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SUMMER 2025

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dear readers



We are excited to bring you the Summer 2025 issue of Lilipoh, with the theme “Coming of Age.” In this issue, you will find both articles about supporting children and young adults on their journeys, as well as poems, essays, and art by young artists and writers, sharing their perceptions, experiences, observations, and dreams.

In this issue, there is a rich diversity of activities and ages represented, but what they all have in common is the understanding that supporting young people cannot be siloed into solely educational, emotional, physical, artistic or spiritual endeavors. They are most effective when they acknowledge and embrace the whole person. Raising healthy and resilient children starts at a very young age, with a great deal of parental and caregiver self-observation and reflection. Literacy supports the development of both cognitive ability and self-esteem. Truly educational programs serve the whole child, and not just academic learning. The activities of the North American Youth Section are particularly inspiring in their scope and creativity.

As part of her podcast, “On Being,” Krista Tippett shared a November 2024 conversation she had with children’s/young adult

author Jason Reynolds and Georgetown University student Kessley Janvier,¹ entitled “On Being Young in America.” This conversation touched on many topics, but those that most stick with me are their shared assertions of our common humanity. Jason Reynolds elaborates at length on the foundational statement, “I respect you because you are, and the reason I do is because that connects us.” Twenty-one year old Kessley Janvier was clear: “You don’t get to just look away and go on with your life. I need to sit with that. We need to sit with that as a society. We need to sit with the fact that we are all interrelated and we affect each other.”

Wise words spoken by voices from the future. We hope this issue helps you deepen your awareness and openness to the young people in your life and in the world around you.

With warmth and gratitude,

Karen

¹ <https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/jason-reynolds-and-kessley-janvier-on-being-young-in/id150892556?i=1000706865611>

LILIPOH stands for Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness.

Life can mean the quality of life, inner life, consciousness – in other words, living a life enhanced through understanding. Liberty may mean the freedom to choose how one lives. Pursuit of happiness is a high term which has often been used superficially. It can mean the joy of helping each other along the road of inner and outer health, and toward a better world.

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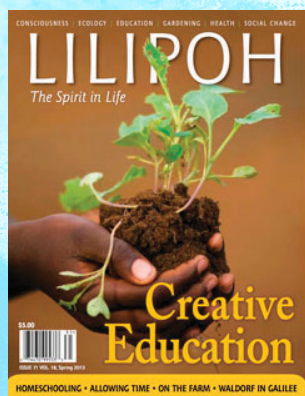
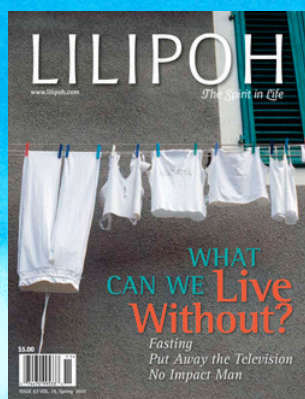
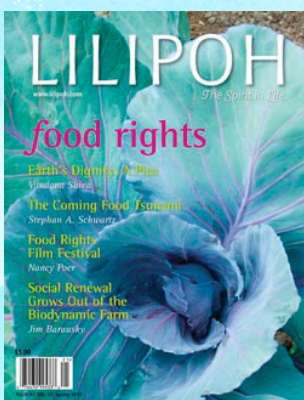
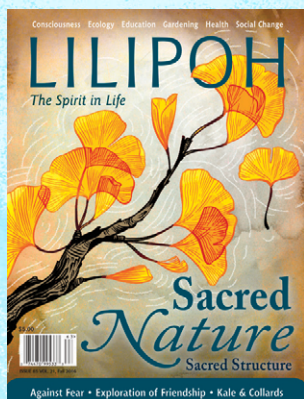
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LILIPOH

the Spirit in Life

Articles, art, poetry, reviews of books, and news make **LILIPOH Magazine** a well-rounded, solution-oriented publication for creative, green-minded individuals who have an interest in spiritual inquiry and a desire to make a difference in the world.



Curbing Climate Change Through Biodynamic Agriculture

By Elizabeth Candelario

As the certifying agency for Biodynamic farms across the USA, Demeter's vision is to heal the planet through agriculture. That's a bold statement, because the very act of farming worldwide is responsible for at least 15% of global greenhouse gas emissions, the leading cause of climate change.

"There is this beautiful symbiosis going on beneath our feet, where the liquid carbon transforms into a solid, and is taken up by the microbiota (bacteria and fungi) that make up healthy soil."

Helping Money Heal; The Vidar Foundation in Canada

By Trevor Janz, MD

"...we are responsible for where our money is, and what effect it is having on all the lives it touches."

The Vidar Foundation is a registered Canadian charity that connects individuals wishing to use their money in positive ways, with borrowers needing money to grow socially responsible enterprises in sustainable agriculture, education, health, cooperatives, and other areas.

(Excerpts from LILIPOH Issue #86, Winter 2017)

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Peel Back

Peel back the layers of “this is” and “of course”
Motion lurks beyond the edges of this
one-sided sight
Forget everything,
forget, forget
Too many times, we bought the illusion
of familiarity
Just to stumble when proven
wrong.

It is here, it is everywhere
Open your eyes
A thousand pieces of a future, a present, a past
Reach up,
Rewind.
Take some time for introspection

Echoes of the crossings of bodies we never knew
Feel it in them, in us, in the things we cannot see
A different light, a subtle change
There is something new to note

Remember always to forget
Remember never to assume
Wake with fresh eyes every morning
Go and see what there’s to find

— ERIN SCHUTT

Erin Schutt (they/them) is a writer and artist from Houston, Texas, with a love for reading and spending time outdoors. They have spent the past year attending micro-colleges in Maine and Wisconsin and plan to pursue a fine arts degree at Kansas City Art Institute, starting this fall.



Successfully Building Leaders for the Future

DR. ARTIKA TYNER

Education and literacy are essential for justice, social change, and to equip the next generation of leaders.

Planting People Growing Justice Leadership Institute (PPGJLI), a community literacy nonprofit based in St. Paul, Minnesota, is successfully building leaders for the future by creatively engaging youth in personal ways with reading and writing. Their unique approach focuses on sharing books that celebrate many cultures, promoting storytelling & cultural preservation, and building intergenerational reading circles. The impact on young people is inspiring and shows what is possible when a community concerned about racial justice and equity comes

together to support and empower future leaders through literacy and the arts.

It all began with:

A SENSE OF COMMUNITY

I'm a proud fifth-generation daughter of Rondo¹, a historic Black neighborhood and symbol of resilience, courage, and perseverance. Rondo gave me a strong sense of community, purpose, culture, and heritage and helped shape who I am

and why I founded PPGJLI. Like many other Black communities, its existence was threatened by the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1956. Characterized as a pathway of least resistance due to political disenfranchisement and lack of economic power, Interstate 94 was built through the heart of it, destroying over 300 Black-owned businesses and 700 Black-owned homes. Although Rondo endured the triple blows of racial removal, disinvestment, and harmful city policies, a new chapter is being written. Led by a new generation of freedom fighters, entrepreneurs, and difference-makers, Rondo is becoming a blueprint of arts-based community development for other marginalized communities nationwide. Central to our community's revitalization and cultural preservation efforts are our elders, who continue to provide invaluable wisdom and embody the enduring values of hope and faith that have defined Rondo for generations.

A LOVE FOR READING

I was in high school during the peak of the War on Drugs, when the majority of my community entered the prison gates for nonviolent drug offenses. With mandatory minimums, they were sentenced to decades-long confinement. My mother, worried about my safety and prioritizing my education, encouraged me to spend my time in the house reading. I found peace and refuge in the pages of books and at the libraries I frequented. Reading fueled my desire to learn, grow, and become a leader. It also helped me understand first-hand what it feels like to be more likely to see a black bear or black dog on the cover of a book than a Black girl or Black boy, or to have my Rondo story reflected in the narrative. It wasn't until much later that I learned about other Black communities with vibrant economies like Tulsa Oklahoma, Mound Bayou Mississippi, and Eatonville Florida.

A DESIRE FOR JUSTICE

These unique and defining life circumstances led me to become a civil rights attorney. The law is

a language of power, and I needed to become fluent in the techniques and policies. By learning the "language of power," I could minister to the needs of the Black community through legal and public policy advocacy. This was also where I witnessed many of my clients learn how to read while in prison and recognized how literacy is not only a building block to creating better outcomes but also preventing cycles of incarceration and disrupting the school-to-prison pipeline. This pipeline, described by the NAACP Legal Defense Fund as "depriving children and youth of meaningful opportunities for education, future employment, and participation in our democracy," is an entry point into the "tangled web of mass incarceration."² It is greatly impacted by school disciplinary practices, zero-tolerance policies, and an increased reliance on police rather than teachers and administrators to maintain discipline. This is a major concern of our community.

A CHALLENGE TO BE ADDRESSED

In 2017, my friends and I gathered in my living room lamenting these challenges in our criminal justice and education systems. I reminded them of my life philosophy: "When we see a problem, we create a solution." This was the genesis of Planting People Growing Justice Leadership Institute. Its programming would address the concerns over growing illiteracy rates and mass incarceration. We'd design ways to provide all readers with an opportunity to discover joy in reading by seeing themselves represented on the pages of a book and help them unveil their limitless potential. With a mission to plant seeds of social change through education, training, and community outreach, the newly formed nonprofit would create new pipelines to success by improving literacy rates. Today those same community members remain dedicated to the mission of what has evolved into a nationally recognized social enterprise as the only Black-led woman-owned bookstore, publishing house, and literacy nonprofit in the nation. Our award-winning literacy campaign is not only



providing young people with hope for the future and a pathway to break the cycle of marginalization and oppression, but also inspiring them to view themselves as leaders with the capacity to address their challenges and pursue their dreams.

It is desperately needed because of:

A LITERACY CRISIS ACROSS THE NATION

One in every four children in the United States has never learned to read. Children who haven't learned to read by Grade Four are more likely to drop out of school, be incarcerated, and have low-paying jobs that keep them in poverty. Because basic literacy skills are more easily developed from birth to age five, these children have not only missed a "window of opportunity," but have far fewer opportunities in their adult lives as well. According to the 2024 Nation's Report Card, only 30% of all fourth graders and 29% of all eighth graders across the nation scored at or above proficient in reading. The figures are even more staggering for Black students who are often in economically disadvantaged school districts. Only 17% of Black fourth graders scored at or above proficiency and Black eighth graders currently have a 14% proficiency rate. The repercussions of these figures have lifelong consequences³. In fact, According to the U.S. Department of Justice,⁴ reading failure is the greatest predictor of future incarceration. A full 85 percent of children in the juvenile justice system are not literate and this feeds the school-to-prison pipeline.⁵

A REPRESENTATION GAP IN CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

Children are more likely to read books when they can identify with the characters, yet only 11.9% of children's books portray Black characters. According to a 2019 Lee & Low Books survey, only 5% of those involved in the publishing industry

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“ READING FUELED MY DESIRE TO LEARN,
GROW, AND BECOME A LEADER.

identify themselves as Black, and only 7% of new children's books published are written by BIPOC authors.⁶ Because children who read about characters like them develop a positive concept of themselves and of others like them, these figures not only influence literacy engagement but also an individual's overall well-being. But here's how change is happening.

It successfully meets that need through:

The nonprofit (PPGJLI) and its affiliated social enterprise (PPGJ Press & Bookstore) work synergistically to create solutions to both the literacy crisis and the representation gap by ensuring that relatable books with positive messaging that increase literacy and leadership are accessible to all. The two signature programs listed below are providing a framework to plant those seeds of social change.

THE LEADERS ARE READERS PROGRAM

This program promotes literacy and diversity in books by offering read-aloud events that bring multiple generations together at local libraries and community centers where resources are limited. The free monthly gathering establishes and builds intergenerational reading circles. It engages multiple generations in a fun and meaningful way to relatable books, while offering local Black authors a platform to foster absent narratives. It also inspires First Educators, those caring adults who interact with children before they enter school, with role modeling and support. And because 61% of low-income families have

no books in their homes,⁷ the program ensures that each child takes home a book with relatable characters. Over 39,000 books have been given away at these events since its inception. The books, created and published through the synergy of the nonprofit and social enterprise, focus on promoting representation and celebrating the rich cultural heritage of the African Diaspora. Nearly 8,000 young people around the world have discovered a meaningful connection to books as a result of this award-winning program. And by building strategic partnerships with thriving businesses like Kowalski's grocery stores and the Minnesota Twins, and world leaders like Odeneho Kwafo Akoto III, the Akwamuhene, and Paramount Chief of the Akwamu State in Ghana, this impact continues to expand.

THE WRITE FOR JUSTICE PROGRAM

This program promotes literacy and leadership by offering writing opportunities and incentives for communities of color to create, re-imagine, and build a more just and inclusive world through the transformative and healing power of storytelling. It is ushering in new futures by preserving and sharing the stories of people of African descent, fostering absent narratives, and addressing the need for diverse authors in the Black community. The program provides encouragement and support for emerging literary artists of all ages through in-person workshops. It also brings the newly published authors together for book signings at local bookstores and libraries. This provides opportunities for community members to engage in collective learning as they share their wisdom, hone their craft, and develop cultural agility. This

process is key to promoting an intergenerational approach to arts-based activism and community building. The writing program continues to foster community engagement and leadership within the Black community and has resulted in the training and publishing of sixty-six authors across the African Diaspora. The authors range in age from eight to eighty years of age. The resulting anthology projects, containing literary contributions from both elders and youth, have received community awards as well. These intergenerational storytelling projects are preserving culture, inspiring future leaders, and building a literacy-rich Black community. In partnership with the social enterprise, PPGJ Press and Bookstore, nine culturally authentic children's books were published and distributed in 2024 as a result of this program which aims to publish 100 Black authors by 2033 and build an ecosystem for new literary artists.

It is powerfully guided by:

A UNIQUE LEADERSHIP THEORY

What runs through all of PPGJLI's programming is its unique leadership theory, which I developed after a decade of research. It is based upon the study of social change movements nationally and globally, mobilization rooted in principles of Pan-Africanism, and leadership profiles of Black leaders. Built upon the unwavering desire to impact others, ignite change, and inspire people to discover the leader within, it focuses on developing leaders from within the community. Whether it's a preschooler or a community elder, they are invited to lead by asking "What's in your hands to make a difference?" My "Education for Social Change" TED talk⁸ further elaborates on this concept.

A COMMUNITY NETWORK

PPGJLI continues to successfully build leaders of the future through ongoing engagement and relationship-building efforts. The nonprofit connects people of all ages by sharing critical



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With monthly donations starting at \$10, you can support PPGJLI in their programming which brings author read-alouds to children and their families and encourages new writers of all ages to tell their stories. You will help ignite a joy for reading and writing and inspire future leaders.

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“CHILDREN WHO READ ABOUT CHARACTERS LIKE THEM DEVELOP A POSITIVE CONCEPT OF THEMSELVES AND OF OTHERS LIKE THEM.

information, encouraging the community to teach and lead others within their sphere of influence, and building a community network through the power of relationships. It is based on the idea that “Planting People” is an organic process that yields a great harvest over time. It starts from the ground up as a seed is planted until it takes root. This seed represents resistance against marginalization and oppression to further the cause of social justice. As the seed begins to germinate, community members of all ages start to view themselves as leaders with the capacity to address their challenges and realize their power to resist oppression. This ongoing process of collaboration, perseverance, teamwork, and diligence is social change in action. It is visibly “Growing Justice” in our historic Rondo community where community engagement and an intergenerational approach to literacy are breaking through despondency and ushering in new futures for an entire community.

A GLOBAL VISION

The challenges and solutions that are happening in Rondo are not isolated. They are happening throughout the nation and the world. Building successful leaders of the future is needed everywhere and is central to a trans-global movement for justice and equity. When we create and or share relatable characters and stories with positive messaging, children find joy in reading. It also helps them develop a positive self-image which impacts their

decision-making, relationships, and overall health and well-being. Let’s aspire to do all we can to ensure that all children have access to these types of books, especially during the formative early years. Let’s commit to providing ample opportunities for youth to lead and contribute to their communities. And let’s continually ask ourselves, “What is in my hands to make a difference?” Regardless of what culture, gender, age, or economic background, our future leaders are depending on us. Together, we can build the world our hearts know is possible. 📖

NOTES

- 1 Rondo Neighborhood | Saint Paul Historical. (n.d.). Saint Paul Historical. <https://saintpaulhistorical.com/items/show/160>
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Dr. Artika Tyner is the founder of Planting People Growing Justice Leadership Institute, a St. Paul-based literacy nonprofit, and its affiliate social enterprise Planting People Growing Justice Press and Bookstore. She is also an accomplished educator, civil rights attorney, and award-winning author of forty books. By using a cross-sector intergenerational approach to strategically bridge the literacy gap, she is equipping future leaders and planting seeds of social change.

winners of the Martin Luther King Day
writing competition¹

Drum Major of Change

These four essays are winners of the Planting People Growing Justice Literacy Institute 2025 “Drum Major of Change” annual writing competition.² This competition is for all Minnesota students, kindergarten through eighth grade. The “prompt” for these pieces of prose, creative fiction, or poetry, is a February 1968 sermon by Martin Luther King where he asserts:

“If you want to be important, wonderful. If you want to be recognized, wonderful. If you want to be great, wonderful. But recognize that he who is greatest among you shall be your servant. That’s a new definition of greatness.”

This morning, the thing that I like about it, by giving that definition of greatness, it means that everybody can be great, because everybody can serve.”³

Diallo Gant

As a drum major of change I would lead by example inspiring others to embrace growth and innovation. I believe in creating a supportive environment where new ideas are encouraged, and diverse perspectives are valued. By fostering collaboration and embracing communication, I can empower individuals to contribute meaningfully to positive change. I aim to motivate others to take initiative and boldly push boundaries to create lasting impact.

Furthermore, being a drum major of change involves actively listening to those around me and staying open to feedback. I understand that change is a process that requires patience and resilience and I am committed to navigating challenges with determination. By staying focused on the bigger picture and leading with empathy, I can guide others, we can build a more inclusive, dynamic future where everyone has the opportunity to thrive.

Ajwa Abshir

No matter how big or small or weak, just know that freedom is on its way. Let us be free to be who we are.

¹ This activity is made possible in partnership with the Minnesota Twins.

² <https://www.ppgji.org/mlk-day-writing-competition>

³ <https://singjuipost.com/martin-luther-kings-sermon-the-drum-major-instinct-transcript/>

Georgia Lindgren

In my life I have always believed I was perfectly safe, I am privileged, I am white, I am upper middle class, I have a home, I am not in any immediate danger. But as I've grown up I've learned, there are still problems in this world. Many people have the mindset of "It's not my fault, it's not my problem" or "why should it be my responsibility when I didn't cause the issue." And my response to that is, well the people who caused this problem aren't going to fix it, and they'll all be dead before they realize what they've done is bad. Like Martin Luther King Jr said "In the end, we will remember not the words of our enemies but the silence of our friends." So it is up to us who see the problem to help, because no one else will.

I Have a Dream

I have a dream that decisions about a woman's health are made only by her and her doctor. I have a dream that I will be able to marry who I love regardless of gender. That every person can identify how they feel the most comfortable. I have a dream that I won't hear a new story of a person of color getting killed every day, and that all people have the same rights and privileges as the straight white men that walk among us.

I have a dream that every child and adult can have access to a safe place to sleep, have food on the table, clean water to drink, access to healthcare, and be able to go to school and work. I have a dream that one day I won't wonder if when I leave for school it's the last time I'll tell my mom I love her, or the last time I pet my dog. I have a dream that I won't be terrified to walk through the school doors, where I am supposed to feel safe.

But most importantly I have a dream that my children will have an earth to live on, and they will never have to write something like this. Because my children will have a world where they have bodily autonomy, a world without discrimination, or the government telling them who they can be and who they can love. My

children will live in a world where everyone works together to help those in need, and that those in power won't do everything possible to hold people down. My children will live in a world where they will feel safe at school and at home. I have a dream that my children will read this and see it as a scary thing from the past, not a terrifying thing from the present.

How will I become a drum major for change?

How will I make a change? How will I stick up for justice? How will I, just a middle school girl from suburban Minnesota do anything important to help those around me? I will do the only thing I can do, I will use my voice.

I will protest to protect my bodily autonomy and the autonomy of every person. I will be brave and stick up for my right to marry who I love, and I will stick up for everyone's right to be who they are. I will treat every person equally no matter what they look like, how they identify, or their economic status, and I will stick up for the people who no one else sticks up for. I will help those in need, and support people who can't support themselves. I will speak out against gun violence. I will outwardly support climate activism.

I will be a drum major for change and justice by speaking out, standing tall, sticking up for what's right, and I will not back down. When people call me unreasonable, or idiotic, or too loud I will tell them "No, I am a drum major, and I'm making a change."

Ada Amaro Arias

I can be a drum major for justice by understanding the community and helping the community. I will do whatever I can to protest for justice, protect for justice, do whatever I can for justice and listen to people because they have words to listen to and listen to their opinions. I will try and help them with money if I can. Justice is good!

‘how we rise is
how we raise’ (part 2)

If We’re Hard on Ourselves, We’re Hard on Our Kids

ONA WETHERALL O’HARA

As an early childhood teacher, I often think about the parents of the children in my class just as much as the children. Parent work is so important in education and especially in early childhood, when children are often separated from their parents and in a school setting for the first time. Parents need just as much support as children! While thinking through conversations with parents I recently had a thought that rang so true for me, and I thought perhaps it would resonate with other parents; if we’re hard on ourselves, we’re hard on our kids. In turn, our kids are, and become adults who are hard on themselves.

A strict approach can be a blessing and a curse. Perhaps it can help instill a driven and disciplined disposition in our children. After all, in some ways I wonder if maybe, as parents, we have lost our grip with being hard on our kids in a healthy way and so we tend to be too “soft,” as we struggle to hold boundaries with our children.

On the other hand, we also know how painful and debilitating it can be to get stuck in places where we are being hard on ourselves. We even do it to ourselves in reflection of our parenting, much of which is natural human reaction to unexpected, startling, confusing, and challenging situations. There lies a predicament: Can we find a way to be hard on ourselves, and our kids, in a way that encourages us and them to strive and grow and not feel defeated and stuck? Can we try to be self-aware without judgement, as human beings and as parents, learn from our reflections, and pass that on to our children?

Being a parent brings us to the edge of our vulnerability and leaves us feeling exposed and raw, and that’s often where our children meet us with their needs. For some of us, we carry baggage and/or trauma from our own childhood that we often desperately want to avoid in our own parenting journey. However, what we are

internally processing often becomes what our children externally express, in one form or another. Sometimes, the things we fear the most are what our children manifest for us to deal with, because life has a way of serving us our work to do one way or another.

One of the biggest influences on our parenting is what we experienced as children. Some of these experiences we strive to honor and pass on to our children and some of them we want to avoid, hoping to model and give our children something different. It can be easy to judge our upbringing and forget that, for the most part, our parents, just like ourselves, always want to be good parents. We also easily lose sight of the fact that everything we experience contributes



“ IF WE’RE HARD ON OUR PARENTS,
WE’RE HARD ON OURSELVES, AND
WE’RE HARD ON OUR KIDS.

to who we are as people, partners, and parents and it’s difficult to grow if we dismiss that or expend energy judging it. In some ways, if we’re hard on our parents, we’re hard on ourselves, and we’re hard on our kids. One approach to breaking this passed-down cycle of judgement is to appreciate all that we as parents are striving for, knowing that part of that drive comes from pushing through our life experiences and using all of them to do our best. In other words, positive outcomes come from positive (or at least objective) approaches and it’s really difficult to feel and be successful driven by negative perspectives.

As we think about summer, a helpful aspect to include is: How can we set ourselves up to not be hard on ourselves and in turn not hard on our kids? Summer is a time for breathing out and relaxing. Perhaps that can include some time for compassion and acceptance for all that we are so we can grow and parent from there and model that for our children. 📌

Ona Weatherall O’Hara is a Lead Pre-K teacher, Early Childhood Leader, Governing Team Member, and Parent at Kimberton Waldorf School. She has been a teacher for sixteen years, having received Waldorf Early Childhood Teacher and LifeWays training, and the full Anthroposophical Psychology training. She believes that through relationship-based education that includes a holistic picture of human development, she can support children and parents in their journeys to becoming self-directed, conscious, and compassionate human beings.

DONNA MIELE

Free Movement from the Very Start (vol, 1) *Self-Initiated Movement and Sensorimotor Development in the Very Young Child*

a book by Jane Swain

The innate wisdom of the developing child from birth through age three drives this comprehensive book, volume one of *Free Movement*, a planned two-book series. Jane Swain is a pediatric physical therapist, movement therapist, and adult educator in the field of Waldorf education. In this book, she weaves together the insights of Emmi Pikler¹ and Rudolf Steiner to call for responsive and ethical care of infants and young children in *Self-Initiated Movement and Sensorimotor Development in the Very Young Child*, focusing on how caregivers can support and protect the process of human sensorimotor development from the moment of birth. *Free Movement* reminds us that as we care for young children, we call forth the child's sense of Self.

Waldorf early childhood educators have long been guided by Rudolf Steiner's insights on the spiritual wisdom of the newborn, encouraging caregivers to employ patience, loving-kindness, and protection of the infant's physiology in a way that allows all aspects of human development to unfold rather than be "taught" or drawn out. These profound principles also guided practical methods for childcare developed by Dr. Emmi Pikler, a Hungarian pediatrician, who worked both in private practice and as the director of a Lóczy, a children's home serving those orphaned



during World War II. She observed the benefits of self-initiated motor development from early on and, with loving attention as the starting point, began guiding parents and Lóczy caregivers in safely supporting babies in exploring movement, sight, sound, and so on, rather than teaching or assisting them. *Free Movement* reveals the reasons for so many of the trappings of the Waldorf early childhood classroom and home and guides caregivers in how to provide similar environments. The soft, swirling colors of Lazured walls of the classroom support healthy development of vision, but so does natural light filtered through the treetops or a fluttering voile

drape. The human voice supports the child in developing the sense of word, of human language, whether through classic songs and rhymes or in simple, direct speech. "Now we are going to pull on your sock." "Now we are going to tie your shoe." And just as young children in a Waldorf setting are permitted to climb, splash, and tumble in a well-maintained environment, the proven methods discussed in *Free Movement* tell us that babies should be free to roll, to reach, to crawl and stand and totter in a safe place without interference.

As a Senior Therapeutic Trainer in Spacial Dynamics,² Jane also describes how Jaimen McMillan's methods and insights

“ THIS BOOK WEAVES TOGETHER THE INSIGHTS OF EMMI PIKLER AND RUDOLF STEINER TO CALL FOR RESPONSIVE AND ETHICAL CARE OF INFANTS AND YOUNG CHILDREN.

guide her consideration of children's development in her practice. Part of the wisdom of Spacial Dynamics is based upon Steiner's foundational senses of touch, life (or well-being), self-movement, and balance and how they are nourished from the very start by free movement. Spacial Dynamics' deep understanding of the child's developing energies also serves as a foundation for older children, as Jane demonstrates. Even after passing the stages of rolling, sitting up, crawling, and so on, the older child who may not have experienced free movement from the very start will gain new developmental mastery. Spacial Dynamics will be explored more fully in the second volume.

Self-Initiated Movement and Sensorimotor Development in the Very Young Child is a refreshingly plainspoken account of how to understand our support of babies and young children at home and in the classroom. Our goals are not to offer "exercise" routines involving the latest mobility assistance, nor educational toys and recordings. They are to create the conditions by which babies and children can experience and explore their world, from the gravity that they must work with to develop the musculature for uprightness to the feel of earth under their hands to the taste of new foods. As Dr. Pikler wrote, "Let us not force the infant. Let us provide well for [them], but let us not disturb the slow, steady process that has its own rhythm and course with every child. . . . The most essential is not 'what' the baby can already do, but 'how' [they do] what [they do.]"³.

Waldorf Early Childhood Association of North America ISBN 978-1-936849-64-2

- 1 "the Pikler Collection: the genius of Emmi Pikler in english," <https://thepiklercollection.weebly.com/>
- 2 Spacial Dynamics is a registered trademark of the Spacial Dynamics Institute <https://www.spacialdynamics.com/>
- 3 Jane Swain, *Self-Initiated Movement and Sensorimotor Development in the Very Young Child*, quoting Emmi Pikler, "From Emmi Pikler's First Book: Excerpts from Peaceful Babies—Contented Mothers." *Sensory Awareness Foundation Bulletin* 14 (Winter 1994), "Emmi Pikler 1902–1984", 17.



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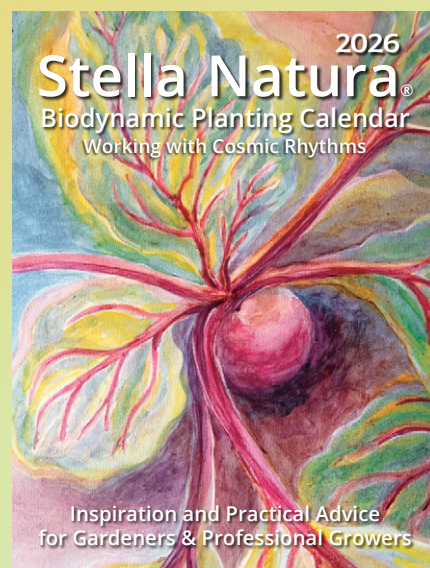
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cultural appreciation series #3

The Importance of Reciprocity

JOAQUIN MUÑOZ, AIYANA MASLA,
AND MASUMI HAYASHI-SMITH

We at Alma Partners have noted that many teachers carry similar questions and concerns related to cultural appreciation and appropriation. Some are holding back from taking risks that could lead to growth, afraid that they will cause harm or that they have already caused harm, and concerned with how to move forward. Some teachers have heard the term cultural appropriation, but don't know exactly what it is, or how it relates to their work. Some teachers feel overwhelmed by the task of working with the concept. Through this three-part series of articles, we hope to offer support, structure, and resources for teachers to authentically deepen their inquiries and expand their offerings.

In our first article (*Lilipoh*, Fall 2024),¹ we looked at how power impacts cultural appreciation and appropriation, using the SEEDS definition of power: “*the ability to decide who will have access to resources; the capacity to direct or influence the behaviors of others or oneself, and/or the course of events.*” In our second article (*Lilipoh*, Spring 2025),² we explored the

importance of relationships when moving from cultural appropriation to appreciation. From here, we will dive into the notion of reciprocity, and the many ways we can lean into reciprocity as we build or bolster relationships and move into interactions that center appreciation and exchange. Our hope is that by deepening understanding and engaging in these practices, we will be able to offer students and families respectful, authentic portrayals of the beautiful and diverse world in which we live.

As we conclude this series on cultural appreciation, we are entering the season in the school cycle where many teachers have begun to plan and prepare for the next school year. As you strive alongside your colleagues to meet the students in front of you, in the times we are living in, we hope to offer supportive frameworks that are built on themes of respect, reverence, and the necessity of a humble approach in order to repair, create, make changes, and offer something intrinsically important to our students: something new.

Reciprocity - The Key Concept of Connection

Verna J. Kirkness and Ray Barnhart articulated core values of respect, relevance, reciprocity, and responsibility in their 2001 article describing how to support First Nations students in higher education.³ At the heart of their description is a reliance on expansive and generative definitions of these values, grounded in Indigenous ways of knowing and being. The authors point out that relationships that are personalized and human are at the heart of good teaching.

We can borrow from their articulation to explore the notion of reciprocity as a response to appropriation. Whereas appropriation relies upon *extraction and exploitation*, reciprocity centers *connection*. The incorporation of diverse understandings and worldviews comes from a deliberate, intentional, and patient process of engaging with individuals and communities. Reciprocity centers relational dynamics. It focuses on, and privileges, human connection. Reciprocity views these human connections as generative, caring, and complex. This means that above all else, connections and ongoing relationships are the orienting objective, and not the transaction of knowledge or resources. And, when knowledge or resources are offered, they are received reverentially, in a way that the spirit of care and responsibility remains active and in motion.

Practices of acknowledgment, recognizing harm, and repair

In aiming to create and imagine a kinder world, we have to take risks in our classrooms and schools. Inevitably, as we try and as we learn, we will make mistakes. This is how change happens!

Without courageous effort or risk taking, there will be no mistake-making. Without mistake-making, there will be no learning, no healing, and no change.

Energy follows attention.
– Otto Scharmer.⁴

It is important for us to consider how our attention shapes our reality. While new processes may be accompanied by feelings of fear, there are pitfalls to centering fear. If we orient from fear, we are also choosing not to orient from joy, celebration, generativity, and relationship. In choosing reciprocity as our anchoring point, it is important for us to explore where our energy is going and not going – and to consciously choose to orient ourselves in courageous relationship.

Cultural appreciation is a practice that asks us to bring inquiry, research, critical thinking, and questions as foundational practices, noticing who we are and how our identities relate to the content that we share in our schools and classrooms. Inherently, power imbalances and nuances of violence or harm will be uncovered in this research. As honest searching and learning can often yield painful information, these truths and dynamics in our global and collective history or context may cause us to freeze in guilt, trauma, shame, or fear of causing harm. On the contrary, it can also inform and bolster us to invest in repair, responsibility, respectful relationship-building, and ultimately help us create new, meaningful connections that uplift culture bearers and present a different, more authentic pathway.

As we learn, grow, and inevitably make mistakes, we practice cultural appreciation by acknowledging our errors, recognizing harm caused along the way, strengthening our capacity to receive feedback, bringing curiosity to discomfort, and taking responsibility. These practices strengthen our integrity, deepen our relationships with others, and help keep us accountable to the social power that we may carry.



Acknowledgement

Truth, reconciliation (if indeed there was a positive relationship to begin with), and healing will only come with acknowledgment as a first step. Acknowledgement can be a formal process, such as creating and reading a land acknowledgment at the beginning of a faculty meeting or school event. Acknowledgement can also happen as a part of everyday teaching. This can look like acknowledging the sources of our stories and songs or the local history of the land we live on in our history blocks. Acknowledgement is the ground before action can be taken - it is not the end of the healing or the full work of repair. It is followed by cultural and economic reparations, alongside other restorative and sustained actions that are informed by being open, offering care, and putting energy towards building genuine connections, which take time to grow and must be consensual and mutually beneficial.

Recognizing and Repairing Harm

It is important to emphasize that the focus isn't on *if* we will make a mistake, but *how* we respond to

realizing a mistake was made. Cultural appreciation requires taking responsibility, time, and curiosity to repair relationships, as we heal a lineage of colonialism and harm (far older and deeper than anything personal or interpersonal) through how and what we teach the next generations. Two types of recognition and their subsequent pathways of repair are at the heart of this process. In the practice of cultural appreciation, one may cause immediate harm or historical harm, and sometimes both occur. Identifying and recognizing which kind of harm took place can inform the actions needed for repair, which will build relationships that have the potential for sustained reciprocity and exchange.

Immediate harm occurs when, considering power imbalances, we have done something harmful in the present moment. This can be unintentional, and is an opportunity for learning and growth. Immediate harm necessitates personal as well as interpersonal healing and repair work. Initially, we will move through all of the feelings that occur when we are made aware that we have caused harm (especially when we did not intend to): humiliation, defensiveness, embarrassment, anger, sadness, and so forth. These feelings can be processed in the appropriate places, with

“RELATIONSHIPS THAT ARE PERSONALIZED AND HUMAN ARE AT THE HEART OF GOOD TEACHING.

others who have agreed to support us as we practice self-forgiveness and free up energy for deep listening. When we are able to pause and process our emotions before recognizing and responding to the harm caused, we can see impact as distinct from intention, regroup in our values, and work towards repair without asking for additional energy from or putting a burden on those who've been harmed. We can then take responsibility for the harm caused, asking what (if anything) can be done towards healing, and even offer a few suggestions or ideas of our own for repair, seeing if anything lands as helpful or restorative.

Recognizing historical harm involves connecting back to the point in time when power imbalances, violence, and oppression severed relationships and connection across difference. It is a process that also involves deep listening, and it asks us to employ truth-telling—about historical dynamics, trauma, and a diversity of ancestral experiences—even when the truth is painful, uncomfortable, or hard to face. It involves active research and recognition into power imbalances, privileges, colonization, oppression, and resource distribution.

Oftentimes, concern about causing harm is amplified by worries related to fear of repercussions in a society that sometimes seems obsessed with punishment. We can and must respond to individual harms and the repairs that are necessary when we commit them. We must also be aware and ready to respond when

the institutions we are a part of create harm or perpetuate historic harms. These kinds of institutional repairs require larger and more systemic approaches, like economic reparations, land reclamation, or significant policy transformation.

Centering Reciprocity

Sometimes, when we want inspiration for how to model our lives, we benefit from looking to nature for examples. Robin Wall Kimmerer writes in *The Serviceberry*:

If our first response to the receipt of gifts is gratitude, then our second is reciprocity: to give a gift in return. What could I give these plants in return for their generosity? I could return the gift of a direct response, like weeding or bringing water or offering a song of thanks that sends appreciation out on the wind. I could make habitat for the solitary bees that fertilized those fruits. Or maybe I could take indirect action, like donating to my local land trust so that more habitat for the gift givers will be saved, speaking at a public hearing on land use, or making art that invites others into the web of reciprocity. I could reduce my carbon footprint, vote on the side of healthy land, advocate for farmland preservation, change my diet, hang my laundry in the sunshine. We live in a time when every choice matters.⁵

When we take these ideas into the realm of human interaction, a question is: how do we keep the gift going? If we receive the gift of someone's culture, what are the gestures that communicate that we are holding what we receive in reverence? How do we deepen our relationship to the culture bearer? How do we show our support and gratitude to the cultures themselves? To the deep and intertwined paths of transmission?

Perhaps the answer is something as simple as respectful monetary exchange. But often the answer is deeper, takes longer, and is specific to the situation we are in. It could mean offering a clear story of how you learned about the element of culture you are teaching, including its own context and (unsanitized) history. It could mean offering use of your land or garden to local community members. I could look like donating to a land trust, or advocating for rights and representation. It could be the deepening of an authentic, long-lasting relationship to a local community center.

Whidbey Island Waldorf School

One example of reciprocity within Waldorf schools is the example of a cultural sharing in the Pacific Northwest, hosted by Whidbey Island Waldorf School, where fourth graders and their families congregate with members of different Coast Salish nations. This gathering is a beautiful example of how reciprocity is cultivated through deep and slow relationship-building, reverence for culture, and the recognition of power. For this article, we spoke with Angela Wilder-Lindstrom who, in her tenure at Whidbey Island Waldorf School, evolved the cultural sharing to what it is now. When it started, it was a small gathering with little connection to the local Indigenous community. Today, it is a rich tradition that nourishes relationships between Coast Salish culture bearers and students at nine different schools.⁶

about Alma Partners

If you are interested in learning more with Alma Partners on this topic, we explore cultural appropriation and cultural appreciation in depth in an annual, online Alma Partners workshop series. You can learn more at almapartners.net/store/p/cultural-appreciation

Additionally, in our online course for individuals as well as schools, entitled *Fulfilling Our Promise: Becoming Inclusive Waldorf Communities*, we dedicate time to unpacking cultural appreciation through work with case studies, self-reflective exercises, key concepts, and clarified definitions. Learn more at almapartners.net/store/p/cohortonline

This tradition evolved out of the relationship work Angela committed to as she connected with local Indigenous elders and cultural centers. When she originally worked on the gathering, her first goal was to connect children with the wisdom of elders of all cultures in the community. Over time, as her relationships with Coast Salish elders grew, she was then able to focus on local traditions such as weaving, flute playing, wood carving, and traditional games. What stood out to us about Angela's relationship work was that she did not connect with Coast Salish community members in a transactional way. Instead, she took time to visit the local cultural center on a monthly basis for years, so that she could build relationships with multiple people in the community and facilitate a lasting connection for them with the school. She reflects, "It's taken a while. You have to be really patient."⁷ Angela is Ojibwe and Cherokee, and her own indigeneity helped aid in building trust. However, she did not lean on that alone. She knew that she had to still approach the community with respect and reciprocity.

Additionally, Angela recognized the role of power in her work. She understood that teaching

about Indigenous customs without doing cultural and historical research or committing to relationships perpetuated harmful patterns. By making the event collaborative, she was able to shift the power dynamics in a way that taught reverence and modeled reciprocity to the students. When inviting Indigenous guests and other culture bearers to Whidbey Island Waldorf School, she not only asked them to share their culture, she also arranged for the school's teachers and Board to listen to the guests. "We wanted them to know that they are valued members of our community." Additionally, Angela mentioned the multiple schools currently taking up the call from the Lakota Waldorf School to offer Indigenous students free tuition.⁸ In this example, reciprocity is the story of many gifts of knowledge, wisdom, and time; being greeted with reverence; commitment to cultural sustainability; lasting relationship; respectful compensation; and the enduring will to do more.

While all the examples we have used in our article series have focused on Indigenous cultures and relationships, we want to emphasize that these lessons and practices apply to all cultures and opportunities for cultural exchange.

Where to Go from Here

Imagine: What if we let reciprocity be possible?

You are invited to take a still and quiet moment to imagine true reciprocity. Perhaps you want to look away from this article, even close your eyes, intentionally breathing. Focus on a vision of reciprocity—daydream and lean into this daydream, resting in a picture of reciprocal relationship in your community. What arises? Take a few breaths here. What are the sensations in your body? Where do you feel them? What emotions are connected to this picture? Who is present and what energy is present? Breathing into this imagination, noticing the sensations, pictures, and emotions that arise when visioning reciprocity,

what stands out to you most when you imagine what is possible?

As you forge your own path of cultural appreciation, we leave you with the following questions:

- What is one way that the practice of cultural appreciation can be employed in your school community and curriculum work? How does this distinctly differ from cultural appropriation?
- What bias and ideas of superiority or inferiority affect the lens through which you view your curriculum and community culture?
- What role does power have in your explorations and practices?
- How can you ground in real relationships so that the school community builds bridges and connections?
- Are you orienting from respect and reverence?
- When you practice cultural appreciation, how are the carriers of the culture you are sharing being supported and uplifted?

May we all greet the gifts and richness of culture with reverence. May we pass them on with care. May all of our relationships be nourished in the process.

NOTES

- ¹ <https://lilipoh.com/?s=fall+2024>
- ² <https://lilipoh.com/?s=spring+2025>
- ³ Ray Barnhart and Verna J. Kirkness, "First Nations and Higher Education: The Four R's - Respect, Relevance, Reciprocity, Responsibility," in *Knowledge Across Cultures: A Contribution to Dialogue Among Civilizations*, ed. R. Hayoe and J. Pan (Comparative Education Research Centre, The University of Hong Kong, 2001). <https://www.uaf.edu/ankn/publications/collective-works-of-ray-b/4Four-Rs-2nd-Ed.pdf>
- ⁴ Otto Scharmer and Katrin Kaufer, *Leading from the Emerging Future* (Berrett-Koehler, 2013), 21.
- ⁵ Robin Wall Kimmerer, *The Serviceberry: Abundance And Reciprocity In The Natural World* (Scribner, 2024), pp. 13-14.
- ⁶ <https://wiws.org/coast-salish-cultural-sharing>
- ⁷ Angela Wilder-Lindstrom, interview with Alma Partners staff.
- ⁸ Angela Wilder-Lindstrom, interview with Alma Partners staff.

Joaquin Muñoz, Aiyana Masla, and Masumi Hayashi-Smith are associates with Alma Partners. Alma Partners is a diverse, multiracial, multigenerational group of eleven experienced consultants and facilitators who offer workshops, courses, Student Leadership Conferences, individual and group consultation, strategic planning, curriculum review and development, and more for schools and other organizations, bridging the gap between ideals and actions. You can find out more at almapartners.net

Basketry with master Irish
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PHOTOS: SEPTIMBOR LIM, NIKKI MOON SHONEMAN

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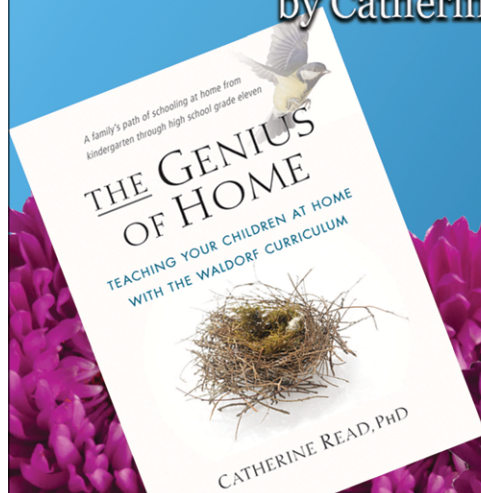
In a world where young people have nearly unlimited access to our planet through imagery, information, and Internet platforms, how might we provide deeper connections to lived experience? How might we support adolescent learners to engage their world in deeper, more authentic ways that move beyond technological image and information? In a culture that has let go of

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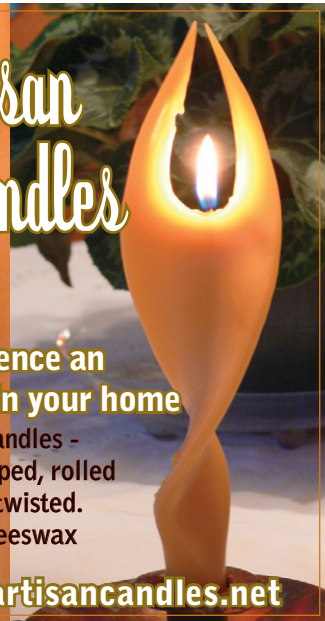
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arts sessions, including individual and group engagement with contemplative, exploratory and adventure activities, SOLA students are invited into a space of Presence - a fully embodied, heart-fully empathic, mentally focused state of being. From this place of deep Presence, students participate in lived experiences that nurture their capacity for understanding human relationships, and how the quality of these relationships define one's experience of the world, one's sense of belonging and community, and one's understanding of their own identity and true self.

anthropological and sociological theories about why this has occurred, but the most resonant, from the perspective of the SOLA view of education, is that we left these important practices behind when we were disengaged and separated from our ancestral homelands, from the ground and rocks and roots of our deeper belonging to Earth's community of life. Now, the question is: Did we also leave behind our deep human need for these ensouling, communal activities? Of course we didn't!

What if an intentional, sacred context were created for the emergence that occurs in the

“ IN A CULTURE THAT HAS LET GO OF TRADITIONAL RITES OF PASSAGE, HOW MIGHT WE RECREATE MEANINGFUL EXPLORATIONS OF IDENTITY? ”

The Hero's Journey

This journey of self discovery is often mythologized and spoken about as 'the hero's journey', and is described and recapitulated in the stories of the Odyssey and Parzival - two important literary elements of the Waldorf adolescent curricula. At SOLA, these literary topics are rendered into a lived experience of the mythological adventures and misadventures articulated in these tales, and also many other literary classics of antiquity.

Our culture has, perhaps unconsciously, dispensed with most of the meaningful activities that punctuate the human 'hero's journey' through the many stages of life. There are

fourteen to eighteen year old adolescent? What if we provided an extended period of time for deep exploration of identity, culture, human belonging, self-reflective and contemplative practices, and eventual expansion of authentic self into the world?

Rite of Passage & Identity

The fourteen to eighteen year old is deeply immersed in an exploration of identity, a deep questioning of the world around him/her. This is a time for frequent depressive and anxious periods in which the adolescent longs for a space that is free of pressures and performance expectations, so that the soul may take the

space it needs to prepare for the larger world it is now exposed to, now being asked to participate in. This emergence is as tender a place as the emergence from the world of kindergarten into the world of first grade, or the transition from home environment to schooling environment before that.

What if there were an educational context for the above explorations that was refracted through the lens of emergence into adulthood? Independently guided projects (intellect), dialectal, philosophical, ontological explorations in community and with the self (heart), and service to something greater than oneself (hands)? The Relational Arts and Global Presencing programs at SOLA strive to incorporate and emphasize the importance of these kinds of activities in the grades eight through twelve curriculum.

The questions above guide SOLA's development of international adventures that provide encounters with places of incredible beauty and magnificence; places where human beings are living meaningful and fully engaged lives in deep relationship with the place of their own Belonging. In this way, the students are immersed in and confronted with a profound, felt and living example of human identity in relation to place and culture. These adventures are one component of a series of intentional (but **not** contrived) 'rite of passage' experiences that we feel are integral to the Living Curriculum at SOLA, and to the hero's journey of adolescent self-recovery, and self-discovery.

Separation, Liminality, Integration

Rites of passage typically contain three important elements: *Separation*, *Liminality*,¹ *Integration*. Our adventures provide these elements in the following ways:

- Separation of the individual from the 'known' culture, landscape, familiar comforts, and

Bog crawling in Connemara, Ireland



immersion in something mysterious, unknown, (even a bit foreboding!);

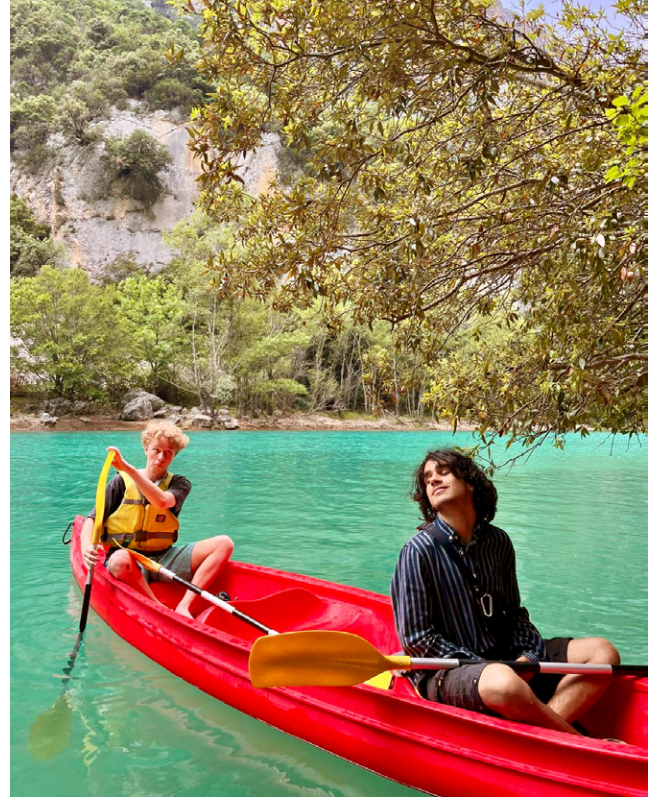
- The creation of a safe context or 'culture' for the tempering of the reflected self;
- Abiding and residing in liminality, to provide for the individual's exploration, navigation of challenges, and eventual expansion of authentic, independent 'coping modalities' and confidence to abide in liminal spaces throughout life, and to encounter the unknown with courage;
- A framework for peer supported engagement and self-guidance of the inevitable edges and challenges, and ample space and time for both group and self reflection and integration.

What is truly remarkable is that adolescents will unconsciously create rites of passage for themselves, whether or not we provide the 'safe' container or sacred context. The often unsettling,

A poetic roving of ancient lands with Farmer-Poet Patrick McCormack, Burren Peninsula, Ireland



Paddling in the Gorges Du Verdon, Southern France



dangerous or truly harmful risk-taking behaviors we observe in today's adolescent culture speak to our innate human need for authentic passage experiences. In the absence of elders to guide that passage, teens may resort to sexual promiscuity, drug or alcohol experimentation, dangerous driving, bullying, exploration of themes around death or darkness, withdrawal into antisocial behaviors, challenges to authority, 'initiation' type group behaviors that push individuals who wish to 'join' a circle of peers to do dangerous or demoralizing things, etc. Without the intentional, sacred space to contextualize the 'legitimate' parts of the above explorations, such experiments can lead to pathologies and outcomes that we, as parents and mentors, shudder to consider.

Is A Teen Ready?

How do we know if a teen is ready for a rite of passage? Here are some guiding questions:

- Is the teen longing for 'more,' asking about the world outside of school, wanting to try new things, dancing from novel experience to novel experience, curious about the world outside of their home culture, longing for 'newness', adventure, etc?
- Is the teen experimenting with identity through changes in clothing style, exploration of gender or sexual orientation, affiliation with socio-political movements, changes in diet or behavior related to ethical or moral codes, etc?
- Has the teen shifted into the 'negatively charged universe' ? Saying 'NO' to or criticizing and questioning nearly everything they once cherished or agreed to or respected? Even saying 'no' to the very opportunities they are innately seeking to expand their horizons?
- Is the teen interested in social media and participating in this digital 'community' with their experimentations in identity?



Sanctuary of Living Arts (SOLA)

Sanctuary of Living Arts, or SOLA, is a learning environment for homeschooling families located in the ancient and pristine Western North Carolina mountains, just west of the bustling, culturally vibrant town of Asheville. Surrounded by Pisgah National Forest, SOLA's 'campus' is a 200 acre nature preserve & farm that includes biodynamically tended orchards, gardens and sylvaculture as well as old growth forests, pristine springs and a variety of farm animals and wildlife. Our classroom structures and activities are nested within this vibrant community of life, and function as a 'learning ecology', supporting meaningful study, presence and practices with Living Earth that are essential to the lives and wellbeing of our own and the greater community.

Visit our website at www.sanctuaryoflivingarts.org

- Are they suffering from deflated self-worth or feelings of inadequacy?
- Has the teen withdrawn into their 'cave' (bedroom)? Is he or she choosing to spend more time alone in the bedroom, soaking in the bathtub, or 'tuned out' with earphones and an electronic device?
- What does your intuition say about the child's readiness for a rite of passage, when you tune in deeply?

Our intention at SOLA is to provide a space for the adolescent's rediscovery and reemergence of their whole, healthy, unique, authentic, self—a fundamental identity that existed before the hormone-induced hyper-vigilance around self image and self consciousness brought on by the changes of puberty and their growing intellectual capacities.

Identity as Belonging

We must strive, as mentors, teachers, guides, and parents to actualize a new culture around the Rite of Passage that is so essential in human development. This is achievable through the facilitation of deep connection: ever deepening presence to self, peers/human community, and the natural world around them. This is Identity as Belonging. May we all participate in this shift by honoring and nourishing a commonly held, deeper recognition of every child's fundamental identity, which is located within something divinely mysterious and universal. 🌿

¹ "Liminality is a quality of being in between two places or stages, on the verge of transitioning to something new." From "Liminality," Vocabulary.com, accessed June 11, 2025, <https://www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/liminality>.

Septimbor Lim is the Pedagogical Mentor & Founder of Sanctuary of Living Arts (SOLA) – a Pre-K- through twelfth grade learning environment that serves ninety or so children and young adults each year. SOLA works from an innovative, Living Waldorf pedagogy focused on the natural world and Living Arts, and is rooted in the developmental and spiritual indications of Rudolf Steiner. Septimbor is also the creator & Mentor for Global Presencing Immersion Experiences at SOLA.

We Are Earth

SOLA HIGH SCHOOL, 2018

Under the Mentorship of Elizabeth Porritt-Carrington

It is snowing here in the mountains of Southern Appalachia
Winter still, though spring is close at hand
We can smell it in the earth and on the air.
Tiny white star flakes are covering the first purple violets
The flurries will blanket the red clay roads, soon.
This last breathe of winter has come to land.

Our School is a village of round houses, warm nests of our learning
Settled in along the shoulders of Mount Pisgah,
we are high in the ridges blue.

We come here by all our paths,
a spectrum arriving like rainbows each day, each season, each year that passes.

The trees greeted us first along our way
They are tall, grey-brown-umber in this light
White Oak, Maple, Poplar, Birch, Cedar, Hickory,
rooting, branching out like neurons or bronchi.

The dogwoods will show blooms in the lower canopy.
Spring's early risers, will be dreaming white butterflies on the breeze.
Cardinals red, flaunt their feathers before spring comes again
Piliated woodpeckers make hollow taps,
sounding out the quiet woods like drums

The air is pure and clean.
Deep green pines sway in harmony, resin perfume raises up to the sky.

And all along the edges of crystal streams
symphonic waterfalls play different keys,
Splunking here and bubbling there,
then softly flowing over smoothed out granite
or quartz that looks like small glaciers.
Mica sparkles like fish scales in the sun
by silver stripes, minnows, raveling together,
around the pools like friends at recess.

Hérons visit here, coming through in wide heavy wingbeats
Long beak poised, they stand like statues at the water's edge
Fishers of the tributaries, of all these capillaries, of life.

Mossy stones are small world rainforests.
Ferns, lacy and smooth, uncoil their spines from spirals
and roll out their leaves for Spring.

And spiders weave webs catching dewy drops of morning.
Others between the rocks, running hither and thither.
Salamanders mottled red and brown.
Worms, working their way down, in the underworld
to the burrows and dens to receive the mycelium messages.

The fruit trees bloom...and a new snow falls
Pink petals and the palest creams of peach, cherry and apple blossoms
Their sweet fruit will fall generously, lovingly to us.

The garden grows again, vegetables are like easter eggs to be sought out.

They taste sweeter when grown by you.
We work with the gardens while the bees hum,
And the birds sing,
And children's voices raise up like hands to say
"we are not alone, we are here echoing with the birdsong!"

Children, playing up trees in colored raincoats,
sliding down muddy hills in the rain, fledglings trying out their wings,
inhabit this place, being a part of everything.

Come, climb up with us, off the trails to caves and enter into the dark!
We encourage one another to be who we are.
Some say "no, it is wild out there, in the woods, stick to the trail, it's straight,
a right track, and never look back."

But up there on the bald, the giant cows roam, long horned,
white and sandal brown
Gentle beasts, their eyes tell you that.
Their great mass tells another story, older than the mountain.
Their breath is heavy and deep, as if out of the very soil of Earth.

And there are galaxies of flowers that bloom on those slopes,
some seen and unseen, galleries of color, spreading wide their hues,
glowing out messages of beginning and ending and beginning again
making seed pods that rattle in Autumn's winds.

(continue on next page)

Autumn, when young Girls are knighted,
blessed for integrity and chivalry and care for their world
Whilst snakes slither through, sunning themselves on rocks or hanging from
trees like ropes, you won't see them till you do.
Virago and Lyra, Great Pyrenees friends protect the rabbits
and the sheep and Loki the pony.
They look too huggable to be fierce
but bark enough as you pass, to spread their warning word,
till they circle their napping spot,
again resting with one eye open.

Our teachers, our guides, walk alongside us.
They show us how to make our own books.
One, a gentle giant who smiles upon us,
being sure all our interests are close at heart.
And another, a gate keeper and mystery weaver seeing through
and over us and all we do
and ensuring that none are turned away
from this School of Living Arts.

An ancient new school, an old wisdom,
A bright vision of how it could be,
like the small mossy stone in the stream or an island in the sea.
A haven, in the storm of undoing and unease.

For it's not news that people forgot the way.
That belonging to the Earth was lost in the plundering,
in the taking and the tearing.
Humans in their problem solving, were problem-creating
and became afraid of the unknown
We forgot to be the colored galaxies of flowers seen and unseen
willing to open and grow old.

As Autumn becomes winter it is traditional here,
to walk a spiral of candlelight and fir.
Slowly the woods become a glowing constellation of light,
And we each take turns to walk the night sky.

Silently or in whispers and then sometimes in songs
we carry the year into another year through Re-membering Earth
as we grow and learn our part in the system that serves all life.

The gifts in our own hands can bring light, more light, and more life
We open our books and write, each of our days and our nights

We are Earth. We are Earth. We are Earth.

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Swimming Lessons

CIARA O'HARA

Splash! My body hit the cold pool water and relaxed momentarily on the hot summer day. "Ciara, Ciara" my little sister's voice called.

"Josephine, put your life vest back on, please. That is dangerous," I said as she took her pink life vest off near the pool's edge.

"But I don't need it, I can swim like you."

I thought quickly about how to respond, admiring her bravery and determination while also wanting her to understand reality. I decided I just needed to be honest. "You can't yet, Josephine. Put it back on, please."

"But I can, I really can, I'll show you."

I knew she couldn't swim and wouldn't learn that day. I was ready to get out of the water and put her vest back on but as I locked eyes with her I could tell that was not going to happen. "Ok, but I need to be right with you."

"No, don't help me," she said as she jumped into the water over her head. I saw her body disappear and quickly pulled her up.

"Are you ok?"

"Yes, I wanna try again, I want to learn."

I never thought I would be given a little sister two days before I turned thirteen, but that is exactly what I got. Although my experience being Josephine's big sister has been one of the best experiences of my life, it has also come with challenges. Countless times, she comes and bothers me while I'm working until I have to raise my voice with her. I often have to remind myself that she is learning as much as I am.



ROWAN O'HARA

“ I’VE LEARNED PATIENCE FROM HER,
BUT I’VE ALSO LEARNED SOMETHING
ELSE.

From the moment Josephine was born a new sense of responsibility and commitment began to form in me. I remember numerous times when she was a baby and she would cry and cry when it was time to nap. I would walk up and down the street with her trying so hard to get her to sleep and finding my arms getting heavier and heavier as my patience waned. In those moments, I truly learned what it meant to have dedication and care for someone.

As my ability to take responsibility and be patient with Josephine has grown, I have appreciated how significant even small deeds can be. Even on the hardest days, when having patience and being present during her long stories with barely any point were challenging, I learned that I couldn’t dictate how she could do things; I needed to let her explore her creativity and imagination. I needed to be patient with her, and myself.

Witnessing Josephine unconsciously take on the world, from learning to walk and talk to learning to tie her shoes, reinforced in me to consciously be the best version of myself so I can be a role model for her as she grows up, and be the person I want to be going out into the world. I’ve

learned patience from her, but I’ve also learned something else.

On my first day of school on my exchange in Germany, I walked into the hectic halls and was surrounded by so many unfamiliar faces speaking a language I was still struggling to grasp. I recalled that pink life vest sitting poolside, and suddenly I felt as though I had just jumped into the water. Now it was me, not Josephine, who could not swim. Having to navigate a new school with new people in a new country taught me that sometimes you end up learning the most when you get in over your head and have to push through. Now as I embark on a new chapter of my life I am reminded to dive into all the possibilities, balancing responsibility and risk. Just like Josephine, I am now determined to jump in and learn. 📸

Ciara O’Hara is a class of 2025 graduate from Kimberton Waldorf School and the middle of three children. She plans to pursue a career as an athletic trainer and play basketball in college. Ciara is devoted to her family, friends, and boyfriend, is a coveted babysitter and camp counselor, thrives under pressure, and enjoys food, singing, fitness, the beach, and a good adventure.

Rowan O’Hara, a photographer and artist, took the photo for this piece. His work can be seen at [instagram.com/rowan_ohara_](https://www.instagram.com/rowan_ohara_)

“ AS I EMBARK ON A NEW CHAPTER OF
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an overview of
Youth Section activities

Hope in Community

SOREN DIETZEL

The Youth Section¹ of the international Anthroposophical Society has gone through many changes over its one hundred years of development, both locally and globally. Yet some things always stay the same. It is an autonomously run, mostly decentralized network of young individuals organizing gatherings for other young people. From Argentina to Oceania and so many places in between, Youth Section groups have formed. Additionally, there are annual opportunities to meet each other at global gatherings organized by the Goetheanum, the headquarters of the Youth Section. Attending these events and seeing the universal spiritual striving of young people all over the world from their own cultural standpoints, and hearing the stories of past generations' similar struggles and aspirations, compels the heart to action. Most of all, working with a local community who co-entangles in questions and organizing on an ongoing basis creates a container for the learning experiences necessary to engage in life and community and to take initiative to see it through. I would like to paint a picture of some of what has come about in the last two years in relation to the North American Youth Section² from my perspective, where I live in the Hudson River Valley of upstate New York.

Meditation As My Sole Guide

Two years ago, I drove from Minnesota to New York with all my belongings. I crossed the Hudson River on a trestle bridge. A freight train whirled below, miniscule in the shadow of the Catskill Mountains. I was a lone traveler; I had left everything behind with meditation as my soul guide now. As I entered this valley, I thought it was only for a time, a respite on familiar ground. A fertile soil indeed I knew it to be, but little did I know that it was there that much more would grow.

The familiar can often be met with a tinge of complacency, but not this time. As I returned to this place with fresh eyes, I saw the work of many years and the hope of many hearts. With that in mind, when I was told about the annual Youth Section gathering, 'Hands In,' I was grateful to join. Heavily centered in experience, we made yarn and collaborative artistic sculptures representing our conversations. We volunteered at the Rudolf Steiner Library and brought the world issues weighing on our hearts to light. By the time the culminating festival came around, all hands were in, and we offered art, presentations, and conversation to a larger audience. We

were left with the question, what is the longing of young people?

The rhythms that thread the annual conferences together opened before me—the study, the organizing, the logistics, and the mutual support. Biweekly meetings engaged my initiative and gave me the opportunity to see others doing the same. Here are a couple of examples of our initiatives.

Youth Section Initiatives

The Environmental Consciousness Action (ECA) group was formed in 2024. It was a challenge to know, examine, and pragmatically engage in relation with the earth. A month-long online forum took place where we were asked questions about our relationships to the local environment, our knowledge of our global supply chain impacts, and challenged to think of creative ways to act on these issues. ECA has gone on to collaborate with educational programs and continues to develop more consciousness-raising challenges, one of which is upcoming in September of 2025.³

Another initiative, True Search,⁴ began by asking questions about the role of technology in humanity's future. To challenge the monopoly of big techs' for profit hold on knowledge and the development of artificial intelligence, an open-source, charitable-giving search engine was prototyped.

I was encouraged to follow my musical aspirations, and approached Free Columbia,⁵ an arts and education initiative based in anthroposophy, about using studio space to develop my song writing. This turned into a weekly potluck and a community- supported creative sharing time. My Youth Section compatriots started supporting these evenings every week with a selfless dedication to community building that we have all found to be fulfilling. The exposure of my artistry and the community interest in my work encouraged my growth. Little did I know this



seed would blossom into the Free Columbia Residency Program,⁶ an opportunity for artists to come live for up to six months and engage in a self-directed project within the context of community.

Other Youth Section colleagues started a home schooling initiative named Chrysalis,⁷ their central question being, what is the child asking for? By developing curriculum to fit children's specific needs, this project is a radical and selfless act of service for the future and a dedication to creativity in education.

I had entered a new stream, and my roots were set; the Hudson River Valley became my home. I drove the winding roads surrounded by fall colors. I cut through the first winter snow on my snowboard, flying down the mountain. And, in the spring, all of these initiatives came together for a festival, "The Sprouts of Conscious Action." ECA had an art show and presentations of all the actions from the challenge, TrueSearch had a Q and A, and a band playing my original music performed to a full room of joyous people. Something opened.



Opening to the Future

When we open to the future, the will to realize it comes to us from it. This provided the themes of the two Youth Section summer conferences in 2024, “Opening the Future” and “Willing the Future.” The former focused on the ideas that could inspire us, and the latter on service and action. We decided it was time to do rather than to talk, simultaneously deepening our study. The importance of non-traditional ways of understanding, like art and music, became more and more important with the rise of the residency program and the dedication to our artistic gatherings. Taking on the inequities we perceive in the world within ourselves became a tangible task.

The inner development necessary to step out of systems of oppression and into graceful service is bumpy. Youth Section work is not only fun; this is about entering the stream of the world’s becoming in a state of conscious responsibility, of taking on the tasks that I can do now in my place and in my time with a heart full of joy and gratitude. The path is not easy, and for this we take company in each other.

As I sit in the early morning finishing this writing, listening to the birds and frogs, and watching the misty morning sun kiss the dew drops away to rise in all its summer glory; it seems the future is now. By the time this article comes out, we will be celebrating “The Light Between,” the 2025 annual conference at Hawthorne Valley School in Upstate New York. These various threads come through the eye of the needle and begin to weave. As I sign off from the Hudson River Valley, a prayer fills my heart that this generation far and wide may find peace in themselves and that hope may take hold. 🌱

NOTES

- 1 youthsection.org
- 2 www.nayouthsection.org; contact northamericanyouthsection@gmail.com
- 3 www.ecainspire.com
- 4 <https://www.nayouthsection.org/initiatives-1/true-search>
- 5 www.freecolumbia.org
- 6 <https://www.freecolumbia.org/residency-program>
- 7 <https://www.chrysalis-homeschool.org/>

Soren Dietzel is a saxophonist and songwriter living in New York State. He is currently working to develop a community supported, self directed, arts and music residency program at Free Columbia. Previously he remodeled houses and played in bands in Duluth Minnesota, on the magnificent Lake Superior. soren@freecolumbia.org

Creative Works from The Youth Section

Selections from the Winter/Spring 2025 edition of
the North American Youth Section publication, *Futuring Now*.

The Courtyard of the Soul

There are different kinds of fear. There is our survival instinct that keeps us safe and warns us of harm. That is good, but it is not what I am talking about here. I am speaking here about the kind of fear that holds us back from a full experience of life in all its beauty. Fear of judgement, fear of failure, fear of stepping into destiny. Fear of the responsibility of our own freedom, of our own empowerment, the kind of fear that is learned from past pain, the fear that does not serve. I am speaking here about the landscape within the human heart. The fear that is confronted in personal or spiritual development—a fear of growth or a fear of change—the fear that only exists in an illusory reflection of the inner state. An experience that may be transformed when we go in and through that fear to learn what it is teaching us and to open to guidance and nourishment from our inherent worth. To call upon the good within to see the beauty that exists without.

— SOREN DIETZEL

Subscribe to *Futuring Now*!

The second issue of *Futuring Now*, a new publication involved with the North American Youth Section, is currently available. It features various creative works from young adults across the United States, centered on the theme of “the light between,” which is also the title of an August conference we are preparing in Upstate New York: nayouthsection.org/about-the-conference

Although this publication aims to be solely print and arrive on people’s doorsteps, it needs subscribers to do so!

If you are interested in becoming a subscriber, which means receiving your own print copy, please email Adeline Lyons at adalineroselyons@gmail.com. Payment is based on a sliding scale of \$5 - \$15 per print copy, and it is a triannual publication. This means the cheapest annual subscription is \$15, while the most expensive is \$45.



**TAIWAN MURAL IN HUALIEN DURING TIME
OF EARTHQUAKE**, painting by Eva Lee

nomenclature knocks

All that remains unnamed
visits her when she has used up
all that stays named:
wrung words
til letters fell clanging
to corridor floors.

When the unnamed knock
she cracks her door
to glimpse the wordless.
Sometimes slamming,
often opening, she tells
the peaceable
from the unspeakable

& dusts her surfaces and lights
her lamps, ready to host
the unreachable.

— ADELINE LYONS

FALLING TO EARTH,
painting by Eloise Avery



The Threefold Youth House

EZRA SULLIVAN

The Youth House¹ is a new initiative of the Threefold Educational Foundation and School² in Chestnut Ridge, New York. Threefold Educational Foundation – a 140-acre community, campus, and farm only twenty miles from Manhattan – has been bringing the teachings of anthroposophy into practice since 1926, by hosting initiatives in education, spiritual scientific research, agriculture, and the arts. Twelve unique institutions, and several neighboring ones, find their home within the context of Threefold, all united in the pursuit of a modern path of initiation.

The Youth House is an affiliate of the Youth Section of the School for Spiritual Science³, and will serve as a key focal point for the work of the Youth Section in North America. The School of Spiritual Science⁴ was founded in 1923, to be a new impulse in human society, for the creation and development of spiritual research. The School has its headquarters at the Goetheanum in Switzerland, and is supported by the General Anthroposophical Society⁵ which comprises thirty-seven country societies, and 42,000 members. The School is composed of twelve sections, with the Youth Section serving the spiritual striving of the youth.

At this time, the Anthroposophical Movement is facing a major crisis of succession. Of the 42,000 members of the Anthroposophical Society globally, about 4% are under the age of 40. And

of the 20,000 members of the School for Spiritual Science, there are 300 members under the age of 40. This crisis extends to the initiatives, where the Waldorf Schools have been experiencing a chronically low supply of new teachers for many years. Meanwhile, the average age among the hundreds of participants at Rudolf Steiner's final address at Michaelmas of 1924 was thirty years old. Willem Zeylmans van Emmichoven was thirty years old when he was appointed by Rudolf Steiner to be the first General Secretary of the Anthroposophical Society in the Netherlands. Finally, the average age of the original Executive Council of the General Anthroposophical Society in 1923 was forty-six years old. New generations are not coming to the movement because what is being offered is not captivating to them.

The mission of the Youth House is to renew anthroposophy into a meaningful, legible, and practical movement for today. Anthroposophy is a path of knowing, of sourcing spiritual wisdom. Often the path can be mistaken for the destination, but the origin and destination of most spiritual traditions is universal truth. Anthroposophy's mission is to support the human soul through initiation. Initiation is a path of self-knowledge in which knowledge becomes wisdom through the birth of the true self, love. The process of initiation prepares the individual to give more, and more in freedom and service to justice.



“ THE YOUTH HOUSE IS RADICALLY
RETHINKING HOW SOCIETY COULD
REFLECT THE NOBILITY OF THE
HUMAN SOUL.

*“Justice is the human soul finding a
place to return. Justice is the day after a
long night.”*

—Orland Bishop⁶

The greatest injustice, the ultimate conspiracy, that humanity faces today is materialism. Young individuals are often the most at risk, and on the frontlines, in this battle with materialistic forces seeking to dominate attention and meaning. The

signs of struggle appear as social isolation, screen addiction, and mental health crises. But the Earth and the stars are conspiring for human beings to experience the realities prepared to become, through love. We become truly human when we choose to give our life energies to light and love rather than desire and mistrust. It is as simple as doing what one knows to be true, to develop the willingness to be ourselves.

The Youth House creates a co-working space in which young adults are mentored and empowered to develop the seeds they bring to sow into the earth. Our vision for the work of the Youth Section is not to sequester young folks off to the side where they do superficial activities, but to be a welcoming party for the future of the Anthroposophical Movement. The Youth Section is not exclusively for those who are not

yet ready to engage directly in the teachings of anthroposophy. The way anthroposophy is taught and represented, not anthroposophy itself, has to change to meet a new time. The Youth Section has this capacity: to create new thinking, art, and initiatives and host everyone in our creations.

The vision of the Youth House is a continuity of creation founded in love. To do this we renew and transform the declining forms of society and culture so that the past can give to the future. When we truly engage in a transformation process, we don't know what will come out on the other end. When a free act is not for outcome, ultimately, in creation, there is no protection for our expectations or the status quo.. Transformation goes beyond intention, and even beyond receptivity, into a third faculty of the human soul: creation. The processes of transformation are not one thing becoming another through conscious intention, conscious activity doesn't necessarily mean knowing what one will do *before* one does it. Transformation involves a certain degree of improvisation because to truly step into creation is to enter the unknown. In Genesis, the darkness was created for a distinct purpose: To provide a schooling of consciousness for the light to move towards its highest form of expression.



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The Youth House Programs

The Youth House hosts three distinct initiatives: The Youth Co-Lab Residency Program, Beginning Anthroposophy: The Threefold Intro Course (all-ages), and a venue to host activities organized by local young adults.

The Youth Co-Lab Residency Program⁷

Beginning September 2025, Threefold invites young adults to participate in a transformative residential experience in the Lower Hudson Valley

“ THE STUDY PROGRAM SERVES THE DEVELOPMENT OF THREE ARCHETYPAL FACULTIES OF THE HUMAN SOUL.

of New York State. The Co-Lab offers participants the opportunity to explore a holistic lifestyle in a spiritually oriented community. Residents will work out of their own initiative on their individual project, contribute toward Youth Section team operations, and work on the hyperlocal level in on-the-ground service work.

Residents are accepted on a rolling basis, each with their own individual commitment period. The program is full-time, strives to be tuition free; housing is included in private rooms with shared kitchen/bathroom, and food costs will be partially covered through service work and mobilization of co-investment relationships.

The program stands on three interconnected pillars:

- 1 **Study:** Developing an inner capacity for meaning
- 2 **Initiative:** Creating projects that address contemporary challenges
- 3 **Service:** Grounding wisdom in practical community engagement

Study invites the development of understanding in pursuit of becoming a better steward of the earth's potential. Much of the study sessions are conversations in which we create community with Rudolf Steiner, and other teachers, through their writings. At the core of the pedagogical approach is to incorporate the foundations of

spiritual science and the needs of the individuals present. In addition to horizontal learning, the program hosts experienced practitioners as visiting faculty.

The study program serves the development of three archetypal faculties of the human soul. In the development of our faculty of thinking, we explore epistemology, in pursuit of living thinking as a spiritual activity. For the faculty of feeling, the arts are explored with hands-on projects in eurythmy, speech and drama, sculpture, painting, music, etc. Finally, for the will faculty of the human soul, we bring in both the practical fields and the exploration of self-knowledge through inner exercises. In practical activities, residents delve into agriculture, herbalism, education, Goethean science,⁸ etc. Self-knowledge through inner exercises refers to exercising in the gymnasium of the soul by strengthening our muscles of concentration, contemplation and meditation.

The heart of the Co-Lab is **initiative**, which we engage through creating societal transformation by researching and developing spiritual, scientific and artistic initiatives and questions. The program supports the unique expression of each resident, as well as providing projects for the Co-Lab team to accomplish together. Every project has a research or inner component as well as a social and outer aspect. First we identify where our personal gifts meet the world's needs, provide mentorship, peer-to-peer collegial support, and

community feedback through regular sharing opportunities with the wider community. Finally, our accomplishments are amplified across the Global Youth Section Network.

The free initiative time can manifest in various ways: a touring theater act, a massive conference, land art projects involving masonry and carpentry, hosting intimate community conversations on polarizing topics, incubating social enterprises, etc.

Service grounds esoteric study in practical reality while developing capacities for collaboration, resourcefulness, and discipline. Through our work lives, residents participate on the operational level of community life, learning new skills, and developing new capacities. Service work connects the residents with the various institutions within Threefold Community and the neighboring Foundations, giving everyone a diversity of interaction and relationship.

Potential projects include: biodynamic farming,⁹ demolition(!), elder care at the Rudolf Steiner Fellowship Foundation,¹⁰ painting houses, landscaping, cleaning, entrepreneurship in artisan crafts (pottery, candlemaking, woodwork), etc.

Beginning Anthroposophy: The Threefold Intro Course¹¹


“Beginning Anthroposophy: The Threefold Intro Course” is an all-ages, part-time course which meets on twelve Saturdays in The Youth House from October through March. We explore anthroposophy through conversations in community with esoteric texts, lectures, and hands-on artistic experience. The course gives participants a broad view of the various paths and initiatives streaming out of anthroposophy. Anyone, of any age, seeking a greater understanding of the threefold nature of the human being - body, soul and spirit - and how to put this wisdom into practice is welcome!

Activity & Event Space

Finally, the Youth House will be available as an event and activity space for young adults living and working at Threefold and the Fellowship Foundations. Activities range from book study groups to music jam nights. Additionally the Youth House is a place of hospitality for casual unannounced social time and visitors. Stop by, meet a new friend or bring an old friend, have a cup of tea, and be welcome.

Our Vision & Call to Action

The Youth House is radically rethinking how society could reflect the nobility of the human soul. This is a beginning toward developing new forms of idealistic community that support human beings in realizing their humanity. We create a space for hospitality, engaged learning, meaningful work, biodynamic meals, seasonal festivals, exploring, creating, and transforming ourselves and our understanding together.

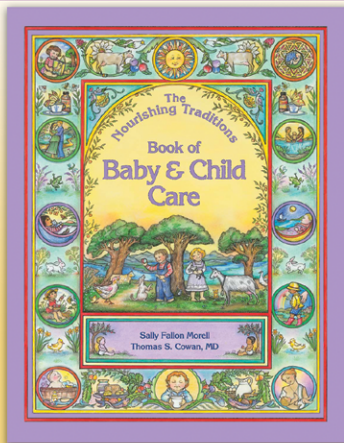
We believe that together, we can create the conditions for a new generation of spiritually awakened, practically skilled, and socially engaged young people to lead us forward. To make the pathway to anthroposophy financially accessible for all, we are currently seeking co-investment partnerships. Please visit the website for more information: threefold.org/youth 

NOTES

- 1 threefold.org/youth
- 2 threefold.org
- 3 <https://youthsection.org/en>
- 4 <https://goetheanum.ch/en/sections>
- 5 <https://goetheanum.ch/en/society>
- 6 Orland Bishop, “Sacred Hospitality & The Dynamics of Initiation,” Dialogue with Matt Seagall, posted by the PCC Forum, April 3, 2025, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fpaG7vSstM8>
- 7 threefold.org/youth
- 8 <https://www.natureinstitute.org/>
- 9 <https://threefoldcommunityfarm.org/>
- 10 <https://www.fellowshipcommunity.org/>
- 11 threefold.org/introcourse

Ezra Sullivan is based at Threefold Educational Foundation and School in Chestnut Ridge, New York, from which he works within the realms of education, gatherings and organizational structure. Reach Ezra by email at ezra@threefold.org

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Just Listen

LORY WIDMER HESS

I suspect that the most basic and powerful way to connect to another person is to listen. Just listen...When people are talking, there's no need to do anything but receive them. Just take them in. Listen to what they're saying. Care about it. Most times caring about it is even more important than understanding it.

—RACHEL NAOMI REMEN,
KITCHEN TABLE WISDOM¹

Spiritual direction, or *Holy Listening*, as the Episcopal priest Margaret Guenther called it in her classic book by that title,² is an ancient practice currently undergoing a revival. Spiritual direction originated in the fourth-century AD, among desert fathers and mothers who went to live in the wilderness when Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire. It represented a kind of quiet rebellion against the forces working to institutionalize faith and incorporate it into the unjust power structures of the time. Those

wise men and women, without any hierarchical structure or system of ordination, listened to wounded, searching souls who came to them in the desert. They might offer a question or a cryptic saying in return, but mostly they held open space for the mystery of divine love to transform lives and hearts. And during that age of terror and transition, a contemplative impulse was planted in Western culture, an impulse which has never gone away though it has often been driven underground, ignored, or overlooked.

Today, as religious institutions are crumbling while the demand for true spiritual nourishment is growing, the practice of “holy listening” speaks powerfully to many modern souls. In the twentieth century it emerged from monasteries and into the ecumenical church movement, influenced by the intersection of theology with the soul care methods of C.G. Jung³ and Carl Rogers,⁴ the growing interest in Eastern meditation techniques, and the writings of contemplative monk Thomas Merton.⁵ The 1980s were boom years for this movement, birthing many new spiritual formation and training programs

“

BEING DEEPLY, TRULY LISTENED TO
CAN MAKE ALL THE DIFFERENCE.

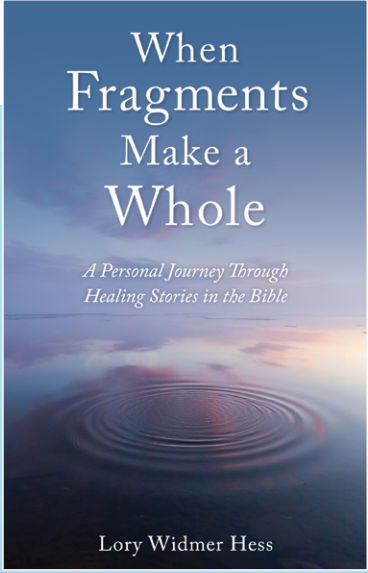
and an umbrella organization, Spiritual Directors International.⁶ Since then, the offerings have continued to proliferate, in great abundance and diversity.

Although sometimes meant to form directees into a particular religious shape, spiritual direction is more commonly practiced today in an open-ended manner that embraces interfaith dialogue and the spirit of the universally human, and is sometimes called spiritual companionship. In its quiet, humble way, it represents a truly revolutionary impulse, one entirely in line with *anthroposophia*, the wisdom of what it means to be human. It is in accord with Rudolf Steiner's statement that a modern, human-centered spiritual movement "must seek to unite people of all races and nations and to bridge the divisions and differences between various people"⁷— to which one might add the urgent need to heal the wounds of centuries of religious warfare. It is a peaceful impulse in an embattled world, a source of strength during a time when powerful spiritual forces threaten to overwhelm the vulnerable human soul.

So essentially uncomplicated is this practice that it can seem incredible for the simple gesture of "just listening" to have such a powerful effect. Yet as many who have experienced it can attest, being deeply, truly listened to can make all the difference, and though simple, it is not easy.

A Time of Crisis

I discovered the gifts of spiritual direction a decade ago, during a time of crisis. My life was unraveling, as I experienced mental and emotional instability escalating in both other people and myself. Extremely challenging relationships within my workplace, my marriage, and my family of origin were coming to a head. For a long time I had resisted the need for change, but now I was being pressed into a place where I felt there was no way out but through. Yet, nothing but more pain, more struggle, more failure and



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Whole

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incapacity seemed to lie in that direction. How could I bear it?

In this condition, unsure of my way forward, I went to church one morning, and at the bottom of the bulletin I saw a small note offering spiritual direction with a priest. I took up the invitation, and started to have regular meetings. Once a month, for about an hour, spiritual direction offered a place where I could unburden my soul and be listened to with a reverent intensity I had never before experienced. This silent, yet palpable listening activity started to shift something in me, giving me the strength I needed to undergo a disorienting process of change.

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“ THIS SILENT, YET PALPABLE LISTENING
ACTIVITY STARTED TO SHIFT
SOMETHING IN ME.

I was not counseled, nor advised, and certainly not “directed,” except in the sense of directing my *attention* to the Healing Spirit, always the unspoken presence in the room. Spiritual direction does not replace psychological counseling or other needed supports; in my case, I soon became aware that I needed many kinds of intervention for issues I’d been ignoring, from marriage counseling to trauma therapy to nutritional advice. But even as I enlisted what soon began to seem like an army of helpers, spiritual direction remained an essential source of some living substance I didn’t find anywhere else. And when my personal crisis had abated, my life transformed and transferred to another country, I sought out spiritual direction as an ongoing practice — now online, grateful not to be limited by national borders or language barriers.

After a few years, I decided to undertake a training in spiritual direction myself, and during a two-year program supervised by a Benedictine women’s community in Colorado,⁸ I practiced the art of listening. Aspiring to offer this gift to another person made me even more aware of the Spirit that deeply wishes to connect with us, but can only do so when we turn to it in total freedom. That turning is our challenge and our opportunity today.

Learning to Listen

When we learn to listen to ourselves, to one another, and to the Spirit, clearing away the noise and the hurry and the ceaseless demands on our attention, another world opens up. It requires

determination to slow down, create space, and set aside time for this other mode of living to appear, and yet when we can do so with regularity, the commitment soon proves worthwhile. A much-needed source of peacefulness and strength takes hold, the “kingdom of heaven” which manifests when we dedicate ourselves to human relationships not driven by the desire for power and control. Spiritual direction — a non-hierarchical relationship in which one person holds a listening space for another, trusting in the healing power of the Spirit — is a treasure of our Western heritage that can bear much fruit today. 🍷

NOTES

- 1 Rachel Naomi Remen, *Kitchen Table Wisdom*, Tenth anniversary edition (New York: Riverhead Books, 2006), p. 143.
- 2 Margaret Guenther, *Holy Listening* (London: Darton, Longman, and Todd, 1993).
- 3 Saul McLeod, “Carl Jung’s Theory of Personality: Archetypes & Collective Unconscious,” Updated January 24, 2024. <https://www.simplypsychology.org/carl-jung.html>.
- 4 ———, “Carl Rogers Humanistic Theory and Contribution to Psychology,” updated February 19, 2025. <https://www.simplypsychology.org/carl-rogers.html>
- 5 “Thomas Merton’s Life and Work,” The Merton Center at Bellarmine University, <https://merton.org/chrono.aspx>.
- 6 Visit <http://sdcompanions.org> for a directory of spiritual directors/companions and training programs, publications, conferences, webinars, guidelines for ethical conduct, and many other offerings.
- 7 Rudolf Steiner, *The Universal Human*, “Individuality and the Group Soul,” December 4, 1909. Ed. Sabine Seiler, tr. Gilbert Church. <https://rsarchive.org/Lectures/UniHuman/19091204p02.html>
- 8 Benedictine Spiritual Direction Training and Certification Program, Benet Hill Monastery, 3190 Benet Lane, Colorado Springs, CO 80921 <https://benethillmonastery.org/>

Lory Widmer Hess studied anthroposophy and eurythmy at Sunbridge College and Eurythmy Spring Valley, and was managing editor for the Waldorf Early Childhood Association of North America from 2006-2016. She currently lives with her family in Switzerland, where she works with adults with developmental challenges and practices spiritual direction. She is the author of *When Fragments Make a Whole: A Personal Journey Through Healing Stories in the Bible* (Florin Books, 2024). Visit her website at enterenchanted.com.

Granite Basalt Mystery

LYNN MADSEN

Reading *How Can Granite Arise from Basalt?* sparked a favorite memory: While climbing in the Teton range in Wyoming, the sense of warmth as I leaned on the granite wall was bliss. It felt like being immersed in love. Also immersed in nature and joy while climbing up a mountain on a perfect summer day and feeling strong. Was this warmth and love my imagination?

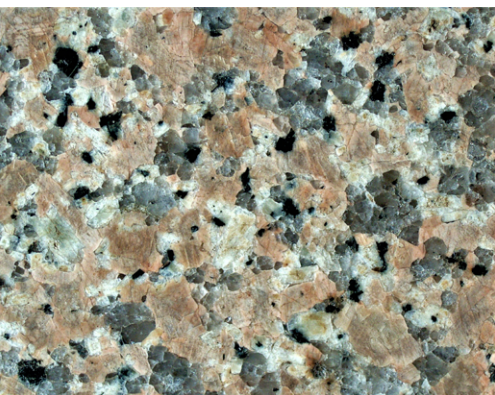
In contrast, on another Teton mountain, Mount Moran, our climbing route included scaling “The Black Dike.” As it happens, that vein of dark material is basalt (which I looked up after reading this book). I loved that climb, but not because of spending time with the basalt. There was no sense of warmth, as there was from the granite. If I visit that part of the country again, I will make a beeline to those granite slopes. I will play music and resonate with its presence.

This book confirms my memory, what my senses detected.

Let’s start with the title: *How Can Granite Arise from Basalt?* I have little knowledge of geology, which makes me a perfect foil to attempt this review. First off, I could not explain the difference between granite and basalt. Second, besides a passing knowledge of shifting tectonic plates, I have no idea how granite would arise otherwise. Below the title on the book cover is a world map placed in the middle of a granite slab that I also cannot explain—turns out to be a map of Pangea.¹ All this before even reading the first chapter.

The author, Dankmar Bosse, has spent much of his life pursuing this question with great passion and has written a much thicker volume about it, familiar to some serious geologists. *How Can Granite Arise from Basalt?* is deceptively thin, because it packs a distilled form of Bosse’s life work in the most concise read I’ve ever come across.

My first read-through included a constant dictionary search of many geologic terms so that I could at least superficially understand the



Granite with Mica, two Feldspars, and Quartz



The black Mica Biotite in this Granite separated first.



The White Feldspar in this Granite separated first

content. The second read-through was like a connect-the-dots puzzle to perceive the big picture that slowly but dramatically revealed itself. In Bosse's clear, methodical, sometimes blunt and sometimes poetic descriptions, this story, like a well-written epic novel, unfolds. Each chapter is a building block to reveal the picture at the end of the book; as a result, even a novice reader like me can answer the title's question.

substance versus basalt, which covers the ocean floors and lies beneath granite on the continents; Bosse has set the stage for the third section of the book that he has titled, "The Separation of the Nature Kingdoms from the Human Being."

I was able to follow the third section with the help of Bosse's time charts; chapters that set out the Earth's history in chronological order, begin-

“ THIS BOOK CONFIRMS MY MEMORY,
WHAT MY SENSES DETECTED.

A Walk Through

Bosse begins the book by describing the many facets of granite—coal, peat, varieties of granite, and various sedimentary layers. Note that granite is not just the granite of the rock slopes I was climbing; it takes many forms, and the evolution of the various forms of granite arise from living forms.

The second section is about the formation of our solar system and Earth. Here is where the map of Pangea takes its place. His three-page description of the seven planets is so packed with information, I have redrawn his illustration for my own use.

Integral to the formation of our solar system and its planets, Bosse then presents basalt. We begin to discern a fundamental difference between basalt and granite. This section ends with chapters about the nature of time. Once more, I will revisit these few pages from now on. My sense of time now goes far beyond my scientific training about radioisotopes.

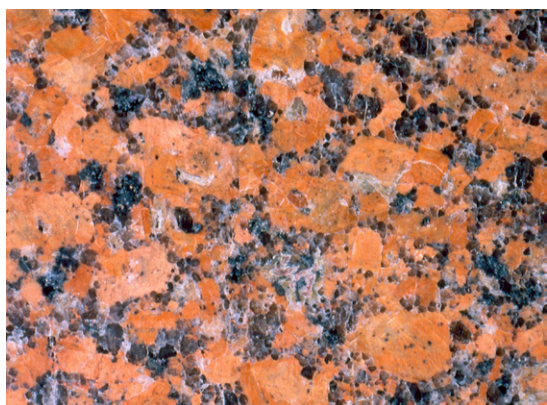
The formation of the solar system—space, and time. Granite and its relation to living

ning with the Polarian epoch of Old Saturn and on through to the present. Starting with mere suggestion of any form, on into gelatinous, albumen-like, watery-air-light-filled environments and the myriad variations of transformations from liquid and gaseous forms of elemental fire, air, water, and earth; to the more solid form of today's Earth.

In contrast, basalt holds no history with living beings. With this ever-increasing

density that took aeons to evolve into the solid planets as we know them now, Bosse's premise is that granite formed within the etheric realm (as did all living things surrounding the earth) and then eventually came to rest on its surface. In contrast, basalt makes up the planet that it fell to.

This third section, chronologically organized by epochs, encompasses the mineral, plant, animal, and human kingdoms including various combinations of these kingdoms. Bosse illuminates how their origins and evolutions relate to this magnificent comprehension of granite and how completely different is its origin from basalt.



(Left) The red Feldspar in Granite separated first



(Right) The gray, translucent Quartz filled the remaining gaps in this red Feldspar Granite

Geology and Rudolf Steiner

The book's vast majority of photos are from Bosse, and he created his own charts. In addition, interspersed throughout the book are quotes, paintings, and drawings from Steiner that increase in number as Bosse's story progresses. Bosse has created a reiteration of Steiner's cosmology embedded in his geological knowledge and insights. In particular, he includes Steiner's paintings of the earlier epochs that are also found in the book by Hilda Raske about the First Goetheanum.² Synchronously, I was reading Raske's book while reviewing this one – a bonus geologic perspective that deepens study of the Hierarchies.

Bosse ends the book with a concise and useful summary of Goethean observation. This ending holds the eloquence of a seemingly simple yet deeply wise suggestion—that one can observe our world with Goethean methods and experience a true education, different from what I recall memorizing by rote in a physical sciences course. True wealth. Thank you, Dankmar Bosse, for this gift. 📖

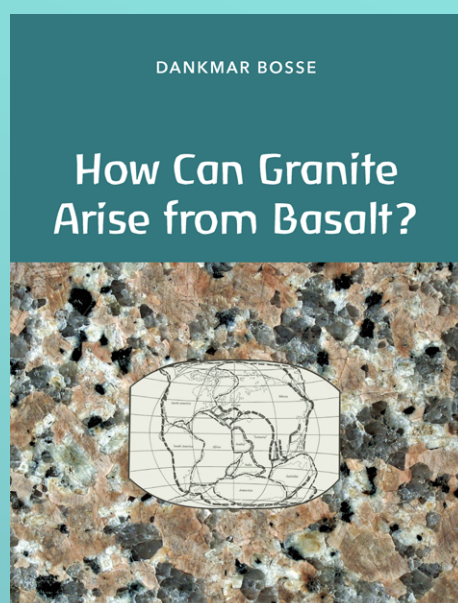
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- 2 Hilda Raske, *The Language of Color in the First Goetheanum* (Rudolf Steiner Press, 2023).

Lynn Madsen, retired from several prior careers, now lives moment-to-moment in Portland, Oregon. She most appreciates the life goal of bringing joy and love to whatever the moment offers.

Where to Buy

How Can Granite Arise from Basalt? (Earth's History from a Spiritual Scientific Perspective) by Dankmar Bosse, James Lee, and Jannebeth Roell is available from Amazon.com.

<https://www.amazon.com/Granite-History-Spiritual-Scientific-Perspective/dp/1736551353>





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Different Time, Same Story

MARY LOU SANELLI

It is hard to explain to people today, when it seems like everyone wants to visit Italy, that our neighbors once targeted my family because we are Italian.

We had only lived in rural Connecticut a few weeks.

Once my father saved enough money to leave our city apartment behind, off we moved to the cul-de-sac where people had larger houses but, I soon came to realize, smaller tolerance for people unlike themselves. Just weeks after we had moved in, someone painted “WOPS GO HOME!” on the side of my father’s station wagon.

I think the way in which I perceived myself changed the moment I saw those words.

My mother said it had to be one of the neighbor kids. I remember her saying something like, “Kids do terrible things.”

But I did not believe it was a kid, not on your life. I was only five, but I’d already begun to notice grownup things, like a certain man in the neighborhood who shook his head whenever our family drove by. I could detect his contempt for all of the European struggles he never had to face and for all the Europeans he suddenly had to. Without his consent.

My father has said that imagining the “American dream” was the only thing that got him through the Second World War. Except he did not carry the streets-paved-in-gold illusion. He defined the “dream” as living in a peaceful country. I’ll

never forget the look that came over him when he saw the slur splattered on his car, as if part of his dream had been snuffed out like one of his cigars, as if he’d finally witnessed something he’d been afraid of all along.

It was a different time, of course, when lots of us still believed that police always did the right thing, and so my father might have pretended to agree with my mother’s plea to call them, but he never did. He just got out the hose and a scrub brush.

And now I wonder: do we all see what we want to see, or can handle seeing, and sweep the rest under, scrub it away, so we can tell ourselves everything is fine, because “fine” is what we so desperately want?

That night, I heard my father cry. I had never imagined it possible for him to cry. If he needed to cry, nothing felt safe. I buried my head in the pillow.

My mother cried too but I was used to that.

I wet my bed that night and continued to for the next year. Night after night, anxiety seeped through my sheets.

There were other clues that my father was a little less secure in the budding suburbs than he let on. He likes to say that everybody in this country loves to eat, but nobody wants to grow food. He was proud of his vegetable garden. Yet he planted it on the side of our house, not in the sunnier front. I think it was because all of the men

around us wore suits to work. My father wore overalls. He still does.

Today, with all of the renewed rhetoric and lack of compassion for immigrants, well, I hope something else my mother said is true: *This too shall pass*.

I have my reasons for why I did not change my surname once I married. But the memory of my father scrubbing the side of his Ford is one of the strongest.

Years later—and why dreams come to us when they do, I have no idea—I woke with a start after seeing my father scrub at his car again. Only this time he was singing “Ain’t No Sunshine,” a popular song at the time that even today has a strong effect on me. I am sure the song pervaded my subconscious because I was heartbroken at the

time. My first boyfriend, Steven, had just broken up with me, and this is what a preadolescent crush can feel like: I thought I would just die without him.

But I must have detected that what my father missed was the sunshine of southern Italy, both literally and in the familiar snug warmth of a true sense of place.

I laid back down, shut my eyes, and I began recreating my life experience, as all artists do, by choreographing the Bill Withers song that I still love to dance to.

The body longs to remember. 

Mary Lou Sanelli is the author of fourteen books of nonfiction, fiction, memoir, poetry, and a children's title. Her newest title, *In So Many Words: Three Years, Two Months, One Me*, has been nominated for a 2025 Washington State Book Award. She lives with her husband on Bainbridge Island. For more information visit www.marylousanelli.com.

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