

RECLAIMING

Q U A R T E R L Y

WITCHCRAFT & MAGICAL ACTIVISM

COMMUNITY ECONOMICS • US SOCIAL FORUM • APHRODITE MAGIC
SUMMER MAGICK • SACRED PEACE WALK • RECLAIMING NEWS

Issue No. 101

Mid-2010

PRINTING TIPS

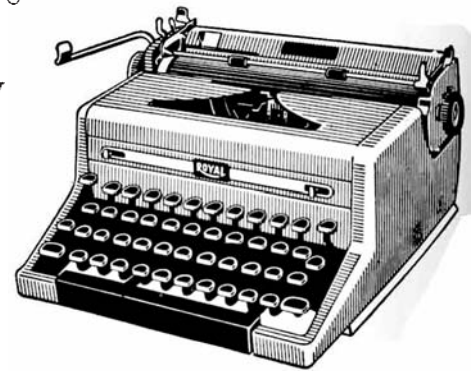
for the Modern Age

Now that you have successfully downloaded RQ, you might want to print some pages.

We sort of hope you do, since we still see ourselves as producing a magazine. We like the idea of you holding it in your hands, spilling coffee on it, leaving it on the floor for your roommate's cat to chew up, etc.

One option is to do what RQers do - burn the file to a disk and take it to your local anarchist cooperative copy shop. For under \$10, we get a great-looking copy, bound down the spine. Pretty cool!

Printing at home should be easy. While we realize these are famous last words, we place our faith in Hewlett Packard and your perseverance.



Choose Print from the file menu. You'll get a dialog box where you can select which pages to print, as well as a choice of scaling or re-sizing the pages.

You can shrink them to fit the paper, print two mini-pages side by side, or leave them as-is ("no scaling" or "none" in dialog box). If you leave them as-is, some printers may cut off the footer and page number.

You may also be able to choose "print quality." Photos should print reasonably well on a laser or inkjet printer set for high-quality printing.

Please contact us if you have any trouble with printing, or feedback about the new online RQ.

RQ -- quarterly@reclaiming.org -- 415-255-7623

RECLAIMING

QUARTERLY

Issue 101

Mid-2010

Reclaiming

P.O. Box 14404
San Francisco, CA 94114
www.reclaiming.org

Reclaiming Quarterly

quarterly@reclaiming.org
www.reclaimingquarterly.org

Reclaiming is a community of people working to unify spirit and political activism. Our vision is rooted in the religion and magic of the Goddess — the Immanent Life Force. We see our work as teaching and making magic — the art of empowering ourselves and each other. In our classes, workshops, and public rituals, we train our voices, bodies, energy, intuition, and minds. We use the skills we learn to deepen our strength, both as individuals and as community, to voice our concerns about the world in which we live, and to bring to birth a vision of a new culture.



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from Reclaiming

Witches' Brew

New songs, chants, and meditation music

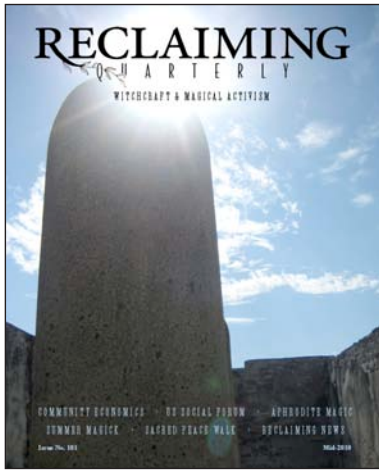
Witches' Brew, Reclaiming's first musical release in eight years, features fifteen outstanding songs and chants from over a dozen of Reclaiming's favorite musicians and teachers.

Performers include many who appeared on earlier Reclaiming recordings, and who have since released their own CDs. This beautiful new CD is a virtual "Best of Reclaiming since 2000."

Featuring: Beverly Frederick • Brook • Evergreen Erb • Danielle Rosa • David Miller • Evelie Delfino Sales Posch
Green & Root • Crow • T. Thorn Coyle • Jeffrey Alphonsus Mooney • Moonrise • Skyklad • Suzanne Sterling



Hear samples and order this beautiful new CD at www.ReclaimingQuarterly.org, or send \$16 per copy to RQ, PO Box 14404, San Francisco CA 94114



COVER PHOTO: Mitla ruins outside Qaxaca, Mexico — by Jamie Lantz

BACK COVER BACKDROP: detail from a work by Amanda Adamah



Our Founder

RQ is descended from *Reclaiming Newsletter* (1980-1997), itself a distant offshoot of *Ye Olde Gazetteer & Reclaymer* (1613-1776). The latter traced its roots to neolithic petroglyphs in Anatolia, before which RQ's past is shrouded in mystery.

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Views expressed in articles, graphics, and advertisements belong to the authors, not to the Reclaiming community or the RQ production cell. Some of us don't even like some of the stuff we print.

RQ is a volunteer effort. You don't need to be in the San Francisco area to help! Contact us at quarterly@reclaiming.org

The following people produced this issue: Ciana, Marcia, Natalie, George, Rosalind, Ruby, Riyana, Jamie

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Special RQ kisses: Lynx, Lily, Carol, Naeomi, Jonathan, Lothlórien, Lisa, Aimee, Elka, Kat, Rain, John, Jim, Sabrina, Mab, Kala, Urania, Tia, Macha, Vibra, Starhawk, Rose, Yoeke, Tarin, Ewa, Evelie, Elfin, Copper, Briana, Nolan, Cerridwen, the Spiral Dance cell — and to our generous contributors!

Who are we (and what is this magazine)?

Reclaiming Quarterly is a magazine/website dedicated to Reclaiming-tradition witchcraft and magical activism. What that means to us can be seen in this magazine and on our website, ReclaimingQuarterly.org.

RQ began its life as *Reclaiming Newsletter* in Winter 1980-81. Today, the magazine is produced by a work cell based in San Francisco, with co-conspirators around North America, Europe, and Australia. We see our magazine not as “the” Reclaiming publication, but as one of many forums, both print and online.

Are we a quarterly? It depends on your definition. We are presently publishing in “selected quarters,” of which this is one. We are also quite attached to the “Q” in RQ, so we retained the title.

Our mission is to bring together Witchcraft and magical activism. Our focus is on practical articles about magic in the world — from household magic to community rituals to grassroots activism.

RQ works together with Reclaiming's websites and elists to serve Reclaiming as well as the wider Pagan and activist worlds. We hope you'll find our feature articles interesting and challenging whether or not you walk the Reclaiming path.

In response to past experience and reader feedback, we generally omit several topics. Poetry and fiction ranked low in our surveys, and appear rarely. Book and music reviews didn't fare much better, so we offer only capsule reviews.

Discussion and analysis of Reclaiming organizing takes place on the Reclaiming elists, where everyone can take part in a timely and democratic way. For information on joining the elists, contact RQ or visit Reclaiming.org.

Want to know anything else? Contact quarterly@reclaiming.org

Submissions

RQ welcomes articles, photos, artwork, etc., related to activist, cultural, or spiritual happenings. Submit via email or mail to the address below. We love photos of all kinds! Please query about how to send them. Print-photos will be returned on request. Old paper submissions are used to line our hamster cages, so save a copy.

We accept submissions anytime. When we're close to publication, we announce a deadline. Articles are sometimes held for another issue as space and topicality dictate. We reserve the right to edit for length, grammar, or readability.

Anything submitted to and/or appearing in RQ may be posted on our website. If you do not want your article or name to appear on the website (i.e., to show up on Google searches), please let us know in writing at the time you submit it.

Send to quarterly@reclaiming.org or PO Box 14404, San Francisco, CA 94114.

Advertise ~ Display Advertising

1/8 page (business card)	\$55	<i>Discount for multiple issues.</i>
1/4 page (4.75" x 3.5")	\$95	<i>Contact us via email for submissions info and specs.</i>
1/2 page (4.75" x 7.25")	\$185	<i>RQ also offers design services.</i>
Full page (9.75" x 7.25")	\$360	<i>Contact quarterly@reclaiming.org</i>

To Our Readers

Welcome to the second online edition of *Reclaiming Quarterly* — issue #101, dating back to *Reclaiming Newsletter* in 1980.

We are struck by the fact that 101 is the first since issue 69 to read the same upside down as right-side up. In bibliomantic terms, this lends special power to the current issue, particularly if you are someone who can read upside-down print.

This being our first issue in eight months, we wanted to include as much as possible. By the time we finished, the issue had grown to 77 pages — a record we look forward to not breaking for a while.

Our theme this issue, starting on page 26, is “Community Economics.” You’ll find hard-boiled analysis of the current economic debacle side by side with articles on “Money Magic” and “Coming Clean” — ways to apply our values to our personal economic relations.

We also welcome our new “Youth Pages,” which feature writings and artwork from the growing number of teens and young adults in our communities. Please let young friends and family-members know that we welcome writings and artwork.

RQ’S ONLINE EXPERIMENT

Whether you read RQ online, print a few pages at home, or (like us) take the file to Kinko’s and have them print and bind a copy, thanks for joining our experiment.

RQ#100 (the first online issue), published Winter Solstice 2009, has been downloaded over 20,000 times. Considering that our largest print run was 2000, this seems to represent a great increase in distribution (even allowing for repeat downloads).

WHY SUBSCRIBE IF IT’S FREE?

That’s a common dilemma faced by all media today. With print declining and the internet unable to produce income, once-proud titles are disappearing under the weight of their budgets.

RQ’s response is to minimize our already-low costs. Almost all of the work on RQ is volunteer. Unlike professional publications, we are not saddled with high production costs.

But we still look to readers for crucial support — equipment, internet costs, travel to events and gatherings, and office expenses.

Your support of RQ underwrites all of Reclaiming, from the camps and classes we publicize, to the Pagan Cluster activities we cover, to services like nonprofit status that RQ helps maintain.

ASSISTANCE FOR THE COMPUTER-CHALLENGED

RQ honors the Luddite movement, and proclaims our kinship with those who would impede the march of dehumanizing technology.

As a special service in solidarity with the computer-challenged, RQ will print and mail a copy of the current RQ to anyone who requests it. For subscribers, this service is free. For others, we will ask a donation. We want everyone to have access to RQ!

See you next time! — *the RQ production cell*

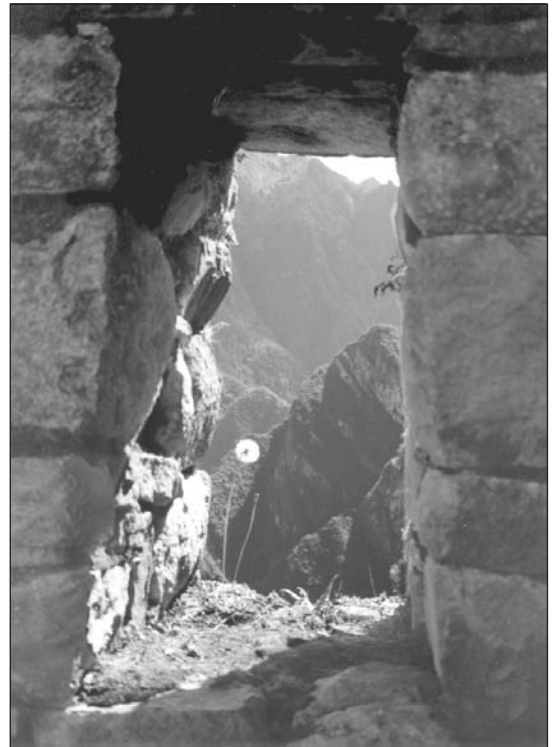


Photo by Gaiamore.

Dandelion Gathering 2010

The fourth biennial Dandelion Gathering (an all-Reclaiming conclave first held in Spring 2004) is just about to get underway as RQ heads to press.

Dandelion 2010 will be held September 8-12 at Diana’s Grove in central Missouri, a 102-acre sanctuary “dedicated to the magical work of personal and community development.”

Diana’s Grove, located two hours southwest of St. Louis, long sponsored a year-round Mystery School, and has been the site of Reclaiming’s Midwest Witchcamp.

The first agenda item at the Dandelion Gathering is building community. Rituals, workshops, and shared meals are favorite activities.

Reclaiming’s evolving BIRCH council will convene again at Dandelion. Any Dandelion participant can take part in BIRCH. Reclaiming communities are encouraged to send a spoke.

As always, RQ staffers plan to be at Dandelion — hope to see you there!

For more on Dandelion 2010, see page 64 and/or visit www.dandeliongathering.org

Photos — www.reclaimingquarterly.org/web/dand06/

Alternate TAKES

Guardian UK

Number one source of international news in English — London-based, with good US coverage. Web pages are print-friendly, so you can practically assemble your own daily paper. No US paper compares — www.guardian.co.uk

Earth First! Journal

More international activist news than ordinary mortals can possibly read. Print edition published eight times a year. EF!J sets the standard for grassroots publications. \$25/year to Box 3023, Tucson, AZ 85702. Or visit www.earthfirstjournal.org

Indy Media Centers

Up to the moment, locally-based activist news from around the world. When the action is breaking, there are no better online sites. Their flagship site has links to dozens of local sites. Visit www.indymedia.org

Witchvox

Witches' Voice is the top networking site for Witches and Pagans online. Everything from religious liberties to the latest local ritual. Events are user-posted and come from every corner of Paganism. An inspiring site to browse. Visit www.witchvox.com

RQ.org

RQ.org carries photo-features and reports on grassroots activism and Pagan events, as well as reports on Witchcamps and other Reclaiming events. Our back-issue archives have dozens of magical and activist features. RQ.org's pages are print-friendly, so you can read offline too.

Books • Film • Music • Resources

BOOKS / WRITING

Radical Homemakers by Shannon Hayes. Shannon Hayes proves to even the most stringent feminists that homemaking skills are remarkably valuable in creating a fulfilling, stimulating life that redefines how we interact with the domestic sphere.

Peace, Love, and Baby Ducks by Lauren Myracle. The perfect "chick flick" book. Kept me up at night, past bedtime. Surprisingly real, not "just another over-privileged rich kid." The face of Sisterhood.

The Rest Is Noise by Alex Ross. Out beyond rock, jazz, and hip-hop is the world of "composed" music. Here's a guide to the strange and noisy 1900s (with online music-samples).

Food Rules by Michael Pollan. Quick and easy "rules" on how to slowly savor real, unprocessed foods. A great read for health-conscious folks who are short on time, but interested in slow food politics nonetheless!

Various Titles by Dana Stubenow. Alaskan author's mystery novels ooze descriptions of gorgeous and dangerous bush country, complex political dynamics, sex, and environmental concerns.

Can't Stop Won't Stop by Jeff Chang. Chang's 500-page social and musical history of hip-hop is a dense but readable guide to the 20th Century's last brilliant musical outburst.

FILM / VIDEO / TELEVISION

True Blood (HBO). Sexy Southern bloodsuckers seek sympathetic server in small-town Louisiana. Poignant, creepy, and compelling social commentary sweltering in the heat of the firefly-ridden South.

Brothers and Sisters. Tragic-comic tales of a Southern California family minus a deceased adulterous dad. Contemporary issues, gay relationships, and family dynamics when love abounds.

more reviews on next page

NEW BOOK ABOUT PEOPLE'S PARK FROM SLINGSHOT

Edited by Terri Compost • Published by Slingshot Collective

This book is for those that hear the name "People's Park" and know deep down that the park is theirs and something to defend. And create.

People's Park: Still Blooming is our family heirloom, our memories, our scrapbook, the story of the courage and hope that freed and tended this sacred piece of Earth. It is for us to remember, but mostly it is for the next to come. This book is an attempt to capture the spirit and story of the Park.

The book was published with the hope that, like seeds, copies will find fertile ground in the hearts of young people and encourage them to try again. We are connected. The land wants to live. Let a thousand Parks bloom.

Available at www.whoopdistro.org
Bulk copies: www.slingshot.tao.ca
Also available at Long Haul Infoshop, 3124 Shattuck Ave, Berkeley, CA 94705 — and at many independent bookstores.



Books • Film • Music • Resources • & More . . .

Caprica. Goddess-worshipping *Battlestar Galactica* fans, feed your hunger for polytheistic prequels! Essentially a Cylon Genesis story for techno-savvy Pagans who honor the old Gods.

Invictus. Although some want to change the colors and mascot of the South African rugby team, Nelson Mandela realizes supporting the team may help heal the rift between whites and blacks.

MUSIC / AUDIO

One by Yuval Ron. Incredible collaboration of Arabic, Israeli, and other worldwide musicians bridging differences through mystical sounds. DVD version includes Aziz, a Mevlevi Whirling Dervish.

The Best Damn Thing by Avril Lavigne. Songs are: Passionate love. Broken hearts. “Skater boy outfits” clash with deep music. Sing-along, lyric memorized, always on my mind.

David Cook by David Cook. Searching through shattered memories, pulling out a thread of lyrics difficult to decipher without the help of Google. Crackles scream softly through speakers.

The Fame by Lady Gaga. “Just Dance” rocked the house at the Faerie Masque Ball, and sounds just as good on small speakers. Great music, negligible lyrics. Can’t have everything.

Five Alt-Country Classics

1. Avett Brothers - *Mignonette*
2. Be Good Tanyas - *Blue Horse*
3. Uncle Tupelo - *March 1992*
4. Gillian Welch - *Revival*
5. Espers - *Espers*

SNACK FOOD

Hazelnut Chocolate Cookies from Ikea. Savoring the cream for last. Everyone grabs for one, trying to capture some of that ferocious deliciousness.

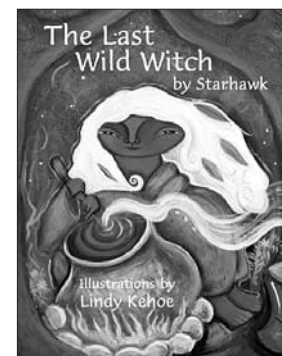
The Last Wild Witch

by Starhawk • illustrations by Lindy Kehoe

An eco-fable for kids and other free spirits. In the heart of the last magic forest lived the last wild Witch. This is the story of how the children of the perfect town let a little wildness get inside of them, find their joy and courage, and save the last wild Witch and the last magic forest

from disappearing.

“Thoughtful, moving and beautiful” — Alice Walker



Contributors: Tori Woodard, Elka Vera, Natalie Mogg, Ciana, Maya Litauer, Jane Meredith, Luke Hauser

25 Years Ago: a Vintage Reclaiming Newsletter

Reclaiming Newsletter, Issue No. 20 - Autumn 1985

Feature articles included:

- “My Summer Vacation, or A Week at Witchcamp,” by Vibra
- “Dial-a-Witch,” by Rose
- “Dumpster Truffles: Prosperity, Scarcity, and Sustainability,” by Starhawk
- “Pagans and Politics; Realities Behind the Theories,” by Tom Ness

Advertisers included San Francisco magic shops Curios & Candles and Tools of Magic, as well as Lomi Bodywork, singing lessons, and *Wiggansnatch*, “an alternative-realities literary magazine.”

Classes included Elements of Magic and Introduction to Wicca for Gay Men.

Reclaiming Newsletter No. 20 was produced by the RQ production cell’s distant ancestors, whom we honor here: Irene, Rose, Rick, Robin, Roy, and Sophia. Cover by Sophia Sparks.

Downloadable copies of old Reclaiming Newsletters and Quarterlies are now available on our website - www.reclaimingquarterly.org/archives/



Coming soon — complete RQ Archives
www.reclaimingquarterly.org/archives/



Youth

What Is Magic?

Reclaiming's next generation weighs in on our question of the quarter

Magic is a way of connecting more deeply with the Earth and with people around me. It's something I can use to empower and inspire myself and others. — Hilary

Magic is a vehicle of change. It helps me come to terms with myself. — Ingrid

Magic to me means the mystical — and it gives me a large community that I love a lot. — Aidan

Magic means the world to me because the world is magic. — Carly

Magic is the divine force that guides us. Without it we would accomplish nothing. — Maya

Magic means putting your will into an intention to make it reality. — Robyn

Magic means my life to me. I'm not always thinking about it, I'm not always in ritual or in trance, but it's always there. I always hold space for it. — Sarah

Magic entails knowledge and use of science, universal laws, art, and mystery. Magic is wisdom and love woven into an art form of personal development and transformation.— Max

Magic is a connection between yourself and different natural entities and spiritual deities. The practice of magic means using the combined energies of yourself and a deity or natural entity to manifest something. — Sequoia

Magic is the ability to look at everyday things in a different light, and see ways that I can change things or that they can be different. — Simon

Reclaiming youth are involved in several Witchcamps, including Vermont, Free Activist, Wild Ginger, Witchlets in the Woods, and Teen Earth Magic. For more information visit Witchcamp.org or email quarterly@reclaiming.org

Submissions for the Youth Pages can be sent to quarterly@reclaiming.org

Painting by Sequoia

Youth

A Muggle-Born Tells Her Tale

By Meagan Fischer

I recently (jokingly) realized that I am Muggle-born.

I was raised as a liberal Christian, interwoven with an acknowledgment of life and Earth as sacred. I didn't grow up doing magic or ritual. I didn't learn the Wheel of the Year until I was a teenager, and I still know only a few traditional Pagan myths and deities.

At twenty years old, I am coming into being a young adult. It seems to me that part of my journey at this time should be learning how to mentor and teach. I am in an awkward position in the Reclaiming community though, where there are many people younger than me that have been raised as Witches, while I am new to the community. (I've been a Witch since I was 15, but I've only been involved with Reclaiming for a year and a half.)

At Teen Earth Magic last year, I sometimes felt embarrassed for not knowing about things that others much younger than me were familiar with, and guilty for asking lots of questions that may have seemed obvious to those who have grown up with Reclaiming in their lives.

Nevertheless, going to Teen Earth Magic (TEM) was a wonderful experience for me. I didn't go to camp when I was younger, due to coming from a poor family, and I probably wouldn't have enjoyed going to a Christian or secular camp full of heteronormativity, lots of rules

(instead of agreements), unhealthy food, and who knows what else.

At TEM I made authentic connections and felt honored as a person, and I saw those younger than me being honored as well, in ways that more conventional youth activities in our society never do. I appreciate the respect that I feel and see between different generations in Reclaiming.

If I were to change a few things regarding youth in Reclaiming, I would relax the separation of sleeping quarters by gender at camps (although I know this has a legal basis). I think it perpetuates blockages between those of different genders, and I would like to see us all feel more comfortable and safe around each other, regardless of our bodies or identities.

I would also like to see more empowerment and freedom for youth to do activities on their own. At TEM I wanted to go on hikes by myself in the morning, but this wasn't allowed for minors. Technically I could have since I was legally responsible for myself, but I felt guilty taking advantage of the privilege when others there were not allowed to do the same.

I recently attended a gathering where very young children were entrusted with more autonomy than I have seen even in Reclaiming, and no one was hurt or lost. I think the danger to youth doing things independently is less than is often imagined. I'd like to see more discussion about strategies for dealing with this, with the full voice of youth taking part in the decisions and believing in our creativity enough to find a way through perceived obstacles, such as legal liability.

I think Reclaiming teachers are doing their best to juggle the value of equal treatment for all ages with personal and legal obligations to protect and keep safe the youth in this community, and I applaud them for their dedication to finding this balance. Thank you!

Meagan is a 20-year-old Witch from Chico CA, where she attends college, practices permaculture, and teaches Compassionate Communication for her local Free Skool.

Image by Sequoia.



Youth



Photos by Amy Breeds

More photos at:

Amybreedsphotography.blogspot.com

Youth

Water Witch (noun)

a person who claims the ability to detect water underground by means of a divining rod

By Natalie Mogg

I had been avoiding ancestor magic for a while. History has always been interesting to me, but delving into my own family's seemed a little scary. I wasn't exactly planning on inviting my roots into my life or magical practice. When I looked back, all I could see was bigotry, carpentry, and Jello salad.

But as it happened, my grandmother was embarking on a family tree project of epic proportions, and I got swept up in the tide of recovering old photographs and recounting family stories. It got to the point where I couldn't help but meet some of my ancestors.

If you go back about one hundred years, you'll find Elizabeth Robinson — my grandmother's grandmother, known to later generations as Grandma R.

I had been hearing stories about having a Water Witch in the family ever since I was little, but having a name and a face made the stories suddenly feel real.

The thought of having a magical ancestor fascinated me. It didn't seem to fit with the pictures of my great-great-grandmother in white Victorian dresses, all faint smiles and unstained lace.

So I asked around, trying to create a mental picture of her from the memories of my grandma, mom, and aunt. The more I found out about this woman,

the less I trusted the impression the photographs gave of her.

She lived with her husband and several children in the harsh Mojave desert. She was the traditional caretaker in many ways — cooking and cleaning and shooting rattlesnakes when the need arose. But she was not by any stretch the image of a proper woman.

She had a mischievous (bordering on mean) sense of humor and an air of scrappy independence about her that might have shocked the neighbors, had she lived close enough to anyone for them to notice.

The way I see it, her Water-Witching was a meeting point of those two sides. She nurtured those around her by giving them the gift of water in the desert, while audaciously thumbing her nose at society's attitudes by reclaiming the word "Witch" (before it was cool).

The way she identified as a Witch obviously meant something completely different to her than it does to us now. I think the term was more pragmatic than spiritual. She never revealed her method of finding the water, and I think it's just as likely that she used a practical, scientific understanding of her environment while calling it magic. (From what I understand, she loved an aura of mystery.)

But whether she used intuition or magic or science or some combination of them all, I think she also inadvertently fit our definition of a Witch. She had to know the land's secrets on some deep level for her to find water underground — I believe the way she interacted with the Earth showed great wisdom and respect. If that's not a Witch, what is?

Both of my parents are strongly nonreligious people, and I myself am agnostic. This being the case, I have a hard time feeling comfortable identifying with any one religious tradition, no matter how much it clicks with me.

Having my spirituality tie into my roots was a reaffirming moment for me as a Witch, and also as a member of my extended family. It gave me a sense of continuity and grounding — she is a part of me and I'm just as much a part of whoever comes next.

It's a huge, peaceful feeling of belonging that I never would have experienced if I hadn't overcome my fear of Jello salad.

Natalie is a fourteen year old mostly-poet who plays mostly-classical guitar, reads a little too much and sleeps a little too little. She also writes for BAMboozled.org.

Youth

Waiting

The train comes
the train goes
not really sure what I'm waiting for
I sit
I stand
I lay
nothing can take the pain away
my mouth fills with chocolatey goodness
knowing it is not a cure
the train comes
the train goes
still I wait

by Maya Litauer



Summer

The light breeze creates beaming ripples in the grass
cattails move back and forth
back and forth
hypnotizing the cat lurking in the shade
peace at last.
Sunshine like gold, splatter-painted across the sky
so calm, so quiet
barking
birds chirping cheerily
their playful melody echoes
in the openness of the great beyond
the leaves turned toward the sun
absorbing its full essence —
a typical summer day

by Maya Litauer



Hand-painted boots by Sophia Rosenberg

PEACE WALK 2010

by K. Seren

In April this year, I danced, chanted, prayed, and walked with people of diverse faiths in the cause of peace and nuclear disarmament. Together we engaged in ritual from our myriad religions with intentions focused on forging peace in humanity.

We walked from Las Vegas to the Nuclear Test Site in Nevada — in the wind, the sun, heat, and cold. We listened to the wind (howling at times), to the stillness of the desert, to each other. We shared meals, sunscreen, and duct tape (my blistered feet thank you!). We shared vision, desire, and dream.

My heart and mind are still raw with the memory of the pain of the land and the suffering of beings at the hands of war. On Friday, the Stations of the Cross were performed with a unique focus on the continued suffering of humanity in the violence of war, imploring us to find the peace that was offered by Christ. Meanwhile the drones of Creech Air Force Base flew overhead. By the fifth station, I could not repeat the sections of the performance that

were intended for all to read in unison. My voice caught in my throat and tears gathered as I opened myself to the pain of humanity — its fears, hatred, and grief.

As I walked on Saturday, I found a space of stillness, alone with my footsteps. With every step I took toward the Nuclear Test Site, I felt a weight on my chest increase, the burdened and belabored Earth Mother struggling to

I began to breathe more deeply, more evenly. I called upon the Light of the Divine, called it from within and without, in me and through me. I envisioned this vast desert being cleansed and healed with this Light, pouring out past me, past the Nuclear Test Site fence, and across the land. I envisioned Light pooling from my footsteps, Light resting gently from above on every cactus and shrub, Light

penetrating below the crust of soil and deep into the Earth. Light seeping into myself, then touching every human heart. Light bringing love and peace to all people.

For all the pain and suffering this Earth holds, mostly due to our own lack of mindfulness and our bowing down to fear, it holds much beauty too. When I had allowed the pain to wash over me, faced it, embraced it, and met it with courage... I began to feel a deep affection. Despite Her wounds, the Earth

cooperated with the rain to cause the desert to gift us with the most amazing array of flowers. Flowers so small they were dwarfed by my fingernails fought to the surface to meet the sun. A wary



heal a tremendous wound. I opened myself as wide as I could, breathed out space for this suffering, and grieved with the Land as I would for my family. I touched the plants lightly, hearing their voices. I cried. I apologized. And then I gave what Light I could offer this place.

Photos by Jim Haber

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PEACE WALK 2010

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burro eyed me cautiously, trotting off to the horizon. A pair of ravens took to the sky ahead.

And in humanity, too, there is hope and the capacity for healing. Again and again this came to me — as we huddled together at lunch using a car as a windbreak, as we stood together in vigil at Creech Air Force Base... but mostly when we danced together. Thursday night, in the Temple of Goddess Spirituality (dedicated to Sekhmet), led by T. Thorn Coyle and Spinner McBride, we called upon the inner divine fire, the elements, and the Goddess Sekhmet. The rhythm of the drums, the warmth of the fire, the starry sky of the open dome of the temple... I could feel myself spiral into this Divine presence, this deep capacity for love and peace. Friday morning, remembering together Christ's sacrifice and the continued suffering of humanity at the hands of violence, I felt this same spiraling — this unity despite difference. And Friday night, led by T. Thorn Coyle and Joshua Levin, recitations of Thomas Merton backed by drumming turned into spontaneous chanting and dancing. As I moved and sung,

I felt my soul rise to meet the Divine presence, bringing the Light and Love of this Divine into me and my humanity.

Sunday morning we danced again — this time to the drumbeat of Johnny Bob, the Tribal Chief of the Western Shoshone.

Before dawn, we gathered around the fire, listening to prayers in the Shoshone

language and dancing together to the solid heartbeat of the drum. As we went round and round, holding hands, circling as the sun rose, I began to lose myself in the circular swirl of energy around the fire, the vortex created by just a few dozen human feet, stomping out the rhythm of love and peace. At breakfast, my mind wondered: what would it be like to have a world of



people dancing to that rhythm of awakening, holding hands in a never-ending spiral of life? What would happen if humanity as a whole, collective consciousness became mindful of how precious life really is? What if we knew our incredible potential to honor life in other beings and transform this world? What if we realized Earth is our

heaven or our hell — that we choose which reality to create?

Nearly a week later, I sit here at my computer in my little mountain cabin and I still can call up the pain of the Land and humanity in the shackles of war. Yet I can also still call up the hope of humanity moving in unison to the heartbeat of peace. Logic tells me that humans are a long way off from finding a collective consciousness of unity and friendship. Yet perhaps because it is a deep-seated desire, my heart and soul tell me this is possible. In

the meantime, whenever I can, I will hold hands with you and dance, and together, we can become filled with the joy and wonder of living. In those moments, we will create heaven on earth. We will become this future humanity, able to celebrate our differences and yet raise one voice for peace — so that no child is orphaned by violence, no mother buries her son in the name of war, and no land is poisoned and scarred by weapons.

K. Seren is a Druid and does independent study with T. Thorn Coyle. A cultural anthropologist specializing in religion and ecology, Seren also writes non-fiction and creates art.



Photos by Jim Haber

A DESERT EXPERIENCE

By T. Thorn Coyle

“Freedom is hard to bear. It can be objected that I am speaking of political freedom in spiritual terms, but the political institutions of any nation are always menaced and are ultimately controlled by the spiritual state of that nation... Privately, we cannot stand our lives and dare not examine them; domestically, we take no responsibility for (and no pride in) what goes on in our country; and internationally, for many millions of people, we are an unmitigated disaster.”

— James Baldwin, *The Fire Next Time*

Thursday night we sang and prayed to Sekhmet to give us the fire of courage to face the wars we carry inside ourselves, to connect with the fire in the Earth and the stars, and the fire in our own blood, in our hearts and minds, that would enable us to face the fires of war that have so ravaged this desert. The mighty black statue of Sekhmet faced the direction of the Nevada Test Site, and the temple itself is situated three miles from Creech Air Force Base and eight miles from two prisons. Prophet James Baldwin is right: as long as there is war inside me, there will be war on Earth. As long as I build prisons in my soul, humanity will imprison itself.

Friday morning we walked the three miles from the Sekhmet's Temple to the “Home of the Hunters.”

Planes glided silently overhead as we walked the Stations of the Cross outside the long fence. Soldiers patrolled in a big truck nearby, following our movements. The desert sun was hot, but thankfully for this hour or so, the

winds were still. As I looked up into the sky, I could not help but notice that the Predator looked remarkably like a wasp, reminding me of my sacred encounter the week before. But this was a wasp for which I did not want to find another home. This was a silent, unmanned, death-dealing wasp who — along with its larger cousin, the Reaper who also made test runs overhead — would not only do surveillance, but carry missiles and bombs over Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Iraq. Although designed to save US military personnel and to more accurately assess targets, 32% of those they kill are still civilians, and of course, sometimes mistakes are made.

Later that afternoon, we held vigil outside the base. Part of the time, I sat on the ground in meditation while anchoring a large banner that fought with the returned wind. As I opened my aura out to hold the desert, I could not help but feel that we all must hold each other, as best we can, whether UAV (Unmanned Aerial Vehicle, or “drone”) operators, the county Sheriff, the counter-protestors, or the yucca and cholla that dotted the landscape. As military personnel drove off the base

toward home, some ignored us, some few flashed peace signs, and one held up his book on Che Guevara.

UAV operators in Nevada and California are killing people across the world, as we speak. They watch the videos implanted in the gliders and watch, in graphic close-ups yet from great distance, as people are blasted into small components of humanity. This also shatters the enlisted men and women, as we can well imagine.

The Military Times reports:

“The Air National Guardsmen who operate Predator drones over Iraq via remote control, launching deadly missile attacks from the safety of Southern California 7000 miles away, are suffering some of the same psychological stresses as their comrades on the battlefield. Working in air-conditioned trailers, Predator pilots observe the field of battle through a bank of video screens and kill enemy fighters with a few computer keystrokes. Then, after their shifts are over, they get to drive home and sleep in their own beds. But that whiplash transition is taking a toll on some of them mentally, and so is the way the unmanned aircraft's cameras enable them to see people getting killed in high-resolution detail, some officers say.”

What are we doing here, with these wars? We are damaging ourselves, our souls, and the Earth. We no longer even have the satisfaction of grappling with another human, hand to hand. We are dealing out death at a distance, and slowly dying inside. Freedom is

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Photos by Jim Haber

DESERT EXPERIENCE

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hard to bear. But so is war. So is our enslavement and inner blindness. How shall we waken to the light that dawns over the desert so beautifully? If life and death are sacred, what is our role in these wars being fought via real-time video games? We try to distance ourselves from the cycles of the Earth, but in the long run, this simply is not possible.

As General Stanley McChrystal wrote in his report to President Obama regarding the war in Afghanistan:

“Pre-occupied with protection of our own forces, we have operated in a manner that distances us – physically and psychologically – from the people we seek to protect... The insurgents cannot defeat us militarily; but we can defeat ourselves.”

And so we keep walking in the desert, beneath the unforgiving sun and scouring wind.

* * *

It is the religious belief of the Western Shoshone that the Earth is most sacred. This includes everything in it, upon it, and above it.

As soon as I stepped across the line onto the Nevada Nuclear Test Site, I began to weep...

Saturday, we walked 15 miles on asphalt, feet and knees screaming. By the final few miles, my muscles were beginning to seize up. I breathed deeply, realigned, and extended my spine to the sky. It helped. During each day of the walk, many flashed peace signs at us,

many ignored us, and some gave the one-fingered greeting. Truckers blew their horns and bikers raised arms in salutation. We battled banners in the winds when they came. During still times, I opened my blue parasol that read “Love, Not Fear”. We walked the



desert highway, next to glimmering rocks and cacti, whether we were 18 years old or 80. The desert gifted me with a black rock bisected by a ascending white stripe that looked like it was heading off into the distance. The road I walked gave me back a little drawing of a road to take in memento vivere.

Western Shoshone Chief Johnnie Bobb and his family greeted us with the Shoshone flag, burning sage, drumming, and singing as we limped on up to the peace camp where dinner cooked by local volunteers would soon be ready. I felt grateful to be there, to give some small witness to the Western Shoshone – whose land, despite the Ruby Valley Treaty, has been used to stoke the fires of war – and to the land itself, to the tiny red and purple flowers, to the yucca, cholla, and nopal.

We live in times of war and preparation for war. This has affected our minds. We live in times of torture and training for torture. This has affected our hearts. We live in times

when the assassination of those who feel threatening to us – whether US citizens or “foreigners” – is acceptable to the governing body of a nation, and to the president who promised hope and change. This has affected our souls. We are awash in the needless shedding of blood and the tears of mothers, fathers, lovers, and children. We are complicit with systems that tear us from each other, that distance us from breath and skin and love, that tell us we are not of the Earth, and can degrade the fertile body of this planet, and can degrade even the space between the stars.

We are crying from the wounding of this body, of our body. And it is not going to get better any time soon.

Sunday morning, I rose at 4:30 after another night spent at

the Goddess Temple. Others had camped out on Shoshone land, braving the harsh wind and cold. I awoke during the night and sent some energy of calming to the sky, thinking of small tents buffeted with little shelter from the land itself. The outdoor sleepers said the wind stilled itself after noon, giving rest and respite for awhile. We made our way back, to join the others around a small fire, while Johnnie Bobb sang for fire and water and for his father, the Sun. We danced and danced together, circling around those flames, feet stepping to the heartbeat of his drum. Later, mass was said, and reconnection made to the sacred in that way. We are of Earth. We are of community. We are in communion. But we have to remember. We have to keep drawing ourselves back.

Children of the Earth, it is time to heed the calling of your heart. It is time to listen to the roaring in your soul. It is time to take up the task of your desire.

Photo by Jim Haber

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DESERT EXPERIENCE

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As visionary Deena Metzger once wrote: "There is no time not to love." Can we set aside our fear and hatred of each other? Can we dance the dance of heartbreak and the longing for deep peace?

After Easter Mass — the mass of resurrection in which Father Steve spoke of Jesus crawling, bruised and battered, from his tomb — we were led again by the Shoshone to the gates of the bomb beleaguered land. We carried our banners and our prayers. We carried our resolve and our longing. Some began to wail at the white line that marks the boundary between one world and another, between the place where we could stand and the place where we could not. People began wailing and crying. The drumbeat started and I had to cross. I had to stand upon that land and offer what healing I could muster. I had to walk upon the stones and sand of ancient seabed where I had not stood for a decade of years.

As soon as I stepped across that line, I began weeping. The land rose up and met my feet, surrounding me with

recognition: I had come. I had come. I had come.

Once I was arrested and inside the holding pen, I hung a string of paper cranes to fly in the harsh wind, and then walked as far as I could and looked out upon the desert, sending wings of energy and light up into sky and down to Earth.



Spreading these wings, I let healing roll out from me. The land drank. I could do little, but as we always do, I did my best with what I had. The wind held my body upright, I moved with it, as though riding on the ocean, or dancing with a firm and strong beloved wrapped around my back. I was home... for I was with

my Mother, who is everywhere and no place. I was standing on the Earth.

Brothers and sisters, these times, like many others, are times that test the resiliency of our souls. As have some of our ancestors before us, I hope we choose the patterns of joy and reconnection rather than stepping toward hatred and fear. Walking the pathways of joy, we have some chance.

T. Thorn Coyle is a respected teacher and author of "Kissing the Limitless" and "Evolutionary Witchcraft" and hosts the popular "Elemental Castings". Founder of Solar Cross Temple and Morningstar Mystery School, she has a spiritual direction practice that reaches people internationally.

UPDATE AND CONTACTS

Following the detentions and confiscation of property at the Nevada Test Site (NTS) on Easter at the culmination of this year's Sacred Peace Walk, the banners, flags and religious symbols were returned. As a result of our actions, authorities created clearer guidelines about how the government will deal with people that cross the line at the NTS and their belongings.

The trial for the Creech 14, arrested during the April 2009 Sacred Peace Walk and "Ground the Drones Lest We Reap the Whirlwind" actions, has been reset for September 14, 2010, in Las Vegas.

For information on actions and organizing around Nevada Test Site, and to learn about Sacred Peace Walk 2011, visit www.nevadadesertexperience.org

Photo by Jim Haber

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US Social Forum

Detroit — June 22-26, 2010

by Starhawk • photos by Jim Haber

JUNE 23 — WE'RE HERE!

I flew into Detroit last night with two wonderful women from the Hunters Point Family agency, a San Francisco group which our Earth Activist Trainings partners with. Lena Miller directs the agency and Jasmine Marshall runs the Peacekeeper program.

We arrived just at the moment Detroit's Riverfest culminated in a massive fireworks display. A million people went down to the river to watch — which made reaching our motel a challenge. We finally had to abandon our taxi and walk the last block, with all our bags.

We got there to find the streets humming with people, a party in progress in the parking lot, barbecues happening on patches of grass by the sidewalks, and the sky alight with the thunder and a rain of light and color.

We got settled and headed out to find food. I have to say it was a different experience for me, walking down the street in those crowds and crowds of people, mostly young, mostly black, all of them dressed to look good. The whole city was drenched in heat haze and pheromones, and I enjoyed seeing it a bit through the eyes of much younger women who were looking pretty good themselves — and definitely attracting far more male attention than I ever do on my own these days.

Jasmine, who is twenty-three, was so excited. "I can't believe it — all

these black people out on the streets, just chillin', having a good time, and nobody shuttin' it down! Why can't we have that in the Bayview?"

And it's true — with all the economic devastation of Detroit, there are thousands of people out here enjoying themselves, wearing short shorts and gold platform shoes. A trio of trumpeters in an empty lot blast out a riff. A couple of trombone players across the street answer them — and they play back and forth, a musical conversation in the street.

Why can't we have it in the Bayview? There's a long history that goes back to the bulldozing of San Francisco's Fillmore District back in the 60s for redevelopment, destroying a thriving and lively Black community. To the closing of the naval shipyard, once the biggest employer in the Bayview, and the resulting unemployment, poverty, and

the residues of toxic wastes. And most immediately, to the intertwined gang violence and police violence. More people die violently per capita in the Bayview than in Iraq, or so I've heard. The infant mortality rate in the Bayview is on par with Haiti or Bulgaria.

As I'm writing, Jasmine and Lena are gossiping and the conversation moves to all the young men they know who are dead. Jasmine says, "My whole age group is gone. All the boys I grew up with — they're all gone." Dead, or in prison.

We spend a lazy morning, sleeping in, and finally make our way down to Cobo Hall, the big convention center that houses registration for the Social Forum, then on to the march.

The march is quite wonderful — colorful, lively, not painfully loud, but mostly what's wonderful is the incredible diversity of people. As Lena puts it, "It's not only every type of person, but every shade and variety of every type." Black, white, Latino, Asian, Native American, every race, age, style of dress, and political persuasion seems represented. There are environmentalists carrying sunflowers and a contingent of domestic workers in magic T-shirts. There are a couple of anarchists with black flags and Revolutionary workers selling newspapers and big puppets of Martin Luther King with recordings of his speeches playing. A brass band plays



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US Social Forum

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and four young people in pink T-shirts dance. Two clowns walk by on stilts, and drummers play a samba beat.

The march is a beautiful vision of what a real social movement could be. Ironically, we march through downtown Detroit, an area blasted and blighted by the city's economic losses. Vast areas are simply empty — full of weeds, with here and there a burned-out carcass of a house. Beautiful stone churches, relics of a time when there was money and jobs, loom over vacant lots. The old Detroit Free Press building, a dignified stone castle, is now boarded over with a sign offering free rents to any enterprise that would venture to locate there. Faded signs grace the tattered marquees of boarded-over department stores. London had more signs of life after the blitz.

Indeed, it's hard to imagine any enemy nation inflicting more damage on a city than has been done here by capitalism at its most irresponsible and brutal.

Through the devastation winds this lively and beautiful march, a sign of hope and resilience. If there's any hope for our poor country and our battered world, any chance we can turn our direction around toward real justice and balance, it lies in the people here, this beautiful coming together across all the divides.

JUNE 24 — A NEW WORLD FROM THE ASHES OF THE OLD

Settling into the conference. We get up late, but I manage to catch most of a morning workshop led by an environmental network of youth — so sweet to sit in a circle with all these beautiful young people, so very diverse, and hear them make connections between social justice and environmental issues.

I run into Jim Haber, an old buddy from San Francisco who does interfaith organizing around the Nevada Test Site and peace and justice issues. He's asking me if any of the folks in the Bayview are interested in making the connection between the funding cuts for social issues and the war — when

a black woman of about my age who is sitting at a table taps us and points at her button, which says "A million a day".

"That's why I can't get a job," she says. "We're spending a million a day on those wars."

We show our video of the permaculture work in the Bayview, which you can see for yourself at: www.youtube.com/watch?v=3bdKgBt6LbE

Lena talks about Hunters Point Family, the agency she started when she was only twenty-three. She created a program for girls, Girls 2000, to help be a safe haven from the violence around them, to build their skills and self-esteem, and to provide the resources that might be lacking in their homes.

Lena is an impressive speaker. She's honest and passionate and people respond to her sense of vision, the same vision that drew me in to help support their work with the gardens.

Then Jasmine talks. She has such an engaging, confident, radiant personality, telling us about coming up in the program herself and now being a Case Manager for the girls. She runs the Girls Group and she's young enough to be kind of a big sister to them.

I talk about our Earth Activist Trainings and how we came to be involved in the Bayview. One part of EAT's mission statement says, "To bring the knowledge and resources of regenerative ecological design to communities with the greatest needs and fewest resources." When a friend introduced me to Lena, and I heard her vision of the Bayview becoming the "green jewel in the crown of the Emerald City," I knew we could support that work.

We talk about what has worked well in our collaboration — a strong, shared vision is the beginning. Respecting the community — coming in with questions, listening rather than slapping down ready-made solutions, employing the permaculture principle of thoughtful and protracted observation — all that is key.

Most of all, keeping the goal firmly on capacity-building for the community,

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Jim Haber

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on transferring knowledge and skills even when sometimes that means sacrificing efficiency or immediate results.

Then we open it up to questions and discussion from the audience. Aresh, who started Homes with Gardens in the Bronx, talks about some of the legal issues in New York and their efforts to defend community gardens.

Shea Howell talks about the Detroit Summer urban gardens and offers to take us to see them. A young woman who is organizing against mountaintop removal coal mining asks some thoughtful questions. All and all — a great time!

The evening, like everything, is double-scheduled. I catch some of the plenary to hear Grace Boggs, an amazing Detroit organizer now in her nineties. She and her husband, Jimmie Boggs, who is now dead, have been the center of much of the creative and transformative work here for decades.

She and other great organizers from Detroit talk about the movement

history of the city. The point they make, over and over again, is that Detroit is a strong center of resistance and resilience. With all that's happened to the city," Grace says, "we continue to come back with something new."

When we get chased out, finally, I end up back at the plenary sitting next to Jim Haber. We decide to go out to the Anchor Bar to hear David Rovics and Anne Feeney, and walk out in the rain. The bar is crowded and noisy, but I decide to have a beer. Up front a man with a guitar is singing a country-rock version of "Solidarity Forever" and everyone is standing and singing.

Someone grabs my hand and holds it up — it's Dave, whom I met on the Gaza Freedom March. We're all singing together, the whole crowded room, crammed with old comrades I've marched with so many times and with so many people I've never met but who have nonetheless been marching together, whether we knew it or not. We're singing that old song that raises the ghosts of so many marches and strikes and struggles, and I'm happy.

"We will build a new world from the ashes of the old," we sing, "Solidarity forever."

I believe it.

JUNE 25 — AN INSPIRING DAY

Some highlights from yesterday:

- Hearing Grace Boggs and Emmanuel Wallerstein, two elders of the social change movement. Most memorable quotes:

Grace: We have to use the negative to advance the positive.

Wallerstein: We want a world that's relatively democratic and relatively equal. I say 'relatively' because nothing is ever perfect.

- Lisa Fithian's organizing workshop, with slides from her union organizing work. I want my friends from the Bayview to hear her, because we may need to start a new form of organizing to protect our community garden from being bulldozed by developers. Check out Lisa's website www.organizingforpower.org for her own notes and lots of resources. A really incredible resource!

- Meeting my old friend Marta Benevides, who does community organizing in El Salvador. Reclaiming, my extended spiritual network, has had a long-term solidarity project to help support her work, ever since she came to a gathering of ours back in the 90s. Visit www.reclaiming.org/resources/elsal/circleoflove.html

We talked with some of the young people who have been working with Marta. In El Salvador, she's started an Ecohouse and a museum. She works with communities striving to build a culture of peace amidst the growing violence.

In El Salvador, as in Mexico, as in the Bayview, the lethal combination of drugs and violence opens the door to even more lethal police violence and intertwined corruption — and in El Salvador it's gotten much, much worse in the last few years.

A couple of the young men are from Williamsburg, Pennsylvania, another community plagued by violence. A Texas company is planning to move sixty thousand workers to Williamsburg to open up a huge natural gas field.

As we sit, one person after another comes by. When there's an open chair

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Jim Haber

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in the circle, it gets filled over and over again with another amazing person doing great work. My old friend Grove Harris turns up — she has been doing lots of interfaith work and was a major organizer of the World Parliament of Religions.

We go on to Grace Lee Boggs' ninety-fifth birthday party in the ballroom. It's a beautiful tribute to her life and work — and sweet to see how much she is loved and respected. Listening to Grace Boggs, connecting with the wonderful people she and her late husband James collected around them, I am struck by how unafraid they are to talk about love. With all the anger, our own frustrations and the violence we face, they still put love at the heart of their work. So do the other great organizers I know — Marta, Lisa, and Lena in the Bayview. Anger is real and vital but you can't sustain a life built on anger as its sole foundation.

Marta wants to dance — her style of organizing requires much dancing. I remember one great day when I visited

her in El Salvador. We were cleaning up and rebuilding a school to be used for technical training. But before we started work, we had a gathering and some of the organizers were honored and given certificates. Then a local band played. After that we put on some music and danced the Macarena. Later we worked — and blasted through a lot in a few hours. Finally we went to the beach and swam and played in the waves. At the end of the day, I led a ritual. By then we felt we had known each other forever. "If it's not fun, why do it?"

There's a sense of love and joy that permeates this gathering. Very little grumbling — although there are things we could grumble about — and lots of radiant delight. If we can knit these strands into a whole with a unified sense of purpose, what a power we can be!

JUNE 26 — A CONFESSION AND A GREAT DAY

I confess — I stayed so late at the party last night that I didn't make it up in time for the March for Clean Air.

What can I say? I could plead age, or asthma — the march is against the world's largest incinerator, which fills

the air with toxic smells — and I've been staving off an asthma attack since I got here. But really, I think you should just stop reading now and denounce me. Go ahead. You'll feel better, and so will I.

Okay, now that that's over with, let me give you some highlights of yesterday:

- Our morning workshop on Organizing for the Long Haul — a great morning hearing some of my own elders talk about what keeps them going.

- After a too-quick lunch, a workshop on Vision-Based and Solutions-Based organizing. We move outside under a shady tree, and talk about vision and story and drama in how we frame our issues. Our time runs short, but something comes clear to me that I've been pondering for a long time about reframing the story around Israel and Palestine — I promise to write more on that soon.

- At the end of the workshop, Shea steals me away for a boat ride. She's got an old inboard/outboard motorboat and we cruise down the river while a couple of the Detroit Summer folks make a music video. The river is blue and cool, the sun is hot, I even get a short nap and come back refreshed just in time for the ritual.

- We do a simple ritual at the Canopy Village, making an offering to the land, then calling in the elements by asking people who work on issues involving air, fire, water, earth, etc. to come into the center. I lead a short meditation, using an image Shea spoke about in the morning when she described being six years old, and seeing a spiderweb covered with dew illumined by the sun, and suddenly knowing what 'beautiful' meant.

We raise energy for the web of connections we have and are creating — like a spiderweb, we don't always see them until the light hits them just right. The forum has been like that light, allowing us to link up with others working



Jim Haber

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on the same issues or facing the same challenges. And like that dew melting back to Earth, the energy from those links will flow into solid work and manifest change.

We imagine the water flowing, pooling underground, rising through springs to become streams and great rivers, bringing healing to the land and spilling out into the oceans, sending special healing to the Gulf. We dance a spiral, leaving the pattern on the grass, raise a cone of power and ground it back into the Earth, and end with gratitude to all we've invoked and to each other.

- By the time we find food and make our way to the party, it's after midnight. The party is spread over a whole street of warehouses, with lots of tables out on the streets and music and dancing inside.

Lisa and I enjoy cruising around

outside, seeing such a beautiful mix of people filling the space and enjoying themselves. We find Jasmine and Oya, another young woman, sitting at a table and join them. It's a joy just to watch the interactions around me — everyone

feeling good, a table of young black kids performing hip-hop, a couple in a long kiss, a mix again of every race and color.

Why can't we have this in San Francisco? Why can't we have it everywhere?



Starhawk is an activist, organizer, and author of many books. She teaches Earth Activist Trainings that combine permaculture design and activist skills. Visit www.starhawk.org

To learn more about the U.S. Social Forum, visit www.ussf2010.org



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War on Immigrants Extends to Trees



By Maxina Ventura

Love of trees comes naturally to many of us. Over the past quarter century, many of us have been in the forests and streets defending redwoods, eucalyptus, and other tree friends.

During this time, a movement called the “nativist” movement has grown to panic-stricken heights and has otherwise-rational people sweating buckets believing that we are under fatal attack by invaders, whether insects or vegetation. I’m sad to report that many people seem to have fallen under a spell concocted by chemical companies.

Monsanto, Wilbur-Ellis, Dow-Elanco, and others have whipped up a frenzy of fear and uncertainty in people’s minds, and have succeeded in getting ecology groups to call for increased use of pesticides all around us.

How has this been playing out? Recently, the University of California at Berkeley has led the charge to remove eucalyptus and other “non-native” trees from the East Bay Hills and from Mount Sutro in San Francisco. Some of us just fought off UCSF’s attempts to get FEMA grants for a “native restoration” project masquerading as a wildfire prevention project (a common ploy), and groups have banded together to support the Hills Conservation Network’s recent lawsuit to stop the East Bay Regional Park District from moving ahead to fell around 900,000 trees and use toxic herbicides thereafter.

Let’s turn some of our magic toward healing the Earth, not further threatening it. “Native Restoration” sounds lovely, but too often is referred to without thinking through what is supposedly “native,” and with no consideration of acclimation of species, a normal part of evolution. Nature is not static, but is constantly adapting. Of all people, why are we, as a larger community of thinkers and nature defenders, afraid of change?

Monsanto, Wilbur-Ellis and Dow-

Elanco sponsor “Exotic Plant” symposia. Their job is to make us fear what they want us to fear. Unfortunately, some groups thought of as anti-pesticide lobbied for an assembly bill in 2008 which passed with lots of chemical industry support, a bill about looking for “invasive pests” and getting funding to do more programs just like the infamous Light Brown Apple Moth pesticides program.

Let’s not fall into parroting the corporations which tell us insects or plants are “pests,” despite the fact that biodynamic and organic farmers don’t fear them.

Who do we want making these decisions? Pesticide pushers, or those who are tending the soil and helping us have access to healthy food?

You can get details by visiting www.dontspraycalifornia.org and milliontrees.wordpress.com, a great blog with photos to drive home the reality of what would happen to us in the Bay Area if the “nativists” get their way of felling over a million non-native trees, decimating acclimated habitats, releasing sequestered carbon in this time of global warming, and releasing yet more toxic pesticides in California (a state which uses more than 25% of the pesticides used in the US, sickening millions, though most have no idea what has caused their myriad illnesses).

MALDIVES PRESIDENT: DIRECT ACTION OVER CLIMATE CHANGE

A 1960s-style campaign of direct action must ignite on the streets as a catalyst for decisive action to combat climate change, according to President Mohamed Nasheed of the imperilled Maldives.

Nasheed, who held an underwater meeting of his cabinet last autumn and is presiding over the relocation of people from some islands because of the effects of warming oceans and rising sea

levels, put his hopes in the emergence of “huge” grassroots action after the failure of talks in Copenhagen in December.

“What we really need is a huge social 60s-style catalytic, dynamic street action,” he said. “If the people in the US wish to change, it can happen. In the 60s and 70s, they’ve done that.”

Nasheed said that it was the United States, not China, that was the biggest obstacle to a global agreement to check carbon emissions, and that the US was where the focus of pressure had to be.

Interviewed by Ed Miliband, the former British energy and climate change secretary, Nasheed spoke of the devastating effect that changes in sea levels are having on the islands, which are on average just 1.5 metres above sea level.

People living on 16 islands of the Maldives archipelago are already being relocated but Nasheed, who became president at the first multi-party elections in 2008 after spells as a political prisoner, said moving the people of the Maldives somewhere else was not a solution. “Even if we go, I always think where would the butterflies go? Where would the sounds go?”

“We cannot wait for the lowest common denominator where everyone agrees to doing almost nothing,” he said.

Adapted from Patrick Barkham/UK Guardian

LET IT BEGIN ~ WITH YOU!

RQ welcomes news tips and short articles for our Let It Begin pages, as well as photos and full-length feature articles on grassroots activism. Send items to quarterly@reclaiming.org

Community Economics

An RQ Theme section

Last Spring, we were tossing around ideas for the theme section of RQ#101. We talked about magical themes, about discussions of working in diverse traditions and with diverse pantheons, and more.

But we kept coming back to one topic that was foremost in people's minds: Economics.

At first sight, it might seem a stretch for "the magazine of witchcraft and magical activism" to tackle the dismal science. Sure, we've done articles and resource guides in the past. But devoting the heart of an issue to Economics?

Still, we recognize that our activism and magical work take place in a world fundamentally shaped by economic forces. When we seek to build a better world, we need not only to criticize existing institutions (something we are pretty good at), but to figure out how to recast our economic relations in a way that actually works for all of us.

The entire process of envisioning and producing this issue of Reclaiming Quarterly has taken place in the broader context of global, political-economic crises. In our early production meetings, we found ourselves passionately talking

about how we perceived these events, and about our lived experience trying to make it through these difficult machinations, many of which seemed beyond our control.



This energy carried us through the work to bring you a broad range of stories, analyses, and guides which we hope inspire you with hope and make a difference in your lives.

- Our first article is a personal story of survival on all levels, recasting the difficulties to allow greater reliance on inner and community resources. Luz writes from roots in organizational and depth psychology, brain science, Pagan

and Sufi spirituality, and the recognition that what we believe and practice has profound effects on the quality of our lives.

- Next we visit veteran progressive and humorous commentator Doug Hen-

wood, writing about the dreaded arena of money and high finance. Tongue-in-cheek quips alternate with astute translations of high-finance gobbledygook.

- Formerly an investment banker and government official, Catherine Austin Fitts left those worlds to build a progressive practice that offers financial expertise to the rest of us. In this distillation of portions of her work, she presents tools to rethink how we can navigate the current economic crises within the arms of family and community.

- Financial coach Briana Cavanaugh paints the story of how money came to occupy a position of centrality in our lives and how we can take back control. She blends spirituality, activism, and practical business skills to help people be more free, at ease, and enjoy lives of well-being.

- We close our Economics section with a discussion with Starhawk about economics and "changing consciousness at will." Culture, politics, and class are the lenses through which she presents her thinking on scarcity, abundance, and the role of magic as we work toward greater sustainability for all.

We're excited about this collection of articles. We hope you find them intriguing, relevant, and beneficial.

Reimagining: Life Beyond

Unemployment

By Luz

My breath stopped. Their stiff body language told me I had not misheard. At a hastily called meeting, two managers had just announced that my employment as an internal consultant would terminate in 30 days.

I work within the framework of organizational psychology – the science and art of how organizational and human systems interact. I attempt to understand system dynamics and help create sustainable change. My leaving this organization and the concurrent world economic debacle seemed to resonate, although at different levels. I encountered and ran afoul of systemic fault lines in my organization just as the world was brought to its knees for its unsustainable systemic practices.

It was late 2009. California and the rest of the world were in the midst of an economic melt-down and I sensed we had not yet hit bottom. I saw this crisis as the consequences of corporate and political activities pursued out of primary allegiance to profit, fostering wanton disregard for the needs of most people. A growing movement to embrace a triple bottom line – people, planet, and prosperity – excites me, but also gives me concern for our collective challenges ahead.

Sheltered from unemployment for nine months, I was now being cut loose from a good paycheck. But more painful had been the accumulation of betrayals by a few people with whom I worked in what had promised to be my dream

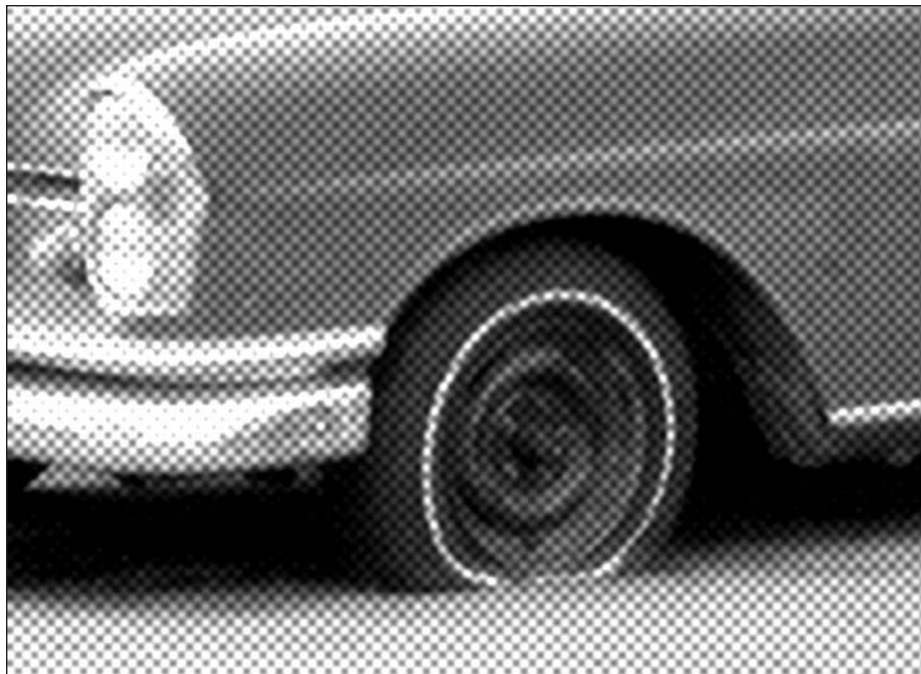
job. Two authentic interviews, great recruiter feedback, and two quick job offers led me to believe that everyone wanted all of what I offered. Even with further research, I unknowingly – and mistakenly – chose the most political, individualistic, and elitist of the two employers.

Looking back on my layoff eight months later, it's frighteningly easy to imagine how I might have spun down into an angst-ridden pit filled with anger, fear, and resentment. That has sometimes been my unemployed experience. This time, when the system's negativity so nakedly revealed itself in that manager meeting, everything changed.

It was no longer about them and me; it now became about what was right for me. While still angry, I knew that dwelling on even righteous anger would keep me trapped in the past, consume and defeat me. Instead, I chose to learn from this extremely stressful experience and to refocus my energy toward what I wanted next. This instinctive inner listening softened my interpretation of the circumstances and opened the door toward a future that I resolved would be much healthier.

Sitting in that meeting, I had felt shock and yet also some emerging sense

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of completion. While a 30-day notice did not seem to qualify as a firing, I had reason to use the “f” word. Over many months I had witnessed the unhealthy dynamics of a huge system riddled with fear, distrust, and punitive scapegoating. I personally had fallen into a nasty political trap for reporting specific dysfunctional behavior that was too close to the bone for a couple of leaders. Already injurious, the situation was likely to escalate, adversely affecting the entire organization. While identifying issues was well within the scope of my role, the time-honored reactionary practice of “shoot the messenger” proved a more expedient fix. One leader dodged looking at the broader systemic conditions and my managers fell into line. Two people lied, projected their own bad feelings onto me, scapegoated me as the troublemaker, and I was almost let go three months into my role.

Whether by nature, training, or early survival skills, I perceive things in a system that others cannot see or choose not to acknowledge. When someone’s interests might be disadvantaged by the truth I reveal, their discomfort can become dangerous to me. Judged “guilty” by lies and false assumptions, I had tried to drop below the leadership radar and focus on my clients. Yet I found myself listening for the other shoe to drop. “They haven’t fired me yet,” became my rueful joke with two trusted colleagues. With the final reality of a forced exit, all the difficult feelings I had tried to suppress for months – simply to function and do the work – broke to the surface and threatened to drown me. The managers and I faced each other across a chasm.

Within the emotional churn, alongside the sense of emerging completion, another quieter feeling lurked below conscious naming. When

it finally broke clear I recognized it as intense relief. It’s over... I’m leaving. Thank Goddess! The deepest part of me that had struggled and twisted and compromised and sold part of my soul for the dream of good work and a steady paycheck now leaped in joy as it saw the door opening on its cage. Instantaneously, I was back, inhabiting my body and immediately grounded into an energy so large that nothing could injure that ferocity. Even management claims about my clients’ opinions of my work – heartbreaking as that was – could not dislodge the fresh scent of freedom and my reawakened power. I knew the truth of my client work from their frank feedback – verbal and somatic.

The next 30 days were transformational. I negotiated my needs with management and engaged their active support to help me fulfill my high expectations for completion and hand-off. For once they did not stint me. I was happier than I had felt in months and could not stop smiling. People said that I appeared more at ease and the difficult manager even remarked that she had never seen me show up so authentically. I wonder if she asked herself why. I created my own strategies for finalizing my client work, rating my teams as high as I could possibly justify, with less managerial interference. My joke morphed into, “So what are they going to do? Fire me?” The day I left, the difficult manager’s eyes welled up as she told me how impressed she’d been with my “grace and dignity” during this final period.

Two days before my exit, I set up an evening celebration with women friends at a suave bay bistro. The last thing I needed

after signing HR final paperwork would be to stumble home into unemployed status alone. Rather, I walked straight into their loving arms. I was feted and congratulated. We ate, drank, toasted, and blessed my transition into sanity and wholeness. We reminisced on our professional lives and what we still wanted to accomplish. That night stands as a testimonial to the need for closure, a casting of a sacred circle of support, a consciously created event to close one door and breathe into readiness for another to open.

I rested that entire month. I went to my paid retreat in Mexico, where the land and the people always nourish me. The Sufi dances blended with the sounds of the great ocean in my blood and limned my heart with joy. Deeply replenished, I returned home and my health crashed. I dragged myself through weeks and weeks of gloomy fatigue. I did what I had to do for unemployment benefits. I took a Reclaiming class and began to feel the inner stirrings of life beyond the muck. I chatted with colleagues about the work I thought I wanted. Another flare-up of a chronic condition threw me into physical pain and panic. My holistic practitioners shook their heads, murmuring about my extended healing crisis. Sometime during those three months of winter I

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finally understood that I was detoxing. They were right. Not only had the stress hormones crashed my immune system, but all of me had been wounded by that poisonous job in an utterly dysfunctional system. Acknowledging this truth allowed me to surrender and accept the necessity of rest.

I did what I could to do what I had to do, and left it at that. Life became simpler and easier. I accrued more debt due to the shortfall of money, but I kept myself fed, the mortgage and other bills paid. I chose to believe that this was a temporary difficulty. First I had to heal. My professional passions reignited as an inexpensive learning opportunity with the right teacher presented itself. I stepped forward and signed up. I expanded my networking efforts to find work. Another Reclaiming class perfectly aligned with my emerging needs and I signed up. My tax returns garnered a chunk of refund money. A somatic-based teleseminar helped me learn from the inside-out what types of environments I truly needed to give my best and keep my soul. An injury claim settled for more than my expenses. This intermittent influx of cash kept the bank account in a rolling cycle of black. Every iteration of “luck” reminded me that I live in a world of synchronistic possibilities, realized as our intentions and expectations are released into the universal field and returned to us as matched material-energy responses.

Money has not usually been easy for me, yet somehow I’ve always managed. I remember 13 months of homelessness, unable to work because of a medical

condition that invariably sent me to the ER whenever I made the attempt, yet I was denied Medi-Cal. I remember returning to work after an industrial injury and tasked with untenable speed-up demands that again put me at risk. Given the previous hellish experiences, I resigned, although I had no notion how to pay my bills in another few months without a job – fast. Two months later I flew out-of-state to my father’s hospital bed. Four days later my beloved dad died. His accident was his ticket out of suffering, having told loved ones that he was ready to go. It also gifted me with his accidental death insurance benefits and a small inheritance, my first taste of financial security. Most of that money is now gone, but it provided a down payment for my first home, help to finish grad school, and living expenses as I recovered from grief and completed executor duties for my dad’s estate.

And now, I’m faced with unemployment benefits ending, no work, and tapping into the last of my funds. I am optimistic. I am still transforming my relationship with money. However its effect on me is less powerful than it once was.

Recalling specific steps that led me through such challenging trials is less significant than treasuring the attitudes

that I came to embrace while living them. In the midst of the journeys, I could feel some great rhythm holding me, unfolding in its own unknowable time. I knew something immeasurably rich was happening to my life, repatterning my cells, and bringing intense human discomfort. I had only to surrender into the mystery and say yes to the immram – the heroine’s journey of destiny. To navigate the fear as my body or spirit slowly healed, I focused on sensing into what might emerge next and on shaping my life with gratitude for small daily things of beauty. I remember the precious taste on my tongue of just-grilled salmon, the flare of sunset through a car window, the gift of another house-sit a couple days before I needed it, the tender smile in someone’s kind eyes, a golden orb of moon kissing the horizon as it flies high. I was in the flow of something bigger than myself, requiring my presence.

All of that is also relevant in my current situation, if I but choose to pay attention, to listen and feel for the waves of the newly emerging rhythm. It’s a realm far beyond unemployment or lack of a paycheck or the next job or a friend or lack of a partner. It’s a sacred gate, and in some ways it doesn’t really matter how I came to the gate.

All of this experience is a gift. It’s a place of re-choosing, reimagining my life, of surrender into the path of the underworld, trusting [most hours] that a new Self will emerge above ground when it is time. And I will treasure her beyond the horizon’s dreaming.

“Luz” lives in the SF Bay area. She passionately pursues travel in Mexico, sci-fi writing and reading, gardening, home repair, deepening her significant relationships, and all good things of beauty, love, spirit, and sustainability.



Gloomy, With a Chance of Depression

by Doug Henwood, editor of
Left Business Observer

When things get slow here at RQ, we like to pull out our monthly copy of Left Business Observer and take turns doing dramatic readings, savoring the 8-page newsletter's pithy, incisive analysis of the global economy.

No one is better at making Economics accessible than LBO editor Doug Henwood, who also has a popular show on public radio.

This article was written in late 2008, at the height of the recent financial crisis. Henwood weaves the collapse and subsequent bailout into a cautiously optimistic vision of a more equitable future.

See end of article for more on Left Business Observer.

I have often described the U.S. economy by invoking the old Timex watch slogan from the 1950s, "Takes a licking and keeps on ticking." Crash follows upon panic follows upon bust, and yet the thing keeps getting up again to binge some more.

These remarkable feats of renewal, though, have always come with big help from the U.S. government, either multibillion dollar bailouts or long rounds of indulgent monetary policy from the Federal Reserve. But revive it always has, despite the forecasts from

the hard left and the hard right that this time it was different and the medicine just won't work.

Will it work again? Will the megadoses of stimulus do the trick?

Or is the jig up? Will what's widely touted as the greatest financial crisis since the 1930s be a prelude to Great Depression II?

BACKSTORY

Before proceeding, a little reminder of how we got to this sorry pass. People borrowed gobs of money to buy houses they couldn't afford, and then borrowed additional gobs against the rising value of those houses. All that borrowing was the result of a toxic mix of misplaced optimism, outright fraud, and quotidian necessity.

But that's not all. Wall Street, which can never let well enough alone, enabled all this mad borrowing in at least two ways. The first was securitization — packaging multiple mortgages into bonds, which were then sold to institutional investors, thereby bringing forth a cornucopia of funds for further lending.

Second, they also packaged mortgages, from solid to rocky, into a raft of synthetic securities that hid the full extent of the risks from people who should have known better — the professional money managers who bought all those wacky derivatives that have now blown

up. And a lot of those money managers were operating with borrowed money, often large quantities of it.

The last two paragraphs make an essential economic point. Some progressive pundits and politicians have argued that any government bailout should be aimed at debtors, not banks.

It would be nice if we had that choice. But sadly, the history of financial crises shows that speed of response is crucial, and since it will take a long time to sift through several million upside-down mortgages, the wobbly financial superstructure has to take precedence — in time, not importance.

THE OFFICIAL RESPONSE TO CRISIS

Two International Monetary Fund (IMF) economists, Luc Laevan and Fabian Valencia, [in] a historical database of 124 banking crises around the world since 1970, show that some sort of systemic restructuring is a key component of almost every banking crisis, meaning forced closures, mergers, and nationalizations.

Shareholders frequently lose money in systemic restructuring, often lots of it, and are even forced to inject fresh capital.

The creation of management vehicles to buy up and eventually sell distressed assets (either financial assets

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like loans or real ones like strip malls or housing tracts) is a frequent feature of restructurings, but such schemes do not appear to be terribly successful.

More successful are recapitalizations using public money — meaning that the government injects funds into the banks in exchange for stock. Such stock is usually sold off, often at a profit, when the banks return to health, though of course a government with socialization on its mind could keep it.

Laevan and Valencia also find that relief for troubled debtors [such as those with distressed mortgages] also helps an economy get out of a financial crisis. This is a nice coincidence of economic efficiency and social justice.

Those who don't want to spend taxpayer money should consider this: Laevan and Valencia suggest that what you save on bailout expenditures you more than lose in a deeper recession.

BAILOUT POLITICS

The original bailout proposal was ludicrous — all 840 words of it. But the House initially rejected their own improved product. Most of the opposition came from the Republican right, though some of the more leftist Democrats helped out.

Republican complaints were delusional. One of the leaders of the

right flank of the anti-bailout camp, Jeb Hensarling of Texas, said that the rescue plan would lead the U.S. down “the road to socialism.”

If only.

If the right opposition was delusional, the left opposition flirted with the juvenile. There were some hyperradicals who wanted no bailout because they want the whole system to come crashing down. That's not politics—that's nihilism.



But less exuberant sorts also said some troublesome things. “We” shouldn't be handing money over to Wall Street — instead we should be spending it on schools and green jobs.

Yes, it would be lovely to spend lots

of money on schools and green jobs. But it wouldn't address the financial crisis. A busted credit system is a very serious problem for everyone, not just the bourgeoisie.

It is absolutely essential that this not happen. One of the things that made the Depression of the 1930s so bad was the collapse of 10,000 banks between 1929 and 1932. Savings were wiped out, and the machinery of credit creation, which provides an essential nutrient for the real economy (it's not all “speculation,” though it may look that way sometimes), seized up.

Fed chair Ben Bernanke has been extremely active in trying to prevent a rerun [including lowering basic interest rates to nearly zero, where they remain in mid-2010].

But the Fed can't do it alone; saving the banks requires the expenditure of real money.

No banks, no economy.

DEBT RELIEF AND REGULATION

But the solution — the “bailout” — has been far from perfect.

Let's look at how we might do better — first in the “realistic” sense, fully aware of the constraints of American politics, and then in a more fanciful sense, of what we might do to make this a better world.

Debtors must be relieved. This isn't only a matter of social justice, it's good orthodox economics. With all the complexities of securitization, this is easier said than done, but that's no excuse for not doing it.

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And finance must be re-regulated. It's reasonable that it wasn't considered in the bailout. Figuring out how to regulate this massively complicated financial system is no easy matter. But it's got to be done.

Finance has gotten so complex and internationalized that it would take lots of time and negotiation even to get a start on things. The old Bretton Woods system, established at the end of World War II, was based on a world of fixed exchange rates, tight capital controls, and unchallenged U.S. dominance.

Now exchange rates float, capital moves more freely than people, and the U.S., while mighty, is hardly unrivalled.

That rivalry is no longer just about Western Europe and Japan — there are also what Wall Street calls the BRICs: Brazil, Russia, India, China. Just for starters. It's difficult to see how a group of countries with different systems and interests can allow regulation to work.

TRUUBLING QUESTIONS

What kind of regulation should the global Left call for? Is the point to make the system work better, in the sense of being less crisis-prone and more humane?

Or is the point to renovate the whole thing? Could a wholesale renovation happen without the existing order collapsing or being torn down? Would we want to throw several hundred million out of work with the vague hope of making things better?

Just who is this Left anyway, and what power do we have? Is our constituency the poorest of the world, to whom the financial system means next to nothing, or the middle ranks who have something but are always at risk of losing it, or the more enlightened elements of the bourgeoisie? All three?

Or is it just idle wankery to dream that "we" have any influence, or that such a "we" even exists?

Waxing more utopian, you can take that further and say that banking

intermediaries, why not keep some of them in the public sector [ie, retain government ownership "for the common good"]?

Why not use [these institutions] to fund real economic development in neighborhoods starved for capital? Why not extend low-cost financial services to poor people who are now fleeced by check-cashing services and payday lenders?

We can dream, can't we?

CONTRADICTIONS

It must be admitted that the [Obama] stimulus program looks half decent in both size and content. Infrastructure spending, green energy, and aid to state and local governments are all good things, and will have a salutary economic effect, too.

But there are some contradictions to consider.

One is financing. Almost everyone assumes that the U.S. will have little trouble raising hundreds of billions for its bailout and stimulus schemes. What if it finds selling all those bonds a little rough? Could the U.S. someday be perceived as a credit risk [such as Greece in 2010], only much bigger?

But there are deeper contradictions. Much of the restoration in corporate profitability from the early 1980s through the late 1990s — a trend that sagged in the early 2000s, then returned, though not as magnificently as before — came from squeezing labor — wage cutting, union busting, outsourcing, and the rest of the familiar story.

What wage incomes couldn't support got a lift from borrowing — credit cards first, then mortgages. The credit outlet is now shut, and will be for quite a while, forcing consumption



is rather like an old-style utility — something so essential to all of us that it should be regulated like electricity used to be before the preposterous experiment with utility deregulation.

If the government is bailing out and nationalizing banks and other financial

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to depend on wage income, which is shrinking. Capital will want to squeeze labor harder to restore profitability, but consumption won't have credit to help it out.

You could argue that this is exactly what the U.S. needs in orthodox terms: to invest more and consume less. Investing more means directing more cash into things and certain kinds of people (engineers rather than brand consultants) and less into Wall Street's pockets (which ultimately means the American rich).

This is a very different economic model from what we've been used to. It's probably not what a working class that has experienced 35 years of flat-to-declining real wages wants to hear.

A more humane way to go about reducing consumption would be taxing rich people, who still have lots of money. Some of it could be given to the less rich, and other of it to funding the bailout and stimulus programs.

That's not in our present politics, but politics could change.

POLITICAL SEQUELAE

There's a lot of talk about how this crisis marks the end of the neoliberal era, which it may be, and also portends the return of the state, which is a little more complicated.

Neoliberalism, a word that's more popular in the outside world than in the U.S., took hold in the early 1980s. Its most prominent feature is an almost religious faith in the efficiency of unregulated markets. The ideal is — was? — to make the real world resemble the financial markets as much as possible, with continuous trading at constantly updated prices, with allegedly

self-regulating markets determining the allocation of both money and stuff. To do that requires the commodification of everything, including water and air. Much of that agenda was successfully accomplished.

Though it fantasizes itself to be antistatist, neoliberalism was nonetheless accomplished only with a heavy hand of the state. It could not have happened had the Federal Reserve [around 1980] not raised



interest rates towards 20%, producing a savage recession that scared labor into submission and drove the world's debtor countries into the arms of the IMF.

It could not have happened if the IMF hadn't forcibly supervised the innumerable rounds of austerity, privatization, and market openings that were the "solution" to the debt crisis. It couldn't have survived without the repeated state bailouts that rescued the financial system whenever it hit a wall.

Now the financial system has hit a giant wall. While the world's states will probably succeed in preventing total

disaster, there looks to be something end-of-the-lineish about this wall. Even very conventional people on Wall Street are talking about "the crisis of an economic paradigm," and the dawn of a "new Democratic era."

But these Democrats — who are basically what David Smeck calls "hedge fund Democrats" — don't have anything matching the transformative agenda that Reagan (a real movement conservative) did.

From that, it's possible to see a new Progressivism that would owe as much to Teddy Roosevelt as Franklin. But both those Roosevelt eras were shaped by radical agitation as much as elite reconstitution. We have little of that now.

Many people who voted [in 2008] for "Change!" are instead getting a slicked up version of the status quo. That's likely to lead to some disappointment — a potentially productive disappointment. The sense of possibility that Barack Obama has awakened is a very dangerous thing.

Back in the [1980s], the anti-communist Right loved to quote Tocqueville, saying that the riskiest time for a bad regime is when it starts to reform itself.

That's where our regime is right now, and it's a good time for us, whoever we are exactly, to go out and make it riskier.

It's going to get easier to win recruits as the ranks of the disappointed swell.

Doug Henwood is editor of Left Business Observer, an extraordinary 8-page newsletter published about ten times per year. Subscriptions are \$22 per year.

This article was slightly edited and updated by RQ. The complete version appeared in Left Business Observer, December 2008, available at www.leftbusinessobserver.com/Gloomy.html

Coming Clean

Taking action individually and with our families, communities, and networks of trust

By Catherine Austin Fitts and the Solari Staff

Catherine Austin Fitts tells the story of one of her partners, Ozzie Blake, an entrepreneur who grew up on a small island. He once explained why small islands produce a much higher percentage of people who are good at starting and building successful businesses. He said that it was because someone who grows up on a small island sees how everything is connected. So it is much easier for that person to learn how to take responsibility for the whole — to see how all time and energy is precious and to never waste anything. People who grow up on small islands, he said, understand that “a penny saved is a penny earned.”

Ozzie had been taught from the time he was a small child to connect the behavior of individual people with how everything works around him. He said that he had learned to adjust his behavior so that it contributed to the system working in the way he hoped it would. His family, his school, and his church all encouraged him to take responsibility for the whole in practical, concrete ways. People who grow up on small islands, he said, understand that “what goes around comes around.”

Ozzie said that America is just a very big island, but most Americans do not know this — nor do they understand

that the planet is just an even bigger island. They cannot connect how the system works — particularly the aspects of the system they do not like — with their own choices and actions. They do not have even simple maps of how



things connect. They do not understand their own power to vote with their prayers, their thoughts, their choice of friends and spouse, their actions, and how they spend their money every day. People who grow up on small islands, he said, “see the world whole.”

Many of us look at our situation only from our own point of view. From every degree of the circle, there is a different definition of what ails us, of why our system isn’t working, and

what the solutions are. Often, what we perceive as our own individual problems are really just the symptoms that each person experiences of the deeper problems we all share. Many times, we think that the solution is to

blame or attack someone, or to propose that more government or private capital be spent in a (futile) attempt to keep the wolf from the door. Without a simple map of where we are, of The Tapeworm that we are feeding, and of how to withdraw and shift our energy, we have forgotten that we are all in this together, and that at the simplest level, you simply can’t eat what you don’t grow.

Our society has encouraged and participated in tremendous speculative financial activity at the expense of the concrete productive sector of our economy. The impact on our economic productivity has been predictable. The deterioration of our living equity — our neighborhoods, infrastructure, and environmental resources — can be seen in every place and it touches everyone, rich and poor alike. The dumping down of the workforce grows as daily television consumption, which teaches counterproductive behavior, reaches frightening levels. What is happening

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in our neighborhood parallels what is happening around the world.

The folks who feel that their biggest problem is their financial equity — falling yields on their investment portfolios—have yet to see that they cannot enjoy capital gains unless their living equity is preserved. That is, our neighborhoods and children need to be kept safe, and we need to understand that the very things that will contribute to their safety — an increase in real human productivity, honest feedback systems, and a restoration of personal accountability — will also lead to huge increases in collective investment capital in the economy. The folks who

feel that their greatest problem is living equity — that they and their children are not safe and our environment is being destroyed, or that we are committing genocide in other parts of the world (or down the block) — have yet to see what the real issue is. We cannot achieve personal safety when yields for both



retail and institutional investors are dependent on profits from organized crime, trickery of the investing public, and government guarantees that promote unproductive investment and personal behavior. Only when we achieve real economic growth based upon concrete increases in productivity, accounted for and disclosed on an honest basis, can we be both safe and wealthy.

Coming clean is about reconciling these different points of view and creating a new energizing unity of people, places, and money. Coming clean begins one person at a time. As the lotus blossom blossoms out of the mud, coming clean begins with you and me — from the inside out.

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Kick Start Your Personal Wealth

1. Start praying or meditating! Ask God or the Universe daily for abundance, protection, guidance, inspiration, and creative energy; envision a new world and act as if it were so.

2. Switch media. Turn off your TV and disconnect from all corporate media.

3. Assess your finances. Look at how your money is supporting The Tapeworm and how you are being drained; check your “sustainability ratio” and start to shift your transactions:

- Can you lower your expenses/overhead so you can survive with less cash and save/invest more?
- Can you make a plan for getting out of debt? Talk to others who have done it or can help, then make a plan and begin, taking it step by step.
- Switch banks and credit card companies, keeping enough cash in the bank for unexpected and lump payments (taxes, insurance bills, car repairs, unemployment, and so on).
- Look into switching investments away from The Tapeworm.
- Can you invest in upgrading home self-sufficiency: water, solar, vegetable garden?

4. Assess your health. Need more exercise? Better eating habits? Help for depression? Pick one or two things that would give you the most energy and start doing them.

5. Build your affinity group. Strengthen relationships with family, friends, neighbors.

Coming Clean

Ways to Kick-Start Our Coming Clean

By Catherine Austin Fitts and the Solari Staff

OPTIMIZE OUR TIME

“Your problem is you think you have time.”

—The Buddha

Many people understand the value of doing a budget for their financial resources. It is relatively rare for people to do an annual budget that mathematically analyzes how we spend our time — or how we want to invest it going forward. One year, Catherine’s senior management team finished working on their company business plan, and all were satisfied that the plan was complete. At the last minute, however, a decision was made to estimate the individual, team, and collective time investment for the coming year. Lo and behold, the group discovered that they had allocated 700% of their time. Their annual goals were overly ambitious. As a result, they had made promises they would not have been able to keep. They were saved by the time budget.

- Your time is precious.
- Your time can be valued more by you and those around you.
- Do a time budget.
- Study who and what you are investing your time in.
- Identify who and what wastes your time.
- Look for opportunities to achieve more

A number of us at Solari found these “emergency measures” to be very energizing entry points for Coming Clean. Especially after another suspicious election in 2004, many people felt off balance and more urgent about securing their family’s safety net, in addition to worrying about shifting the balance of power away from The Tapeworm and back to our communities. Taking these measures is akin to putting your own oxygen mask on first and then tending to others — or to triage, which stabilizes the most serious conditions first. Start with a quick pass — whatever you can do in the next two or three weeks — and then see where you want to go from there.

energy for yourself with your time.

- Look for opportunities in collaboration with other members of your family.

CREATE A BEAUTIFUL HOME

Where do you want to live? Are you living there? Where are you surrounded by people you love and trust? Where do you have access to the air, land, food, and water that will nurture you and your family?

A beautiful home gives you energy. This means that it does not drain you of time and resources. Are you a slave to a house that is big and expensive and filled with lots of possessions that take time to maintain? Move out of your field

anything that is not beautiful, life- and energy-giving, and useful. We find de-cluttering by yourself hard to do. Team up with friends to help de-clutter and reorganize one another’s home and office. There is a myth that beauty is expensive — that we cannot create beautiful homes within our means. Another myth tries to convince us that beauty in a home has to be complex. Not so. Beauty just takes time and attention — and it is something that we can all have. A home that is in alignment and harmony with the land and environment around you is the most beautiful — and powerful — of all.

- We deserve a beautiful and safe home.
- We can create a beautiful and safe home no matter what our circumstances.
- Our ability to create a beautiful and safe home depends on our ability to understand how we can honor others’ ability to do the same.
- Invite friends to help you with a spring cleaning.
- As you clean, de-clutter your house.
- Decorate your house with things made by, or which remind you of, the people you love.
- Learn feng shui principles and apply

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them to your home.

- Identify all the ways to lower your energy, utility, and home insurance bills that improve your quality of life.
- Test your water quality and make sure you have excellent filters if needed.

STRENGTHEN OUR RELATIONSHIPS

Who are the people in your life, your family, and your community that you love? Are they getting your admiration, time, and energy? Are your time and energy going instead to the people whom you are afraid of, who have power over you, or who demand your attention in negative ways? Do you hunger for association with people who — after you study their work and how they make money — are contributing to the drain on you, your family, and your community?

Take a look at your schedule. Have you planned ahead to make time available for strategic thinking, conversation, and whatever else you need to do so that you can live in alignment with and care for the people you love? Be there for the people whom you would like to be there for you. One of the advantages of forgiving people who have harmed you or done you wrong is that it frees up an enormous amount of time and energy that you can then invest in the people who are doing you right.

Giving priority and investing in people we love and who love us is the most important investment we will ever make.

In a healthy culture, men and women build up each other's power and security.

In a healthy culture, members of a family think and act opportunistically on each other's behalf.

In a healthy culture, members honor those among them who practice their values and lead toward the world they envision.

- Make a list of the people you love.

- Pray for them; plan and invest strategically in your relationship with them; be a blessing to one another; remember birthdays and other important dates.
- Identify the leaders who are building the world you want, particularly in your immediate area and life.
- Find energizing ways to support them.
- Withdraw your support from the leaders and the people in your life who are draining you.
- Save time and energy by practicing forgiveness.

RAISE OUR LEARNING METABOLISM

As we manage increasing levels of complexity in our lives due to new technology and globalization, we are also dealing with rising levels of political and economic uncertainty. In this environment, thinking strategically about what we need to know, how to access and acquire that knowledge, and how to build collaborative networks to help us do so, can provide a steady flow of new energy. There is a reason why nations have intelligence agencies and why companies have lifelong learning programs and investigative firms. When you look back through history, how did our ancestors deal with periods of high spiritual and financial stress? What worked? Surely nothing that we are dealing with today is tougher than what Native Americans, slaves, or immigrants and settlers dealt with during the past 300 years.

Some cultures have evolved a high degree of knowledge as well as proto-



cols for surviving great levels of stress. We can identify and learn from those who have this knowledge.

We use only a tiny portion of the knowledge and learning capacity available to us.

Develop a learning plan for your life: What could you learn that would give you the most energy for achieving your vision?

Identify the people who teach you the most: What can you do to give them energy?

Identify the people who teach you the least. What can you do to transform that learning and teaching drain? If that is not possible, consider removing yourself from their life.

Identify who knows about things that you need help with, particularly in your neighborhood.

LEARN “HOW THE MONEY WORKS” AROUND YOU

Most people do not learn economics and finance in school. However, it is never too late to start to learn. In addition, a lot of effort has been made to suppress information about government finances and the covert economy. However, if you dig and make an effort, much useful information can be found.

We can understand the economics of our household, family, and neighborhood, as well as the organizations, businesses, and governments in the areas in which we vote for political and judicial representation.

We can understand money tools — accounting and currency — and financial instruments — stocks and bonds.

We can understand the economics of various industries such as energy, food, and water, as well as banking systems and markets — commodity and financial — and the laws that govern them.

We can understand covert economics.

We can build and maintain useful “money maps” and use these to oppor-

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tunistically shift resources to ourselves and those we trust, both locally and globally.

- Develop a framework for all the financial and economic knowledge that could be useful to you.
- Develop a learning plan to acquire that knowledge.
- Acquire and use a good dictionary of financial and economic terms.
- Keep a journal to track your learning journey and to write down the meaning of any word you read that you do not understand.
- Learn how to use Solari Analytics when mapping out the risks and incentives related to events in your world, and to ask and answer the question, “Cui bono?” (Who benefits?).

INVEST IN PEOPLE AND ASSETS YOU KNOW AND TRUST

Sound money, financial transparency, and equity financing are the basis of a healthy economy.

We can generate living and financial wealth by investing in opportunities not controlled by large corporations and investors.

- Learn about precious metals and digital gold, and explore investment opportunities in precious metals and related stocks.
- Learn about alternative currency, community currency, and barter systems.
- Explore opportunities to diversify offshore.
- Explore opportunities to invest locally or in close family and friend networks, with people you know and trust.
- See also Catherine Austin Fitts’s blog, posted at www.solari.com

INTEGRATE YOUR TIME AND MONEY

In one of the earlier steps, we prepared a budget for our time. Now let’s do a budget for our financial resources. As you do this, compare the various trade-offs in your life between time and money. For example, what is the cost of private schools for your children versus the benefits of working less and doing home schooling? After looking at the health impacts and costs of working and living in an urban environment, what are the integrated benefits of moving to a low-cost rural area?

Are you working long hours and then paying more per hour for people to do household chores for you that you could do for yourself? Does it pay to learn plumbing, electrical repair, auto mechanics? What about your children? Have you taught them how to respect their time and your time? What do your budgets teach you about habits that save time? What do they teach you about the cost of unethical or incompetent people in your life? How much is interest on debt costing you in terms of the time it takes to pay it off?

Your time is precious. So are your financial resources. How can the two give each other energy? Expressing time and money mathematically will illuminate opportunities for these to work together.

- Do an annual financial budget.
- Estimate the value of your time in terms of after-tax income.



- Explore opportunities for getting more for less.
- Make a list of the ten people, habits, events, or other things that wasted the most money over the last year. What can you learn from this list?

BOOKS

Rich Dad, Poor Dad: What the Rich Teach Their Kids About Money — That the Poor and Middle Class Do Not! by Robert Kiyosaki and Sharon Lechter

Law for Dummies, by John Ventura

Accounting for Dummies, by John A. Tracey

Investing for Dummies and *Personal Financial for Dummies*, both by Eric Tyson

Organized Crime and American Power: A History, by Michael Woodiwiss

The Seven Habits of Highly Effective Teens: The Ultimate Teenage Success Guide, by Sean Covey

The Greater Good: How Philanthropy Drives the American Economy and Can Save Capitalism, by Claire Gaudiani

ARTICLES/AUDIO

“Economics for Dummies,” by Catherine Austin Fitts

“Solari Audio Seminars” — visit www.solari.com

FILMS

Shut Up and Sing

America: Freedom to Facism

The Take

MORE RESOURCES

Many more articles, books, and other resources, including podcasts and Catherine Austin Fitts’ blog, can be found at the Solari website. Visit www.solari.com

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Money Magic

by Briana Cavanaugh

In our community we talk about money magic a lot. What we don't talk about is what money is and what we do with it. We get specific about sex, gender, gardening, permaculture, activism, and action. But we don't talk about money. If we're going to truly create change, we need to look at this.

Money started out as people trading things (goods) or activities (services) with other people in their communities. Later someone got the idea of being able to trade a thing for a token so that you didn't have to carry half a cow with you in order to get a place to sleep away from home. Convenient!

As far as I can tell, money is the idea, or the spirit, of community exchange. Money is inherently about people — we created it. Unlike trees or animals or oceans, this thing is of our doing. Money does not exist in nature outside of us. Most other creatures use themselves and their environment directly to get what they need.

The upside is that money is one place where as human beings we are totally and completely at cause — completely able to create and destroy this thing at will. At whose will? The will of the people in the community.

The downside is that we put a thing between us and what we desire. And then we gave it energy. That thing has taken on a life of its own — a life that

we give it. Money is a social contract. An agreement. We agree that if we take paper, metal, or plastic to a place we can exchange it for a thing. We sometimes give our money to other people to hold on to for long periods of time and they give us back more than we gave them — well, sometimes.

We give money life. We give it our hopes and dreams. We say things like, "If only I had money, I'd..." or "I need money so that I can..." We give it our ideas about the future: "Maybe I can

save up and..." We blame our worst fears and nightmares on it in the form of housing foreclosures, investments tanking, over-spending, and not having enough. We use money to take out our aggressions: "I hate paying taxes," and "The government totally rips us off!" or to play out our emotional insecurities — retail therapy anyone?

We make money into the Boogie Man. No one talks about it or looks

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directly at it. We don't teach the subject in school. In fact, we don't teach kids about it at all except through second hand ideas, or watching adults. We don't really teach adults about it either except in specialized classes, like accounting or "money management."

Consider our stories and fairy tales. What story do you tell that talks about dollars and cents? How about the Three Little Pigs, where having more resources equates to not being eaten by the wolf. Or the stories where we send our young (usually) men out on a quest and give them our young (usually) women when they return. This makes the young women the currency of the kingdom.

When was the last time you talked directly about money with someone? For many people it's never, or only with a spouse and often only in a crisis. We as a community don't talk about money or teach about money. We wish and hope and we do magic, but fail to act directly. Let's talk in direct terms. What can we do to manifest our truth and our desires? I've put together a list of the ten things that I think are most important to getting straight with ourselves about money.

First and foremost, tell the truth.

What is the truth about your money? How much do you have? How much do you spend? Where do you spend it and when do you spend it? Where do you get money from? Knowing your truth and speaking it is the first step on the path.

Acknowledge choice. A common way we give away choice is asking others for permission to do things that are about you. Our fears of looking ridiculous or being different keep us from telling the truth and acting in alignment with that truth. Even, and sometimes especially, in communities

that are not mainstream. If these people don't love us, who will? You will. It is your job to love you.

Be accountable for your actions.

Don't over-commit; show up for your commitments or get help to meet them. When you're not accountable, you're eroding your truth and your integrity. It doesn't matter if no one notices — you know. You have to live with yourself no matter what, so make it count.

Know that you are always doing the best you can. This is what we do all day long — we make our best possible choices. This is instinctual programming and all animals do it. But we seem to add an additional piece. We look back at our choices and berate ourselves for the choices that led here, even though in the moment we made the best possible choice with the available information. All we can ever do is make the best choice we can in the moment. So stop knocking yourself around for things that you can't change.

Shore up those energy leaks.

Otherwise you are diverting energy from

action, self-care, and what you really want. If every act is a magical act, then your worrying is just as powerful as your ritual. What do you suppose the outcome will be if you spend ten times as much energy worrying as acting or doing magic?

Take action. Don't just be at choice, be at cause. I watch people work at jobs they hate in order to get money, spend three hours a few times a year doing money magic — and then wonder why they're miserable. What would your world look like if you used your life's energy to do what you love?

Trust wisely — and then act.

Otherwise known as, follow your intuition. I don't trust that I can walk into a store and spend \$5 for all the groceries that I need for my family for the week. But I do trust that I am taken care of and that my son and I will have all we truly need. I pray to have what I need, I get information, do the best I can, trust wisely, act, and then do my best not worry about it.

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Money Magic

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Love. Try an experiment. Act from love, then act from fear. You tell me where you want to be. The bonus of acting from love is a change in brain chemistry. When we experience kindness we get a shot of serotonin which regulates mood. It's nature's happy pill. And it's not just the person receiving the kindness that gets the good drugs. The person acting and anyone watching is also chemically affected by the kindness. Nature has wired us to be love. I say we take advantage of it!

Examine your assumptions; explore your choices. Do you assume that you must have money to have a thing or experience? If you want a thing, can you barter, trade, or work for it? Does someone else have it and are they willing to share? Can you go together and reduce the cost? What is it you're really looking for? What do you assume has to happen? Are there other ways to do that?

Practice integrity and self-care — the biggest piece of this puzzle. Of all the things that you can do to create change about your financial situation, taking care of yourself is the most critical thing you can do. That's what this list is about. When you use money, what you are exchanging with people is your life's energy. Remember: we exchange energy or work for money, and money for goods and services. It all comes from you and your energy — all of it.

Self-care creates money in a very clear, tangible way. Good boundaries create abundance. Integrity creates prosperity.

Briana Cavanaugh is a Financial Coach and Reclaiming Witch. Her path is integrating her practical business skills with activism and spirituality to inspire liberation and self-love. You can find her at www.infinitelypossible.net

Sufficiency vs Abundance

by Briana Cavanaugh

People talk about abundance, but it's generally portrayed as excess, as "extremely wealthy." "Abundance" is primarily a way to re-package rampant consumerism.

"Sufficiency" is the idea that there is enough. That you are enough and have enough and all is well.

Yet there aren't endless resources. If we put sustainability next to abundance and prosperity, I see the solution in sufficiency.

If some use a lot of resources, others have none. Resources are finite. If some people pollute, others are sick. If some people sell local resources, local people go hungry.

And there is enough for everyone. Abundance is not an exact formula. It's not clear that everyone should have two cars and a house and a yacht. It is about making good choices and promoting *everyone* being well and healthy. That's the abundance I seek.

When I went into business for myself I had to decide what my game was, what choices to make. What do I want to win? What choices do I want to make?

I want to win at spending time with my kid and living well so I can work on healing myself and the world. That means working enough hours that we can eat and have a safe place to sleep and enough resources that we can learn and grow and be happy.

My game is not "let's make a million dollars." Not because money isn't fun, but because money and resources are not an end in and of themselves. When we make money an end we risk ourselves, our planet, and our connection with the earth. We put greed ahead of people and the planet.

My goals are about spending money wisely and enjoying the time that I have to raise an awesome, empowered, happy kid while experiencing deep joy and lots of love. Not so bad really.



Scarcity, Abundance, & Sustainability

RQ asks: Is “changing consciousness at will” the key to abundance?

A dialogue with Starhawk

As part of our “Economics” theme section, RQ’s Luke Hauser talked with permaculture organizer Starhawk about issues of abundance, scarcity, and sustainability.

RQ: Much of Reclaiming’s magical and political work involves “changing consciousness at will.” Do you think that a change of consciousness can address issues of poverty, scarcity, and unequal access to resources?

Starhawk: It depends on how that is meant. I have a concern about framing this work as “prosperity consciousness.”

One of the main tenets of prosperity consciousness could perhaps be stated as, “It’s only our attitude that keeps us from being prosperous. If we change the way we think about money, if we get rid of the guilt, we can have all the abundance we want.”

By and large, this statement holds true for many U.S. citizens, especially those of us who are urban and educated,

and particularly those who can pass as white-middle-class, heterosexual, and not too weird. It is true that many of us could be more prosperous if we let go of the fears and blocks that hold us back.

However, this idea is only empowering when applied to ourselves. Applied to others, it can be deadly.



It very easily transmutes into victim-blaming: “The poor are poor because of their bad attitudes.” It’s an Aquarian version of “the poor are shiftless and lazy.”

It seems to me like another version of the old myth that anyone can make it here in the “land of opportunity.” The myth is perpetuated because this *is* a land of opportunity for many — but not for all. And if we forget or ignore or blame those who don’t make it, then we aren’t building a new culture, we’re perpetuating the old one.

RQ: A problem I see is, the overflowing abundance of our society is directly dependent on the massive waste we generate. Plenty of people buy used clothes or musical equipment or other goods. We furnish our homes by scavenging from dumpsters. So in that sense, by adjusting our consciousness and accepting second-hand goods, we can participate in the abundance that’s all around us despite our limited income. Unfortunately, the model only works so long as our society is being so incredibly wasteful. If others quit throwing perfectly good things away,

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Abundance & Scarcity

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how would I furnish my home?

Starhawk: Right. Outside the borders of the Western countries, it would never work. The idea that poverty is the result of attitude becomes ludicrous. In the Third World, the very meaning of poverty and abundance changes.

I've spent time in Europe, Canada, Latin America and the Middle East. Being out of this country has made me see the whole debate about prosperity and scarcity in very different ways. When I visited Nicaragua some years ago, I would enter people's houses and wonder if they were inhabited, they were so empty of goods.

In the US, I associate poverty with shoddiness and cast-off goods. In Nicaragua, shoddy goods were the mark of the middle class. The poor have nothing — maybe a hammock or some beat-up chairs, perhaps one change of clothes carefully kept for best. Prosperity is measured in beans and rice, in basic health care and schooling. And even the poverty of Nicaragua seems like immense wealth compared to the starvation in parts of Africa, where life itself is at issue.

All this is not to say that we should be wallowing in guilt, but that we need to keep a sane perspective when talking about abundance. When I arrived home from my trip to Nicaragua, I was greeted with truffles redeemed by Pagan anarchists from a dumpster outside one of the Bay Area's elite candy stores. Here, we can afford to fill the garbage with expensive chocolates tossed out because they've lost the first bloom of freshness. We are surrounded by wealth and waste. Even those of us who don't have a lot of personal money

have access to resources undreamed of elsewhere.

Our access to material abundance is a direct inheritance of many years of Western expropriation of the Third World. If we want true worldwide abundance we may have to give up some of our own access to material goods. At the very least, we can give up our willingness to waste.

RQ: Do you see this as a "new asceticism"?

Starhawk: The recognition that our wealth is based on others' poverty is not asceticism or puritanism. It has nothing to do with seeing money per se as something "dirty." But it does come from a recognition that scarcity is a very real operating condition in much of the world, not a mere illusion of the unenlightened.

RQ: I recently read an article describing

scarcity as an illusion. It called the belief in scarcity the "big terror behind all the monetary greed," the "primal terror" that keeps us from challenging the status quo. Do we need to move "beyond scarcity"?

Starhawk: Some people criticize our culture for a "belief in scarcity," but the truth is the opposite. Our entire economic system is based on the illusion that the Earth's resources, particularly fossil fuels, are infinite, and that the Earth's ability to absorb waste is inexhaustible.

We are coming to the end of the era of cheap fossil fuels. We are rapidly polluting irreplaceable groundwater deposits in the same way we waste the surface water and air. We need to come to grips with the reality of scarcity or we will destroy beyond salvation the air, water, and Earth that are the foundation of any abundance.

Ironically, it is the very cultures that have the most refined attunement to scarcity, tribal cultures attuned to the real limits of their environment, that are most characterized by sharing of resources. Among the Bushpeople of Africa or the Eskimos, greed or selfishness is seen as a disease.

RQ: So how do we challenge the status quo? How do we begin to rethink our lives in an Earth-friendly, life-nourishing way that takes account of economic realities such as scarcity?

Starhawk: In other words, how do we envision and create revolution?

Perhaps instead of dwelling on prosperity or scarcity, we need to think



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about sustainability. A movement is growing around permaculture, or sustainable agriculture, developing new attitudes, practices, and resources that conserve and replenish soil and water, instead of wasting them.

We need to develop a sustainable union of spirituality and political action – to build sustainable groups and organizations.

For something to be sustainable, we cannot be putting in more energy than we are getting back. We cannot be using up resources faster than we are replenishing them.

RQ: Even if it's not asceticism, it still seems like part of the solution is people living their lives in a simpler manner —

living collectively so more people are using the same resources, finding ways to eliminate daily use of cars, eating locally-grown food, supporting local culture.

Starhawk: Collective living is a good



example of the change that is needed. Perhaps over the years we will be able to join collective households into neighborhoods, to transform our physical environment so it becomes more ecological and sustainable.

That is my personal dream. I want to live in a community that can thrive and prosper in balance with the Earth and with all her beings.

This discussion is based on an article originally written in the mid-1980s. The article appeared in Reclaiming Newsletter No. 20, available through the Reclaiming Quarterly Archives.

RQ questions by Luke Hauser. Visit www.directaction.org

Starhawk is an activist, organizer, and author of many books. She teaches Earth Activist Trainings that combine permaculture design and activist skills (see ad below). Visit www.starhawk.org

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What if the Earth is NOT Our Mother?

The following conversation begins with a provocation from Keith Hennessy and is followed by responses from Kirk Read, Rachel Kaplan, Jack Davis, and Ravyn Stanfield.

The goal of this polyvocal text is not to resolve an issue or come to consensus but to create some queer friction or turbulence that might yield fresh intelligence and ritual experimentation.

A PROVOCATION

by **Keith Hennessy**

I want to trouble the relationship between gender and deity.

I was raised Catholic, taught to call my dad, all priests, and God, "Father." Feminists and other critics of monotheistic and patriarchal religions have challenged this triple conflation.

Through these critiques I learned to recognize the structural network of home, society, and universe as a series of male-dominated "families." The one God becomes the ultimate head of global household. He might be a loving father or a stern father, but he's

our daddy. We accept as normal a vast network of psychological and political dynamics held in patriarchal place by the language, metaphor, and icon of Father.

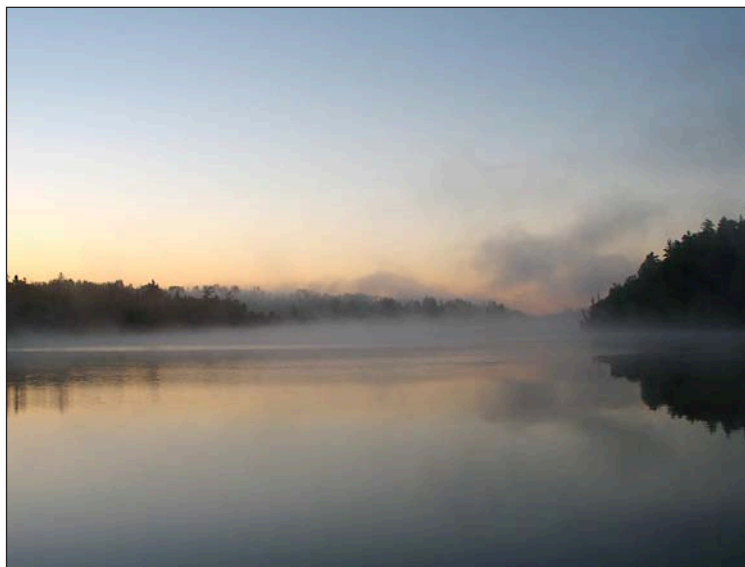
In the Bay Area during the mid-

to late-1980s, I was part of a vibrant culture created by anarchists, feminists, direct action activists, collective houses, worker-owned businesses, politically engaged artists, and hybrids thereof. Among the many influences and participants in this network were

people who identified as feminist Witches, or simply Pagans. Many of these activist Witches gathered within and around the collective called Reclaiming. We *reclaimed* deity as feminine and feminine as sacred, and we brought ritual performance to all spheres of political action, creative work, and daily life. A new world felt not only possible but actual. And this new world, following the beliefs of both Native Americans* and (neo) Pagans, would be called Mother.

As an assertive

response to 2000 years of Father God, today's Pagans claim a much longer history, however hidden or marginalized, of goddesses, Earth Mothers, and Mother Earth. But this feminist move, dependent on essentialist tropes of mothers and fathers, can never fully reverse or topple a gendered hierarchy that is structurally enforced.



* - Variations of Earth Fathers exist in at least a few indigenous or ancient cultures. In Egyptian mythology Geb is the Earth-god or Father Earth and Nut is the mother or goddess of the sky. Neil Maclean, an Ohlone solidarity activist, told me that the native people from San Francisco, before contact with Europe, called the Earth their father and the sun their mother. For further research, I suggest Malcolm Margolin's well-researched *The Ohlone Way: Indian Life in the San Francisco-Monterey Bay Area*.

Photos by Marcia Rayene

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Earth Our Mother?

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What happens when we anthropomorphize the Earth, when we give it human names and social roles? How does it serve either a Pagan or ecological project to assign a gender and a social role to the Earth? What do we gain and what do we lose when we refer to the Earth as Mother? How are we influenced in terms of perspective, experience, wisdom, ambitions, or motivations? Is it possible to experience the Earth as alive without linking it to our own perceptions and politics of mortality? Maybe s/he is neither alive nor dead, neither great provider nor great destroyer. Clearly, the Earth and the human are not separate events. Might we consider new language (or less language) to frame ecological and Pagan perspectives and action?

I grew up reciting a prayer, which begins:

“Our Father, who art in Heaven, hallowed be thy Name.”

In my late 20s, already having identified as both an ex-Catholic and a recovering Catholic, I heard a version that is allegedly a closer translation of the original Aramaic text (the language of the historical Jesus):

“Dear you, from whom all light and sound vibrations emanate.”

I was changed forever with the potential of this revelation, despite the fact that its mystic inclinations are considered by conservative Christians to be more conjecture than translation. Replacing “father” with the source of sound and light vibration destabilizes the conflicts between science and religion, between mono and poly, and supports my conviction that neither god nor Earth is best considered in gendered human terms.

Twenty years of developing the

tools of queer and feminism for inspired analysis and action have prompted me to challenge Pagan friends and networks. How can we say mother without invoking “father”? In the myth/story of Mary and Jesus, the virgin birth is a non-consensual fertilization by the Holy Spirit, a proxy of God the Father. Are we silently calling an all-powerful father god every time we call Mother Earth? Feminist and queer perspectives remind us of the hegemonic damage of continually reasserting the heterosexual nuclear family as a universal norm. Mother plus father does not have to be



the only frame for creativity, life, law, generation, or genius.

There can be significant patriarchal disruptions and spiritual inspirations when calling the Earth a mother. But the ambivalent subtexts, both heterosexist and human-centered, suggest that we reconsider. What if the Earth is not y/our mother?

THE EARTH IS A COMMUNAL ORGY

by Kirk Read

I get queasy with the girl and boyification of nature in general. The insistence on Mother Earth and Father Sky and the way water is always equated with wombs and menstruation. Enough with the Pagan clichés already! I’ve been reading a lot about plants lately.

And earthworms. Socially constructed notions of masculinity and femininity don’t make sense in a compost heap. I mean, we can call them male and female plants, but they’re nothing without bees. And where do bees fit into the binary gender map? Gender is best left to humans checking boxes on match.com. I’m worried when my transgender friends recreate the worst imaginable cartoon archetypes of gender, as well as lesbian friends getting super-entrenched in pop culture and fashion. Gay men have been on a hypermasculine trip for a long time, which is intimidating to me

even though I fall under its spell pretty easily. What I’m trying to say is that people often identified as gender pioneers are huffing the same gnarly fumes of gender stereotypes as everyone else. I don’t think the answer is to dig ourselves further into the gender ditch by referring to trees with alternative pronouns like zie and hir. Sometimes a tree is just a tree. Not to get all Gertrude Stein on you.

I resist Goddess language and gendered language because it

transfers gender maps as understood by humans upon an Earth that is far more complicated than we’re collectively able to imagine. This language turns the Earth into a nuclear family, with a mom and dad and babies. And the Earth is not at all a nuclear family. The Earth is a big communal orgy of vines growing out of dead bodies on top of poop, then getting inoculated by some floating spore carried in the fur of a squirrel.

GENDER IS A STORY

by Rachel Kaplan

As I sit to write, the wind is whipping through the green trees outside, another storm heading from the sea to me. It has been a wild winter and the wonder

Photos by Marcia Rayene

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of water continues... do I need or want to think of this gift of life-bringing rain as female? No, I do not. Do I need to think of the destruction taking place everywhere, everyday, of the Earth and its inhabitants, as male? No I do not. But is it simpler by far to rest in the "hegemonic structuralism of gender"? Yes, it is. Does it serve us in recreating the world? I am not sure, but I am not sure either that I have another way.

As a permaculturist,

I am trained to look at the natural systems around me and to use them as a template for action.

I cannot help but notice the gendered reality that pervades the natural world.

These differences are unstoried in the natural world in a way that is never true for the human world.

Perhaps it is the story that is the problem

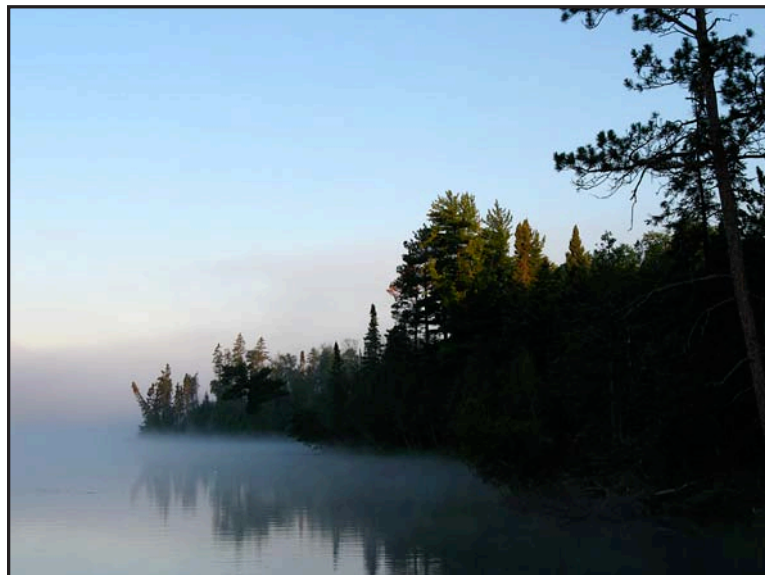
(which is what gender is after all),

rather than the reality of the biological difference between us. But if it is true that biological differences — which we call gender — are part of the natural world, and our dis-ease in culture comes from separating ourselves radically from the natural order of which we are a part, how else are we to understand our lives, our actions, our selves? If we could get to the place where nature is — a sense of being-ness without the story of meaning — then gender wouldn't be an issue at all. But our differences, and what they tell us about our purpose and how to act, would still be there, inherent within us.

After a stint as a radical lesbian feminist, I became active in the Bay

Photos by Marcia Rayene

Area artistic-anarchist-Pagan culture that Keith Hennessy describes above. But a key difference in coming from a Jewish background, rather than a Catholic or Christian one, is not in the way god was personified, but in the way people were. We were victims of culture and history, rather than the victors, making it simpler for us to identify with the oppressed, the downtrodden, the dispossessed. From there, and living in a woman's body, it was an easy step to feminism, lesbianism, Paganism, moving ever outside the reach — or so I



hoped — of god the father. Did it work? Not really. I am subject all the time to patriarchal reality, patriarchal decision-making, both internal and external.

I fight all the time with my feminist-raised boyfriend/husband who wants all things to be "equal" between us, who has somehow swallowed the fantasy that there is even such a thing as equality between men and women, or between people and one another. Biology showed us, in the form of our daughter, that there is a reason why culture evolved the way it did, and that in fact, there is a destiny inherent in our biologies. Can you imagine? It took having our daughter to realize that biology on some level is destiny. If we live in a differentiated universe because our bodies and their capacities simply do different things — even in an age where

that can be modified and tricked out, as in tranny love and queer procreation — we are left with a gendered universe that dictates some of our decisions, actions and ways of being. Is our alternative as simple as telling a different story? Who tells a story outside the box in which they live? Not too many people I know.

I worship the Earth as the vehicle of regeneration, the wheel of death and rebirth, the altar of reality, rather than the distorted lies of religion and people's stories. As a permie, I witness the power of the Earth in destruction

and regeneration. I dig that.

Is it a female power? Maybe.

I certainly identify with it in myself, as a woman. As a mother, I am living out a story of my gendered body — procreative, protective, maternal, fierce, nurturing... Do I see my partner living out many of these same aspects? Yes. Is it equal? No.

And the beat goes on...

FAGGOT MAGIC

by Jack Davis

I recently co-facilitated a class in elements of magic for gay men. One of the questions we posed: What does it mean to be a gay man involved in

goddess spirituality?

We created invocations that were not directed to a specific deity and called upon the aspects that we desired from a queer god. Our chants embraced:

copious amounts of jism...

gentle and animal fucking...

sweet faggot god...

weirdo...

your mighty cock...

and bring it girl!

Sometimes deity is the goddess because she is not the god, the god is the colleague and not the consort of the goddess, the goddess is a man in a dress, deity has no gender, or deity is all genders.

Maybe thinking of deity can be like shopping at a thrift store, picking and choosing, holding out for exactly

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what you want. During the class, it was revealed to us that if, as Dion Fortune says, magic is the art of changing consciousness at will, then faggot magic is the art of changing costumes at Goodwill.

SYMBIOSIS OR DOMINATION?

by Ravyn Stanfield

“The Earth is our Mother, we must take care of her.” This is a chant that I learned in my twenties through the feminist Earth-based spirituality movement. It was attributed as a traditional Native American chant.

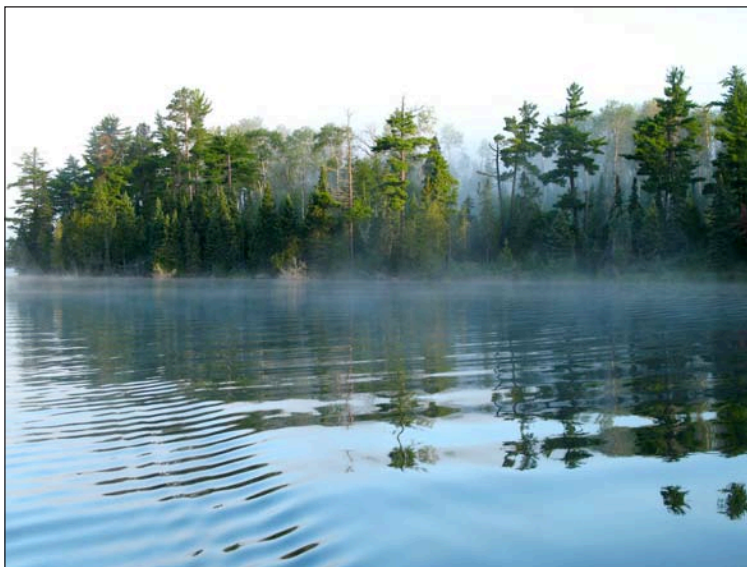
While attempting to avoid the romanticizing of indigenous cultures that white folks like to do, there can certainly be an argument made that people who lived in North America prior to European colonization placed a value on relationship with their landbase. One could further argue that most people in contemporary Western culture are several steps removed from the ways that the land provides staples for our continued survival.

The Earth Mother archetype perhaps shook that up, muddied the waters, asked us to relate to our planet in a way that evoked a primary connection with nourishment. I see/saw it as an attempt to give a face to the faceless, to make the vast spaces of the planet accessible through familiarity. Perhaps it was also an attempt to offer an alternative to flesh mothers who may have failed in small or large ways to nurture us in the ways we wanted. At any rate, “we must take care of her” was a statement asserted without question, a

mission/invitation/provocation.

Identifying the Earth with the oppression of women in all countries, pasting genitals and gender roles on the planet, was a bold political move of its time, a strong blow in the struggle to capture the imagination of the people. We could have easily called the planet Native, African, Jewish, Irish, Queer or Muslim at various times of our collective evolution, and it would have made the same point.

So has Earth Mother passed her prime, so to speak? I see ways that this archetype/identity is still useful, inviting humans to seek healthy relationship with the planet within a parasitic culture that consumes everything in sight and has nothing at all to do with functional communion. I can also see the false



ways that we can glorify the “feminine” and continue to expect female-bodied people to do something magical to “save the Earth” as if living well on the planet was not the responsibility of all humans. I can see the false ways that MotherFather gods still keep humans infantile and powerless in the face of authority, as well as continuing a heterosexist reality.

What is our goal in moving out of the oppressed “feminine” identity that we have politically associated with the planet? I haven’t fully uncovered the answer for myself yet, I think that releasing our oppressed identities is one

of the most difficult tasks that humans can accomplish. Recognizing that we belong to a group that is stigmatized by a larger culture is vital to resistance and liberation efforts. However, when does this identification end? Is it when the group itself feels free? Is it when the tangible liberation goals of the group have been accomplished? Is it when another group points out that this group is “free enough”? This gets tricky for me because I know that for every one of us who grows beyond strict gender cages, there is a girl who survives a rape and identifies with the feminist movement for the first time.

Are we free enough yet to let go of the planet as our Mother and say that the goal has been accomplished? To continue the metaphor, would it mean that we would simply move out of the house or live far away?

The war on qualities that we/they assigned to the “feminine” is real, and the gender-role socialization that kills continues to unfold as soon as people get the gender results of the ultrasound. Those born with the biological bodies of boys are still told that they must separate from intimate relationship with others (and ultimately the planet) to be seen as strong. Those born with the biological bodies of girls eventually see that this ability to separate

seems to be a way to success and status. Interdependence is not a consensual teaching that we offer children in Western culture.

For me, the question is not masculine or feminine, pussy or prick, queer or hetero, it is about whether we are living in a relationship of symbiosis or dominion with the planet. I welcome our questioning of whether or not we need the Earth Mother archetype to help us shift the reality of dominion. I also see Western civilization in active opposition to symbiosis. I wonder what will the Earth be to us instead? Our vital home or a silent lifeless rock?

Photos by Marcia Rayene



Practicing Islam

in the U.S.A.

by *Jalaledin Ebrahim*

It will come as no surprise that, like most people, I practice the tradition of my family of origin, which is a spiritual mystical interpretation of Islam. Given our current post 9/11 context, is it easy to hold fast to this tradition?

Perhaps one first has to look at the very early influences from the perspective of child development to appreciate how profoundly one is marked by one's faith, despite perceived attacks in the media and elsewhere.

It begins with rites and rituals at birth when an infant in our tradition is accepted as a murid or disciple of the Imam of the Time or the Spiritual Master of the Age, in direct lineal descent from the Prophet Muhammad. In the case of a male, you cannot at the outset ignore the experience of circumcision, if only to formalize the religious identity of the infant. In my case, my parents had made that decision before I made my eager appearance in the hospital in Nairobi, Kenya, when it was still a British colony.

Early in the first days of infancy my parents sought out the Mukhi, a congregational leader (there being no clerics in our path of Islam), and

arranged for a ritual similar to a baptism. I was anointed with holy water which was blessed by the Imam of the Time, prayers were said for me, and my given name was registered.

In my early childhood, I would join my parents at least weekly at the congregational prayers and was taught how to participate through imitation of the older kids and adults. This was an important and critical period for early

socialization.

While this social and psychological conditioning was important, the expression of faith embodied by my grandmother and mother were far more influential. I remember how my mother broke out in a chant with her prayer beads one night as my father was driving a VW van in a rain storm

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Practicing Islam

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in some very difficult, flooded, and unpaved African terrain, without street lighting. We arrived at our destination safe and sound. That felt like a miracle because my Dad could hardly see the road ahead in the dark.

If that was a miracle, then how do we categorize the healing hand of my grandmother as I lay in a polio ward at an infectious disease hospital at the age of eleven, diagnosed with poliomyelitis of the brain? She would pray over me every evening and anoint my head and face with holy water for three weeks. It was nothing less than miraculous when the hospital director called my mother to take me home as they could not find any further reason to keep me.

However, the event that has perhaps had the most enduring impact on my faith was my grandmother's passing when I was twelve years old. She attended daily congregational prayers, morning and evening, and was a devoted believer. She died quite suddenly one evening in the Jamatkhana (community prayer hall) after she had descended the staircase with my mother. From all reports, it was considered a blessed

and miraculous passing, a perfect death if there ever was such a phenomenon. My grandmother, having completed her worship rituals, passed her purse to my mother and lay down on the floor without falling or stumbling, almost as if she had expected to be called at that very moment. At her funeral, complete

true that other cultural influences began to compete for my attention – Elvis Presley, Cliff Richard, The Beatles, and the Rolling Stones, rock and roll, jazz, rhythm and blues, and American movies! Where were these all supposed to fit into my world?

This was the beginning of a period of introspection and cultural assimilation. I was a member of a progressive Muslim community with a Sufi orientation, but I was also part of an emerging beat generation. We liked to go to parties, do the fox trot, cha cha, and twist! And for this to happen we needed to have normal and natural contact with the opposite sex. We lived in a cosmopolitan city and many of us were exposed and influenced by this seductive Western lifestyle. My peers and I were pulled in both directions. I clearly remember the night we had a dance party – all clean fun,

with no alcohol or drugs. After two in the morning, a few of us piled into a car and took a ride, making it back in time for the dawn meditation and morning congregational prayer. Both lifestyles were compelling.

The most challenging developmental age for maintaining my faith was during college. I had the good fortune to attend what is now known as the American University of Paris. I was burning the candle at both ends and occasionally



The Grand Bazaar in Istanbul.

strangers reported that they had been the recipients of her generosity and wanted to be present to say their farewells to this pure soul. The presence and prayers of the community made me aware that births, weddings, and funerals are all part of the landscape of the spiritual tradition that I was raised in. My faith evoked notions of the sacred and the miraculous.

By the time I was a teenager, it was quite normal to identify with our faith tradition as the anchor of familial and community life. However, it is also

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Practicing Islam

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taking risks with my social habits at the expense of my academic success. This was a heady time in the 60s when students were exploring and experimenting with everything from personal and political philosophies to altered states of consciousness. We were studying Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus. The Vietnam War was raging and political opposition to the war in Europe and the USA seemed far removed from the bourgeois values of my faith community. However, a couple of sparkling moments occurred when I had the opportunity to have an audience with His Highness the Aga Khan, the charismatic leader of our faith community. Similar to a Sufi Sheikh, his role is to interpret the faith according to time and context: hence the modern contemporary outlook on Islam for which our faith community is often ostracized in the larger Muslim ummah.

I had sought his personal counsel and guidance about pursuing Islamic studies. He had attended Harvard University and graduated with honors in Islamic History. I was not earning high grades and I clearly had to turn a corner if I wanted to achieve some academic success. Hard work and regular prayers formed the essence of his answer.

The second encounter was an

initiation into the mystical aspects of our faith tradition, another experience that was to stay with me for the rest of my life.

Having turned the page on my academic mediocrity, I transferred to Cornell University in 1969. The campus was highly politicized, and as much as I tried to hold onto my religious tradition, it did not seem to have any role in the thinking of a college activist. Engaged



viewing the world. My faith had become lukewarm.

The Vietnam War ended and the human potential movement emerged in the mid 70s. I enrolled in Transcendental Meditation (TM) and Est. Both of these methods seemed to call me back to my faith tradition.

One evening, before attending the Jamatkhana in Santa Monica, California, I sat in my car for 20 minutes meditating,

using the more accessible TM method, rather than my tradition's practice that was required to be performed at 4 a.m.! Then when I went into the congregational prayer, I had a new, profoundly luminous experience of an altered state of consciousness. I had to ask myself, why did I have this

Buddhism seemed to be more relevant: being in the moment, accepting that life is suffering, seeking the stillness within, and contributing to the well being of humanity as a whole.

Our icons were Che Guevara, Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Peter, Paul and Mary, Bob Dylan, and the renowned Jesuit priests – the Berrigan brothers. Within this context, I could not relate to the religious tradition I was raised in because it had nothing to offer me in the things that I thought really mattered on the planet at the time. I was able to maintain my practice of prayer and meditated on and off, but it did not seem to be a part of an overall schema for

experience in the sacred space of the Jamatkhana and not earlier in my car or elsewhere? This was perhaps a moment of awakening to the deeper experience of my faith.

In the early 80s, I embarked on a pilgrimage to the holy sites of Islam: Mecca and Medina in Saudi Arabia, followed by Kufa, Kerbala, and Najaf in Iraq. However, nothing could compare with the numinosity of being in the presence of my spiritual teacher, the Aga Khan. By now I had had many such opportunities in different cities throughout Europe and North America.

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Practicing Islam

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By 1994 my mother had been fighting a valiant battle with breast cancer for twenty years and was close to her own death. I could see it in her eyes – they had changed from a soft brown to a sparkling silver.

One day in our family condominium in Redondo Beach, California, she kept saying, “I want to go home!” My sister and I thought she was reeling from the morphine taken to manage her chronic pain. That evening she asked me to submit her tithes at the prayer service. When I returned she was waiting for me to make sure that her final task had been performed. Then she painfully made her way up the stairs.

“Think of them as the staircase to heaven, Mom,” I encouraged.

“I wish,” she responded.

Once up the stairs, she walked to her bedroom and lay on her bed. A sideways glance to the upper right corner of the ceiling, as if to greet the angel of death, and she forever closed her eyes.

I was there to witness her death. The next morning she was to have been transferred to hospice. The night of her death, people from our community – complete strangers to my sister and me – started arriving and helped us to make the necessary arrangements. Volunteers came to cook

and provide sustenance during our time of grief. We had delayed the funeral two days so my father could arrive from Kenya to be present for her last rites. This experience of complete support forced my sister and me to re-examine our relationship with the community. We had followed the practice of the faith but



The Hagia Sophia mosque in Istanbul.

we had done precious little to engage in the community. My mother’s passing shifted our relationship with those who had stood by her and us in the final hours. We were grateful and indebted, but more, we were blessed to be “in community” with other practitioners on the path.

While getting a graduate degree in Spiritual Psychology, I was introduced to a workshop on Sufi healing by a Shadhilliya practitioner. This and other encounters with various Sufi circles, which comprised many practitioners raised in other religious traditions, helped to situate the progressive

practices with which I was raised into the context of a more universal thread: mystical Islam. I no longer felt so alone in the practice of the faith. Even though these mystical paths are not embraced by mainstream Islam, I had found a way to nourish my soul in the post-9/11 American context.

Practice of the faith, in my experience, is never a static phenomenon. It involves a dynamic process of learning about the small self and the Big Self, about Self and Other, about light and shadow. There are moments of deep faith and then moments of doubt, uncertainty, and ambivalence. There are moments of frustration at not fitting in and moments of celebration where everything is in flow. What keeps one going is the call of the Sacred and the Miraculous. Then there are those unexplained deep moments of stillness and inner peace.

No, it’s not easy being Muslim in a post-9/11 world, but as I dig deeper, I find buried treasure in my faith of origin.

See <http://jalealadin.blogspot.com> for scholarly research citations and reflections for Jalealadin’s upcoming dissertation, “Towards an Integral Psychology of Islam.”

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A Day of the Dead Ritual

When the heart weeps for what it has lost, the spirit laughs for what it has found — West Africa

by Barry and Maya Spector

Modern people have long been aware of lacking something that neither our ideologies, nor our addictions, nor our consumerist frenzies can satisfy. Searching for it, millions have sampled Asian spirituality and discovered contemplative practices that ground their lives in authentic values, while others have rediscovered their Christian or Jewish roots. The choice is personal, mysterious, and utterly unpredictable. Still others, like ourselves, have concluded that monotheism itself is the source of our dilemma.

Polytheism provides a framework for people to address the plural patterns of the soul. In this context, ignoring any of the gods can mean that some aspect of our consciousness is so much in the foreground that it has pushed others out of awareness. However, saying that spirits and ancestors are merely inside us reduces them to psychological figures. Pagans prefer to see them as imaginative worlds of meaning in which we participate, as reflecting natural forces both in the universe and within humanity.

Metaphor transmits multiple levels of meaning and invites dialogue.

Consider that some languages lack the verb “to be.” Speakers must communicate indirectly, tolerate ambiguity, and endure the tension between opposites, rather than settling for the “either-or” resolution characteristic of monotheism. They think mythologically, identify the



archetypal nature in events, and recognize that the literal, psychological, and symbolic dimensions of reality complement each other to make a greater whole.

There is no reason to assume that indigenous people cannot do this. Actually, it is we who have, by and large, lost this capacity. The curses of modernity – alienation, racism, environmental collapse, totalitarianism, consumerism, addiction, and world war

– are the results. When modern people confuse a myth with historical truth, or if we allow dogma to determine the effect the symbol is supposed to have, the symbol dies. Since monotheism generally rejects ambiguity, it requires belief, which implies not merely a single truth but also the obligation to convert –

or eliminate – others. It invites misogyny, intolerance, and hatred of the body.

Pagan thinking appreciates diversity and encourages us to imagine. Myth is truth precisely because it refuses to reduce reality to one single perspective. For these reasons, we have chosen to experiment with living rituals from many indigenous cultures, rather than to follow one path exclusively.

But why are we called to celebrate the Day of the Dead?

For years, I (Barry) would dread the approach of Fall, when I’d experience all kinds of accidents and minor illnesses. Eventually, I realized that it was my own darkness that I’d been unwilling to examine. We learned about the Celtic view that the world moves annually between the Light and Dark halves of the year, and we began to approach these transitions ritually, to welcome the darkness.

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Photo from Oakland, CA Museum • by Luz

Day of the Dead Ritual

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Twelve years ago, after long-term experience with Spiral Dance and men's mythopoetic work, we began to offer rituals to provide an opportunity for communal grieving. Many indigenous cultures recognize annual periods, such as Samhain, when the "veil between the worlds" is thinnest, when the boundaries between the seen and unseen worlds become permeable, and the spirits of the dead walk briefly among the living, to eat the foods they loved when they were alive. These are times for loving remembrance. They are also liminal, sacred times, when great things are possible.

And they are dangerous times, since some spirits are hungry for more than physical food. The old gods are returning as they sense our interest in healing the unfinished business of the past. Indigenous cultures from Bali to Guatemala agree that there is a *reciprocal relationship between the worlds*. What is damaged in one world can be repaired by the beings in the other. Thus, such cultures affirm that many of our problems actually arise because we have not allowed the spirits of the dead to move completely to their final homes.

They say that the ancestors require two basic things from us: *beauty* and *our tears*. The fullness of our grief, expressed in colorful, poetic, communal celebrations, feeds the dead when they visit, so that when they return to the other world they can be of help to us who remain in this one. And by feeding them with our grief, we may

drop some of the emotional load we all carry simply by living in these times. The ancestors can aid the living. But they need our help to complete their transitions. Without enough people weeping for it on this side, say the Mayans, a soul is forced to turn back. Taking up residence in the body of a youth, it may ruin his life through violence and alcoholism, until the community completes the appropriate



rites. This is the essential teaching: when we starve the spirits by *not dying to our false selves and embodying our authentic selves*, the spirits take literal death as a substitute.

Such beliefs are nearly universal, except, of course, in modern culture, particularly in America, which relentlessly pressures everyone to be upbeat and deny death. We have all known the frustrating atmosphere of American funerals, with their restrained emotional expression, where family members are encouraged to keep a "stiff upper lip," and clergy lecture that the "departed" is "with Jesus" or in a "better place." To a Pagan, what could be a better place than this Earth?

We feel that the inability to achieve closure haunts the American soul. Looking back at the charred ruins of history's most violent century, we notice certain factors. One is the resolution

of disputes through distanced, high-tech violence that insulates us from the consequences of our actions. The second is the Anglo-Saxon cult of masculinity that prevents men from shedding tears. The third is the massive, karmic (there is no other word for it) weight of our ungrieved histories of genocide, slavery, and empire. Is it any wonder that (white) Americans cry so sparingly at funerals?

This is why we have found it so helpful to utilize ritual elements and stories from cultures that understand the critical value of grief work. As Pagans, we entertain the possibility that if there is such a thing as truth, it resides in many places. We know that some indigenous teachers dislike whites appropriating their traditions. However, we have discovered that, at their essence, many tribal cultures reveal a surprising similarity of intention, especially in their grief rituals. Besides, we feel that the times are too painful and the need

too strong to reject anything authentic. We need all the help we can get. Indeed, Malidoma Somé has encouraged us to take his Dagara grief rituals into our communities.

So we experiment, with respect (and when possible, with permission) for those traditions, not to co-opt them, but to utilize what may be of value to personal and cultural healing.

We entertain these basic principles:

- 1 — Even without having lost loved ones recently, we *all* carry immense loads of unexpressed grief.
- 2 — Desiring healing as much as we do, beings on the other side of the veil call to us continually. It is our responsibility to approach them through ritual.
- 3 — Grieving may never completely

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Photo from Oakland, CA Museum • by Luz

Day of the Dead Ritual

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end, but we can clarify our intentions to achieve closure with old wounds and with those who are no longer with us. Unfinished business keeps us from focusing on future goals. Dropping some of that weight makes room for a new imagination.

4 — Releasing emotions requires a safe space and a caring community. Since, say the Dagara people, a person sick with grief sickens the whole village, *grieving must be communal work*. So we try to create and nurture community, even if only briefly.

5 — Having inherited a Western tradition deeply suspicious of the imagination, we know how difficult it is to let go. So we tell poems (*recited, not read*), guide meditations, name the past year's dead, and build altars. Stories and grief songs from many indigenous

traditions help pull us out of normal, emotionally-restrained consciousness.

6 — We must *move* the emotions. When ritual involves the body, the soul takes notice.

7 — “Radical ritual” is by nature unpredictable. We respectfully invoke the spirits, but we never know how things will end.

8 — Ritual of this nature, like any initiation, involves sacrifice. We attempt to release whatever holds us back, sabotages our relationships, or keeps us stuck in unproductive patterns. In this imagination, the ancestors are eager for signs of our commitment and sincerity. What appears toxic to us, that which we wish to sacrifice, becomes food to them, and they gladly feast upon it.

We encourage the gradual buildup of emotion, structuring the day around certain basic, recurrent themes, such as exile or imprisonment. Each year we tell a story from a different tradition. Participants break up into small,

facilitated groups, where they are asked: *What haunts you? Are you in exile from home? Family? Society? Have you exiled or hurt others? Personal*

losses? Abortions? Choices not to have children, etc. What have you sacrificed in order to survive? Are you clinging to something that must die?

Then comes extended chanting and drumming. All stand before a beautiful water shrine, which beckons them to literally and symbolically lay their burdens down. Here, the community is critical. As dancers leave the “village” and approach the shrine to weep, scream, or silently address their ancestors, the singers and drummers encourage them. One can feel both the “pull” of the ancestors and the “push” of the community. Ideally, participants return to the village cleansed from their ordeal. The community welcomes them enthusiastically, because such people are now more capable of giving their “original medicine” to others.

We conclude with more poetry, statements of intention for the new year, and a feast for the tired souls who have worked so hard to feed the spirits.

This year, Barry and Maya Spector's Day of the Dead Ritual will take place in El Cerrito, California on November 6, 2010. Contact them at shmoover@comcast.net, or visit www.barryandmayaspector.com.

Barry Spector is the author of Madness At The Gates Of The City: The Myth of American Innocence.

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Summer Magick

A Summer Walk Into Healing, Celebration, and Renewal

By Preston Vargas

Summertime. It is the magick of outdoor rituals pulsing through the cool night air, the solidarity we show at Pagan Pride gatherings, and the laughter we share at potluck picnics. For each of us the season of sun conjures up rich images. However, nothing is as quintessential to summer as those long strolls on beautiful days. Still, as commonplace as a summer walk may seem, it can be a wonderful opportunity for healing, celebration, and renewal. A summer stroll can be a sacred experience that can move any of us into a mutually beneficial relationship with the world around us.

EARTH-WALKING

“Earth-Walking” is experiencing a sacred dimension to what would otherwise be a simple walk. It is the practice outlined in Starhawk’s book, *The Earth Path*. Earth-Walking is a process of opening energetic and spiritual channels which allow one to enter into a relationship with a particular location and the entities that inhabit it. I find it similar to the processes of shape-shifting and aspecting. For me, Earth-Walking is perceiving my consciousness as the living consciousness of the planet.

While it would be wonderful

if I could say it is one of my daily practices, truthfully I do not Earth-Walk as often as I would like. However, I try to do it as often as I can. One recent time was a beautiful summer day on the northern California coast. That particular day I felt overwhelmingly compelled to go for a walk. In some respects I believe I was called to Earth-Walk. Following the call, I headed west toward the setting sun.

After about ten minutes of quiet walking, I reached Ocean Beach on the west end of San Francisco. It was a warm day and the tide was low. I kicked

off my flip-flops and walked lazily in the surf. As the sandy waves scrubbed between each of my toes I felt myself sinking into the rhythms of that “between” place where the sea meets the shore.

HEALING

As I Earth-Walked, I meandered through the breaking waves and sea foam. Occasionally I would bend and throw.

Bend and throw is a practice I have of trying to save stranded jellyfish. I cannot help it when I come across them lying there so helpless and pitiful. Once

out of the sea, their beauty is a little deflated, like an old “happy birthday” balloon that’s wrinkled and has barely enough helium to keep it from dragging on the floor.

I bend down and scoop them up quickly and heave them back into the sea. I do not believe many of them recover but I try nonetheless. Not surprisingly, I get stung when I engage in this rescue mission. My partner laughs at me every time he catches me doing the bend and throw. He often comments that the jellyfish are not very appreciative as evidence of their stinging me. However, I disagree. The jellyfish are most grateful. Especially since they know that I know that I am going to get stung. They are grateful that knowing this, someone tries to

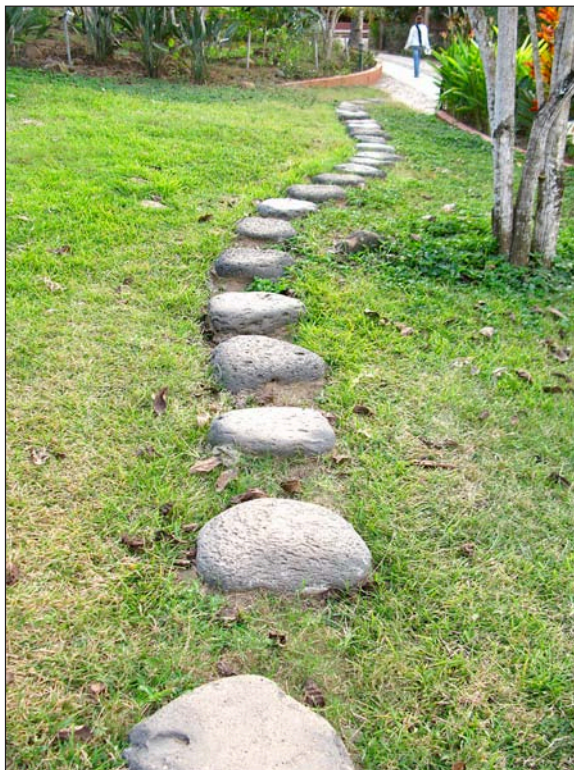


Photo by Marcia Rayene

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Summer Magick

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help them anyway. The jellyfish, if they could, might in gratitude stop stinging me. Yet they have not. I accept the nature of a jellyfish and don't blame a single one. I think it would be silly of me to feel otherwise.

However, on this day the jellyfish were few and my hands ended up just a tad tingly. I continued Earth-Walking north on the beach, scouting out for intact exoskeletons of deceased sand dollars. I've gotten into the habit of decorating my altar with those little star-discs treasures. However, I could not find any.

As I was walking, I noticed a sea worn plastic bag. Actually, I had first thought it was a jellyfish in distress. The bag seemed to be glaring at me. I would have felt guilty leaving it there. Ocean Beach was sharing a beautiful day with me. How dare I walk past this trash in my pursuit of treasures from the sea? Somehow, this plastic bag that had made its way here felt as if it were my responsibility.

With the plastic bag in tow I kept heading north. There I was Earth-Walking and ugh... more trash. Candy wrappers, cigarette butts, bits of plastic, Styrofoam, and all sorts of trash. As I went along, I just kept picking it up. I could not stop. Each time I noticed a piece of refuse I would rush over to it and scoop it up. It was the same excitement that I get when I find a sand dollar intact. I went on with my hunt with a smile and skip in my step. If I had not been so consumed with what I was doing I might have noticed tourists looking upon me with a bit of wonder about a crazy San Franciscan.

If I was attracting onlookers I did not care. I was completely enveloped in the deep healing process that was

going on. My Earth-Walking had helped me merge with the essence of Ocean Beach. Each wave that rolled into shore felt as if it were caressing Me. The sand drifting in sheets across the dunes were tickles upon my skin. I was Ocean Beach cleaning Ocean Beach. I was healing myself. As the process continued I felt increasingly whole, healthy, and content.

CELEBRATION

When my bag was full I made my way east towards the street where I found a trash receptacle. I emptied my bag and headed back west, back to the surf to continue the healing process. As I was



"Rotunda of the Sea," sculptures by Guadalajara artist Alejandro Colunga, on the boardwalk in Puerto Vallarta.

stepping through the soft sand about midway down the beach I was stopped in my tracks. To my left was a flock of gulls. They were a gray color with bright brick red beaks. They were doing the strangest thing. They were all quietly staring off in one direction. West. I decided to attend to what the gulls had noticed. As I slowly turned my head west I was met with an amazing sunset.

Through my extended senses, the sunset felt sublime.

I had never known that humans were not the only beings who stopped and gathered together to share a beautiful sunset. Here was a flock of gulls who had gathered with a purpose. They had gathered to individually and communally celebrate the setting sun and in extension the sacred unfoldings of our cosmos. In fact, as I scanned the shoreline, almost all of the shore birds had gathered in groups staring in quiet celebration of the setting sun.

I sat down in the sand to share in this celebration. All at once, I was full of anticipation, longing, and fulfillment.

In my shifted state of being I was consciously engaged in this phenomenon in a manner that spanned through my extended senses, emotions, and intellect. I had undoubtedly seen beautiful sunsets in the past. Yet this particular sunset created a new feeling within me.

The gulls preened and gazed quickly back at the sun, making sure they would not miss a crucial moment. As I sat in my track pants and sweatshirt I felt underdressed. The gulls were carefully sifting sand from their feathers. They were smoothing over any ruffles in their form. There was a sense of pride to their preening. The birds would not have it said that they were unkempt at the setting of the sun. They wanted to present their best selves. It was as if they were welcoming back a long absent lover. I thought to myself, "here I am in sweats and the birds are dressed in their Sunday best." As I contemplated the idea of the birds dressed in their "Sunday best," I suddenly remembered cosmologist

Brian Swimme saying something to the effect that every species is a saint.

It then became immediately apparent to me. I had wandered into a community of winged saints. Ocean Beach in its gratitude for healing had initiated me into a celebration that the sainted shore birds have been

Photo by Marcia Rayene

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Summer Magick

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participating in for thousands, maybe millions, of years.

The shore birds were gathered in anticipation, longing, and erotic joy. I was swept up in their bliss as they officiated and partook in the cosmic consumption of the sun and the sea. The sun burned with longing for the cool embrace of the sea. The sea in turn, chilled and lonely, craved the warmth of the plunging sun. They would find in each other pleasure and deep communion.

I sat in celebration with the gulls and experienced the erotic fulfillment that sunset brings, and the hopeful joy that tomorrow the unfoldings of the universe will greet me in unimaginable ways. We celebrated as the sun slipped behind the thin veil of mist and finally entered into the sea.

As I walked home in the afterglow, and the gulls flew off to their perches, I was overcome with gratitude. I was grateful not for any trinket that I could

carry back home but for a greater treasure. I had experienced something profound, something that before reintegrating into the rhythms of nature I might never have known. I had been gifted with a priceless treasure. It is a treasure that lingers on the altar of my soul.

RENEWAL

It is still difficult for me to remain grounded in nature as I continue with all of my everyday experiences. The dominating paradigm of mainstream society is struggling to retain a mechanistic and nihilistic worldview. Not very long ago, the system had no need to struggle. Yet now the system is in its death throes. Our environmental, economic, population, health, political, spiritual, and social crises are evidence that the foundations of the system have cracked and the tower is poised to fall. Springing up through the cracks are the suggestions of new modes of being.

These suggestions of new modes of being are strengthened by grounding in the rhythms of nature.

Each of these experiences strengthens the field of a new mode of being. That is one of the residual effects of practices such as Earth-Walking. Each succeeding experience can occur with less hindrance and deeper intensity. Each time I Earth-Walk, the process becomes more fluid and the phenomenon intensifies. This is able to occur because a field of experience is being created. A path between the veils is becoming wider and the veil itself becomes slightly thinner. As these new modes of being are presented to us, the opportunities to exist in mutually beneficial relationships to the whole are multiplied. Witnessing how "small" practices can subtly influence the course of our future fills me with awe and hope. I am in awe of the amazing power of our world and I am hopeful that we are even now transitioning into a mode of being that is mutually beneficial to all.

Witch and Gatekeeper Preston lives out his soulgifts to restore co-creative relationships by dancing the interwoven stories of the Cosmos.



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INVOKING APHRODITE

FOR SEXUAL HEALING

By Jane Meredith

Aphrodite is the ancient Greek Goddess of love and beauty and almost everything about her shouts of sexuality. In Botticelli's Birth of Venus (Aphrodite is the Greek, and Venus the Roman name for the same Goddess) we see her standing naked in a scallop shell, having been born of the sea, a fully mature Goddess. She gazes at the viewer, and one can imagine she is using her famous enticement to draw us into relationship. The shell itself is a symbol for a woman's (or a Goddess') labia, and Aphrodite was conceived by her father's castrated genitals mating with the sea. Of course, every birth is sexual in nature, but the ingredients of Aphrodite's birth seem particularly potent.

The stories about Aphrodite continue her theme of sexuality. She owned a magical girdle which could entice any mortal or god – the Trojan War was lost when she lent it to Hera (Hera and Zeus had taken opposite sides in the war) which sufficiently distracted Zeus for the Greeks to get their wooden horse through the gates of Troy. There are also stories of Aphrodite's many love affairs — scandalous, romantic and tragic — and although in later stories she is given a husband and she does have children (Eros, or Cupid is one), she is never contained by definitions of wife or mother.

The type of love Aphrodite offers is symbolised by her nakedness —

Photo by Marcia Rayene

unbounded by social rules. There is a kind of innocence in her, denoting a strength within her vulnerability, an understanding that love is given freely and openly. She is fundamentally joyous, dealing with the difficulties



of love and relationship as part of the dance of life. One of her central teachings is that love is found within, for no matter the results of her love affairs, Aphrodite continues to offer love and beauty to the world.

When I began working with Aphrodite I was cautious. She seemed to me overly confident (brazen, rash), perhaps a little too much like the male inhabitants of Olympus, who followed their sexual

urges regardless of consequence or price (usually paid by the recipient of their attentions). I had suffered through love and through relationships fairly endlessly, and because of this I thought of Aphrodite as ruthless. I stepped only very gradually into appreciating what she offered.

When I entered into ritual with Aphrodite, I discovered almost the reverse of my fears. Rocked upon the waves of her sea I felt cradled, enfolded almost back into the womb. Travelling in path-workings back to the time of her Temples, I was filled with awe – but it was an awe tinged with dancing, laughter, joy, and release. Calling to her for guidance in love I felt bolstered, reminded of my core strength, the integrity of my love and lovingness, and the shining qualities of my inner being. I have found Aphrodite to be absolutely radiant, ruthless only at that mysterious level of utter compassion, impatient with anything but the deepest truth, and utterly light-filled.

Aphrodite can be invoked beside the ocean, by dancing or in meditation. The essential ingredient is an open heart. Aphrodite asks us to be as vulnerable as she is shown to be, naked in that painting. She offers renewal for broken hearts and wounded sexuality. If you are struggling with past abuse, trauma, lack of self-love, disconnection from your sexual or sensual self, or trying to recover from a painful relationship, Aphrodite's energy can be deeply healing. Even if your heart is trauma-free, her energy can enhance your

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APHRODITE

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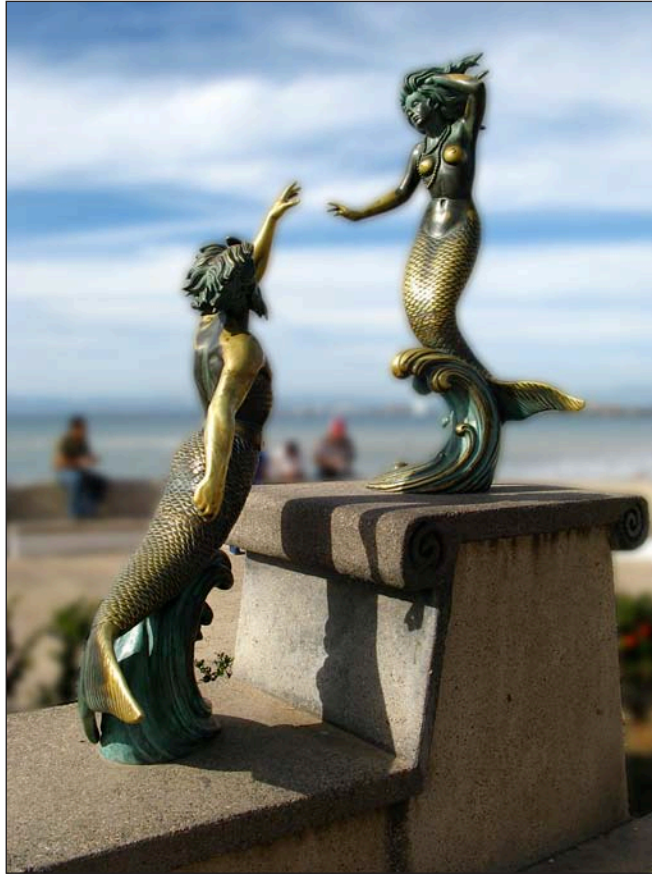
journey through the world.

To invoke Aphrodite, it's helpful to create an altar specially focused towards her. Your Aphrodite Altar might be built at the beach, from sculpted sand, seashells, and whatever else you find. You might dedicate a piece of art-work to her, or build a traditional altar with a cloth, candles, a statuette or picture of the Goddess, or create a purely etheric altar, built through dance, inner path-working or song. Creating the Altar is a way of focusing your mind, of beginning to "tune in" to the channel that Aphrodite is broadcasting on. It is also a clear statement of your intent. Building an Altar might be enough for you to do at first. Later you can come back and begin to work with the Goddess.

When you are ready to take the next step in your sexual healing, begin to call on Aphrodite. Mostly this would be done at your altar, but you might choose to do it outside in nature, or spontaneously, having previously set your intention. I have invoked Aphrodite while swimming naked in the sea, singing under the moon's light, at my altar, in my magical journal/book of spells, and dancing by myself. At different times I have asked for healing, for understanding, for the return of my joyousness, for a lover, and just to feel her presence.

There are many ways to do an invocation, but the essential thing is to come from your deepest self, with no reservations. In the moment, this might look like crying your heart out, or shouting your longing and pain to the

winds, or composing a song of worship. You might take an hour of drumming or meditation to reach this place, or even many attempts to reach deeply enough inside yourself. The focus of the invocation is the Goddess herself — by invoking her you are asking for her energy to touch your life, to feel her (either within yourself or as a separate



"Neptune and the Nereid." Government-commissioned sculpture by Mexico City artist Carlos Espino, on the boardwalk in Puerto Vallarta.

presence), or for some of her qualities to be transferred to you.

When you find this deep place where you feel the presence of Aphrodite, ask the Goddess for what you need. This is also when you may become aware, within yourself, of the changes required to accept what she might give. These changes might have to do with your attitudes, limitations, or habits, or structural changes to do with your lifestyle, choices, and the people you are connected to. This can be very challenging, although sometimes it is absolutely blessed, straight-forward, and like being

handed a gift you have longed for.

At this point, if you feel it is the right thing for you, you can hand yourself over to the Goddess — you might visualise her and find some way to symbolise your willingness to follow her path, to be guided by her. Sometimes I imagine myself as lying within her cupped hands; or dancing with her vast energy; or walking behind her, fitting my footsteps into hers. It might take several hours to get into this deep place. But without this inner resolution and giving-over, without a complete commitment to your own healing, the Goddess can do no more than touch your life with a hint of possibilities. For change to occur, you must be willing to move beyond the ways and situations you are familiar with.

When this happens you will feel a distinct shift within yourself — your earlier problems will look and feel completely different, as if the Goddess truly had walked with you for a step or two on your journey. After you have felt this shift it's important to take some action that symbolises your new (renewed) self — swimming naked in the ocean, dancing to Aphrodite, or writing down your insights. Enter into this activity as deeply as you can, conscious that it is the first step on your healing path. Even if you have not reached the shift-place yet, you may wish to take

this type of action, symbolising your willingness to grow and heal.

You might also have come clearly to some resolution, a deep compassion for yourself and others, or a new idea for your future direction in continuing to heal, learning a different type of relating or exploring hidden truths about yourself and your life. If it is appropriate, you can ask Aphrodite for a clear direction to follow in pursuing your healing. This may be just a feeling or thought of the next step, but

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Photo by Marcia Rayene

APHRODITE

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sometimes a whole path will outline itself to you. If nothing comes to you as the next step, make space for the new direction when it should arrive.

Try to remain in this deepened state, connected with the Goddess until it fades naturally. Then make sure to conclude your ritual by grounding your energy (sending excess energy and emotion into the earth), and thanking Aphrodite. It's important to clearly state whether you wish to continue invoking Aphrodite and/or her qualities into your life, or you are finishing your invocation for now.

It is possible you might meet deep truths in this ritual, decide to make radical changes in your life, or pursue a course of healing on issues that have arisen. You may need to take actions in the external world, as well as work on your own feelings and understandings. Aphrodite can continue to support you

as you find counselling, a support group, or treatment specifically tailored to your needs. You also might choose to undertake several – even many – rituals invoking the Goddess as you move step by step closer to healing your heart and sexual self.



With Aphrodite (unlike some other Goddesses I've worked with) I've never felt pushed beyond my limits, plunged off the edge of the cliff, or been asked to do the impossible. She is actually the leavening, the support to enable us not only to move, but to dance — with grace — through the difficult arenas of love, sex, and connection with others. In her own limitless love she assists others to open their hearts, heal, and experience love. She lends out these qualities.

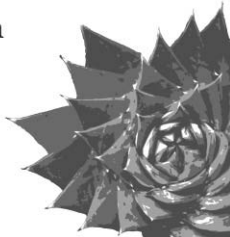
As the stories say, she lends out her magical girdle — to those who are brave enough for the adventure and willing to acknowledge their own divine Aphrodite essence.

Jane Meredith is involved with Australian Reclaiming and will teach at BC Witchcamp this year. Her book Aphrodite's Magic: Celebrate and Heal Your Sexuality is available at bookshops and Amazon. Her CD of guided journeys, Aphrodite's Temple, is available at www.janemeredith.com

A shorter version of this article previously appeared in Injoy magazine.

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DEDICATING A LABYRINTH GARDEN



A REPORT FROM NORTH CAROLINA

The Dragon's Cauldron, the Reclaiming group for central North Carolina, is in the process of building a public labyrinth garden as a service to SEEDS.

SEEDS (South Eastern Efforts Developing Sustainable Spaces) is a Durham, North Carolina-based, multifaceted non-profit community project whose goal is to teach people to care for the Earth, themselves, and each other through a variety of garden-based programs. We are helping them build a public seven-circuit labyrinth and garden at their Leigh Farm site.

LINKS

Dragon's Cauldron: www.dragonscauldron.org

SEEDS: www.seedsnc.org/

Photos by Otter, Beth Owl's Daughter, and Jen Turtle.

more photos on next page



NORTH CAROLINA LABYRINTH GARDEN

continued from preceding page — Photos by Otter, Beth Owl's Daughter, and Jen Turtle



Teen Earth Magic

Teen Earth Magic 2010, held near Nevada City in Northern California, drew together two dozen teens and young adults along with six teachers for five days of magic and activism.

Our third annual teen retreat worked with the Pentacle of the Great Turning: Desire, Surrender, Transformation, Solidarity, and Manifestation (see *RQ#100 for an article*). Photos are posted at RQ.org

The fourth California Teen Earth Magic retreat is planned for June 2011. We welcome youth and young adults ages 13-25 (ages 19-25 will be part of a mentoring path).

Vermonters may also host a Teen Earth Magic retreat in Summer 2011.

For more information, contact RQ — quarterly@reclaiming.org



Photo by Will/RQ



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FOURTH BIENNIAL ALL-RECLAIMING

DANDELION GATHERING

SALEM, MISSOURI • SEPTEMBER 8-12, 2010

Early in September of 2010, dozens of Reclaiming folks will gather together at the 4th biennial Dandelion Gathering. This time Dandelion is in the heart of the Midwest at Diana's Grove, long-time host of Midwest Witchcamp.

As RQ goes to press, the 2010 Dandelion Gathering will convene at Diana's Grove in Salem, Missouri. From September 8-12, Reclaiming folks from around North America and possibly from Europe and Australia will share

stories, skills, rituals, meeting space, meals, and hopefully a lot of magic.

Dandelion is open to any who identify as being part of Reclaiming.

As part of the Gathering, the BIRCH council will meet and consider various aspects of Reclaiming.

This is the fourth Dandelion Gathering. The first was in 2004 in Texas. The 2006 Dandelion was in Massachusetts, and the 2008 gathering in California.

For more info on this and future Dandelion Gatherings, visit dandeliongathering.org



Photograph from the first Dandelion Gathering, 2004


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EUROPEAN WINTER WITCHCAMP

A REPORT FROM WINTER WITCHCAMP IN SPAIN

by *Moira*

Imagine that you are on a plateau of a mountain with a gorgeous view down into the valley, surrounded by higher mountains, their tops covered with snow... there is a strong wind... three eagles are calling and circling around a small house made of local stone in the middle of a wild, untamed wood. You can hear laughter from inside and talk in different European languages, a mixture of Spanish, English, German, and French.

Then you enter and find about thirty people in a kitchen, which is also our dining-room, where our cook prepares one of her delicious meals and scents of fine vegetables and herbs fill the air.

A warm fire — made from wood of the forest around the hut — is burning and crackling in the stove, people are sipping on hot tea made of water from the local well, electricity comes from a battery that has to be exchanged from time to time. In order to save energy, many candles are burning.

People gesticulate wildly in order to communicate and it seems that language is not a barrier for people, whose hearts are wide open and who are really longing to understand each other. And if they want to say, “I like you,” and don’t know how to say it in English or Spanish, they just look you deeply in the eyes, smile, hug, and give you an enthusiastic kiss.

Later they will put their sleeping bags on the floor and be satisfied with the little space in the dorm-room above

— which you can reach if you climb the narrow wooden staircase — that is also our room for path-work and rituals. The people who have come are not here in order to enjoy a lot of luxury and comfort, but simplicity, precious wilderness, and community with other folks from Eastern, Southern, Western, and Northern Europe who are interested in goddess-spirituality, magic, witchcraft, and Reclaiming-culture. And even people who have slept at another place with more comfort the night before say that they want to

“SOMOS UN CIRCULO, DENTRO DE UN CIRCULO, SIN PRINCIPIO, Y SIN FINAL”

— *Spanish version of “We are a circle, within a circle...”*

stay and sleep here in this tiny room today as they love it — although it is almost bursting from all the mattresses, sleeping-bags, and people that it hosts already.

If you want to join us at this wild and enchanted place and really enjoy yourself you have to let go of some things: your need for privacy — as you will be together with others for day and night; your need for long showers — as you have to share the water and tiny bathroom with more than a dozen sisters and brothers; and especially your need for punctuality — as the Spanish people follow their own rhythms and instincts.

Sunshine is dearly needed, as someone has called a lot of rain during the evening-ritual with her intense shamanic songs and drumming that ended up in a rain and hail-storm — unusual in this area, where there had been no rain for months.

People step outside in the morning and hold a sun-dance. It works well and the sun comes out, cheered by all with laughter, songs, and gratitude. And as this spontaneous magic flows, even the Northern Europeans among us (from Germany and our beloved Witches from England and Scotland) — we who are used to schedules and timetables — find it easier to let go and follow the flow.

If you like meetings where things are co-created, open for spontaneity, embracing and balancing different cultures, if you like people who are a little chaotic, open, lovely, who have lots of humour and the ability to let go of their own habits and cultural concepts — this might just be the right place for you.

A big thanksgiving to all who made this wonderful event happen, and to all those dedicated people who contributed a lot of time and energy to it. Camp was completely filled, we could cover all costs, and even have some seed-money for next year.

First of all I want to give many heartfelt thanks to Morgaine, my beloved sister, co-teacher, and organizer who kept in touch with all the participants from the different countries and answered tons of emails and telephone-calls. Blessed be your spider-qualities, your endurance and patience.

Many thanks also to Peti and Vicente for all your great support before and during camp. Your happiness, songs and practical skills of caring for the money-stuff, driving the mini-van, collecting fire-wood, putting up the tipi, cooking and caring for Morgaine’s

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FIRST GODDESS CONFERENCE IN MADRID

A group of Priestesses and Priests of the Goddess, in union of two traditions – Avalon and Celtic-Reclaiming — are preparing the first Goddess Conference in Madrid, Spain.

The Goddess Conference has happened many years in Glastonbury, England, nurtured by the Priestesses of Avalon and visited by hundreds of persons each year. Speakers such as Starhawk from Reclaiming or Anique Radiant Heart from Australia have participated in past years to encourage and support the Pagan tradition in its multiple threads.

We feel the moment has come to reclaim publicly the Goddess in Spain, and we have joined together as the weavers of the Spanish Goddess Conference. We are pioneers venturing into the unknown, discovering treasures of this land: its sacred places, the names of the ancient Goddesses honored in Hispania, traces of Her worship in old traditions. Little by little we start to know that Madrid is a Goddess city, and that our ancestral Goddesses are eager to be found, to wake to life again.

Beginnings are hard, but they are also bright. We will never feel this way again. The second Spanish Goddess Conference will be completely different, less innocent, based on this first experience, on these previous laughs over our mistakes,



on this first joy of finding we are a community – all of us who are willing to regain the Goddess!

Would you like to join us this September? For more information, contact conferenciadiosa@yahoo.es

WINTER WITCHCAMP IN SPAIN

continued from preceding page

wonderful Fairy-children, have helped us to have enough time for planning, getting inspired, and co-creating.

Karen, our translator, also did a wonderful job from morning until late at night – really smart and efficient!

Much love to Almudena and Roman, the hosts of the place and house, who are some of the most dedicated lovers of nature and wilderness that I have ever met and who care for this place so well. Thanks for your friendliness and enthusiasm about camp and for your warmth. Roman, I will never forget how you looked at me, smiled, and said in broken English: “Wonderful work, trees laughing.”

“Somos un circulo...”

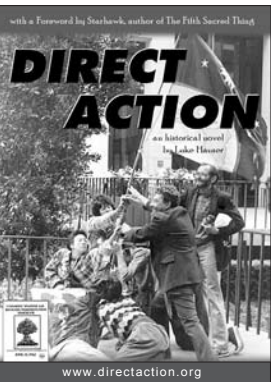
May it never end!

For more information about the European Reclaiming Community-building-process and our witchcamps in Europe, visit www.reclaimingspain.org Moira's website: www.rhea-kriti.de

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San Francisco, CA 94122

(415) 242-0116

ortha@alltravelsf.com

Ortha Spingaerd, the owner of All Travel, has been a member of Reclaiming since 1997. I'm the REALLY short gal (4'10") with the bun, usually reading a book if you see me on the street or the San Francisco MUNI.



Reclaiming Pages

Information and Events in the Reclaiming Tradition

The following pages highlight events sponsored by regional Reclaiming-tradition groups. Many of these groups are anchored by Reclaiming Witchcamp teachers and organizers.

While Reclaiming communities vary widely in their focus, style, and ways of organizing, all Reclaiming groups agree on the Principles of Unity (below).

Reclaiming is a community of people working to unify spirit and political action.

Our vision is rooted in the religion and magic of the Goddess — the Immanent Life Force.

We see our work as teaching and making magic — the art of empowering ourselves and each other. In our classes, workshops, and public rituals, we train our voices, bodies, energy, intuition, and minds.

We use the skills we learn to deepen our strength, both as individuals and as community, to voice our concerns about the world in which we live, and to bring to birth a vision of a new culture.

Reclaiming's Principles of Unity

“My law is love unto all beings...” — The Charge of the Goddess

The values of the Reclaiming tradition stem from our understanding that the Earth is alive and all of life is sacred and interconnected. We see the Goddess as immanent in the Earth's cycles of birth, growth, death, decay, and regeneration. Our practice arises from a deep, spiritual commitment to the Earth, to healing, and to the linking of magic with political action.

Each of us embodies the divine. Our ultimate spiritual authority is within, and we need no other person to interpret the sacred to us. We foster the questioning attitude, and honor intellectual, spiritual, and creative freedom.

We are an evolving, dynamic tradition and proudly call ourselves Witches. Honoring both Goddess and God, we work with female and male images of divinity, always remembering that their essence is a mystery which goes beyond form. Our community rituals are participatory and ecstatic, celebrating the cycles of the seasons and our lives, and raising energy for personal, collective, and Earth healing.

We know that everyone can do the life-changing, world-renewing work of magic, the art of changing consciousness at will. We strive to teach and practice in ways that foster personal and collective empowerment, to model shared power, and to open leadership roles to all. We make decisions by consensus, and balance individual autonomy with social responsibility.

Our tradition honors the wild, and calls for service to the Earth and the community. We value peace and practice non-violence, in keeping with the Rede, “Harm none, and do what you will.” We work for all forms of justice: environmental, social, political, racial, gender, and economic. Our feminism includes a radical analysis of power, seeing all systems of oppression as interrelated, rooted in structures of domination and control.

We welcome all genders, all races, all ages and sexual orientations, and all those differences of life situation, background, and ability that increase our diversity. We strive to make our public rituals and events accessible and safe. We try to balance the need to be justly compensated for our labor with our commitment to make our work available to people of all economic levels.

All living beings are worthy of respect. All are supported by the sacred elements of Air, Fire, Water, and Earth. We work to create and sustain communities and cultures that embody our values, that can help to heal the wounds of the Earth and Her peoples, and that can sustain us and nurture future generations.

This statement of core values was developed at the Reclaiming Collective Retreat held the weekend of November 8, 1997.

About Reclaiming



Resources

How does today's Witch-on-the-go find out more about Reclaiming?

The easiest way is to take a class, attend a ritual, or sign up for a retreat or Witchcamp.

Contacts for local communities and Witchcamps can be found on the next two pages. New groups and updated contact information can be found on the Reclaiming website, or in future issues of RQ.

Here are some more resources.

RECLAIMING.ORG

Reclaiming's website (as well as the sibling site ReclaimingQuarterly.org) is a great source of information — everything from history and background to photo-features of our latest organizing, from classes and rituals to samples from our music CDs.

BOOKS

Here are some books by Reclaiming teachers that you can find in bookstores and online.

Starhawk, *The Fifth Sacred Thing*, *The Spiral Dance*, *The Earth Path*, and more

T. Thorn Coyle, *Evolutionary Witchcraft*, *Kissing the Limitless*

Starhawk, Anne Hill, & Diane Baker, *Circle Round: Raising Children in Goddess Traditions*

Starhawk & M. Macha NightMare, *The Pagan Book of Living & Dying*

Luke Hauser, *Direct Action: An Historical Novel*

David Miller, *I Didn't Know God Made Honky-Tonk Communists*

RECORDED MUSIC

Reclaiming offers four CDs of Earth-centered chants and songs — see the back cover of this issue for more information, or visit our website.

Numerous Reclaiming teachers have also recorded CDs — Reclaiming's CD *Witches' Brew* is a sampler of recent Reclaiming-inspired releases.

IF ALL ELSE FAILS — CONTACT RQ

If you can't find what you're looking for — contact RQ! Our experts are standing by to answer your queries, or figure out who can.

Reclaiming Core Classes

These classes have evolved as the “core curricula” of many, but not all, Reclaiming communities.

Elements of Magic is the basic Reclaiming class, and is taught at most Witchcamps as well as in local communities. The other three core classes, as well as many other workshops and classes, have Elements as a prerequisite.

Elements of Magic

Deepen your vision and focus your will, empowering yourself to act in the world. Practice magic by working with the Elements: Earth, Air, Water, Fire, and Spirit. Techniques include drumming, singing, sacred dance, breath work, visualization, sensing, projecting and raising energy, chanting, trance work, creating magical space, spell crafting, and structuring meaningful ritual. We hope to provide a nurturing environment for all participants. Prerequisite: Read the first six chapters of *The Spiral Dance* by Starhawk.



Iron Pentacle

The points of the Iron Pentacle name our birthrights as free beings: Sex, Pride, Self, Power, and Passion. In this class, we will explore these aspects of our own authentic energy. Six weeks. Prerequisite: Elements of Magic or equivalent.

Pentacle of Pearl

We will work with the deep, healing energies of the Pentacle of Pearl, moving through the five points: Love, Law, Wisdom, Liberty, and Knowledge. Six weeks. Prerequisite: Elements of Magic or equivalent.



Rites of Passage

Journeying into the realm of our own dreams and imaginings, we will each become the main character in our own myth. Through storytelling, trance, and dream work, we will draw forth and weave a rich tapestry of images and symbols between the worlds, to empower us in all the worlds. Six weeks. Prerequisite: Elements of Magic or equivalent.

Reclaiming Classes ~ General Information

Classes are offered in many regions (see following pages for local groups). To arrange classes in other areas, contact RQ — quarterly@reclaiming.org

Classes are announced throughout the year. Visit Reclaiming's website, www.reclaiming.org, or see contact info for various regions in the following pages.

Although studying and practicing the Reclaiming tradition can be profoundly healing, Reclaiming classes are not a substitute for medical or psychiatric care. Teachers are not responsible for diagnosing illnesses nor for recommending treatments. Students are responsible for seeking professional help if they need it.



Reclaiming Regional Groups & Contacts

Local groups are anchored by Reclaiming teachers. RQ offers this list of kindred communities as a public service, but is not responsible for these groups. If contact info is outdated or you want us to add a group, or if you have other questions, please contact quarterly@reclaiming.org

Australia

Australian Reclaiming Community
www.australiareclaiming.org.au
ecell@australiareclaiming.org.au
fimariposa@yahoo.com.au, (03) 9384 1082
astrojazz@bigpond.com.au, 0425 757 937

Continental Europe

Reclaiming Réseau Francophone (France)
reclaiming.online.fr

Reclaiming Deutschland (Germany)
www.reclaiming.de

Reclaiming Netherlands
www.reclaiming.nl

Phoenix Witchcamp (Germany)
Deutsch: www.phoenixcamp.eu
www.phoenix-camp.eu/englishhome.html

European Wintercamp (Spain)
www.reclaimingspain.org
m.morgaine@sie.es, (0034) 920 37 25 73
English: www.reclaimingspain.org/CampTextEnglish2009.htm

Britain

British Reclaiming
www.britishreclaiming.org.uk

West Wales
moonroot@uko2.co.uk, (+44) 01267 281414

Cambridge
cradle@globalnet.co.uk

Devon
flamingirondragon@googlemail.com

Hertfordshire
suparnovajuice@gmail.com

Nottingham
jeanniejonathan@aol.com

Derby
mazmc@macunlimited.net

West Sussex
georgia.conway@btopenworld.com

Scotland
reclaimingscotia.wordpress.com
reclaimingscotia@yahoo.co.uk

Buckinghamshire
amhranai.annemarie@gmail.com

Avalon Spring Witchcamp
www.avaloncamp.org.uk
avaloncamp@gmail.com

Sunrise Camp
www.freewebs.com/sunrisecamp
sunrisecamp@yahoo.com

Canada

British Columbia Witchcamp Community
www.bcwitchcamp.ca
witchcampbcinfo@gmail.com
(250) 598-9229

Vancouver Reclaiming Community
www.vancouverreclaiming.org

Alberta Reclaiming Community
ca.groups.yahoo.com/group/albertareclaiming/

Wild Ginger (Ontario)
www.wildgingerwitches.org
wychwood@rogers.com
(519) 439-6252

Fredericton (New Brunswick)
groups.yahoo.com/group/paganrituals/

Montreal Reclaiming
www.cosmic-muse.com/reclaiming

United States

California

San Francisco Bay Area and North Bay
www.reclaiming.org/rituals
www.reclaiming.org/classevents
groups.yahoo.com/group/BAREclaiming
(415) 255-7623

North Bay Reclaiming
www.northbayreclaiming.org
northbayreclaiming@yahoo.com

California Witchcamp
www.californiawitchcamp.org
info@californiawitchcamp.org
(510) 534-9600

Witchlets in the Woods Family Camp
www.witchletsinthewoods.org
info@witchletsinthewoods.org

Indigo Artichoke Heart (Southern California: Valley/West Los Angeles/Laguna Nigel)
groups.yahoo.com/group/IAH-Discussion

Mountain Circle (Truckee/Incline/Reno)
sismhall1@aol.com, (530) 546-4226

Oregon

Portland Reclaiming
www.portlandreclaiming.org
webgeek@portlandreclaiming.org

Free Activist Camp (Oregon/Washington)
www.freewitchcamp.org
freeactivistwitchcamp@gmail.com

Washington

Turning Tide (Seattle)
www.seattlereclaiming.spiderweb.net
groups.yahoo.com/group/SeattleReclaiming/



Reclaiming Regional Groups & Contacts

Local groups are anchored by Reclaiming teachers. RQ offers this list of kindred communities as a public service, but is not responsible for these groups. If contact info is outdated or you want us to add a group, or if you have other questions, please contact quarterly@reclaiming.org

Cascadia Village Camp
home.comcast.net/~cascadiavillagecamp
cascadiavillagecamp@comcast.net
(206) 517-7876

Texas

Tejas Web (Austin)
www.tejasweb.org
groups.yahoo.com/subscribe/tejas_web/

Tejas Web Witchcamp
witchcamp.tejasweb.org
witchcamp@tejasweb.org
(512) 282-5541

Colorado

Colorado Springs
www.reclaimingcoloradosprings.org

Reclaiming Spirit (Denver)
www.reclaimingspirit.org
groups.yahoo.com/group/reclaimingspirit/

Colorado Witchcamp
www.reclaimingspirit.org
morgans_insight@yahoo.com, (303) 618-7702

Midwest

Midwest Witchcamp
dirigoreclaim@earthlink.net
(207) 251-3669

Minnesota

Twin Cities Reclaiming
TwinCitiesReclaiming@yahoogroups.com

Winter Witchcamp
www.winterwitchcamp.org
winterwitchcamp13@yahoo.com

Michigan

Trillium Reclaiming (Southeast Michigan)
groups.yahoo.com/group/trilliumreclaiming

Illinois

Chicago Reclaiming
www.chicagoreclaiming.com
groups.yahoo.com/subscribe/chireclaim/

Weaving Women (Champaign-Urbana)
slvr_moon@ifairtrade.net

Tri-State

Tri-State Reclaiming (OH, KY, WV)
groups.yahoo.com/group/TriStateReclaiming/

Vermont

Vermont Witchcamp
www.vermontwitchcamp.net
information@vermontwitchcamp.net
(802) 436-3451, (603) 894-5871, or
(413) 369-4049

Massachusetts

Boston Area
qb.skraus4828@real-cheap-email.com
(781) 658-2687

New York

Ithaca Reclaiming
www.ithacareclaiming.org soulspirals@soulspirals.net
(607) 227-5852
groups.yahoo.com/group/IthacaReclaimingCollective/

Long Island Reclaiming (Suffolk County)
www.lireclaiming.org
asherahscauldon@msn.com, (631) 751-3477

New York / New Jersey / Pennsylvania

New York / New Jersey / Pennsylvania
NyNjPa-Reclaiming@yahoogroups.com

Delaware Valley

Delaware Valley Reclaiming
(PA, NJ, DE, NY - Greater Philadelphia)
DelValReclaiming@yahoogroups.com

Pennsylvania

Reclaiming3Rivers (Pittsburgh)
reclaiming3rivers@yahoo.com
groups.yahoo.com/group/Reclaiming3River/
(412) 722-9117

Maryland

Baltimore Reclaiming
groups.yahoo.com/group/bmorereclaiming/

Mid-Atlantic

SpiralHeart Witchcamp Community
www.spiralheart.org
info@spiralheart.org, (202) 728-7510
groups.yahoo.com/group/spiralheart/

Otters of the Fae (Central Virginia)
ReclaimingCVA@yahoogroups.com

Dragon's Cauldron (Raleigh/Durham)
www.dragonscauldron.org
groups.yahoo.com/subscribe/RTPReclaiming

Wild Child Camp (Richmond, Virginia)
www.spiralheart.org/events/wildchild/

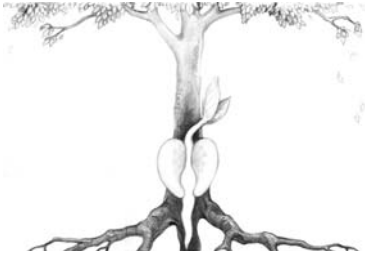
Florida

Earthwater Glade
www.myspace.com/earthwaterglade
www.groups.yahoo.com/group/earthwaterglade

Magnolia Circle (Tallahassee)
www.magnoliacircle.org
DragonWing56@aol.com, (850) 320-0823

Antarctica

Pygoscelis Icepack (Vostok)
www.reclaimingquarterly.org/web/rpww



Reclaiming Witchcamps

A week of Earth-based spirituality and magic

What Is Witchcamp?

Study magic and ritual in a week-long intensive that includes trancework, healing, drumming, dancing, chanting, storytelling, guided visualization, and energy work.

Witchcamp is offered to people at all levels of experience. Newcomers can learn the basic skills of magic and ritual, working with the elements, movement, sound, and the mythological and historical framework of the Goddess tradition. Advanced paths offer the chance to apply the tools of ritual to personal healing and empowerment, or to focus on taking the Craft out into the world, creating public ritual, and healing issues surrounding leadership and power.

Witchcamp is an intensive — seven days of ritual and magic designed for people who are dedicated to powerful spiritual learning experiences and personal growth. This intensive is not a festival. It will expand your unconscious awareness, push your edges, and likely change your life. The intensive is sequestered for the entire seven days. Please plan to attend the entire week.

Witchcamps were first organized for adults. Some camps welcome all ages or adults-plus-teens, and several youth-oriented camps have also emerged. Contact the specific camps for more information (*see next page*).



Witchlets in the Woods offers magic for kids, teens, and adults. Photo: Loki Rainman

What Happens at Witchcamp?

As you might expect, a lot of magic takes place at Witchcamp. But what exactly does it look like?

The heart of Witchcamp is a series of evening rituals, often based around a myth or magical story. These rituals carry participants into the magical, emotional, and social layers of the story, and invite deep personal work.

Morning path offers a choice of weeklong intensive workshops. Paths are a chance for more intimate magical experience, a place to ask questions and learn new skills.

For folks who are new to the Reclaiming tradition, Elements of Magic is a good introduction. For those who have already taken Elements, advanced paths focus on everything from labyrinths to the Iron Pentacle to priestessing skills to Earth activism.

Workshops, talent shows, and even the occasional free moment fill out an amazing magical week between the worlds: Reclaiming Witchcamp.

Reclaiming Camps for Youth, Kids, & Families

Reclaiming Camps are autonomously organized, and each camp decides its own focus and policies. Some camps are adult-only, some for all ages, and some are family- or youth-oriented.

Some of the Witchcamps listed on the next page include teens and/or young folks. These camps offer special youth paths where young campers can learn magical, ecological, and group-process skills. Contact the camp for specifics.

Several Reclaiming camps are specially oriented toward families or youth. Family Camps are all-ages retreats with a special focus on young campers. Teen Earth Magic welcomes young people age 13-25.

See next page for camps welcoming young people.

Contact specific camps to find out their focus, age range, and other details. For info on organizing a camp in your area, contact RQ.

Witchcamps

in the Reclaiming Tradition

Most camps are annual — some are biennial. Dates are approximate, and may change. For current dates, contact the camp or www.Witchcamp.org

Some camps include teens and/or children. They are marked with an asterisk* below.

Many of these camps are camper-organized. If you want to see a Witchcamp happen in your area, one way is to attend an established camp and talk with teachers and organizers.



Winter Witchcamp (Minnesota) • February
www.winterwitchcamp.org, winterwitchcamp13@yahoo.com

European Winter Witchcamp (Spain) • February-March
www.reclaimingspain.org, m.morgaine@sie.es, (0034) 920 37 25 73

Australian Community Witchcamp • Spring
witchcamp.australiareclaiming.org.au, astrojazz@bigpond.com.au

Avalon Spring (England) • April
www.avaloncamp.org.uk, avaloncamp@gmail.com

MidWest • June
dirigoreclaim@earthlink.net, (207) 251-3669

Teen Earth Magic (Northern California)* • June
www.reclaimingquarterly.org/web/tem/, quarterly@reclaiming.org, (415) 255-7623

Wild Ginger Family Camp (Ontario)* • June
www.wildgingerwitches.org, wychwood@rogers.com, (519) 439-6252

California (Mendocino Woodlands) • June-July
www.californiawitchcamp.org, info@californiawitchcamp.org, (510) 534-9600

Cascadia Village Camp (Washington)* • July
home.comcast.net/~cascadiavillagecamp, cascadiavillagecamp@comcast.net, (206) 517-7876

Free Activist Camp (Oregon/Washington)* • July-August
freewitchcamp.org, andrew.paik@verizon.net, (310) 570-3662

SpiralHeart (MidAtlantic) • August
www.spiralheart.org, info@spiralheart.org, (202) 728-7510

Witchlets in the Woods (California)* • August
www.witchletsinthewoods.org, info@witchletsinthewoods.org, (415) 946-7798

Sunrise (United Kingdom)* • August
www.freewebs.com/sunrisecamp, sunrisecamp@yahoo.com

British Columbia • August
bcwitchcamp.ca, witchcampbcinfo@gmail.com, (250) 598-9229

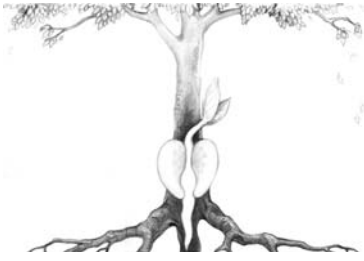
Vermont* • Late August
www.vermontwitchcamp.net, information@vermontwitchcamp.net, (802) 436-3451, (603) 894-5871 or (413) 369-4049

Phoenix (Germany) • September
Deutsch: www.phoenix-camp.eu
English: www.phoenixcamp.eu/englishhome.html

Texas* • October
witchcamp.tejasweb.org, witchcamp@tejasweb.org, (512) 282-5541



Photos from top: Robin Parrott;
Randy Ralston; Otter



The Wheel of the Year

Reclaiming groups celebrate rituals in many locales across North America, Europe, and Australia. Some groups observe the entire Neo-Pagan Wheel of the Year, while others meet less frequently. To find out what's happening in your region (or halfway around the world), visit www.Reclaiming.org — if no internet, call (415) 255-7623.

All Reclaiming events are clean and sober. No alcohol or drugs, please.

Samhain/Halloween

The holiday popularly known as Halloween is the time of year known to Witches as Samhain, when the veil is thin between the worlds of the living and the dead. We gather to remember and honor our ancestors, our Beloved Dead, and all those who have crossed over. As we mourn for those we love who have died this year, we also mourn the losses and pain suffered by the Earth, our Mother. Yet even as we grieve we also remember and honor the sacred cycle of life, death, rebirth and regeneration, celebrating the births of our children born this year, and our own vital connections to the Earth and each other, in which we ground our hope.

Winter Solstice

This is the night of Solstice, the longest night of the year. We watch for the coming of dawn, when the Great Mother again gives birth to the Sun, who is bringer of hope and the promise of summer. This is the stillness behind motion, when time itself stops; the center which is also the circumference of all. We are awake in the night. We turn the Wheel to bring the light. We call the sun from the womb of night.

Brigid/Candlemas/Imbolc

This is the feast of the waxing light. What was born at the Solstice begins to manifest, and we who were midwives to the infant year now see the days grow visibly longer. This is the time of individuation: within the measures of the spiral, we each bring our own light, and become uniquely ourselves. It is the time of initiation, of beginning, when seeds that will later sprout and grow begin to stir from their deep sleep. We meet to share the light of inspiration, which will grow with the growing year.

Spring Equinox

This is the time of Spring's return; the joyful time, the seed time, when life bursts forth from the earth and the chains of Winter are broken. Light and dark are equal: it is a time of balance, when all the elements within us must be brought into a new harmony. Kore, the Dark Maiden, returns from the Land of the Dead, cloaked in the fresh rain, with the sweet scent of desire on her breath. As She dances, despair turns to hope, want to abundance, and we sing:

She changes everything She touches,
And everything She touches, changes

In many locales, children are a special part of this ritual, and a hunt for colored eggs follows.

Beltane/May Day/Int'l Workers' Day

This is the time when sweet desire weds wild delight. The green of the Earth meets the red and black of workers' rights in the greening fields, and we rejoice together under the warm sun. The maypole, the shaft of life, is twined in a spiral web, and all of nature is renewed. We meet in the time of flowering, to dance the dance of life.

Summer Solstice

This is the time of the rose: blossom and thorn, fragrance and blood. Now on the longest day of the year, light triumphs, and yet begins to decline into dark. We set sail across the dark seas of time, searching for the isle of light that is rebirth. We turn the Wheel and share the Sun's fate, for we have planted the seeds of our own changes, and to grow we must accept even the passing of the sun.

Lammas

We stand now between hope and fear, in the time of waiting. In the fields, the grain is ripe but not yet harvested. We have worked hard to bring many things to fruition, but the rewards are not yet certain. Now the Mother becomes the Reaper, the Implacable One who feeds on life that new life may grow. Light diminishes, the days shorten, summer passes. We gather to turn the Wheel, knowing that to harvest we must sacrifice, and warmth and light must pass into Winter.

Fall Equinox

This is the time of harvest, of thanksgiving and joy, of leave-taking and sorrow. Now day and night are equal, in perfect balance, and we give thought to balance and flow within our own lives. The Sun sails West, and we into the dark. Life declines; the season of barrenness is on us, yet we give thanks for that which we have reaped and gathered. We meet to turn the Wheel and weave the cord of life that will sustain us through the dark.

A Note on Terminology

Local communities use different names for some of the sabbats. RQ uses the neutral terms "Equinox" and "Solstice" to honor the fact that these are holidays of the Earth Herself, not of any one culture. We often call the cross-quarters by Celtic names.

Descriptions are adapted from "The Spiral Dance," by Starhawk, ©1989, Harper San Francisco.

Reclaiming Regional News

RQ Archives ~

old RQs on the way

Reclaiming Quarterly celebrates our 100th edition by beginning to re-issue our complete archives, going back to the first Reclaiming Newsletter in Winter 1980-81.

The archives will be re-issued as high-resolution PDF files. You'll be able to see and read every page of the original issues exactly as they appeared — stories, pictures, class and event listings, ads, ink-smudges...

You'll also be able to print entire issues or any pages you want for off-screen reading.

In addition, every ten-issue volume will contain bonus features such as photographs, flyers, introductory and reflective essays, audio recordings, humor and satire, and more.

RQ will place selected highlights on our website. But the sheer quantity of material means most of the archives will be available only on disks.

The entire 100-issue archives, along with many special features, are available by subscription — with a discount for current RQ subscribers. Visit our website for details.

To see highlights and advance features, visit our website — www.reclaimingquarterly.org/archives/



Australian Reclaiming Community

We gathered in September, 2009 at a campsite in northeast Victoria. There were ten of us.

We spent two days talking, planning, writing down our thoughts, ritualing, lighting the flame, calling on the Powers and Elements, mixing our wishes and our desires from the waters of the world into the waters of the Yarra River and grounding our dreams in the cauldron of the land.

We sang our desires, acknowledged and called on the ancestors of the land, and asked for guidance and acceptance. The flame was lit, first from within, then from without, as we danced and stirred the cauldron, joyously beginning to birth an Australian Reclaiming Community.

Around Easter 2010, we gathered again at the same campsite in the Australian countryside. More time was spent poring over the plans, our dreams, and our hopes. We called on the fairies of creativity and craft, making an altar cloth to present to our northern hemisphere brothers and sisters, thus reaching out to the international

Reclaiming community for support in our quest for an Australian Witchcamp.

We are grateful for the seeds planted by Starhawk and Thorn Coyle during their visits to Australia, and for the support and training given to us at Witchcamps by the wider Reclaiming community.

When we felt the birthing of our community was well on its way, we set a timeline to organise an Australian Reclaiming WitchCamp in 2011. Each of us took a part of our visioning with us into the real world to birth our vision of an Australian Reclaiming Community.

While we feel sure that the birthing of an Australian Reclaiming Community is well underway, we ask the international Reclaiming community for your support, mystical protection, and magical sustenance to encourage us while we give birth to the inaugural Australian Reclaiming Witchcamp in 2011. So mote it be! Blessed Be!

By Sandra Lacey, on behalf of Australian Reclaiming Community (ARC)

Seedlings Welcome You!

Greetings from the Seedlings!

We are a newly formed group dedicated to welcoming folks into the Bay Area Reclaiming community.

We welcome any questions, concerns, or ideas from folks around the issues of inclusion and transparency. Contact Tara Bridhe at welcometoreclaiming@gmail.com with your feedback or to find out how to get involved. Welcome!

San Francisco ritual dates are posted at www.reclaiming.org/rituals. For email reminders, contact quarterly@reclaiming.org

Bay Area Class Listings Now Online

Visit www.reclaiming.org ~ RQ welcomes feedback on new listings

Reclaiming Bay Area teachers offer core classes (see page 68) plus courses in spellwork, music and drumming, meditation, permaculture, tarot, astrology, dreamwork, and many other topics.

Classes are offered in San Francisco, East Bay, North Bay, and occasionally the South Bay and Central Valley. Some are held on week-nights, and others as weekend intensives.

Reclaiming teachers often team up with other teachers to bring a variety of approaches to their classes.

If you don't have internet access, and using cafés or libraries is not an option, call RQ, (415) 255-7623, and we'll try to help.

For an up-to-date listing of Bay Area classes, rituals, retreats, workshops, and other events, visit www.reclaiming.org/classevents/

You may also want to join the Bay Area Reclaiming discussion list (BARD). Send an email to sfrpc@yahoo.com to join.

Contacts for other regions can be found at www.reclaiming.org/worldwide

Pagan Workers Vanguard

Pagan Workers Honor Bolshevik Mysteries

The Anarcho-Leninist faction of the Revolutionary Pagan Workers Vanguard provisional proletarian coalition has announced plans to celebrate the sacred rites of the 1917 Russian Revolution.

During a series of nightly rituals devotees will re-enact the revolution, including the decadence of late-imperial Russia, the collapse of Russian armies in World War I, the February Revolt which overthrew the Czar and installed a moderate parliamentary government, the betrayal of the revolution by the Menshevik faction, the October Bolshevik Uprising, and the victorious civil war against the counter-revolutionary White Army.

Novitiates are expected to fast for a week prior to the rites, subsisting on stale rye bread, drinking cheap vodka, and sleeping in water-logged trenches.

On the climactic evening, new pledges will be forced to watch the uncut version of *Doctor Zhivago*, then left to sleep in the snow. In the middle of the night they will be awakened for the storming of the Winter Palace – the glorious moment when Lenin and the Bolsheviks seized revolutionary power and declared the Soviet State.

The initiation ceremony ends with a spiral dance performed in a mock-up of the Kremlin Palace. Vodka shots will be drunk in honor of Bolshevika, the ancient Russian Goddess of effective

continued on page D-132

RPWV Archives at RQ.org

In an exclusive scoop, RQ offers reprints of past editions of the RPWV, along with several other satirical features from our pages!

Visit www.ReclaimingQuarterly.org

Reclaiming Icons to Join Wax Museum

Reclaiming's Spiral Dance, Witchcamp cones of power, and six-hour consensus meetings are about to be immortalized in a new touring exhibit sponsored by Madame Tussaud's Wax Museum.

Madame Tussaud's, long known for honoring the world's most important personages in waxen tableaux, has chosen Reclaiming to represent the rebirth of Goddess spirituality and the tremendous entrepreneurial opportunities that this entails.

The Neo-Pagan exhibit will feature life-like representations of Reclaiming luminaries such as founding co-priestess Sunshine Moonbeam, who will be honored as a Witchcamp teacher, local ritual organizer, and chairperson of the clean-up committee for seventeen consecutive Spiral Dance rituals.

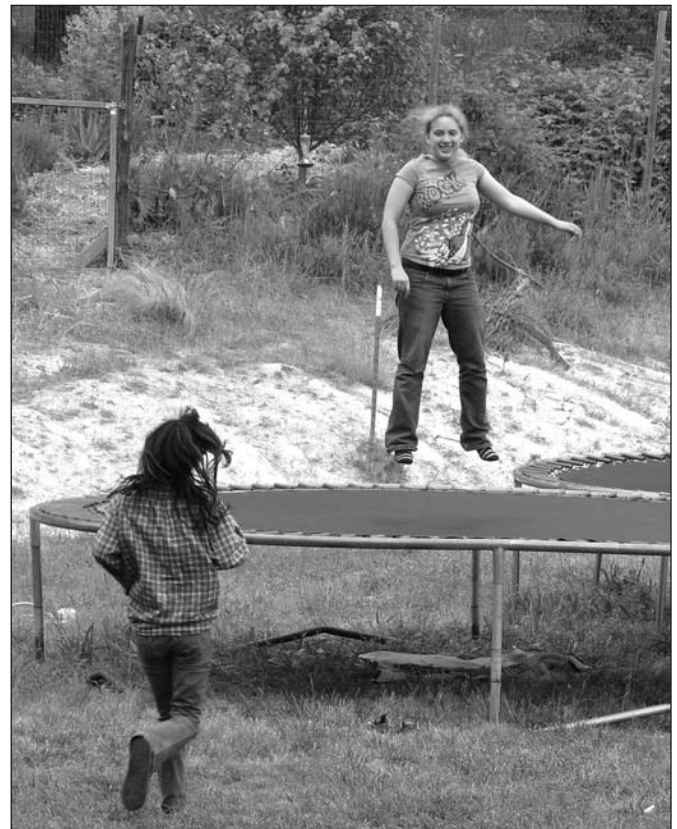
Ms. Moonbeam will be portrayed wielding the legendary triple-bristled broom of Turninengen, which allows the owner to purify the ritual space, cast a magical circle, and sweep up excess glitter at the same time.

Sharing the stage will be Radical Third Path Saint Brigid Faeerie Brujaja initiate Goldenrod

EtherChild, whose shaved head and twin nipple rings will glisten hypnotically in the limelight as he performs a prosperity spell.

Madame Tussaud's prides itself on lifelike presentations, and no depiction of Reclaiming would be complete without a wax replica of an all-day consensus meeting.

Reclaiming activists also asked to be included in the street protest vignette, but museum curators opted instead to create lifelike waxen statues of the anarchist Black Bloc faction.



A mispronounced incantation during a levitation workshop at the Teen Earth Magic retreat left a young adult mentor transfixed in mid-air for over two hours. Here, a teen paramagician races to the scene. Photo by Luke Hauser/RPWV.

ReclaimingQuarterly.

Current RQ website features include:

Sound-samples from Reclaiming Music and Chant CDs

Five-Minute Labyrinth*

Witchcamp Chants Book

Pagan Cluster at the School of the Americas*

Clown Anarchy*

Pagan Pride Parade*

Witches Opposing War*

Garden Lockdown at Reclaim the Commons*

Revolutionary Pagan Workers Vanguard and other humor

Back-issue archives

Links to Reclaiming rituals, classes, and Witchcamps

(* - RQ online photo-features)

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Help Shape the Site

Help us create a site that you want to visit regularly. Send us your feedback and suggestions ~ quarterly@reclaiming.org

A website for all of Reclaiming!

Whether you're a Pagan Cluster activist, a solitary, a Witchcamper, part of a circle or coven in the far-flung Reclaiming network ~ whatever brings you to RQ ~ this is your website!

Stay connected to Reclaiming ~ bookmark this site and visit it often.



The screenshot shows the website's header with the title "Reclaiming QUARTERLY" and the subtitle "The Magazine for Witchcraft and Magical Activism". Below the header is a navigation menu with links for "Reclaiming Home", "RQ Home", "Back issues", "Subscribe", "Advertising", and "Submissions". The main content area is divided into two columns. The left column features a "BREAKING NEWS ..." section with a link to "LATEST ADDITIONS TO OUR SITE" and a sub-section for "Aspecting and Anchoring - reflections and stories on two advanced magical practices". Below this is the "RQ ONLINE FEATURES" section, which lists "Grassroots and Alternative News", "Photo features of the Witches Opposing War, Clown Anarchy, Art and Revolution, and other activist highlights of recent months", "Witchcamp Chantbook", "Pagan Cluster Actions - click here for the latest", and "Revolutionary Pagan Workers Vanguard". A small photograph of a person in a costume is visible next to the "Photo features" link. The right column has a "Welcome to ReclaimingQuarterly.org" section with a link to "Check out recent issues of RQ!" and a small image of the magazine cover. Below this is a paragraph about the site's mission and a "Subscribe or donate now!" section with text explaining that the site is supported by subscriptions and advertising.

OTHER RECLAIMING WEBSITES

Reclaiming.org

One-stop web resource for all of Reclaiming — links to groups across North America and Europe, classes, rituals, Witchcamps, elists, plus articles and information about Reclaiming.

Witchcamp.org

Get information on each of Reclaiming's Witchcamps and family camps. Reclaiming camps are held in over a dozen locations across North America and in Western Europe.

PaganCluster.org

Link up with the ever-evolving group of Reclaiming folks and other Pagans who join together to do magic, direct action, permaculture, protest, and other grassroots activism.

Music from Reclaiming

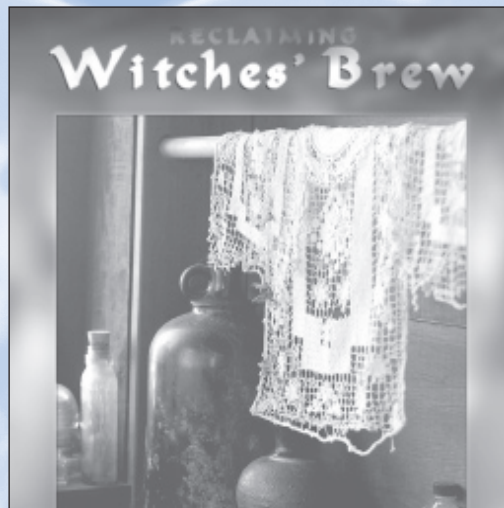
Songs, chants, and meditation music
for rituals, personal practice, and just listening

Our latest CD is *Witches' Brew: Songs and Chants from the Reclaiming Cauldron*, featuring songs by over a dozen Reclaiming teachers and musicians.

Included are chants for rituals and classes, meditation music for personal or class use, and inspirational songs.

Featuring music by:

Evelie Posch • Evergreen Erb
Green & Root • T. Thorn Coyle
Danielle Rosa • David Miller
Skyclad • Suzanne Sterling
Jeffrey Alphonsus Mooney
Beverly Frederick • Brook • Crow



Coming Soon

- Chants for Kids
(fun for everyone)
- Ritual Chants
(a new compilation
of recent chants
from classes and
Witchcamps)

Samples and online ordering at www.ReclaimingQuarterly.org
Mail orders — \$16 per copy to RQ at PO Box 14404, San Francisco CA 94114

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