

LIBERTROPH MAGAZINE

A collection of art and stories about white anti-racist organizing past and present



LIBERTROPH (noun): *One who is nourished by liberation*

The root 'liber' means free. The suffix 'troph' refers to nourishment.

Plants that are nourished by sunlight are phototrophs. Heterotrophs depend on other organic compounds for nourishment, whereas Autotrophs nourish themselves.

As anti-racist organizers, we bend toward liberation for nourishment. We show up to protests to be nourished by community; we seek out art and stories to nurture our visions; we move through conflict to cultivate accountable relationships that sustain us over time.

We are Libertrophs.





Editor-in-Chief

Alyssa Smaldino

Art Director & Illustrator

Julienne Kaleta

Designer

Carmen Smith, Nice Media Group

Accountability Circle

Leah Brown, Joanna Carrasco, Matthew Manning, Hannah Perry, Dhara Shah

Teachers and Mentors

The People's Institute for Survival and Beyond, particularly Dr. Kimberley Richards, Dr. Ron Chisom, and Pat Maher, and the Undoing Racism®/Community Organizing Workshop; Dr. Resmaa Menakem and the Somatic Abolitionism practice; Nadia Owusu, Hafizah Omar, and all former members of Living Cities' Colleagues Operationalizing Racial Equity team; Chetna Mehta of the Mosaiceye Collective; disability justice leaders such as TL Lewis and Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha; Robin Wall Kimmerer; adrienne maree brown and the Emergent Strategy principles; Dr. Badi Foster; Mother Nature and her teachings

And so many more... Libertroph wouldn't have happened without you.

In the spirit of making Libertroph Magazine accessible as a resource and organizing tool, all of the content will always be available for free online. If you are moved by Libertroph and can help cover the costs of creating it, we invite you to donate or reach out about a partnership.

Learn more at libertroph.com/donate. Thank you!

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

**Nourishing
Liberatory Possibilities**

Alyssa Smaldino

5

ESSAY, VISUAL ART

**Ancestral Grief as a Portal
Towards Palestinian
Solidarity**

Julienne Kaleta

7

ESSAY

**On white people not
existing... and other truths
James Baldwin taught me**

Elizabeth Woodson

11

VISUAL ART, ESSAY

White : Silence

Stephanie Land

15

EMBODIMENT PRACTICE

**Feeling Into (and out of)
White Gatekeeping**

Annie Ferguson

17

MIXED MEDIA

Staying Troubled

kelly drumright

19

POETRY

**Mamma Etna Cries in
January**

Alyssa Smaldino

21

VISUAL ART, ESSAY

Negatives Preserved

Stephanie Land

23



INTERVIEWS

Lessons from Our White Anti-Racist Elders

Margery Freeman and David Billings

25

VISUAL ART, ESSAY

As the Sky

Taylor Maroney

33

ESSAY

Keeping Time and Time Keeping: Re-Calling Our Ancestral Calendars

Darcy Ottey, Shula Pesach, and
members of the *Re-Calling Our
Ancestors* Team

37

VISUAL ART

Myth-Keeping and Memory Making

Julienne Kaleta

43

ESSAY

Beyond Virtue-Signaling: Race and Parenting

Jeff Raderstrong

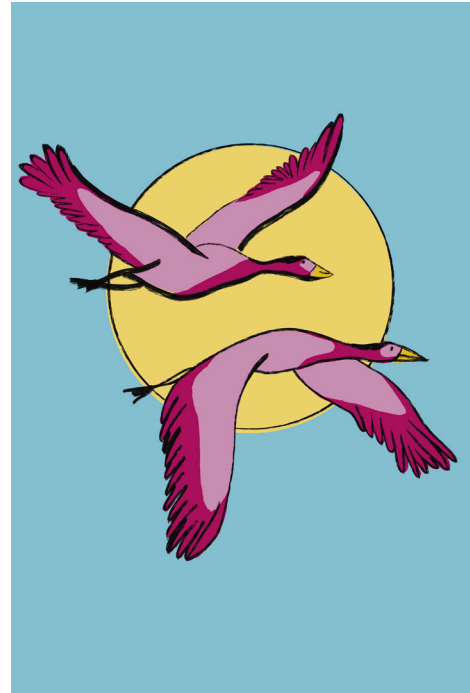
49

POETRY

Moon Day

Elizabeth Woodson

53



EMBODIMENT PRACTICE

Moving Our Internalized Racism

Laura Stein

57



Nourishing Liberatory Possibilities

Those of us with our senses attuned to *liberatory possibility* may have noticed a pattern in recent years. Across the internet, artistic and creative expressions visualize a new world order that transcends capitalism, white dominance, and patriarchy—what Joanna Macy coined “*The Great Turning*.” People are refining their understanding of the systems and cultures that dominate our violent society, and experimenting with new ways of being that value safety and care for all.



Alyssa Smaldino &
Julienne Kaleta, *Libertroph*
Magazine co-founders

I’ve been moved by the emergence of magazines that document these experiments and steward us toward collective new futures. Magazines like *Hammer & Hope*, *Gumbo*, *Womanly*, *Emergence*, and *Acacia*, to name just a few. What I love about the expression of a magazine, in particular, is its ability to shape our knowledge *and* titillate our senses: to impart words *and* images, reporting *and* stories, analysis *and* poetry.

The more inspiration I sourced from the pages of these magazines, the more my imagination expanded. I also noticed that, in most cases, they featured Black and brown artists speaking primarily to their peers. They were culturally informed and focused. I began to search for artistic expressions by white people that might inspire other white people to co-create a world where we no longer hoard power, safety, and wealth. I kept coming up short.

Through my work as an anti-racism organizer, I knew white folks were engaged in the work of recreating the world. I met organizers connecting with the descendants of the people their families enslaved and initiating reparations processes. I read about religious leaders giving their churches’ land back to Indigenous people. I participated in somatic abolitionist¹ practice groups where white people were confronting our complicity in maintaining the racist status quo. I witnessed us holding each other through the delicate process of rewiring our nervous systems so we can normalize new humanistic behaviors.

As I considered the gap between actions on the ground and the absence of art and stories about white anti-racist organizing, I could hear the questions of Black teachers and mentors such as Drs. Ron Chisom and Kimberley Richards of PISAB and Dr. Resmaa Menakem in my mind: where are the stories of white anti-racist organizing being documented? How might they be amplified as invitations for more white people to learn about and join anti-racism efforts? How can our stories open portals to liberatory possibilities?

LISTEN TO
LIBERTROPH



Each piece in this collection
is available for listening.

Listen at libertroph.com

In dialogue with my white accountability buddy, Julienne Kaleta, we decided to create a home for stories of white anti-racist organizing. We knew from the start that words were not enough. To shape a *culture* where it's okay for white people to mess up and fail and grow in our journeys toward new futures, we need art. We need visuals that soothe us as words challenge our thinking. Thankfully, Julienne's illustrations do just that, as with the visual art submissions we received—from Kelly Drumright's foraged materials-turned-movement memorabilia to Stephanie Land's meticulously-crafted sculptures, which I see as gravestones to white silence. White people are, indeed, shaping culture beyond our legacy of racism.

The pieces gathered here reflect just the tip of the iceberg in this "Great Turning." But if we could unveil the whole iceberg, it still would not be enough. We need *all* white people to organize for anti-racism, and *Libertroph* Issue 01 shows us that *any* white person can step into this movement. Elizabeth Woodson describes herself as a "12th generation descendant of European settlers;" Julienne Kaleta unearths the myths and memories of their Irish ancestors; David Billings speaks of growing up in a Mississippi town called "the most violent city on earth in 1962."

Before our ethnic cultures were melted into the pot we call America, white people represented a wide diversity of experiences globally. We all have an entry point into liberation through our distinct ancestral memory. *And*—as the *Re-Calling Our Ancestors* team reminds us—no matter who or where we come from, our people assimilated to whiteness together, "and so we must undo this together."

After reading and re-reading each of the pieces in *Libertroph* Issue 01 through a layered editing process, I am more confident than ever

that we not only *can* undo racism together, but we *are* undoing racism² together.

In Spring 2001, an editorial in the *Race Traitor* journal proclaimed, "The existence of the white race depends on the willingness of those assigned to it to place their racial interests

above class, gender, or any other interests they hold. The defection of enough of its members to make it unreliable as a predictor of behavior will lead to its collapse."³

In the inaugural issue of *Libertroph Magazine*, we see examples of white artists, scholars, and organizers whose behavior is not predicated on their race. In other words, they are slowing down with intention, rather than speeding by with the urgency of capitalism; they are giving money away, rather than hoarding it; they are speaking truth to power and embracing the conflict that follows, rather than sweeping it all under the rug. They are being nourished by liberation. They are libertrophs.

I hope their stories bring you a renewed sense of possibility. And if you are racialized as white, I invite you to join us in defecting from the harmful behaviors of the white race. There are many ways to do that, as you'll see illuminated in these pages. But choose one. Today. We can no longer afford for you to wait. Our collective humanity depends on it.

With care,
Alyssa Smaldino



¹ Menakem, Resmaa. "What Somatic Abolitionism Is." Dr. Resmaa. <https://resmaa.com/movement/>.

² PISAB. Undoing Racism® Community Organizing Workshop. <https://pisab.org/undoing-racism-community-organizing-workshop/>.

³ Garvey, J., Henson, B., & Ignatiev, N. "What We Believe." *Race Traitor* Volume 12. (Spring 2001): 105. <https://libcom.org/article/race-traitor-12>.



Ancestral Grief as a Portal Towards Palestinian Solidarity

By Julienne Kaleta

*In my dreams, there is room for all our grief.
There is time for all our grief.*

When Irish families said goodbye to those fleeing the Hunger, they would host wakes with expectations that their large, extended families would never be seen again.

In the late 1840s, my ancestors were among those fleeing Donegal, Ireland to escape an empire-induced potato famine that took place under English rule. I wonder what it was like for my Irish Catholic ancestors to say goodbye to their families forever. I hope they find solace knowing my Irish-American family is still deep in the way of knowing our second, third, and fourth cousins.

As someone five generations removed from the ancestors forced to flee, I can trace the reverberations of trauma throughout my family. In three generations preceding mine, Irish men in my family have died before they reached the age of 40. Alcoholism, violence, shame, and mental health challenges run strong in Irish-American families. A first-generation Irish-American friend told me recently, "Irish men die young, and the women live forever." We laughed sarcastically, but there's pain broiling under the surface.

We feel into our grief, sleep in it, rise in it.

Last Winter, my cousin C went missing in Manhattan. For three months, my family, friends, and treasured strangers gathered to search the strip of land where he was last seen. We lived everyday in a terrified limbo of hope and desperation. As we hung flyers in subway stations, posted on social media, and pleaded for help finding C, I witnessed with continued horror the news of thousands of worlds and lives collapsing in Palestine. I posted Instagram stories asking for support finding C, and clicked into GoFundMe links to send money for the survival and fleeing of Palestinian families in Gaza. I imagined searching for C in a city that was also being bombed, without hospitals, without regular meals, while also grieving other loved ones. I carried a stone in my chest.

In the Spring, C's body was found. The dam of fear that had been building all Winter broke open with our answered question. I felt a deluge of grief. C died at 26 years old, marking the fourth generation of a young man to die in my Irish lineage. At the wake, C's twin, Q, bravely named the carceral and mental health systems that failed C throughout his life.

When I looked at my family gathered around

me honoring C's life, I felt so proud to be of *them*. Proud of our tight hugs, our loving and meandering toasts, open tears, music-making, and courage to name hard truths even when there might be blowback. Proud of our *Irishness*. At the time, I was also witnessing steadfast and sweeping Irish solidarity with Palestine. I wondered what stories of colonization/ resistance and cultural loss/ preservation live in my family history, and what they could teach me about how to feel through my grief – for C, for Gaza, for a world that lets genocide happen.

We gather what we need and share it amongst ourselves. We hold one another.

Like me, many of us white Americans come from ancestors who fled a place that was their home for generations before. They fled to escape

By giving up parts of their Irishness, they received “safety” at the top of a racial hierarchy that was built on the enslavement of Africans and genocide of Native peoples. This was not passive – European immigrants who became white Americans enforce(d) this hierarchy through violence, instilling our power through the law.

For Irish New Yorkers, one path to whiteness was policing. My grandparents' ascent into the middle class and eventual land ownership was spurred by my grandfather's job in the (infamously Irish-American!) NYPD. Police dehumanize those they are policing to enact the racist violence entrenched in their role. The disembodiment my grandfather experienced can be passed down, often expressed as

As someone five generations removed from the ancestors forced to flee, I can trace the reverberations of trauma throughout my family.

persecution, genocide, and poverty. They fled for dreams of raising a family in a place where they might survive, or even thrive. In a Somatic Abolitionism workshop I attended, Dr. Resmaa Menakem said to those of us who live in white bodies: “You never dealt with the fleeing.”

In my family, there is a severed memory of the “before.” I grew up hearing a confusing blend of wistful nostalgia for the Old Country alongside a narrative that our familial “before” in Ireland was miserable and exchanged for a better life in the U.S. The stories of all there was to be gained by coming to the States were so dominant, I didn't grow up hearing about what was left behind. But my family's losses were great.

Upon their arrival to New York, my Irish ancestors were met with discrimination and poverty. Like many immigrants who became white, they broke ties to their culture – their names, food, language, traditional clothing, music, relationships with family in their home countries, connections to land, and more. Whether their choices were conscious or not, all of these cultural sacrifices were made in exchange for the privileges afforded by assimilation into whiteness.

alcoholism, violence, shame, and mental health challenges.

Generations of white people have learned to override and numb the horror that threatens to rise in our bodies as we witness violence enacted by one another against people of color. It immobilizes us when we are confronted with moments that should activate us. It tricks us into believing our safety depends on someone's suffering. It allows us to justify genocide.

The grief opens a door, and we walk through.

How can we free our lineages from these deceptions? How can we release ourselves from numbness to make room for the deluge of grief, rage, and horror that resides inside us? How can we hold each other through it?

I start by slowing down to feel it all. I take a breath and notice the sensations rising in my body. I put my hand to my chest, where the stone lives, and feel it soften a little. I remind myself that all is not lost.

We fall into the tastes and smells of remembrance. We tell all the stories. We get everyone's name right. We sob. We rest. We play.

As long as there has been empire and

occupation, there have been people defying it. Despite 800 years of colonization in Ireland that threatened the loss of natural Atlantic rainforest ecosystems, trees are being replanted, forests restored. Irish children are growing up learning the language of those who knew the land for centuries before them. In addition to Irish-American histories of assimilation and racism, we have also built radical alliances with Black and brown people. Irish people on both sides of the sea are abolitionists, we participate in uprisings, and we organize for the end of the Zionist occupation of Palestine. Familiarizing myself with these acts of defiance opens a portal for me to see *resistance* to racism and colonization as part of my Irish inheritance, too.

We gather seashells at the shores of death, and pass them out to loved ones to remember and hold onto. We uncover all the rubble. We find all the missing.

I will never know the depth of the culture my ancestors sacrificed, but I get to co-create what remains. I practice cultural embodiment as a means of defying the white supremacy that deceived my ancestors into giving up their culture.

I cry out for every life, library, and olive tree destroyed in Palestine. I mourn the cultural losses and trauma that generations of Palestinians will be left to reckon with. I honor every olive tree being replanted despite persistent violence, and I vow to support, in any way I can, future generations of Palestinian resistance, healing, and cultural vibrance.

My Irishness is sometimes a feeling in my gut. I'm uncovering and following it like a beloved return. Some of the Irish culture I know now looks like backyard parties with my many cousins, swimming gleefully in the coldest ocean temperatures, and remembering a lifetime by the water and in the woods with C. It looks like a deep spiritual connection to nature and dreams. It looks like story-gathering from my elder storytellers to grow our cultural memory. It looks like pausing to feel the tides of grief rising in my body. It looks like showing up in solidarity with people across the globe who are experiencing the violence of occupation and colonization.

We raise our hands and look to the sky. We say, No more. The bombs stop. The shrapnel turns to seeds. Ancestral grief pours down, nurturing a world where Palestine is Free. 🌱



REPARATIVE PHILANTHROPY



**BOLD
VENTURES**

We partner with wealth holders to design bold, community-centered solutions that shift power, repair harm, and advance liberation.

Learn more at alltogetherbold.com



On white people not existing... and other truths James Baldwin taught me

By Elizabeth Woodson

Mr. James Baldwin taught me that white people don't exist. He is explicit: "There *are* no white people." This is from his essay entitled: "On being white... and other lies."

I started reading Mr. Baldwin's oeuvre in 2018. I planned to do that clever millennial thing where you read all of an author's works in one year. It is now 2025, and I am still reading James Baldwin. Thank god. I never plan to stop.

One thing I've noticed across his works is that he did not often say or write "white people" – he used more accurate language:

- They
- The populace
- Citizens
- Co-citizens
- Countrymen
- Americans
- Ordinary Americans
- Patriots
- Pioneers
- The free and the brave
- The defenders of public space
- The liberal community
- Those who call themselves white
- Those who think of themselves as white
- Those who believe themselves to be white
- Those who have betrayed themselves into being white
- That identity which calls itself White
- So thoroughly insulated a people
- The great, vast, blank generality

How did white people get this way? Mr. James Baldwin asks. And answers: "By deciding that they were white. By opting for safety instead of life. By persuading themselves that a black child's life meant nothing compared with a white child's life. By abandoning their children to the things white men could buy. By informing their children that black women, black men, and black children had no human integrity that those who call themselves white were bound to respect."



I began to get a visceral sense of this when I worked at the Equal Justice Initiative in Montgomery, Alabama. My job as part of the team that opened the Legacy Museum was to research the primary sources that documented white people enacting racial terrorism. EJI is brilliant in its framing of the content: instead of focusing on the victims, visitors are required to look into the eyes of the white perpetrators. And in those eyes, you witness the monstrosity that Mr. Baldwin describes. It is an emptiness. A source-less-ness. As Dr. Resmaa Menakem describes, there is a “ferality.”¹ Where we know there should be sentience, there is instead disconnection. And those eyes are the same, from the enslavers to the lynchers to the segregators to the police – and the communities around them that did nothing to stop them.

This includes my own family. I am the 12th generation of European settlers in what is now called the United States. We have chosen, again and again, to enact and/or to passively observe violence, from the creation of racialized chattel enslavement through each era of racial terrorism. That data leaves one in a bleak place. I recall a question that visitors to the EJI sites would often ask – how do you stay hopeful? My Black colleagues would share powerful testimony of their ancestors choosing love, dignity, and humanity despite the brutality, and how that continues to fortify them today. I never answered that question. Knowing my family line, what could I say?

But, Mr. Baldwin did not leave us without instructions. I think of *Notes of a Native Son*, a book of essays that he published originally in 1955. In 1984, he wrote a new introduction in which he reflects on the absence of social change in those three decades. He writes, “The people who think of themselves as White have the choice of becoming human or irrelevant.” At first, I got stuck on irrelevant – that hurt my ego. But as I kept re-reading, I finally heard him – this is our choice. Every day. To deny or to acknowledge. To destroy or to repair. To remain sick or to heal. And like learning to play an instrument or a sport, it is a muscle that gets stronger with practice.

¹ Menakem, Resmaa. “White Fertility.” Dr. Resmaa. <https://resmaa.com/2022/06/08/white-ferality/>.

Which brings me to the second truth that Mr. James Baldwin taught me: you cannot harm someone, deny it, and be undamaged.

For 400+ years, the people who believe ourselves to be white (have) perpetrate(d) harm against Black and brown people, our children watching, and call(ed) it not only permissible but required. Brutality committed or witnessed, unacknowledged and unrepaired, for generation upon generation, results in the suffering of those harmed and also the internal distortion of the perpetrators.

Mr. Baldwin explains: “There is a great captive Negro population here, which is well publicized but not well known. And what is not publicized, and what is not known at all, is that there is a great captive white population here too. No one has pointed out yet with any force that if I am not a man here, you are not a man here. You cannot lynch me and keep me in ghettos without becoming something monstrous yourselves.”

***This is our choice. Every day. To deny or to acknowledge.
To destroy or to repair. To remain sick or to heal.***

Our most powerful options for changemaking are the choices that we make every day within ourselves and with the “white” people and institutions we’re in relationship with. Do we respond to Uncle Arthur at the dinner table? Do we speak up at our team meeting? Do we do so with love and rigor, instead of with disdain and impatience? We don’t need to phonebank into a swing state or leave our communities to participate in the movement for justice. All of us already are the front line of something. What could the world look like if we took on the responsibility, the mandate, the joy of contributing that which is uniquely ours, every day? As indigenous wisdom teaches us, when every being within an ecosystem understands and plays its role, that ecosystem thrives. No wonder ours is on fire. The missing part of the movement to achieve justice and liberation has always been the people who call ourselves white not even trying to understand what our role is, much less practice it.

Now can be the time we break that pattern and initiate a new way of being. Mr. Baldwin reminded us: “I do not believe in the twentieth-century myth that we are all helpless, that it’s out of our hands. It’s only out of our hands if we don’t want to pick it up.”

Choosing to pick it up takes courage, but it really does feel good. I’m now organizing with Woodson family members to acknowledge and to repair the harm white Woodsons have enacted. Every other Sunday, white Woodsons meet alone together to work on our specific reparative actions that are in direct response to the violence that our forefathers enacted. Once a month, we meet with our Black Woodson cousins and advisors who provide guidance and redirection. We are practicing new ways of being, and developing healthy identity and culture for our family. So far, this is looking like:

- developing new holidays to mark the year as a family, such as an annual day of mourning and commemoration in August when our white family members began enslaving African people in 1619, and a celebration of Dr. Carter G. Woodson on his birthday every December 19
- supporting our Black cousins with immediate financial needs
- making quarterly donations to the Pamunkey Indian Tribe, whose land my family colonized
- individually and collectively learning about the Pamunkey peoples’ history and culture
- initiating contact with the Virginia Museum of History and Culture to rewrite their description of our family’s role in the violence against the Pamunkey Indian Tribe. The current curation is white-washed and untruthful, specifically as it relates to a gun my family used to murder Pamunkey people which remains on display there in an exhibit titled, “Taking Aim”

We range in age from 14 to 91, and live all across the country. Every day, it is hard. And every day, we are finding our way back to each other, back to the truth, back to our bodies, and back to humanity.

In this 101st year since James Baldwin’s birth, I am so grateful to him. Thank you, Mr. Baldwin, for teaching those of us who think of ourselves as white that there is indeed another path. A path to becoming healed and whole and healthy. And that it is ours to choose.

Your Communications Partners



STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS AND CONTENT CREATION

nicemediagroup.com



White : Silence

By Stephanie Land

White : Silence is the first sculpture in a body of work on whiteness. Over the course of its creation, like whiteness, it has taken many forms — a pile of bones, a pyre, a burial. But whiteness is not a grief we attend to, it is the house — the church — we build personally, culturally, and systematically to insulate ourselves at the expense of others.

I grew up in the John Hughes-like suburbs of Chicago in the 80's and 90's where, to white people, race was a thing of the past. Possibly perceived as being 'solved' in the decade or two that followed the Civil Rights Movement. Cary, Illinois was a town of 90% white, 6% Latino, 2% Asian, 1% Black, 1% Native, where discussing diversity, race, or the role that the white person in America had played and was continuing to play out, was unthinkable. Although race surrounded us in the everyday news and in pop culture, we didn't speak about it. We were the observers of race and felt we had nothing to do with it because we were "race-less."

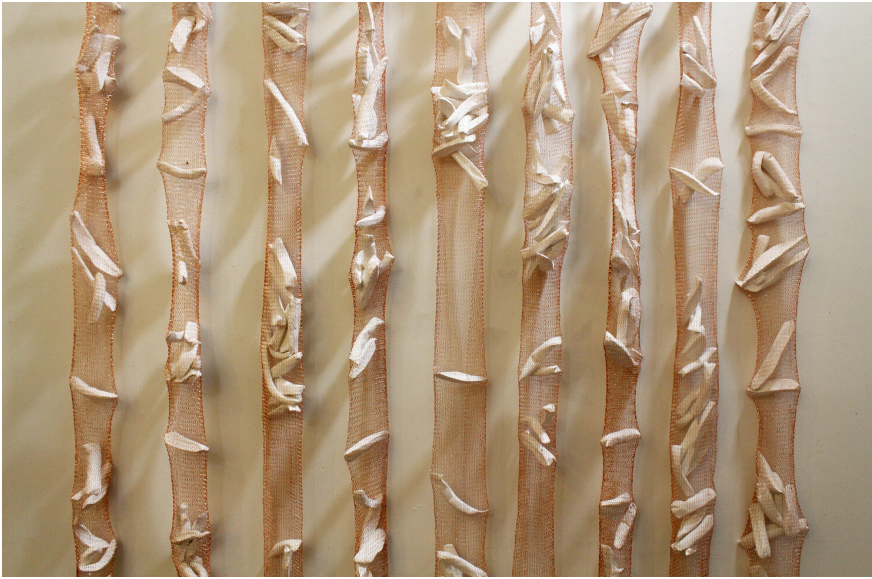
We didn't have to have "the race talk," as families of color are forced to for their survival, and so we learned that whatever being white meant in the world, it wasn't something we'd ever be expected to confront or articulate. There would be no personal events, no hurtful interactions to prod us into a family meeting about how our skin color affected our life, livelihood, personal survival, or identity. Our identity was a non-identity. It made us safe, impenetrable.

Our predominantly white suburb was surrounded by other predominantly white suburbs, all of them likely created by white flight - the big city of Chicago, with segregation problems of its own (though still more diverse than the suburbs), was just far enough away to not make any impact. With a historical whiteness in our stories, in our actions, and in our assumptions of society, our ignorances had their own ignorances. But ignorance was not a word I or anyone I knew was taught to associate with whiteness.

For all white families, whiteness is the silent narrator to every story we tell. Over time, the silence forms itself into a habit, a catch — all of being able to talk around a thing. In whiteness, we become like trees trying to deny their roots.

This is the trouble with silence - it becomes a place of comfort for the difficult things to be tucked away. My silence has been my privilege and the root of my harm, onto others and myself. And too, the slow speed at which I have been able to confront my white silence and come to my understanding of race in privacy, as a white person, is my privilege and my inheritance.

An avid letter writer, I had a 15 year history of letter correspondence with my maternal grandmother. Between us there were generational lifetimes of silence around so much, including whiteness. *White : Silence* is comprised of more than 800 pieces of alginate cast into the bottom of envelopes, dried and individually sanded down. The process was tedious, repetitive, difficult, but also quiet enough for me to begin to think and speak out loud the silence and secrets around the history of my own whiteness — each piece cast in an envelope, like a message in a bottle, a conversation I am having with the ghost of my grandmother. *White : Silence* is an attempt to investigate the complicity of whiteness, and a call to action to investigate the white self, family, and structure. To understand that as a white person in America, whiteness is a part of everything we do, from the cultural spaces we're allowed into, to the relative safety with which we walk down the street, to the conversations our families didn't and still don't have to have. 🌱



White : Silence



Feeling Into (and out of) White Gatekeeping

By Annie Ferguson

LISTEN TO
THE MEDITATION



INTRODUCTION

I have spent the past few years studying white people who support racial equity, looking at where difficult emotions come up and how they cause us to get stuck, do less, or leave the movement. In addition, I have been studying how some white antiracists manage those challenging emotions in order to stay involved in organizing work in healthy, productive ways. The goal of my research is two-fold:

- to reduce the harm caused by white people to activists of color and the movement, and
- to respond to movement calls that ask white people to 'go get our people,' figuring out how to recruit more white people into the antiracist movement – *and* keep them engaged.

My research (61 interviews and 17 months of activist ethnography*) demonstrates that emotions are a major challenge to both of those goals. While lots of different emotions came up – probably every emotion imaginable! – the emotion that was **most commonly mentioned** as limiting white antiracist action was fear,

specifically, the fear of making a mistake that resulted in harsh judgment or criticism and being removed from the community.

Before you roll your eyes! This fear comes directly from a phenomenon that I imagine many of us will recognize, that I call **white gatekeeping**: white people having extreme and perfectionist standards for themselves and other white people. In other words, many of us think our harsh judgment of other white people is a strategy to:

- 'protect' people of color or multiracial movement spaces (although whether we can or should seek to 'protect' people or spaces is worth further examination!), or
- show up as the best possible antiracist or even, a Good White Person.

Yet, in reality, our judgments and harsh critique are causing real harm to ourselves, to other white people, and to the movement's progress. White movement cultures that encourage perfectionism and harshly judging

ourselves and other white people make us so scared of making a mistake that we wind up stepping back entirely, doing less, or showing up in ways that are really hampered by that fear - awkward, uncomfortable, and struggling to form genuine connections.

The people I interviewed also talked about how the criticism *and* the fear of making mistakes are coming from specific characteristics of internalized racial superiority: binary thinking, superiority/inferiority,

White movement cultures that encourage perfectionism and harshly judging ourselves and other white people make us so scared of making a mistake that we wind up stepping back entirely, doing less, or showing up in ways that are really hampered by that fear.

competition, individualism, perfectionism, and punishing/carceral thinking. I know that many of us have been hearing more and more from healing justice and transformative justice movements, as well as others in the antiracist space, that we need to approach each other with care and an eye towards mutual aid. And yet! Many white antiracists continue to act like white people are far more deserving of their critique than their care.

My research highlights that dismantling these specific forms of internalized racial superiority is critical to our ability to be more effective in our own antiracist organizing, in recruiting more white people to the movement, and in transitioning from an individualizing, punishing mindset to a collaborative one that can truly work towards mutual liberation. We can have a critical analysis and hold people to a high standard... with love.

I have developed this meditation because perhaps it isn't enough to know we *should* engage differently with other white people. Perhaps we need practice feeling into the judgment, superiority, and perfectionism, so that we can start to recognize the somatic signs (aka body sensations) that pop up. The meditation also offers practice of a different path, bringing us to emotional states where we can feel the somatic difference in taking a more collectivized, caring mindset.

More on the meditation:

- We are going to go through a few different moments or emotional experiences together. Some of these might feel uncomfortable. I'm going to ask you to feel into the corners of things that don't feel good, as well as things that do feel good, so that we can start to differentiate and discern between feelings in the body. I welcome you to really try to put yourself into the moments and feelings I describe so you can attune to how and where each moment shows up in your body. That attunement will help us pick up on judgment more quickly and shift it more quickly.

- I'm going to share an example that might trigger judgment, but if you find your mind going in a different direction or remembering a past mistake you've made and you start feeling shame and prickly instead, I invite you to try to stay with us. We've all been there. But for the purpose of this meditation, stay with us.

- I have never done this before! So my thanks for your grace, in advance, through any weird noises or errors I might make, and I enthusiastically welcome any feedback you might have.

This research and meditation are grounded in the work of so many people who fight to eradicate oppression and build a new world, including all of my research participants and thought partners, as well as Frantz Fanon, James Baldwin, Toni Morrison, bell hooks, Deborah Vargas, Laura Aguilar, Frank Wilderson, Bayo Akomolafe, Prentiss Hemphill, adrienne maree brown, Ruth Frankenberg, Shelly Tochluk, Resmaa Menakem, and truly, a thousand others. The background music on the meditation comes from Kevin MacLeod who offers the track under Creative Commons licensing on incompetech.com.

Ultimately, I hope this meditation supports white people in enhancing and further humanizing our antiracist work.



**Activist ethnography means that I observed an organization focused on engaging white people and that I participated in that organization as an active member through that time.*



Staying Troubled

By kelly drumright

I can't remember the exact time when I pivoted toward foraged and repurposed materials, but I do remember why: a bone-deep realization that there's no "away" to throw anything to.

After many years of ongoing study of anti-racist and anti-colonial frameworks and movements, a core teaching of interconnectedness landed viscerally and has since unfurled in my art and mutual aid practices. Aspirationally, I always want to be troubling whiteness and settler-ness, those impulses that have me sub/consciously oriented towards anthropocentrism, disposability, individuality, novelty, purity, and urgency in myriad ways. "Staying with the trouble" (Donna Haraway shoutout) for me means an ongoing commitment to learning from, materially supporting, and following the lead of the beings most negatively impacted by the oppressive systems from which I benefit.

And then there's the constant struggle to strike a balance between A) shutting the fuck up about the things I'm doing (wary of performative activism and the surveillance State) and B) speaking/stepping the fuck up as necessary (Black Lives Matter! Free Palestine! Land Back! Being queer/trans is cool, actually!). I keep coming back to James Baldwin's wisdom: "The role of the artist is exactly the same as the role of the lover. If I love you, I have to make you conscious of the things you don't see."



Decolonization or Extinction

The pieces included here center on postcards mailed by two incredible organizations that I myself support and encourage others to as well: The Red Nation and Critical Resistance. The postcards are displayed alongside beads, dried botanicals, paint, paper, roving yarn, scrap metal, silk thread, and wire on canvas.

"Decolonization or Extinction" includes a postcard by The Red Nation (therednation.org), an indigenous media organization that publishes a phenomenal podcast in addition to print titles.

"Towards Liberation" includes a postcard from Critical Resistance (criticalresistance.org), an organization working to abolish the Prison Industrial Complex.

I imagine folks might not give mailers like these a second thought (*skims postcard* "That's neat. This can be recycled, right?"). Or, if I'm being optimistic, maybe they end up as talismans on someone's fridge or altar. Rather than dispose of these movement ephemera, I wanted to honor and archive these artistic objects while embracing my particular flavor of multimedia chaos. 🌱



Towards Liberation



Mamma Etna Cries in January

By Alyssa Smaldino

*Just steps from Porto dell'Etna, the man at the market proclaims with a heavy heart:
"I've just returned from Etna. The snow is already melting! In January!"*

so white, the crashed waves
not the white of our ways,
the white of snow,
 freshly fallen
 on her slopes
 before becoming
 p r e c i p i t a t i o n
 pioggia nel patio
 her tears falling
 too soon
the white of our ways
turning white snow
into white, crashed waves



RELATIONAL FACILITATOR:

ONE WHO TENDS TO THE
HEART AND SOUL OF OUR
ORGANIZATIONS AND
MOVEMENTS FOR JUSTICE
AND LIBERATION

WE ALL IMPACT CULTURE.

AT COURAGE, WE'RE NURTURING A FIELD OF SKILLED, CONFIDENT AND LOVING
FACILITATORS COMMITTED TO FOSTERING CARE, MUTUALITY, AND SOLIDARITY.

WWW.COURAGEOFCARE.ORG



Negatives Preserved

By Stephanie Land

In the exhibit *Negatives Preserved*, I follow America's story of segregation through my family's history of land, alongside the creation of America's suburbs, and my own birth and upbringing in Midwestern sundown towns in Wisconsin and Illinois. The use of photography, mapping, sculpture and the archive, allows me to swing between the micro and macro, and ask how one white family's home ownership affects Black and brown families in a country whose laws and policies continue to be inherently racist.

The point of departure begins with the archival photographs of my great-great-grandfather, JC Land, who was born in Grand Island, New York, in the mid 1800's and moved to Waukesha, Wisconsin in the 1870's. I traveled to Waukesha in 2021, to learn more about my first generation German-American ancestor and to unpack how a traveling portrait photographer, within the first few years of his arrival, managed to secure a brick and mortar photo studio along with three other buildings, including a large house on Main Street. Through the experience of walking while documenting with photography

and video, I retraced the steps of my great-great-grandfather, visiting site specific locations in Waukesha while uncovering his archive in the Waukesha County Museum Research Center.

Main Street combines a replica of an archival photograph by JC Land and an intervention of moss. Photographed from the top of City Hall, I was taken aback by the size of the home on Main Street, owned by my great-great-grandfather soon after arriving in Wisconsin. My only choice was to travel to Waukesha and walk the street where this home once stood. The piece becomes a photographic intervention, disrupting the romanticism that photographs can hold, and questioning the ways in which this property was obtained.

Upon return from Waukesha, I began to investigate the policies that likely benefited my family throughout the past 150 years: from the Homestead Act to the Dawes Act, from the GI Bill after WWII to redlining and suburban sprawl. In the sculpture *Homesteads, 1878-1998*, I use textiles to create a generational archive of owned family homes. The structure alludes to the

Main Street





Homesteads, 1878-1998



White Flight

domestic—a white picket fence or fabric invoking a laundry line; both tools that signal home while defining the outline of one’s property. With the familial archive alongside my own photography, I attempt to understand how history determines who continues to have access to land.

The show’s central statue, *White Flight*, employs alginate cast in envelopes, to engage the intimate violence of white silence and the things that remain unspoken about. The castings, though seemingly contained, thrust out like shards to show the violence that came with white communities. Considered an unearthing, *White Flight* speaks to the stories that weren’t told across generations, the histories of entire populations, unrecognized.

An archive reveals only the perspectives of those chosen to be preserved within it. What is not said contains more history than ever was told. In JC Land’s archive there is an unawareness that from the 1880s, and at the

tail end of Reconstruction, towns throughout Wisconsin explicitly barred Black and brown families from integrating white communities. Also not shown is the backlash to the abolition of slavery, the formerly enslaved, or the forced displacement to Oklahoma and the West, of the many Indigenous populations, including Kiikaapoi (Kickapoo), Peoria, Bodwéwadmí (Potawatomi), Očhéthi Šakówiŋ (Sioux), Hoocąk (Ho-Chunk) and Myaamia (Miami). The pieces in *Negatives Preserved* ask the viewer to consider these omissions as we observe land, the archive, and a white family’s history in America.

Investigating beginnings and middles instead of endings, *Negatives Preserved* is an examination into land and the histories untold, its privileges informing the narratives we have. The show asks for white Americans to view American histories from a more truthful lens, confronting the ways one participates in and upholds white supremacy. 🌱



INTERVIEWS

Lessons From Our White Anti-Racist Elders

By Margery Freeman and David Billings



In 2012, Sandy Bernabei interviewed Margery Freeman and David Billings for the AntiRacist Alliance Youtube page. The Libertroph team asked them if we could uplift these lessons again, with a new introduction from Margery and David. The interview transcripts have been edited for brevity and clarity.

VISIT THE WEBSITE
FOR THE FULL
VIDEO COLLECTION



INTRODUCTION

Reading the transcript of these 2012 interviews we did with Sandy Bernabei, we were struck by their positive and hopeful tone. It seemed that much of our anti-racist organizing was bearing fruit: Organizing to challenge white supremacy was gaining steam across the country, even worldwide. Many non-profits, schools, healthcare, and judicial systems were adopting antiracist principles and practices.

Yet history has taught us that white supremacy always fights back when challenged. The current catastrophic actions being taken by federal as well as some state and local governments to re-assert white supremacy create fear and even hopelessness – as they are intended. Our colleague Barbara Major explains: This anti-democratic movement is gaining power *because* our broad-based anti-racist movement has been so strong! It should be no surprise. History also shows our way forward, with hope: As we organize together – inside our institutions and in our communities – with clear anti-racist principles, we will regain the momentum to build an even stronger and equitable multiracial democracy.





INTERVIEWS WITH **MARGERY FREEMAN**

FROM RADICAL ACTIVIST TO ANTIRACIST

My name is Margery Freeman and I'm an activist. I've been part of the People's Institute for Survival and Beyond work since the early 1980s. One of the stories I like to tell is the fact I came into the work as an antiracist activist having a long history – I had already spent 30 years calling myself a radical activist, doing socialist work, working for different causes—the Civil Rights Movement, the anti-war movement, the women's movement, and so I thought I had all of the bonafides, all of the credentials for being able to call myself a radical activist.

But when I went to my first Undoing Racism® Workshop in 1983, I was very angry because I realized that what had happened to me was that I had not really understood what I was doing. I hadn't had any kind of framework. I was just doing good work, which is such a common thing for those of us who are white and educated women to do—we love to help people and so we go to work. And as Jim Dunn once said, you know, he loves to help people who are sick, but it doesn't give him the right to go and work on them. And that's what I was doing. I was working on them. I was doing good work but it was not work that was very effective.

I had the good fortune of being mentored by both Jim Dunn and Ron Chisom as well as by my husband David Billings and others whom I had known—Jim Hayes and others in the New Orleans area where I was living at the time. Having them

be part of my learning was just essential. And one of the things that happened in our life is that soon after I had been introduced to the People's Institute, David and I moved to New York for a couple of years and we were living one year in Englewood, New Jersey, and it was the very year that Jim Dunn, one of the co-founders of the People's Institute, had been diagnosed with cancer. And he was very sick and he was in New York and couldn't live by himself, so he came to live with us at our house in New Jersey with his new baby and his wife, for the spring of 1985. It was like an intensive tutorial. Here is a man that people think is not going to be around long for this world, but everything he did and everything he said was always about helping people to find themselves, to get clear about who they were, and to become more effective in the work they wanted to do. So his impact on my family was profound. Our teenage son, 15-years-old, our 12-year-old son, both were deeply impacted by having this experience, and I learned so much from just watching his interactions with people. When the People's Institute teaches something like, *in order to be effective organizers you have to build relationships*, I was living that very lesson in my house with my children, watching the way in which this profound and deeply humane person was able to always be listening to other people, always being able to take time with other people. It was a wonderful experience for me and I learned so much from that.

ANTIRACISM CAN BE FUN & FEED OUR SOUL!

One of the things I learned from living 35 years in New Orleans is that you have to have a good time doing what you're doing. As Joe Barnes once said, "If white people see anti-racist work as sacrificial, we're not going to do it." It's got to be something that feeds our souls. It's got to be something that builds our humanity and relationships with a wide group of people. So when David and I moved to New York, the group here said, "We want to have a welcome party!" It was a potluck, and we had a really good time. There wasn't an agenda, it was just an enjoyable time. I said to the group that was assembled at that first meeting in November 2004, "You know, maybe we should do this every month." The people in the room said, "Nah, we're too busy. We can't possibly just take time to enjoy one another." And I said, "Well, let's try it." Because that's really one of the things that we have to learn how to do, is how to be together and just enjoy one another's company.

So we started having anti-racist potlucks every month, and we've had them every single month for the last 6.5 years. Hundreds of people have come to them and they've had a good time, and they've got to know one another. One of the things that's been fascinating is, occasionally it'll be largely a white group, for example, and a person of color who's new will be visiting, and they will sit there wondering why they're there. And then they'll hear this informal conversation about anti-racist work. They will be so encouraged; they'll say, "I've never heard a group of white people sitting together over food and having a good time and talking as anti-racists." It's informal, it's good, it's fun, it's enjoyable. But what we also have done is have meetings and discussion groups all the time so people can come in and out to deepen their understanding, to start to build relationships. Romances that have grown, and a lot of wonderful relationships have developed over those years.

When David and I realized we were going to be moving back south, we started to develop a larger group of people who we call the leadership development group. And it was the same people who were using anti-racist principles to do what they were doing. We brought this group together and said, "Look, we've got to be able to sustain this work over time. And the way we can sustain the work is if every person in the room"—there were maybe 40 or 50 people in the room—"takes this as your way of doing your work." And so for the last year and a half we've been having conversations building that relationship among these different people. By the time David and I moved back down to Mississippi, we realized there was a strong group of people from all walks of life—old people and young people, Black, Latino, Asian American and white—all working together. Now some would say—"Margery, you're putting on a false front." I don't think so. I watch these relationships, I watch the connecting with people over the phone, through emails, getting together for coffee. That's what takes this work to a different level. That's what makes it a way of life.

CHANGING EDUCATION IN GREENSBORO, NORTH CAROLINA

One of the things that we often are asked is, "How are things changing as a result of our work?" In the education world, the change is coming very slowly. Sometimes it can be discouraging. We see very good examples of change that's happening, but it's pockets of change.

Greensboro, NC is a place where there are shifts in the way policies are being made for the curriculum, purchasing, buildings, and more. So the people in NC who are our friends and allies there are working both within the system and outside of the system. Building a base outside of the system, in the community, and then building a core group of people inside the schools who are working together. This outside and inside effort is really making a difference in that area. Not only has the school board been through the Undoing Racism Workshop, but they meet monthly as race caucuses to continue to deepen their understanding of what the Undoing Racism analysis is meaning for the schools and the school district.

You have to be able to get a cadre of people inside the school working together with the people in the community who are the parents and the advisers and the leaders in the community so that when they work together they can speak with a voice that's going to be heard by the powers that be and start the changes that are going to be made.



INTERVIEWS WITH **DAVID BILLINGS**

ROLE OF WHITE PEOPLE IN UNDOING RACISM MOVEMENT

I'm David Billings. I'm 77 years old now in 2025, but since my teens I've been very fascinated with the concept of race, and particularly my own race. You know, no one discussed it. No one talked about it. It's unbelievable, now, in this country, thousands of people who became white in the United States are engaging the whole question of: *what is the role of white people in the social justice movement?* It's incredible. When the Institute was started in 1980—I would later learn of the work of Paul Marcus in Boston—but at that time I didn't know any white people that were struggling with the question of what it meant to be white.

I, along with Diana Dunn, Margery Freeman, and others, started a group called European Dissent. Because we took up the challenge of learning to relate to each other as white people and not depending on our relationship with

people of color in order to feel that we were whole. A lot of us were living vicariously through our relationships with people of color. Now that discussion is going on all over the United States. The key is to move that discussion to organizing because—particularly those of us in the white activist intelligentsia role—we will talk something to death. But it's very difficult for us to say, *okay, now let's go out there and make the mistakes. Let's go out there, get our hands dirty.* And a lot of that's going on. I'm very pleased with it.

So that's been my life... I grew up in Mississippi. I was very much in a white supremacist environment. There was a lot of violence. My hometown was called the most violent city on earth in 1962. But even there now, there are people grappling with the question of *how do we move towards equity in this society?* That's been incredible.

ANTI-RACISM BRINGS PROGRESSIVE MOVEMENTS TOGETHER

Radical whites were—in my experience—often not very pleasant to be around. We didn't know how to have fun, even with each other. In the circles that I moved in, we thought that having fun was somehow the equivalent of slacking off on the work that needed to be done. So it's very hard to organize any other white people because they said, you know, I don't want to go there and hear y'all beat up on me for not doing this or not doing that. So you have to learn how to have discussions that you can organize with.

The great failing of a lot of our work as, whatever you call us—liberated whites or anti-racist whites—is that we can't organize outside our own circle. So we meet each other in different venues but it's the same ones of us. So we have to be able to respect other white people, to organize with them, to not judge them, to be familiar with their music, to be familiar and be approving, in many ways, of how they live their lives. And not just scold all the time because it doesn't help build anything. And I see that a lot more now than I did at first: white people genuinely learning how to be together, to be in the movement and appreciate our own history.

There have been a lot of white anti-racists in history (they didn't necessarily call themselves that), but they're not in the history books. So we grow up as white people only hearing about white people who did terrible things to others. But there have always been white people who spoke out against enslavement, or the massacre of the indigenous. There were always white people there. There are white people in every photograph of the Civil Rights era, but they're never named. And you wonder: *Who is that nun? Who is that? Who's that person in the back?* If you look at that wonderful, iconic picture of Rosa Parks sitting in the Montgomery Bus and refusing to give up her seat, there's a white man sitting right behind her, but he's invisible. You're never told who he was. Well, he actually was a photographer for Look Magazine who had an incredible career, as did others, photographing. So we need that history, and we need to keep our spirits up, and to not flail ourselves. A lot of us—we just beat ourselves up all the time for what we haven't done. And while there's a point at which I guess that's necessary, it can't be that which describes our relationships. Most people are just not going to respond to that.

There have always been white people who spoke out against enslavement, or the massacre of the indigenous. There were always white people there.



Illustrated recreation of famous photo of Rosa Parks seated on a bus with Nicholas C. Chriss behind her

TRANSFORMATIONAL QUALITY OF UNDOING RACISM

The truth is that this is a race-constructed nation, and we all know it somewhere in our psyche. And yes, there are other forms of oppression, but race is The Great Divide. It is the Rubicon we've never crossed. And in the Undoing Racism Workshop, you hear a strong analysis of, *what is this racism business? What is this country about? And how do we undo it?* And it doesn't vary. It doesn't say, *well, I'm going to talk one way over here and one way over here. I'm going to talk to poor people this way and rich people that way.* It talks to everybody the same.

Then it talks about how understanding this helps us organize around issues of class, around issues of gender or sexuality. See, the reason you got to start with race in this country, in our opinion, is that you're not going to be able to organize around gender in such a way that brings women of color into the work unless you understand that race is right on top of the table. If it's not on top, it's under the table. A lot of us who are white say, *well, it's really about a class thing.* And in my experience, most of us who say that have never tried to organize interracially around a class analysis. Because it's very hard to keep people in the room who've been oppressed by race for centuries if you don't demonstrate that you understand that dynamic. Now, once you do, you can organize around different forms of oppression and you will see others as allies in that struggle.

You know, we're pitted against each other across our different philosophies, our ideologies. But we try to say in The People's Institute and in the Undoing Racism Workshop, *we've got to come together as a collective.* But we have to have a foundation, and we can't continue to debate issues that fragment us. If you're organizing, see, if you're *organizing*, you will understand why you must bring race to the floor. Because you won't be able to organize in a labor setting without it, and the same way around other issues.

MUST UNDERSTAND RACISM TO EFFECTIVELY ADDRESS CLASSISM

I remember Diana Dunn saying to me one time—she's a trainer and one of the founders of The People's Institute with Jim Dunn and Ron Chisom and Barbara Major and others—she would say, *you know, there are millions of white people in this country who are poor.* She said that to me and I said, *well, you know Diana, I know that. I got an analysis.* She said, *no, no, no, no. That's not what I'm saying.* She says, *but not one of us is poor because we're white.* Damn, that's deep. You know, that's true. I'm poor for a whole lot of reasons. There are all sorts of things that can happen to me and sometimes I'm the object of discrimination, but never on the basis of race. It might be because I don't have the right credentials, or somebody might be prejudiced against short men, or whatever it might be. But the society doesn't work against me, it works for me.

And that's why we'll hedge our bets. That's why the working class – who for centuries has internalized a certain message – when asked to join Black, brown, and red brethren or sisters, will hesitate. They might not know what that voice is. What that voice is saying is, *wait a minute now. If you go too far, you're going to lose that which is the reason why you have advantage in the first place.*

And all white people know this. Some of us are guilty and feed ourselves over it, some of us will deny it and say, *but I don't see myself as white,* and we always joke and say, *well, you better, because everybody else does!* Or white people will say, *I don't see color.* We say all sorts of things, and those are genuine, very human expressions, but in fact, it doesn't help, it hurts. When the whole world sees you a certain way, but you're in denial, you get out of touch with reality. And the white supremacist culture that we live in—I'm not making an ideological statement with that; it just means that the culture is dominated by how white people think—makes it so I have what I have because of my relationship to these *sanctioned* systems. I gotta understand that.

That does not mean that I can't fight racism, that I can't be against oppression and I can't speak on this. I can speak on it if I'm organizing. If you're not organizing, someone can challenge you and say, *why do you go around speaking about this? Shouldn't somebody else get asked that all the time?* But if I'm organizing with other whites, I'm organizing in coalitions of accountability to people of color, to deny our voice and say you shouldn't speak out is to keep everything the way it is. 🌱

the late Dr. Jim Dunn,
co-founder of PISAB



To our mentors, teachers, elders, and friends across the People's Institute network,
Thank you for 45 years of transforming lives. You've awakened millions of minds and
hearts while building a net that works. The world cannot stop us with the analysis
you've instilled and the humanity you've unlocked.



Are you ready to join an Undoing Racism workshop and take part
in this unstoppable movement? Register for a workshop here:



This ad was generously supported by Molly Schultz Hafid, who was inspired and mentored by Margery Freeman, David Billings, and the rest of the Core Trainers at PISAB to commit to a lifelong journey of being anti-racist. Learn more about her work to align philanthropic strategy with social justice and anti-racist principles at www.mshconsults.com.



As the Sky

By Taylor Maroney

My work over the past five years has been about excavating and reimagining. Growing up white in the United States, I was told I was everything and anything all at once. I could dream, I was unstoppable, I could achieve it all, and nothing was out of reach. My racial likeness was reflected at me from every angle, from billboards to TV shows. Yet, when I pondered what it meant to be white, the answer always felt so nebulous and untouchable. From years of research, I learned that this ambiguity is purposely maintained to keep white people from questioning our place on top of the social-political hierarchies.

Growing up trans and queer was the opposite messaging. I knew exactly what I was: unnatural, something to be frightened of, a grouping of body parts, an outcome of surgeries. I was predatorial and a problem. Where whiteness was so ingrained in the media, transness was primitive. With limitations placed on what I could access and experience, there was no room for growth. I was a living schism.

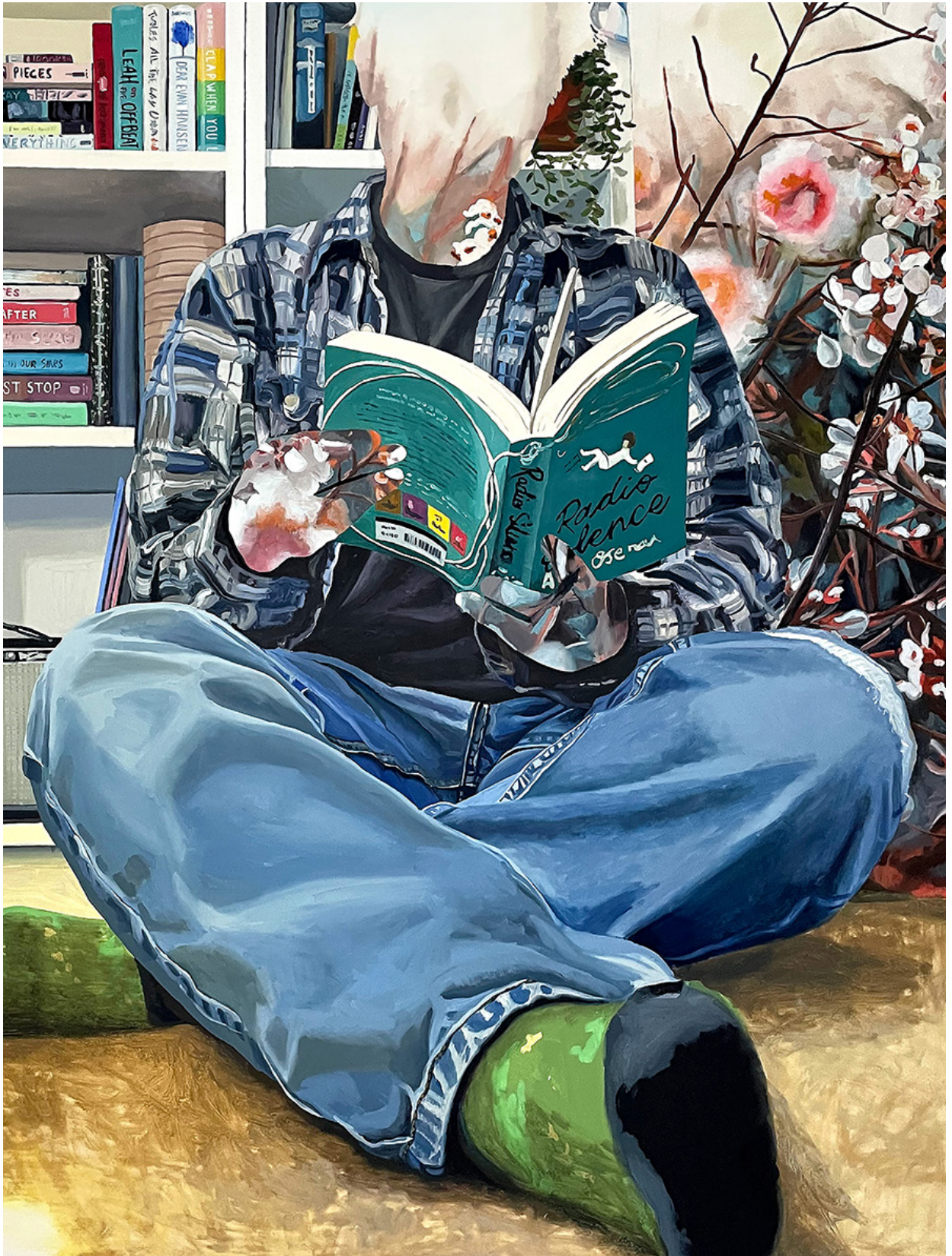
In my work, I began stripping down my white identity. I wanted to understand how I was contributing to white supremacy. By painting it, I could make whiteness tangible, which allowed it to become something I could recognize, talk about, and feel. Once I reached this point of understanding I felt ready to include the other parts of my identity.

Tricia Hersey, an activist and artist, says that

the body is a site of liberation. This sentiment is the inspiration behind my recent work of the queer and trans community, whose bodies are replaced with sky or earth. The infinite vastness of the sky is the ultimate symbol of freedom. I paint my peers in a way they are deserving of, in a way they are not often portrayed. These paintings become a wish, a safe space, for myself and other trans folks to be, and be seen as they want to be seen.

My practice investigates how race and gender shape perception, operating as fundamental markers prescribed to the body, often beyond our consent. By removing the figure, I challenge viewers to reconsider how meaning is constructed. I offer a space for stillness, where a hoodie becomes a question, a gesture becomes a memory, and viewers are invited to contemplate: what structures hold us, and who stands beside us unseen?

I make my paintings via digital collaging and then translate the images into oil paint. I use a combination of Photoshop, Premier Pro, and Procreate. The videos, photos, and Procreate images are a form of drawing that allows me to ideate. Using digital tools to create compositions allows me to quickly experiment with different images without the restrictions of traditional pen and paper sketching. I then turn the digital image into an analog form, either as a painting or drawing. Lastly, I put these images out into the world as a form of reclamation. 🌱



Theo

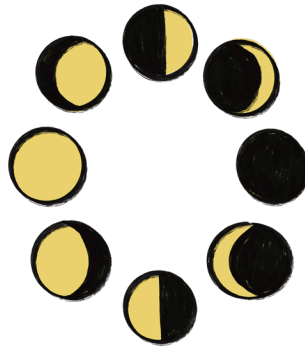


Vitamin E

*Where whiteness was so ingrained
in the media, transness was primitive.*



To Self Love IYKYK...



Keeping Time and Time Keeping: Re-Calling Our Ancestral Calendars

By Darcy Ottey, Shula Pesach, and members of the *Re-Calling Our Ancestors* team

Two worldviews – at least – collide inside me. One is the pace and rhythms of the Gregorian calendar, driven by the relentless pressure of the Protestant work ethic, forged in the toxic urgency of late-stage capitalism, and sculpted by the various forms of supremacy and oppression. The other is the pace, rhythm, and cycles of earth, waters, sky, body.

I learned this latter world of time at the pace of a river. In 2021, I was blessed with the opportunity to raft what the Paiute people who have lived along the rim call *Kaibab*, colonially known as the Grand Canyon. For 21 days, I was immersed in the life of *Ha'gthayah* – the big river, or “a lot of water coming through,” as it is known by the Havasuw `Baaja, the people of the blue green waters, who have lived in the canyon since time immemorial.

I learned that surrendering to the movements and speed of the river did not mean moving slowly; indeed, sometimes the rapids carried me so swiftly downstream I didn't have capacity for rational thought, and could only respond instinctually to quickly changing conditions. Other times were more languid, a chance to rest, laugh, and play. The worst were the (many) times I found myself stuck in eddies, watching my companions float by effortlessly as I worked as hard as I could while barely moving at all.

Even in these moments of being caught in an eddy, it was a profound gift to be in a place where clock time had no meaning, where a worldview that breaks time into hours, minutes,

seconds, could fall away. Life took on a coherent rhythm, one that felt true in my body.

Remembering the world of time that is the river, I feel the collision of times. I know I am not alone in longing for a different rhythm than what modernity provides. And I am grateful for the opportunity to practice rehabilitating and reimagining time in community, as part of the *Re-Calling our Ancestors* collective. *Re-Calling our Ancestors* is community exploration and ritual inquiry into ancestral recovery, truth-telling, and repair; we offer educational and healing space for committed white, white-passing, and white-assimilated anti-racists to deepen their practice of ancestral connection. Since our beginnings, our team has learned that time-travel is at the center of our work: recollecting ancestral lineages for their relevance in the political present and for the sake of flourishing futures. We are in a prayer of ‘when?’ as much as we make offerings of ‘what?’ and ‘how?’ We have been dedicating ourselves to the work of mending the violence which white supremacy, capitalism, and colonialism have waged on bodies, on land, and our experience(s) of time, guided by these questions:

- › *What can ancestral calendars, seasonal festivals, and iterative ritual practices teach us?*
- › *How can we navigate our contemporary lives with guidance and grounding in relation to time?*

› *In what ways do ancestral cycles connect us to past, present, and future?*

Where are we? When are we?

I write this piece on the couch my partner inherited from his grandmother, in our little home on stolen Methow lands, amidst the expanses of bitterbrush above the Methow River, right by the tiny airport that doubles as a smokejumper base in fire season. It is in this area that Methow survivors of early settlement efforts were rounded up by the US Army and forcibly marched out of the valley and into the Okanogan Valley to the east, in 1886.

I draft these words in early September 2024; the moon is still new enough that a crescent hasn't yet appeared in the sky but might tonight. The Methow people know this moon as the Time of the Salmon Return; my Slavic relatives understand it as вересень, *veresen* — the moon of purple heather. The days are still hot enough outside for me to try to avoid midday sun, but the nights have grown longer and much cooler, enough that I want a sweatshirt in the mornings. The harvest is coming in, and hunting season is just around the corner. Virgo season is fully upon us, inviting us to become present to the ever-changing nature of the earth and our bodies. Today is day 922 since war broke out in Ukraine, and 333 days since Hamas attacked Israel and Israel responded with horrific and unrelenting violence. It's 61 days until the presidential election in the United States. I'm a week behind the due date to have a draft for my team.

All of these realities — and so many more — inform this essay. What I might say on the topic of Ancestral Time-Keeping on a different day, and/or on different lands, would be informed by different realities. Such are the nature of time and place.

How I Arrive to This Conversation

I come to this conversation about Ancestral Time-Keeping, and its relationship with the work of dismantling white supremacy, as a student and practitioner of culture. Culture — defined by the dictionary as “the sum total of ways of living built up by a group of human beings and transmitted from one generation to another” — includes all of the material things which unite a group, like food, technology, and clothing, as well as language, expectations of behavior, religion, worldview, and more. Culture shapes not just

the way we see the world but our navigation of and embodiment of worldviews. Being a student and practitioner of culture means that I'm constantly trying to make sense of the lifeways of my community (and other communities), and working to create alternatives away from violence, hierarchy, and division, and towards healing, liberation, justice, and peace.

I first began to understand the importance of *time* in the work of culture-building when worlds of time collided like lava meeting ocean waves. This was 2008, at a community gathering on Hawai'i, where a significant breach in protocol brought the gathering to a screeching halt, catalyzed by a clash of two different understandings of time. This experience ruptured my understanding of the very essence of how time works (or more basically, my understanding that there even were different ways that time works).

The experience impacted many of those present, as well as others who learned of the incident afterwards. Out of it, an emerging intergenerational, multicultural, and multi-racial community recognized that in order to come together, we must develop shared language, maps, and protocols to account for different cultural orientations, including different experiences of time — as well as our understanding of protocol. When Youth Passageways, the organization that was seeded at this gathering, emerged five years later (and I stepped into the role of founding staff member), the experience led us to create “Cross Cultural Protocols in Rites of Passage: Guiding Principles, Themes, and Inquiry.”¹ This living, evolving document includes this statement regarding Different Perspectives/Perceptions of Time:

We strive to become sensitized to different perceptions of time within and between different cultures. We recognize that ceremonial time differs from linear time and our work and schedules are designed with that awareness. We strive to set and keep to agreements of time and space, including agreements that at times, time will be fluid and processes will last as long as required. We commit to holding a long view of time, which

¹ Cross Cultural Protocols Working Group. “Cross-Cultural Protocols in Rites of Passage.” Youth Passageways. April 15, 2015. <https://www.youthpassageways.org/resources/resource/cross-cultural-protocols-in-rites-of-passage-guiding-principles-themes-and-inquiry/>.

Our people did not assimilate into whiteness alone. Our people became white themselves from those marginalized by the culture. The

holds in our awareness many generations of ancestors as well as future generations to come.

A few years later, it led us to identify **“Respect for Time and Place”** as one of Youth Passageways’ four core values, with these commitments:

- We listen for the wisdom and guidance of the earth, giving attention to the impact of time and place, honoring the seasons and natural cycles.
- We hold as truth that time is circular, cyclical, expansive, and serves as our ally.
- We uphold our work as doing our part contributing to the past, present, and future generations.

These experiences and collectively-articulated understandings prepared the soil for my own emerging understandings, and offered me foundational practices to help these understandings begin to take root and grow. Alongside other frameworks, tools, and practices, these orientations inform our work at *Re-Calling our Ancestors*.



Theoretical Considerations in the Discussion of Ancestral Time-Keeping

The story of what happened at that gathering highlights the significance of what sociologist Eviatar Zerubavel calls “time-maps” – mental constructs complete with whole social topologies. Through time-maps we are oriented to hills, valleys, edges, and centers, “full” and “empty” times that structure our collective understandings of time. As philosopher Charles W. Mills explains, we “rely... on these maps and how they enable us to locate ourselves in the intersubjective time of our group.”² Time-maps make up our internal experience of seasons, cycles, and change, but also frame how we understand these aspects of time on a cultural level.

Time-maps are foundational to *chronopolitics* – understanding of political power is affected by our understanding of time and history, and vice versa. Mills notes that just as there are contested geographies and geopolitics, there are contested ways of relating to time, and contested chronopolitics. In other words, the way

we experience time is ancestral and historical, impacted by our socio-political context, and invested in norms and values. How this works can be experienced in a variety of ways.

One, we *inherit* time-maps. We received our temporality – knowingly or unknowingly – from the past. These time-maps might be quite specific – a yearly flow in my family marked by Christmas and a December 31/January 1 “New Year” as important celebrations where all work stops, for example. Or they might be quite general: a lunar ethnic calendar as opposed to a solar civil one, orienting to time as polychronic or monochronic time,³ or a rural agricultural temporality compared to an urban experience of time.

Second, we *exist within* time-maps. Jenny O’Dell describes an important aspect of how this works under capitalism in detail in *Saving Time: Discovering a Life Beyond the Clock*, in her discussion of something she calls ‘entrainment.’ She notes that “[t]his phenomenon, in which one adapts her temporal rhythms to those of someone or something else...often plays out on an uneven field of relationships that reflects hierarchies of gender, race, class, and ability.”⁴ O’Dell offers the example of a woman running a café in a small village in Java. The café is open in the middle of the night catering to tourists. This café owner has *entrained* herself to the wishes of the tourists who want to climb the Ijen volcano in time for the sunrise. Time is classed, raced, abled, gendered, and colonized. Within the dominant culture, we live in the era of human-centered time. Even more specific than human-centered, we live within white, Christian, cismale, able-body-centered time. This is our dominant time-map.

Third, we *practice* time-maps. Whether consciously or subconsciously, the way we ‘do’ time is always the perpetuation of certain commitments that are shaping present and future realities. We can choose to practice time-maps driven by capitalism, colonialism,

² Mills, Charles W. “The Chronopolitics of Racial Time.” *Time & Society*. (2020). 300.

³Wikipedia. “Chronemics.” <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chronemics>.

⁴ Odell, Jenny. *Saving Time: Discovering a Life Beyond the Clock*. Random House, 2024.

*as they collectively yoked themselves to the dominant culture, and distanced
they did this together, and so we must undo this together.*

and white supremacy; and we can practice time-maps rooted in cycles of earth, sky, and water. And of course, we can practice active engagement in integrating the two.

Temporal Assimilation & De-Assimilation

Building individual and collective awareness about how we can and do inherit, exist within, and practice time-maps allows us to take steps toward de-assimilating from whiteness – the primary goal of our work at *Re-Calling our Ancestors*.

For example, many of us have absorbed cultural stories like time is linear, uni-directional, fixed, and scarce – or cultural truisms like time is money – since our earliest memories. Remember being taught to read a clock as a child? Remember having that brilliant idea and being told ‘there’s not enough time’ to pursue it? Remember the first time you heard the phrase ‘youth is wasted on young’? Remember the feeling of anxiety racing through you when you thought you might show up late to work? Remember how hard it was to wrap your mind around what happened yesterday, what will happen in a week?

All these and more implicit teachings situate us in the time-map of dominant culture. From our earliest conditioning, we were attuned to the time of colonialism, ableism, white supremacy, and capitalism. We have been entrained into intolerable speeds and orientations of productivity driven by racialized capitalism, and we have been assimilated into notions of time rooted in white supremacy. At *Re-Calling our Ancestors*, we call this ‘temporal assimilation.’

Imagine, for a moment, what it would be like to grow up without ever encountering a clock. What would be different about how you understand and experience the world if you had never heard an alarm go off, nor oriented your internal rhythm to a school bell or a timeclock in your workplace? The clock, the alarm, the time sheet – these can be understood as ritual tools casting particular spells. *What spells have they cast on you, on us? What are the spells we can and do cast to draw forth another story? What are the ritual tools we can use to cast such spells?*

Our people did not assimilate into whiteness alone. Our people became white as they collectively yoked themselves to the dominant culture, and distanced themselves from those marginalized by the culture. They did this together, and so we must undo this together. *De-assimilating from whiteness* invites us to establish kinship ties with the many other beings with whom we co-exist: between ourselves and the plants, the moon, the cycles of the sun, our bodies and the body of the earth, with our ancestors, with other people with whom we share practices born from life-affirming time-maps.



Apprenticing to Ancestral Time-Keeping

The work of ancestral recovery, racial justice, and regenerating culture asks us to show up in continuous, iterative cycles of learning, growth, and embodiment. *Re-Calling Our Ancestors* calls this apprenticing. Throughout our courses, we offer multiple modalities for apprenticing to the themes we are studying. We offer a few below as invitations to ourselves, and to you, in the task of apprenticing to Ancestral Time-Keeping.

Communal Engagement:

The work of de-assimilating from whiteness is inherently communal, so we invite you to consider: *Who are (or could be) your communities of practice in the work of temporal de-assimilation? What solar/lunar calendars do you share with your community? What ongoing cycles of activity, rest, reflection, and integration are included in the ways your community engages together?*

As I consider these questions, I think about...

- autumn seasons of harvesting and preserving fruit with my mom;
- rooting a fundraising campaign within the cycles of the moon with my work teams;
- committing to a weekly practice of sabbath with my partner;
- hosting seasonal community gatherings on the cross-quarters.

Each one of these is a relational practice of *temporal de-assimilation*.



Reflection:

In the spirit of drawing upon the technologies of our ancestors, I offer the Quaker practice of the Query – questions to guide reflection and spiritual inquiry.

Queries have no right answer, nor is finding an answer necessarily the goal. Rather, Queries are generative questions to invite deeper contemplation. In this spirit, we invite you to spend some time with the following questions, making notes, noticing sensations, verbalizing out loud, drawing pictures, or otherwise scribing what emerges through these Queries:

- *What time-maps have you inherited?*
- *What time-maps do you exist within – are you entrained to?*
- *What time-maps do you practice?*

We invite you to draw or create your own time-map(s).

Study:

Intellectual understanding and critical analysis is a key element in our efforts to dismantle time-maps rooted in white supremacy, and in our efforts to feed and tend ancestral time-maps. Toward these ends, we have begun to compile a list of resources⁵ related to ancestral time-keeping. We invite you to engage with these resources – and add to them as we develop a repository for our collective learning.



Practice:

Altarwork:

Our practices at *Re-Calling our Ancestors* include tending to altars. These altars are culturally specific, aesthetically varied, and personally significant—there is not a singular approach. However we engage with them personally, we understand altars as portals that bring awareness of ancestral accompaniment, and as a method of working with energies we are calling forth in our lives.

As you explore what ancestral time-keeping means for you and your anti-racist practice, we invite you to create and tend an altar calling forth ways of keeping time outside and beyond dominant time-maps. This may include seasonally-relevant items gathered from the wild world. You may adorn your altar with...

- one or more time-maps that you've created
- items (like clocks, calendars, etc) with whom you're wishing to transform your relationship
- other items that you're calling on for their support in relating to time differently

We invite you to creatively and intuitively craft and tend this altarwork, perhaps for a moon cycle or a season.

Somatic Practice:

Lineages of anti-racist somatics practitioners have taught us that we embody systems of white supremacy, the legacies of cultural assimilation, the wisdom of our ancestral traditions, and so much more. *Re-Calling Our Ancestors* is guided by the political strategy and cultural prayer that our somatic selves (i.e., our bodies) can be remade for the sake of flourishing – our brain's wiring, the ways we posture ourselves and move through space, and the felt sense of our corporeal experience can be the site of transformation. How we inhabit our bodies can be how we work towards collective liberation.

As we work to cultivate nourishing and connected time-maps, we invite you to practice noticing how different ways of relating to time are experienced in your body.

What sensations are stirred when you look at the clock?

What about when an alarm goes off?

We invite you to consider spending a full day without a clock, and making note of your sensations at the end of this day.

Earth Intimacy:

We believe that reconnection with the more-than-human world is crucial to our work as white and white-assimilated folk. Foundational to the logic of whiteness is a renunciation of animate and earth-cherishing traditions. Whiteness engenders false stories of separation, disconnection, and superiority, while the natural world exemplifies a clear truth of interrelationship. As we recall our interdependence and kinship with all life, we invite accompaniment from intelligences far greater than those curated by the myths of whiteness.

⁵ Communal Resources. August 2024. tinyurl.com/keepingtimeresources

As is accessible with you, we invite you into a daily tending of the moon throughout a full cycle of waxing and waning. This may involve...

- Learning the name of the moon and their phases in an ancestral tongue, and/or the language of the first peoples of the lands you are on
- Each day or night, take a moment to bring your awareness to the moon, noting their current phase, whether you are able to see them with your eyes or not
- Perhaps you wish to introduce yourself to the moon if you haven't yet done so
- Perhaps you share more about your particular longings at this time, and invite partnership from the moon in finding new ways to be in relationship with ancestral time-maps
- At the completion of this moon cycle, we invite you to craft and offer the moon a token of gratitude for the deeper cycles they make possible: a word of gratitude or song, a breath, or an offering of natural fibers



Closing

As I come to the end of this piece, weeks have passed and I find myself on the other side of the autumn equinox. The past days of working on this draft have been accompanied by a maple tree, who started the week with just a blush of red on the crown and is now a glorious fiery sight. It's time to harvest rose hips and make soups and syrups to stave off the coming cold season. The moon is waning, arriving later and later into the sky each night, and the salmon are beginning their return to the Methow River. Libra season has arrived, bringing attention to balance and justice, inviting keen and strategic thinking - and marking my dad's coming 80th birthday, a significant milestone in my family. Next week the Jewish High Holidays begin. Election day is less than 6 weeks away, just on the other side of the cross-quarter between fall equinox and winter solstice.

All of these, and many more, serve as landmarks in my time-map...

The cycles continue, and different worldviews continue to collide inside me. So many questions and areas for further exploration remain - the work of a different day, or a different season. For now, to close, I offer you these words from our *Re-Calling our Ancestors* invocation:

*may we presence ourselves
- breathing, feeling,
heart beating, here -
in this work of alchemy,
in the arc towards abolition,
in each moment we find ourselves
as we heal between and across times.*

*may we be accompanied:
by the elements and beings
of those lands waterways places where we dwell
- may we be tethered and nourished
through the mysterious web that connects us to all life.*

*may we be accompanied:
by the witness of stars and planets,
constellations and the cosmos beyond
- may we be held in remembrance
of cycles and turnings, of seasons and changing skies.*

***may we be accompanied:
by all that weaves us to wellness
and allows for our learning***
*- may we be attentive and opened to the edges
of ourselves, of our consciousness, of our practices.*

*may we accompany:
one another on this journey,
nourishing, supporting, and challenging each other
leaning into our interdependence and risking our
autonomy
re-learning unwavering solidarity in service of co-
liberation and repair. 🍂*

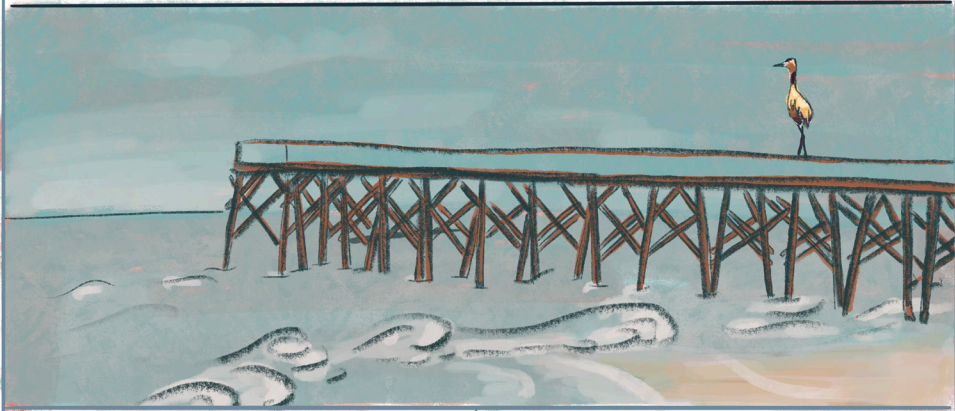
*Note: In this co-authored piece, we often utilized a first-person voice to tell this story. As settlers who have been taught to emphasize our uniqueness, part of our work together is exploring nuances of "I" and "we" - what truly is individual and what is collective? While some of the particularities may be the story of one of us, the trajectory of our experiences and the writing of this piece were shared.



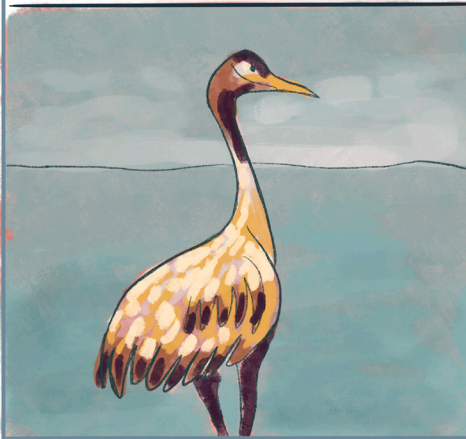
Myth-Keeping &

By Julienne Kaleta

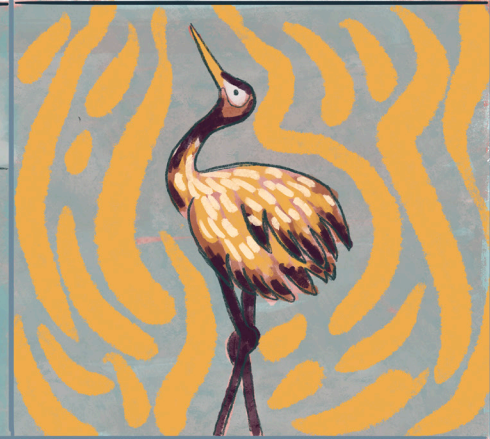
In Irish mythology, the crane walks the line of the Otherworld.



One foot in reality.



One foot in the spiritual world beyond.



My Irish ancestors arrived to the United States in the 1850s.



& Memory Making

As I've learned about Irish assimilation, I think a lot about what my ancestors gave up in exchange for the privileges afforded through whiteness.



NAN, WILL YOU TELL ME A STORY ABOUT YOU GROWING UP?

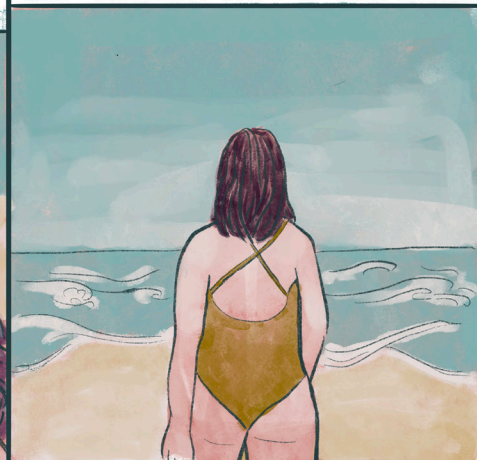


WHY WOULD YOU WANT TO KNOW ABOUT THAT?

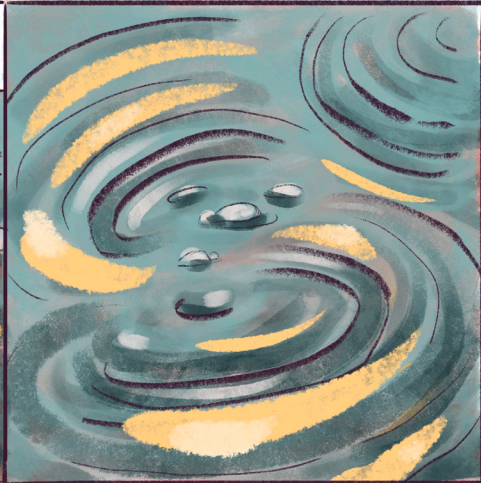


I fixate on the loss of our Irish memories and culture.

Feel a timed pressure to gather it all.



I wish I could dive into another realm
where we name all our histories.



In one Irish folklore, a crane bag holds keepsakes of Irish culture and memory within.







We will never unearth all our history and culture.

Just like we can never lose it all.

I REMEMBER THIS SONG.

WANT ME TO TEACH IT TO YOU?

Beyond Virtue-Signaling: Race and Parenting

By Jeff Raderstrong



Like many “good” white liberal parents, my wife and I have grappled with how to talk to our white children about race. We’ve read a lot, listened to several podcasts, and tried to find age-appropriate resources for our kids.

This concern only grew in the aftermath of George Floyd’s murder in 2020. (My older son’s second birthday coincided with the day the mass protests began in Minneapolis, which also happens to be my hometown. I remember putting him to bed and scrolling through my phone for the rest of the evening, absorbing all the news, watching the videos, and clicking through the pictures.) The reckoning that came after that eight minute and 46 second video ricocheted around the internet was profound not only in its scale across our culture, but for how deep it bored into our personal lives.

For many white people, we dealt with this reckoning by going inward, seeking out how we had been the problem, and how we could transform into the solution. Many wanted to “do the work.” Books like *How to Be an Antiracist*, by Ibram X. Kendi, and *White Fragility*, by Robin DiAngelo, shot to the top of bestseller lists, clearly driven by white people seeking out answers to counteract the feeling of hopelessness that came with facing our nation’s racist core laid bare.

My wife (who is white, like me) and I had these same feelings, but since we had each gone through various anti-racist trainings, we both felt further along in our “work,” so to speak. But we were still relatively new parents and terrified about how we could possibly raise anti-racist white children in a country that has never reckoned with its racist roots.

Thankfully, there were a lot of resources for us to choose from. In addition to his *How to Be an Antiracist* book, Kendi had written a children's book, *Antiracist Baby*, which was conveniently timed to come out in mid-June, 2020. We snapped up our copy.

When the book arrived, we read it to our two year old. The book is presented as a step-by-step guide to how children can be anti-racist, and much of what's recommended should not be surprising to anyone familiar with anti-racist practices: celebrate differences, use your words, believe we can overcome racism. The book is a traditional board book - about 20 thick, cardboard pages, with lots of bright and fun drawings of babies and kids, with appropriately diverse backgrounds and skin colors.

In addition to buying this book for ourselves and our kids (we had another one on the way that summer), we would send the book to any friend who had a baby or celebrated their kids' birthdays. It became our "go to" present, which our (mostly white) friends seemingly appreciated.

However, my wife and I grew increasingly uncomfortable with the book as our two year old grew into a three year old and became more aware of what we were saying to him. Many of the things in the book were generally nice things to teach a toddler, but some seemed a little outside his boundaries of comprehension. On one page, for example, Kendi suggests that children "confess when being racist."

This advice is well and good for any adult. I am not opposed to the idea. I believe strongly, as a white person, in repairing any relational harm that may come from my actions.

But, my three year old had no awareness about what "being racist" meant, nor do I think I could ever explain it to him in a way that I felt was constructive. Maybe this was a failing on

my part, but I worried that by pushing this kind of message on him, that he would start to think about the world in binaries - racist vs. not racist - without a full context of what that means.

I'll give an example: My son got a pretty good-sized firetruck for his first christmas from my Grandma. He loved this firetruck (and now, five years later, still plays with it sometimes). It had a ladder, you could open up the inside to see all the tools, it had stabilizers on the side - everything you would want in a firetruck. It also came with two pretty nondescript firefighter figures, one with black skin and one with white skin. (Though my son referred to these figures as "brown" and "peach", because, well, neither of the figures had skin coloring anywhere close to the black and white colors in his crayon box.)

He would frequently give these figures jobs to do on the firetruck. The "white" figure tended to be the driver; the "black" figure was on the top of the ladder, putting out the fires. I became concerned that he was categorizing these figures based on what I perceived as their race. One time, I switched them around - making the "black" one the driver, and the "white" one on the ladder - and he got mad at me. He said that was not where they belong. I said: "No, no, each firefighter can do whatever they want! They can be anything!"

As soon as I said it, I inwardly cringed. That phrase coming out of my mouth was embarrassing, not just because it was a cliché, but because I realized I was putting my own - and society's - assumptions on to my son who had no reason to believe someone *couldn't* do something they wanted because of their skin color. He was just a kid, playing. In his mind, the firefighter with a brown face was the one on the ladder; the one with the peach face was the driver. Most likely, that's all there was to it - no value or judgment about which one was better.

Buying the book was a way for parents to virtue-signal about their beliefs, rather than actually deal with the hard task of teaching their kids about the on-going legacy of slavery and racism in this country, and our responsibility as white people to do something about it.

In the same way, *Antiracist Baby* places our society's assumptions onto children who do not know better. My son had no idea about the unjust systems created to uphold white supremacy at that age. Yes, I know that children can be aware of racial differences at a very young age, and show racial preferences, but trying to explain the concept of a power analysis to a three year old would be met with an inscrutable face. Similarly, offering solutions based on that same analysis - even with bright colors - landed flat. He enjoyed the book because the central baby character was quite humorous and did silly things involving its diaper, but I don't think he was able to absorb the message of the book at all.

Instead of telling our son, "nothing disrupts racism more than when we confess the racist ideas we sometimes express," we have found more age-appropriate guidance, like from pediatric psychologist Dr. Sheila Modir, to be helpful. Dr. Modir encourages parents of very young children to model kind behavior and talk about what it means to harm someone else, and how to repair that relationship. We're teaching our kids that if you hurt someone's feelings, or say something that isn't nice, you have to check in on your friend and see what you can do to make them feel better.

Reading *Antiracist Baby* again, now that my children are older and have moved beyond board books, I see that it's a book designed for parents to feel good about talking to their kids about race, not to present age-appropriate lessons to those kids. Buying the book was a way for parents to virtue-signal about their beliefs, rather than actually deal with the hard task of teaching their kids about the on-going legacy of slavery and racism in this country, and our responsibility as white people to do something about it. Now that my kids are older, and can understand more, I am continuing my struggle to figure out the most effective age-appropriate ways to talk about all this.

In addition to buying *Antiracist Baby*, we got a copy of *Homemade Love*, by bell hooks. We loved, and still love, reading this book to our

kids, when they'll let us pull back out a board book. It was at one point my son's favorite book, although probably for just a few weeks; toddlers can be fickle. This book tells the story of a Black family with a young girl and how they love each other and support each other. It contains a phrase that I think about all the time: "There is no all the time right." This phrase is said by the little girl's parents to assure her she is still loved after she makes a mistake - breaking a flower vase - something we all need to hear and I tell myself frequently as I struggle through life. The book is written through hooks' lyrical prose with fun almost-rhymes that always soothe us as we read it.

Homemade Love felt much more age-appropriate for our kids while also introducing the idea of differences across families and the love that all parents have for their kids. It was perfectly aligned with Dr. Modir's recommendations for modeling behavior and building empathy in young kids: the book literally illustrates unconditional love and acceptance, even when someone makes a mistake and creates harm. It showed a family different from ours, bringing diversity into our home. It also underscored our collective humanity and the fundamental dignity we all share, regardless of the color of our skin. I can't say that this book made my kids anti-racist, but it did open up their world a little bit to what other families look like and experience, and how we all want and strive for the same thing: Love.

As we continue to struggle to raise anti-racist children - a struggle I expect will continue for all of our parenthood - we will seek out age-appropriate resources and conversations. Our kids can understand things better than they did a few years ago. They are now in school, surrounded by a diversity of experiences and backgrounds through their peers. We will continue to talk with our kids about our nation's history and what it means for their day-to-day lives, all to help them understand that their job, as kids and future adults, is to be kind to all and create a joyful world for everyone. 🌱



Writestrong: Do good work. Write good stuff.
Level-up your business, brand or writing with my help.

raderstrong.com

Reach out for a free coaching session!



Moon Day

By Elizabeth Woodson

I have always been drawn to it
To her
The Moon
My mother taught me to pay attention
She says that she learned that from her
mother

“Look at that mooooooon!!!!!”
She is thrilled
Every time
So I am too

For many years, I misinterpreted this inheritance
It was a quirk
I was known by my friends as Moon Girl
Always making a loud squeal when the moon
was in sight
Pointing and making everyone else look too
We laughed and kept going
“Why do you love the moon?” they would ask
I didn’t really know. “It’s pretty!!” I would say.

Around my house are the many moon-themed
gifts I have received over the years
Two sets of moon coasters
A moon bracelet, three moon necklaces
Two moon banners
A moon canvas bag
And many moon journals



Since I moved to Montgomery,
I've had full moon rise watching parties
I'm having one today
You can too:

1. Look up the day of the next full moon
2. Identify a good spot – the top of a hill! Or a park with an open horizon, ideally a flat field with visibility due east and not too many trees up close (although a treeline can add to the drama)
3. Look up the time that the full moon will rise
4. Text your friends to meet you there 30 minutes before the time the internet told you
5. Bring:
 - a. Blankets
 - b. A candle
 - c. Some flowers
 - d. A moon playlist
 - e. Pens, paper, some kind of reflection to offer – what are we releasing? What are we growing?
 - f. Snacks
6. Gather
7. Marvel at the sun setting
8. Turn around 180 degrees and wait for the moon to enter

She never comes when the internet says she will
No
We must wait
And watch
We must pay attention
She'll come when she is ready

Who will be the first one to glimpse her??

WOWWWWWWW there she issssssss



First there is celebration

Noisy

Joyful

“Can you believe how bright it is???”

Then there is quiet

We just watch

She moves so fast but so slow

Becoming bluer as she rises

We are enthralled

“And to think, this happens every month!!”

One time, Gracen who is 5 says we must all run to her

He leads the way

3, 2, 1, GO!!

We sprint towards the moon

She lays out a road for us

We are flying to her!!!!

The park does have an end, and we do have to stop running, but we feel closer

To her

To each other

We walk back to the group, panting, happy

These friends also ask, “Why do you love the moon?”

I didn’t know I would find the answer learning about whiteness

Learning about my people

Before we became “white”

The Celtic, the Germanic, the Anglo-Saxon cultures from whom I descend

I have been learning of their cosmology, their toasting rituals, their land practices

And then I learned that they were lunar

Their time and relationships and life-understanding was determined by the moon

Full moons were their times of celebration,

especially at the Harvest

And then it coalesced

My mother taught me to look for the moon

And her mother taught her

Could this be one thread of connection – to land, to culture – that did survive?

That somehow made its way through those generations of my people choosing whiteness and denial and destruction?

???

Yes.

Yes.

It is not a quirk.

It is not random.

It is old.

It is nurturing.

It is known to my spirit.

It is one way to repair.

And now as I pay attention, I know why

I will keep sharing with the children, as my mother has told me and her mother told her

This will be the inheritance that I choose to pass down

It is already starting

Gracen asked me, “When is the next moon party? I want to run to the moon again!”

At each gathering, we greet each other with, “Happy Moon Day!”

At the end, we say, “Can’t wait til next month!”

And I know that there will be a next month

And I will understand why I

And so many

Are drawn to her light

Racialized as white and ready to reckon with... your father? Your childhood best friend? Your colleagues at work? Your neighborhood's homeowners association?

Join **Reckon With** for ongoing peer and expert support.

www.reckonwith.org

hello@reckonwith.org

W E L C O M E

T O

R E C K O N W I T H



Patricia Maher Healing Arts

Transforming whiteness — becoming our whole selves through homeopathy and astrology

patriciamaherastrology.wordpress.com/

patriciamaherhomeopathy.com

pat@patriciamaherhomeopathy.com





M O V I N G

Our Internalized Racism

By Laura Stein

Central Question: What do we want to shake free within ourselves so that we can be more effective and whole anti-racist organizers?

Who Is This Practice For: A group of white people that are familiar with the concepts of internalized racial superiority and white supremacy culture. Ideally one or two people are in the role of facilitators/ guides and can read the instructions and model the practice for the group.

Internalized Racial Superiority & White Supremacy Culture Learning Resources

If you have a group that is not familiar with this, you will need to spend more time establishing a shared analysis and understanding. Even if you are familiar with this topic, undoing internalized racial oppression is a lifelong process. Continued research and exploration is essential in this work.

The People's Institute for Survival and Beyond Undoing Racism® and Community Workshop¹ was a transformative experience that set me on my lifelong journey of understanding and undoing internalized racial superiority. They

offer workshops (virtual and in-person) in locations across the country, and can also be commissioned to offer private workshops for groups.

Another excellent resource is Tema Okun's White Supremacy Culture website,² which builds upon her original 1999 article, "white supremacy culture," a seminal writing on this topic.

Movement Practice Influences

This practice was inspired by the lineage of training I've received in Contemporary and improvisational dance practices. Urban Bush Women's Summer Leadership Institute and Shannon Stewart are two of my central influences.

How Long Is This Practice: Depending on the group size, this can be a 45–75 minute practice.

¹ The People's Institute for Survival and Beyond. "PISAB Regional Workshops." 2025. pisab.org/pisab-regional-workshops/.

² Okun, Tema. "(divorcing) White Supremacy Culture". Feb 2025. www.whitesupremacyculture.info/.



Facilitator Preparation

- Make a four-track playlist (here's an example³):
 - 1) a track to play while folx are entering the space that sets a grounding and joyful tone
 - 2) a track for stretching
 - 3) a track for shaking and vibrating
 - 4) an instrumental track to play while generating and sharing movement
- Choose an introduction, check-in protocol, and question prompt. For example, ask each person to share their name, pronouns, and one thing they're feeling grateful for this week.
- Intentionally prepare the space:
 - a. For in-person space: be sure to have an open floor without furniture obstruction, big enough to sit in a circle together and have each individual spread out to use a space where they can create their own movement. You will also need a device to amplify music.

- b. For virtual space: let attendees know that they should join from somewhere they can move without furniture obstruction and be on camera. Make sure you learn how to share audio from your computer.

Accessibility Notes

- All the movement practices can be done in a seated or standing position.
- Music is not essential to the movement practices. For people with hearing impairments, make sure that you have closed captioning (built into Zoom and available through platforms such as Ava) or an ASL interpreter available.
- For people with visual impairments, instructions can be given verbally with descriptions of each person's movement share.

³ tinyurl.com/embodimentpracticeplaylist

FACILITATOR AGENDA

Introductions/Check-Ins (10 mins):

- Facilitators introduce themselves and provide an overview of the practice they'll be leading.
- Each person in the room introduces themselves and responds to a check-in prompt.

Warm Up (10 mins):

- Lead people through breathing: five deep breaths in and out (or whatever breathing practices you appreciate to settle the body and bring attention to the present moment). You can do this standing, seated, or lying on the floor.
- Play a 3-4 minute song to guide people through stretching and warming up their bodies. You can ask people to follow your movement, or invite them to stretch and warm up in whatever way feels good for them.
- Play a 3-4 minute song to guide people through vibrating and shaking their bodies. Bend your knees, wiggle, get silly and loose.

Journaling Exercise (7 mins):

Review this list of manifestations of internalized racial superiority (IRS):*

Saviorism

Either/Or Thinking

Shame/Guilt

Meritocracy

Manipulation

Silence

Conflict Avoidance

Cognitive Dissonance

Distancing

Competition

Defensiveness

Belief in One Right Way

Worship of the Written Word

Exceptionalism

Self-Righteousness

Individualism

Materialism

Intellectualism

Right to Comfort

Fear of Open Conflict

Entitlement

Perfectionism

Power Hoarding

Violence

Quantity over Quality

Sense of Urgency

Looking at the list, take some time to reflect through journaling: what are 2-3 manifestations that feel especially present for you personally today? What's "on top"? How are these showing up for you right now?

*This list draws from the People's Institute for Survival and Beyond

Dance Making (5 mins)

- Pick one manifestation that you wrote about and create some movements and gestures that feel like that manifestation. How would you move if you were *in competition OR distancing OR manipulating* etc.? Improvise and play around with some gestures and start repeating the gestures that feel most resonant in your body. You are essentially setting a short phrase of choreography by repeating and remembering those movements. (2 mins)
- Once you've set the choreography, play with moving your body in the opposite way. What quality and texture does moving in the opposite way take on? Do not attempt to assign any words or language to this simply feel it and move it. (2 mins)

- Connect the two movements together into a story of transformation that's no longer than one minute long. Begin your movement phrase with the manifestation of internalized superiority, then transition into the movement in the opposite quality. End in stillness. You've created a dance that embodies what shaking free from that manifestation of internalized superiority might feel like. (1 min)

Sharing and Witnessing (5-10 mins, depending on the group size)

Each person shares their phrase, while the rest of the group watches in the spirit of deep listening and witnessing.

- The facilitator will ask the person if they are ready to start, and play the song that was used for generating movement. Once the participant comes to stillness, they will stop the song.
- At the end of each person's sharing, appreciate them in some way (snaps, claps, etc).
- During this sharing time, do not take notes, do not verbally respond, and try not to worry about what you're going to share while you're watching other people. Practice being present with witnessing what each person has created with their movement, and how you feel watching it.

Debrief (10-15 mins, depending on the group size)

Lead a debriefing conversation on the experience with the group.

- What did you see?
- What did you feel?
- What did you learn?

Closing Question (5 mins)

- What do you want to carry forward from the work you did today?



QUOTES FROM WHITE FOLX WHO HAVE DONE THIS PRACTICE:

- *I forgot how much fun moving was, and that I could do this. And that was liberating.*
- *My body showed me how my internal process of perfectionism causes me to lash out.*
- *Being witnessed and witnessing someone is a really powerful thing in and of itself.*

Contributors

Alyssa Smaldino (she/they) is co-founder of *Libertroph Magazine* and an organizer and trainer with the People's Institute for Survival and Beyond. Across these and other projects, she is grounded in an ethos of care and collective liberation.

Julienne Kaleta (she/they) is an artist and co-founder of *Libertroph Magazine*. Julienne makes art and shares stories that can serve as invitations into liberated futures.

Elizabeth Woodson (she/her) is a 12th generation European American settler. Informed by a range of experiences over a decade of working toward racial equity, Elizabeth directs Reckon With, an organization that offers peer-support for people racialized as "white" who are ready to repair racial harm.

Stephanie Land (she/her) received a BA in Photography and an MA in Fine Art Printmaking. Her work has been featured in exhibitions and publications throughout the US and UK. Among several awards and artist residencies, Stephanie was a featured artist in The Whiteness Issue of The Racial Imaginary Institute.

Annie Ferguson (they/she) is a PhD Candidate in Sociology with research focused on how white people's emotions impact our engagement in antiracism. Before re-entering academia, Annie spent 15 years working in agriculture and community/economic development.

kelly j drumright (they/them) is an artist, writer, and audio producer working at the intersections of disability justice and anti-imperialism. A queer/trans white settler and chronically ill AuDHDer, kelly shares abolitionist ideas on their local radio station KGNU. kelly is a gardener who grows nearly all of the plants that appear in their art.

Margery Freeman (she/her) has been an organizer and trainer with The People's Institute for Survival and Beyond for over 40 years. Margery is a lifetime educator working with other educators and activists to bring anti-racist principles to their work. Margery is married to David Billings. They have three children and eight grandchildren.

David Billings (he/him) is an anti-racist community organizer and historian. He is the author of *DEEP DENIAL: The Persistence of White Supremacy in U.S. History and Life*. He is one of the founding organizers of The People's Institute for Survival and Beyond and is co-founder of European Dissent. David is a retired United Methodist minister.

Taylor Maroney (they/them) graduated with a MFA in painting after earning a BFA. They have received two Elizabeth Greenshield International Grants and the Distinguished Artist Fellowship in UMass Dartmouth's MFA program. Taylor's work is a celebration of the queer, trans bodies that have been largely left out of figurative representation.

Darcy Ottey (she/they) is an educator, coach, cultural strategist, ritual practitioner, and the author of *Rites and Responsibilities: A Guide to Growing Up*. Through projects including Re-Calling our Ancestors, Adjacent Education & Consulting, Fierce Allies, and Youth Passageways, Darcy devotes her life energy to deconstructing dominant pathways and offering healing alternatives.

Shula Pesach (she/they) is a community ritualist, Jewish educator, and trans theologian. She is neurodivergent, working-class, chronically ill, and transgender, with citizenship and education privilege. They serve movements for flourishing and collective liberation through her work with Re-Calling our Ancestors, Weaving Earth Center for Relational Education, and Taproot.

Jeff Raderstrong (he/him) is a writer and ghostwriter focused on the intersection of politics, the economy and culture, who also happens to think and write a lot about parenting. His work has previously been featured in places like MSNBC, Newsweek, Forbes, and The TODAY Show.

Laura Stein (she/her) is founder and principal consultant at Rooted Evolution. Laura's greatest professional legacy is Dancing Grounds, a nonprofit dedicated to arts and social justice. Laura is an organizer and trainer with the People's Institute for Survival and Beyond, and an organizer with European Dissent New Orleans and Jewish Voices for Peace. She's currently launching a new project, Gentrification Reparations Fund.

A note on language



There are many ways to talk about liberation.

This project references language and terms that we've learned from organizations and leaders who have inspired us.

Anti-racist organizing:

The People's Institute for Survival and Beyond (PISAB) describes organizing as 'bringing people together for a specific purpose or intent.' Anti-racist organizing is about organizing with humanity and practicing anti-racist organizing principles.

White culture:

When we think about white culture, we like to start by looking at culture generally. PISAB describes culture as "the life support system of a community." When we consider this for white people and communities in the US, we might think about wealth accumulation, white picket fences, chicken pot pie, and reliance on the police. Kenneth Jones and Tema Okun help us see how the characteristics of this culture manifest interpersonally and organizationally through the White Supremacy Culture website. It's important to note that white culture is distinct from the cultural heritages white people brought from Europe; often, white culture is the set of conditions and privileges for which white people gave up our ethnic cultural traditions.

White anti-racist culture:

Through the Somatic Abolitionism process, its founder Dr. Resmaa Menakem urges us to consider what embodied anti-racist culture might look and feel like in the US, particularly as white people. We understand white anti-racist culture as a vision not yet formulated, but actively being shaped by white people who have decided to consciously confront our relationships to white culture and shape new cultures that actively disrupt the violence and terror of white supremacy. This project exists to highlight these efforts and make it more possible for white people to co-create white anti-racist culture that supports the safety and power of Black people, indigenous people, Palestinian people, trans people, disabled people, and all people.

Internalized Racial Superiority:

Throughout the magazine, several contributors name Internalized Racial Superiority (or IRS for short) to refer to behaviors and patterns exhibited by white people. PISAB notes IRS as one of two forms of Internalized Racial Oppression, the other being Internalized Racial Inferiority, which is experienced by people of color. They define IRS as: "The acceptance of and acting out of a superior definition is rooted in the historical designation of one's race. Over many generations, this process of empowerment and access expresses itself as unearned privileges, access to institutional power, and invisible advantages based upon race." Many of the characteristics of IRS, which are detailed in the Undoing Racism® workshop, mirror the characteristics of White Supremacy Culture referenced above.



NOURISHED BY LIBERATION