valuable way of "being" in life from my dad, est/Landmark and the late Marjie Parrot, a staff member in the consulting area when I met her in about 1982. As the sole support of two children, I had neither the time nor money as a young mother to take the courses she offered until 1993 when she led the second Wisdom course in Boston and altered my life in a most profound way. Marjie also taught me in the Facilitated Wisdom course to learn to brag, which was not a part of my Yiddish Yankee/Proper Bostonian heritage. I am forever indebted to Marjie and all the leaders at est/Landmark for their contribution to my family members' lives. I will let the quotes speak for themselves.

Relationships with Family and Friends:

My rewarding relationships with my spouse, children and grandchildren; most of the books I wrote leading and managing The Moscow Marathon Project; being a Landmark seminar leader for 20+ years; being a Wisdom Course leader for 20+ years.

—Joan Bordow

Got engaged to my best friend, now 36 years married, plus a confidence/clarity forever.

—Cliff Bassman

I love my life. I am the matriarch of a large, loving, close family.

—Nancy Lipp

Loving my life. Reigniting relationships with my mom and siblings, being complete with my mom before she died, and nurturing and expressing the love between my brothers, sister and me. Being responsible for my faith and relationship with God that my parents had gifted me with. The satisfaction of engaging in a life that's FOR something bigger than my own life, and especially marrying a magnificent man who makes it his job to listen and make others lighten up and engage in what they really want to accomplish.

—Noreen Schuster

I have raised two wonderful human beings who are amazing parents. I taught Communication courses to thousands of people and it made a difference in their personal and professional lives. I have volunteered at Landmark and at my temple and fulfilled on my family legacy of volunteering as a natural self-expression.

—Ina Ames

An extraordinary life, in every way ... all four children did the [est] Training a month after me ... the twins were eight and Lisa was 15 and Char was 12 ... Bob did it the next year...we all have lives we love and are a loving and close family.

—Peg Eaton Miller

Health and Quality of Life:

For me that first training fixed a headache that was debilitating at that time. It has not returned. My entire head was in pain. As we went through the exercise, I felt it slowly shrink in size and eventually disappeared. That, in itself, was worth the cost of the course.

—Anonymous

Probably one of the most important lessons for me was learning that if my life does not work, it's because I don't keep my agreements. I learned that empirically after the training.

—Kathleen Deacon

I met my wife who was also on staff and raised my kids with her. Our daughter frequently acknowledges how much our participation with est ended up impacting her life in a very positive way. The real accomplishment is who I have become, how much I have grown and the impact my life has had on many others. Thinking about it now, I do feel that having great relationships is an accomplishment worth mentioning.

—Anonymous

One of the founders of the Dallas est center (1978 or 79), Introduction to the Forum leader and seminar leader. In 2016, we created a group of 50-60 women who actively participate in city issues. We were able through our work to pass and place term limits on our City Charter (a city of 400,000 which never had term limits).

—Pat Connolly

Being unstoppable; saying yes powerfully and also saying no powerfully. Being fully committed to what I want or have happen. Knowing that I don't know everything.

—Annette Gilbert

The truth is that all my life, what I have, who I am and what I do I accomplished from participating in this work. And I have a life I love.

—Ilene Muething

Traveling the world, an amazing fulfilling career, lifelong friendships, making a tangible difference in the lives of others, my community and the world, contributing to the quality of life for others, authoring a book, living a fulfilling, rewarding, awesome life.

—Charlie Frair

Went from a totally predictable life with low expectations to an unimagined life full of possibilities far beyond what I thought 45 years ago!

—Frank Quinlan

I have given up a boat load of suffering, expectations, disappointments and lots of noise in my head. I am creative, self-expressed, mostly happy and leading a balanced life being at cause in the matter of my circumstances. I continue to tell people that est and Landmark were the BEST things I've ever done in my life! (I'm 73 years old now.)

—Marion Rose

Career:

I started my own consulting company and built a 40+ year career. I also built the Conference for Global Transformation with my team of 30+ people who assist. Now I am retired and have been designated a Senior Fellow for the U.S. Nuclear Industry Council.

—Laurie Ford

I did the Guest Seminar Leader Program and became a guest seminar leader for a couple of years which I enjoyed immensely. I organized my first big event (The Boston Holiday Project Halloween Ball) and, out of that, began to recognize my aptitude as an event planner. Probably the biggest thing I did was to have a successful event planning business for 18 years, Events Unlimited, Inc., which was very positive and growthful for me.

—Meg Holland

1. I got into medical school. 2. I developed a couple of great relationships and a great marriage. 3. I got, held for many years, and did well in a responsible corporate position. 4. I strengthened a tenuous relationship with my family. 5. I live the life I love and I love the life I live.

—Jay Gold

I taught myself to write computer software. Commercials in which I was the primary actor won three Clio Awards. I successfully lead the Self-Expression and Leadership Program. I was the co-chair of the CGT (Conference for Global Transformation) for 13 years. I was accepted as a full-time resident by France and now speak and read French fluently. I have the most amazing friends!

—Ray Stoddard

Took the training at the age of 20 and grew up in the work. From only having had a few superficial relationships with women, met my wife of 41 years. Assisted in est and developed myself in service of others to become a teacher in the New York City public schools.

—David Bekier

Making a Difference:

When I first did the est Training in 1978, I learned that making a difference wasn't limited to the Mother Teresas, Dr. Kings and Gandhis of the world. Josh Orleans from Brooklyn could make a difference, too.

—Josh Orleans

I organized the Foundation for Climate Restoration and had Pope Francis say last week that "Climate restoration is of utmost importance." That sets the stage for global alignment for achieving it and restoring a proven safe and healthy climate by 2050.

—Peter Fiekowsky

Raising three very independent and successful children. Growing the Conference for Global Transformation from 500 to 1,000 people. Starting a business that grew to 12 employees and provided income for a family of five for 20 years. Being the project manager for the first online Landmark Forum and first online Advanced Course.

—Julia Simms

Wow! I live a life that is drastically different than the one I was headed for. It is impossible to measure the impact of the difference I have made in other people's lives simply by being who I am as a result of this work. When I worked in a women's prison, I brought a few distinctions to the women I worked with, and I saw transformation before my eyes. There was one woman who saw the basis for her repeat offenses and was left with choice about whether to repeat her pattern.

—Lorrie Herzberg

What qualities of your life do you say were highly improved by participating in this work?

Ina's personal commentary: I do not imagine any group of people with one activity in common could possibly register such diverse accomplishments in their lives.

Health, Happiness, Joy, Appreciation, Ability to Act, Having power with failure, Listening, Being with another, Empathy, Patience, Letting go, Forgiving, Commitment, Honor, Integrity, Value and importance of word, Being responsible, Making a difference with others and in my community, Compassion, Passion, Loving myself, Enrolling others, Creating and managing projects, Persistence, Love, Acceptance, letting life be, Managing my time, Giving up trying to force things to happen

—Charlie Frair

Listening, Relating, Communicating, Leading, Creating, Standing for things, Causing miracles.

—Curtis Aubrey

First and foremost — integrity and authenticity. Relationships radically improved as a result of vastly improved communication skills that were honed in the work. I have discovered a depth of compassion and an appreciation for insights that seem to come out of nowhere but, in fact, were made possible by all the work we did. I learned to think for myself and stand up for what I care about.

—Anonymous

My ability to listen, talk straight, be honest and be complete in all my relationships.

—Laurie Ford

Critical thinking skills and teamwork.

—Eldon Cline

A commitment to making a difference, integrity, straight communication, standing up for principles, leadership, inclusiveness, being present, listening.

—MarySue Foster

I have always been very thankful that I did the training when I was so young, in my early twenties, so that I could integrate it into my life. I remember looking around in my training at the “older” people and thinking it was such a loss for people not to have access to this when they were younger. Now that I am older, I feel blessed to have had this opportunity when I was so young.

—Ricki Eggert

What do you see that participating in this work has contributed to your family and the rest of your communities?

Ina’s personal commentary: I would say most of us who participated in the est Training were informed we were part of a cult. As a communications professor, I knew the distinctions of a cult and the est Training had fewer distinctions of a cult than my synagogue or my friends’ churches or mosques. The est Training was not designed to tell you how to think. It was designed to have you think. The most important distinguishing trait of both est and Landmark is that one intention was to unite and transform families so that love is prominent and that accepting people and loving them for who they are is honored and appreciated. Families, who had been split, were reunited. Unlike a cult, which tries to isolate participants from their families, est and the Forum offer the tools to unite families with forgiveness and love.

FAMILY

My parents loved us, but they were not very good at parenting, so Landmark was one of those places where I found positive adult role models that taught me about setting goals, thinking outside the box and choosing an empowering attitude that creates success.

—Anonymous

Freedom to love my family despite the stories that I make up.

—LouAnn Timochenko

My kids did all of the work as well as my mom, dad, cousins, nephew and friends. They all got a lot of value out of the work. My sons are very straight-forward with me. My son, Myles, asked me to move to Denver because he was the one who would take care of me. I did and we see each other every week. The work made a difference in my participation with my synagogue in New York City.

—Ilene Fischer

We live a life free from the circumstances. This is the way life looks when it’s working.

—Linda Burgess

Having a family that is completely connected. My daughter is one of my best friends. Always being complete has my family and the communities I participate in be joyous and self-expressed. My focus on empowering them has led to their greater empowerment.

—Ilene Muething

My family has the tools necessary to be in life with an open heart and the confidence to take on life’s challenges. My community has been touched in individual as well as organizational ways through my ability to fundraise and network. I am aware of a dozen individuals who have careers they dreamed of through my networking.

—Sharon Jones

It took work, but over time I improved the relationships in my family of origin and had my 80-year-old mother do the est Training and a graduate seminar (that I led). The many communities I’ve participated in have also been the beneficiaries of my participation.

—John O’Leary

After the training, I came home immediately to my son, 17 years old, who was in a severe Tourette’s episode. I listened without judgment or fixing or thinking I needed to say something. I listened from my heart fully present for two hours. At the end, I said, “I get it, you don’t feel you exist!” He looked at me with tears and said, “I can’t believe you heard me mom.” And the Tourette’s disappeared forever.

—Donna Belle

I am closer to my brother and sister after being estranged. Got married at age 70, having never been married before!

—Frank Quinlan

My Other Communities

The knowledge of the importance of integrity in all endeavors in all parts of my life.

—Andrew Abeles

Listening to others so they discover their own greatness.

—Chris Kirtz

More than 20,000 students have participated in courses that I have taught. Not a week goes by that one of my students doesn’t report that their life has been permanently changed by our work together.

—Don Maue

A life I love. Enormous breakdowns that became a source of growth and strength. Change as a source of discovery vs. upset. Relationships are deep and long-term whether I see/talk with the people or not. I am that we (all of us) are already

always related. I can be, have and do anything I say I want to be, have and do.

—Lori Wostl

It’s my commitment to effective and honest communication that guides my interactions with everyone. I acknowledge est as the source of any accomplishments in my life.

—Pam Friedman

I have an amazing marriage of 36 years. I built a private nonprofit circumventing the school to prison pipeline and recruited over 100 volunteers to help me run all the programs that we created to give victims a voice and young offenders a chance to repair the harm which gave them empathy. I also have raised thousands of dollars for our Boys and Girls Club.

—Polly Wolner

At this time is there anything for which you are incomplete regarding your participation in this work? If so, please share.

Ina’s personal commentary: We use the world “complete” as a distinction. Roughly, it means the person experiences something as whole and complete with no anger, resentment and regret, and with an experience that all is well. I included this question so people who were incomplete could get themselves complete. To my surprise, very few people needed that listening. Most responses were about what they might have done differently and some were on what they felt est/Landmark could improve. I will let them speak for themselves.

Every day, or almost every day, I am thankful for what I received from est and Landmark — my only incompleteness is that while I was a good est guest seminar leader, I should have proceeded to leading seminars and I never got there.

—Michael Kubin

I am blessed to have been at two reunions of the Six-Day staff. We used our time together to clear and complete any upsets and withholds. Thanks for providing this question for others.

—Jan Kroeger

Yes, I find the structure of Landmark Worldwide to be old-fashioned, male-dominated, even by the women. The refusal to take gender bias into serious account is off-putting, and yet I remain. Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr. stood on the shoulders of suffragist women who really pioneered non-violent social resistance and civil disobedience.

—Ellen Snortland

Since I returned in 2009, the community of graduates and the enterprise have never embraced matters of evolving conversations about race. As a woman of color, there have been plenty of times where this technology has saved my life, has been shared with people who do not care for me because of my skin color, even in hostile work environments. Those sacred experiences have never reverberated to the worldwide graduate community which is inauthentic.

—Anne Marie Rivers

I so appreciate the opportunity to continue to participate in this work. I have never done the Introduction to the Forum Leaders Program and always wondered what that would be like.

—Margaret Chaudhuri

I am incomplete that my certifications for the Introduction Leaders Program were erased when Werner Erhard and Associates became Landmark.

—Don Maue

My center manager encouraged me to stop leading seminars. They were the highest expression of my love for humanity. I also led the pre-trainings and the mid-trainings. I miss leading.

—Vicki Rosenberg

CONCLUSION:

I could have used the 5,000 words of this article sharing what I got out of my choice to do the est Training as could many people whose shares constitute this article. I spent hours choosing the quotes and torturous hours editing this down from 7,300 words. First, let me acknowledge everyone

who contributed to this journal article: Laurie Ford, Rich Schuster, all of the wonderful est graduates who filled out the survey and my children, Meri and Eric, who started editing my professional papers for me when they were in junior high school. They are still supporting their mom in whatever I do as I support them in whatever they do.

I hope you are as moved as I am by what the participants in this research shared. Like most projects, this research began as all about me and ended up honoring and giving voice to others — graduates of the est Training and our legacy at Landmark. I am grateful for Werner Erhard, Landmark’s CEO Harry Rosenberg and all our est/ Landmark leaders for their contributions to our lives, families, communities and the world.

THE RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE:

First Name

Last Name

1. What year did you first take the est training?
2. What year did you take The Landmark Forum?
3. What year did you last participate in our work?
4. If you remember, what or who had you choose to take the est training?
5. What accomplishment(s) would you like to declare/register out of participating in this work? Feel free to brag!
6. What qualities of your life do you say were highly improved by participating in this work?
7. What do you see that participating in this work has contributed to your family and the rest of your communities?
8. At this time is there anything for which you are incomplete regarding your participation in this work? If so, please share.

Do you give me permission to quote you?

- a. It is okay to quote me INCLUDING using my name.
- b. It is NOT okay to quote me.
- c. It is okay to quote me WITHOUT using my name.

DANCING ON THE DASH

LORRAINE “RAIN” WARREN

Abstract

The author explores what registering accomplishment is for her by asking people in her life about their accomplishments. In the process, she and others recognize the impact of what they have contributed and unconceal a few blind spots that lead to new actions and new appreciation for their lives.

In approaching this article, I was reminded of what a seminar leader, Maurice Cohen, said to me nearly 30 years ago. “All of your past accomplishments give you no ground to stand on today,” he said. “You can take all of your trophies and accolades and place them on a shelf to gather the dust and for people to see. So what? Now what? The question is: Who are you being now? What are you creating now?”

I have carried his words with me. They are part of how I live my life. I never allow myself to rest in the comfort of my past accomplishments. This stance has been a blessing and curse. I have continued to accomplish much in my life and found myself never fully taking time to celebrate or “register accomplishment.” There was always a seeking of the next thing before fully acknowledging a current accomplishment. In many ways, I have never seen myself as an accomplished person. Nothing I ever did was enough. There was always a more, a better, a bigger or something that was missing to do.

Accomplishment is described by many as the dash between one’s birth and death. Often, that dash is not registered, acknowledged or celebrated until one’s final services. I am learning that as important as it is to not bring past accomplishments to the present holding them as the grand finale, it is important to celebrate accomplishments along the way.

Being in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, I chose to celebrate life, no matter what. I chose to be happy, no matter what. That, in itself, is an accomplishment to me. I have the privilege to make that choice every day and moment.

I chose to “dance on the dash” every day. I have become wiser. I smile and laugh more often.

To delve more deeply into the idea of registering accomplishment, I interviewed more than 10 individuals in my various communities by asking them to look with me at registering accomplishment.

I asked, “What are the top three accomplishments you have achieved in your life? What accomplishments have you created that are alive, unfolding and developing for you? Finally, how can you acknowledge, celebrate and strengthen your accomplishments, as well as share the possibilities and futures you can now see and develop?”

Most had to pause and give the idea some thought before answering. My friend, Llenar Danita, said she would never have thought of “registering accomplishments” or the possibility of her accomplishments being an ongoing development. She had never thought of her accomplishments as having a future to be acknowledged, celebrated and even alive beyond her lifetime. She called me back days later and said this inquiry had her think about legacy as a way of registering accomplishments. As a result, she decided to ensure that the younger people in her family were her financial beneficiaries. She said this conversation gives her continued food for thought.

I am so proud of my nephew, Jesse Dunn. He and his wife, Kim, have three beautiful children, the twins (boy and girl) and another daughter. Jesse shared that he considered homeschooling his children and seeing them thrive with his leadership and guidance as his most rewarding accomplishments. He expressed his joy at seeing their happy faces. He and his wife removed them from traditional schools. He treasures the time he spends with his children as he watches them learn, grow and develop. He knows that all of the moments with them, even the most challenging ones, are priceless.

Auset O’Neal, a college friend I have known since I was 17 years old, said giving birth to, and raising, her son Pamue was her greatest accomplishment. She recounted times when being a parent was extremely difficult for her, and she takes pleasure now in seeing her son thriving with his own business. Also, she had married the love of her life and accomplished the vow of “until death do us part.” Being married left her with some distinctions about relationships that she is registering in a book she is writing called, “Finding True Love.”

My friend, Ralph Pearce, a recently retired

physician who raised two sons who also became physicians, said knowing he has made a difference in the lives of many patients is an accomplishment for him and he now gets to retire, enjoy his wife, Rhonda, and be a grandparent, which loomed largely in several other responses.

As I engaged in this inquiry, I felt a sense of pride noticing that many people in my life consider their commitment to serving others as major accomplishments. Overall, accomplishments expanded beyond their local communities to the national and international levels.

In 1997, Melvin Allen attended the International Black Summit event, a gathering of people of black African descent from around the world designed to empower their visions. He met a participant there who introduced him to someone from his hometown, Chicago. This woman was an African-American who had moved to South Africa to help disadvantaged children. She shared with him her vision to raise funds to help children and said she needed \$5,000. At the time, Melvin was in the Self-Expression and Leadership Program. He thought that would be a great project. He continued the dialogue with her. He began to share with everyone he knew about their project. He raised the first \$2,000 from Summit participants.

He continued to share when he returned home. Someone invited him to speak at, and join, the New Jersey Rotary Club. He ended up connecting the New Jersey Rotary Club with the Cape Town Rotary Club. Jointly, the two clubs eventually raised more than \$40,000. The funds were donated to the University of Cape Town to purchase hearing aids for children in rural villages and townships.

The possibility he saw for these children repeated itself in his own life. He said that if it were not for Landmark, he would never have been able to see this possibility or attended the International Black Summit. He added as one who now wears a hearing aid, had it not been for Landmark, he never would have returned to school and completed his Ph.D. at the age of 71. He feels privileged to have achieved these and many other accomplishments in life.

As a result, children, who did not have access to a free education or transportation to schools

and were outcast due to their disability, could now grow up and hear. Melvin says he never thought he would be allowed to make this kind of difference. He said, “I am now hard of hearing and could not imagine what it may have been like for children not being able to hear. All of the hearing aids changed the lives of children. I have a deep appreciation for what I have.”

For Steven Sye, a Wisdom Curriculum graduate, his commitment to make a difference included stepping past his fear and personal circumstances to support a commitment to make a difference. He sourced multimillions of dollars of charitable donations which transformed the lives of hundreds of families by providing affordable housing.

Catherine Thomas, Ph.D., intervened in a ministerial school facing financial distress and saved it from closing its doors forever. Unity Urban Ministerial School founded in Detroit, Michigan, has become one of the largest and most successful new thought international schools in the world.

Altheal Randolph, a physician’s assistant, created her own initiative called “Feet of Color” in which she knitted footsies to raise funds so she could travel to a village in Kenya to deliver medications to those suffering from AIDS-related illnesses. She was one of the first to deliver the “cocktails,” rounds of medications that saved hundreds of lives. She received donations of medications that were being unused and possibly thrown away from doctors and clinics. She also provided training and supplies to Kenyan physicians and medical personnel who traveled great distances to receive her expertise. She is credited with saving hundreds of lives. When I was in Kenya at the Being a Leader and the Effective Exercise of Leadership course, I met a woman who said Altheal’s efforts brought her back from her death bed.¹ The woman introduced me to the baby she was pregnant with at the time, now a healthy adult.

Llenar Danita is tracking family genealogy which will be logged and saved for generations to come. To strengthen that accomplishment, she is now creating a financial vehicle to maintain the storage space for the information, in addition to lining up

other caretakers to continue tracing, tracking and preserving historical family data.

Joyce Jones shared her accomplishment of having been diagnosed with dyslexia years after having already completed her education to become an award-winning teacher and coach. She had struggled through high school, college and graduate school learning to reverse letters and concepts so that she could understand her lessons and write student papers. She was not diagnosed until she was at an in-service workshop for teacher’s training on dyslexia.

She accepted her dyslexia as a gift and now shares with students who have dyslexia or any other disability, encouraging them to: accept and embrace the opportunity provided; create a relationship with it; discover how it can work for them and how this unique challenge is a gift to themselves and others. Her years as a seminar leader supported her in distinguishing and being able to effectively operate in life given her circumstances.

Another graduate spoke of registering the accomplishment in how she is able to be with herself by staying in a space of gratitude, having the courage to say yes to opportunities that arise in her life, being gentle and loving with herself and others, and listening and following her internal prompts that she expresses as “Listening to Spirit.”

Altheal’s response most mirrors my experience in approaching the inquiry of registering accomplishment, when she said: “When I approached your questions, I found myself staring into the emptiness. Those accomplishments seem to be now in the moment. Oh, they make great stories such as ‘see?’ At one time in my life, they are I-made-a-difference shares. For sure, they existed and made an impact once upon a time and place. Fish tales now. That’s not a bad thing. It just means to me that I can’t live in what was, what might have been. Maybe accomplishment, like a possibility, is a stand you take, a generative act.”

She then asked herself, “So what now?,” and she responded: “What I consider accomplishment now is more a way of being-in-the-world. Being love, play and generosity are more the character and

state of being in-the-world that I have created for myself as accomplishment. It's always present and appropriate to the opportunity to contribute to people, places and things. I love my relationship to Godliness. I love my relationship to being servant leader to folks whoever they may be and to the possibility of being for human being (like a creation rather than a certainty)."

I appreciate Altheal's reference to her state of "being-in-the-world," a term we often heard Werner Erhard, the founder of the est Training which later became The Landmark Forum, mention. We both participated in the Being a Leader course. Altheal took the course once in Cancun. I did the course in Cancun, Kenya and at Clemson University in South Carolina. I have had 20 years' experience traveling nationally and internationally as a specialist facilitating dialogues on race relations, diversity and inclusion, and supporting communities in working through conflicts.

I can track hours of listening to hundreds and hundreds of people. At times, the bulk of my work involved teaching them something they did not know about cultures, relating to other human beings and how to creatively resolve conflicts.

As I became a facilitator of a process called, "Open Space Technology," and as I began to engage in Landmark courses and programs, I realized that beyond my knowledge what was more important was who I was being with people. I realized that any problem any human being faces could be resolved within the person and their community beyond something that I or one of my colleagues could teach them.

The most important thing was who I was being with people. Being open, being generous, being empathetic, being with people in a space of respect and dignity and being a listening for possibility. Having made these discoveries, I just wanted to listen to people. I wanted to listen into their greatness. I wanted to, in some cases, listen their greatness into being.

In 2015, I had an opportunity to work with a group of youth who had come to the United States from Yemen to spend a year attending an American high school. The intention was to learn about, and

experience, a different culture. Just as the year had ended and they were scheduled to return home, civil war broke out in their countries and they could not go home. These young people were traumatized by not knowing what their futures would be.

In some instances, they could not reach, or communicate with, their families. They were devastated. I was sent in to talk to them as they were housed at a university on summer break while the U.S. State Department determined next steps. These youth, who ranged from about 16 years old to their early twenties, expected to receive another lecture. After all, they had heard many.

I prepared the room by placing chairs in a circle vs. lecture style. I saw the surprise on their faces when they noticed the circle. After introducing myself, I said, "I want to hear from you. What do you want to and need to express? What do you need? How do you want to be interacted with? What would be of most value to you? I am here to listen." And, I sat and listened.

Through the tears, then laughter and intense sharing of experiences, I could see the beginning of the restoration of their humanity and facility in taking a devastating experience and beginning to build their own capacities to be with all that had happened to them. Some of them could never return to Yemen and were left to complete college and create a new future for themselves. There was little during that time that I needed to teach them. I know that simply being with them and listening generated a foundation for them to really get present to what they already knew and what their parents had instilled in them which was already present when they first stepped foot on U.S. soil.

Another example is having the opportunity to listen to the stories of genocide survivors. I could not turn back the hands of time and stop the genocide from having happened. I could not instantly erase the trauma or provide tangible resources that some survivors needed. I could, however, listen. I could listen to the depth and birth of their stories in such a way that the listening I brought created access to healing and an ability to be with all of what they had experienced and witnessed during the genocide.

Every interview I conducted ended with a warm embrace and gratitude for providing the space of listening. Some had never told their stories before, even 20-plus years after the genocide. Some were grateful to be listened to without interruption or a breakdown for the listener which triggered their own trauma. They could speak their story in its entirety because they had someone who was listening, truly listening.

Through my commitment and practice of listening, I am known amongst my community as someone who is a great listener. My friend said to me, "Dr. Rain, you are one of my most cherished human beings. Thank you for the opportunity and the listening." So, even in writing this article, a difference was made by creating space and listening to each person who responded registering accomplishment.

Recently, I celebrated my 60th birthday. Social distancing, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, required a Zoom virtual birthday party. Close to 100 people attended from different parts of the United States and the world.

I saw my own accomplishments in the faces and expressions of the diverse people I have interacted with during my lifetime. Having faith leaders from many sacred traditions provide blessings on opening the event were just a telephone call away for me. I was moved by the prayers uttered from many sacred traditions from Africa, First Nation People, Judaism, Christianity, Buddhism and Baha'i. Those in attendance were equally diverse representing all races, social economic levels, professions and world views.

I was able to share travel stories based on experiences with people I met from around the world. They touched my humanity as I touched theirs. I even had internationally known recording artists, Tuck and Patti, perform at my party and participate. I saw the accomplishment of bringing together people from different aspects of my life who prayed, sang, listened and danced together. Such an extraordinary collection of accomplishments in just a piece of my own community. The event was an accomplishment in so many ways. We had an opportunity in the moment to forget we were in the midst of a global pandemic.

As my nephew Jesse said, "Registering accomplishments, whether small or large, encourages me to get through the tough days. It is important to not only get through the tough days but celebrate all of my days and the opportunities I have to be accomplishment in each moment." Now, acknowledging his accomplishment comes alive for him as he talks to younger people about what he has learned on his journey as he assists, encourages and advises them.

Llenar called me back weeks later and shared, "This is a valuable inquiry. Had you not asked those questions, I doubt I would have seen what I shared about strengthening my accomplishment as a possibility for future generations. I now see that I had a blind spot in this area. Thank you for the engagement. I discovered that registering accomplishments brings me present to my own and others' legacies. My legacy becomes every life that I have touched and every life that has touched mine. No accomplishment or legacy is created alone or in a vacuum."

ENDNOTES

1 Being a Leader and the Effective Exercise of Leadership course, An Ontological/Phenomenological Model, is a leadership laboratory first developed by Werner Erhard and others. First offered in 2004, the course is now available at several hundred colleges and universities around the world.

2 Open Space Technology is a simple way to run productive meetings for five-to-2,000+ people. The facilitator provides the structure and tools for the community to self-organize and inquire into issues and concerns that are most important to them and transform conflicts into inspired opportunities. A large part of the facilitator's responsibility is to listen. In 1995, Lorraine Warren was certified and trained in Open Space by its originator Harrison Owen.

INTERVIEW WITH OUR COVER ARTIST – ANDREA FONO

ALEXANDRA ISAIEVYCH AND BARBARA HOLLAND

After closing remarks at the 2019 Conference for Global Transformation in Hollywood, a small group of artists lingered on the steps of the conference building, sharing and exploring. What if we used the art of Wisdom graduates for the cover of the journal and all the related marketing materials instead of the usual stock pictures?

A committee formed on the spot, and after many conversations, co-created the first Call for Art for the **Visual Theme of the 2021 Conference for Global Transformation**. We are grateful to all the artists who generously contributed their images, as it was not easy to make a selection from all the wonderful choices. In the end, a bright red image by Andrea Fono was selected for this year's Journal cover.

Recently, Fred Moss, a transformative psychiatrist and thought leader in mental health, interviewed Andrea Fono for his “Welcome to Humanity” podcast series. Here are edited excerpts from their conversation, highlighting the contagiously inspirational world of our featured artist.

Moss: It's my great honor to introduce you to this extraordinary human, unlike anybody I have ever met, and I suspect unlike anybody that you have ever met, as well. What is so interesting is that her uniqueness seems to stem from her inherent, true-blue humanity.

But, first, some key notes about her artistic journey. Fono has been a professional artist for over three decades and has traveled and

exhibited her work extensively all over the world. Her paintings, monoprints and drawings are visual meditations to remind us of our connection to the larger world around us, and, ultimately, to the infinity of the cosmos.

In 2011, Fono traveled to the Amazon and witnessed firsthand the devastation of the deforestation of the jungle and grasped the urgency of the entire situation. She was completely alarmed at the global threat of petroleum drilling in the Ecuadorian rainforest and pledged to convey in her work the unfolding story of what could be lost due to the peril that climate change presents to our planet. In her words: “I hear a calling for a new kind of an Eco-justice-artist whose function will be to bridge culture, education and the sciences. When we are able to see our Earth as sacred, we will not want to exploit it.”

Moss: So, Andrea, who are you?

Fono: Who am I? I am tender love. I am sweet flirtation. I'm good with the yummy of humanity. I'm good with the dummy of humanity. It is all just fertilization for self-growth, for the evolution of mankind. I know this sounds maybe something high falutin', but, really, I live for life itself.

Moss: So, what does that really mean to you when you say, “I live for life itself?” Or even, living for the yummy and the dummy, and sweet flirtation? How did you pick those features? How does that become essential Andrea Fono?

Fono: I've had some dark spots in life and have really allowed those times to kind of drill me into the earth to hide, not so much to heal from Mother Earth, but just kind of “invisibilize” me. And I didn't really get for a long time that the darkness, the shadow side, or the doubts can actually be the fertilization for realizing that love is the only thing that really matters. I had a whole series of business mistakes. I had a real estate mistake. I used that to almost unqualify me from life. And how ridiculous was that? But really, I did buy that. So, in the healing, in the reemerging to be with people, to be in the sun, to be in water and ocean, it became just so luscious. The textures of life are so much better than the doubts in my head.

Moss: Well, one of the things I'm hearing here, and it really comes as no surprise, is this venture into the darkness, this venture into the shadow. And, when asked how you got here, you go right back to the moments in time when you are going through some deep, dark experiences. What I'm really interested in is the rebound as a result of really taking on the darkness, the other side of darkness, and having that be how your life gets defined. First, is that an accurate assessment of how you got here, and, second, please talk to us about that transformation or transition, and the interrelation between the super dark and the super light.

Fono: I must say I wouldn't have predicted myself to start on that tone or to have gone right there. I'm kind of surprised by it because I knew myself to be someone who had a joie de vivre. I've been thinking about some people I've known during this COVID-19 era who have been having a hard time of it, while I was just kind of tracking my joy during the time through the delight of either my productivity in my artwork or my delight in all the people that I could be on Zoom calls with. It seemed like I was on the phone or Zoom for eight hours a day. It was just fantastic. I had a better social life during COVID than otherwise. Yet, it had made me very present to knowing that I had overcome the darkness.

It's interesting. I don't attempt to “positivize” anybody who might be going through a hard time. I am actually able to stay right in the fire with them and just validate either their despondency or their

loneliness. It is because I am a believer in using fodder for fertilization. It is all going to bloom soon. I don't feel like I need to push the sap, like Rilke would say in one of his poems.¹ I don't push the sap. The tree will leaf again; the sap will rise naturally.

Moss: I guess what I am hearing you say is that in your own experience of having traversed those undesirable periods in your life, you have now found a way to resonate with others who are going through difficult times without needing to run away or push the sap at any point.

Fono: Yes.

Moss: There is some pleasure in your joie de vivre that shows up in that you get to be all of it at the same time, like a piece of life, while you are there hanging out with people who are at the height of their life's despondency.

Fono: Yeah. And I believe in it getting better. I don't have to make them feel better. But I will believe in it for them in the same way people believed in it for me. I am not quite sure what it is except an invitation to be curious and allow that we can find lightness. We can find it. We can. Actually, both lightness and darkness can even exist at the same time.

Moss: Right. So, light and dark are not a mutually exclusive experience in any way?

Fono: No, no.

Moss: I'm wondering, is there something you have for the listeners who maybe have not experienced the darkness that you did, or the pain, or the near “unqualification” from life that you had, that you could pass to them with words that could make a difference?

Fono: I would say: keep talking to people. Just keep talking and keep listening. Keep talking. If people get tired of listening to you, find new people. Just keep talking. Fred, sometimes I think about, often actually, about the pioneers, about the pilgrims, but the pioneers, specifically, who came west across America on the covered wagons via little trails going through Colorado or Utah or those mountains. How did they do that?

How do people in those covered ox-drawn wagons carrying kids, women and men, how did they just not stop and die when it got hard? I just can't even imagine a couple days like that. It wasn't just a few people who did that. Here are people going west for a promise. Did they know the destination? Did they know they wanted to park in San Francisco or Los Angeles? Or Salt Lake City? Did they know that the salmon was pink and not white like fish on the East Coast? Did they know anything? Probably it was just a promise. Was that gumption, and that promise sourcing their strength in the moment, everything that they needed?

Moss: Something drove those people forward minute by minute, hour by hour, day by day. We sit here in California now, acting as though it was here before them, but, actually, it didn't look anything like that before. There was no settlement anywhere here. It's not just like driving a car down the I-80 into Reno. This is moving west against all odds, with challenging weather and terrain. Massive threatening challenges every single day. Every single day, every single minute, every single meal, every single decision.

Fono: Yeah. It could just be a promise.

My parents are immigrants from Hungary and proud American citizens since the 1950s. But they came on a promise. It was simply a promise of freedom of expression. You get on an army boat. You are seasick coming across the ocean. You stay in camps until you get permission, and fill out applications, and who knows what kind of jobs they have, and all of it was for a promise. I wonder if the promise in itself can feed the soul.

Moss: I wasn't with you when you were going through these unqualifying dark times. It sounds like just a handful of people who were there and were able to guide you out or pull you out, or at least be there to create possibility, or maybe even design a promise, that could pull you forward.

Then you have walked through life, and over the last decade or two becoming a pretty functional, pretty high-performing artist. This is a breakthrough. It is about you rising from the ashes to a place of very high notoriety, a reputable place of being recognized for the magic woman that you now are.

Fono: What I didn't tell you yet was that before these dark periods, I had an immense amount of success. I had sold a million dollars' worth of art by the time I was 30. It almost seemed like I was just opening the trunk of my car and asking people, "Would you like to buy one?" I mean, it was that innocent. We weren't talking about big time New York dealers. It was some local San Francisco art galleries. But I just wore my heart on my sleeve, and I think I painted my heart on my sleeve, if you will.

What had me slip into the darkness was these perceived failures that I didn't know I was allowed to make. I dug my own ditches by not knowing I could make mistakes and not realizing that failures are really openings for opportunities for breakthroughs. I did not get any of that for at least eight or nine years. I suppose that underneath all of that there is a fierce commitment to celebrate each and every single person I see, to celebrate each and every moment that I am in my studio painting.

It is its own madness in a way. It is like a must. It is not like anything I could have sat down and figured out. It is not anything I ever wrote down. I guess it is just my flag by which I live. Maybe that is why I am so out here with people like there is nothing but your eyes, Fred, when I am with you, there is nothing else that is worthy of everything. It could be just mad living in the present.

Moss: Mad living in the present.

Fono: Yeah. I can dabble in the past and have some crying. But that is just some fertilizer for a weakness, or, perhaps, for something else that I need to learn, and it is just me exploring how messy and beautiful can the present be.

Moss: I can honor that. Thank you.

Fono: People think I'm an extrovert. Quite frankly, I can spend weeks and months by myself. Being an only child and choosing to get married late in my 40s (we don't have children), but I gave myself a lot of peace. "Well, I am so happy to be out, because I have spent so much time by myself." It is almost like I am a golden retriever, and I just want to smell everybody. It is like I'm going from person to person because I am just so happy. It is very

doggy-like; it is really very canine of me.

Moss: That is fascinating. I get that. There is something about the slingshot effect. This idea that you lived through places that you are not eager to ever go back through, but that they have become the source for real appreciation of the wondrous and the miraculous of the messy and the beautiful that is right here. Asking how beautiful, or how messy can it get?

Fono: Yes, exactly. Whether it is a messy unmade bed, the messy dishes, there is nothing wrong with that. Or a messy conversation. When I have felt stressed or I have made mistakes in conversations or in a relationship, then there is nothing better than the cleanup.

Moss: There really is nothing better than the cleanup, and we are back to being and asking, what is the promise? Where can we go after we make a mistake? After we screwed up, or after we have caused damage, or after we have been tripped up, or after we have been tumbling. What is next?

Fono: The betrayal. Because if you think about it, even COVID could be interpreted as a betrayal. Betrayal of the promises of the 21st century, or that the world is supposed to work a certain way, or that I am supposed to go to school and get that degree. There are so many "supposed to's." If I had bombs to throw at anything, it would be at "supposed to's." But, I think, as humans, we are habitual that way and allow the "supposed to's" to ruin things.

Moss: So, what is the opposite of "supposed to's?" If there were no "supposed to's," how would that affect your life?

Fono: It has something to do with playing and playing with other people. I had an exhibition of my artwork in Tokyo in March 2019 and I had this craving. I hired a number of photographers of different ages to do a series of photos with me that we used as a series of signs. And in the signs, I was declaring, I was making certain declarations about play in life, and love, and evolution of human beings, all incorporating people in the city of Tokyo into the photographs, including creating a whole series at the Shibuya crossing in Tokyo. That

is the iconic street where there are thousands of people crossing the street at the same time.

I just decided to run into the middle of that street with the thousands of people with my photographer and to swirl and twirl a lot of colorful fabrics. Now, I hadn't planned that. I didn't know what I was going to do with those fabrics. I actually had wanted someone to wrap me up in them, but what I ended up doing instead was just splaying them out into the middle of the boulevard. Then, there was the response of all these people that didn't expect magenta or yellow fabric to go up. I suppose that was more of that impractical dancing, more impractical playing.

I was in Japan for a month. When I came home, I realized that I was heartbroken as if I had fallen in love, not just with one person, but I had fallen in love with so many people. As a rule, I look at people's eyes and I smile. I think I love the bowing, that is like: "I see you." There is an honoring. No matter where you put me, I am with you. I felt so nurtured. It felt like an exhilaration the whole time I was there.

I don't know if other people feel that way when they are traveling. Sometimes, it seems easier to have an exhilarated, heightened impact when one is not at their usual place. It is probably one of the reasons that I use nature in my art-making process. In the last five years, I have been using cherry blossoms, really any kind of blossom, or any kind of leaf, in my monoprinting process.

When I'm giving myself those few weeks or a couple months where I am just in painting mode, I wake up in the morning and ask, "What is blooming? What plant can I pick? What leaf can I pick? With what neighbor do I make a request? Can I please pick a leaf off your tree?" It is just so exciting to see what has the Earth given me today. And what can I make with her? What can we co-create together?

I'm correcting myself – I did say when I'm traveling there is a heightened sense of immersion or awareness into what's amazing about life, about the different things, but, really, I can do that right out of my backdoor, too.

Moss: One of the things I get as I'm listening to

you is the idea that when you speak of art, you are speaking about the visual arts, right? We are talking about you being a spectacular visual artist as far as using natural sources to create these images that are extraordinary and unique to you. It's almost as though we are getting an opportunity when we are with your art, when we are with you, to see the world through the same eyes that you are using to get excited about seeing what you see. We get to be sourced by you into the unique beauty that you see in the world around you that maybe some of us don't see at the same level of vividness.

Fono: I'd like to say that one of the reasons I've been able to make a living as an artist is that I have created my art to be an invitation. Sometimes I think art can be so self-obsessed that it forgets to relate and forgets that it is an invitation.

Moss: So self-obsessed that it forgets to relate? That is just brilliant. Isn't that humanity, too? We can be so self-obsessed that we forget to relate.

Fono: I don't know if you know this about me, but my parents were in the restaurant business. They had a very successful Hungarian restaurant in San Francisco for more than 20 years in Ghirardelli Square. My parents thought it would be...I don't know, actually, what they thought. I am making up that they thought it would be cute, if, as a 10-year-old, I wore a little bonnet that had flowers embroidered on it and a traditional dress, the Hungarian dirndl, and be out in the restaurant. And I was quite shy. I didn't actually speak much growing up because my first language was Hungarian.

But there was something about being in contact with hundreds of people on Friday and Saturday nights and to learning how to offer desserts. I was fine if people said they didn't want a bittersweet chocolate torte or a sweet cheese palacsinta. That was fine. It wasn't personal. But it allowed me to get this gift of engagement.

Moss: Say more about that, about the gift of engagement.

Fono: So, we are talking San Francisco in the 1970s, early 1980s. My parents hired whoever

lived in San Francisco – all kinds of people with different sexual experiences, different cultural experiences. There was this acceptance. I actually didn't even know people had issues with gay people until I went to college. I thought that was absolutely normal because all of our waiters were gay.

My mother didn't believe in chefs. She thought they were all egos. Chef was a four-letter word, so she trained people how to make the restaurant's food and breads. There were people from all kinds of countries who worked for us. Then you learn when you open your door....you just don't have time to judge. You just don't have time to decide if you like them or not. You're just going to offer them a cup of soup. If they want one, that's great. If they don't, it is just an invitation to be together for a little while.

In fact, I still have this habit of when I get into an elevator, I'm so excited that I'll turn around and look at everyone in the elevator and go, "We have 30 seconds in the elevator together. How could we make this really good?" It's like, "This is it. Here we are."

Moss: Yeah, invitation is a key word for you. You know what, let's put the word "invitation" into you now becoming sort of a host of the CGT journal, the featured artist on its cover. What are you inviting to, not only the people at the conference, but the people who know the people at that conference, the world? What's the invitation that is represented by you becoming the featured artist on that cover?

Fono: It's an invitation for an interconnectedness. It could be: What is your spice that meets with my spice? And what's that going to taste like? Or what's your red to my blue that together will co-create violet? Exploring the interconnectedness of when humans choose not to be threatened by the other? Whoever the other is. Whatever skin, religion, even politics. What if we weren't threatened?

The magic was in the mixture of the spices, the flavors and the colors. It wasn't personal. What made life more interesting was the dance with you, was what came from the energy or the joy, or the exhaustion, or what did I learn now? That's where art comes in. It is the pleasure of the colors mixing, the compositions, but if it has to be about

human beings, that is what I am interested in, is what's at the meeting of people meeting people?

There doesn't even have to be a synchronicity. It's like the non-sexualized pollination, if that makes any sense. What do I offer you? What is the gift in listening to you? Or to any of my friends who are listening. To my husband. Or what can happen when we are together? That is what the conference is for me. That is what seeing, being with people, is for me.

In fact, just this last weekend I realized that art is not just how I might create my life, but in my relationships, I am creating art. It's not like it ends. It is not that when this interview is over, "Oh, have we made art or not?" It is almost like when we are in the process of making art, we are going to learn something. Or even our conversation could be artistic. Are we bringing curiosity in? Are we bringing creativity in? Are we cultivating something?

Moss: Curiosity, creativity, cultivation and invitation for exquisite interactivity. What if all of it is about the interaction?

Fono: Listen, I have this visualization of the New York City skyline. It is a bunch of buildings. But it is what happened when there was an interconnection of people and architects, and people from everywhere. It is what people have created together. Maybe that is why I brought up that I have had these experiences of darkness because I had to create myself to be somebody who celebrates. I had to see the folly of what I thought was success and achievement. I had to actually fall. I had to actually be an asshole. I actually had to go out of communication to create, and that now I create celebrating and being with people.

Moss: That is really good. Again, I speak for many who are just reveling in your creative brilliance and getting a little glimpse by accepting your invitation to see the world as you do, a little glimpse of the beauty and the magic that all of the world provides for each of us every single moment, if we keep our eyes open. It's just brilliant. What a beautiful journey. And where are you heading to now?

Fono: I have been working on a series of YouTube videos that invite people to really look at flowers, play with flowers and have fun. I am going to be doing some play coaching. I am also creating some hug bubbles for those people who need hugging. I'm manufacturing those and will have instructions for how people can create their own. What I have to offer is beauty and distraction from the normality of life. I'm here to be a little bit silly and a little bit delirious. That is my contribution.

Moss: Your eccentricity, your silliness and what else?

Fono: Delirious. I haven't used that before, but I was just thinking that the secret ingredient of play is to unplug from the logic.

Moss: The invitation to join you is a large one. You skipped over the beauty and you certainly are beautiful. At the deepest level of appreciation, there's something about your beauty that at the end of the day all of us see, whether you like it or not.

Fono: Thank you. All beauty is healing for us. There it is, another invitation for us to heal and to have joy. Upon further reflection, I wish I had mentioned inclusivity or the phenomenon of belonging. Our belonging to each other whether we like it or not. And the presence of love whether we like each other or not. There is love whether you want me or not. And then there is the aspect of being "ready."

Ready for what? Ready for who?

A preparation for love.

A preparation for joy.

A preparation for tolerance.

And not like that takes any amount of schooling, or farming, or even planning for.

It is an inside job to say **yes!**

It happens in a nanosecond. A nanoquark.

I am ready for you (no matter what).

I am ready for people (no matter what).

I am ready for sadness, mistakes, problems,

loneliness and I am fully open-hearted to be with the **you** of humanity. From there, and possibly in a greater promise, we can find/lead/guide/source each other (however blind) to resolution, to our thirst being quenched, our pain being healed, to forgiveness of Self and others offered to each other from each other.

Are we ready?

That is my question.

Fred, both you and I know there is choice. However, are folks prepared/ready for/open to non-sexualized nirvana and ecstasy? I mean, I don't care if it is from copulating. That's fine. To each their own. What interests me is the willingness for the experience of ecstasy by being with you, or you, or the other you.

Or the *thems*, or those people, or that kind of a person. Can I have ecstasy by belonging with you? Can I have a heightened state of pleasure and joy, simply by being with ... x, y, z?

That's what beauty is. My present to others is my intrinsic uniqueness. Will I let you see my intrinsic uniqueness? It is probably why I paint. Paints are less fussy than people. I can dance with paints and colors all day, and none of it is even personal. And to continue my inquiry – can I belong so bad (like love so hard, so deeply) that I ain't afraid to be?

ENDNOTES

1 Rainer Maria Rilke was a Bohemian-Austrian poet and novelist who lived from 1875-1926.



DISCOVERIES FROM THE INQUIRIES

DISCOVERIES FROM THE INQUIRIES

MY DREAM TO CONNECT ALL HUMAN BEINGS

HANS SUURMOND

During the last year, I have come to believe that inquiry has never been more critical for me, my life, the stability of my country and the fate of the world.

In fact, I just keep thinking: What would life on this planet be like if inquiry – as Landmark graduates practice it – were to become a common tool used throughout the world? Would 7.8 billion thoughtful and ongoing inquiries bring about a world we all so fervently desire?

Australia and New Zealand to Europe, the United Kingdom and Africa, the calls also provide a depth and breadth of the human experience that isn't easily found elsewhere, particularly in the midst of a pandemic that has squelched travel.

Given all that leads me to a profound appreciation that we, inquiry explorers, can gather weekly. Though I have not been on a call every week, I can no longer imagine my life without them if only because I always come away from a call startled by something I've discovered, inspired by the commitments that others share for the world and in love with everyone who participates.

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

Consider participating in the weekly calls or the Inquiry Explorations Program and contributing your own Discoveries from the Inquiries in the 2022 journal. Who knows what there is for you to discover!

— Melinda Voss, Editor

Yet, despite inquiry's power, it often seems illusive. It's a practice I barely understand. Most of the time I'm at a loss for words on how to explain it. During a recent breakout session in the Inquiry Explorations Program, I likened inquiry to wandering. Sometimes, I'm wandering in a moon-like desert, I told my fellow inquirers. Other times, I'm thrashing my way through a lush forest.

The 20 contributors to the Discoveries from the Inquiries section do their own wandering involving a wide range of topics from examining expectations to creating a friendlier math vocabulary, from exploring the relationship between time and listening to being in a pandemic lockdown with 60 strangers. Most, if not all, contributors participated in the Inquiries of the Social Commons, the Inquiry Explorations Program, or both.

The weekly inquiry calls offer a structure for building one's muscle in this almost mystifying and rather magical activity. Offered virtually even before the coronavirus pandemic, the calls and the Inquiry Explorations Program bind fellow inquiry practitioners in community. Given that Wisdom graduates regularly participate from

My promise for the world is that by 2030 all human beings feel connected and experience community. I joined the Inquiry Explorations Program, which gave me structure for working on my promise. In this report, I will tell you what I accomplished in the last year, and I will reflect on what is possible now.

Last year was very special, not in the last place because of the pandemic we all experienced. Personally, it was an emotional year. Both my mother and mother-in-law died. As a result of COVID-19, only a few relatives and friends could be present at their funerals. But we found new ways of remembering and celebrating their lives. Many people joined us online, some put up candles in their homes and dressed as if they were present in the funeral home. We all felt connected and experienced being part of a large community.

I am working as a program manager for local government. In the municipality, there are more than 50,000 people in 26 villages. In the spring, we had our first lockdown in the Netherlands. My colleagues and I sat down and discussed how we could contribute to the residents who lived on their own and were literally disconnected from other people.

We started an inquiry in the communities and saw many initiatives, created by fellow residents, churches and welfare workers. People started to do each other's shopping, prepare meals and send flowers and postcards. We created a website where all the initiatives were posted. That inspired others to start their own activities. In almost all of the 26 villages we saw new forms of cooperation. Lots of people felt connection with other people in their community.

LONELINESS ASKS FOR LISTENING

In this way, the activities contributed to reducing loneliness. My definition of loneliness is suffering from a lack of connection. Since this is experienced internally, you often cannot see it from the outside. We often think that this mainly applies to the elderly, but the experience of the past months taught me that many young people also have to deal with loneliness.

Loneliness is relieved when a person feels reconnection with something or someone. Our conversations showed that lonely people are best helped by mainly listening to the personal stories of others, and only then to see if there is still something to do.

PAY ATTENTION TO EACH OTHER

During this first wave of COVID-19, I created my dream to keep this spirit and energy for the future. So, when the second wave came, we started a new initiative, called *"Pay attention to each other."* A lot of new activities were created: Handing out small Christmas presents, flowers, small books with stories or puzzles, having meetings and celebrations online, and – as I said before – listening to others.

BUY LOCAL PRODUCTS

We started another campaign: “*Buy local products.*” During our conversations with people from the community, we saw that many people did not go out shopping. They bought their products online. Local shop owners lost their income and could hardly survive. We challenged the shop owners to work together on delivering their products to the buyers’ houses. We made posters and wrote news articles in which we asked people to buy from the local restaurants and shops. This was a great success. In October, we organized the “*Week against loneliness.*” We asked one of the deputy mayors to start the campaign, “Share a cake together,” “Drink a cup of coffee or tea with somebody and say, join us!” Because it is important to look at each other and share some time. It’s a small effort, but a big gesture.

COVID-19 proves that we cannot live without each other; the need for social contact is essential to human beings. How did the people experience COVID-19? What they missed was hugging each other; shaking hands. They experienced distance; it is different to sit next to each other instead of having an online conversation and meeting a person in a shop wearing a mask. But they said it was the second-best possibility and it gave them warmth and energy. What they also liked is the fun and play we brought to the activities. For me and my team, we celebrated our successes, and that gave us new energy for a next step.

STRONGER RELATIONSHIPS

The Dutch Safety Monitor shows that relationships with neighbors have become stronger. There is a lot of resilience and willingness to act. If we could keep up this mindset, that would be a great start in fulfilling my promise. But I also see that there is a whole lot of polarization. This was very clear to me during and after the presidential election in the United States. In the Netherlands, I also see people disagreeing about topics, but, in the end, we know that we have to work together. The Dutch cabinet government consists of four political parties. They have to compromise, meet each other and listen instead of fighting each other. This requires more patience, and less nagging and judging. This requires not talking about what divides, but what is connecting.

BUILDING BRIDGES

Global solidarity means “building bridges.” What is binding us? Every human being wants to be seen, heard and valued. We all want a happy and healthy life. We all wish to survive the pandemic. We want a great life for ourselves, children and grandchildren.

So, what did we learn from COVID-19?

For me, it is that well-being is more important than prosperity. Declining well-being can give rise to social unrest, like friction between groups and distrust in government. It is not wrong to have different opinions; without friction, no shine. But how do we get the inhabitants of the world to forget their short-term concerns for a while and concentrate on the long-term?

I think you only can do that by starting one-on-one conversations. Especially on Zoom, where you have to look each other in the eyes constantly and focus on commonalities instead of magnifying the differences. You can do this by understanding each other’s worldviews instead of criticizing the blind spots of the other.

I also saw that it is important to pay attention to those who are particularly hit hard in this crisis. During the first wave of COVID-19, I saw that the institutional world could not handle it anymore. Then the community began to take actions. Neighbors helped each other. Society took over.

I also learned that social value takes precedence over economic value. During the COVID-19 crisis in the Netherlands, 85% of the Dutch people expected an economic crisis. But the Dutch social and cultural planning office found that there was optimism about an increase in social trust and great pride in social resilience. People can organize meetings and create connections very well themselves. They do not need government or institutions for that. In this space, I created my promise: “For all human beings to feel connected and experience community.” It is a bit ironic that the realization of connectedness has to save us in a society in which we have to keep a distance. But human beings have shown that they can be flexible in times of crisis. Many elderly people, therefore, also made the link to World War II in the discussions.

EMPOWERMENT

Yuval Noah Harari, an Israeli historian and author, said in an article about the world after COVID-19: “A self-motivated and well-informed population is usually far more powerful and effective than a policed, ignorant population.”

So, it is all about empowerment. Not about giving a fish to a poor person, but a fishing rod. In this way, we can strengthen people’s control over their own lives. I call this, “Being self-reliant together.”

Harari also said: “Humanity needs to make a choice. Will we travel down the route of disunity, or will we adopt the path of global solidarity? If we choose global solidarity, it will be a victory not only against a coronavirus, but against all future epidemics and crises that might assail humankind in the 21st century.”

In a Dutch inquiry on globalization, we saw that Dutch people are more positive about it, although we sometimes think differently, for example, about refugee policy. But, according to the research, these opposing views do not form a divisive problem in mutual relationships. So, there is hope.

MEASURES

In my inquiry into measures, I found several global goals, created by the United Nations, on such things as capacity building, policy and institutional coherence, multistakeholder partnerships and accountability. But, they were too abstract for me to give energy. In the Netherlands, a couple of students created an 18th global goal: *Share and pass on.*

That is my invitation to you: Let’s start fulfilling my dream together. Let’s create a world where nobody is left out. How? Be quiet and listen! Focus on what’s strong, not what’s wrong. Work together, build relationships, start in your own originating circle.

Don’t ask what the world needs. Ask what makes you come alive and go do it. Because what the world needs is people who have come alive.

—Howard Thurman, an American philosopher, theologian and civil rights leader

A CIRCUITOUS ROUTE

JIM FOWLER

It was a crisp morning in January and I had just picked up a copy of the college newsletter on my way to one of my classes. In the newsletter was an article about a man who had studied various spiritual and psychological disciplines and applied that knowledge to his career as a businessman. He was scheduled to give a talk to the parapsychology class later that week.

I attended the talk, expecting to see an elderly German man in a white robe walk to the front of the room. The exact opposite was the case. Here was a 35-year-old man dressed impeccably in slacks, shirt, shoes and a sports coat. I thought he looked like a slick car salesman. The first words out of his mouth were, “I am here to tell you that there are only two things in the universe – barriers and perfection.” The year was 1972 and the man’s name was Werner Erhard.¹ Little did I know then this would put me on course to follow my true calling in life.

I participated in the est Training in April 1972.² Without going into a long description of what happened, I can tell you that the end result was freedom from a way of being that had dominated my life. I was 20 years old and it often seemed to me that my life was already over. There was no future other than the constant sense of concern and worry that I would never be able to answer the question that many of us have been asked as children. “What do you want to be when you grow up?”

As far as I can tell, I have been a musician since I was very young. As a 5-year-old boy, I recognized music as a language; a language in which tones were the words and rhythm was the punctuation. Though I did not have the capacity to describe it as such at the time, the language of music was as familiar to me as English.

My musical education started in my home. I was born into a large family of 10 children. My mother

had a player piano that was often played by my sisters. One of them took lessons and could read music. The other knew how to play “Heart and Soul.” She would often let me sit next to her and we would switch the melody and harmony parts.

I was in fourth grade when I learned to play the recorder. The instructor asked if anyone wanted to play “The Marine’s Hymn” for the class. I volunteered and I played it flawlessly from start to finish. I was pretending to read the music. I had learned it by ear and I was as concerned with being found out as I was with finishing the piece without a mistake. The latter won out over the former.

During my middle school years, we would listen to records of The Kingston Trio and The Limeliter’s, two American folk music groups. I had already started to learn to play the guitar. It was during that time that the Beatles hit the scene. I was hooked.

In high school, I was part of a singing group known as Up With People. They were bringing a positive message to the youth of the world and giving them an opportunity to express their talents. They had national casts that toured the country and they established local chapters in cities across the United States.

I became the leader of the small band that accompanied the chorus and was a vocal soloist in my hometown chapter. I did that for several years. My brother and I performed in front of an audience of 2,500 students at my high school and we brought the house down with our performance.

It was during this period of time that I knew music was my calling. I wrote my first song and it even included treble clef and guitar chord notation. I was literate as a musician, yet not sure if I could make a living at it.

I remember attending an assembly at my high school where the glee club and orchestra performed a concert. I was a math/science major at the time, and I knew that I was getting close to a time when I needed to consider college and a career. Sitting in the balcony, listening and watching classical music being played and sung, I was mesmerized and hooked again.

Three years later, I was a junior in college away from home for the first time ever. I would often sit in my apartment, playing songs on my guitar and singing. One day, a fellow student knocked on my door and asked what album I was playing. I told her that it was not an album. I was the one playing that song. She was stunned and so was I.

Within a year after completing the est Training, I applied to the music department and was accepted. For two wonderful years, I was immersed in music. I played violin in the orchestra and sang in various vocal groups. My senior concert was a performance of various genres of music ranging from classical to barbershop. In June of 1976, I graduated with a bachelor of arts degree in music from Sonoma State College.

My journey was now complete. Or was it? I knew that I did not want to go directly into teaching as a profession. I had been in school most of my life. I did not really have the wherewithal to be a touring artist or even a studio musician. In the summer after graduation, I worked on a ranch near Calistoga, California. Was this the fulfillment of six years of college? It seemed rather strange to me. Nevertheless, I sat outside one day and spontaneously wrote a guitar tune that combined folk with classical. I called the piece “Calistoga Waltz.” Maybe something had been fulfilled.

For 25 years, I lived my life and engaged in several careers. I was a waiter, massage therapist and software programmer. During that time, I participated in numerous programs with est, Werner Erhard and Associates and Landmark. All the while, this persistent and often strong voice spoke and tugged at me to pursue my passion of music.

It was not until the year 2000 that the future I had been longing for opened up in front of me. A few important things happened during that

time. I reviewed the entire Curriculum for Living.³ I invented myself as the possibility of Love, Courage and full Self-Expression. I was laid off from my job in the high-tech world.

Here was the opening I had been waiting for. I began teaching music. I recorded a song that received airtime on National Public Radio. I was no longer a wannabe. Over the course of 20 years, I have taught more than 300 private students, taught classroom music to 10 different grade levels and written more than 50 original songs. My songs have won awards in the professional songwriting community.

In the last two years, I have dwelt in the programs of the Wisdom Course Area. A turning point in that process was watching Vanessa Johnstone’s keynote address at the 2020 Conference for Global Transformation. Her message was “Give Birth to Something.” I was moved to tears and I reignited my vision for ASÓMASE – A School of Music and Self-Expression. I have arrived at what I consider to be the next ascent up the mountain with no top.

While it may sound cliché, there is some truth to the words of a song from “The Sound of Music.”

Climb every mountain

Ford every stream

Follow every rainbow

’Til you find your dream

What is your dream? Are you willing to have it manifest itself? Is there a pathway, hidden trail or circuitous route somewhere in this world of transformation where we travel that will lead you to having that dream be fulfilled? I say there is.

ENDNOTES

¹ In 1971, Werner Erhard founded Erhard Seminars Training, often referred to as est, that offered a program known as the est Training.

² The est Training was a two-weekend program and was delivered in various formats over time.

³ The Curriculum for Living includes The Landmark Forum, the Seminar Program, the Advanced Course and the Self-Expression and Leadership Program.

FURTHERING MY COMMITMENT: WHAT IF MATH VOCABULARY WAS YOUR FRIEND?

LARRY BERNARD

My commitment is that mathematics will be seen everywhere as the wonderful, inspirational, creative and fun subject that it really is, and the teaching of mathematics will coincide with that viewpoint.

Having regularly participated in weekly Inquiries of the Social Commons calls (Living as a Created Self, Measures and Social Commons) for the greater part of last year, along with my involvement with the Inquiry Explorations Program, I began to truly live my commitment as never before, especially after last year’s Conference for Global Transformation.

As a resource, the listening, self-expression and sharing available in those venues have opened up a new world of possibility for me. Below, I document actions I have taken lately, as a result of my participation, to further my commitment.

Lately, I have observed, locally and nationwide, an effort to include more mathematics and STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) majors from underrepresented groups, e.g., women, African-Americans, Latinx. My commitment fits very well with this goal. If we can make mathematics more appealing and less confronting to a larger segment of the population, we will be well on the way to including more of the groups traditionally left out of STEM programs.

To this end, I have proposed, in several places at City College of San Francisco where I teach, some changes in the way we name things in mathematics. Many of the ways we talk about mathematics have a lot of negative connotations. Let’s begin with the word “problems.” We routinely refer to our exercises, questions, examples and investigations as problems.

Indeed, in the dictionary, a secondary definition of the word includes reference to “mathematical problems” as one of the meanings of the word. However, the first definition of the word is: “a matter or situation regarded as unwelcome or harmful and needing to be dealt with and overcome.”

Further connotations, actual synonyms from the thesaurus, are: “difficulty, issue, trouble, worry, complication, mess, muddle, stumbling block, obstacle, hurdle” and other negative thoughts and feelings.

I propose that we stop using this word in its mathematical context and instead talk about “questions,” or “examples,” or “exercises,” or “investigations.” After sharing my commitment with my students (for the very first time ever), I have instituted this vocabulary change in my most recent mathematics course at City College with positive reactions. Of course, the textbook and lots of other places have “problems” everywhere, so it’s a continual revision process. I would like to start doing this at the college and eventually request the textbook companies to follow our example with the idea of making the language we use allow for more inclusion of those

who are, traditionally, alienated by “problems.”

Then, there’s “homework.” Another negative carryover from youthful school days when we wanted to be out playing and instead had “homework.” Phooey! Glad to say, texts I have used recently have titled their homework “Study Sets” and “Exercise Sets.” I like this and have adopted this terminology for my class, again with positive reactions. Let’s get rid of “homework” and call it a study set. Again, I would like to begin this at the college and appeal to the textbook companies who still have “homework” to follow suit.

Another loaded word is “tests.” I think the word “assessment” is much better than “test,” which has the connotation of “trial” or even “ordeal.” This is especially true for anyone who, as a member of an underrepresented group, has had any difficulties with previous mathematics courses. I have adopted “assessments” for my class. I would like to make this a common practice at the college; then we can begin a trend by asking textbook companies to go along.

To make this vocabulary alteration more widespread at City College, I shared my commitment and proposals enumerated above (again, for the very first time) with the Mathematics Community of Practices Committee and mathematics department head. The committee was very favorable. However, in the committee report to the department meeting, there was only a general summary of my ideas. I thought that I would like to do something more to make this happen.

To this end, I thought of coming up with a pledge that I could circulate for teachers to sign which would say something like: “I pledge to use other words to substitute for words that intimidate: “problem,” “test” and “homework.”

I then met with the department head, shared my commitment with her, along with my ideas about vocabulary and a pledge for the members of our department to sign. Her response was, “I believe that if you did this, one third of the faculty would say, ‘Yes! Wonderful. Sign me up.’ Another third would say, ‘What are you talking about? I don’t understand...’ and the remaining third would say, ‘I won’t have anything to do with such nonsense.’”

This was a revelation. I had not considered that anyone would be opposed or even ambivalent. Of course, there would be opposition. The department head has a very good idea of who is teaching mathematics at City College—a far better idea than I do, as an adjunct instructor. Reality check. What now?

During that Zoom call with the department head, I acknowledged her for a very clear presentation of the looming financial crisis that the college is facing, with possible major class cuts and layoffs—a real threat to our well-being. I had not understood before the depth of the catastrophe that threatens in the near future. In the context of that, my proposal is easily relegated to a minor consideration, or a “we’ll look at that some other time” status.

She agreed and mentioned that she has been working on getting a data science class going at the college. This is a hot subject, being, as I understand it, a fundamental way of relating to computer programming that a large number of people are very interested in.

With the financial situation heading toward disaster, implementing this course, which has proven extremely popular when it has been offered elsewhere, has had to be put on a back burner. I have not been able to figure out a way to add my proposal to hers yet, or, for that matter, to anyone else’s proposal. At this point, I think that would be a possible strategy—join forces with another movement and further another’s and my commitments together. Stay tuned and watch for next year’s report.

CREATING WORLD PEACE

KET FOX

“There is no way to peace. Peace is the way.”

—A. J. Muste, American activist

As a troubled 20-something, my own journey to devoting my life to creating world peace began in August 1969 during a panic attack. I lost all memory for a long four minutes

When my thoughts returned, all desire unexpectedly vanished, rendering me wide awake literally for 11 days and 11 nights before finally falling asleep.

On the 12th morning, I awakened with a mind flooded by thoughts of human suffering. Four years later, I “heard” my own voice say in a dream: “My purpose is to live in resonant, rhythmic harmony with all peoples, creatures and things.”

Soon, this idea birthed an irresistible yearning for peace on Earth. What would it take to resolve conflict and cause inner peace? I didn’t want to suffer any longer, and I didn’t want anyone else to suffer.

The practical discipline of my engineering and physics background clarified the need for an organization. Eventually, I formed what’s known as a B corp, which commits to creating public benefit and sustainable value in addition to generating profit.²

In 1978, I created what I call the World Peace Project Source Document which raises two questions:

- What forces generate the climate that perpetuates war and conflict?
- What makes the actions you and I take effective for fulfilling on any promise for peace?

Consequently, the mission for me evolved into six “Principles for Peace,” which are:

1. Values
2. Family
3. Community
4. Work
5. Nature
6. Wisdom

Each of these principles also relates to one of the six forces that perpetuates societal conflict. No doubt all of us have lived through our own childhood conditions that have brought us face to face with these six forces. In relation to the six principles, they are:

- 1. Values and the Seduction of Force** – The insidious habit of relying upon aggression or force for an inherent, compulsive, obsessive and emotionally “addictive” reward.
- 2. Family and Abandonment** – If we live past childhood, we, at some point, come to face abandonment or “orphaning,” that is, being alone or “on our own.”
- 3. Community and “Appliancing”** – The word coined here, appliancing, refers to our

practice of considering ourselves and others as inhuman or unreal.

- 4. Work and Systems of Scarcity** – Behind a massive façade of “Masquerade,” we’ve built financial and trading relationships erected upon a presumptive expectation of scarcity.
- 5. The Nature of Fear** – Fear and apprehension naturally follow the impact of abrupt, early or unsupported abandonment to further sow the seeds of war and conflict.
- 6. Wisdom Obscured by a Masquerade** – We are often driven by desire, hurt, fear and/or anger and act as though we aren’t vulnerable to fear. We fabricate a fictional identity out of our thoughts, stories and imaginations—an identity that we feel compelled to protect.

At the same time, the principles for peace work in concert with each other to deepen a natural access to inner harmony. These principles are realized through:

- 1. Demonstrating Ethical Integrity (Value)** – being whole and complete, reliably aware, free from mind, led by love, empowered by peace, honoring life in all its forms; and, within this context, practicing humor, serenity and candor.
- 2. Communicating Supportive Intimacy (Family)** – relating to people with an open commitment both to their well-being and receiving their communication.
- 3. Practicing Mutual Comradeship (Community)** – living respectfully and cooperatively with one’s neighbors.
- 4. Managing Resource Sufficiency (Work)** – having one’s work provide a surplus for the good of one’s self, one’s family and as a contribution to one’s community.
- 5. Cultivating Physical Well-Being (Nature)** – becoming physically able to affect health and safety for one’s self and being able to sustain a life-supportive environment.
- 6. Understanding Cultural Literacy (Wisdom)** – being knowledgeable enough to survive, optimize health, live safely, be

appropriate and wise enough to generate gratitude, peace and satisfaction in one’s life under any circumstance.

These practices reveal what it takes to speak/ listen, work/play and get along with one another.

This mission led me to complete the est Training in January 1977 and to participate in every seminar as well as most of the courses and training programs offered by Landmark from 1977 to the present.

Over the past 47 years, the company I formed puts the public good above profits. During that time, I have developed and successfully tested six in-house programs and six additional public projects for attaining world peace through accessing inner peace.

In 2020, like most businesses and organizations in the throes of the coronavirus pandemic, I have moved its programs and projects to online venues and am now upgrading computer systems, securing its online communications, running Zoom events and recruiting/training staff.

ENDNOTES

- 1 www.en.wikiquote.org/wiki/A._J._Muste.
- 2 www.benefitcorp.net/what-is-a-benefit-corporation.

SAVING A LIFE — THE POWER OF BEING WITH, LISTENING AND NOT KNOWING

HERB QUICK

It was the third week of February 2020. I was between Weekends five and six of my second consecutive time through the Partnership Explorations course. The course covers a lot of ground from the idea of alien, flirting with being on the edge, Dancing in the Unknown, embracing Beginner’s Mind, practicing Listening and “Being With.” Also, oh yes, expecting miracles, and experiencing them daily. Life was opening up like a flower in full bloom — opportunities and invitations appearing unexpectedly, relationships teeming with love and affinity.

Being With, Listening and Beginner’s Mind have been three of the most powerful distinctions and practices for me in all of my participation with Landmark so far. The practice of bracketing what I think I know (or what I do know, dammit! I’ve learned so much...), just being with whatever or whomever I encounter, and listening, really listening, seems to create a space and clearing in which people, things and life itself can show up as they are. Not as I know they are or as I’d like them to be.

But I digress. I was sharing an experience of what can emerge in this space and clearing. Back to the third week of February 2020.

Ally, my youngest daughter, had been living with her boyfriend for the better part of two years. They had recently become engaged. The wedding was in planning with the date set. The bachelorette party had been scheduled and organized. Ally’s closest relatives from her mother’s side of the family in Germany, as well as her best friends from there and all over the United States, had planned or were planning their trips.

She called me that Tuesday evening in February sobbing and said, “It’s over. He got mad about something, called everything off and left to stay with his parents. I’m probably going to have to move back into the condo.” I asked if I should come over or if she needed anything. She said no, she just wanted to get some sleep. We talked a little while longer, then said goodnight.

I drove over to their place on Wednesday and we talked for a bit. She was packing up her things and needed some containers. I picked some up and brought them to the house along with some lunch. We ate and I left for the office.

On Thursday, I needed to be at the office most of the day, so I called her in the morning. She was quiet but said she was OK. In the afternoon, I began feeling uneasy; I tried calling her several times. She didn’t pick up or call back. I texted and got no response. The feeling grew stronger; it became almost like a pain in my stomach, and I was getting more and more nervous.

Finally, able to leave that evening, I drove straight to their house. It was dark. I knocked on the kitchen door, which was the one they almost always used. Nothing. I knocked again louder and waited a moment. Still nothing. I went around to the front door and found it unlocked. I went in, calling her name and looking around. I found her in the master bedroom passed out on the bed. She was unconscious. There was an empty vodka bottle on the floor. I tried shaking her and calling her name and discovered she had wet the bed and vomited on it.

I continued talking to her as I lifted her up and out of the bed and stood her up. She finally opened

her eyes, and I began walking her around the house, talking to her the whole time. When she became somewhat present, I had her drink water, as much as she could. She eventually started trying to talk but could not form words. When I felt she had moved enough, I had her sit down and drink more water while I went and stripped the bed while sobbing heavily, then helped her get changed and put the soiled clothing and bedding in the washer, and searched the place to make sure there was no more alcohol.

I stayed there that night to monitor her, then came and went for two days. In the afternoon of that second day, while I was not at the house, she texted me, her mother, sisters, aunt (my sister) and two best friends that she had become an alcoholic, knew that it had ruined her relationship with her fiancé and probably others and was going to stop drinking. She did. She and her fiancé worked things out and got back together.

So where were Being With, Listening and Not Knowing in all of this?

The entire time from her first phone call to the night I found her passed out and likely kept her from slipping into a coma and/or choking on her own vomit to the day she sent that text message, I was practicing Being With, Listening and Beginner’s Mind. Yes, I was sobbing heavily as I was cleaning up. When I was with her though, I was just being with her and listening to her. I put aside anything I think I know about any of it; any judgments, opinions, advice. I made sure that this environment was maintained when anyone else showed up.

I am convinced that it was this space, clearing, that allowed my daughter to show up as she truly is and to get clear about what there was to do to honor who she is and take those actions.

This is one of many, many miracles that have shown up in my life through the practice of these three distinctions. What else could emerge through Being With, Listening and Not Knowing? What miracles would you like to share?

LISTENING AND TIME

SUSIE FRASER

These things seem so simple And, yet, altering my views of them has made a big difference for me.

Time is made up. It describes the movement of the earth on its axis and around the sun. Its passing is mechanical – tick, tick, tick – a second is a second, around the world, with very small variations depending on the clock. Time enables us to make arrangements to attend events, connect with other people and plan how our lives go.

Then, there is how I experience time passing. Sometimes, time seems to pass fast, and sometimes slowly. It’s not necessarily the same for me and others. I recall going to a classical music concert where the orchestra played a long – a 90-minute-long – work with no interval. I loved it, and, when it ended, I thought, “Oh, it’s over already!” All three friends I was with said things, such as, “Oh, that was so long I thought it was never going to end!” Same performance and different experiences of time passing.

It can work the other way, too. I’m surprised how much I can get done in five minutes when I am hurrying to be on time for a Zoom call in five minutes – bathroom, coffee, notepad, lipstick, log in – made it. Different needs and opinions seem to dramatically alter how time occurs for me.

Each of us has the same amount of time and, yet, many of us say things such as, “I wish I had more time” and “I don’t have time to …” – as if it would all work out if the 36-hour day came along. I notice things work better for me when I’m looking at what I am going to do in the time I have rather than somehow trying to get more time.

Listening is tricky. I listen, and listen, and then they say something, and I think something about what

they said, and I am gone into thinking, and I don’t necessarily notice that happened. It is also easy to use the time when they are talking to figure out what I am going to say when they stop talking, and it is my turn to talk, especially if I am standing in line for a turn at the microphone.

I can’t check if I am listening because as soon as I ask myself, “Am I listening?,” I am not listening. So, what can I do? Well, it seems to me I can develop a capacity to notice when I am not listening and then return to listening. This will sound familiar to readers who have a practice of sitting, and returning to sitting.

From time to time I do this exercise. I have paper and pen, and I make a mark on my paper when I notice I am not listening, and I return to listening. At the end of the period of time, I count the marks. More marks are better because one catches the stopping of listening sooner. I have shared this with others, including in a training program I run, and some people say they have found it helpful.

It seems that how time occurs, fast, slow or in-between, is a function of my listening at the time. Sometimes, like in that 90-minute musical piece, it seems my sense of time passing almost disappears entirely.

REGISTERING ACCOMPLISHMENT: DOES IT BEGIN BY ASKING THE UNANSWERABLE QUESTIONS?

FIONA PELHAM

My 2020 Report from the Field included a question which, when I wrote it in January 2020, seemed unanswerable. I asked:

“Is our fascination with the measurement of carbon footprints jeopardizing our future of human connection?”

In January 2020, my context for this question was the idea that regulations and policy around the global need for reducing carbon would restrict our ability to travel the world to be face to face with each other.

The commitment from which I asked this question is a commitment for a sustainable event sector. In other words, every time people come together, the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals are advanced. The U.N. goals range from ending poverty and gender inequality to ensuring decent work for all and responsible production and consumption.

When I wrote this question in January 2020, I thought that it was a dichotomy. I could not imagine how it would be possible for a decrease in carbon emissions to happen at the same time as an increase in human connection. I was listening from a place that one of these elements would win to the detriment of the other. It turns out registering accomplishment begins by giving language to a commitment, even when it seems impossible.

As we all know, by March 2020, COVID-19 was changing our world. The Conference for Global Transformation (CGT) went online and we all connected from our living rooms. Every single

attendee was able to participate without a need to travel. There was no travel-related carbon footprint from the event.¹ Standing in the listening I had when I posed the question, the accomplishment of no carbon footprint also would have meant no human connection.

Having no human connection was not the accomplishment which I and every other attendee of the CGT registered for. Instead, we all jumped into the unknown (an amazing opportunity to experience the fifth field we explore in the Partnership Explorations course) and we accomplished a new way to experience human connection.²

We connected with the keynote speakers as they spoke directly to us without the obstruction of the back of someone’s head or the side angle provided by an end of row seat. The European community, moved by the closing keynote speakers, created an unplanned sharing opportunity using WhatsApp messaging and the hospitality Zoom room. We were accomplishing never-before experienced levels of human connection.

Standing in January 2020, the idea of the CGT being the world’s only example of human connection without a carbon footprint would have been an amazing accomplishment. What astounded me, as I reread my 2020 Report from the Field, was the realization that, since March 2020, nearly every single person in the world has been exploring and experiencing carbon footprint-free human connection.

In fact, you could say that humanity’s greatest

accomplishment in 2020 was our ability to learn how to connect with each other in a new way.

Did asking my unanswerable question cause this accomplishment? Of course not, but asking the unanswerable question gave me language and a place to stand so I could be curious, collaborative and demonstrate leadership. You could say that, by giving language to the impossible, I had created space to be able to explore how it could be possible. By April 2020, the not-for-profit organization I run, Positive Impact Events, had launched a campaign to upskill and empower 100,000 event professionals to build the future of how human connection happens.

We interviewed more than 17 global leaders, created animation films and shared toolkits with more than 1,200 global ambassadors. We launched a program called “Explore” for those responsible for planning events in corporate companies, and we delivered experiments on how human connection happens from dancing and singing to storytelling and acknowledgement exercises. Together, we were learning how human connection happens and our experiments gave people the chance to try something new.

Our attendees began to use what they learned within their companies. For example, a global tech company began an international meeting with an acknowledgement session, using appreciation as a way to build the connection their colleagues said they were missing. In a face to face situation, they could have been exchanging thoughts on the weekend’s sports results while waiting for a coffee. After the acknowledgement session, the event attendees’ feedback was that they had never felt so connected, a sign that our patterns of behavior when connecting face to face could have been limiting the depths of our human connection.

In January 2021, asking the question, “Is our fascination with the measurement of carbon footprints jeopardizing our future of human connection?” seems pointless. There is no dichotomy. This seems a small question, and it is almost impossible to remember this question as one around which there was limited action.

If registering accomplishment begins with asking the unanswerable question, I’m keen to ask

another unanswerable question. I’m also at the edges of everything I can imagine as impossible because, within 12 months, the impossible question I’ve spent my career exploring has been addressed. So, here is my impossible question for 2021 and, maybe, this time next year my Report from the Field will be registering the accomplishment from this unanswerable question:

“Will everyone collaborating, communicating, participating and being included in decision-making replace our political approach to creating a world that works for everyone?”

ENDNOTES

- 1 Of course, energy is required to power technology which does create carbon emissions. A carbon footprint for a global sporting event identified emissions related to IT would be 0.2% whereas emissions caused by travel to the event would be over 60%.
- 2 Partnership Explorations is a 10-month course offered by Landmark.

DISCOVERIES FROM THE INQUIRIES

ON THE ROAD TO LISTENING:
THE JOURNEY CONTINUES

CHRIS KIRTZ

WIDENING THE PATH

Readers of past journals from the Conference for Global Transformation will realize this is now the third report on my journey of becoming a “listener” as a custodian of Living as a Created [Creating] Self: Carving New Pathways for Life.

In the 2019 journal, I noted that I discovered I was a “verb” and not a “noun.” I was an ongoing evolving “conversation” (actually part of networks of conversations) – not a fixed entity or “thing.”

In the 2020 journal, I reported on discovering the importance of listening with “nothing” to offer.

Now, in 2021, my development continues. As a custodian, and as Adult as Possibility in Training and Development for Life:

- My commitment is: “listening” is as sought after, recognized and in demand as speaking.
- I am listening for: humanity’s capacity to create.
- My practice is: listening “as” the social commons of transformation with “nothing to offer.”
- My measure is: Do people discover themselves as authors, creators and source of life and listening in the listening provided?

Now listening – at least with the commitment I have – is a proverbial Landmark “mountain with no top.”

That’s not only fine, it’s wonderful, thrilling and exhilarating.

What a joy – living in the world of “looking” and

“discovering” – rather than thinking and knowing or not knowing. It’s pure fun, play and ease.

Being present, tingling and alive – now and now and now.

Come join me or any of the other custodians on any of the six topics of inquiry which piques your interest and/or suits your schedule.

All you have to lose is your fixed way of being.

All you have to gain is the freedom to be and the freedom to act.

As Brian Regnier, the creator of the conference and a Landmark Forum leader, among other things, puts it, “An access to the immediate transformation of reality.”

REGISTERING ACCOMPLISHMENT

Everything above was written and ready for submission – just awaiting completion of today’s Living as a Created [Creating] Self Inquiry.

Today’s question was: What new pathways could we carve and what new discoveries might be available?

The new pathway I discovered was “registering accomplishment.”

I had completely overlooked inquiring there – even though my wife, after reading Part I, suggested I might want to add something given “Registering Accomplishment” is the topic of this year’s conference.

Upon reflection, I now register the new ground taken on my listening journey, and, this third – in a

row – entry for the journal as an accomplishment.

I am present to the power of taking the time to pause and reflect on accomplishments and registering them.

Having registered these accomplishments, I realize that I now start with an expanded capacity to manifest my commitment.

Were I building a house, it would be as if I had stabilized and expanded the foundation, and added height to the structure from which my vision is closer and more clearly on the horizon.

DISCOVERIES FROM THE INQUIRIES

TO WEAR A MASK OR NOT TO WEAR A MASK, THAT IS THE QUESTION

ARIELA MARSHALL

To quote three wise men:

“We won’t fulfill on our commitments to the world unless the people you consider the ‘opposition’ join you.”

—Tobin White, a Landmark leader

“Talk and engage with the fringes, the parts of our community that think differently than we do.”

—Brian Regnier, a Landmark leader

“The journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step.”

—Lao Tzu, a Chinese philosopher

And then there’s the Wisdom Unlimited course tip that talking to strangers is where our power to make a difference lies.¹

My commitment for the world is: “Everyone gets they are the source of their own well-being and are in charge, in action, on the court and on the dance floor of their life.”

COVID-19 has brought up a difference about wearing a mask between my thinking and the thinking of my Orthodox Jewish relatives. At first, I wasn’t going to engage in the subject with them. But, then I asked myself, “What is something we are both aligned on?” The answer to that question was easy, “Our Jewish faith.”

Coming from there, it was easy for me to see a solution to my dilemma about my relatives who did not favor wearing masks. A high school friend posted a picture of a Hanukkah mask she had made on Facebook. After I commented on how

cute that was, she asked for my address to send me some. I asked her if she could make some masks for children in the same pattern. She did. I sent them to my cousin as part of a Hanukkah package.

To my surprise, my cousin called to thank me for the masks and said her children were excited to wear their new Hanukkah masks as they expressed their Jewish faith, and no one else in their class has a cool mask like theirs.

In the Partnership Explorations course, we talk about the “alien” and “being in the unknown,” and the access that gives us.² We also interview people in our community and ask, “What don’t we talk about?” and “What could we talk about?” After interviewing the 27 people in my community book, I realized that there was a world of things I don’t talk about with my community.

I had a real opportunity to expand my topics of conversation from ordinary or “social grease” conversations to ones that make a difference in the world. The simple fact that I could shift an entire family’s perception about masks from, “We don’t need to do that” to “It’s the cool thing to do” by finding common ground forwards my commitment to the world.

As a result of my commitment to wearing masks, I have found a local woman who sews beautiful masks, and I have been able to support her business. One day, I went into a doughnut shop for coffee and the owner complimented me on my beautiful mask. The conversation led to connecting my mask-maker to the shop owner, who placed an order for doughnut masks which she sold in her shop. They were such a big hit that she placed a second order. The double

benefit is I am supporting a local business, and I now have expanded my community and made a friend in the process.

I did the same with a former doctor of mine, now a dean at Harvard Medical School, who always expounded on the health benefits of coffee. I mailed him coffee masks. He has invited me for coffee. Now I can explore other opportunities to partner and expand my commitment of well-being in the world with a dean at Harvard Medical School.

From being on a Measures inquiry call, I realized that I have measures for the actions I take to fulfill on my promise.³ These include: How many people are purchasing my friend’s handmade masks and how her business of making masks is thriving? I also count that my 96-year-old mother, who is in a long-term care facility, has not contracted COVID-19 in the face of all the outbreaks that her facility has had.

In my community, the people, who have had COVID-19, have not had severe enough cases for hospitalization, and there have not been any COVID-19-related deaths in my immediate circle.

I’ve also seen new openings for actions to expand my conversations around well-being. I’m thinking of writing a book about how to manage yourself powerfully in the face of any medical circumstance. Lucky for me, my doctor friend is a well-known author and acclaimed worldwide public speaker.

So, in the end, out of a conversation I was hesitant to engage in, I developed an agreement about mask wearing, gave a local business owner new business and have a meeting with a dean at Harvard Medical School to discuss possible collaboration.

I invite you to take the advice of those three wise men: Tobin White, Brian Regnier and Lao Tzu. Reach out to the opposition, engage with the fringe parts of your community and talk to strangers. Take that single step to go beyond comfort in conversations. You will be amazed at your accomplishments by learning what is possible and how to make a difference.

ENDNOTES

- 1 The Wisdom Unlimited course is a nine-month course offered by Landmark.
- 2 Partnership Explorations is a 10-month course offered by Landmark.
- 3 Inquiry Explorations is the program designed for participants who attend the conference to be in action all year long – to create a commitment for the world and begin conversations to launch that commitment. Each week, calls are available for inquiries on a variety of subjects and make up part of what’s known as the Social Commons.

DISCOVERIES FROM THE INQUIRIES

A GIANT CRASH UN-BUNKS US FROM OUR BEDS: WRITING AND REWRITING 2020 INSIDE THE SOCIAL COMMONS

RUTH B. (TRUE) SHIELDS

Once upon a time, I promised this:

“By the year 2020, all of us are participating fully in all of life for all our lives, learning each other’s languages and honoring Language as the House of Being.”

That was a L-O-N-G time ago (2002), and, at the time, we called these “impossible promises.”

In 2016, I was hanging out with a new friend who had never heard of such a promise, so I said that I’d go with her to a workshop on creating one. After all, another friend was leading that workshop, so even though “I already have one, I can go and support my friends.”

With no intention in mind, I sat there and listened and reluctantly participated in the exercises. I was very surprised when “I already have one” fell away, and I stood up and declared to everyone in the room, “Everyone’s language is worth learning.”

A short time later, I took myself to a training retreat for entrepreneurs and every time the guy started pitching his year-long training program, I got up and left the room to make sure I wouldn’t even consider signing up for it. Finally, I went to one of his program coaches and shared what was going on and wrote the “worth learning”

declaration and the following words on the application form:

“I promise, by 2030, one thousand or more language will have been removed from the Endangered Language List worldwide – through revitalization, not extinction.”

This new promise – worded as a specific measurable result to be produced in the world – is a nonlinear descendant of the older promise. Each new articulation takes me and my life over in ways that seem like it is eating, sleeping and breathing me, instead of the other way around.

Who knew that, in 2020, all of us [including me] would be participating fully in all of life for all our lives, learning each other’s languages, and honoring Language as the House of Being?

Apparently, I knew, or it sure seems that way.

The “all of us” affected by a global pandemic have had to adapt like mad to a new world circumstance and invent with haste new ways of participating fully – safely and at a distance, up close and personal, by video screen or not.

That old promise – for a far-in-the-future year now in the past – seems surprisingly to have been fulfilled, especially in the here-and-now hindsight of the past year. It happened in the first year of pandemic pandemonium, a year I had so looked forward to and could have – or, perhaps, should have – been so disappointed by.

Instead, over the course of this past year in the Inquiry Explorations Program, I have come to articulate these old and new promises in a new way, as a new commitment:

Languages are the Source of Love, Community, Pride, and Joy.

I am becoming more and more comfortable in the speaking — and teaching — of the indigenous California language whose survival I am committed to. I have eagerly sought out colleagues and partners in that endeavor and incorporated other people’s approaches to language-learning and teaching alongside my own.

I have started doing what I keep asking my students and clients to do – start learning a language your family has had taken from you or one that finds you connecting with friends and family purely for the pleasure and joy of connecting with — and loving — them more deeply. My students and clients have become my friends, and my friends and family have become my students and clients. If – by chance – we start off unrelated, we soon fall deeply in love with each other. We work and play together in these new languages until such time as we have fallen in love with what we are learning and cannot even think of stopping them again.

FINDING MY INNER POET

In the last week of December, I arrived a few minutes late to a Social Commons inquiry call in time to hear someone’s joking remark, “We should all come back next week having written a sonnet!” I laughed, not really knowing what I was laughing at, while grabbing a pencil and jotting that down. The following Sunday - kasvk mats’il or “rest day” in my calendar, I picked up that note, googled “how to write a sonnet” and made a few notes on rhyme schemes I’d forgotten and points about structure I’d never heard of before.

Shakespeare’s sonnets have 14 lines carefully written in iambic pentameter. That is, they consist of five “iambes” – sequences of unstressed and stressed syllables repeated five times per line. These lines are arranged into three four-line stanzas called “quatrains” followed by a two-line “couplet” to close out the sonnet.

SONNET FOR THE CLIMATE

For Peter and Sharon*

*A giant crash un-bunks us from our beds.
The outside thunder cracks and ends the drought.
We run outside and let it drench our heads,
then dance for more despite a deepening doubt.*

*Against all odds and wavering hopes, we breathe –
belief ablaze despite the parched night’s heat.
Whole neighborhoods of thirsty souls relieved,
grown drunk on H2O’s delicious treat.*

*But dawn’s alerts bring cries of “Sailor’s Warn”
with eerie orange and ash-filled skies aglow.
Evacuation plans so soon reborn:
First, catch the cat, then rent a car, and go.*

*To dream this healing dream of ours, we’ll need
to see through all the smoke – and science heed.*

© Ruth B. (True) Shields, January 3, 2021

*I dedicate my first-ever sonnet to Peter and Sharon Fiekowsky whose vision for restoring the climate dances so close to mine for languages.

It turns out that Shakespeare’s sonnets are famous for having an ABAB/CDCD/EFEF/GG rhyme scheme. (This pattern differs from those typically used by Petrarch.) The all-caps notation tells us that the first quatrain’s first line rhymes with its third line and the second and fourth lines rhyme with each other, but not with the first and third lines. In addition, it tells us that the second and third quatrains follow a similar pattern, but that none of the rhymes are repeated from quatrain to quatrain.

In terms of content, I learned that most sonnets present a topic or theme in the first two quatrains and then a problem with that topic or theme in the third – often started with the word “but” in the ninth line. The final couplet serves as a kind of moral to the story told in the preceding quatrains.

With all this in mind, I picked up a stack of 14 three-by-five-inch index cards and my trusty 0.5mm mechanical pencil and started writing. I wanted something vivid along the lines of Landmark’s “vivid share” technology: Present-tense, active voice and something the reader can “see” as though they’re right there as it’s happening. I wanted my housemate to recognize her precious presence in the before and after of twin disasters, and I wanted my poet brother to praise me.

How did I do?

HOW WILL YOU MAKE YOUR BIGGEST IMPACT WHILE LIVING ON PLANET EARTH?

ANNA CHOI

“We are blessed with technology that would be indescribable to our forefathers. We have the wherewithal, the know-it-all to feed everybody, clothe everybody and give every human on Earth a chance. We know now what we could never have known before – that we now have the option for all humanity to make it successfully on this planet in this lifetime. Whether it is to be utopia or oblivion will be a touch-and-go relay race right up to the final moment.”

—Buckminster Fuller, an American architect, systems theorist, author, inventor and futurist

My commitment for the world is to elevate humanity's consciousness through being a loving presence.

Unless humanity cooperates with a higher consciousness, we will have more of what's not working. But, how do you measure consciousness?

I created measures based on each level of Self. Here's how my commitment has measured up in the last year.

SELF AS INDIVIDUAL MEASURE: CERTIFY AS AN ENERGY MASTER

While I've practiced yoga weekly for 20 years, the last five years I've focused on body and brain yoga based on the Tao philosophy, tai chi, qigong, martial arts and brain education. In this type of yoga, you must first awaken to being able to feel energy before embarking on mastering your energy.

The accreditation to become an energy master is like becoming a Landmark program leader, requiring intensive training and evaluations on your studies, training, character development and actions by your center manager, regional manager and corporate headquarters on what ways you lived the principles of being a Dahn master at the level of Self, at your center and in your region. Even though my week-long in-person training got cancelled and moved online, I completed the training successfully to be approved as an energy master.

SELF AS GROUP MEASURE: HOW UNCONDITIONALLY LOVING AM I BEING?

Every few weeks, I ask my 9-year-old son and husband on a scale of 1-5, how unconditionally loving have I been? By being in the inquiry of “Am I being unconditionally loving?” with my family, I've been able to maintain an average score of four during the pandemic.

SELF AS COMMUNITY MEASURE: 500+ COMMUNITY OF CONSCIOUS ENTREPRENEUR MEMBERS

After relying on live events and speaking to source clientele in my company, Conscious Business Coaching, I decided to simply build community online when the pandemic hit.

After two years of stagnant growth hovering at 200 members, we grew to more than 550 members in three months. We organized monthly Conscious Entrepreneur Socials and started EnergyTV interviews on our YouTube channel growing subscribers to more than 270 after having 120 in a year.

My company co-organized an online Synergy Summit with about 40 attendees and created a new virtual “silent retreat” program for our clients.

In our community, we continued with online yoga outreach classes enrolling two other instructors to run the class on their own. We also established a Conscious Leadership Foundation to make grants to local schools for training their staff on mindfulness, emotional resilience and leadership.

SELF AS WORLD MEASURES: PREMIERING TEDXSIL TALK AND FORBES ARTICLES

On a whim, I was one of 80 applicants to submit a one-minute talk proposal for a TEDx talk through our local library system. I was selected as one of the final 15.

This event of 6,000 audience members sold out within hours. When the pandemic hit, they cancelled the live event. It moved online with one speaker per week. We had to promote ourselves at home on Zoom speaking to a camera hole.

Constantly letting go of that disappointment, I focused my talk's core message on how to find peace in chaos. It became a constant inquiry that blossomed into more than 41,000 views, 16 articles for Forbes and 17 speaking engagements ranging from podcast interviews to being on a panel for the Seattle World Trade Center.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR OTHERS: PARTNERS

My commitment cannot be fulfilled alone. I expanded my originating circle to include larger organizations instead of individuals alone. That led to:

- Doing a keynote talk sharing my ALIVE model to Business Networking International for 600 international business leaders that live on their continuing education unit's website;
- Signed on a 350-million-dollar corporate partner, Body & Brain Yoga, to contract their head trainers as part of my company's coaching team; and
- Was selected for a joint venture with a multimillion-dollar podcast company that booked 70 interviews with Conscious Business Leaders in less than eight weeks.

SAYING NO

Unless a leader remains crystal clear on what outcome they want, it's difficult to know what to say yes or no to. I turned down an invitation to share the virtual stage with world-renowned Deepak Chopra, to co-author a book, and cut ties with a major global partner that no longer had sufficient integrity for us to continue.

Continuing to operate from obligation, duty or responsibility to partnerships that no longer align were huge energy drains because I cared too much what others would think rather than making the healthiest choice for myself.

PLAYING SMALL TO CREATING TEAMS

When my key team member to-be-successor left our company, this breakdown allowed me to stop treating my business as a vehicle for my own personal growth to express my passion, and, instead, run it as a company. My company became a system that anyone would be able to run with the same impact, unattached to who came and went on the team.

As a result, I've gone from being a solo business owner to hiring two assistants, contracting with two coaches and three podcast marketing team members, two associate consultants and a Facebook community manager.

LESSONS LEARNED

- 1. Trust the unknown.** I've learned to surrender to rather than strategize my future. It feels as though what worked in sales and marketing was irrelevant during the pandemic. I have to keep letting go of what worked in the past to innovate newly into the future.
- 2. Stop caring what others think, or else I'll suffer deeply.** Whether it's politics, Black Lives Matter or COVID-19 choices and behaviors, it's more draining to suppress what I think than learn to speak up lovingly without being attached to an outcome. It's the ultimate expression to be one's true self and not betray oneself to fit in.
- 3. Grow what replenishes you.** When my TEDx talk got removed from ted.com

because they believed that I didn't follow guidelines, I had to choose to stay focused on the message worth sharing of finding peace in chaos and not worry about looking bad.

NOW WHAT?

In the face of many challenges of constant remote working with my husband 24/7 (we've never been together this much before), homeschooling my son (I'm not a teacher), running a full-time growing business (my kid is always interrupting) or obtaining my black belt (my grandmaster's gym is closed and not offering online classes), my commitment prevailed.

Looking ahead, my vision is to publish a book on how to tap into your flow anytime, anywhere, unleashing your brilliance and go on a global speaking tour with my family. I will continue exploring what's now become a lifelong inquiry: *How can we make the biggest impact while living on this earth?*

DISCOVERIES FROM THE INQUIRIES

PATIENCE: TRANSFORMING “IMPATIENT EXPECTATIONS” AND CHOOSING THE *ELAN VITAL*

CARLA BARROW

My promise for the world is that, “by 2024, Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness are available to all: Choice, Opportunity and Partnership rule the day.

Since 2015, I've been at play transforming from lawyer to therapist. I created 2020 as “The Year to Licensure,” the culmination of five years of education, training, internship and passing a national exam. I seemed on track to accomplish my goal, telling myself to stay focused and keep my calendar full to complete training hours. As a child and family therapist at a certified domestic violence shelter, that goal seemed doable as the need seemed always to exceed resources.

From a declaration created at a Wisdom Unlimited course Community Saturday, I completed my first workshop for a local hospital on the power of journaling (“mindfulness with a pen”), reaping positive results and vowing to create more such programs in the summer. On track for licensure, I sensed myself as restless, nonetheless. I worked a rigid, undesirable schedule, earning less than ample wages and reported to supervisors years younger than me with only slightly more field experience. Worse, there was the internal voice that wanted more and wanted it now.

Luckily, the children and families I served saved

me. They filled my heart with play and healing. Their capacity to face pain, loss, separation and life quakes called me to be. It became tougher to complain about my perceived problems in the face of theirs. While the clients made agency work fulfilling, my internal dialogue still rumbled: “You’re worth more. You deserve more. Don’t be a slave.” The entitlement story was quite righteous, making the plan to licensure no easier to accomplish.

My journaling practice left a paper trail of all I made wrong and blamed for my suffering, but it also settled me down to contemplate new beginnings and alternative stories that were more empowering. I kept myself on the Wisdom Participation team representing the Conference for Global Transformation as a structure for possibility.

As news of COVID-19’s existence in the United States broke, I prepared to resign from the domestic violence shelter to embark upon two exciting job opportunities: one to provide part-time legal consulting services to a former employer, and the other to provide group therapy at a local university. However, in the week that Florida issued stay-at-home orders, both job opportunities evaporated with no hope for recovery. The plan for licensure 2020 suddenly looked bleak. Frightened, but undeterred, I scoured resources and found part-time work with another family agency several weeks later, salvaging the plan to licensure, in part. By summer, I created additional part-time work in a private practice specializing in dialectical behavioral therapy (“DBT”) and began co-leading DBT skill groups.

As fall approached, I presented a second virtual workshop incorporating journaling with Focusing, a mind/body awareness tool developed by Eugene Gendlin. I threw myself into video blogging and MailChimp newsletters to build my profile as a therapist.

I am a clear and obvious extrovert, so you might think this would come naturally, but it did not. I felt confronted and phony. But, with the encouragement of Landmark graduates who have marketing gravitas, I moved past the story that posting was “embarrassing” and “shameless bragging,” and reframed it as sharing, playing, exploring and going beyond. My motto became: “Better Done Than Perfect,” and I reached out in novel ways:

- I offered the South Florida legal community free “therapeutic chats” during Lawyer Well-Being Week.
- I joined the Professionalism Committee for our local legal bar association, spearheading a panel workshop on dealing with difficult opposing counsel, providing input from a therapist’s perspective. I have also been asked to blog and host podcasts on mental health topics in 2021 for our local legal community.
- In response to a call for participation, I researched national providers of DBT skill groups and found two female attorneys-turned DBT therapists in California. Never having met personally before, I made contact and enrolled them both in proposing a 90-minute workshop to the American Bar Association for its 2021 Lawyer Well-Being Week.
- By year-end in 2020, I secured yet another invitation to present a journaling workshop to hospital staff and a request to provide mindfulness training to a local legal services organization where, as an attorney, I previously served on the board.

Immediately after the conference, I joined the Inquiry Explorations Program and rejoined RESULTS, a citizen lobby to end hunger and poverty. A week later, I attended their virtual

international conference and lobbied our Florida Legislature for COVID relief. I also wrote a letter to the Ft. Lauderdale Sun Sentinel demanding clarity and protection for the economically vulnerable in the form of a national moratorium on evictions and foreclosures. The letter was published with a large photo, then circulated to our members of Congress. I also took on being the lead contact for our Florida senators on domestic poverty issues.

I used quiet, waiting, silent moments in 2020 to spoil Mishka, my Shih Tzu, to take long walks to the beach, cook here and there for my husband (a real miracle) and make the most of opportunity. I completed a score of advanced therapy trainings, made up lost ground on licensure hours and gave up an utterly false conversation that I had to be the breadwinner of the family simply because that was what I chose to do as a lawyer in the past.

From a new vantage point, I watched my husband step up to fully support our household, maintaining and growing his construction business through the pandemic, even as his partner of 25 years contracted the virus, spent six weeks on a ventilator in intensive care and passed away before Thanksgiving. That shocking and tragic experience brought our family, company family and family of those who lost someone to COVID closer and distinguished “empty and meaningless” newly.

Finally, 2020 marked the move into a side hustle/private practice. I remember my first client as though it were yesterday. At some point, I passed the mark of a 10th, 20th and, later, a 30th client. I passed the national licensure exam in November 2020 and received my license as a marriage and family therapist on Christmas Eve. By year-end, I terminated all agency work and opened my 40th private practice case file by developing a niche with couples, a population with which I relish practicing. My experience of myself now is fresh. I like the fit and feel of being a therapist, and the ease with which my promise and experience as a legal professional and Landmark graduate can be integrated into practice.

The year 2020 was one of transforming “impatient expectations,” including fixed, rigid ways of being that constricted choice, opportunity and partnership. I left 2020 with a powerful image

that emerged during a hypnosis session: The image of a great blue heron, known by the Florida indigenous culture for its wisdom, stillness, patience and self-reliance.

For 2021, I recommit to the practices of journaling, posting and participation. I give up the need to know “how” to expand my career and promise for the world. I forego shame and defensiveness around making mistakes. I choose, instead, awareness, willingness, community and what Henri Bergson called “the elan vital,” the vital force or impulse of life within each of us moving us toward ongoing growth and evolution. Let’s see where the steppingstones lead.

DISCOVERIES FROM BEING STOPPED AND GIVING UP AS PART OF REGISTERING ACCOMPLISHMENT

GORDON MARTIN

Excited after the May 2020 Conference for Global Transformation, I found that making a difference through partnership and contribution and being vulnerable called me forth like a beacon. Four months later after I had not done anything to move forward, I wrote about being stopped. I registered the accomplishment of why I chose to do The Landmark Forum in the first place and about my recovery from addiction and the subsequent growth in my self-expression.

The following are poems that I wrote documenting the journey between 2006 and 2020.

Right Now Declaration

I declare that from today
I will share like Dylan
Write like Gibran
Paint like Nechita
Dance like myself
Open my eyes
Listen with love
From love
Contribute like Bono
And sing like Celine
From the front
From my heart
My soul
knowing that

I am a vehicle
Through which
The Eternal
One love
Spirit
Has access to the world
And I know that
This journey
Will be smooth
Will be rocky
Will be turbulent
At times downright
Outrageous
And confronting
And that at times
I will cry
I will stop
I will hide
I will try to run away
And deny that this is my path
My calling
My vocare ...

August 2006

When God Calls

When God calls
Do you answer the call?
Do you listen at all?
Do you run from the room?
Pretend that he is not on the line
That maybe he will lose your number

When God calls
Do you celebrate or hide?
Do you listen or turn your back?

Do you open the door or lock it up tight?

I know for me
I have done it all
Run toward
Run away

Opened the door
And also turned off the light
Pretending that I am not home

And yet he keeps calling me
Wondering when I will awake
Awake not only to my purpose
But to the reason I am here at all

All I can promise is that I am listening now
And am here to give my life to serve you
To serve those who need me as I need them
To live to glorify your name in a way that is uniquely me

August 2015

Longer Than Jesus (Abridged)

Are you a Christian man,
He said to me?
Yes I said
I think then you must go
Into a cave
A cave?
Jesus went into a cave, he said
He went in on a Friday, dead
He came out on a Sunday, alive again
I don't know how long you will have to go in for ...

So I went in that cave
And he was right,
Been in there longer than Jesus
33 months later like a brown bear
I am poking my head out the door
Feeling restored
Washed new

Recovery horses leading the chariot
With God holding the reins
Loaded with tools
Armour

And a big headlamp lighting the way
Riding alongside many others
No longer alone in an army of many

Ready for the long road ahead
The path still filled with many potholes
Danger lurking in the woods
Sirens in the fog, inviting disaster
Chaos on speed dial

I am grateful I listened
Grateful that I got off the
Elevator before it hit bottom
Grateful that I walked into the cave
Instead of being carried
And have walked out too
My step lighter
My head held high

July 2018

Shed

Shed illusions of separateness
Your silence
Regrets
Shed noise that you're worthless
Better off dead

Shed mountains of doubt
Fear that rips you in two
Shed harm, hurt and pain
Leaving you all black and blue

Then breathe
Breathe out
Breathe in

Know that you grow stronger
Now begin yet again

Shed layer upon layer
Let them fall to the floor
Shed layer upon layer
Sweep them straight out the door

Shed shame
Your head
Heavy
Your voice
Laden with strife

Shed angry,
Loud voices
Leaving you
Scared for your life

Shed
A feeling

A knowing
That He won't
Help you

Shed Pride
Greed
Selfishness
And an old friend or two

Shed isolated
Misunderstood
Outcaste
Black sheep

Shed until
You
Shed
Your fear of sleep

What now you say
Shed
Shed some more

Shed till you're
Shiny
Shiny and new
Shed till you're green
No longer
Blue

Shed till your night
Is not scary at all
Shed till you know
You'll not stagger
Not fall

Shed till a smile
Comes across your face
Shed till God washes you
With only God's grace

Then one day, no longer
No shedding be done
Ascend to the
Heavens
Your game has been won

July 2018

What If

What if I just gave up the story
That my words don't matter

What if I gave up that you
Who praise my talent
Are simply being nice

If I gave up that the concern
That my voice would be criticized
That those accomplished
With letters galore
After their name
With awards on their shelves
With commentators espousing their art
Would walk on by scowling in my direction

What if I boldly acknowledged
That it is not about me
That the reason why Dylan has so many friends
Is because he shares

That putting words that flow
Through me on paper may inspire
Another to pick up their pen

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 on to

What then ...

February 2019

God, I Am Grateful

Thank you God, I am grateful
For the wind and the rain
For the struggle and the pain
For the darkness of the night
That left me without sight
For all the endless fears
That keep reducing me to tears

For my willingness to cry
Be vulnerable not shy

For as the wind on my back
You keep me right on track

And as the wind on my face
I know I need Your grace
For surrendering my life to you
As we continue our walk on through

For the sun shining up above
For that beauty of Your love
For a laugh and a big smile
Seeing we have come many a mile
And now I ask of You

What else would you have me do?

August 2018

Unafraid

When you share you
The real you
Not hidden behind
Concerns or fears
Not peering out from
Boarded up windows
Triple locked doors
When you are bare
Naked exposed
To the elements
Hair stands on end
Waves of compassion
Surge through my body
Recharging the sun
Rippling through the galaxy

March 2019

Doubt

Vulnerability to discover
Yet no stones unturned
Obstacles like monoliths
Obstruct my view
Doubt
Glass under my feet,
Bare
I would not travel

October 2020

In The Noticing

It is in the noticing
That my failures
Become a stage
Become a guidepost
A how to manual for success
Yes these stops
These backward slides
These face plants

Worthy
In the noticing

October 2020

Finger Painting Feelings

Where have you been
I imagine them saying
Here I say
Out here
Not hidden behind
My words don't matter
Locked up in secret places
Where others can't criticize
My heart is open
Jericho's walls
Long fallen
Spilling my blood
Orange, red, green
Finger painting feelings
Sprouting beauty

August 2019

A YEAR OF AWARENESS, GROWTH AND GRATITUDE

MERYL SHER

Most of the last 10 months was spent alone in my one-bedroom apartment on the Upper West Side of New York City. When I look at this never-before year, I’m struck by all the experiences I’ve had and what I discovered about myself and life. Although I was alone, most of the time I wasn’t alone ... choosing to stay connected with my communities.

I created a plethora of appointments letting people know how important they were to me and how I treasure them in my life. I reestablished relationships and built new friendships. I had no idea when I started attending the Inquiries of the Social Commons calls how much I would learn through the powerful and exquisite listening of others in addition to the difference I would make for them by expressing my thoughts, feelings and insights.¹

During this unusual time, I notice that I have become more “known, sought after, recognized and in demand.” This is one of the ways we measure our growth in the Inquiry Explorations Program. I regularly attend the Public Persona, Contribution and Living a Created (Creating) Self inquiries.

Each week, we contemplate a new conversation inside that topic and explore how it could impact our commitment for the world. We share whatever shows up for us right in that moment. Opportunities for being present in generative conversations consistently expand the expression of my leadership and create an awareness of how I connect with the other participants and custodians...a mirror for being out in life.

By being on the Social Commons calls, I started to register accomplishments that manifested. As a life coach, I was invited to be interviewed on a series of radio shows to discuss my business and

commitment to bring forth passion into the lives of others. Receiving a 9.3 out of 10 in their rating system, as well as listeners sending in positive comments, were measures that my message and commitment came across well.

After I admired someone’s paintings during an Inquiry Explorations call, she invited me to create with her an artist video project for the Conference for Global Transformation (“CGT”) or Year-end Vacation course. I had to step past my fear of not being good enough to sing and perform on a platform that had never been my forte. As an opera singer who has performed live for more than 50 years, virtual performing was never part of my vision for the future. It may not be perfect (my act) and I’m choosing to play full out in this beautiful, expressive collaboration.

My two senior managers in the health and wellness biotech company I’m passionate about had noticed that I was being more inspirational and positive on various Zoom calls. They invited me to be the guest speaker on a Motivational Monday. It was an honor to be chosen. It’s the first time I was part of a Facebook Live/YouTube interview. Attendees have already reached out to connect with me!

My side business has grown, and my coaching practice has expanded for both paying and pro bono clients. I am working with a friend who is starting his own business. I completed editing a book for a graduate as well as editing multiple resumes and cover e-mails for friends and family looking for new jobs. What a year!

Looking to keep my brain active and heart connected, I dove into my growth and development. Inquiry ... what is too much?

- I participated in A Bit of Wisdom; Self-Expression: Now More than Ever; the 2020 CGT; Leadership Series: The Foundation which is part of the Being a Leader and the Effective Exercise of Leadership course; the one-day Consultants’ Practices; A Life that Sings and the World Business and Executive Coach Summit and reviewed the Landmark Forum for Graduates.
- I’m currently assisting in the Wisdom Unlimited course in New York and learning how to be a Zoom manager; I am reviewing the Partnership Explorations course and participating in Inquiry Explorations and Inquiries of the Social Commons.
- What is in my future? I registered for the 2021 CGT and the Developmental Relating and Relationships course.²

In March, after being in my apartment for just one week, I reached out to my sister in Colorado and asked her if she would be willing to dance/exercise with me on Zoom. We didn’t know how long this isolation would last, and I knew that I needed to move my body. What a fabulous result came out of this simple request. We are still on Zoom four-to-five times every week for an hour and exercise 30-45 minutes. My special, loving sister and I are closer than ever before. Often, my niece and great niece will join us, and I am able to experience one of my greatest joys during this coronavirus pandemic. A video from Rylee with hugs and kisses is priceless.

I felt afraid for the first time in my 42 years in New York City when the riots and marches were happening all the way up to my block. After hearing George Floyd say, “I can’t breathe” on television and seeing what happened, I realized that I was having trouble breathing and my heart was heavy and hurting. I felt an anger that had me yelling. I cried that ugly-faced crying when you can’t seem to stop. Who could I call? I didn’t even know who was still living in my building since so many tenants left New York. It was late and I texted a dear friend and she called by FaceTime immediately. She calmed me down and I was able to breathe. Sometimes, all our tools and practices just don’t come to mind when a moment happens that is so deeply felt. Connection was the way.

Grateful for you, Jo.

Initially, I didn’t want to celebrate my 65th birthday which would normally have been an important milestone. After getting some coaching, I hosted a Zoom birthday party. I invited almost 300 people from different periods and communities in my life. I bought big balloons and asked my sister to send me the chocolate chip cake that our whole family has always enjoyed for special occasions. A girlfriend dropped off cake toppers of 65 in bling... perfect for this diva. I dressed up. About 165 dear ones dropped by to celebrate with me. It was the best birthday of my life. Occasionally, during this year, a thought would pass through my mind... Do they remember that I’m sitting here in my apartment all this time alone? Now, I see just how much the people in my life love and appreciate me. I cried the entire five hours of my party while people were sharing with me. I was so moved by them. That is a celebration I will always remember. Thank you all for your love.

I have learned about my resilience and inner strength, how putting structures and systems in place can really have a positive impact. I became friends with my calendar. What does self-care look like? I ask myself...have I carved out enough time in my calendar for quiet, introspective “me time?” Before I say “yes,” I ask, “Does this bring me joy?” How am I occurring in the world, how can I make a difference, how can life be created so others have lives they love...fully self-expressed?

What is possible if we listen in such a way to contribute to each person in every conversation or interaction? How can I reach out and impact more people? What if we can shine a light to create a future where humanity comes together and everyone, everything and the planet all know that we care?

I have discovered my life purpose is to inspire and empower others through my commitment to the world. “All people have access to being joyful & passionate, experiencing vital lives, touching hearts through the arts...Love is palpable.”

ENDNOTES

1 Landmark’s Wisdom Course Area offers weekly calls on various topics that are known as the Inquiries of the Social Commons.
2 The Developmental Relating and Relationships course takes place over five three-day weekends.

PROVOKING ACTION AND THOUGHT THROUGH COMPLETE COMMUNICATION

GEOFFREY WHEELER

“Anyone who’s known me more than 15 minutes” is a phrase that’s proven useful as an introduction to an expression of Self in support of contribution and, by extension, my promise for the world: “To provoke thought and action through complete communication.”

The definition of communication that forms the basis of that promise is one provided by my eighth-grade science teacher. “Communication requires three things: a sender, the medium through which the message is sent and the receiver.” This, then, covers everything from person-to-person messaging on up to the one-to-many, and many-to-many examples of live performance, broadcasting, networks, terrestrial and satellite communications. Any of the languages, including music, dance and other creative arts, qualify.

If transformation is available as a possibility, given the power of “word creating world” and the pitfalls inherent in structural and representational language, the opening phrase can often presage some expression of identity, that is, small “S” in self. Just as often, that means a “contribution” to the conversation that is more distraction than authentically forwarding the action.

The uncertainty of the nature of the receiver, then, in a human context, absent “empty and meaningless *that* it’s empty and meaningless” can be a recipe for confusion or absurdity, at best, and

tragedy or violence, at worst.

Engaging in the handful of “listening” conversations that have been the heart of our work these past several years has provided a wonderful laboratory for refining my promise and exposing the limitations of the inherent pitfalls of identity in fulfilling on a promise. The acknowledgment that there’s a listening into which what’s said might be filtered compels the speaker to take that into account, lest they risk damaging the relationship of the two, possibly beyond repair. That is, if the damage is severe enough to cause either one to lose interest in taking the time necessary to affect the repair.

Life is, after all, short and every graduate knows there’s a lot of work to be done. Healing a broken relationship can legitimately be thought of as not worth the time and trouble. Other relationships are always at hand to fill in a “missing.” After all, being “complete” *merely* comes down to a mutual declaration. (“I’m *done* with you!” or “Oh, yeah? OK, I’m done with *you!*” or, some such variation on authentic communication. For a teenager, say.)

“Honor the pause.” A few years ago, in a conversation about the frustration of speaking into a listening that wasn’t a match for my intent, a Wisdom Course leader gave me that advice. Those words didn’t occur for me as noise. Rather, given the length of our friendship and the concomitant level of trust enjoyed, I’ve been grappling with, wondering about and playing with it ever since.

As a Wisdom Unlimited course graduate, the suggestion strikes at the heart of my impatience in most exchanges, eager to interrupt when the answer is so obvious or jumping in to correct the

impression of another regarding the accuracy of their listening. Without awareness of that frustration and giving space to another to express themselves, the arrogance of those thoughts is exceeded only by the absurdity of what comes out of my mouth in service of getting quickly to the point. Here, the natural conceit of humans, speaking, is that the listener inhabits the same world. Maybe, they don’t.

As a graduate of the Partnership Explorations course, the pause is an essential step in generative language, creating new language, with four, five or 36 fields serving as measures of where the dance is taking place. One of the traps here is that what shows up as a wall in others’ worlds doesn’t even show up as a line in mine.

Another trap, in a Landmark context, is that any possibility that I create has got to be crystal clear without any further explanation. Every Landmark graduate knows this is not the case, especially when one is wandering, er, dancing in the “non-Landmark” world.

When attention is paid to the listening into which we’re speaking, another measure rears its ugly head. How do we register the successful sharing of a possibility unless we register the successful re-creation of that possibility? In my case, the lack of successful re-creation begins with (well, because — me!) humor and here real damage is apparent immediately. Start bumping up against the “appropriate” and the damage can be *real*.

After a way of registering listening is found, a feedback mechanism gets created wherein the speaker “reads the room” and alters their speaking accordingly.

When we consider the communication in which we are currently engaged, that is me having written this months in advance of you reading it, other considerations enter the picture. Every attempt has been made to keep this concise; in mathematical or logical terms, the absolute value of the words written. This is, inherently, impossible. I and we have attached meaning to these words, and you may be reading them completely oblivious to my intent.

This is the dance, or conversation in which

we’re engaged. Unless I have a way to register membership, it becomes an impossible task to register accomplishment. Until I know the words have been read and registered, my accomplishment has no effect on, or in, the world. As a measure of my successful communication of my promise, please feel free to contact me (gswheels@yahoo.com) to keep this conversation alive for another chunk of time.

After all, my promise was originally crafted for a very small world, mine, which is insufficient to affect any greater change. Unless or until membership in this promise is registered, no indication of the power of the possibility can be had. While I have no investment in the outcome, if you’ve made it this far, the message is received and the promise stated in the opening is therein fulfilled.

Thanks for listening.

ENDNOTES

1 Partnership Explorations is a 10-month course offered by Landmark.

BEING IN THE DEED: NOTES FROM A NURSE DURING A PANDEMIC

LORI WATKINS

A NURSE’S STORY

I am a nurse. My actions are timed, intentional and task-oriented. I stand next to my patient’s bed as he gasps for each breath. As I inhale, I wait in anticipation to see when, or if, my actions have the desired effect. I hold my breath. The tension in my shoulders tightens. I exhale as I see the relief in my patient’s eyes. I sit next to my patient. His eyes are wide open. His respirations slow. He gasps between breaths and says, “Please, don’t leave me.”

I walk into the bathroom with white washcloth in hand; I turn on the faucet. As I wait for the water to warm up, I look in the mirror. I imagine I am a sun goddess, sailing on the Mediterranean Sea, my hair sparkles as a splash of sea water encompasses my vessel. The sun is my muse, turning, twisting like a flamingo dancing on the water. As I look down into the sink, hot water overflows from the basin. I turn off the faucet, returning from my daydream.

With razor and shaving cream in hand, I walk toward my patient’s bed. I look deeply into his eyes, place a towel under his chin. I dab a warm soapy washcloth around his cheeks. I shake the shaving cream bottle. As I press the button white foam escapes, and I place the soapy foam on his cheeks. I raise his razor. With one swipe at a time, the stubby whiskers are removed. He puckers his lips, moves his head left and right. A warm washcloth to his chin and cheekbones and I can see a look of relief on his face. A smile emerges from his lips.

During the pandemic, we separated patients into three areas: red for patients with confirmed COVID-19, yellow for individuals with an uncertain

COVID-19 status and green for those we knew were negative for COVID-19. We call this practice “cohorting,” a tool to maintain, monitor and eliminate infection in hospitals and other public health environments.

MASKING THE PAIN

I’ve known for a long time now that human beings are relieved to know a fellow human being is listening to what they are dealing with. Sometimes, it’s just one human being listening to another. What I’ve discovered lately is that inquiry takes place in many forms. What are you dealing with? Who do you know yourself to be? What do you value? What would you like to be acknowledged for? If there is one thing that you could do right now, paint me a picture of that.

But, what do frontline workers need? First off, frontline workers need to be able to debrief from their day. What do they need when they go home? What do they have to manage when they get home and how are they going to do those tasks? Right now, frontline workers are providing everything, which is difficult for patients. What is critical for the patients is that the frontline providers have everything they need, even if it is something as simple as being reminded of their favorite things – a favorite song, favorite color or something that is important to them.

MEDICATION MEDIATION

Going about my day, I am told that I talk to myself. My reply is, “Is that normal?” Yes, I speak to myself. I am referring to a technique used by nurses while administering medications known as verbal mediation during medication passes.

“Verbal mediation is private speech that facilitates learning and problem-solving. In either case, the speech is intended for the speaker, not an outside listener, according to the Encyclopedia of Clinical Neuropsychology.¹

While administering medications, nurses also rely on the “five rights” of medication administration, which are: the right patient, the right drug, the right dose, the right route and the right time. Designed to reduce medication errors and harm, this practice should be accepted as a goal of the medication process, not the “be-all and end-all” of medication safety.

It is important for nurses to understand how, why and what the desired effect of each medication is. Some medications are “married” to each other; they work in conjunction for a specified effect. Others must be given at certain times or under certain conditions, such as before, or after, a meal. Needless to say, there’s a lot for a nurse to keep track of.

Given all the kinds of medications and treatments, information overload can compromise the mental capacity of frontline workers. For me, I’ve discovered the best practice is to be in a constant and extensive inquiry for the well-being, not just of patients, but also the community.

Nurses are always thinking, verifying, observing, assessing, intervening and fixing. We’re always looking for what’s wrong and how to follow protocols. This reminds me of when I worked as a dishwasher in an Italian restaurant in college. I was told to wash the big pots first, then the smaller items. I’ve also learned to question even when there is opposition. I’ve learned to observe what is created in one setting compared to another one. For example, the needs of an individual in a skilled nursing setting are much different than one in an assisted living setting. A care plan is designed from a clinical judgment to address the needs of each patient; care that must be timed and synchronized over each nurse’s shift.

For me, when patients deal with panic, I seek to have them experience a calm nurturing voice. Engaging in an orderly fashion while a fire burns in a building, we have been trained to follow specific rules.

What I’ve wondered especially lately is how does an individual’s spirit thrive in the practical, sterile world of modern health care? I observe my own mechanical distribution of medication preparation, passes and patient observations. Somehow, these simple acts feed my spirit because the act is from one living being to another being. I marvel at spending 23 years of counting, passing, counting and passing. I have collected thoughts, feelings, emotions and sensations from being in the deed.

Bereavement and grief often are essential for growth and development. Grief, sadness, despair, anger, hurt and resentment – these emotions are natural and considered normal reactions to many situations in a health care setting. But, these days, it’s sometimes hard to see the future growth and development when the world has lost 2.3 million souls to the coronavirus as of January 2021.

Nevertheless, the resignation and sadness faced by each family and community all the way up to the global level will give us the opportunity to create newly. The ecosystem theory can be related to hospice by how our society interacts with dying and death. Dealing with the process of death affects our adaptability in our societies.

It seems as though I’m walking out into a new world in partnership with others who are stepping into a new existence, perhaps without loved family members or from other challenging experiences during the last year. In the end, all of us are engaged in designing something new. What’s new for me this year is that health care providers have experienced being a valued contribution and have a newfound relationship of being contributed to.

ENDNOTES

¹ “Verbal Mediation.” Encyclopedia of Clinical Neuropsychology. Eds.: Kreutzer, J., DeLucas, J. and Caplan, B. SpringerLink. www.doi.org/10.1007/978-0-387-79948-3_1102. Accessed February 14, 2021.

WHAT IS THE CONTRIBUTION OF YOUR CIRCUMSTANCES?

JERROD KERR, VICKI THORPE AND LOU WOOD

Vicki, Jerrod and Lou inquired into registering circumstances as opportunities for growth, contribution and commitment in life instead of something to deal with and overcome. We invite you to engage with us in discovering the contribution of this inquiry in your life.

Jerrod Kerr: “My commitment for the world is that all people honor their circumstances as a way of mastering their contribution to the world.”

Formulating this commitment began in the developmental course, Service and Contribution, and was born out of my innate desire to express the seemingly inexpressible.¹ In 2014, while in the Wisdom Unlimited course, I broke my back in a vehicle accident, leaving me paralyzed from the mid-back down.

From the onset, I was showered with encouragement and acknowledgment of inspiration. Yet, something was hollow about this, or, rather, frustrating. I couldn’t place that thing – that remarkable way of being that I was being. I mean, what happened to me was some people’s worst nightmare, by their own admission.

The way they experienced me inside of that context was nothing short of remarkable. I’ve been in the inquiry of what is that? What is that way of being that is “remarkable” given a set of paralyzing circumstances? Through the past year I’ve begun to distinguish it as access to being it, in

the face of any set of circumstances, and what it is is mastery.

I discovered this year that we are all masters of our circumstances. We have all been through some incredible tough stuff and have our battle scars to prove it, and we’ve survived. We are here, alive and on the scene. We are here to tell the tale. We are all masters of our circumstances.

Look at toddlers and you will see humans who’ve mastered the circumstances of babies. Look at adolescents and you will see humans who’ve mastered the circumstances that come with being a child. Yet, we don’t relate to ourselves as masters.

How would the way in which your current circumstances occur for you alter if you related to yourself as a master? What about your family? Your team? What if you related to everyone in your life as a master? Could that be an access to the immediate transformation of your environment? This is the inquiry I’ve been engaged in this year. I’ve come to honor people’s struggles by acknowledging them as a way to know themselves as masters and inquire with them about what is available now as we take on the next year, the next set of circumstances.

Registering the accomplishment of mastery affords one the opportunity to take on life as it is, as it presents itself.

To paraphrase the ancient Greek philosopher Epictetus a bit, “Circumstances do not make the individual. They simply reveal the individual to themselves and others.” I say that revelation is one of mastery.

Vicki Thorpe: “My commitment in the world is to end death by suicide and redesign family communication; bring context, skills and practices in support of families relating to each other from their love, commitments and gifts.”

While doing the Landmark Forum in September 2000, I saw that my view of my circumstances of being parented and parenting had me be a victim, and it was that view which caused my ineffectiveness as a parent.

Growing up, I saw my parents doing their best and at their wits’ end after adopting my brother at nine months old with reactive attachment disorder and ADHD.² The doctor told them to institutionalize him and my mom said no. My brother ran away day and night.

Teaching him boundaries was crucial. He threw up at every meal from eating too fast and was too thin. Expert psychologists were in and out of our home coaching my parents. People in the community often offered contradictory opinions. I wondered how I, or anyone, could know what to do. In the end, my parents’ physical, emotional and financial stamina was depleted, and they resorted to demeaning each other and their children.

Out of wondering, I watch, experiment and study families. My takeaway is there is no one right way to raise children or deal with situations. So then, how do we parent?

Register feedback in the form of behavior and results from Self and your child. Does it work for me and my child? How do I use or interpret that feedback?

I am always looking at how to empower myself as a parent of grown children and other families. This last holiday season I developed a cultural unit teaching and playing holiday music on the ukulele with the whole family in one hour. I used my own gifts and talents in making a difference with six families. My commitments of connection, enjoyment and learning were experienced. I registered that by the smiles on their faces, feedback and them wanting

to buy this experience for other family members as a gift for the season. A format and commitment operated in the background while letting go of one way of doing it right.

Lou Wood: “My commitment for the world is having a Heart-Centered Humanity, moving forward in a Heart-Centered world right now!”

My circumstances are that I raised three children single-handedly after marriages that ended without resolution and prior to me doing The Landmark Forum.

The eldest, a son born in 1987 with Asperger’s Syndrome, dealt with developmental delays experienced in an unsupportive school system in his early life and my many mistakes. The key takeaway lessons are: letting go and learning to trust. At 33 years old now, my son is in the Introduction Leaders Program and works full-time. We speak twice a week living on different continents.

My second child, a daughter born in 1989, was hospitalized at 10 weeks of age to remove a malformed kidney. She developed childhood epilepsy requiring twice daily medication. Now 31, she has limited use of her lower limbs, making it difficult to continue as a circus and street performer. She has yet to see any future possibilities as a disabled performer. I speak with her at least once a week living on different continents. The key takeaway lessons are: being in inquiry with my own maternal instincts to protect, noticing when my emotions and physical sensations urge me to act in the furthering of my commitment for the world and who I am being as her mother.

The third child, another daughter born in 1996, developed mental health issues with the onset of puberty. She has required hospitalization on suicide watch many times in the last six-to-seven years. I speak with her several times a week living on different continents. The key takeaway lessons are: creating the possibility of a new conversation that a parent should bury their own child if that is the child’s choice for themselves, and, however mentally and emotionally painful, being with all of her conversations exactly as they are and exactly as they’re not.

These circumstances are a contribution to my life and the world only by not hiding them in dialogue with others. Quoting Werner Erhard, “What we leave alone, leaves us alone.”³ In other words, don’t waste time trying to fix or change, but be with what is so, allowing miracles to show up.

ENDNOTES

1 Service and Contribution has been retired by the Wisdom Course Area.

2 Reactive attachment disorder is a condition in which an infant or young child does not form a secure, healthy emotional bond with his, or her, primary caretakers. Children with this condition often have trouble managing their emotions and forming meaningful connections with other people. Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (“ADHD”) is a mental health condition that can cause above-normal levels of hyperactive and impulsive behaviors.

3 Werner Erhard is an American author and lecturer known for founding the est Training, which operated from 1971 to 1984 and later became The Landmark Forum, a three-and-a-half-day course.

DISCOVERIES FROM THE INQUIRIES

RESISTANCE TO RESULTS

LYNNIE STERBA

This report focuses on how what I resist is often what most impacts my life – when I get out of my own way.

When I start a Landmark course with thoughts of possibility, I find that all the while I keep one foot on the brake (aka resistance). It’s not that the brake pedal is firmly on the floor. Well, sometimes it is, but I like to stay safe when venturing out in unknown territory.

It is an odd way to begin any new adventure and, yet, that brake pedal has been a solid travel companion throughout my life. What would be different this time with the Inquiry Explorations Program?¹

Inquiry Explorations is unlike any course I’ve taken. It took me many months to let go of said brake and start to participate in a program that questions and challenges but does not provide answers. “Discover for myself is all well and good but I really don’t have time for that, so could you just give me the answer, please,” said my results-driven mind. The world of the unknown sounds better in someone else’s story than actually experiencing it for myself. I had to be willing to go with the flow, to trust, listen and share, and be willing to not know what the hell I was doing.

This reminds me of when I began abstract painting. I had painted landscapes using oils for years loving the Fauve Expressionistic painters of France with their bold colors, line and brush strokes. I loved finding my own way with the Fauve influence to create beautiful landscapes filled with flowers, trees, hillsides and oceans celebrating nature. After many years of success being known as a painter in my art community, I noticed that I was in the doldrums in my painting. I yearned to stretch myself and reignite my passion and grow artistically but I was not sure how.

I was intrigued by abstract painting and felt ready

for the challenge of a new direction. I began slowly painting figures in an abstract way using my familiar easel, oil paints and brushes. I did good work but knew there was something deeper, a part of my authentic Self yet to be expressed. I had no idea what was next for me. I was accustomed to having a subject as a reference point and approaching my blank canvas from there. Then my new art teacher, Dale Patton, encouraged, pleaded and gently demanded that I try something new.

I had the choice to participate in a painting exercise influenced by paintings of Jackson Pollock. Putting a large unstretched canvas on the floor and painting with acrylic or house paint did not thrill me. The idea was to let loose and drip, pour and throw paint on the canvas. I put the brakes on as I was thinking, “I don’t paint like this.” “Is this painting?” “I won’t use house paint.” “If this is horrible, I can always wipe it out and paint over it.”

Using a completely blank canvas, I began with fear and trepidation. There was no reference point, no direction, no subject. It was pure creation. I dripped and threw paint and saw designs and forms starting to take shape. I stared harder than ever into the canvas, finding my way into the essence of what needed to be revealed. I reached for more colors, more paint and moved my body in the way of a dance creating a rhythm that I had never experienced. I did not know where I was going but trusted I was going somewhere.

By participating, I experienced joy and started to get out of my head, letting the process take me over. I got engaged, inspired and started to like what I was seeing. A spark in me was ignited, reaching a deeper part of me. My view of what I was seeing changed. I could not go back. Out of nothing came something that changed my entire way of painting and entire life.



Lynnie Sterba Joy United 36 x 48 acrylic on canvas

My paintings got bigger. My brush strokes got bolder. My soul soared. I found home. I was playing in a wonderland of movement and color. So much to explore. So much to learn, to grow to. My concept of big changed. Typically, my landscapes were three-to-four feet. Now, my abstracts were four- or five-to-six feet. What I thought was big in the past seemed small, and I had a new sense of what big was. I continue to play in my world of abstract painting, and now I'm exploring adding back landscape painting in a whole new way.

Like facing a blank canvas full of possibilities, Inquiry Explorations is a process of showing up and not knowing what will happen. Although I participated in the inquiry workdays and the periodic Tuesday sessions, I really was not interested in the weekly Social Commons calls. It's sad to say, but it almost took a pandemic to have me start to participate fully in the program. I had to get past my "I'm too busy for extra Zoom meetings" and "Don't think I could get much out of them anyway" to let miracles start to happen.

I had to set aside my need for an answer and my judgments, complaints and everything else in that realm which limits my life. I took the brakes off and opened myself up to new conversations and people and old familiar friends. I let myself not know, be confused, ask questions and not do it right. I laughed and cried, was heard and acknowledged and received support and encouragement. As I started to listen and share, I found myself in the dance of the Social Commons conversation.

I went from a half-hearted commitment to attend one weekly Social Commons Zoom meeting to permanently putting the Discourse, Created Self, Public Persona and Social Commons calls as part of my weekly schedule. I found home, family, friends and a new world community. I created a commitment to the world where beauty and inspiration through art connect people to their shared humanity. That structure allowed me to have the foundation I needed to create my life.

As I stay in Inquiry Explorations because my resistance never got me kicked out, I feel my life shifting. No longer using the brakes, I speak up and I am becoming known. My dream of making a living as a sought-after and in-demand artist whose paintings bring beauty and inspiration to the world is happening. Through expanding my originating circle, having new conversations and taking risks by sharing what is important to me, I am starting to find my own answers and creating results.

AUTHOR'S NOTE:

As I reflect on what I have written, my present life as an artist would never have existed without the love, dedication and kick-in-the-butt attitude I so needed from my painting teacher, Dale Patton. In the same way, the encouragement, love and listening of the Inquiry Explorations team including the custodians, my listener Debby Borza and Tobin White and Julia Simms continue to make a huge difference impacting my life.² These angels are "the wind beneath my wings" giving me the space and time to share, listen, fail, succeed, discover and find my way to let my "light shine in the world," even if, sometimes, I am late for Zoom meetings or my dog, Jackson, is barking in the background.

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ENDNOTES

1 Inquiry Explorations is the program for participants who attend the Conference for Global Transformation to be in action all year long – to create a commitment for the world and begin the conversations to launch that commitment and participate in weekly calls, known as the Social Commons, on various topics.

2 Tobin White and Julia Simms lead the Inquiry Explorations Program.

DISCOVERIES FROM THE INQUIRIES

HOW I MADE MY ESCAPE

HELEN JACKSON

The first thing I did was to say yes to doing the Wisdom Unlimited course. A nine-month-long Landmark course that includes five course weekends, I'd been resisting taking this course, as I do, for the longest time, 25 years to be precise. I wanted what it offered. I just wasn't willing to do what it took to have the results until I registered in January 2020, that is. Then I was ready.

I was so enamoured by the guy who had played with my resistance so easily before he registered me that I promised to hug him before the year was out. At that time, I was expecting to see him at every weekend.

I had no idea which direction the journey would take me. I just knew it was time.

Things changed along the way for sure. Our first weekend gathering was scheduled to take place in Frankfurt, Germany. Well, that didn't happen. COVID-19 happened and all travel was cancelled until further notice.

I was majorly upset. Part of my wanting to do the Wisdom course was to travel in Europe and meet new people, and, of course, deliver the hug. Now that seemed impossible.

Umm, looks like I'll be doing weekend one in India then as that's where I am, in lockdown with 60 strangers. Well, that's an exaggeration actually. Fifty-eight strangers as I'm related to two of them. My son and granddaughter are here with me. Now what?

We've been told the lockdown will last one day. Thinking we can just about handle that, we have a family meeting to make a plan; to create a survival

strategy for being stuck with 58 strangers for an entire day.

"Suggestions please."

"We could always get to know them" was one of the suggestions.

"Get to know them? We don't even speak the same language." Interesting to see what's in the space between me and people.

We survived day one and then days two and three. As the lockdown continued, we noticed how many of the others we had gotten to know in spite of the language barrier. Community began to form.

Then there were the age barriers. I was, by far, the eldest at 62 and my granddaughter the youngest at 11.

It was a lot to take in. No sign of being able to get home anytime soon. The daily "Call to Be" with Helga Christian, the Wisdom course leader, helped as did the sunshine and the helpful staff at our service. They produced exceptional meals for us all. The staff rapidly became part of the family, and we did become a family. Meanwhile, the Wisdom course continued.

Weekend two was approaching. Getting a strong enough internet connection had been problematic for weekend one so I headed home after four months in India in time for weekend two.

I'd met a woman named Lisa on my travels and, when asked how long she'd been travelling, her reply astonished me. "Five and one-half years," she said.

Looking back, that was the moment the escape plan began formulation. What needed to be put in place to begin a one-way journey of travel with no return date? With weekend two over, I wondered where I might be for weekend three?

I wasn't sure that I was ready to undertake the first leg of this new adventure alone so I came to an agreement with my friend Jill that when her home was sold, and I had completed the things I needed to do, then we'd be off.

After a few delays and false starts, we were off. We headed to France and what better way than on a car ferry watching the white cliffs of Dover get smaller as the French coastline came into focus.

Our first stop was to stay with a gorgeous French man with vision whom I'd met in India. Oh, and he happened to live in a castle. What a wonderful start to our trip being welcomed by, and into, his family with open arms and great French hospitality; an expanding community.

Fully rested, we then headed to our next stop, a friend of mine from almost 40 years ago. The years fell away as we danced to the music of Hackney in the early 1980s. We laughed and cried until it was time to take our leave.

Next on our list were friends of Jill's. First in Bordeaux, France, then the foothills of Spain's Pyrenees.

It was almost time for weekend three and Jill and me to go our separate ways. Jill was going to her new home to prepare for Christmas with her family while I was going to stay with another Indian family member.

Weekend three took place in lockdown, too, in Montpellier, France; totally perfect. We're getting the hang of this now.

Eventually, I tired of the French way of doing things. Masks were compulsory, as were online attestations, every time we wanted to go outdoors. Two things happened. First, I became a recluse. I didn't leave the house for weeks on end. Secondly, I became irritable, unbearably so. I was missing the freedom of breathing fresh air. It was time to move on.

I felt like a fugitive on the run, crossing borders

during a lockdown. Arriving in Barcelona, Spain, I booked a room in time to visit weekend four in New York. The course went on into the early hours of the morning.

We were now well into December and the intended hug hadn't yet happened. We'd managed to miss each other on our travels so far. A quick online check-in ascertained that we were both currently in the same country. That was great news. I now knew my next step.

Off to Tortosa in Spain, where the hug finally happened.

What a year it's been. From not being able to travel to the Wisdom course to taking the Wisdom course along with me while I travel. Who'd ever have known?

DISCOVERIES FROM THE INQUIRIES

YOU GOTTA BURN SOME COOKIES!

ERIC ENGLART

In the year of COVID-19, I went from sitting around bored, watching free Zoom trainings on stuff I already knew, to being a business owner with programs of my own.

For most of the year, I was on calls (do we call Zoom meetings that?) with friends who were building businesses or nonprofits in this "plague" year. One friend is raising money for her foundation in Africa to help children. Another is training people how to be healthy and fit. A third got together a team of more than 20 people to be "interns." That business is to be a full-fledged media production company, from writing copy, blogs and newsletters to video broadcasting and owning his own broadcast station.

They all inspire me, and I am glad that I am helping them move their projects forward. Being surrounded by a network of entrepreneurs is an excellent way to become one yourself.

For me, playing with them was more interesting than sitting around, and I enjoyed helping them. At some point though, I got tired of watching their adventures and I had a thought. Did you ever have one of those thoughts that people say, "What were you thinking?!" Why are people never around when you are thinking it? For years, I talked about building a coaching and training company, but it was just talk. From being in this network and on calls and trainings, I decided that it was time to do something, anything.

I decided to finally start that company. Being an engineer, I thought that it would be fun to call it "Living a Designed Life." Over my life, I have found that we are all mostly going through life unconscious, like zombies. By applying some

engineering to our lives, I believe that we can design some minor changes and experience more time, money and freedom.

I started by creating a context of "let's burn some cookies" as my way of being. To learn to cook, you sometimes need to burn sets of cookies on the way to mastering making them. I took on building my business that, if I take an action, the next step will reveal itself.

I started by creating a "30-Day Book Writing Challenge" because I thought that I could create it and some people might like it. Using a method I call "chunking," I reverse-engineered a completed book down to the steps it would take to create it and mapped this process out. Basically, I "chunked" my program on "chunking." It's self-referential and a kind of paradox.

Well, from promoting it to friends and family, 29 people decided to do the challenge. I was shocked at how many people were interested in the concept of getting their book off their bucket list and onto the done list. Well, now I was on the hook to produce what I had said I would do. Kind of like when Tariq ibn Ziyad and Hernan Cortes burned their ships so their men would have to go forward with no option to retreat. Finally looking good would help me!

I wrote the text for the challenge each day so I could send it out that night. It took two-to-three hours of work each day, staying just ahead of the customers. Just-in-time engineering they used to call it. Design it so they can build it tomorrow, and that is what I did.

While running my first "Book Writing Challenge,"

I was on a podcast called the Daily Huddle, which was co-hosted by someone in that first challenge. He shared about what he was getting from the challenge.

During the questions and answers of the podcast, someone asked what the cost was. I fumbled for a moment ... then \$147 flew out of my mouth with no thinking, and then I offered a half-scholarship to anyone. While I was still talking on the podcast, four people registered by filling out my form, but I had not set up a payment method, so I had to follow-up later with them a few times. While I was still talking, I learned two important things about business. First, you should know what you are going to charge for what you are selling to people. The other is that when someone wants to register, you need to be ready for it.

My first challenge was at no cost, but I did request a donation to my girlfriend who is fighting cancer and trying to do it in a holistic way instead of chemotherapy or radiation. October revenue was 29 registrations with \$498.25 all on donations to her medical bills. From that run of my challenge, I learned that if people do not put money into something, they are not going to do anything. I think people wanted to be a contribution to me by agreeing to do it.

All three challenges were filled by word-of-mouth and posting in some of the WhatsApp groups that I belong to. November was six registrations with paid clients totally \$341.07. December was six registrations with paid clients totally \$364.97. December was six registrations with \$364.97 paid clients. I had not yet learned to set up a launch sequence for filling programs.

Here are the statistics I compiled from running the first three months of my challenge. Other than posting in the same groups one time per month, getting referrals and talking to people I already knew, I did no other marketing. Being on the Daily Huddle podcast happened in November the week of Thanksgiving.

Month	#Registrations	Revenue	Revenue Per Registration
October	29	\$498.25	\$17.18
November	6	\$341.07	\$56.85
December	6	\$364.97	\$60.83



As I talked to people, I found just how often someone had something they wanted to write about. Not all were big, glorious business books or trying to change the world. One person just wanted to let go of some pains from their past. Another wanted to write the memoirs of her adventures with her husband who passed two years ago. Some people just saw an opportunity to express themselves.

What started out as a project to cure my boredom has blossomed into a context of “writing as a source of self-expression.” I am currently in a conversation with a nonprofit that helps people freed from human trafficking. We are exploring if my method could help them put their pasts in the past and be a resource for these people.

A second conversation has begun with a teacher who may have their students all write books on mentoring and the value of it as a group exercise.

From sitting bored to being a contribution in the world through writing, I never knew that was going to happen. I wonder what kind of cookies I should burn next...

(And, by the way, this was written using the chunking method.)



REPORTS FROM THE FIELD

Naturally, the reports from some contributors this year deal with the upheaval and tumult of last year’s pandemic. Others, however, report on their ways of being in relation to events, circumstances and accomplishments that had nothing to do with the coronavirus or other upsetting events that occurred in the world.

As contributors reflect on their lives – in recent times or over decades – their reports evoke the many ways that these graduates keep creating, growing, training themselves, contributing and, most of all, standing for their commitments in the world.

Bringing distinctions gleaned from Landmark’s courses and programs, the contributors apply them to a wide variety of topics. For example, one contributor documents how she measured daily progress in recovering from a stroke. Another poignantly offers a tribute to the late and much-loved Wisdom Course leader, Marjie Parrot. Also, in no less compelling fashion, a report inquires into simple acts of connecting to the network of conversations.

Some contributors offer inspiring accounts of how they’re advancing their commitments in the world. Many commitments involved some of the seemingly intractable problems in the world, such as ending homelessness, eliminating relationship violence, creating world peace, decreasing carbon emissions, ensuring a fair world for all families, ending death by suicide and promoting harmony between nature and humans. This section contains many more examples of what graduates are up to in the world.

But I’ll leave you with a powerful thought put forth by a contributor on registering accomplishment. As she puts it, “It turns out registering accomplishment begins by giving language to a commitment, even when it seems impossible.”

— Melinda Voss, Editor

A REPORT FROM THE FIELD

CREATING A WORLD WHERE FAMILIES ARE VALUED AND NURTURED

MARTHA MCDEVITT-PUGH

My commitment for the world arose as I prepared to leave my home in Oakland, California, and move to the Netherlands for the best reason in the world: Love. In 1998, I fell in love with my best friend, Lin, who lived halfway across the world. After more than a year of long plane trips to visit each other, and as the Netherlands was on the verge of becoming the first country in the world to allow same-sex couples to marry, we decided I would join her in the Netherlands for two years. After that, we would find a way back to the United States.

We quickly learned there was no way back. The way forward was paved with new commitments, declarations, taking on things we’d never imagined, breakdowns, miracles, breakthroughs and results. Fortunately, we both discovered and completed The Landmark Forum in 1999. In the next two decades, participation in the Advanced Course, the seminar program, the Self-Expression & Leadership Program, the Wisdom Unlimited course, Partnership Explorations course, Power

& Contribution course, the Conference for Global Transformation and the Introduction Leaders Program provided ongoing opportunities to transform life itself.

COMMITMENTS AND DECLARATIONS

In 2002, we created a commitment to a fair world for all families inside the context of access to immigration law to live in the country of one’s citizenship and based on the fundamental human right to form a family, as stated in Article 16 of the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights. In 2010, I made an impossible promise that, “by 2030, the people of the world would experience being one humanity with liberty and justice for all.” In 2011, I took on a commitment to enfranchise all U.S. citizens.

BREAKDOWN 1

The first breakdown was the key to all that followed. I said that I was moving to Europe and I was happy with that. The truth was that I was giving up a life and job I loved near my aging mother, siblings and young nieces and nephews to start over at age 41 in a cold, damp, rainy country where the technology field offered few career prospects. In my Advanced Course in November 1999, I wrote over and over the story that I should be happy to be moving to Europe to be with the woman I love, but I wasn’t.

DISTINGUISHING COMMUNITY

The breakthrough came in the Self-Expression & Leadership Program three years later when I

distinguished an inauthentic way of being: angry and hurt that my marriage wasn't recognized in the country of my citizenship. I got that I could choose to continue to hide my anger and become bitter, impacting my health and vitality, or I could be in action and create community among the most inspiring people in the world: those who had left their homes to be with who they loved. I organized a Thanksgiving dinner in Amsterdam for 70 people and started the Love Exiles Foundation, which quickly sprouted virtual and live communities around the world.

MIRACLES – A PARTIAL LIST

Virtual Love Exiles communities set up around the world, starting in Canada, United Kingdom, the Netherlands and Germany, provided a bridge to a new home for self-exiling Americans and their partners.

My then 12-year-old niece wrote a letter of gratitude to Job Cohen, the mayor of Amsterdam, which I read to him at a 2006 event celebrating five years of same-sex marriage in the Netherlands. Several weeks later, he wrote to 15 mayors in Western and Central Europe, encouraging them to play a role in opening up marriage to same-sex couples.

In 2006, a friend told me about her friend Susan who had made a film about an inspiring couple, Edie and Thea. I met Susan and Edie in Amsterdam. A few months later, Edie sued the government in a landmark case, United States v. Windsor.

In 2007, an executive committee member of the Democratic National Committee Youth Caucus invited me to speak at their event. When she later moved abroad, I invited her to join Democrats Abroad. She went on to be elected vice chair, becoming the youngest member of a Democratic state party executive committee.

In 2009, while participating in Partnership Explorations, I listened to Shirley, a mother of two young boys who was about to be deported because her partner was a woman and their relationship wasn't recognized. Her partner said that if we could do anything to stop her deportation, they would become spokespeople. They did. Shirley spoke three months later at a

U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee hearing and her boys spoke on conference calls with members of Congress. Their story appeared in The New York Times, Washington Post, People magazine and others, not to mention television news channels.

In 2011, I was asked to run for election as chair of a regional (equivalent of county) political party. I served four years as chair and two as vice chair. I led the Immigration Task Force, which stood for inclusion of same-sex partners in U.S. immigration law.

On my first trip to Washington, D.C. as chair of Democrats Abroad Netherlands, our group ran into Congressman John Lewis, a Democrat from Georgia (who died in 2020) in the hallway. He invited us to his office the next day. He spent an hour telling his life story, a son of sharecroppers in Alabama, and no one in his family had ever been able to vote. As a voting rights activist, he risked his life, spoke with Martin Luther King, Jr. at the March on Washington and committed his life to voting rights, which passed in 1963. My life was altered.

In 2012, I was elected as a delegate to the Democratic National Convention. Meanwhile, our story was captured in books – “Love Warriors” (Kotulski), “Same-Sex Marriage” (Lahey and Alderson), “When Gay People Get Married” (Badgett), “Torn Apart” (Rickard), “Migrants or Expatriates?” (Klekowski van Koppenfels), “Amor & Exile” (Hoffman & Salgado), “We Gaan Ons Echt Verbinden” (Kalk and Rikkers) and articles in The People’s Victory and Urgency Required.

In 2016, I was asked to run for election as a state-level representative to the Democratic National Committee. I was reelected in 2020.

In 2020, I headed a voter protection global help desk team for Democrats Abroad, which assisted hundreds of U.S. citizens being denied the right to vote. The Democratic presidential candidate won the election in Georgia for the first time in more than two decades, and the number of U.S. citizens voting from abroad was greater than Joe Biden’s margin of victory in Georgia.

BREAKDOWNS

We aimed to pass the Uniting American Families Act after the 2004 election, but it wasn't brought to a committee hearing until 2009 and

was removed from the 2013 Comprehensive Immigration Reform Bill before it passed the Senate committee. Neither bill reached the House or Senate for a vote. Many American families were separated and non-U.S. same-sex spouses deported until 2013.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The Love Exiles community generated leadership and gave members and their families the opportunity to take action to make a difference for themselves and others. Our leadership is in demand.

In 2003, Congress passed the MOVE Act, a federal law that guarantees the right to vote from abroad.

In 2013, Edie Windsor won her case at the U.S. Supreme Court, striking down Section 2 of the Defense of Marriage Act. It meant my marriage was federally recognized and Lin could apply to live in the U.S. as my legal spouse. We were no longer “love exiles.”

Participation of voting by Americans abroad in 2020 reached 150% of 2016 participation.

What I can now stand for is the opportunity to engage in what we want as human beings. I can include others and build new teams and initiatives.

BEYOND VIOLENCE: ACCOMPLISHING LOVE, RESPECT AND CONNECTION IN AUSTRALIA

MERILYN SKELTON

In 2019, I began an inquiry into how to fulfill on love, respect and connection between people in Australia. This report explores what I have accomplished since to fulfill on my promise to end the epidemic of relationship violence that occurs every day in Australia. In 2019, I became the founder of Pillars of Respect, the vehicle being used to fulfill on the promise.

PROMISE AND COMMITMENT

In my 2019 paper that appeared in that year’s Journal for the Conference for Global Transformation (CGT), my promise and commitment was that “all intimate partner violence in Australia is eliminated by 2030.” This has now evolved into my new promise, which is zero deaths from violence in relationships in Australia by 2030. I realized that limiting my promise to intimate partner and family violence didn’t actually deal with the violence in the relationship I personally experienced.

For the sake of ease, I’m using the definition of intimate partner violence from the World Health Organization (WHO) and using these for any types of personal relationships that are impacted by violence.

WHO cites the following behavior as:

- Acts of physical violence, such as slapping, hitting, kicking and beating.
- Sexual violence, including forced sexual intercourse and other forms of sexual coercion.
- Emotional (psychological) abuse, such as insults, belittling, constant humiliation, intimidation (e.g., destroying things), threats of harm and threats to take away children.

The second part of my promise is that all people feel love, respect and connection at all times in their relationships no matter the context. My definitions are as follows:

- Love is when two people feel connected, supported, have affinity and feel heard and respected when they interact.
- Respect is what is between two people when someone says something to the other, it gets heard. Each person holds a place where the other person can be who they are without judgment. Their wishes and boundaries are heard and maintained in that relationship. When someone says to the other person that they don’t want something done/said/acted upon, the request is honored.
- Connection occurs when an individual feels able to safely communicate their needs, desires, boundaries and wants to another person. Connection means that all parties in a relationship feel heard, loved, respected and supported.

To accomplish the two parts of this promise, there needs to be agreement on measures for when violence starts in relationships, what deaths are counted and how we measure the accomplishment of love, respect and connection in relationships. This is all part of the Pillars of Respect mission.

ACCOMPLISHING LOVE, RESPECT AND CONNECTION IN RELATIONSHIPS

In my 2019 paper, I explained that the Australian government had committed to spending \$100 million toward eliminating domestic violence.¹

In the coronavirus pandemic that began in February 2020, the federal government has declared that it will now spend \$150 million toward domestic, family and sexual violence in Australia to boost programs which support and facilitate people who have been impacted by violence in relationships.²

Furthermore, a Women’s Safety Council has now been established federally.³ This is a significant accomplishment especially given the current political climate. It has also been the first time I’ve seen the federal government actually be open about the pandemic of violence in Australia and acknowledge the problem. That is a massive shift. What’s next is for Pillars of Respect to fulfill on measuring the true economic cost of violence in relationships to Australia.

Setting up Pillars of Respect in 2019 with me as its founder was my first accomplishment. Out of this being set up, I now have a small team of dedicated individuals committed to causing zero deaths from violence in relationships in Australia by 2030. The team and I are the catalysts.

Before 2019, calling me a founder was not possible, and I couldn’t see having a small team and a wider community in membership of the conversation. Having a small team now means that I can press on with accomplishing projects within the project to amplify the message nationally and internationally.

Through sharing my commitment publicly on social media, I have transformed the conversation that ending all violence in relationships is actually possible. The most profound result was when one of my team members (a fellow Landmark graduate but not a Wisdom Unlimited course graduate yet) shared with me that she had massive breakthroughs through having conversations with me that ending violence is actually possible. Before those conversations, she had not thought it was possible.

For me, that reflected the experience I had at the 2018 Conference for Global Transformation when Coral Crew-Noble shared in her keynote speech about how she had transformed the murder rate in Jamaica through her work. She shared what was possible. Therefore, I was able to enroll and register my team in not only creation of the tools necessary to build upon, but how, as a collective, we can get the job done. I thank her for inspiring me to take the next steps to turn this into a reality for Australia.

Pillars of Respect is now online and the promised outcome is present in the network of conversations, a Wisdom course distinction. I have a Facebook group of 150 people currently, and I intend that this small group grow to over 1,000+ people within the next three months.

Out of standing for what can be accomplished, I now have members engaged in all walks of life who share the same goal. Membership has expanded across Australia and internationally. I have been doing Facebook Live reports as well with groups that I do not belong to, to spread the message that zero deaths from violence in relationships in Australia by 2030 is actually a possible promise.

My vision for what’s possible has been built on what has already been accomplished by groups of people who have worked on eliminating violence from Australian society since the naming of the issue began about 40 years ago. I am in the development phase of working with people who work in the violence reduction community or alongside it in the coaching/empowerment/ personal development/empowered sexuality industry to devise solutions. I want to create solutions that are innovative in becoming more effective in reducing and/or eliminating violence in our culture as a conversation and outcome.

I lead the conversation in transforming the planet about relationship violence to one of relationships that foster love, respect and connection. Pillars of Respect has not been set up as a nonprofit business and has no investment in perpetuating any of the businesses that currently profit from violence in relationships.

Pillars of Respect has been set up to create a new economy of love; a culture where love, respect and

connection are funded for others and ourselves. Pillars of Respect has sponsored events a number of times called “Conversations for Love,” which are workshops causing generative conversations for how individuals can take steps in their life to shift from violence to love, respect and connection when they see it.

Also, Pillars of Respect has removed the “gender” and “othering” in the conversations around violence in relationships. This enables a far more equal and loving space for all people to participate. Violence does not have a gender, age group, socio-economic status, race or religion. Eliminating violence is a conversation for humanity. There is much work to be done here.

CONCLUSION

As I have spoken and declared my promise for Australia, the world of accomplishment has opened up to me. Pillars of Respect has been founded, and there are now the beginnings of membership in the conversation to amplify the message that this is actually possible as we work together to interrupt the conversations around violence. The accomplishment of zero deaths from violence in relationships now has a platform and means to accomplish this lofty goal by 2030.

ENDNOTES

1 Wilson, L. “The Cost of Violence in the Australian Economy.” News Corp Australia Network, November 22, 2015. Accessed January 16, 2019. www.news.com.au/national/the-cost-of-domestic-violence-australian-economy-robbed-of-billions/news-story/655a55c524aabd b4640e3bfdac2865e.

2 www.pm.gov.au/media/11-billion-support-more-mental-health-medicare-and-domestic-violence-services-0. Accessed September 14, 2020.

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A REPORT FROM THE FIELD

REGISTERING REHAB

LIBBY MCKNIGHT

I was sitting in my hospital bed, three weeks after I had a right hemisphere hemorrhagic stroke, wearing those bright yellow non-slip hospital socks, attending the 2020 Conference for Global Transformation on my iPad. I heard Tobin White, a Landmark leader, announce the theme for the 2021 conference, “Registering Accomplishment – What’s Possible Now?” and realized that it was a key to my recovery.

I was already meeting daily with my physical and occupational therapists and saw how important it was that they were registering my accomplishments and letting me know what they noticed, supporting me in whatever the next action would be. Encouragement was key, and registering accomplishment was required for the encouragement to be empowering.

After I was discharged from inpatient care, I had in-home physical therapy and occupational therapy once or twice a week. My physical therapist gave me homework and followed up to see how I was doing with it. My occupational therapist made suggestions, but never made assignments or followed up; she wasn’t registering accomplishments. I had a lot more progress during that time with my physical therapy leg exercises and walking than I did with occupational therapy arm exercises and hand movements.

When home therapy ran out, I realized that doing my exercises faithfully was going to be key to my recovery. My sister bought me a white board

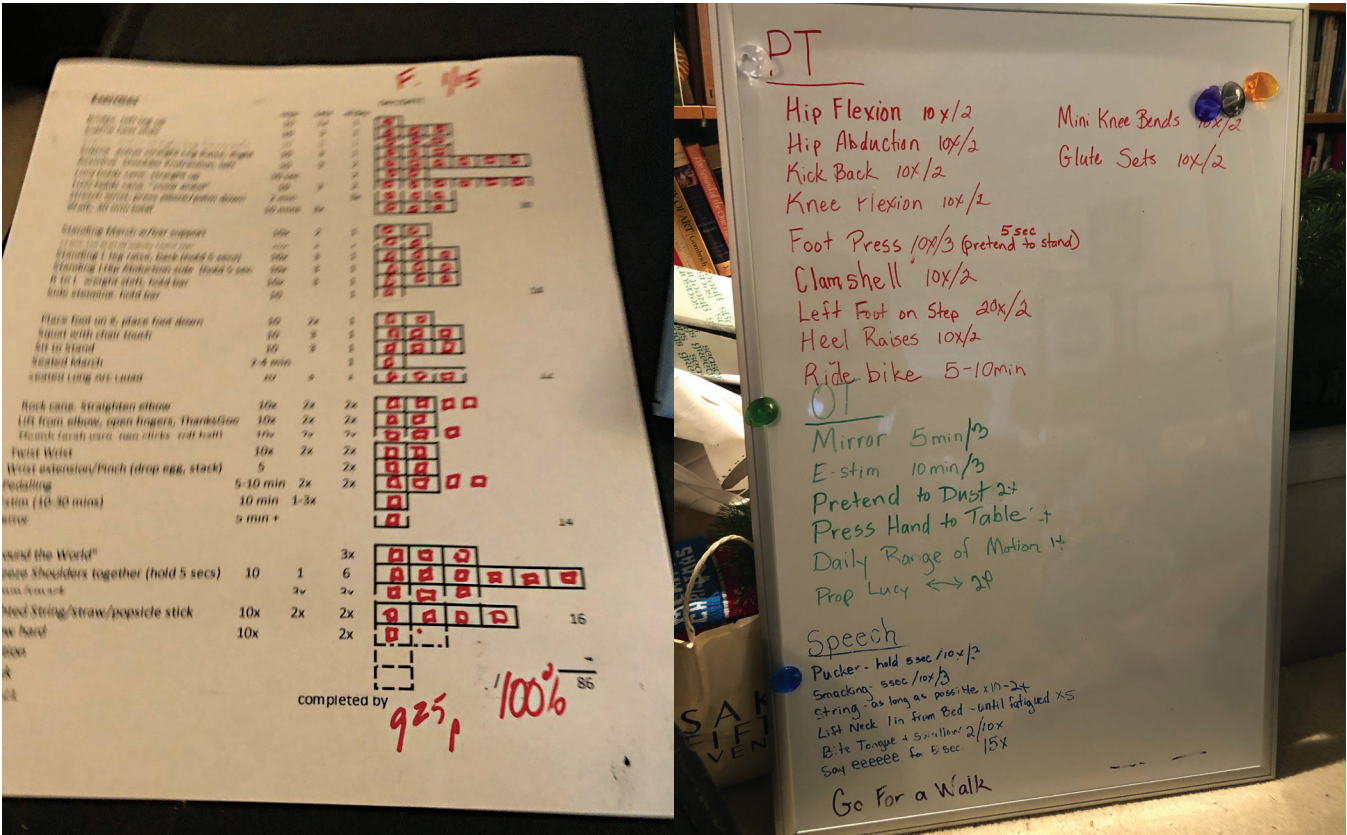
and wrote out my exercises, so they were visible every day. I soon realized that I needed to be able to mark off what I had done myself rather than relying on her to mark it for me, and I made an Excel chart on the computer.

Filling it in on the computer or my phone was cumbersome, so I started printing out the charts and using an array of colored markers to fill in the boxes. Adding color, and sometimes shapes or designs, helped to make charting more fun. In the Beyond Fitness seminar (Yes, I did Beyond Fitness when I could barely walk!), we explored the question of “Where do we get stopped?” and found that basically we stop when resilience, follow through or fun is missing.

Another part of adding fun and accountability to the process has been posting a photo of my daily chart with the percentage completed on Facebook, where a community can see whether I’m doing my exercises. Knowing that they are watching has been very helpful in continuing when I have an “attack” of “I don’t wanna!” about my exercises (follow through goes missing).

Having people register my accomplishments has been key to my ongoing success at completing 100% of my exercises most of the days in the past several months.

My commitment to the world is that, “All People Experience themselves as Known and Loved and Connected, with Themselves, Each Other and Spirit.”



Charting exercises and daily progress.

My experience with using Facebook to document and register my recovery has been allowing me to connect with an army of encouragers who say that I inspire them, leaving me feeling known and loved even while they are inspiring me to keep going.

I post my daily exercise results and videos registering my accomplishments with walking, climbing stairs and moving my left hand. Having so many people remark on (register) my accomplishments has motivated me to look for more areas where I can document progress and it inspires me to keep working toward my goals.

A REPORT FROM THE FIELD

INQUIRING INTO THE DISCOURSE OF HUMANS’ RELATIONSHIP WITH NATURE

AMRIT KENDRICK

The discourse of humans’ relationship with nature is overdue for transformation.

Who do we say we are in the matter of humans having a transformed relationship to nature? Who do we have others be in the matter of integrity when humans interact with nature at the level of the plant community and habitat? Where can language and culture be transformed to create a vibrant future for other natural organisms, which are intertwined with human mental and physical health?

Part of the inquiry lies in examining the interface where no questions are asked. Disconnection occurs at the interfaces. Where industry requires iron ore or wood, a forest or rock formation is just an inconvenient obstacle. Where a government or private company decides to build a road, the presence of habitat is irrelevant. Where a city requires more land for housing, remnant native vegetation is simply in the way. In a place where people must land planes and park cars, pavement is much more important than the trees and landscape already in place. In planning waterfront access, the wetlands are a place to be filled and are not regarded as the home of birds and other creatures. Though laws and administrative structures are designed to address these blind spots, their expert advice holds little sway when money and jobs are to be generated in the short term.

For more than 60 years, I have been observing the interactions between humans and nature. Both my parents were wildlife enthusiasts, who counted and identified migrating birds, took

holidays specially to see large grazing animals in their natural habitat, kept notes on nesting habits of raptors, got excited about seals and otters and read books like “Born Free” and works by Konrad Lorenz, an Austrian zoologist, ethologist and ornithologist, who shared the 1973 Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine with two others and is often regarded as one of the founders of modern ethology, the study of animal behavior.¹

I then engaged in a range of work, which I hoped would allow me to broadcast a message into the world about how special these other non-human creatures are. Rather like a quest, I found jobs in relatively natural settings. My first jobs during high school and university ensured I did not work in offices, but instead in state parks and at remote fire stations. I was always close to trees, seashores and creeks.

When I traveled overseas, I visited rainforests that were being heavily logged, soon to be replaced by oil palm plantations. I visited rivers soon to be mined for gold and sleepy, grass-hut villages on islands soon to be turned into grand tourism resorts with international airports. It gave me a sense of hopelessness and also left me wondering: What drives human beings, who claim to be fascinated with nature, to do all this destruction of it? Where are we missing the connection?

The work I did varied but I always intended to discover how to increase the respect humans have for nature. I studied and worked in park interpretation, science communication and environmental education. All those fields suggest

they are designed to get the message across to various human audiences, adults who visit parks, children who go to camps and community members keen to learn more about the natural world. Working as a park ranger for government agencies charged with managing parklands, as a conservation and land management lecturer, and trainer and project manager in nonprofits delivering workshops to communities, I was left feeling like the process was inadequate. Those things being studied and communicated about still got removed, fragmented, disrespected and ignored.

At the same time, one cannot help noticing the great love of nature that humans have, as illustrated by the popularity of “ecotourism” and of David Attenborough and his programs. He apparently started on Twitter one day and had a million followers the next day. The Internet and social media platforms are full of Facebook pages and Instagram accounts honoring insects, birds, mammals and trees, celebrating wildflowers, forest bathing, national parks and the outback.

Where does the connection between destruction in the name of economic expediency and conserving these precious things get short-circuited? How do we remain blind to the irony of naming streets in a new housing subdivision after the wildflower species which now have a dangerously reduced population due to the clearing necessary to create the subdivision?

It is a discourse engaged in by people who live in the subdivision, build houses, drive bulldozers, authorize payments for the clearing and draw up plans and apply for government approval. What if there were different considerations in the discourse? Considerations of carbon release or ecosystem services could be incorporated into the design process. The obvious inefficacy of the minimal legal framework leaves homebuyers and developers off the hook for their descendants’ future. What if those people became interested in a product that respected the integrity of a plant community? What if buyers desired smaller ecological footprints and more protection of local habitat as a norm?

What would we learn through listening for and expressing new language into the community?

Part of this has started to arise in Australia with granting of native title to indigenous communities. This increased openness to indigenous land management acknowledges a respect for “country,” the natural environment in which indigenous people were responsible for understanding and studying other organisms around them.

Could the discourse be transformed by bringing together traditional indigenous knowledge with scientific knowledge? How could we discover if we are transforming the discourse? What could we measure?

ENDNOTES

1 www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Konrad_Lorenz. Accessed February 8, 2021.

A REPORT FROM THE FIELD

A JOURNEY THROUGH 2020 – REGISTERING ACCOMPLISHMENT

DENISE KRAUSS

Let’s start with my commitment to the world. “All people live their lives fulfilled through peace, calm and clarity.” This commitment is now posted on the top of my computer. I see it when I go into my office in the morning. It makes me smile. Keep reading and you’ll see how this is connected to my journey through 2020. What a rollercoaster ride!

Until March 2020, I thought of myself as a “non-technological” person with a never had been/ wasn’t now/never would be-kind of attitude. I wasn’t a technology professional. I didn’t understand technology or any kind of electronics, and I didn’t even care about understanding it. There were other people I would seek out to make sure it all worked. All I wanted was for my technology to work when I wanted, or needed, it to work. That’s what it was supposed to do.

I felt bad that my website wasn’t professional looking and I wasn’t as connected to the world as I could be. I simply didn’t have all the online tools that everyone thought I should already have. My attitude was: I had a website and, if you were interested in working with me, you would contact me. In addition, I thought someone had to be a

professional to make a website look good and draw people to it. And, I was definitely not that.

On March 19, 2020, California went into “shutdown” mode after the new coronavirus showed up in the United States and in-person group networking ended. For a professional organizer and coach who visited clients in their home, that became an impossibility. Nobody was visiting anybody as long as COVID-19 was around. Overnight, my income shrank to one-third of what it had been since I was unable to visit my organizing clients and my coaching clients were out of work. The irony was that previously I had actually increased my income by about \$1,000 per month and having my best year yet.

Two questions immediately occurred for me:

- 1. How do I make a difference for people?
- 2. How do I make an ongoing income?

If I wanted to have even the possibility of making a difference, I had to do things differently. How could I pivot to make that happen? I didn’t know. It would take something huge to make this work. Huge? Really? Huge? I was not up to huge. I was just little ole me, not a big public persona. How could I make big enough changes to have a positive impact? I could feel resignation and defeat creeping in.

So, I took a look around. What resources were available? What actions could I take? I knew of at least two large organizations that were available to me, so I started with them.

The first action was to become a regular attendee on the Living as a Created Self inquiry calls. While I had joined the call in January 2020, I noticed how often there was something else that needed to be done at 9 a.m. on Wednesday, and 6 p.m. on Monday just didn't work. This call became a standing commitment for me. This was a place that I could reinvent and create myself for my new world. This call has not only provided that space but has kept me present to who I am in the world and what my commitment is. That was the first change I made in my 2020 journey.

I was also a member of an organization that supports coaches in growing their businesses. This organization offered resources to expand my business and people who would support me in that particular endeavor. So, I investigated this organization further to see what was available. Everything they did was online! Oh my gosh! How was this ever going to work? I could feel despair and hopelessness creeping in.

I knew that I had to create a new way of being and pull myself up by my bootstraps. I started to participate on daily Zoom calls. I found the exact calls that would support me in creating a mindset for stepping out boldly on different social media platforms. This was the beginning of my journey to become technologically savvy.

Before all this happened, I was part of a group accepted to present a breakout session at the 2020 Conference for Global Transformation. Initially, it was in-person. Now, all of sudden, the entire conference was going to be virtual. Yes, online. Once again, I felt my shoulders collapse in that same old despondent, dejected feeling.

The three of us were speaking on "Letting Go." We wondered how exactly do you present a breakout session online where people can share with each other? How do you do this? We put our heads together and figured out that we would have mini-breakout sessions for sharing within our main breakout session presentation.

We also saw that practice was necessary. We set up six separate online practice sessions and had four-to-10 participants in each session. We discussed things, such as "What if we actually have 150 people show up for our breakout session?"

What would we do then?" This would be easy to manage in person but now we are online and how do you do that? Then we laughed at the thought of a large group. We decided to make two plans for our breakout session: one for a smaller group and one for a larger group. Lo and behold, 75-to-80 attendees' faces showed up on our Zoom screen. This was the epitome of huge. We were able to create a powerful result by implementing huge changes. So, this enabled me, in fact, to let go of my limiting belief that I was technologically challenged.

I was now on my way. I learned how to build a brand-new website and two social media-based pages for my business. I moved on to two other technology-based platforms that provide diverse options for an online business to thrive, which include newsletters and ways to measure results. I have learned that each platform has its own purpose and some of them can work seamlessly together.

My journey through 2020 included many visits to the dark place of resignation and defeat. It was a year of inquiry, flexibility, learning, resistance and accomplishment. I learned a lot about technology for my personal and business life and know that I can walk in that world if I choose to. I learned to stop, take a deep breath and start newly.

My list of accomplishments for 2020 feels longer than Santa's list of children. While my journey continues into 2021, I see the foundation that I built, the progress I have made and know that my business will continue to grow. When I stop in the area of technology and feel down about it, I can now acknowledge it, let it go and move forward.

As I traveled my journey of 2020, I recreated myself, my business, my specialty and how I present myself to the world.

My commitment to the world is now stated on my website. What better way to let people know what I'm about?

A REPORT FROM THE FIELD

HOMELESSNESS IS NOT A MONOLITH

RICK MITCHELL AND JOEL WEISS

A WORD ABOUT HOMELESSNESS

The homeless population is not a monolith. We live in a complex world and much of it can be difficult or even impossible to understand. Our reaction to this is to attempt to simplify by categorizing our experiences and observed world into a few buckets.

For example, consider the phrase "homeless person." What picture does that phrase conjure up in your mind? For me, the picture that comes to mind is of a scruffy, gray-bearded old man sitting on a curb holding a sign.

But my default picture (and maybe yours) is not actually representative of the typical homeless person – in part because there is no typical homeless person. The fact is that the person I envision is most certainly homeless – even chronically so – but most of those experiencing homelessness probably look more like you and me than like my scruffy, gray-bearded old man.

It may surprise you to know that only 15 percent of the homeless today are chronically homeless; 10 percent are episodically homeless and the balance are temporarily homeless. With the kind of assistance provided by the Homeless ID Project in Arizona and similar organizations, a homeless man or woman will be empowered to find an end to their homelessness. It's worth noting that about half of those experiencing homelessness are in families with children. Homelessness is not a monolith.

... AND A WORD ABOUT FISH

You've heard it before: "Give a man a fish and he'll eat for a day. Teach a man to fish and he'll eat for

a lifetime." Given the above, is it sufficient just to give a fish? Sometimes, certainly. I am unlikely to possess the resources to help a chronically homeless individual end their homelessness and, yet, by God, that scruffy, gray-bearded, chronically homeless old man sitting on a curb does need a fish and he needs it every day just to stay alive!

On the other hand, the majority of those experiencing homelessness today both want and need help ending their homelessness – and, the sooner, the better because the strongest predictor of someone entering the chronic phase of homelessness is time. Temporarily and episodically homeless individuals need help in order to end their homelessness, and they need it as quickly as possible, lest they become hopelessly and chronically stuck.

So, as you look at how you might help the homeless, consider working with organizations that offer a way out of homelessness and not just those focused on providing a more comfortable way to be homeless.

Find or create an agency like the Arizona Homeless ID Project working to help the homeless get replacement identification documents. It is impossible to end one's homelessness without documents. There are only a few of us working on this across the nation and we are working on ways to support others as they get started in their own quest to help the homeless.

SO, ONCE MORE, WHAT CAN I DO TO HELP THE HOMELESS?

Do what calls you. See if that calling can help leverage the resources already in place and

positioned to help the homeless.

Give of your time, talent and treasure. Volunteer. It's important. Bring the kids. Provide ingredients for meals to a food bank. Help prepare and serve meals at the local shelter or food kitchen. Look for opportunities other than the period of Thanksgiving to the New Year when everyone seems compelled by the glad tidings and goodwill of the season.

Provide clothing to a jobs program — know that your clothes may be the difference-maker in the job interview that carries an individual out of homelessness. Provide t-shirts, jeans, belts, shoes, socks and even reading glasses to agencies and organizations serving the homeless where there are clients on the spot in need of those things. What's important is the agency will recycle and otherwise funnel the items they can't use to do even more good.

Become an advocate for an end to homelessness in your community. Resist NIMBY (not in my backyard) actions that aim to keep homeless people out of your neighborhood. Sponsor, support and speak out on laws and programs specifically designed to move people from the streets in ways that allow them to rebuild their lives.

HELP THE HOMELESS BY PREVENTING HOMELESSNESS

A few paragraphs ago I discussed the fact that homelessness is not one thing; it's not a monolith. Homeless individuals are as diverse as the general population.

A common belief is that people fall into homelessness because of addiction and mental health issues. Some do but consider that you could become homeless, maybe due to a job loss or an unexpected and expensive medical event – either one of which might lead to an eviction. Consider your reaction. How long would it take, living on the street, behind a bush or under a bridge before you would begin to suffer the symptoms of something like PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder)? How long would it be before you accepted the offer of a “well-meaning” fellow street person who offered you a hit of this or a shot of that to make those symptoms disappear? Let's look a bit more broadly

at the sources of homelessness.

Families and individuals evicted from their homes are, by definition, homeless. In Maricopa County, Arizona, with a population of 4.4 million, more than 40,000 families were evicted from their homes in 2018. What are the numbers where you live? The evicted may check into a hotel or temporarily sleep on the couch of a friend or relative but that does not mean they are not homeless. Senior citizens living on fixed incomes, who have not kept up with rent increases, are joining the homeless.

Young adults aging out of the foster care system and juvenile corrections system, often without identification documents, are becoming homeless at abnormally high rates.

Women and children fleeing a domestic violence situation or even a human trafficking situation are often relegated to homelessness. Helping the homeless by preventing homelessness in the first place may be as simple as understanding the causes of homelessness and working to prevent it.

FINAL THOUGHTS

There are hundreds of thousands of homeless people in the United States and millions living in poverty who are a single missed paycheck away from ending up homeless. You want to help and your help is needed. Find your niche and join the battle against homelessness.

Whether you choose to work with an existing social services agency, community group or religious organization, find a way to help that speaks to you and your humanity.

Feed, clothe, house, heal. That's the mission of one of the larger and more effective agencies in Arizona. Each of those activities are worthy and necessary. Find an agency that does one or more of those. They need you. Work in your community. It may be that you can help the homeless by writing your congressional representatives demanding that work be done on both prevention of, and resolution to, homelessness.

We all want to help, really! It's in our DNA. Seeing homeless individuals on the streets seems like something we ought to be able to solve. As you

reach into your pocket to solve that problem, consider that some kinds of help are better than others. Don't act out of guilt. Don't get frustrated with your inability to solve the problem quickly. But, get on the court – step up to the plate and swing the bat. Get into action wherever you see yourself contributing to help prevent and end homelessness in your community. You'll be glad you did.

WHERE IS MY NETWORK OF CONVERSATIONS?

DOUGLAS DUNN

Where is your network of conversations? Do you know where it is located in the world?

Through previously attending the Wisdom Unlimited course in 2017 and now participating in the Partnership Explorations course and Inquiry Explorations Program, I am getting familiar with the notion that who we are is a network of conversations. Listening to my internal thoughts and feelings is less important than those in my network. I am learning that “my” and “I” could be considered redundant and I am the hole in my community “doughnut” so I don’t even exist! But where does the doughnut exist? Is it important to know where my network is?

In January 2020, in those days of face-to-face seminars, I was driving each week to attend the Relationship seminar led by Lucy Pearce. It felt good to connect with people around the Bristol area, about 80 miles from my home in Devon, in the southwest part of the United Kingdom. The commitment I took on in that seminar was to broaden my horizons. I remember the year before when my Wisdom course leader, Helga Christian, noticed I shared a lot about my family, and, in particular, about my daughter. She said that I could consider extending conversations to the wider community. It was a useful tip and something I hadn’t seen before, so I decided to take it on.

I agreed to join the committee for a local Activity Trust. Activities took place within a village hall in the small town of Bovey Tracey. It was a sort of a club where members choose their preferred activities. In my case, it was weekly talks, table tennis, watercolor painting and writing for pleasure. There were also walking groups and organized visits to places of interest. My role on the committee was to open up the hall and meet-and-greet club members. Another job I had was arranging chairs for weekly talks which were attended by around 80 people. The events were friendly and interesting and I enjoyed connecting with people. The club had some rules. One was that members must live within five miles of the town.

When the COVID-19 pandemic came in March 2020, the hall was closed and everyone was in lockdown. In the summer, I offered to deliver a newsletter to members and take them by hand to save postage. I made a point of knocking on each person’s door to see who I was delivering to. What I noticed was how much pleasure it was to see who answered the door.

I started wondering why I enjoy meeting people so much. Was it because I was desperate to meet people face-to-face or was I just being nosey? Was there something behind my feeling of fulfillment in finding out where people lived?

Prior to the pandemic I met fellow club members in the hall and we did things together. After posting those letters I got to know where they lived. When I went shopping, I often recognized club members and we stopped for a chat. For some reason, knowing where people lived mattered to me.

One of the reasons I moved from London to Devon was due to my interest in astronomy. There are dark skies here and I discovered a thriving astronomical society in nearby Torquay. I clearly remember a conversation with a fellow Wisdom course participant, Susie Miles, during a Social Commons session in London in 2017. We talked about the stars and how much her mother enjoyed stargazing. I even thought up the idea of building an observatory in my garden. I am still thankful for Susie listening to what I liked about my life. Later, I talked with another Wisdom graduate who had built an observatory. I think those conversations led me to selling my apartment in London and buying a house in Devon – with a garden!

When I moved into my new house in Bovey Tracey, a small town and civil parish in Devon in 2017, I had an originating circle of zero. Not even a doughnut to my name! But I had the confidence to create one from nothing, thanks to the Wisdom course. Through playing tennis in nearby Ashburton, I met new people and became familiar with another small-town community. One of the tennis players told me about TAS, the Torbay Astronomical Society, which I discovered presented monthly lectures and offered observational evenings using their telescope. I started going regularly to the meetings and using their telescope.

After the lockdown in March 2020, I suggested online lectures and gave a short presentation about the stars I had observed on a trip to Malawi as a volunteer.¹ I also joined the society’s committee and agreed to take on printing its annual calendar. I wasn’t exactly sure how to produce the calendar, but, being an IT trainer, I knew that it was something I could learn. Soon I was e-mailing astrophotographers for their best pictures. I also had fun looking up celestial events, such as eclipses, moon phases and planet locations to include in the calendar.

When the calendar proof came back from the printers, I was proud of what I produced and accomplished. I ordered 40 and they sold like hot cakes thanks to Facebook and our online meetings. I was very happy to send one to Susie’s mum. Reactions on the society’s Facebook page

included: “Thanks for the calendars, Doug! I arrived back in Torquay for the Christmas period yesterday and so I’ve seen your delivery. They look great.” “The calendars are fantastic! Thanks Doug!” “Awesome.”

Since most members lived around Torbay, once again I decided to deliver them by hand and discover where people live instead of posting the calendars. Now, when I see members on Zoom meetings they are more than boxes on the screen but people in houses I have visited. In the end, some members offered to come and pick up their calendars from my house. I think they also liked to connect up in this way.

WHAT’S POSSIBLE NOW?

Participating in Partnership Explorations online has extended my originating circle beyond Devon and Bristol to counties in Europe, the United States and around the world. I have reconnected with one participant, Theresa Surak, from California. I first met Theresa at the A Life That Sings vacation course at Lake Tahoe led by Jerry Fishman. She reminded me that, through online connections, where you live is no longer a barrier. People can work and collaborate together from different countries. Our network of conversations can be local and/or spread around the world. How glorious!

ENDNOTES

¹ Dunn, D. “Becoming a Wisdom Facilitator.” Journal of the Conference for Global Transformation, 2019. Landmark Worldwide.

CREATING LIFE “OUT HERE”

HILARY BURNS

This report is about my exploration into how to create lives “out here” in dialogue that are free from our limiting thoughts. My commitment is that we are all free to create lives that we truly love.

I started this exploration a few years ago. In the Wisdom Unlimited course, I experienced life “in the moment of now” when rackets and winning formulas disappeared, and I was free to create my life powerfully.¹ I was excited and felt marvelously alive.

This contrasted with what I call my “other side of life,” where nothing seems possible, I have no energy, everything seems wrong and I just can’t do anything right. At times like this all I want to do is hide under the covers until the horrible feeling has passed.

I didn’t talk about my other side. I thought that I was the only person who got like this. Everyone else always seemed to be happy and positive. I was ashamed of this part of me.

Then I took the Sharing course. On Saturdays, we spent an hour together. We were put in breakout sessions for 40 minutes and told to share. At first, the 40 minutes seemed endless. What could we possibly talk about? These were strangers. Then I heard something that changed my life. “*You can’t share wrong.*”

“Really?,” I asked.

“Yes. *There is no right way to share.*”

Sharing became my first access to creating life “out here” in dialogue. I shared what I was dealing with and how I felt. Rather than condemning me, others related and started talking about what they were dealing with. Pretty soon, you couldn’t shut us up. The 40 minutes went by quickly. We felt freedom, intimacy and affinity. It was miraculous.

I kept reviewing this course. I watched people come in with their rules on how one was to share. They were stiff and anxious. Once they learned that they couldn’t share wrong, they opened up, relaxed and became open and loving. It was incredible to watch.

My second access to freedom came about by accident, too. I had been annoyed with my ex-husband for two years. Finally, I told someone I hated when he called me his wife. We had been divorced for years and I was not his wife.

“*Why don’t you tell him?,*” they asked.

“*Oh. I hadn’t thought of that. What will I say? What if he gets mad and won’t talk to me? What about the kids?,*” I replied.

I decided to speak up despite my fear.

“*I want to tell you something but I don’t know how,*” I said to him.

“*What? You can tell me anything,*” he replied.

“I hate when you call me your wife. I am not your wife. It really bothers me,” I blurted out crying.

“*Okay, then I won’t call you that,*” he said.

I couldn’t believe it. He was fine. The anxiety was only with me. The real miracle was that I felt free. The resentment and annoyance were gone. Just by “saying what I didn’t think I could say.”

I created a poster for the 2018 Conference for Global Transformation. People put stickies on the wall of what they didn’t think they could say. They reported having amazing breakthroughs even though their contributions to the wall were anonymous. Just releasing their shameful thoughts to the universe created freedom. It was, again, miraculous.

My next access to freedom came from reading “The Untethered Soul” by Michael Singer. He says that we are constantly trying to stay within our comfort zone or model. We struggle to keep people, places and things in a manner that support this model. If it starts to go another way, we get uncomfortable and our mind tells us how to get things back the way we need them to be to feel comfortable again.

He calls this our cage. We know the limits to our cage when we encounter resistance. This is where we stop. When I was publishing my memoir, I encountered resistance and almost didn’t go forward. What would people think? What would happen when they read about the “bad” stuff I had done?

It would have been more comfortable to just scrap the book. To “go beyond” the discomfort, according to Singer, I had to go through the resistance instead of backing away from it. Just like a dog that encounters an electric fence. There is momentary discomfort for the dog, but freedom on the other side. I experienced the discomfort. I leaned into the unpleasant body sensations and worrisome thoughts. It only took a few moments. All of a sudden I felt free. Again, it felt miraculous.

Now, when I encounter resistance, instead of backing away from it, I allow it. I know that it is another access in my exploration to freedom. It is fascinating.

I discovered my next access at the 2020 Year-end Vacation course when we looked at what we are hiding. I hide when I am hurt because I don’t think I should be. I was ashamed that I got hurt and certainly wasn’t going to tell anybody about it.

Then I learned another secret to freedom. I thought being hurt was wrong. As long as I made it wrong, I was stuck. I had no access to anything

other than the way it was.

What if it’s not wrong to be hurt? What if it’s OK to make up meaning that isn’t empowering? What if it’s OK to be upset, angry, mean, resentful or even crazy?

Is it possible to accept myself as I am? With all the negative and shameful ways I can be? So what if I’m not positive and perky and pleasant like the rest of the world seems? Does that make me a bad person? Am I wrong?

It sure seems wrong. Aren’t you supposed to be happy and peppy? Aren’t you supposed to be positive and shake off the negativity easily and effortlessly?

That’s what I always thought, and I was wrong for not being able to.

I have taken on the ABC’s of badness in order to accept the all of it. Rather than be ashamed, I can play. It’s a fun game.

I now announce, “I’m in a bad mood. I’m making you all wrong.” Then I can laugh and return to belonging. It’s been incredible.

My last access to freedom was discovered during an inquiry into “what we can’t say about accomplishment.”

What we discovered is that we thought bragging, conceit and arrogance were wrong. In order not to be bad, we learned to put ourselves down and focus on what we didn’t do. That creates a negative and disempowering energy.

Just by focusing on our small accomplishments, our energy shifted. It became generative and creative, giving us a new space to move forward with confidence, possibility and freedom. Such a little step can create such a big impact.

I can’t wait to inquire into more ways to create freedom. Stay tuned for more adventures from the field.

ENDNOTES

¹ The Wisdom Unlimited course is a nine-month course offered by Landmark.

LANDMARK PRESENCE IN FRANCE

AZUCENA VAN DER HORST

What has been accomplished?

In 2005, Landmark closed its Paris center. Nevertheless, a team of five-to-seven graduates and four translators have produced:

- Two-to-three Landmark Forums a year with an average of 10-to-25 French participants in the translated section of European forums in the last 15 years.
- One-to-two Advanced Courses with eight-to-22 participants during the past five years.
- European webinars in the seminar program for French-speaking graduates with an average of three seminars a year, 35-to-95 participants in 13 locations that include Paris, Bruxelles, Anvers, Geneve, Lyon, Chambéry, Grenoble, Gap, Marseille, Montpellier, Perpignan, Bordeaux and La Rochelle during the past seven years.
- Five-to-15 participants in the Wisdom Unlimited course each year. Five have completed the Wisdom curriculum.

Who have you become standing in what has been accomplished?

I have become someone who is free to be with any conversation and free to act in the face of no agreement. The team is now able to generate itself as the Source of Landmark France and has freed itself up from the negative conversations that were attached to Landmark.

What problems have you transformed into opportunities to fulfill your commitment to the world?

The main problem has been that the Introduction Leaders Program was not accessible to the graduates living in France and there was no support of an official assisting program.¹ The

opportunity became enrolling French graduates and continuing to share their transformation and apply Landmark tools.

What has become possible for you as an individual, recognizing accomplishment?

It is now possible to look at what has been accomplished from “what’s so” rather than from judging and evaluating, to be proud of what has been accomplished and grant being to others’ and my humanity.

What has become possible for your groups, teams and communities, recognizing accomplishment?

In 2020, with the Introduction Leaders Program available online, it is now possible for French graduates to generate new opportunities to participate, be fully part of Landmark and experience being free to be and free to act.

Standing in what has been accomplished, what can you say now?

I say that it was worth all the trouble and difficulties I went through. It was a great court to play on and to train myself in the distinctions of the Forum. I have reached a deeper understanding of my commitment to the world, which is: “A world that works for everyone with nothing and nobody left out. A ‘you and me’ world rather than a ‘you or me’ world.”

What can you stand for now?

I can stand for bringing workability to every corner of life.

ENDNOTES

¹ Landmark’s Introduction Leaders Program is a 29-week program that develops graduates to be leaders and lead introductions to the Landmark Forum.

THE SOUTHERN OCEANS CLIMATE RESTORATION TEAM: BEGINNINGS

OWEN ALLEN, ROSE GRANT, RACHEL BARWELL, TIM CHAMBERLAIN, SHAFEEA ZUBAIR, JULIE RAINES AND SUZ HAYWOOD

This report notes that a created future is realized through three features:

- 1. Leadership in the declaration of the created future;*
- 2. A working structure established for realizing that future; and*
- 3. Reliance on the future, resources and knowledge in the existing network of conversations.*

The Southern Oceans Climate Restoration Team is an agile team of transformative activists. Core members are leaders in education, health, farming, environmental science, journalism, human rights, the arts and activism. The current team members are all competent in distinctions from Landmark transformative training. Though that is not a requirement for membership, Landmark training provides the oil for the working team being in empowering conversations with ease.

OVERVIEW OF CLIMATE RESTORATION

The work of the Foundation for Climate Restoration is focused on a global paradigm shift to restore the climate through education, advocacy and a solutions exchange.

- On education, the foundation has clarified that the nature of the challenge facing humanity is that the carbon dioxide (CO₂) levels in the atmosphere are already 25% more than the conditions in which humans have flourished over the past two million years. Restoring the climate requires the removal of one-trillion tons of CO₂ from the atmosphere to bring CO₂ back to pre-industrial levels. Nonetheless, through sequestration technologies, that is achievable by 2050.

On solutions, the foundation plays a role of an evaluator of the efficacy of carbon sequestration technologies by establishing three criteria:

- The technologies are capable of permanently sequestering the carbon (taken as at least 100 years);
- The technologies are scalable to be able to sequester a large portion (50%) of the requisite CO₂ over a 20-year period; and
- The sequestered carbon is in a form that underpins a financially viable market, making the solutions readily fundable.

There are two frontrunners meeting the criteria – artificial aggregate for concrete and giant kelp farming.

- On advocacy, the foundation is facilitating the formation of a climate restoration ecosystem by building local chapters of adult volunteers and designing educational tools

for children and youth. Local chapters will have a role in educating local communities and advocating for climate restoration to policymakers. Local chapters can have a large impact by advocating the adoption of commitments to climate restoration and public procurement policies that favor the use (buying) of low-embodied carbon products, such as artificial concrete, and so providing a stimulus to the scalable development of the technology.

LEADERSHIP DOWN UNDER – INVITATIONS, OFFERS AND ACTION

The keynote address by Peter Fiekowsky and Erica Dodds on the Foundation for Climate Restoration at the 2020 Conference for Global Transformation attracted the interest of a number of delegates from “Downunder” (Australia and New Zealand) with an interest in climate change solutions.

Rachel Barwell of New Zealand and Rose Grant of Tasmania, Australia, of Potent Climate Action called a number of those delegates to consider supporting the work of the Foundation for Climate Restoration. Owen Allen of North Queensland, Australia, offered and hosted a WhatsApp communication group called Wisdom Downunder for Climate Restoration. The group continues as an information sharing site on climate change and action. Tim Chamberlain of New Zealand offered to liaise with the foundation. Suz Haywood of Tasmania offered transformational listening.

The first meeting of the Wisdom Downunder group took place online on June 2, 2020, raising various questions on climate restoration as particular to Australia and New Zealand and relating to the work of the Foundation for Climate Restoration. Erica Dodds, the foundation’s chief operating officer, attended the second meeting, clarifying the basis for the work and outlining the foundation’s created future and approach to a restored climate by 2050. The conversation turned to the inquiry of what a Downunder team commitment to the foundation would look like. Owen offered to maintain the meeting place on Zoom and the agenda. We became affiliates of the foundation as part of their local chapters’ development group.

CREATED FUTURE AND STRUCTURES FOR ACTION

A few meetings later, a core participant group from New Zealand, Australia and Maldives declared itself as standing for the southern oceans, defined as the Pacific and Indian Oceans and the island nations from Africa to South America and Antarctica (and wherever that conversation turns up).

Members were intent on being able to work across the three legs of climate solution:

- 1. The reduction of emissions of CO₂ and other greenhouse gasses;
- 2. Human society adaptations to the altered living conditions; and
- 3. Climate restoration.

Barely a month from the first meeting, the team chose to engage in an agile conversation and took the name Southern Oceans Climate Restoration Team. Our purpose showed up as providing listening, knowledgeable engagement and action around climate change, natural and human ecologies and climate restoration technologies, and in being with all of the extraordinariness of the people of the southern oceans’ region as a flourishing of everyone and everything on the planet.

STRUCTURES FOR INFORMATION

The opening of the conversation soon led to the flow of a large amount of information. At the recommendation of Rose, who is a journalist, the group decided to use TeamApp to categorize and file information links about climate change solutions. We now use three platforms for information, communication and action: WhatsApp groups for daily sharing; TeamApp for filing information and organizational connections; and weekly online meetings.

A NETWORK OF CONVERSATIONS

Kelp farming is the most promising technology for climate restoration for the southern oceans. Through Julie Raines, an ecologist, and Tim, a farmer, a number of researchers in kelp farming in Australia and New Zealand immediately showed up in the group’s network of conversations.

They have been connected with northern ocean researchers associated with the foundation.

Other conversations showing up include “doughnut” economics (a framework for sustainable development), agriculture and land care, and educational pedagogy for climate change. It’s not all easy flying. A conversation stopper showed up through a manager in a concrete company who dismissed climate change and any need to talk about artificial aggregate.

Coincidentally, group members Rachel, Rose and Shafeea Zubair were helping the African Leadership Transformation Foundation and University of Zambia host a three-day online Zambian Climate Leadership Transformation Summit for October 2020. The Zambian summit has provided a transformational fulcrum for other group action.

Rachel organized a mini-summit for her region of New Zealand. Shafeea reached out to the speaker of the House of Parliament of the Maldives and Climate Vulnerable Forum Ambassador for Ambition, Muhammed Nasheed. An influencer with conversations in climate and ecology across Africa, India, the United Kingdom and Island nations, Muhammed declared his own interest in both leadership training in Africa and climate restoration.

Shafeea and Owen are currently supporting the meeting of Muhammed and Rick Parnell, the foundation’s CEO, as a vital relationship leading up to the next international climate change agreement meeting in Glasgow in 2021.

As 2020 drew to a close, an informal review of the southern oceans group’s work showed that the most important contribution we provided was empowering the listening for each other in action for leadership in climate change solutions. As the new year turns over, the group is a clearing for First Nations people in Australia and New Zealand and the Pacific Islands in climate change solutions.

LOVE, BE RESTORATIVE: SAY WHAT THERE IS TO SAY, LISTEN WITH EMPATHY AND RESPOND WITH ACCOUNTABILITY

MARSHA L. HECK

EFFORTS, ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND DISCOVERIES

An empathy education model for teachers developed from my commitment that all people say what they need to say and are heard.

As a teacher educator, I explored “listening with empathy and responding with accountability for the whole” through teaching, research and community service.

As an artist, I created sculptures to explore how conflicting demographic groups communicate.

As a neighbor, I provided leadership and restorative practices expertise for a neighborhood anti-racism initiative.

Once these and other projects involving professional development, personal growth and spiritual direction occurred like overflowing plates and random metaphoric objects being dropped while I teetered on one foot attempting to juggle them all. Now, they are unfolding and allowing balance, self-expression and contribution.

Articulated in the report title, my guiding commitments and goals are defined as follows:

Love, as embodied by the iconic civil rights leader, John Lewis, who died in July 2020, is both affective and cognitive, ethical, forgiving, gracious, just, moral, patient and transformative.

Restorative is specific to restorative justice, and, in particular, restorative practices. Restorative

justice intends the repair of harm through dialogue that tends to relationships among those harmed and causing the harm. Accountability within community is not punitive. Restorative practices empower the wisdom of the whole to guide gathered communities in fulfilling shared commitments and intentions.

Agreements for restorative conversations include some version of speaking one’s truth in kindness and listening to understand. Exploring restorative practices expanded my decades-long research agenda. The last five years I focused specifically on my six-point definition of empathy that exists only in community with accountability.

Accountability is understood in part from indigenous first-nation values, bearing in mind the impact of community on individual actions and expectations of individuals within community because *this is how life looks when it is working*.

FINDING AND DEVELOPING MEASURES

Preparing this report provided a means to overcome my initial resistance to measure the effectiveness of my empathy education efforts, various superficial research design attempts notwithstanding. How, I argued, does one measure love, listening, empathy, accountability and justice in relationships or communities? A tool from the International Institute for Restorative Practices proved helpful.

Formal measures of restorative practices efficacy for teacher support and program evaluation are

found in the RP-Observe Manual (www.iirp.edu/). While instructive and helpful for articulating the measures I developed, they were too specific for my purposes. I wanted a less methodological and more relational assessment of individual participation and community impact.

Ultimately, the four measures below distill a broad range of conclusions drawn from studying interdisciplinary knowledge bases and reflecting on decades of personal and professional experiences. This four-point self-report initiates an assessment of whether individuals said what they needed to say, listened with empathy and responded with accountability, and strengthened the community in the process.

- Was there disagreement expressed in conversations within the community? Were counter points of view, experience or recommendation considered by the group?
- Was the process/conversation/efforts of the community as a whole impacted by the conversation about alternative perspectives? Was the product/intended outcome of the gathered community affected by the conversation of alternative perspectives?
- Did those involved report, as a result of the conversation, a novel awareness or insight that shifted their experience of, or “seeming” about, their relationships with others?
- Did those involved report, as a result of the conversation, a shift in being, thinking and/or doing that affected their activities and/or conversations with others?

OPPORTUNITIES FOR OTHERS, EXPANDING COMMUNITY

In reviewing both the Wisdom Unlimited and Partnership Explorations courses, I resisted including workmates in my originating circle and community book. I chose the one work person in my community book closest to being a friend as a representative of my commitment to the transformation of a toxic work environment.

The calendar year began with such a miracle. All colleagues in my department met to prepare in advance of a formal meeting with administrators.

We came together to explore deepening conflicts with administration and heard each other. In the formal meeting, we came together with other colleagues in unity to move forward with clarity in ways not possible the last five semesters. A community advocate and icon for social and racial justice was also added as an adjunct. She will focus and expand our effectiveness with administrative tensions and define our contributions to area schools.

During my current sabbatical, I teach one course at another college. This fulfilled a dream to play with my friend who has more anti-racist teaching expertise than I do. Our exploration sparked a collaboration with a local school official to develop an anti-racist, cultural competency certification for teachers.

In an invited leadership role with the inaugural neighborhood racism initiative, I navigated never-done-before approaches to creating and leadership to provide a place for neighbors to say what needed to be said and be heard. I gained confidence in managing activities even when my approach was counter to what some team members wanted, and, together, because of our differences, we effectively supported seven virtual conversation circles with neighbors. These contributions transformed my understanding of leadership and identity as “expert,” exponentially expanding my capacity to support others.

Simply summarized: Knowing does not make a difference. Listening does. In the process, I deepened relationships with neighbors and expanded my circle – through circles.

DEVELOPING PROFICIENCY

These successes are due to my developing proficiency in restorative practices, inviting authentic communication and listening with love. Through authentic self-expression and listening to understand, my work colleagues and I created community and collaborated for the first time in years. The aforementioned meeting ended with acknowledgment of one another and our effective community voice – acknowledgment that continued after the meeting. Intentionally employing distinctions of Wisdom and Partnership Explorations transformed my doughnut.

Colleagues (albeit unknowingly) practiced Wisdom Course Area strategies.

Through daily meditation, I developed my mindfulness and capacity for equanimity – *nothing is wrong. This is how life looks when it is working. Create the future now. Whole, complete and perfect; and freedom to be cause in the matter.* For over a decade, my capacities for the Communication Program have been a good match for both my constitutional disposition toward love and tendency to be irascible. In this exploration, I strengthened my capacity to listen for the future from nothing (more important from nothing is wrong) with generosity and grace.

WHAT’S NEXT

Employing Landmark or other communication- and relationship-building distinctions when people are polarized – locked in to or out of particular viewpoints – seems entirely ill-defined. Transformation seems possible only when both parties come to the table. When polarization does not allow dialogue, none of the measures listed above can be met. Nothing, not restorative practices or Landmark distinctions, will engage polarized others. What is missing, the presence of which would make a difference, to bridge tensions and initiate an as yet unimagined dialogue?

Ironically, restorative practices seem more effective within the rules and limitations of schools and the criminal justice system than in less defined or legislated groups. By comparison, conversations among peers that lack distinct power differentials would seem an easier fit for empathy. However, in reality, people get stuck in recurring dialogues saying the same things. Why? By comparison, when affinity and relatedness exist, conversations more readily lead to enrollment and possibility. When people are somehow stuck, well, that is how life looks when it is working.

A REPORT FROM THE FIELD

A TRIBUTE TO MARJIE PARROT

LORRAINE “RAIN” WARREN

This is a tribute to the legacy of Marjie Parrot, a Wisdom Course leader who died in 2020, and to duly note the difference she made in my life and the lives of many others.

I met Marjie Parrot just about three years before her death. After being with her in a Facilitated Wisdom course, I wanted to be in every course that she led. I cannot tell you exactly what it was about Marjie that appealed to me on so many levels. I know that it had to do with her listening and way of being.

For me, her presence was so profound that when she slipped out of the room to take a short break, I found myself noticing that something was missing. In short, the quality of listening shifted. It dawned on me that Marjie left the space. It was as if the quality of the air changed. I would often acknowledge that by saying, “Marjie isn’t here.”

When folks asked me how did you know Marjie left, I realized that, for me, Marjie was the very presence of listening. I learned by observing Marjie that I could consciously bring the presence of listening to any space and did not need to know anything else other than I am the person in the room listening.

Marjie’s legacy of listening will be carried forward by me and many others to the spaces where we

live, work and play for the remainder of our days.

She is, and was, one of the few people in my life who I felt really got me instantly without explanation. She saw my humanity. She listened deeply to my soul’s cry.

In a call with Marjie’s husband, Chuck, I listened to his grief and broken heart at the loss of his cherished wife and partner. I had no words that could be of comfort to him. I could only give to him what Marjie gave to me, listening. When our call ended, all I could do was sit in silence and steep myself in the energy of the eternal love that he expressed for her. I wrote a poem in Marjie’s memory that I dedicate to Chuck.

A Poem for Chuck

June 20, 2020, 2 a.m. Eastern Time

Love
sits
there,
timeless
and
eternal

Tears
run down my face
making a trail
that leads
to my heart
and lands

there

right there

and sits

there

And, Love still sits
there

solid, yet
melting parts of me
that I in all my years
could have
never
imagined

Love sits
there
in my
Goodbyes
as I greet
each new
day with
hesitancy

Love sits
there
in memories
of all that was
and is
still
so good

Love sits
there
as my
seemingly endless
tears
pour
out
from
my very soul

Love says,
Fall in love
with all
your tears
My Love,
for the day
will soon
come,
that you will
cry
no
more

cherish
this sacred time
of weeping
and
silent
smiles

and embrace
the bitter sweetness
that is
this life

Love sits there
and says
breathe deeply
My Love
and savor
this
precious
moment

and
the
next

and
the
next

and
the
next

Love
sits
there,
timeless
and
eternal

A REPORT FROM THE FIELD

SURRENDERING TO A COMMITMENT TO
END HOMELESSNESS

PEG MILLER

I first saw homelessness in 1986 while on a training run for the Chicago Marathon. While I was shocked by what I saw and thought about “going to the homeless,” I did nothing about it until 1995 when I began volunteering in a church pantry for people who are homeless in the community of Los Gatos, California.

Once I started talking with the people who were homeless, I fell in love with them. Of course, at the time I was a 51-year-old, privileged white woman, and the other women in the church were worried about me. They couldn’t understand how I could hug “those people” and talk with them. One of the church secretaries said to me one day, “It isn’t that I don’t care about them, but they are so dirty and smelly.”

In that church, I attempted to bring together the parishioners and the people who were homeless. I invited the people who were homeless to the annual fall picnic. They all came. But the church courtyard where it was held looked like a junior high school dance. The homeless sat at tables together while the parishioners sat at separate tables together. Our priest then held a Thanksgiving dinner for the people who were homeless. The priest stayed in the kitchen cooking, and, once again, the people who were homeless sat together at tables and the parishioners sat at tables together.

I then began volunteering with a homeless advocacy group in San Jose. About 40 people who were homeless were staying at night in a downtown San Jose church. I began staying at

night with them, helping prepare meals for them and listening to their stories. It was at that time that I began to recognize many of the people who are homeless have addictions and untreated mental illnesses.

By the time I moved with my husband to the East Bay, I was aware of the many issues among the most deeply entrenched people who were homeless. It was there, in 1999, that I met Dr. Davida Coady and Tom Gorham, who had started Options, a program to deal with all the issues homeless people face. Many were addicted and/or mentally ill.

I remember the drug court that Dr. Coady started in Berkeley right next to the Berkeley Police Station. Judge Carol Brosnahan presided and then there were the rest of us – a police captain, Dr. Coady, Tom, Susan Bookman, who headed up a group called On Your Own Reconnaissance, a representative from Berkeley Mental Health and me. We would sit in the small courtroom with the clients.

Each session started with meditation. Then, as each client’s case came up, the judge would just talk to them. Each of us would say something to the client to encourage them in their journey toward sobriety. Some people think that, to get clean, an addict must want to. Drug courts have shown that is not true. In reality, if an addict stays in treatment long enough, many will change. The key is getting them to stay in treatment.

Many judges in Berkeley and Oakland became

allies of Options, keeping the clients in treatment long enough so they learned that recovery gave them a much better life. Of course, the clients said that the courts were making them come to treatment, which was never true. The judge had simply said, “Jail/prison or treatment.” The client always had a choice. That kind of support from judges, the police, probation and other community agencies became the leverage that Options needed to keep people in treatment.

I was learning by doing. I must have ordered hundreds of dollars worth of books and attended every training for women and addiction I could find. Mostly, I learned from Tom, who developed the entire program of treatment. I sat in with him in his groups and watched as he had people read, write and share. I was able to design a lot of the treatment for Options, supported by Tom, and began to see miracles. While many in the general population say things like, “The homeless like being homeless, an addict never changes,” I was seeing that when people are given a chance, along with love, support and tools, they can radically change.

In fact, in the 21 years I was at Options, I saw miracle after miracle. One of our current staff went into prison before turning 18. He was in solitary confinement 14 years and never thought he would get out of prison. He did the drug and alcohol certification training that Options leads in nine California prisons, becoming a certified drug and alcohol counselor and eventually getting out of prison. He works at Options and is on the board in San Mateo County for youth justice. The most amazing thing about him is his attitude. He is not vengeful, even though what he had to endure in prison is unforgiveable. Instead, he is grateful for his life today and the opportunity to help others who suffer from addiction and the effects of incarceration.

By the time I retired from Options on December 4, 2020, many of the staff were from that training program in the California prisons. To work with them lit up my life. I learned to be grateful rather than to complain, to empower rather than to criticize and to love rather than to gossip. I learned that I had the most amazing job in the world.

I mean, who else works in a place where, when

someone asks how you are, you can tell the absolute truth. Rigorous honesty, one of the tenets of recovery, permeates the work place at Options. Options really is like the best of families, “All for one and one for all.” As I came close to retirement, I would tune into the staff meeting on Tuesday on Microsoft Teams and cry, as I listened to the staff in charge of this magnificent organization. Tom retired December 31, 2020, and the organization will be in the hands of the younger folks. The mission of Dr. Coady will continue: The very best state-of-the-art treatment for addicts, immediately accessible, with support for everything they are dealing with, for free. When an addict wants treatment, there is a very short window of time to act. Options knows that, so treatment is immediately available. Clean and sober housing is also immediately available.

Many people ask how Dr. Coady knew that what she designed was so important. She simply listened to the clients and always dealt with whatever need was in front of her. She was, after all, an emergency room doctor who had served in the hot spots of the world. Timing is everything in recovery. From her I learned to listen to clients, trusting they would let me know what they needed. I learned to trust my commitment for, and love of, people.

I think I am most moved by Dr. Coady’s motto for her life: “Do as much as you can, as well as you can, for as many as you can, for as long as you can.” She lived that way until her dying breath.

A REPORT FROM THE FIELD

FROM THE FIELD OF AGING

ALBERTA ROMAN

Yes, old age is the only stage of my life that I have not been looking forward to with anticipation. I have said just that and thought just that more frequently. After having been in the inquiry of old age for a bit, I can and am saying something new here.

My commitment for the world is that all people can experience health and happiness. I am living in the possibility of being in love with life right now as I am about to turn 78. My commitment is alive, unfolding and developing.

Let’s look at aging: We are always aging and in one sense nothing is new there. Now let’s look at old age. By the World Health Organization’s definition, age 65 is one boundary. Another look is that old age is the age at which one has 15 years left to live.

By that definition, one can be of old age and be chronologically young. That leaves “old-agers” of whatever chronological age in possible common conversation with others. In our culture, being in old age, two of the most spoken concerns I have heard are: “I don’t want to be a burden to my family and friends and I do not want to be in pain.”

This could be said of others; again, a possible common experience with non “old- agers.” So, I am clear about the importance of inquiring into the conversations of whatever age one has reached. Are not health and happiness profoundly connected to the illusion of separateness?

Some of the work that I, along with many others, am actively advocating for is universal health care which will raise the level of health significantly

for many people. Such items as long-term care, hearing, vision and dental care are included along with the regular medical and surgical benefits.

There is not space here to go into the mechanisms of cost-effectiveness expected with increased benefits coverage and of people now uninsured or under insured. It is quite telling to see a graph of increasing longevity when some people hit 65 and become eligible for, and use regular, reasonably-priced health care. The people, who will enjoy new and added health and happiness, are not measurable at this point.

Another way my commitment for the word is alive, unfolding and developing is in my assisting agreement and participation with Landmark, most recently in the Wisdom Course Area. As a participation partner, I listen for the dreams of participants. One of our participants shared that he has shifted in his way of being in relationship. He has stopped fixing and now tolerates other people, while being expressed about his needs and wants. He identified this as a happy, healthy way of being in relationship.

In my own participation in the Facilitated Wisdom course for Elders, I have enhanced my inquiry into my experience of aging, along with many other

elders worldwide. One direct benefit is for me to be engaged and sharing my experiences with others and hearing theirs. The difference that has made for me is one of inclusion in the life all around the planet.

Continuing closer to home, I have brought the distinction of play to many of my most intimate relationships. Recently our 10-year-old granddaughter declared that she spends every Wednesday overnight with Grampy and Gramy. Of course, the world aligned with this declaration. While here, she drew up a contract for us to sign. (For some time, she has been noticing that we get to say more times what she should do as compared to how many times she gets to say what we should do.) In the interest of balance, she created this contract entitled G+G.

“Gramy, you will never herd me, even though I’m going the right way. Grampy, you will never keep putting your arm on me.”

This contract is complete with signature lines. I did insert that, in my former life, I had been a border collie on the farm and herding was in my genes. She was undeterred. We are happy our granddaughter is defining clear boundaries and is comfortable being assertive and self-expressed. Of course, we signed and I said that I want a conversation about the “never” part.

Both our grandchildren have agreed to be in my community book of people during the Facilitated Partnership course for Elders for whose growth and development I am a stand.

Our 9-year-old grandson shared this with me as I invited him to participate in the Landmark Forum for Young People. “They probably won’t want me because I’m chubby.” I was a bit surprised as he is often feisty and has not shared that concern with me ever. I assured him that there were plenty of chubby people in Landmark and he could feel quite comfortable just the way he is. I replied, “And you know your mom and me and uncle were all chubby...right?” Our next conversation will be around what it is like for him to be chubby, as he calls it.

My capacity to be in conversations close to my heart is growing in my elderhood as my

commitment for the world gets expressed. My possibility of being in love with life calls on me at times to be balanced. I create this by returning to listening, sharing, sleeping, eating, walking, working, pleasure, hibernating, leading, following, accepting, creating, contributing to and being contributed to.

It has become clear that I can make room for the health and happiness of others and myself. The resources that I commit to the health and happiness of others brings me immeasurable health and happiness. I know this for sure. I measure these things by the inspiration and energy, pleasure, purpose and play I find each day.

A REPORT FROM THE FIELD

CORONAVIRUS PUTS TRANSFORMATION TO THE TEST IN ZAMBIA

SARAH THOMAS

In March 2020, a month after the successful completion of the Being a Leader and the Effective Exercise of Leadership: An Ontological/ Phenomenological Model at Ghana’s Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, the coronavirus pandemic dramatically disrupted the Africa Leadership Transformation Foundation’s (ALT) plan to create one-million leaders in 10 African countries by 2030.¹

Another leadership course had been scheduled in Zambia. Now, there was no way a course in Zambia was possible with universities closed, travel restricted, people leaving the cities for their villages, millions of children under 15 out of school, idle youth between 15-24 and economies crashing. On top of this, the climate crisis continued to affect millions.

To quit was not an option, but what could be done to deal with the pandemic? The economy? Climate crisis? Education? Agriculture? Choose!

Not anyone knew for certain. A predictable future was even difficult to imagine. Trying to change the past to be more, better or different would

certainly not work in circumstances never seen before.

So, in July 2020, a group of us made a bold leap. The team included:

- Daniel Kamanga, ALT Foundation executive director;
- Susan Kralj and me, the founding director of the U.S. ALT foundation;
- University of Zambia professors from the Being a Leader courses;
- The dean and colleagues of University of Zambia’s School of Humanities, departments of population management and environment studies; and
- Volunteers from Australia, New Zealand and the Maldives committed to Africa leadership and climate change.

We decided to design an inquiry as Harry Rosenberg, Landmark’s CEO, shared in his 2020 Conference for Global Transformation keynote address for “a social transformation conversation that creates the space for effective social change.”

Mutuka Mubita from the Zambia National Broadcasting Network in Lusaka, Zambia, told the story in October 2020 of how the foundation and University of Zambia hosted the Zambia Climate Transformation Leadership Summit, an inquiry for government, women and youth to transform the climate change conversation.

Seventy-five delegates attended all three 90-minute webinar sessions. In three days and 270 minutes together, we created new possibilities for climate transformation, even in the face of a global pandemic. Here are some initial results:

- Academic experts from University of Zambia’s population management, environmental gender studies and top climate experts shifted from focusing on either climate or pandemic to both climate and pandemic;
- The grass roots women responsible for 80% of agriculture in Zambia amplified their voices to shift the context from being “vulnerable and powerless” to being cause-in-the-matter decision-making leaders with contributions for sustainable agriculture;
- The Hon. Jean Kapata, the minister of lands and natural resources, promised the national climate change adaptation plan would be more robust for the economy, women and youth;
- The Ministry of Gender asked the question: “If women hold up half the sky and it seems as if it’s falling, what do we do?” The agency committed to contributing to a national strategy for women’s climate leadership;
- The United Nations Development Program, which works to eradicate poverty and reduce inequalities through the sustainable development of nations, agreed to continue mobilizing resources for women and integrate women into leadership; and
- The director of Zambia’s National Climate Change Network mobilized young leaders and women from all 10 provinces. Zambia’s population is 18.4 million. Fifty percent are younger than 15 years of age.

We discovered transformation is best measured in the accomplishments of human beings.

CLIMATE ACTION LEADERS: WOMEN AND YOUTH

For me, educating girls is a high priority in reducing threats to the environment from climate change. Others agree. According to Paul Hawken

in his book, “Drawdown: The Most Comprehensive Plan Ever Proposed to Reverse Global Warming,” educating girls ranks No. 6 out of 100 proven solutions for annual decline of greenhouse gases.²

In 2022, a University of Zambia professor will launch a climate core curriculum for primary girls and adolescents. What could be possible by 2031 if all girls were educated? What if all girls and boys were educated in climate restoration? For me, the possibility is that 8,537,600 primary school students would grow up being custodians of Zambia’s future.

When their leadership for climate transformation is recognized, anything and everything is possible.

Two months after the summit, here are some other outcomes:

- Youth planted 5,000 seedlings and established three nurseries;
- Women’s land rights were finalized and ratified with local government;
- A total of 150 pounds of plastic was collected on their university campus; and
- An intergenerational and politician climate change dialogue was initiated.

In 2005, speaking to young leaders, Nelson Mandela, South Africa’s iconic leader, said:

“Sometimes it falls upon a generation to be great. You can be that great generation.”

Young Zambian leaders are being that great generation and creating their climate change agenda, which includes:

- Influencing governmental decisions for Zambia’s climate transformation;
- Empowering women to make decisions affecting their lives;
- Creating new jobs, careers and industries through climate crisis innovations; and
- Engaging in sustainable/regenerative agriculture to secure Zambia’s food supply.

As Project Drawdown puts it, “It is critical that

human rights are always centered, that gender equality is the aim and that benefits to the planet are understood as positive ripple effects of access and agency.”³

In 2016, four women graduates of Dubai’s leadership course returned being cause-in-the-matter for The Kenya We Want registering 100 participants in the first of three courses in Africa in three years. My poster that year at the Conference for Global Transformation was entitled, “Equality Works for Everyone, Empowering Women, Empowering Humanity.”

Today, my declared commitment is, “A world that honors the dignity and concerns of all people and all things.”

The lessons in Africa this year bring me in concert living my commitment with Africans in a world that works for everyone.

ENDNOTES

1 The Being a Leader course is a collaborative work of Werner Erhard, Michael C. Jensen, Steve Zaffron and Jeri Echeverria (and past contributors Allan Scherr and Kari Granger).The course is a leadership laboratory where instructors work with participants to create direct access to the ways of being, thinking, planning and action required to be a leader and exercise leadership effectively – in any situation and no matter the circumstances.

2 www.resilience.org/stories/2020-05-26/educating-girls-is-more-effective-in-the-climate-emergency-than-many-green-technologies-2/#.

3 www.drawdown.org/sectors/health-and-education.

LEADERS DON'T QUIT

CORAL CREW-NOBLE

“Leaders don’t get to quit,” Jean Lloyd said softly as we sat in the empty lobby of the Landmark center in Atlanta, Georgia.

Jean Lloyd was a global leader, a high-powered consultant, a Communications Program leader and weekend leader for the Team, Management and Leadership Program, the capstone course for the Curriculum for Accomplishment.

I had enrolled in Level One of the year-long mastery program for communication because I had a lot that I wanted to accomplish. Whatever did she mean, I wondered, and leaned forward listening intently. I was mesmerized by her words.

I was always fascinated when others referred to me as a leader and was interested to learn what they saw that had them think that. To me, I was the same regular person I’d always been. But, if I told the truth to myself, I rather liked the idea of being a leader. But after my poor display of leadership earlier, I was more than curious.

Fifteen minutes before, I’d stormed out of a team meeting upset. My response to the situation had been a vivid display of myself at eight years of age, arms folded and defiant. In that moment, I was right. I knew I was right. They knew that I was right. But, by the time I reached my car, tears were streaming down my cheeks. I was so mad at myself and embarrassed by my own behavior.

I may have been right, but I wanted to have the super powers that the program promised:

Creating teams and teamwork in any situation that produce powerful results in many areas of life with freedom and ease, while having affinity and possibility in all of one’s conversations and relationships. There was definitely a gap.

My phone rang and it was the program manager asking me to return to the center because Jean wanted to speak to me. I was relieved, and, at the same time, apprehensive. I hadn’t left the parking lot, but I couldn’t bring myself to let the program manager know, I was too ashamed. I waited for a few minutes, dried my tears and did the best I could to salvage my makeup.

“Leaders don’t get to quit,” Jean repeated. “We go out into the unknown creating pathways for others to follow. What would the world be like if Martin Luther King had quit? Harriet Tubman? Sojourner Truth? Thomas Edison?

That conversation was 10 years ago. Since then, I completed the Curriculum for Accomplishment and launched my commitment to the world: “By the year 2020, there will be world peace; all people will experience being one through communication and all cultures connected through history, life and art!”

The commitment took me on a quest to another country, Jamaica, a different culture, where, together with a team of amazing Landmark graduates, we plunged into the depths of the prison system and the Department of Correctional Services, where we delivered a pilot of the End

Violence Project Program that achieved a 98% reduction in violent incidents almost immediately. It bridged the chasm between resident inmates and correctional officers. They collaborated on more than 34 projects.

The program ran for three years. Other accomplishments include a global collective that produced an audio book for Jamaica’s national development plan and leading a national project within the ministry of national security for culture change. Countless times when faced with challenges, roadblocks and death threats, I flirted with the idea of quitting, but I remembered, “Leaders don’t get to quit.”

Toward the end of 2019, world peace was nowhere in sight. Deflated and engulfed in a whiff of failure, I returned to the United States. But looking in the rear-view mirror of life today, what got accomplished within the Department of Correctional Services is more than 170 lives of inmates and correctional officers transformed and there was a 98% reduction in violent incidents. There was also a cultural transformation of two maximum security prisons.

The Unite for Change movement relaunched—through a parish consultative committee—forming a national cross-sector coalition to reduce the murder rate. The work is not done. Jamaica has remained in the Top Five on the World Bank’s Top 20 list of most violent countries.

Standing in these and other accomplishments, I’ve become more experienced and confident that transformation works. Also, I know myself as resilient and skilled at coordinating people from all walks of life to align on a vision and work together to accomplish a common goal.

The coronavirus arrived shortly after my return to the U.S. With the whole world using technology to stay connected during the global pandemic, I saw an opportunity to elevate my commitment to the world: To cause effective leadership in creating teams and teamwork in any situation that produce powerful results in many areas of life with freedom and ease, while having affinity and possibility in all of one’s conversations and relationships.

Also, what became possible for me, as an individual, was recognizing accomplishment as the opportunity to revisit a dormant commitment. I had been trying for more than two decades to have my family together at the holidays. In December 2020, for the first time, we had family across the globe: Canada, the United States and the United Kingdom together for a fireside chat on Zoom. There it was: All people experiencing being one through communication, all cultures connected through history, life and art. I wasn’t sure that people would come, but they did and the reviews were quite amazing. Family members were a demand for another. So, we did it again on New Year’s Eve and they declared a new tradition was born.

It has become possible for my groups, teams and communities to recognize accomplishment as the space to look at what we often deem as failure through the lens of opportunities for growth and development. Standing in what has been accomplished, I can now say that I made a difference. I helped others to grow and develop and they helped me. It was a worthwhile journey and I’d do it again.

I can now stand for all people exploring and finding their purpose. What’s next is creating a series of global fireside chats on Zoom bridging the generational and other divides within my family, culminating in a global family reunion in Jamaica, and, perhaps, creating newly that: “By the year 2030, there will be world peace, all people will experience being one through communication and all cultures connected through history, life and art!”

In considering what I can stand for now, I stand for all people exploring and finding their purpose. As for what’s next? I’m building a team and standing for causing their effective leadership to continue the work that got started.



JOURNAL AUTHOR BIOGRAPHIES

INA R. AMES is a retired communications professor with specialties in communication theory, speech performance, drama and English as a Second Language. Ames was president of the Communication Association of Massachusetts for nine years and chair of two divisions of the National Communication Association – the Undergraduate and University Division and Communication in the Future Division. She has been published, served on panels and appeared in state, national and international programs. Participating in est/Landmark since 1980, she is currently a custodian of the Inquiries of the Social Commons calls and a former seminar leader and facilitator for the Facilitated Wisdom course.

SHARON FIEKOWSKY sources a four-generation family and serves as the chief relationship officer of the Foundation for Climate Restoration. Her focus is contribution to her immediate community through direct interactions in the areas of chronic illness management and end-of-life care, and humanity-at-large through the foundation's work. A former Landmark staff person, she has participated as a senior graduate for more than 30 years. Fiekowsky has served as a source person for multiple courses and now brings the distinctions of Source to the foundation.

ANDREA FONO'S passion for life is best expressed through her laughter and paintings. Her art is an expression of humanity's sacred belonging and connection to nature. In 2008, she founded Global Coloring: Painting for Peace, a community art celebration. Over 3,500 people from Europe, Africa, Singapore and Ecuador have participated in this forgiveness experiment. Fono and her husband, Frank, a native Fijian, co-founded "The Fiji Reads Project," contributing children's books and art supplies to schools all over Fiji. Her joy is mentoring other adult artists' hearts, too. A television segment on inspiration that she wrote was nominated for an Emmy Award.

STEPHEN W. FRANCIS began his career as a graduate assistant coach at North Carolina State University earning a bachelor's degree in psychology and human resource development. He branched into sales, business development and higher education. As a collegiate instructor, he helped design curriculum at various universities and for defense contractors. He holds a master's degree in business administration and a master's degree in clinical mental health counseling from Walden University. Currently, he works as a psychotherapist for Wellspan Health in York, Pennsylvania. He has been married to his wife, Sallie, for 25 years and they have a 17-year-old son, Max.

SUSAN H. HOSKINS is chief executive officer of I AM HUMANITY, whose mission is to provide expanded awareness, shifts in self-concept and highlight leadership that promotes and nourishes the flourishing of humanity. Hoskins is also founder of the Human Spirit Institute, which offers workshops, classes, coaches and products that unleash and foster a lifestyle of self-expression and in-the-moment experience of the quality of life. She is committed to the declaration that the 2020s are the Decade of Honoring the Human Spirit. Previously, Hoskins founded the Coalition for Economic Empowerment serving as CEO for 28 years delivering programs to support low-income people globally.

ROSE HAMPTON is retired from a 35-year career with a Fortune 10 company that included roles as chief operating officer, Six Sigma Quality leader and senior vice president. Hampton came up through the ranks in the company and was recognized as a "Top 100" performer and a "Black Achievers" awardee. Her avocation is small business consulting and coaching. She is the mother of three children and grandmother to five. She fills several leadership roles in Wisdom Course Area programs. She is a cousin to civil rights icon, Rosa Parks, and shares her "yes" spirit besides loving travel, learning and cooking.

LIZ LAUGHLIN, ED.D., received her doctorate in education leadership from University of California, San Diego in 2011. She is retired from a 30+-year career as a middle and high school teacher, high school principal and county office administrator. Her promise for the world, “All people recognize and realize their unique potential,” was developed during her career as an educator. She has participated in Landmark programs since the year 2000 and actively participates in the Landmark Assisting Program. She now lives in San Marcos, California.

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 has a master’s degree in business administration and 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 stop drinking and has been participating or assisting with Landmark ever since. Martin uses the distinctions of transformation and recovery as part of ongoing growth and development. He is a poet who writes about his everyday encounters with God. He will soon be publishing his first book of recovery poems entitled, “From Darkness to Light and Everywhere In-Between.”

NINA MASTER is an acupuncturist practicing state-of-the-art therapies of the Toyohari Meridian system in Japanese-style acupuncture for 18 years. She holds a bachelor of health science degree in Chinese Medicine, Acupuncture, from Victoria University in Melbourne, Australia. She has presented in the medical practices and acupuncture industry and the area of personal, intuitive and spiritual growth, applying treatment strategies for healing chronic illnesses. Dr. Master’s commitment

is “to bring leadership in having people cause better health.” She has influenced many medical and holistic clinics in Brisbane and surrounding areas as well as fulfillment in her own clinic.

BRIAN MCFADIN is an author, philosopher, master-certified professional coach and business consultant helping solo-preneurs, 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.

PAUL MCMICKLE is a decorated Vietnam veteran (Army Special Forces), who, after leaving the military, looked for ways to make a difference as a civilian. Finding the transition from military to civilian life difficult, he was on a quest for what would ease the anxiety that seemed to be ever-present even though there was nothing to be anxious about. Fortunately, a dear friend introduced him to the est Training (now The Landmark Forum). That was 45 years ago. His anxiety disappeared, and those programs opened the door to a life of difference-making that was previously unimaginable.

PEG MILLER did the est Training in 1982 in New York City and participated in every program she could do, including the Potential Forum Leaders’ Program. During this time, she encountered the homeless and began her journey to make a difference in that arena. Previously, she was a physical therapist, graduating from Stanford University in 1966 and taking her first job in Queens, New York in 1969, where she began the first infant intervention program in the country. Married with four children, she has 10 grandchildren and two great grandchildren. All family members except for four have participated in Landmark.

FRED MOSS, M.D., is a transformational, restorative psychiatrist and life coach. Having served the mental health community for more than 40 years, Moss is dedicated to the power of connection, communication and creativity as the primary sources of healing for all humans everywhere, no matter their circumstances. Founder of Welcome to Humanity, an entity

focused on bringing empowerment to people who find themselves disempowered, he has a podcast, “Welcome to Humanity,” to spotlight the brilliance of the people he interacts with. His article is sourced from his podcast.

KATHY NORMAN works in blockchain and writes in science fiction. Norman is accompanied by her dog, Bella, who listens to everything she writes, mostly with her eyes closed.

RICH SCHUSTER might be considered one of the elders of the Wisdom Course Area. Having retired from a career in engineering and physics, he 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.

ED STROUPE spent 35 years as a software developer and designer. With his wife, Mary, he co-founded Integritas, Inc. and led their development group to achieve 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. In 2017, he published a novel, “Signaling: A Message from the Future.” Since 2019, he has been a graduate student at St. John’s College in Santa Fe, New Mexico. He and Mary live with her mother, three cats and a new puppy in Santa Fe.

ANGELA WILSON TURNBULL is a leader, advocate, strategist and consultant. She empowers organizations and communities to create impossible results. As a former senior advisor during the Obama administration, she shaped the president’s management agenda with an early adoption of IT, emergency and disaster preparedness, business continuity, privacy and cybersecurity. As a presenter in the U.S., U.K., France, Africa, Mediterranean countries and most notably at the Musee du Louvre in Paris, Turnbull contributed as a writer/researcher for New York Times Bestseller, The Playbook. She co-edited, The

Way I Walk, and is featured in Family Pictures, How We Love, and 360 Degrees.

CAROLYN M. VINCENT’S passion to build community comes from her own life’s journey. She grew up in a connected neighborhood in India. During a 22-year marriage in Australia, she inadvertently allowed herself to get isolated emotionally. With her marriage breakdown in 2010, Vincent realized how unsupported she was. Boldly knocking on 100 doors in her neighborhood, she shared her life’s journey and vision for a connected neighborhood. Vincent had a 98% success rate. She has been involved in several community-building projects and is committed to creating a world that works. She brings fun and authenticity to our world.

MELINDA VOSS was a staff writer for the Des Moines Register and Tribune for 26 years, a co-founder and executive director of the Association of Health Care Journalists and the public relations director for the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system. 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. In 2018, she became the editor of the Journal of the Conference for Global Transformation.

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. Warren has served as a facilitator, speaker and coach as well as “clutter buster,” and has received international recognition for her work in peace-building and social justice.

LORI WATKINS was born in Santiago, Chile in 1976. Adopted at five months of age, she was a third-culture kid, growing up in the countries of South America, Africa, Asia and the United States. As a licensed vocational nurse of 23 years, Watkins

works with senior citizens in partnership with Complete Caregiver. As a creative expression, she advocates for mental health needs, demonstrating a vision of the future where the arts are desired. As an artist who paints using oils on canvas, art is a natural expression for her.

AMY WEINSTEIN is a senior graduate having served in many roles in Landmark. She has most recently been committed to living a life in which transformation is delicately woven into any and all interactions with people. Weinstein is finally semi-retired. Working part-time affords her the opportunities to volunteer in local politics, take regular watercolor lessons, study podcasting and many other creative pursuits, including writing children’s books and illustrations. She is an avid organic gardener and single mom of three plus one grandchild. Weinstein considers herself a steward of the earth in a time when this is very important.



HOW TO CONTRIBUTE TO FUTURE JOURNALS

PAPERS

Submissions due: October 1, 2021

Journal papers up to 5,000 words provide authors with an opportunity to articulate their research, inquiries, ideas, practices, philosophies, views, work, artistic endeavors, successes and failures on topics related to the theme of the conference as expressed in the Call for Papers and Other Contributions. The journal will be published on the conference website: www.wisdomcgt.com. A print version may also be available to order. For more detailed information on the 2022 Call for Papers, go to www.wisdomcgt.com and click on Play a Key Role.

REPORTS FROM THE FIELD OR DISCOVERIES FROM THE INQUIRIES

Submissions due: January 15, 2022

Let people know what has happened in the area of your commitment for the world, what breakthroughs or breakdowns you have had, what you have learned and what has been discovered and achieved. Reports can be up to 1,500 words. For more detailed information, go to www.wisdomcgt.com and click on Play a Key Role.

2023 CONFERENCE VISUAL THEME

Images are due: November 15, 2021

The conference visual theme for 2023 provides Wisdom Community artists an opportunity to contribute their images to visually represent the conference. The image selected may be included on the cover of the conference journal, program, letterhead, bookmarks, banners and other promotional materials as deemed appropriate by the conference manager. Images are selected 18 months in advance. Submitted artwork contributes to the distillation of the conference theme. For more detailed information, and to submit your art, e-mail: cgtcoverart@gmail.com.



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