



# RECLAIMING

QUARTERLY

Witchcraft & Magical Activism

Issue #102  
Mid 2011

# PRINTING TIPS

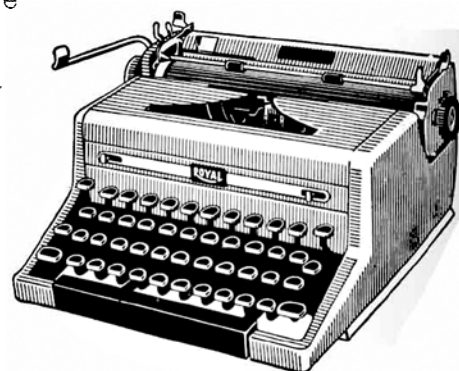
## for the Modern Age

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](mailto:quarterly@reclaiming.org)

# RECLAIMING

QUARTERLY

**Issue 102**

**Mid 2011**

## **Reclaiming**

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San Francisco, CA 94114

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## **Reclaiming Quarterly**

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[www.reclaimingquarterly.org](http://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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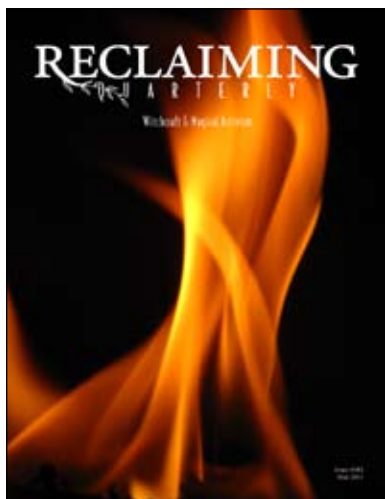
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**COVER PHOTO** by Naeomi Castellano

**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](mailto:quarterly@reclaiming.org)

The following people produced this issue: Arcadia, Luz, George, Natalie, Valerie, Karysa, Naeomi, Aisha

Proffreders: Irisanya, Beth, MUD, Eli, Anthony, Luke, Sunfeather, Calley

Special RQ kisses: Lynx, Lily, Carol, Naeomi, Jonathan, Lothlórien, Lisa, Aimee, Elka, Kat, Rain, John, Jim, Sabrina, Mab, Cerridwen, Kala, Urania, Tia, Macha, Vibra, Starhawk, Rose, Tarin, Evelie, Elfin, Briana, Nolan, Leigh Ann, 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](http://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](http://Reclaiming.org).

Want to know anything else? Contact [quarterly@reclaiming.org](mailto: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](mailto:quarterly@reclaiming.org) or PO Box 14404, San Francisco, CA 94114.

## Advertise ~ Display Advertising

*Prices for grayscale/black-and-white — query for color prices*

1/8 page	(business card)	\$45	<i>Discount for multiple issues.</i>
1/4 page	(5" x 3.5")	\$80	<i>Contact us via email for submissions info and specs. RQ also offers design services.</i>
1/2 page	(5" x 7.25")	\$150	
Full page	(10" x 7.25")	\$275	<i>Contact <a href="mailto:quarterly@reclaiming.org">quarterly@reclaiming.org</a></i>

# To Our Readers

Welcome to the latest edition of *Reclaiming Quarterly* — issue #102, dating back to *Reclaiming Newsletter* in 1980.

Before we go any further, we must correct an important magical error in the last issue. In this very space, we stated that issue #101 was the first since #69 to read the same upside down as right-side up. We went so far as to call readers' attention to the bibliomantic implications of this rare conjuncture.

Well, as alert readers noticed, we missed a number — and a really good one at that. We overlooked issue #88, with a theme section on Reclaiming's history (just about our only theme ever to actually focus on Reclaiming). You can see the issue for yourself by visiting the Archives section of RQ.org.

We offer numerological apologies to friends and fans of 88, and cast an eye forward to issue #111, which at the current rate of publication should appear late in Obama's second term.

## FIRE — AND LOTS OF IT

Our theme this issue is Fire in all its aspects. The section begins on page 26. See page 27 for an introduction.

Our Youth section brings a fresh spirit to the magazine. Youth and young adults are specially invited to submit writing, photos, and artwork to these pages.

Our activism pages bring frontline coverage of the Wisconsin protests and a disabled rights action in Berkeley.

You'll also find feature articles and a photo essay by Michael Starkman. The issue rounds out with Reclaiming news and info, including a sampling of Michael Rauner's Spiral Dance photos.

Ah, yes — the Vanguard, as always, brings up the rear — see announcement to right.

## WHY SUBSCRIBE IF IT'S FREE?

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 looks to our readers for crucial support — equipment, internet costs, travel to events and gatherings, and office expenses.

Almost all of the work on RQ is volunteer. But we need your support for equipment, software, website hosting, and many other aspects of our work.

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.

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



## Revolutionary Pagan Workers Vanguard

Yes — contained on page 84 of this issue of *Reclaiming Quarterly* is the latest edition of the RPWV — issue #35 of this crucial compendium of Alchemico-Leninist analysis, theory, and muckraking.

For 35 issues of RQ, the RPWV has upheld the sacred tenets of magical materialism as the final page of the magazine. It's still there — the voice of the Pagan proletariat!

## FEATURED IN THIS ISSUE (SEE PAGE 84)

- Illegal Brigid Pledge Coaching Raises Furor
- Dandelion Gathering Weighs Revisions to Principles of Unity — including eliminating language suggesting that Australian Witches are standing on their heads
- Photo — the Right Ancient Order of the Bristling Broom sweeps up after PaganFest

## WANT MORE OF THE VANGUARD?

You can read our collected works — the back issues of the RPWV, exactly as they appeared in RQ beginning in the late 1990s. Read all the news at:  
[www.ReclaimingQuarterly.org/archives/](http://www.ReclaimingQuarterly.org/archives/)

# 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](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://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

## FILM / VIDEO / TELEVISION

*Black Swan*. A psychotic yet beautiful exploration of the professional ballet. The glam dance world opens up to reveal the poignant and devastating wretchedness of competition, sexuality, and the shadow self.

*Buitiful*, written and directed by Mexican director Gonzalez-Inarritu. An exquisitely raw dive into the eroding life of a man confronted by multiple responsibilities and diminishing capacity. Not for the faint-of-heart.

*My Girlfriend's Boyfriend*. Heartfelt romance combined with a clever plot. Watch til the very end for a great twist that brings it all together.



## MUSIC / AUDIO

*Lungs* by Florence + the Machine. One of the best albums of the year. Flo belts it out, tender yet strong, to driving rhythms and pretty harp arpeggios. Indie rock has never been this magical.

*Treats* by Sleigh Bells. Aggressive noise pop that gets the adrenaline pumping. Mad beats, deadpan vocals, and wicked guitar make this album perfectly danceable and interesting enough for repeat listens.

*Lunacy* by Lunacy. The first Lunacy recording from 1990 is now available as a CD, including all the lyrics as a CD-ROM. Lunacy's second album, *Hand of Desire* (1992), will be available soon. Visit [lunacymusic.blogspot.com](http://lunacymusic.blogspot.com) for ordering information.

*more reviews on next page*

## WITCH HOUSE – CHILL DOWNTempo ELECTRONICA

Witches finally hit the mainstream of pop music! Witch House, Ghost Drone, Spectral Pop, Were-House, and more. It's occult-oriented, downtempo music that has been compared to Chillwave (always a favorite here at RQ proofing sessions).

Sounds are mixed and remixed. Many bands mix genders as well.

Sadly, reviews are mixed, too. A common complaint is that the music sounds like someone just got a new computer. Find out for yourself by visiting the RQ#102 webpage, where you'll find links to online samples:

[www.ReclaimingQuarterly.org/102/](http://www.ReclaimingQuarterly.org/102/)

You can also google some of these bands, or the genres above:

Mater Suspira Vision

oOoOO

Modern Witch

tearist

White Ring

twYIY<ght>ZoNe

*image by Naeomi Castellano*





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

## Five Classic 1990s Hip-Hop Albums

1. Brand Nubian *Everything is Everything*
2. Wyclef Jean *The Carnival*
3. Jungle Brothers *Done by the Forces of Nature*
4. Lauryn Hill *Miseducation*
5. Tribe Called Quest *Low End Theory*

*Histories* by Herodotus (audiobook). Chatty Mediterranean history plus travelogue from the well-traveled Herodotus, circa 400 BCE. Legend says Herodotus read his work aloud in the marketplace. Here's a chance to listen in.

*In These Arms: A Song for All Beings* by Jennifer Berezan and Friends. In these times of great sorrow and great fear, works of great beauty soothe the soul. This album, one long chant, is a life saver.

## BOOKS / WRITING

*Belong to Me* by Marisa de los Santos. Pure poetic narrative mixed with an



intimate understanding of the vagaries of the human psyche. Dialogue imbues magical insights and vulnerability of characters living into their own wildness. Highly satisfying.

*American Gods* by Neil Gaiman. Gaiman is always an amazing storyteller, and he's at the top of his intricate magic-noir game in this road trip through deity and myth in modern-day America.

*Sex and Eroticism in Mesopotamian Literature* by Dr. Gwendolyn Leick. If you are interested in Inanna, Dumuzi, sacred prostitution, gender roles and the importance of LGBTI folk in Ancient Mesopotamia, this book will be illuminating.

*Honeybee Democracy* by Thomas D. Seely. A fascinating story of how honeybees produce new colonies by communicating and working together. Honeybees have much to teach us about collective wisdom and effective group decision-making.

*The Sorcerer of Sainte Felice* by Ann Finnin. Page-turner for ceremonial magick fans chronicles efforts by 15-year-old apprentice Michael to avoid burning at the stake. Alchemy, angels, intense edgy fun.

*Phyllida and the Brotherhood of Philander* by Ann Herenden. A fun polyamorous bisexual Regency romance novel for those of us with that vice.

*more reviews on next page*

## 25 Years Ago: a Vintage Reclaiming Newsletter

### Reclaiming Newsletter, Issue No. 22 - Spring 1986

*Hand-lettered caption on tarot card reads: "Now if you'll all just look down here, I'll turn this stick into a white rabbit."*

Feature articles included:

- "Energy Follows Intention," by Cybele
- "Ethics: Dealing with Power Over," by Robin K
- "Prairie Faeries," by Sabra Ravensbeak
- "Hannah's Household Hints," by Hannah Clancy

Advertisers included San Francisco magic shop Tools of Magic, as well as Lomi Bodywork, musician Charlie Murphy, and *The Vigil*, "A Graphic Journal of Wiccaen and Earth Religions" from Omaha, Nebraska.

Classes included Elements of Magic and Ritual as a Tool for Freedom.

Reclaiming Newsletter No. 22 was produced by the RQ production cell's distant ancestors, whom we honor here: Leslie, Rick, Robin, Vibra, Rose, and Roy.



RQ Archives — samples now online at [www.reclaimingquarterly.org/archives/](http://www.reclaimingquarterly.org/archives/)

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

*Write Your Own Egyptian Hieroglyphics* by Angela McDonald. Hieroglyphics are partly pictograms and partly alphabetical script. Learn to read and write your name, greetings, and useful phrases for when you find yourself trance-journeying to ancient Egypt.

*Love In Abundance: A Counselor's Advice on Open Relationships* by Kathy Labriola. Exploring alternative relationships? Here are practical ideas on the complex web of negotiations, agreements, pitfalls, and rewards of polygamy. For individuals, couples, or groups.

## FAVORITE UN RESOLUTIONS

*The UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*. Adopted by the United Nations in 2007 and endorsed by the United States in 2010, this document teaches us right relationship with our Indigenous neighbors.

**RQ welcomes reviews!** It doesn't need to be "pagan," and it doesn't need to be "art." If it's exciting you, let us know about it. Send title plus 25 words to [quarterly@reclaiming.org](mailto:quarterly@reclaiming.org)

**Contributors:** Zay, Arcadia, Luz, George, JoHanna, Teri, Kate, Jo, Natalie

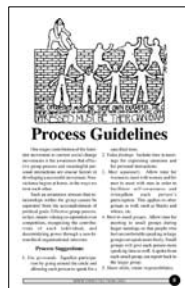
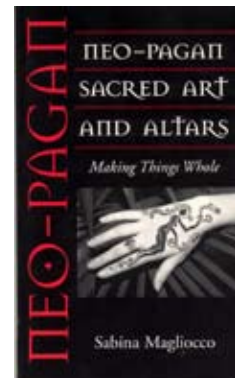
## Neo-Pagan Sacred Art and Altars: Making Things Whole

by *Sabina Magliocco*

With grace and tact, anthropologist Sabina Magliocco's short book provides an intelligent introduction to the material culture of neo-pagans. Each sentence gives the reader keys to better understanding the history and social context of not just pagan art, but paganism in general.

Lovingly and meticulously researched, Magliocco's book combines her knowledge of modern paganism with anecdotal experience. The result is a perfectly distilled anthropological work that tempers readability with intellectual rigor — and a gorgeous series of photographs for good measure. For those with a keen interest in art, folklore, history, or spirituality in general, this book is a gem not to be missed.

*Reviewed by Arcadia*

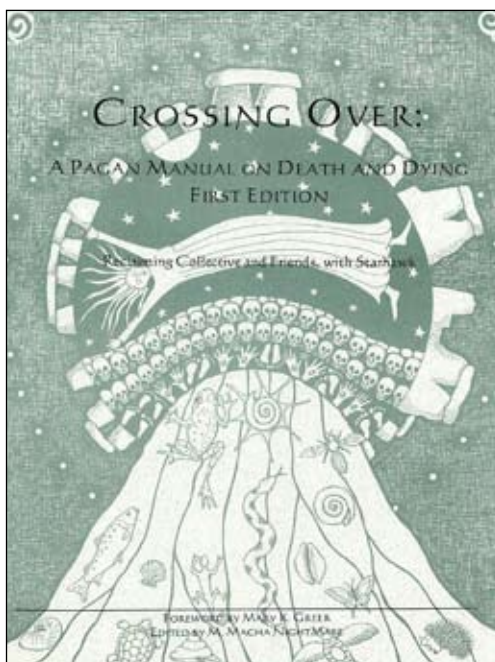


## Consensus & Feminist Process

*Free download at RQ.org*

This 16-page handbook is distilled from direct action handbooks. Sections cover nonviolence in action and in our relationships, consensus and group process, affinity groups, working amid diversity, and confronting oppression.

Free download: [www.ReclaimingQuarterly.org/web/handbook/](http://www.ReclaimingQuarterly.org/web/handbook/)



## Reclaiming classic fetches top dollar online

Dear RQ,

Recently I searched for *Crossing Over* on ABEbooks.com.

(*Crossing Over* was the prototype, self-published by Reclaiming, of the book that was eventually published by HarperSanFrancisco as *The Pagan Book of Living and Dying*, co-authored by M. Macha NightMare and Starhawk. — RQ)

ABEbooks lists a single copy available — for \$140! Yes, that's one hundred forty dollars.

So if you happen to have bought a copy the year that came out, you may wish to hang onto it. *Crossing Over: A Pagan Manual on Death and Dying* was published in 1996, and *TPBOL&D* in 1997. In 2010 the latter book was translated and published in Poland.

Tickled,

Macha

*If you didn't buy a copy back in '96, you'll find one in Reclaiming's archives, conveniently located on the RQ website: [www.reclaimingquarterly.org/archives/](http://www.reclaimingquarterly.org/archives/)*



# Youth

## WORDS OF MY ANCESTORS' WISDOM

*text and images by Carly Pruett*

I have been reading tarot for the past six years and I have really loved reading tarot and have felt very connected with the cards. But this Fall I took a one night rune workshop.

I had never used runes before that point, but as the class went on I felt a very deep, age-old connection with the runes, even stronger than the connection I have with tarot. I felt a profound need to pursue this. I have viking ancestry, so the runes are in my blood.

I have a very strong relationship with my ancestors and I honor and worship them at a local cemetery deep in the forest near my house.



Recently some trees were being cleared at the cemetery including several very old cedar trees.

I left my offerings and salvaged a branch and took it home. I dried it by the fire and cut it into 3/4-inch rounds then peeled them and sanded them and painted them in a snowy winter storm while the power was out, just as my ancestors would have done.

Because of the deep wisdom of the powerful tree from the cemetery, the runes speak words of my ancestors' wisdom.



# Youth

## Comparison

---

Simplified to an out of place hair  
Like wry bread she smiles  
Eyebrows set to disconcert  
Teeth sing, jaws grind  
Majestic objective  
Carefree worry  
Defend my madame  
From adolescent hair pins,  
Light that rams in all the wrong places  
Brown eyes are not similar  
Brown hair is not related  
Brown skin,  
She has white.  
But when the clock strikes three  
Mice crawl out  
Tongues loll in  
Shoulders back now  
To hide the misery of wealth  
Comparison, if you will  
These two fine ladies on a stormy  
day  
Forget not, the turquoise necklace  
That covers skin of metal  
Lips of crimson, chin of corners  
Blue against brown  
White against white  
Who's to say which is to be  
More aesthetically pleasing  
When all I see is slave  
And owner  
Love and hate  
Compassion and remorse  
A whip shatters bones like glass

A scream claws at ears, digging in  
Like a wound that will remain  
Bleeding, open  
Termites gnaw for wood  
And this is what happens when brown lies still on the dirt  
She fades.  
Tilted face shows no misery,  
Cornered eyes search,  
In the distance, they wait  
For a photographer to take a shot  
So for one second they can pretend  
Nothing is real.  
But we all wake up sometime,  
With the flash, eyes open  
I did what I could.

*by Maya Litauer*



*Artwork by Monieka • Photo by RQ.*

# Youth

Your knees ripped out from under you,  
Shaking convulsing trembling crumbling,  
Your breath heaves barely tearing through,  
Your collapsed closed choking lungs.  
Sifting waters turning the rolling tides,  
Of seventy-five percent of you,  
Pouring down, crushing drowning in large sighs,  
A harsh cleansing of the undeserving slums.  
Beaten, broken and battered you lie,  
A dark chasm of your heart cracked,  
Now leaking the poison kept secret inside,  
Seeping into the rest of you from toes to gums.  
"How could I let it escape?!" you scream,  
Too late the greed has infected and begun to kill,  
You wonder, is this the American dream?  
As you lay quietly after the quake.

— *by Hilary*



*Photo by Amy Breeds*

# Youth

## Doctor Help Me Sleep...

*by Natalie Mogg*

He says Doctor help me sleep, because when I close my eyes, all I can see is the wallpaper. My breath won't look me in the eye and my tongue is bone-dry dead against my gritty teeth.

He is hoping for something closer to the horse tranquilizer end of things than she is likely to prescribe (judging by the soft weather-worn fabric look around her brown eyes and the smell of sand dollars clinging to her office).

The doctor steeples her fingers with the kind of fatalism someone else might use to build a house. She is the perpetual stranger. People are mere scenery, props for positioning around the stage of her mind. She draws in everything she sees, pastes it on the insides of her eyelids, makes it a part of herself.

Most people, when they meet her, begin to believe in magic. She has harbored a tooth for the forbidden since her first day (it still attracts her tongue to it like an open sore). A shrine to warm sweet darkness, an altar that she cradles always in her mouth- It's the only thing keeping her here. In the morning, she turns the key in the door and says, "This is freedom."

Most people, when they meet her, begin to lose faith in words. She pulls out a pad of paper and writes: Just like swimming will help you to breathe, music will teach you silence.

Go wash yourself in the rushing Nile  
(Forget that you are sick)

go cleanse yourself in the muddy Nile.

(or even better, rejoice in your decaying limbs)

You are not ill  
only dying  
so make your wanting  
an act of becoming  
Swim.

Satisfied with her hand-scrawled message, she leaves.

The patient takes the slip of paper, thin and yellow, crinkling to the sound of autumn, and steps outside.

The Nile is pouring down from the sky.

The paper dissolves.

He supines his eyes and lays down on the unclean sidewalk and fills his bone-cavities with the contagious rushing and catches hypothermia and sleeps.



*Witchwear by Athena Knowles. Photo by RQ.*



# Arnieville

## and the Fight for Disability Rights

*by Marg Hall*

*photos by Arnieville organizers*

There's no mistaking it: I'm getting yelled at as I ride my bike across two lanes of traffic. Bob watches and wildly gestures, expressing his disapproval of my maneuver. He's deaf, so his "yelling" is non-verbal. This is my introduction to Arnieville.

It is the summer of 2010, and a small group of disability rights activists, their caregivers and allies, have chosen my neighborhood to set up a disabled rights protest. They've erected tents, a porta-potty, banners, literature tables, signs, and have food to share. A small group of hardy souls are camped out in the public median strip on a very busy street in South Berkeley.

"Our Homes, Not Nursing Homes" is what the sign says. I think to myself, "This could be interesting!" Parking my bike, I walk up to the table where several women my age, in scooters and wheelchairs, are welcoming the public. I know about nursing homes, and how dreadful, even life threatening, they can be. I helped take care of my mother-in-law who resided in a number of these homes. But I'm not so familiar with the home care safety

net, threatened by state budget cuts that seem to motivate this camp out.

One of the women explains that IHSS (In Home Support Services) is a state-run program that keeps poor and disabled persons in their homes and communities. It provides basic assistance to individuals unable to perform self-care activities in their homes. As disabilities vary, the number of hours per month allotted to each individual to hire an attendant depends on the level of need.



The proposed cuts would destabilize people's fragile ability to survive independently. The disabled, many of whom are still quite young, will be forced to leave their homes and communities and become imprisoned in nursing homes.

Some will resist and join the many disabled homeless on the streets. Others will stay at home with less care and increased suffering. Preventable health problems can quickly escalate because of inattention, poor nutrition or hygiene, leading to medical crises and emergency room visits. No doubt some will die. Repeated cuts to these safety nets are not only cruel but costly, as emergency rooms and nursing homes are comparatively expensive options.

To protest this threat, Jean explains to me, organizers decided to take inspiration from the tent cities named "Hoovervilles" which sprang up during the Great Depression of the 1930s. They call this encampment "Arnieville," named for then-Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger, presided over several years of budget cuts during our own Great Recession.

Jean explains to me the nature of her disability. She has been disabled for many years as a result of an occupational injury (pesticide exposure). She suffers with chronic pain and mobility

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## DISABILITY RIGHTS

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limitations. I volunteer the information that I too am disabled. It surprises me how easily I utter these words to a complete stranger: "I have an invisible disability." This is a first for me. I feel a little like I'm coming out.

I explain I'm in a hurry to get back to my coven for a meeting, but will return. One of the others, Iris, with flowing grey hair and travelling on a scooter, tells me she's a Witch, too. Well, I'm definitely coming back to visit these women!

Later that day, I return with a large banner to hang up at the camp, and decide to join in their protest, which quickly becomes my protest.

Even though at this point in my life I don't need to rely upon In Home Support Services or the other state safety net programs, I know that these are important lifelines. Unless we're rich, any of us at any time could need help. For the most part, all of us are only temporarily "able bodied," and once disabled, it's a downward spiral. One major illness or disability can push us out over the abyss.

For seven years I have been coming to terms with huge personal changes in my health and the growing realization that I was disabled. I am no

longer able to work, rarely able to socialize or travel, struggled with isolation and felt growing anger about the prejudice and social stigmatization I felt. My disability is not apparent. There are good days and bad days. (I have chronic pain and environmental injury).

I needed to connect with the disabled community, but didn't know how.

How lucky I am! Almost immediately I recognized that these folks with disabilities, these street activists, are my people. I need their help, and think I can help them, too. Every day I stop by, if only for a few hours. Neighbors bring food, supplies, and equipment. Others donate money and stop to lend a hand. Drivers honk their horns in support. Homeless people, many with disabilities, find a safe home at our encampment. Word spreads. More folk with disabilities stop by to share food, visit, attend workshops, network for support, and strategize on how to fight back. Sign-up sheets multiply, a Facebook page is created, and public



space is transformed into an open-air center of organizing.

We are a quirky bunch — everyone has both special needs and valuable talents. Sheela, who is blind, is also a Pagan with inner vision and is a great singer. The homeless men, attuned to night threats, stand guard. We ask Ramona, whose first language is ASL (American Sign Language), to emcee one of our rallies. Those of us with chronic mental and physical conditions disappear and return seamlessly, depending on what kind of day we're having. The crips need lots of space for their chairs, and when a messenger is needed, they can move really fast!

It's all so chaotic yet somehow it works. I no longer feel so out of place with my own special needs. No elaborate explanation is necessary — they get it. I feel understood, welcomed, valued. My heart expands and I feel more alive than I've felt in a long time. It is nothing less than magical. The change within me is thrilling, but the work of political change is unfinished and daunting. The budget axe still hangs over our heads.

After a month (we were now officially the longest disability rights

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## DISABILITY RIGHTS

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protest in US history), we decided to change tactics. Our last day at Arnieville we held a closing ritual of sorts — not explicitly pagan but pretty close.

The group then traveled to Sacramento, where the budget was being debated and our fate decided. In one protest, we blocked the major intersection outside the State Capitol Building by setting up tents and using wheelchairs and gurneys. We donned hospital gowns. These actions were designed to demonstrate the effects of budget cuts on our lives. Twenty-two of us were arrested. The day before the budget passed, we returned and more of us were arrested at a sit-in inside the Capitol Building.

In 2010, we succeeded in holding back the worst of the cuts, although there were some. What appears to others to be relatively small cuts can have devastating impact on the poor and disabled. This is especially true since we're starting to feel the cumulative effect of past cuts. In 2011, the fight will be even harder as state budgets all around the country are in crisis because of the Great Recession. The situation in California is dire. The only way out, unless we are to suffer

death from a thousand cuts, is to tax the rich. But the political will is weak for this.

California has a new governor, Jerry Brown. The Arnieville protest encampment is no longer, but the organization responsible for its creation, CUIDO, lives on. CUIDO stands for Communities United in Defense of Olmstead. Olmstead was a court case decision by the US Supreme Court in 1999 that outlawed the systematic segregation of our people into nursing homes and institutions. The historical ableist approach has been to get the crips out of sight so everyone else can feel better: to remove us from our homes and communities. This practice is offensive to the disabled. It is discrimination. That's why IHSS (In Home Support Services) is essential to independent living, and to the protection of our civil rights.



We will use our bodies to defend these rights. We'll do whatever it takes! We will stand up, roll forward, sit in, and lie down. We will go into the streets, around barricades, cross thresholds and into buildings where the rich and powerful gather and speak directly, proudly, and if needed, rudely, this simple truth: our lives are precious. The greed and enormous wealth of the rich in the midst of such widespread pain is disgusting. We demand justice and will need allies. There's not much time to lose, as these cuts are deadly and lives are at stake.

Martin Luther King Jr. warned us that a nation that spends more on its military than on programs to help people, approached spiritual death. We refuse to participate in spiritual death. We will fight for our lives and for our souls. Most likely wherever you live, this fight is happening. Join us.

*Marg Hall is a Bay Area Reclaiming Witch, a political activist, and is also a person living with an invisible disability.*

*For more information on CUIDO, visit [cuido.org](http://cuido.org)*



# RITUAL IN PLACES OF POWER

by **Rebecca Heartwell**

*In October 2010, Rebecca Heartwell spoke at a session of Parliament on behalf of her local transition initiative. This is her account.*

Today I feel I have arrived. Today I pierced through a barrier that traversed all my barriers of gender, class, and invisible disabilities. Today I went into the Houses of Parliament and spoke up.

Last time I went there was on the anniversary of the suffragettes entering parliament. We sang and chanted but had to remain outside. Doing nothing more than that, I and many others were forcibly grappled and threatened.

Today I went inside, but more inside than I imagined. I found parts of me that I'd left behind along with my ancestors.

I went there as a member of my local transition initiative. I arrived an hour before my scheduled time to seek a place to do ritual: a ritual to help me be in my power and dissolve barriers to a "power-with" process for those within and outside of the walls.

The "right" place came quickly, a central place with four main corridors, over which lay plaques and tributes to Scotland, England, Ireland and Wales.

Renewed by Starhawk's "Holding the Vision" course a couple of weeks before, I anchored myself and cast a circle around the HOP whilst holding my vision on the central axis. North... Responsibility, East... Communication,

I silently asked for their support with my heart, eyes, and mind. They became Guardians of the Directions.

I stated my intentions and sang for peace and justice. All seemed to be still around me and to exhale and inhale with

me. I asked for the Guardians to hold the circle for the next few hours with Time as my ally to facilitate the main body of the ritual in the work I needed to do. In the next few hours I was warmly welcomed by all of the officials I encountered.

I continued my spirals of energy work in the House of Lords and House of Commons. I talked with some of them about their work and was shown jewels they carry on uniforms worth £70,000.

In the midst of it all there was some confusion over where my debate was to be held. One of the Sargeant in Arms said my hosting MP, who would know the answer, was in session in the Commons. I thought I'd have to wait until he finished.

But the Sargeant in Arms affirmed and reconnected me to my power as he said, "You have every right to 'Green Card' him" — that is, get

him to come out and speak to me.

Finally the time came for my session, "Food Security after Peak Oil." The main speakers were from Friends of the Earth (FOE), a scientist from a GM research lab, along with the hosting MP.

The respondents (including myself) were ordered and listed, and though I

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South... Power, West... Connection.

Above me, in the centre, was an amazing mandala web. I was able to utilise the points as dynamic accumulators to draw the sunlight energy and fertilise the seeds in the good dark earth under my feet. As I lifted my arm to spin and draw the circle I noticed the guards. I felt them register me and

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## RITUAL

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wanted to go first to get it done with, the Goddess had other plans. I was put towards the end of the thirteen speakers.

I am not an academic and can confess to getting lost at times in the commons debate as I waited my turn to speak. I wondered whether any words would come out of my mouth by the time they got to me.

I found myself hoping that others would say what I needed to say so I wouldn't have to speak. I kept repeating the messages from Starhawk and the Sergeant in Arms — that I had a right to take my place, a right to speak.

Suddenly it was my turn. As a member of my local transition initiative, I agreed that oil has peaked or will do in the next few years. I also said that it could be possible to feed ourselves by 2050 in a sustainable way, but only if we act now. We all need to be part of the so-



lution and reconnect to the Earth.

How do we do that? I talked about our various initiatives: growing food behind a library, health centre, community centre, and nursery school, as well as growing forest gardens and community orchards in an urban London borough.

I described how we have started up a Community-Supported Agriculture Program (CSA), working with a farm just fifteen minutes by train to meet food needs of our community. I stressed that the need to be

sustainable was the need to “get local” and build resilience with a capacity to respond quickly, to foster diversity, and rebuild community.

The immediate response from the speakers, particularly FOE, after the session closed was overwhelmingly positive...

“Thank you... excellent... very important... vital... we need to replicate what you're doing... need to find out exactly what you're doing, how you're doing it and provide funding and support...etc.” People came up to me requesting details and I was congratulated again by the speakers.

Afterward, I returned to my ritual space, going up to the literal guardians of the directions, thanking them and shaking their hands. I anchored again in the central axis point and with the high energy of my whole being sent the central vision to spiral around our Earth and the solar system.

Finally I closed the circle. I rang my parents as I left and trusted that my ancestors were on the line too.

*Rebecca Heartwell, is an urban community gardener and earth activist. She initiates community building events involving seasonal earth-based rituals, spirals of resilience and off grid camping. She lives in a housing co-op community in London.*

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**Nick Venegoni** M.A.

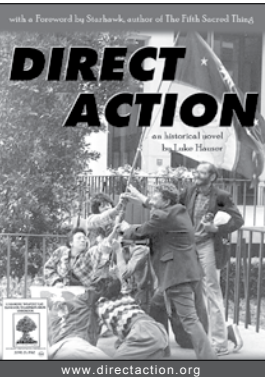
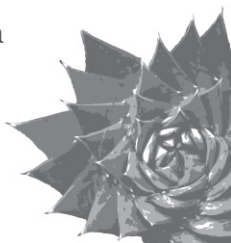
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# Wisconsin Unions defend workers' rights

In one of the largest direct actions since Seattle 1999, tens of thousands of demonstrators took over the streets and occupied the state capitol in Madison in February.

Protesters opposed a sweeping anti-union measure nearing passage in the state legislature and supported by the governor.

The bill was delayed by a technicality that involved opposition senators going underground to deny a quorum. The tactic was eventually defeated by a parliamentary maneuver — hardly a banner day for democracy on any count.

Many schools in Wisconsin closed as teachers joined the protests. Governor Walker responded by threatening to call in the National Guard.

Unions from across the country poured resources into Wisconsin while facing similar struggles in a number of other states trying to solve budget crises by de-unioning public services.

“Plans are being put into place to silence workers, lower their wages, cut their benefits and increase the likelihood that they will suffer injuries and fatalities at work,” said Gerald McEntee, president of the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees, which has 1.6 million members. “It is happening at a breakneck pace.”

The Wisconsin legislation would remove workers' rights, recognized since 1959, to negotiate collectively over pensions and health insurance, both of which are being cut. They will

be allowed to continue bargaining over wages.

To follow this story, contact Wisconsin public sector unions, or contact the First Unitarian Society of Madison, which was involved in the capitol protests (see next page).

*Quote from UK Guardian reports.*

*Coverage of Wisconsin protests continues on next page.*

**Madison, Wisconsin  
— February 2011**

**Photos by Melissa Ryan**





# Madison UUs protest for workers' rights

**By Donald E. Skinner**

*This article was written in March 2011, just after the Wisconsin governor signed the contested legislation.*

Unitarian Universalists are among the thousands of people deeply involved in protests against an effort in Wisconsin to do away with collective bargaining rights for nearly all of the state's public employees.

Members of the First Unitarian Society of Madison have been at the Capitol every day since the protests began on February 12.

"We're up to our eyeballs in this controversy," said the Rev. Michael A. Schuler, parish minister at First Unitarian. This is very much of a piece

**photos by Melissa Ryan**

with our own Unitarian Universalist purposes and principles."

He said many members of his congregation have been at the capitol daily and continue to be involved, even after Governor Scott Walker officially signed away collective bargaining rights on March 11 as part of a plan to reduce a budget deficit. Several weeks ago, when it appeared that protesters might be arrested, Schuler himself joined a small clergy group that planned to offer themselves for arrest to ensure a peaceful protest. "Fortunately it didn't come to that," he said.

The issue of workers' rights is personal for many members of the congregation, he noted. "We have a lot of public employees in the congregation — teachers, university personnel, a police officer." Now that the bill has

been signed by the governor, the goal has shifted, he said, from preventing its passage to how to recover worker rights. "We have been supporting besieged workers in their struggle to retain collective bargaining rights. Now we move on to how to restore these rights. We will continue to be involved."

First Unitarian member Abigail Swetz has been at the capitol most days since the first week. "At first I went because I was scared and shocked and needed to do something, and it felt good to be together with other struggling people," she said. "And now (after the bill signing) I feel sad and bewildered, so I go to find my community so I can help decide what to do next. When you've been attacked, community is the only place to turn. We are becoming a movement. And I am a part of it."

She said that in the past month she has often recalled a sermon by the Rev. Marlin Lavanhar of All Souls Unitarian Church in Tulsa, Oklahoma, where she formerly attended church. "He referenced a Native American tribe's tradition of healing the sick by placing them at the center of the community so everyone could tend to them. In Wisconsin we've placed democracy

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**Madison, Wisconsin  
— February 2011**

**Photos by Melissa Ryan**



## Wisconsin UUs

*continued from preceding page*

in the middle of our community, and now we are all participating in healing it.”

She said that since protests began in Wisconsin there have always been many UUs present. “There are so many of us out here, carrying signs, leading chants and songs, carrying our Standing on the Side of Love banner, that I can’t count them all. We’re everywhere.”

Swetz is a teacher. Her wife, Lauri

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## Wisconsin UUs

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Schwartz, is a police officer, so both could eventually be affected by the loss of bargaining rights, even though police are not affected by the new legislation. In a post to the UUs' Standing on the Side of Love website in late February, she wrote, "Last week, my wife worked a 12-hour shift, took off her weapon, put on her union shirt, and marched for another 2 hours around and inside the capitol. She did that two days in a row. This entire protest is a labor of love, and if her actions don't prove that, I don't know what will."

Beryl Aschenberg is director of religious education at the First Unitarian Society of Milwaukee where she said the governor's actions and the protests have affected every aspect of congregational life. Many members have participated in rallies against the governor's move. In addition, State Sen. Chris Larson, one of 14 Democratic senators who left the state in late February for three weeks in an attempt to block approval of the measure by the Senate, is a member of the congregation.

"In the past weeks all of the staff's pastoral radars have been sounding alarms in every interaction we have with members," said Aschenberg. "The prevalent feelings are of frustration, anger, powerlessness, deep sadness, and disbelief, to name a few. The mood permeates all of our meetings, as well as coffee hour after each of our three services."

Aschenberg has also talked about the worker issue in Children's Chapel. "At least a third of [the children] had been to Madison to protest with their families." A room was also set aside after each worship service for those who wanted to speak with others about events in Madison.

On February 27 the Rev. Drew Kennedy, senior minister at the Milwaukee congregation, scrapped his planned sermon and addressed the issue of workers' rights. He told his congregation that, to him, the issue is how to go about restoring morality. "We cannot . . . let our democracy continue to be transformed into a morally bankrupt plutocracy . . . while the middle class and poor work two and three jobs, suffer through bankruptcies, double up with their families and friends. We need to restore the moral center of the universe in this country."



Kennedy said he maintained contact with Sen. Larson's family during the weeks the senators were out of the state, offering any help that might be needed. The senators returned on March 12.

The Rev. Kelly J. Crocker, minister of religious education at the Madison congregation, preached a sermon on February 26 and 27 noting that her mother had benefited from a union. Crocker said that in deciding how to respond to the situation in Wisconsin as a UU, she recalled Unitarian and Universalist historical figures such as abolitionist the Rev. William Henry Furness, suffragist Susan B. Anthony, and the Rev. James Reeb, who was killed in Selma, Alabama.

**Madison, Wisconsin  
— February 2011**

**Photos by Melissa Ryan**

Noting that religious principles involving the inherent worth and dignity of all people and compassion and justice in human relations were being dismissed or ignored by state leaders in Wisconsin, she observed, "Our religious ancestors lived and died for the conviction that religious beliefs are true if and only if they help you to live a more loving, more just life. In the

coming days may we each take the time to reflect on what we believe, may we take the time to face one another, and together, put those beliefs and principles into action to help each of us live lives that are more just and more loving. Because then we may be able to create a world which is more just and more loving."

Schuler said Crocker's sermon earned a standing ovation, "the first I've seen in 23 years. It was very moving."

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*Follow UU organizing and activism at [www.uuworld.org](http://www.uuworld.org)*

# Reflections on Change

# Egypt

by *Starhawk*

Just over a year ago, I was in Tahrir Square, in Cairo, demonstrating with other members of the Gaza Freedom March, trying without success to pressure Mubarak's government to let us continue on our humanitarian peace mission to Gaza.

In these last weeks, I've often thought about that day on the square — the heady few moments when we blocked traffic, the adrenaline as the police rushed in to beat us back, the long, grueling day on the edge of the square. We took those risks knowing we had some measure of protection, as internationals, from the torture, imprisonment, and potential loss of life faced by our Egyptian friends should they take the same kinds of actions.

As I've followed reports of the protests, I've been awed by the spirit, the courage, and the stamina of all the people who have come out to take those risks. Mubarak finally yielded to the people's will and stepped down.

Moments of political euphoria don't come often in a lifetime, and when they do, they are sweet. I wish I could have been back in Tahrir Square to share that celebration, and to honor the sacrifices that so many have made.

As the drama has unfolded, I've been working on a book about power and group process in collaborative groups — with a deadline so tight that, with all my other commitments,

it leaves little time for blogging. I've been writing this book because I believe we are entering a new era in which the top-down organizations of governments, corporations, and military are more and more being challenged by emergent, collaborative, and co-creative movements without traditional

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**"...fascinating and affirming — to see a loosely organized movement led by young people rise up, almost without warning, and sweep away the tight control of dictatorship."**

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lines of authority. I've been working in those kinds of groups for thirty years, and believe I know something of their strengths and pitfalls — if only through the many, many mistakes I've made.

So I've found the unfolding events in Egypt fascinating and affirming — to see a loosely organized movement led by young people rise up, almost without warning, and sweep away the tight control of dictatorship. Because the movement had no Great Leader nor central control, the government had no one whose death or imprisonment could stop the uprising. Because people were voluntarily choosing to participate, they took enormous risks and suffered hardships without faltering. Because they remained committed to

nonviolence, they were able to deter the army from extreme reprisals and win over world public opinion.

I wish I knew more about how they made decisions on Tahrir Square, how they communicated in the absence of the internet and those cell-phones we'd come to depend on. I hope that in succeeding days, we'll hear more reports from inside the protestors' camps. I have a deep, professional curiosity about what kind of meetings they had, and how they were facilitated.

And I know that the work of transformation is not completed, by any means. Amorphous, emergent movements can be unstoppable — but building a new structure requires some sort of organization. Structures can be washed away by the tides of

spontaneous outrage, but to govern a country over time, new structures must be built on a new foundation. The Egyptian people will continue to need our support to make sure the transition is a real one, not just a removal of one face while the infrastructure of oppression remains.

In the meantime, we have much to learn from their experience, and that of the Tunisians and all the other movements arising in the Middle East. Let us all savor this sweet moment, with gratitude to those who bravery, sacrifices, and unflagging determination have challenged repression and brought liberation.

*Read more of Starhawk's writings and add your comments: [www.starhawkblog.org](http://www.starhawkblog.org)*



# APPALACHIA IS RISING

*by the Appalachia Rising Organizing Team*

"This is only the beginning. There's no going back. The pressure will continue."

Kentucky Rising issued these words at the conclusion of their four-day occupation of the Kentucky Governor's office in February 2011.

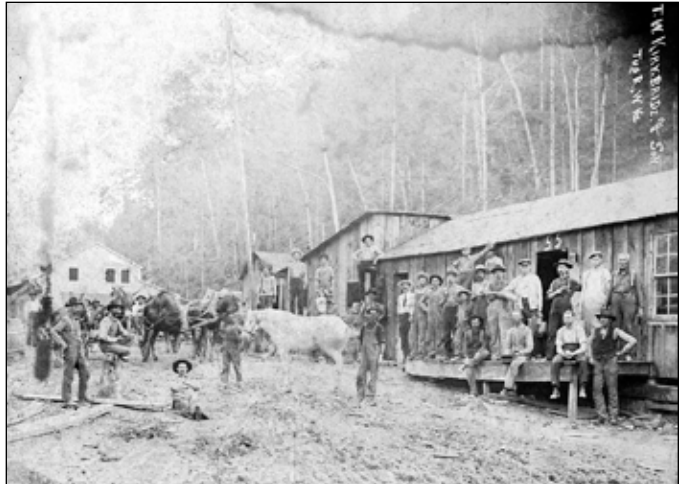
From June 5 to 11, 2011 Appalachia will rise again for the March on Blair Mountain. We will march to preserve Blair Mountain, abolish mountaintop removal, strengthen labor rights, and demand sustainable job creation for all Appalachian communities.

The March on Blair Mountain commemorates the 1921 Battle of Blair Mountain, when ten thousand coal miners marched against the coal operators and fought for the right to live and work in decent conditions.

Today, Blair Mountain is threatened with obliteration by mountaintop removal. During the March on Blair Mountain, we will make a determined non-violent stand for economic and environmental justice in the 21st century.

The five-day march travels from Marmet (near Charleston) to Blair Mountain in Logan County. Music, speakers, and workshops will be held at camp grounds in the evening. June 11 will be a rally in the town of Blair and Day of Action on Blair Mountain.

All communities and people need good jobs, clean air, and clean water. In the spirit of the 1921 march – which consisted of moun-



tain folk, African Americans, and immigrants from all over Europe – we call on all those who seek justice to march in solidarity with the workers, communities, and mountains of Appalachia.

*Learn more about Blair Mountain and the June March on Blair Mountain at [www.friendsofblairmountain.org](http://www.friendsofblairmountain.org)*

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Photos courtesy of Kenneth King / FoBM  
Top: Logging camp, Tug River by T.W. Kirkbride  
Middle: First train up Coal River  
Bottom: Route 17 near Blair Gap

## Nuclear Power ~ Solution to Global Warming?

After several decades in the doghouse, nuclear power has recently emerged as an “alternate” source to carbon-based fuels. The governments of Britain and France have agreed to collaborate in promoting nuclear power around the globe, and voices in the U.S. — where no new plant has been licensed since the 1970s — are clamoring for increased investment in this “clean” energy source.

But nuclear power is not clean. It produces both low and high-level radioactive waste that remains dangerous for several hundred thousand years. No country in the world has found a solution for this waste. Building new nuclear plants would mean the production of much more of radioactive waste with nowhere for it to go.

The vast majority of public interest and environmental groups are opposed to nuclear power because it creates dangerous waste, brings unnecessary risks, and cannot rescue us from climate change.

Nuclear power is too slow, expensive, and inflexible a technology to address climate change, and would entail the building of thousands of new nuclear reactors. These reactors would result in intensified proliferation, waste, and safety problems.

New reactors would also drain investment away from renewable technologies. According to a new analysis by Public Citizen based on the work of governments, universities, and other organizations in the United States, Europe and Japan, it is technically and economically feasible for a diverse mix of existing renewable technologies to completely meet U.S. energy needs over the coming decades.

Clean, safe renewable energy sources — such as wind, solar, advanced hydroelectric and some types of biomass and geothermal energy — can reliably generate as much energy as conventional fuels without significant carbon emissions, destructive mining, or the production of radioactive waste.

### FATAL FLAWS

Public Citizen has produced a paper called “Five Fatal Flaws of Nuclear Power.” Here’s a synopsis:

**Cost** — nuclear power is viable only with billions of dollars of government subsidies. Subsidies for wind, solar, and other renewable sources are only a fraction of that for nukes.

**Safety** — the danger of toxic leaks and emissions, groundwater contamination, and adverse health impacts on workers at the facility are all substantially higher than alternate sources.

**Security** — a nuclear plant, particularly one located near a population center, would be one of the most devastating sites possible for a terrorist attack. Increased security means increased cost, with no guarantee of success.

**Waste** — nuclear power produces radioactive waste for which no safe disposal method has ever been devised. This material will be radioactive for tens or even hundreds of thousands of years — a lethal legacy to all future species. Proponents of nuclear power don’t like to mention the waste issue, apparently assuming that someone else will have to deal with that problem.

**Proliferation** — Nuclear power also increases the risks of nuclear weapons proliferation. As more reactors are built around the world, nuclear material becomes more vulnerable to theft and diversion. Power reactors have led directly to nuclear weapons programs in some countries.

Adding up the risk, the cost, and the overwhelming opposition of non-corporate environmental groups, we say, in the words of the 1980s: “Nuclear Power? Nein Danke!”

*The full version of “Five Fatal Flaws of Nuclear Power” is available at [www.publiccitizen.org](http://www.publiccitizen.org), along with other resources and contacts.*



## UK UnCut targets corporations, banks

London welcomed 2011 with a wave of grassroots protests against banks and corporations accused of evading their fair shares of taxes. The protests, which came as banks revealed huge executive bonus packages, involved a range of peaceful and creative direct actions.

“It was greed and reckless banking that caused the financial crisis,” said Daniel Garvin of UK UnCut. “Now the government is making the political choice to cut public services that will hit the poorest hardest rather than force the banks to change how they operate.”

“We wanted to give people the chance to have their say on what is going on, as the government seems incapable of taking any meaningful action.”

UK Uncut began in late 2010 when a group of friends targeted Vodafone, claiming that the mobile phone company had avoided billions of pounds in tax.

The protest, organised through Twitter, went viral and over the next several months hundreds of protests were organised against companies alleged to have avoided taxes.

The campaign has helped forced the issue of corporate tax avoidance into the mainstream political debate in the UK.

*Quotes courtesy UK Guardian. Visit [www.ukuncut.org.uk/](http://www.ukuncut.org.uk/)*

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## 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](mailto:quarterly@reclaiming.org)







# Introducing our theme of FIRE

by Luz

Welcome to the third online issue of RQ, following our previous 30 years of publishing in print.

What a difference a year makes, since issue #101 emerged last summer. The world has seen challenges which have altered life as we have lived it. Mirroring that reality, many of the articles we received echoed these times of turbulence by invoking the primal element of FIRE!

We've seen the entire globe reeling from crises that provoked popular protest and revolt in multiple countries. The list of issues seem overwhelming: austerity measures, food shortages, unemployment, lack of healthcare, financial meltdown, disease, poisoned or privatized water, education cuts, toxic environments, economic hardship, natural disasters, displacement, increasing corporate control, and survival continue to play center stage.

Much of Europe has risen up to refuse attempts to remedy problems on the backs of working people. The US and Mexico have seen protests on multiple fronts. Africa, the Saudi peninsula, and the Middle East erupted into flames that rocked entrenched authoritarian leadership that has often served US interests. Bursting into the headlines has been news from Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Algeria, Bahrain, Morocco, Lebanon, Jordan, Yemen, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Iraq, Iran, and Syria. Some claim that the problems we face stem from breakdowns of the various

economic-political systems at work.

What began in Tunisia with a solitary fruit-seller's hungry, despairing act of self-immolation soon lit the tinder long gathered. "Enough!" shouted millions of voices across class, gender, and occupational lines.

In the US, several state governors sought to pass bills nakedly written to eviscerate basic rights to collectively bargain wages and work conditions. Some believe the core strategy is to turn the country into a conservative bastion. Again, thousands roared, "NO!" Dissenters across continents and oceans alluded to and supported each other's mirrored actions. In Japan, earth moved a population, water swept away ordinary lives, and nuclear fire imploded notions of security and cheap, reliable energy.

Our global family is navigating multiple crises. New worldviews seem to be supplanting the notion that government's responsibility is to ensure everyone's wellbeing by protecting the "commons." It's a scary time. Yet what opportunities might lay hidden beneath such ferocity? Let's consider the context.

Fire, unleashed from a cauldron of pain, fear, and misery. Elemental fire, arising because something must be consumed. Bonds breaking... within the cycle of nuclear fission... and its meltdown... in cultural, political, and socially constructed narratives that stipulate new constraints that impoverish body and spirit. Wikileaks continues to unmask the false narratives meant to enslave us.

Humans have always created rituals to honor and celebrate the staggering beauty of fire's power, its cleansing capacity, and its function in a cycle that pro-

mulgates new growth, however painfully born. Beltane, campfire stories, and Burning Man all immerse us in the metaphorical cauldron for living transformation.

Several writers delved into this theme of fire, offering myriad ways of working with this element in the context of contemporary events. Nighthawk invites us to remember our capacity to be in the sacredness of fire, to walk it, to join with it, to be safe within its reach while holding the focus of our vision. Habondia, too, embodies the wisdom of seeing farther than the immediate fiery challenges in our lives. Slippery Elm calls inspiration into the circle as the remedy to terror, to serve as the transformational vehicle for social change. Andy Paik tells us how to construct a sacred fire cauldron and safely maintain it. Phoenix guides us in receiving the wisdom of fire scryed in the cauldron.

Defense of beach-bonfire rights reminds us of our constitutional right to gather and celebrate our sacred connection when celebrating holy days. The seasons' transitions are well met as we re-enact the phoenix rising from the ashes of everything burned to the ground.

Megan Young shows us how fire offers us the possibility for a new sense of self, danced in ecstasy. Dawnstar speaks of the honor and privilege of tending a ritual fire. Abel Gomez writes of Kali, imbued by a loving devotion that seeks to understand the shadow places, transcend fear, and approach a cosmic consciousness.

*Come dance with us in the fire  
and let us together see what holy  
things want to be made from it.*

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Fire photo on preceding page by  
Naemi Castellano





# Devotion to the Dark Mother

## A Glimpse Into the Mysteries of Maa Kali

by **Abel R. Gomez**

There are many paths to attainment within the Hindu traditions. During my initial stages of training within the SHARANYA temple, I was introduced to both the Tantric (occult) and Bhakti (devotional) forms of practice. While the more esoteric practices certainly felt akin to my practices in the Craft, it was the devotional path that truly moved me.

Devotion is not a major part of the Craft, except in the most abstract forms. In ritual we dance with the gods, sing with them, and weave powerful spirals of ecstasy, but rarely do we offer tokens of gratitude or connection.

It was this deep need for devotion to the mysteries of life that initially attracted me to the Hindu path. Goddess Kali came to me when I was thirteen, during a period of deep introspection and spiritual yearning. Her striking iconography and mythology aroused my spirit and piqued my curiosity. I set out to read everything I could about Her, through books, websites, and conversations with those knowledgeable around me. At the time I was also beginning to learn about the Craft, and the theological similarities to the Goddess-revering paths of Hinduism were uncanny to me.

As I continued to engage with Kali's mysteries, through study and prayer, two identities emerged: personal and transpersonal. I came to know her as a personal goddess, with specific

mythological and ritualistic symbolism, festivals, and offerings. She revealed Herself as Dark Mother, Goddess of the crossroads, of the chthonic realms, and of the shadow places, both in our psyches and in the world, urging humanity to understand and transcend fear. Kali holds the paradox of both loving mother and fierce warrior, guiding us towards the path to illumination and ultimate bliss.



Kali also revealed Herself as Mahakali, the transpersonal realm of experience, the cosmic consciousness embodied. This seems to be a common thread of many esoteric traditions. To me, Mahakali is akin to the Ain Soph Aur of the Qabalistic tradition, the infinite, the ground of being, ultimate reality. She can also be linked to the

Star Goddess/God Herself of the Anderson Feri Tradition of Witchcraft, the manifest divinity in whom we live, move, and have our entire being. In this regard, every prayer or offering of devotion to Her is truly an honoring of the entire cosmos.

### RITUALS OF DEVOTION

In Hinduism, devotion typically takes the form of japa (chanting) and puja (ritual worship). Puja often consists of various offerings and prayers to grant the devotee a boon, but on a larger scale, to connect the devotee with the Infinite. Within the deeply symbolic patterns of devotional ritual lie deep universal truths, namely that the Goddess is embodied in all life. Puja allows us to connect with the personal and transpersonal forms of the divine, to experience Kether in Malkuth, as Qabalists say — that is, to experience the sublime in the material world. It becomes the way the Goddess can know Herself, through us, as us.

Just as with rituals in the Craft, puja can be as complex or as simplistic as one chooses. At the SHARANYA temple, the devotional and occult forms of Hindu practice are interwoven during our monthly Kali Puja ceremonies to create a communal experience of deep connection. Puja can fuse together highly complex mythological and ritualistic structures, or it can simply be a heartfelt offering of flowers. What matters most is intentionality — the depth of devotion your heart brings.

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**Photo by Luz of mask in Museum of Popular Art, Mexico City**



## A Short Devotional Ritual to Kali

Gather together:

- incense
- a small bowl with water
- a portion of food
- a small fan
- a candle or lamp
- a bell
- an image of the deity or deities you wish to honor

The bell, used always in the left hand, garners the attention of the deity while offerings are given with the right hand.

Each of these offerings is symbolically aimed at greeting the deity as an honored guest. We welcome Her with the incense, then give it something to drink and eat, respectfully offer it cool air, and finally bid the deity farewell with light.



photos by Luz

## Devotion in The World

This is a small example of the myriad forms ritual devotion may take. As one continues on the devotional path, one of the most profound realizations is that every action can become an act of devotion. The popular Hindu saint Ramakrishna realized this while worshipping the image of Maa Kali at the Dakshineswar Kali temple in India. His sense of devotion and love for the Divine Mother expanded as everything he saw became part of Her embodied mystery. He offered bowls of milk to cats and flowers at the feet of prostitutes all in honor of the Mother of the Universe.

This same sense of profound connection is available to any of us willing to offer devotion to that which we love. We can broaden this notion of devotion beyond ritual into the realm of activism, art, gardening, or any other action and dedicate it to the Goddess. From this space our entire lives can become acts of devotion, and with this awareness we can open to deeper connections to the Goddess, and thus a deeper connection to the beauty and mystery of life itself.

*Abel R. Gomez is a student, performer, activist, and ritualist ecstatically devoted to Maa Kali. He is active in Bay Area Reclaiming and SHARANYA communities.*





# To Tend a Rítual Fire....

Story begins on page 32



The fire is laid in the center of the ritual circle at California Witchcamp. Firewood is gathered by a team of volunteers.

The evening's firetender builds the structure. Here, large structural logs and smaller kindling are shaped into a cauldron.

Additional wood is sorted by size and stacked around the periphery, to be fed to the fire during the course of the ritual.

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Images by Dawnstar





### *Ritual Fire continued*

Wood for a long evening of ritual and campfire camaraderie, stacked in neat piles, marks the periphery of the fire circle.

During the ritual, only the firetender steps into the ring. The fire is fed as needed, and a key skill is the ability to move quietly in and out of the circle during the ritual.

*Images by Dawnstar —  
story begins on next page*







# To Tend a Ritual Fire

## *Images and text by Dawnstar*

Twilight has fallen and drums are beating. A small clearing in the woods is filled with gaily dressed people gathered in anticipation of sharing a night of ritual. I center, breathe deeply, and ground myself in preparation for priestessing the fire. The signal is given. I walk to the center in a semi-trance and bend to the structure before me.

The wood had been lovingly gathering by members of the community. It had taken several hours to gather and several more to construct the structure that would house the spirit of fire and provide, warmth, light, and focus for the ritual.

Many people had helped to create the structure I was about to light. Some had gathered buckets of small twigs that filled in the base of the structure to ensure a good “catch” once a lit match was applied. This wood also provides “flaring” material for the first lighting and provides the necessary quick-burning material needed for the spontaneous fire building and “coning” that would come later in the ritual.

Others had gathered wood in various sizes. This wood was layered smallest to largest in the structure. This gradation would ensure that the fire rapidly spread from the thinner-diameter bottom layers to the thicker-diameter

layers above. Wood was also piled in a ring around the fire grouped by size. This outer ring provided a physical barrier and created a safety zone around the ritual fire when lit. It also kept the materials needed for tending during the ritual close at hand — as much wood as was used to create the main fire structure



would be used to tend the fire during the course of the ritual. All the wood had been carefully selected to ensure it was dry so it would catch easily, and was free of bark and moss, so that it wouldn't smoke.

Holding a box of matches in my hand, I strike one, call to the element of fire and ask fire to join us in the ritual and to aid our work. I put the match to the kindling, then move to the

other side of the structure to repeat the calling.

I step back and watch as the fire spreads quickly, catching first the thin twigs, then the slightly larger sticks, and, finally the larger-diameter wood. I breathe and go deeper into trance as

I watch the fire rise through the structure, eventually reaching the flare material at the top. The fire pauses as it starts to consume the piled twigs and then suddenly it rises well above my head as it springs to life, filling the clearing with a burst of light and a ring of heat.

The ritual starts and I focus on feeling both the energy of the fire and the energy of the ritual. I know when the fire is about to fall. I feel it calling to me when it needs

more wood. It is a physical pull which sometimes I can respond to immediately, or sometimes I must wait to answer depending on what is going on in the ritual. I am in a ritual within the ritual, keeping the energy of the fire in sync with the energy of the ritual.

Sometimes the fire burns softly and gently, sometimes the fire roars above head height. It is a dance within

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## Ritual Fire

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the dance and I do my best to provide whatever is needed. The only thing that exists for me in my semi-trance state is the fire and I am in relationship with it. I feed and nourish it and care for it while it is with us.

Eventually the ritual ends and people begin dispersing. Sometimes there is drumming and dancing afterwards and sometimes just quiet contemplation. I continue to tend the fire until the wee hours of the morning. When it is time to end the evening, those remaining in the clearing take hands and ring the fire. We thank the fire for the blessings we have received and for aiding us in our work. When we have bid it hail and farewell, we douse it with water. All is dark and there is a glowing bed of stars at our feet as the embers struggle to remain alive despite the deluge of water. One by one, we put them out and then stir the steaming darkened ash bed to ensure that none were missed. Then we embrace and say good night and I head to my cabin for a few hours of sleep. Tomorrow afternoon we will clean the ashes and repeat the cycle.

I have been a fire tender for California



Witchcamp for over ten years. I apprenticed to the previous fire tender, learning first how to build the special structure needed to support a ritual fire and then how to tend during a ritual.

The first year of my apprenticeship I only built the ritual fire structure. The next year I tended a single ritual fire; the year after that, I tended two fires; the year after that, three; and so on until I was sharing the fire tending equally with my teacher.

At first my tending was clumsy and I was thinking too much about what I was doing. Over time, I began to feel the energy of the fire and to know it as a living, breathing entity to be called intentionally into the ritual to support the work at hand. I fell too deeply into trance in those years and only realized it when I was abruptly thrown out by one of those leading the ritual.

Once I realized what was going on,

I learned to control my trance state and keep it light enough to respond and interact with those leading the ritual but deep enough so that I was still in contact with the spirit of the fire.

I began to tend more fires until my teacher



moved on to other things. I tended alone for a few years and now I am a teacher with an apprentice fire tender. I am doing my best to lead my pupil along the path I took and bring him to spiritual understanding and awakening to the true nature of the ritual fire quickly and purposefully. To this end, I have instituted various “levels” to the apprenticeship. Last year, he achieved the first level and tended his first fire. Next year I will take on an additional apprentice. This new apprentice will spend her first year building and learning about the wood while her older fellow apprentice will move to the next apprenticeship level. My vision is to eventually have four to five tenders all equally capable of tending the ritual fire and who understand its living nature.

For me, tending the ritual fire is a sacred honor and a privilege. My relationship with the ritual fire is deeply, spiritually fulfilling. I am blessed and thankful to be of service to the Goddess in this manner. Blessed be.

*Dawnstar is a Reclaiming spiritualist whose passions are the fire and the harp. She occasionally teaches Reclaiming core classes in her community and loves to be outdoors.*

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**Images and text by Dawnstar**





# FIREFLY

BE THE GADFLY OF THE STATE AND ALSO ITS FIREFLY - LAWRENCE FERLINGHETTI

**by Slippery Elm**

*BOOM! The reverberations of an ear-splitting explosion echo between tall buildings as the oxygen above the town square is snatched up in a fiery plume. Citizens scatter — running frantically in all directions as if the car bomb was a thrown bowling ball splashing into the middle of a school of fish.*

*A woman cries out desperately above the sirens, shouts, and traffic but her child is nowhere to be found. A restaurant and its adjacent store fronts are on fire, emitting thick clouds of smoke, blackening the sky... It's hard to imagine that just 15 minutes ago, the streets were filled with ordinary people doing ordinary things — shopping, waiting for the bus, walking their dogs.*

*But that's how terrorists operate: make no moment a safe one, so that the people live in a perpetual state of fear...*

Kidnappings, robberies, assassinations, and bombings like the one described above are used by terrorists world-wide as political weapons to assume power over a population, or to attempt to fulfill their political demands. The ability to evoke emotional responses in people is an incredibly powerful mode

of manipulating, communicating to, or transforming a given population. As humans, we have an immense capacity to feel a great variety of different emotions, but like their name suggests — terrorists employ terror or fear as



their weapon of choice.

Terror is generally seen as the most powerful emotion to use when trying to assume power over a population or transform a government. However, contrary to popular belief, inspiration is an emotion just as potent — or even more potent — in bringing about social change. Terror is to a terrorist what inspiration is to an “inspirationist.” Terrorists use terror as a political weapon, “inspirationists” use inspiration as a political remedy. Inspiration is the holy spirit of *awen* or *imbis*. It is the fire in our hearts and souls — it is our desire to get out of bed and greet the

day — our burning passion to make the world healthier place — the lightning bolts of epiphanies — and the buzz of pure creativity. To be inspired is to be in-spirited — to be filled with spirit or energy.

There are many different ways to inspire someone, but I write about what I know best. Being an artist, what follows is a look at some examples of social change through inspiration sparked by art: specifically, the art of storytelling and poetry attributed to bards — the oral poets and word-shamans of yesterday and today.

From the griots of West Africa, to the skalds of Scandinavia, to the troubadours of France, to the fili of Ireland — bards, and their cross-cultural counterparts, were prominent figures in the societies of different cultures around the world. Traditionally, they were the “remembrancers” of their communities — living memory banks of collective history kept alive through the stories they accumulated. They played the role of the celebrant, and also the eulogist — and presided over many important rites of passage. Through the stories and poems they composed and performed, they were essentially the voices of their community, the land, and the ancestors.

Bards also had many magical and shamanic qualities. A good

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## FIREFLY

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storyteller has the ability to captivate his or her audience and whisk them on journeys to other worlds and dimensions. A good poet has the ability to connect to the essence of the soul of his or her listeners and communicate ecstatic joys, shocking truths, and profound mysteries — using language of a song-like quality that sends ripples of enchantment through the air. The word “enchant” broken down is en-chant — to sing to or chant to. Many spells include a short verse or chant, which acts as a way of releasing energy and expressing intention. Words are immensely powerful things.

In Celtic Traditions, bards (bard is actually a Welsh word) were known to channel the fiery spirit of inspiration — called *awen* in Welsh and *imbis* in Irish. The Irish seer-poets, the fili, would work themselves into trance-like states — completely seized by the spirit of inspiration — and utter spontaneous verses “off the top of the head.” Brigid, or Brid as she is sometimes called, is the Irish Goddess of poetry and as such is sacred to poets and storytellers. She is associated with well-springs of inspiration and also to the element of Fire. Fire is an element of transformation: it changes everything

it touches. Like fire, inspiration is a powerfully transformative spirit, and a powerfully transformative emotion. Although the bardic traditions described above have roots in ancient times, they continue to evolve and are still prominent today. In fact, many modern bards — including Allen Ginsberg, Eddie Lenihan, and countless others — are responsible for powerful instances of social change and positive transformation during the 20th century, right up to the present.



Allen Ginsberg was a fire. He burned with a passion unrivalled among many of the world’s best poets. His poetry was spontaneous, shocking, musical, celebratory, and so powerfully personal that all humanity could relate to it on some level — therefore making it universal. Ginsberg was a large part of the paradigm shift that took place in “Western Society” during the 1950s, 60s, and 70s. His infamous poem *Howl* and its subsequent court case, challenged, and then changed the established laws regarding obscenity in the USA. He became a counter-cultural

hero through the large publicity the case received, and his poetry appeared in countless alternative magazines. He gave powerful readings at numerous political actions and festivals — including the legendary “Human Be-In” festival in San Francisco. His widespread and passionate advocacy against sexual-repression, militarism, and industrial civilization got him deported from several countries including Cuba and Czechoslovakia in 1965.

The poet and storyteller Eddie

Lenihan is another powerful bard who spoke out against the poisons of the industrial revolution. Dedicated to preserving the old traditions and stories of his native Ireland, Lenihan travels the country learning stories from the old people, and visiting the actual locations where the stories are said to take place. Many of these stories describe interactions with the faeries — the nature spirits of

the Irish landscape. Although they aren’t depicted as fundamentally evil, the consequences for disturbing or disrespecting a place in which the faeries dwell are dire, and often result in illness or death. In 1999, freeway construction in County Clare would have demolished an ancient hawthorn tree that was featured in many of the old stories, had Lenihan not taken action in its defence. Hawthorns are sacred trees to the faery folk and this particular tree happened to be the alleged meeting

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## FIREFLY

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place of the faeries of Munster, when they would rally to do battle with the faeries of Connacht. Lenihan launched a campaign to save the tree using his story telling as an essential tool in inspiring and rallying the local community to speak out on behalf of the tree. The campaign made international headlines and eventually the ancient hawthorn tree was incorporated into the design plan for the freeway.

A more recent example of bards using inspiration within the context of social activism is the Mobile Cipher Caravan of Vancouver, British Columbia.

A “cipher” is a hip-hop free-style circle. Even outside of a political context it is an incredibly powerful phenomenon. Free-styling is the art of channelling and subsequently reciting spontaneous rhymes over a beat and is comparable to the trance-like prophetic utterances of the Irish seer-poets of old. In fact, real hip-hop MCs (note: the music marketed as hip-hop on television and the radio does not represent true hip-hop; it is materialistic, violent, misogynistic, lacking in creativity, and highly commercialized, all things that true hip-hop opposes) are essentially modern-day bards. Within the circle of the cipher (circles are powerful symbols in and of themselves!) expression is uninhibited and creative energy crackles among participants. The energy

is so high that it appears the MCs are performing a ritual; and some people might argue that in fact, they are. It’s no surprise that the acronym MC stands for Master of Ceremonies.

In Vancouver, a community of passionate MCs have been using “mobile cipher” tactics as outreach for certain issues affecting their bio-region — including the dangerous shipping of



Tar Sands crude-oil on super-tankers from Vancouver’s harbour to Asia. Speakers and microphones are attached to a modified bicycle to create a “sound-bike.” The sound bike, the MCs, and their accompanying dancers, roam downtown Vancouver performing in the streets and handing out political art to passers-by. The “Caravan” makes a very auditory and visual impression wherever it goes and initiates conversation with many people who would never think to stop and talk to a typical street canvasser. Its positive and celebratory energy is infectious, often causing pedestrians to join in themselves and get on the microphone or dance along.

Inspiration is a powerful force for manifesting social change. Whether it is inspiration from friends and family, inspiration from nature, inspiration from visual art, inspiration from music, or inspiration brought about by the bardic arts — like the poetry and storytelling of bards such as Allen Ginsberg, Eddie Lenihan, and the Mobile Cipher Caravan MCs of Vancouver BC — inspiration often leads to profound paradigm shifts. In this mechanical age of dry-hearts and crusty spirits, inspiration spreads like wild fire — every woman or man you inspire enflames everything he or she touches, and burns brighter and brighter till soon there will be nothing that can extinguish the great inferno

of captivated hearts working in unison to create a better world. In Lawrence Ferlinghetti’s influential work *Poetry As Insurgent Art*, he encourages poets to “Be the gadfly of the state and also its firefly.” As poets we have an obligation to speak out on behalf of our society. As humans we have an obligation to speak out and act on behalf of our world.

*Slippery Elm is a writer, poet, and emcee (MC) from Vancouver, BC. He is a co-founder of the Mobile Cipher Caravan and has performed his poetry at numerous political actions, open mics, and poetry jams. Facebook him at: [www.facebook.com/SlipperyElm.Music](http://www.facebook.com/SlipperyElm.Music)*

## Looking Forward... Through the Fire

I learned an important awareness while walking on fire many moons ago. One of my spiritual teachers taught us to go into our hearts and become one with the fire. While staying connected at a heart level, she instructed us to look ahead at her, waiting at the end of the path of hot coals.

I walked across twice this way, experiencing the gentle power of letting my heart guide me. The third time across, I looked down. The moment that I did, I felt the heat of the fire on my feet. I had forgotten to continue to look forward. When I again looked forward to the end of the path, I no longer felt the heat of the fire.

For some of us, life is a constant balance of staying connected within and looking forward to what is coming.

*by Alexandra Habondia*

*Alexandra Habondia is an Ordained Priestess, Iseum of Mary Isis. She experienced her first firewalk with Rev. Edwene Gaines, as described here. For her day job she performs alternative firewalking in her financial advisory business.*





# Fi Fire Scrying

by **Phoenix LeFae**

Scrying is one of the oldest forms of divination. It is done by staring into an object with the intention to gain insight about a question or problem. There are many ways to practice the art of scrying. It can be done with a mirror, in a bowl of water, with a crystal ball, or the most ancient way of scrying — with fire.

To scry with fire you can use a roaring campfire, a small hearth fire, or even a simple candle flame. The size of the fire doesn't matter. What does matter is your focus, intention, and will. It is a magical act and just like any magical act, you get out of it what you put into it.

While scrying you might see images, symbols, words, or get flashes of insight. You might also hear messages, sense an answer, or smell a clue. All of these forms of information reception are valid. Each person will experience scrying in their own way. What is important to remember is that if fire scrying doesn't work for you, don't feel discouraged. Instead, try the following steps with a different form of scrying, perhaps a crystal ball or bowl of water.

So how do you do it? The first step is to have a question or issue that you

want some insight on. Make sure your question is clear and concise. The more vague your question, the more vague your answers will be. Then light a candle and get into sacred space. Take your time in setting your reading place. Remember this is a ritual. When fire scrying it is best to work with no light except for the flame. You might find that you prefer to have soft ambient music playing in the background, or not. Try

more easily. Don't let your eyes go out of focus or cross, just let them relax. Let yourself watch the flame as if watching a performance. Notice the movement, color, and shape of the flame.

As you relax into this process, allow whatever messages you might receive to come through without judgment. You might get an idea about something. You might see a symbol or word in the flame. Whatever it is, take note and keep watching. Don't try to interpret what you see in the moment.

You might want to keep a journal with you to jot down information as it comes. This way you won't be distracted trying to remember what you have seen. Instead you can focus on the fire and continue with your scrying.

When you stop receiving messages this is a sign that your reading is over. Snuff out the

candle and open up your sacred space. Now you can review your messages and see what you might have discovered. For anything unclear follow up with another scrying session at a later time.

*Phoenix LeFae: Priestess for hire, writer, and lover of Earth, Sea, and Sky.*



it with and without music to see which way suits you better.

Once you have created your space, sit in front of the candle and just watch the flame. Allow your vision to soften and your breathing to become regular. Sometimes focusing your vision on the periphery helps the insights to come

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**Photo by Naeomi Castellano**



# Creating a Scrying Cauldron

by Andy Paik

Fire is dangerous.

Keep that in mind when fire scrying. Light your fire in an open area, leave space around it. Indoors is okay, but leave a window open nearby for ventilation. Also be aware that your fire alarm will probably go off if you are indoors and don't turn it off.

Take a large bowl, or a cast-iron cauldron or pot, that won't burn. I use one of those big silvery metal salad bowls. It has taken on a nice burnished, rainbowy look from all the fires. Put the bowl on the floor or on a low altar. Leave at least two feet of room all around it. Put a towel under it if you don't want what is beneath it to be scorched. You can surround it with large rocks to keep it from being knocked over if you are going to have people moving or dancing around it or if your bowl has a round bottom. Make sure that any animals and small children are safely occupied elsewhere.

Pour in a cup of isopropyl alcohol. Light it on fire with a long match or already-lit long candle. The fire won't roar up instantly, but it will do it quickly enough that you will be grateful for the length of the match. Lighters (the short ones) are a good way to get burned. I use one of those long barbecue lighters both for safety and reliability in the often windy conditions of outdoor rituals.

One cup of isopropyl alcohol will get you about 10 minutes of flame. Plenty of time for a good vision. The flame will probably be about two feet high. The higher the alcohol content in the rubbing alcohol the hotter the flame will be.

Ninety percent alcohol fires will leave more ash and are more likely

## Fire Scrying Tools

Here is a list of things you will need or may want for the scrying fire:

- A metal bowl
- rubbing alcohol
- a damp towel
- a pitcher of water
- a long candle
- fireplace matches or spark-lighter
- burn cream
- fire extinguisher
- Epsom or other salt
- boric acid

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to set off the smoke detector. Start with the seventy percent until you get comfortable with it. The first time, it will look much bigger than you expect. Practice before using it in ritual. Start with small amounts and work up.

Let the flame burn out naturally. If you must stop before the flame is out, extinguish it with the cauldron lid.

Never refill the bowl while the flame is burning! Make sure every last bit of flame is out before adding alcohol. I lit myself on fire once this way. I was careless and did not respect the flame. It reminded me of respect, completely disrupting a Lughnasad ritual in the process.

In case of emergencies, probably a spill, don't panic. Look at the fire to see if it will actually light anything else on fire. Unlike wax/oil fires, you can put rubbing alcohol fires out with water so keep a lot handy. The alcohol will float at first, but then go out. Smothering with a damp towel also works. Just drop the

towel over fire.

Ninety percent alcohol will produce more interesting fires, but seventy percent will hurt less if you are burned. A bottle of burn cream or a fire extinguisher, even though you will probably never use them, will greatly reassure the pyrophobes around you.

When I first started doing scrying bowls, everyone told me I had to put Epsom salt in the alcohol, but no one knew why. Epsom salt makes the flames more even and less wild. When using ninety percent, this can produce the occasional ring effect (a ring effect is like a smoke ring of fire), but overall, the effect of Epsom salt is minimal. Using sea or table salt produces random flashes of gold color late in the burn. Using boric acid instead of a salt, will give a much more pronounced effect turning much of the fire bright green. Epsom salt and rubbing alcohol are both in the pharmacy part of a large grocery/drug store. Boric acid will be by the contact lens stuff (it is a cleaner). Sea salt is by the food.

For the salts, use as much salt as you do alcohol. For the boric acid, put in as much as you have alcohol, then add more until it gets thicker and souplike. Mix the stuff well and let it sit for a while before lighting. Additives usually decrease burning time. None of the additives are good after burning. They will be smelly, crusty, and you will actually have to scrape out some bit of the boric acid. Throw this stuff away after each use.

*Andy Paik is a Witch and magician from Los Angeles who is working to master as many different kinds of magic as possible...*





# Portal of Flames

by Megan Young

When does a fire become more than just a fire? How close can you get to its flames before you get burned?

It was the summer of 2006 and I was regularly attending outdoor dance parties in the wilds of California. It was common to have a bonfire near the dance floor to stay warm and give some light in the depth of the night. I always appreciated the warmth and glow of the fire, but on one magical night in a Southern California forest my relationship with fire radically deepened.

Having recently suffered an injury at the base of my spine, I was in a fair amount of physical pain and feeling generally unbalanced as the night began. The fire was ceremonially lit and the dance floor had begun to fill in. The firelight reflected beautifully on the dancers' faces, illuminating their playful smiles. The music was loud, heavy and heady — not for the faint of heart. I was in the center of the dance floor watching in wonder as the fire sparks animated in front of my eyes. I felt strangely compelled to dance closer to the fire. Large pieces of wood were added to the fire to keep the flames going strong, following the peaks and crescendos in the music.

Several fire tending sticks were laid out around the fire. Before I knew what I was doing, I picked up one of the sticks, held it tightly in both hands, and plunged it into the belly of the fire. The burning wood was thick and heavy, creating a dense, wide fire. More and more wood was added until the coals were

glowing red hot, and bright orange flames leapt fiercely up to the cosmos. It looked like the opening to another world.

I could feel smoke in my eyes. My skin was hot and sticky from the heat. I danced along with the music, never letting go of the stick that anchored me to the center of the fire.

My thoughts began to shift rapidly, becoming increasingly chaotic and random. The last thing I remember seeing (with my eyes) was two of my close girlfriends come to the fire and dance close to me. I felt like I was shapeshifting in and out of my body. I was oscillating through vast waves of emotion. I began to experience immense pleasure. My entire body was tingly, light, and full of joy. Intense waves of pleasure rose up out of my center. I felt it anchored in my lower chakras,

vibrating and waking up all my cells. The pleasure was building and building and eventually climaxed in a whole body orgasm! I had never experienced pleasure so deep.

Then in stark contrast to the bliss of that pleasure, I felt a horrific pain, more terrible than any I had ever felt. A pain that began in the center of my being, sharp, pointed, deep, and stabbing. Pain that consumed my entire being, physically and mentally. Tears streamed down my face, my stomach clenched and back spasmed, yet I couldn't move from the fire.

For what must have been hours I fluxed between these two extremes, traveling higher and higher on waves of pleasure and then crashing back down into agony.

*continued on next page*





## Portal of Flames

*continued from preceding page*

Gradually, I realized that the sensations I was feeling were not entirely my own. I was aware of a strong presence within me, energy that I identified as an old woman. It was her pain I was feeling, her pleasure. But who was this old woman? And why was she manifesting inside of me?

My thoughts became clear and I realized that the old woman raging and writhing within me was Mother Earth. The fire opened a portal to the center of the Earth, and through the stick I clung to I was channeling the terrible beauty of the entire planet. The pain I experienced was comprised of every violent act committed against her, every forest burned, every waterway polluted, every animal or human killed, every pile of trash buried beneath her surface, every toxic chemical, nuclear bomb, every world war, flowing through my body, with the fire as a clear and open channel.

Oh, but the pleasure! The simple promise of flowers in Spring, the deep blue of the sky, moss on trees in a thousand shades of green, the miracle of motherhood, fresh vegetables, waterfalls, rainbows, salmon shining in rivers, and countless sunsets too



beautiful for words, these wonders and delights flow through me, up out of the fire and straight through my body.

When the impact of my realization sank in I began to weep, feeling humbled and honored to experience something so incredible. I can't say how long I stood at that fire with my hands gripping the fire stick. I don't know if I was moving, dancing, standing up straight, or slouched over. I am not sure if my eyes were open or closed. I wasn't aware of any other people around me throughout this experience and I don't remember hearing any music.

I slowly backed away from the fire and gently set down the fire stick, blinking and doing everything in my power to get grounded.

Fire holds the key to some surprising and powerful mysteries. If we surrender to it we open ourselves to experiencing those mysteries firsthand.

*Megan Young is a dancer, dreamer, writer, and facilitator dedicated to exploring liminal, creative spaces and committed to using her voice to empower herself and others. Visit [trilliumcantada.blogspot.com](http://trilliumcantada.blogspot.com)*



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# A Witch's Perspective on the Sacred Fire Walk

by *Judith Stachowski aka Nighthawk*

*Photos by Naeomi Castellano*

Fire walking has been practiced since ancient times, with the first recorded fire walk in 1200 BC. Shamans and priests as well as common people in cultures all over the world have connected with their Divine beings, performed healing, and celebrated coming of age rituals by fire walking.

In the late 1970s, a man named Tolly Burkan ([www.firewalking.com](http://www.firewalking.com)) brought fire walking to the United States after he was taught by a friend who had learned from a Tibetan monk. Burkan began holding public seminars to teach people to overcome their fears.

Fire walking was used as a means to inspire creativity and empower vision in large corporations. Many celebrities such as Dr. Andrew Weil and Anthony Robbins challenged themselves by walking on hot coals. Burkan established a school to teach fire walking instructors who could then hold public fire walks in their communities around the country.

My good friend and soul sister, Dorita, attended a fire walking school called Sundoor ([www.sundoor.com](http://www.sundoor.com)) in California run by Tolly Burkan's ex-wife, Peggy Dylan. Dorita had been walking the coals for several years and felt called to become an instructor in order to facilitate fire walks for a community in Pennsylvania.

Every time Dorita told me about walking on fire, I thought she had gone mad. I could not understand why anyone would want to do such a thing! However, I did see a very great and deep change in Dorita which seemed related to her fire walking experiences.

I am a Reclaiming Witch and have attended Vermont Witchcamp several times. I have been a participant and facilitator of small and large rituals and


understand that personal transformation can happen in many different ways. I still resisted walking on hot coals. While it seemed good for my friend Dorita, I never expected to participate myself.

Before Dorita left for her two-week training at Sundoor, she asked me if she could hold her inaugural fire walk at my home. I asked her if I would have to walk the coals if I agreed. I believe she laughed at me! Not only did Dorita want to hold her first fire walk at my home, she wanted me to tend fire along with her husband David. I found it difficult to say "no" to something that meant so much to someone very dear to me. It also seemed to be Dorita's new spiritual path to walk and I would do whatever I could to help her.

I decided to attend a fire walk beforehand so I understood what I was getting into. I signed up to attend a fire walk in Pennsylvania led by Dorita's mentor. This fire walk was held at a tavern/meeting house. The fire was built in the courtyard and the "pre-walk talk" was held in a meeting room. During the class, we were given a corporate-type presentation – how to attain our goals, keep the vision of completing the walk in our minds, and find our passion/acting on our passion. We paired up to talk about our



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## Sacred Fire Walk

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fears and goals. Then, we tramped out to the courtyard, where a huge mound of glowing coals greeted us. I couldn't believe that anyone could walk on those coals and certainly didn't think I could do so!

Once the coals were raked out, experienced fire walkers started to walk and dance across as everyone chanted and danced to the drumbeat. I recognized the energy-raising that was occurring and understood that it was an important part of the entire experience.

Yes, I did walk the coals that night, many times. And no, I didn't get burned.

Each time I walk the coals, whether I've been fire tender or participant, it feels like the first time. I feel the fear and anticipation. I feel my mind clearing as I watch others walk across the coals. Then, I know it's my turn to walk and I hold the vision of being on the other side of the coals in my heart.

After providing me with a brief training in tending fire, Dorita held her debut fire walk at my house, in spite of pellet-like snow. Her husband and I tended the fire. Neither of us had trained at Sundoor, although David had experience in walking the fire and had assisted in fire tending for another fire walk. In spite of the cold and snow, many people challenged themselves and experienced the power of walking on

coals. For the first time, I felt the power and passion of the fire as a fire tender.

Magic happens in several different places during a fire walk. It begins, of course, with a group of like-minded people coming together to share the experience. It grows when this group gathers to build and light the fire. Each piece of wood placed on the pile is "named" with an intent or a blessing. Singing and chanting help the magical energy build once the fire is lit. During the seminar, the instructor continues

each fire is distinct. I feel the wonderful energy of the coals moving around the circle of people — those walking on them, those supporting and chanting. I watch the transformation that happens when people walk the coals for the first time — the amazement and joy, the tremendous sense of accomplishment.

The transformations I've experienced and witnessed involve finding inner courage, the connection of a group of people working with one goal, and rediscovering self-love.

The magic of the coals can open people to possibilities in their lives. I have seen children as young as six years old walk the coals and feel the joy of overcoming their fears. I have seen a blind woman walk the coals as she challenged herself to grow. Physically disabled people have walked the coals, finding healing and



the magic by "planting seeds," which the participants can nurture and grow — seeds such as self-love, the ability to overcome fear, and connecting with the Divine. When the coals are ready, the participants drum and chant, which of course raises the energy of everyone, making walking on coals possible.

The magic of the fire reaches out to envelop me each time I tend fire for a fire walk. The intensity of the fire, the way it changes as it burns to coals, the glowing coals in a pile, just waiting to be raked out. I note how different wood gives off different energy and that

personal growth.

The magic of the fire and fire walking helps me to understand my own personal power as well as my vulnerabilities, both of which are very important for me to grow. This has been a means of re-connecting with the Divine and redefining my Spiritual path. I find great blessings in fire walking.

*Nighthawk lives in Western New York. She has practiced Witchcraft for fifteen years, most of them in the Reclaiming tradition, and has attended Vermont Witchcamp.*

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**Photos by Naeomi Castellano**





# Reclaiming Defends Solstice Bonfires

Traditional site for San Francisco Ocean Beach rituals threatened by budget shortfalls

by **George Franklin**

If you've attended a Solstice ritual at San Francisco's Ocean Beach in the past few years, you've had a chance to be part of the "bonfire defense plan."

Why is Reclaiming having to defend our right to hold Solstice bonfires at this traditional location?

Federal park authorities have been attempting for several years to ban bonfires on most of San Francisco's Ocean Beach due to budget shortfalls that affect beach maintenance staffing.

Reclaiming and other groups and individuals who use the beach have attended hearings, written letters, and organized to prevent this drastic change in beach policy, which threatens to eliminate one of the last "commons" spaces in San Francisco.

After the 2006 Summer Solstice bonfire was extinguished by beach police immediately after the circle was opened, local Reclaiming folks met to organize a nonviolent response for future rituals.

The Reclaiming community meeting, working with the San Francisco Ritual Planning Cell, elected to send a letter notifying the authorities of our intent to hold the ritual at our traditional location (*see next page*).

The community meeting also created a "bonfire defense plan" which allows several

different ways of participating:

- Rocks link arms around the bonfire
- Mists link hands and stream through the space
- Trees cluster nearby to chant and sing
- Winds (chosen ahead of time) talk with authorities
- Sheepdogs act as ushers/graces

As with any situation involving possible police intervention, we role-play the plan beforehand, using the occasion to teach songs for the ritual. Up to 200 people at a time have taken part in the festive walk-throughs.

By an interesting coincidence, the beach police have not been seen for several years. The magic just might be working...

## HOW TO GET INVOLVED

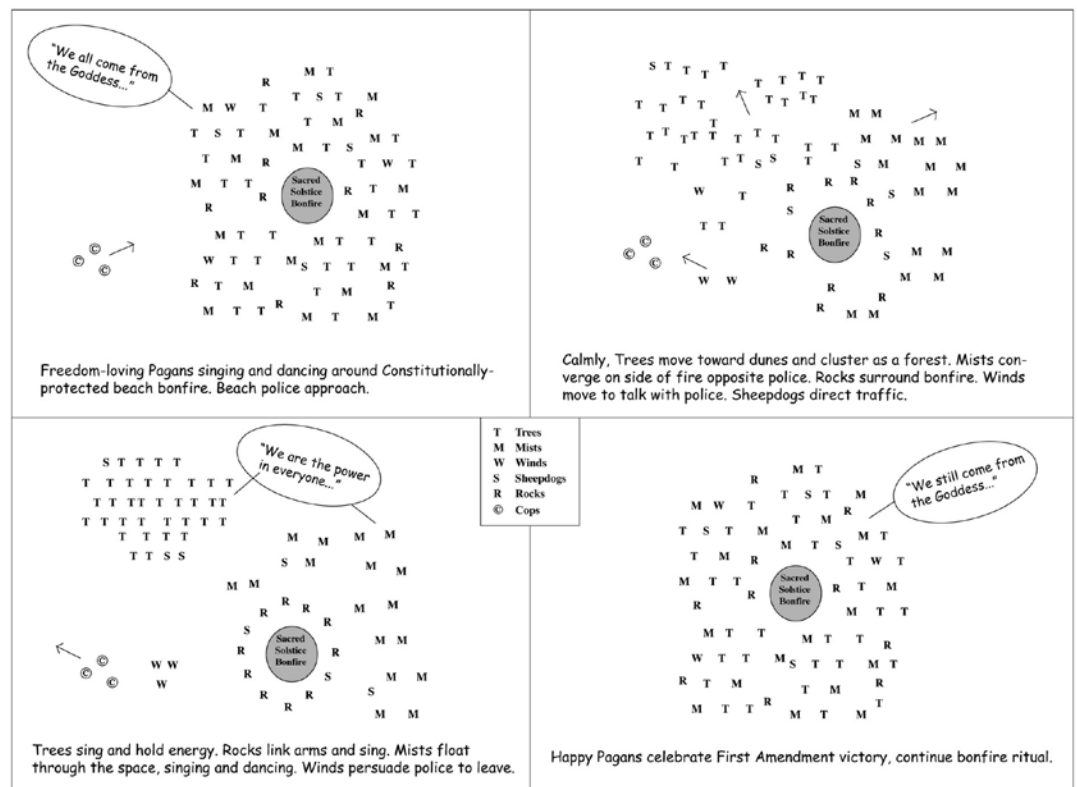
Bay Area Reclaiming rituals are organized by volunteer planning cells. If you have taken Reclaiming core classes and/or attended Witchcamp and been active in Reclaiming for a year and a day, you can help with Reclaiming rituals.

San Francisco: [SFRPC@yahoogroups.org](mailto:SFRPC@yahoogroups.org)

North Bay: [northbayreclaiming@yahoo.com](mailto:northbayreclaiming@yahoo.com)

Ritual webpage: [reclaiming.org/rituals/](http://reclaiming.org/rituals/)

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# Reclaiming Defends Solstice Bonfires

## Ritual planners send letter to Park Service in support of San Francisco Ocean Beach rituals

*Reclaiming has been working to defend its right to hold traditional Ocean Beach Solstice bonfires since 2003. Ten years ago, numerous groups held bonfires on or around Solstice. Now Reclaiming is one of the last. See preceding page.*

*This letter was written after testimony at a series of public hearings was ignored by decision makers. Statements from a wide variety of beach users favored education rather than restricted use.*

*No response has been received. — George Franklin/SFRPC*

Date: December 13, 2006

From: San Francisco  
Reclaiming Ritual  
Planning Cell (SFRPC)

To: Brian O'Neil / Golden  
Gate National Recreation  
Area

We would like to introduce ourselves. We are the Reclaiming Ritual Planning group, and we are a part of Reclaiming, a spiritual tradition in this area for almost 30 years, and a growing international tradition. We are environmentalists with an Earth-based spirituality — our environment is sacred to us, part of the Great Mother. We are non-violent, a family group, and our events are drug and alcohol free.

Members of our group attended several public hearings in 2003-2004, and like most others spoke in favor of education and enforcement of existing laws, and against a bonfire ban.

We have been holding our Summer and Winter Solstice rituals, which involve a fire for warmth, focus, and spiritual meaning, at a southern stretch of Ocean Beach for over 20 years. It is very significant for us to return, year after year, to the same place. We always clean up after ourselves, and our rituals are quiet although they involve song

and acoustic instruments. We have done

internal education and distributed fliers about fire safety (i.e., burning clean wood, dousing fire, etc.) We never burn pallets, treated wood, or other inappropriate materials.

The Winter Solstice is a sacred ceremony involving the cleansing and transforming power of ocean and fire. The ceremony lasts until the last people at the ritual extinguish the fire. Part of our reason for being down near Taraval is a desire not to impact other beach users. Because there is no permit policy, we are writing to inform you of our intention and purpose to build our fire this Winter Solstice, as usual. Reclaiming supports the GGNRA's work of making the beaches safe, beautiful, and ecologically healthy. We think it is important that the GGNRA have the

funding necessary to do this work of taking care of the beaches and their public use, and we hope to support that process. We want to work together with the GGNRA for safe, clean beaches. We imagine that the GGNRA would prefer a different solution than an unpopular, hard to enforce beachfire ban. Such a ban might cost the GGNRA in support from the public on other issues. The beach near Taraval, on Summer and Winter Solstices, is our temple from many years' use and tradition. We have a traditional and First Amendment right to gather on the beach — it is the largest and safest open space in

San Francisco. We look forward to an undisturbed ceremony. If authorities attempt to prevent our celebration, we are also preparing a nonviolent response (*see preceding page*).

If you would like to discuss these matters, please contact us.

*Rose, Nancy, Nolan, Moss, Rock,  
George, Ewa, April, Rosa, Rachel*

*(Members of San Francisco Reclaiming  
Ritual Planning Cell)*



*Ocean Beach in San Francisco before a Solstice ritual. Photo by Otter/RQ.*

and acoustic instruments. We have done internal education and distributed fliers about fire safety (i.e., burning clean wood, dousing fire, etc.) We never burn pallets, treated wood, or other inappropriate materials.

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photographs of California Witchcamp by Michael Starkman

## SACRED GROVE ■ *Taken by the Land*

photographs and invocation by Michael Starkman





photographs of California Witchcamp by Michael Starkman

## SACRED GROVE ■ *The World Tree*

(California Witchcamp, 2006 – 2010)





photographs of California Witchcamp by Michael Starkman

## SACRED GROVE ■ *Guardians*

Hail spirits of this land  
I ask if you will walk with me





photographs of California Witchcamp by Michael Starkman

## SACRED GROVE ■ *Cauldron of Rebirth*

Lead me to your sacred spots  
and guide my eyes so I may see

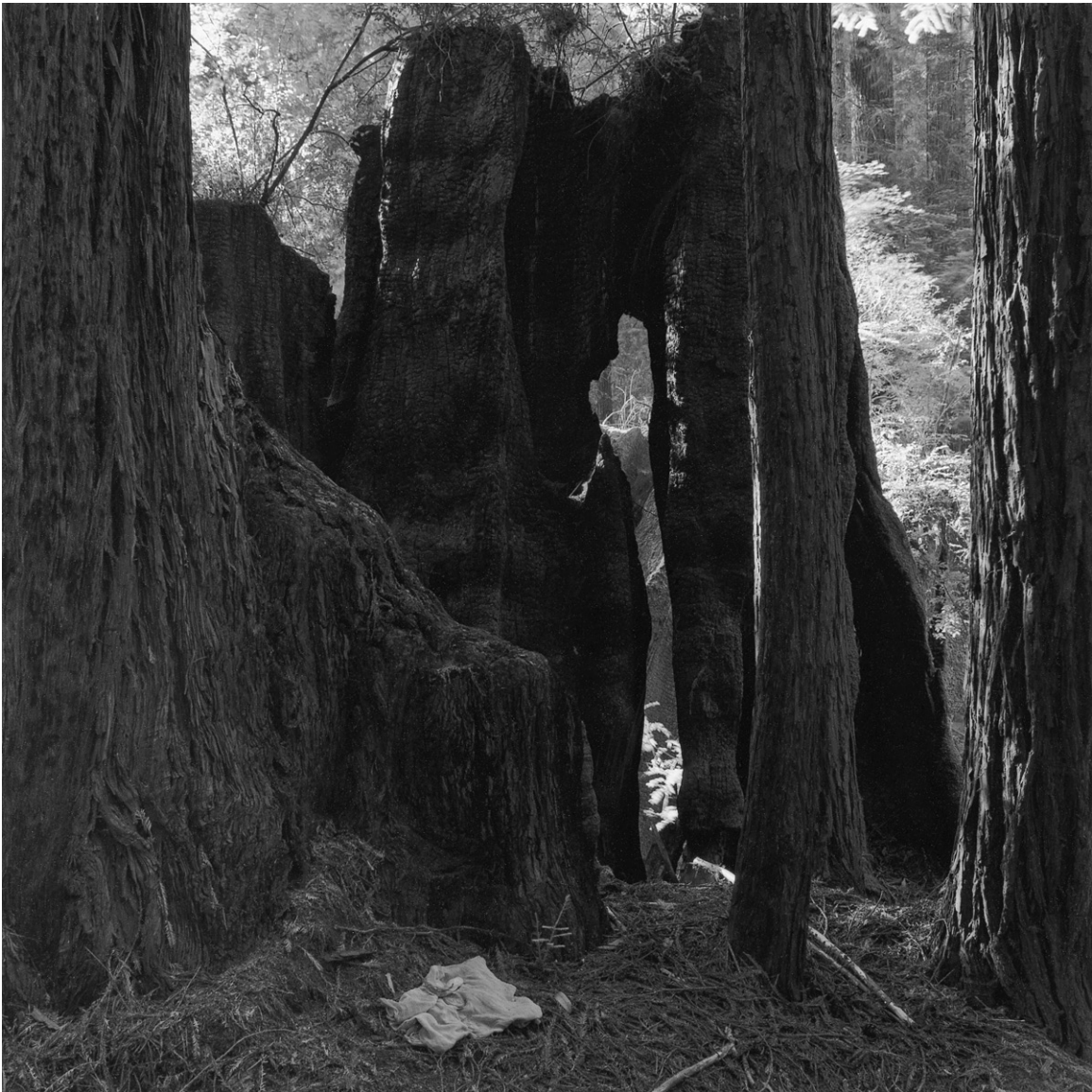




photographs of California Witchcamp by Michael Starkman

## SACRED GROVE ■ *Dawn*

Teach me your words  
to the song of the wind



photographs of California Witchcamp by Michael Starkman

## SACRED GROVE ■ *Aureole*

Allow my heart to beat with yours  
while I wander here



# *Features*



photo by Amy Breeds



# Ms. MUGWORT'S

## QUESTION SYMPOSIUM



*A living encyclopedia of questionable advice, avid meddler in human business, and generous provider of single-dose granules of salt for the taking, Ms. Mugwort is RQ's go-to witch for all of those burning questions you just don't know who to ask. Part Mary Poppins and part Wicked Witch of the West, she excels at sweeping manners right under her magic carpet.*

*Ms. Mugwort's ruminations are transcribed from the original Manx by Arcadia.*

Dear Ms. Mugwort:

I have a big cross-country move coming up soon, and enough magical clutter from old and ongoing spells to fill up a whole truck. How do I retain all of the magic when I move? Is there a special way to pack spell materials so the magic doesn't leak out?

-- Roadtrippin' in Oakland

Dear Roadtrippin',

If you are an adept in teleportation, I highly suggest using that method. Otherwise, try this: rid yourself of all of those dusty old candle stubs, paper scraps, dirt clods, and whatever else you're hanging onto that is not a part of a current spell. Ninety-nine percent of Witches find that this solves their problem entirely!

Dear Ms. Mugwort:

Why is it that whenever I go to a ritual where part of the magic involves stopping and staring deeply into the eyes of Witches I don't know, I've just consumed garlic hummus and have "death breath"? On the other hand, why is it that when I remember to brush and floss, I end up paired with the Witch who was obviously just eating a poppy seed bagel? Please help.

--Sure & Unsure in Fremont

Dear Sure & Unsure,

It's important to remember that "death breath" is just a part of your "life breath," and that poppy seeds come from our sacred Mother Earth. But all that said — gross is gross, and even Witches and Pagans know that! As a courtesy to others, you can always try incorporating covert garlic-breath checks into your ritual experience, especially when everyone else is really focusing on learning the words to a new chant. And don't forget — it's always a good idea to contribute foliage to rituals, and what better than the attractive and useful weed plant called mint? Be a handy-dandy Witch and keep the mint alongside your scrying mirror and seize the chance to divine while looking divine!

Dear Ms. Mugwort:

I've been transitioning my feline companion, Bubbles, into the role of familiar, but she doesn't seem to be aware of all of the responsibilities that this entails. She swats at my sage smoke, eats the feathers on my altar, and plays with the string I use in binding spells. I'm afraid that she is going to singe a whisker if she doesn't stop sniffing around my candles and incense! What can I do to make Bubbles into a really reliable familiar? Why doesn't she sit like a good girl and help me with my magic?

--Herding Cats in Sedona, AZ

Dear Herding Cats,

I'm afraid that the answer to your question is one of life's great mysteries: it's because she's a cat. If you want obedience, try a dog. If you want to keep your feathers intact, try a lizard. A sloth is certainly too slow to chase after your binding-spell strings. Consider perhaps that Bubbles weaves chaos magick — a necessary tool in any Witch's repertoire. To get Bubbles to simmer down a bit, try this trick: offer her a small pinch of *Nepeta cataria* (a.k.a. catnip). Goodness knows that Bubbles deserves that much for all of the hard work she is putting in, even if that hard work looks like dozing under the altar during a spell.

*Do you have a question for Ms. Mugwort? She looks over letters sent to [msmugwort@gmail.com](mailto:msmugwort@gmail.com) between sips of tea and actively meddling in the business of others. Send her your questions any old time!*



# Gardnerian Witchcraft

*an interview with Deborah Lipp, by Wicked Whimsy*

**What is the name of your path?**

Gardnerian Wicca or Gardnerian Witchcraft.

**Is your path pantheistic, polytheistic, nontheistic, or something else entirely?**

Gardnerian Wicca, first of all, is orthopraxic, not orthodox. In plain English, that means that the tradition is defined by what you do, not what you believe. There is a wide range of beliefs among those who are Gardnerian, and that's great. By defining ourselves by behavior, we avoid being the Thought Police.

In general, Gardnerians are polytheistic, but that may take any of several shapes. Most Gardnerians are "soft polytheists," meaning we believe in many gods, but that all gods are ultimately One. For myself, I don't believe there is a One god that is distinct and separate from the One that is all life, you, me, my cats, the Atlantic Ocean, and so on. I think some people tend to see "One" as "God," and I don't. I see One as All, the Tao if you will. And within that One, we're all individuals, gods, and people equally.

That said, there's an awful lot I don't understand about metaphysics, despite a lifetime of study.

Gardnerians worship a specific pair of deities, whom we call the God and the Goddess. Some people think that makes us duotheists, but that's not quite true. We don't call Her "the Goddess" because She's the one and only goddess, but because we consider Her name a secret.

The Pagan Paths interview series was designed to help portray paganism not as the monolith it's usually shown as, but as the variety of multifaceted religions & spiritualities that it actually is. Wicked Whimsy is the personal website of Michelle Nickolaisen, dedicated to creating the life you crave, covering topics ranging from style to spirituality to productivity & creativity.



**What does your daily (or otherwise regular) practice consist of?**

Gardnerians in general meet monthly for full moons (Esbats) and for the eight holidays (Sabbats). Some groups also do new moons. Different groups handle the occasional overlap of holidays and moons differently. In addition, we may meet ad hoc, for example, if there's an emergency healing, or a special occasion, or extra training time, or experimental meetings, or whatever.

Whatever private daily (or otherwise) practice an individual may have is their own choice.

**Can you please give a brief overview of your holidays, if they exist? Which one is your favorite?**

Our holidays are pretty familiar to most Pagans, but let me take a moment to talk about exoteric and esoteric, public and private, and the famous Gardnerian secrecy.

Gardnerians operate under an oath of secrecy, which we take upon initiation. That doesn't mean we can't talk about our tradition, but there are certain areas around which we tiptoe.

Personally, I believe that all religion has an exoteric and an esoteric aspect. There's the part that faces the world and the part that looks inward. I don't think one is superior to the other. I don't think I'd be the Wiccan and Pagan I am today without the enormous positive input of the exoteric Pagan community, by which I mean the public stuff, the festivals, the sharing, the open rituals, the communication. I think that's been an essential part of my growth and exploration and expansion as a Pagan

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**Photo by Luz**

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## Gardnerian Witchcraft

*continued from preceding page*

and Witch.

For me, that public side is complimented by a private side, by the secret, private, intimate, and mystical experience of Gardnerian Witchcraft.

I actually believe that Gerald Gardner always intended a Wiccan practice to include both. He alluded to it in all of his writing: that a coven was something that functioned within a larger Pagan community. I think that's so important.

So if I talk about the holidays: Beltane, Summer Solstice, Lammass, Fall Equinox, Samhain, Yule, Imbolc, and Spring Equinox, I could talk about the public Pagan stuff, and you'd be totally familiar with that.

Meanwhile, I'm also doing private work on the inner, mystical meaning of those holidays. But I don't think that the inner meaning is the "right" one and the public meaning is somehow fake. Rather, I believe they're two sides of the same coin.

All that is the long way around to saying that the inner, private Gardnerian holidays and how they differ from the public Pagan ones is something I'm not prepared to talk about.

**Is there a set view of the afterlife, and if so, what is it?**

Gardnerians tend to believe in reincarnation: rest in the Summerland and then rebirth in a new body. Certainly our rituals support that belief. However, I did say we're not orthodox and not the Thought Police, so there are definitely some Gardnerians who don't believe in reincarnation or simply aren't sure.

My personal beliefs have been strongly influenced by studying the Seth material.

**Do you have a particularly close relationship with one god or goddess? Would you like to share a bit about them?**

In addition to the Gardnerian God and Goddess, my personal patron is Kali. Gardnerians don't necessarily have a patron, it's not part of the tradition. I had a vision of Kali many, many years ago that has had a profound impact on me. She is a difficult Goddess, but She chose me and I accept that and love Her.

**Do you interact with any spirits or beings, other than your deities?**

Oh sure, all the time. That's such an open-ended question! I mean, how do you take a walk on the beach without interacting with the spirit of Ocean? How do you honor your beloved Dead

without interacting with their spirits? The world is full of spirits and beings and we interact with them all the time.

**How do you feel about eclectic vs. traditional Wicca?**

I celebrate people's ability to choose a path that is right for them. I would personally never be happy with an eclectic path. It's just not my personality.

I have a section in my book, *The Study of Witchcraft*, that discusses eclectic, traditional, and radical Witchcraft, and how they differ. I go over each path's pluses and minuses, and suggest ways they can learn from each other.

**Any resources or recommended reading?**

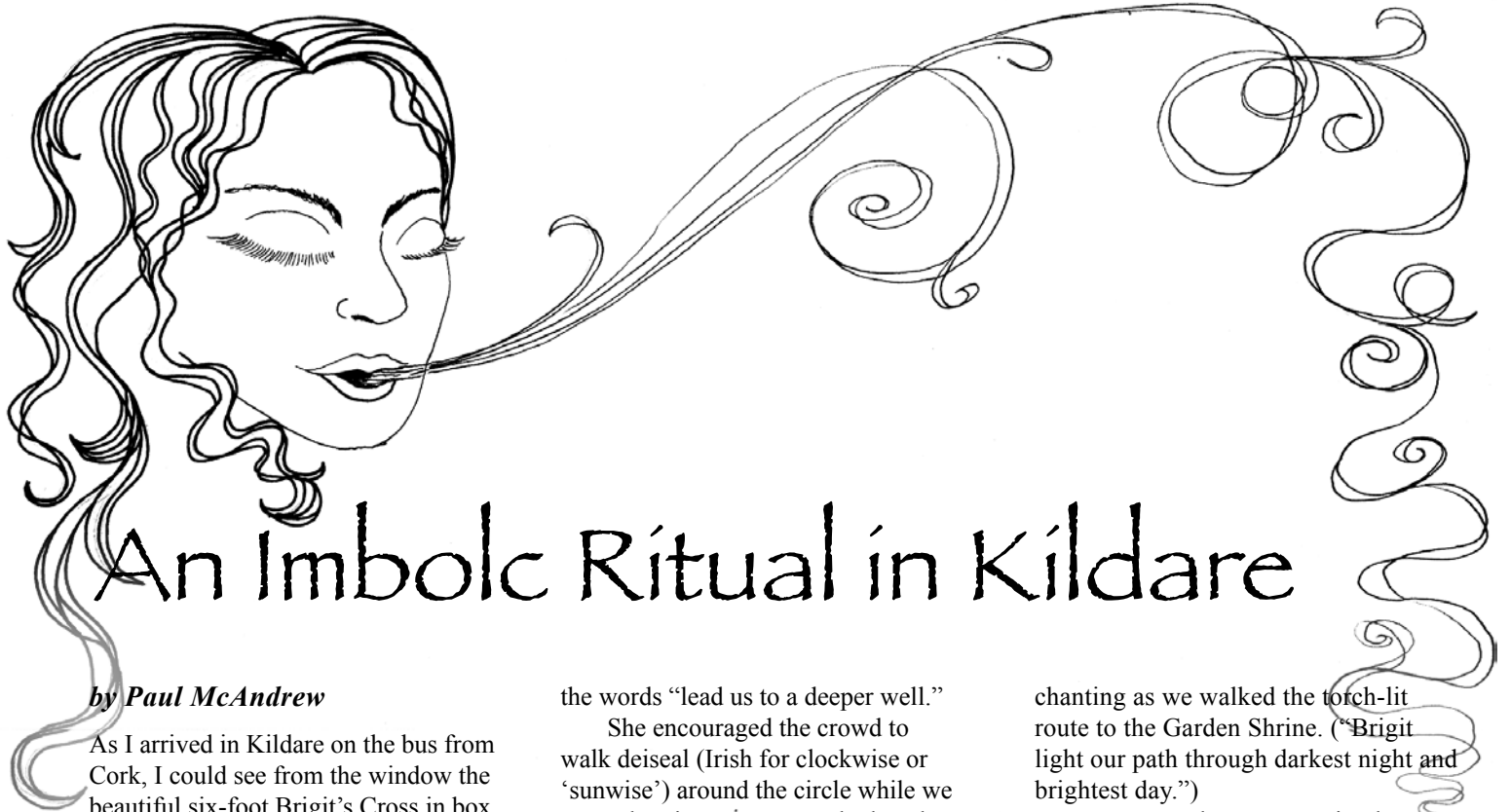
Well, I'm a big fan of my own books. Ha, kidding. I have a recommended reading list on my website.

*Check out Deborah Lipp's books on Amazon, or visit [www.deborahlipp.com](http://www.deborahlipp.com)*

*Pagan Paths is a series dedicated to showing that Paganism is not, as it's often portrayed, a monolith, but an umbrella term for a variety of different, living, breathing religions and paths. Read other interviews in this series at [www.wicked-whimsey.com](http://www.wicked-whimsey.com)*

*Photo by Luz*





# An Imbolc Ritual in Kildare

by **Paul McAndrew**

As I arrived in Kildare on the bus from Cork, I could see from the window the beautiful six-foot Brigit's Cross in box hedging growing on the side of the road.

I got off in the town square and saw a huge sculpture of a flaming torch wreathed in oak leaves, and a powerful-looking statue of Brigit. A "Feile Bhride" banner was flying.

I was met by a friend, Paul, who'd travelled up from Cork earlier. Paul and I walked the mile or so out of town down the dark road towards Brigit's Healing Well. As we got close we could see flames along the side of the road. The ritual route was lit with flaming torches.

We got to the well, which was surrounded with flames, and I climbed down the steep bank so I could bless myself with the water. Just past the well a 20-foot circle had been laid out in candle-lanterns. In the centre of the circle was a large three-legged brazier full of fire, surrounded with arrangements of rushes, symbolizing the hearth. There was a crowd of a hundred people of all ages.

One of the nuns welcomed everybody regardless of the reason they had come, and started teaching us various Brigit chants (she called them "chants" not "hymns") in Irish and English. One of them was "Oscailt mo chroí" ("open my heart"). Another had

the words "lead us to a deeper well."

She encouraged the crowd to walk deiseal (Irish for clockwise or 'sunwise') around the circle while we were chanting. We were asked to shout out the names of the places we had travelled from. The nun talked about the tradition of Brigit walking the land and blessing every town, home, and shed on the eve of her feast. She taught us to chant Her name to invite her to the circle. She talked about Brigit being the one who brings Spring and breathes life into the mouth of dead Winter.

A woman then carried a piece of cloth around the circle, holding it out towards the people to bless us. We were told that it was Brigit's mantle and that we should each leave a piece of cloth outside on our window ledge that night which would become Brigit's mantle and could be used for healing throughout the year. A young girl of about ten sang a beautiful song to Brigit.

Then water from the Healing Well was carried around the circle by four women and sprinkled on the crowd. A young woman wove a Brigit's Cross from rushes in the centre of the circle while we chanted about weaving the hopes of our hearts' delight into it. Then one of the nuns walked around the circle, holding up Brigit's Cross and asking for blessings from the Four Directions, including love from the South and strength from the North. We followed Brigit's flame as it was carried away from the circle,

chanting as we walked the torch-lit route to the Garden Shrine. ("Brigit light our path through darkest night and brightest day.")

Many people were carrying lanterns or glass jars with candles in them.

Outside the entrance to the shrine was a large burning brazier. The shrine itself covers about a quarter of an acre, surrounded by trees, with a stream running through it, upright stones, and a statue of Brigit as a strong woman holding a torch. We chanted, "Walk gently on the Earth, we must respect Her, She does not belong to us, our children must inherit Her."

We were invited to shout out our hopes for ourselves and the world. People shouted things like "justice," "peace of mind," "reconnecting with the Earth." People gave each other a sign of peace, hugging or shaking hands with those around us. After the ritual Luka Bloom played his guitar and sang his Imbolc song, "Don't be afraid of the light that shines within you."

The ritual is held every year in Kildare on January 31st. I'd really recommend going!

*Paul McAndrew is a 43-year-old anarchist gay Pagan from Yorkshire, England, active in radical politics and in the Pagan community in Cork, Ireland.*



Artwork by Naeomi Castellano

# CONFESSIONS

## OF A PAGAN PRIEST

*by Rafael Jesús González*

When in my mid-twenties I became a born-again pagan after a lifetime of traditional Christian Catholic upbringing, practice, and study (I intended to become a physician, enter the Franciscan Order, and work as a medical missionary in South America or Africa) I was not prepared in pagan ritual.

But, having been an altar boy and while in the Navy assisted the chaplain at Corona Naval Hospital say mass, I was well grounded in the rituals of the Catholic church, which in reality, are not that very different from most rituals around the world.

The Catholic sacrament of the Eucharist is a true communion, consecration or not, for bread and wine are indeed flesh and blood of the Earth Mother herself. Purification by water, the wafting of holy smoke (frankincense, myrrh, copal, sage, cedar, sweetgrass) go back to the beginnings of our race, as do the chant, sacred objects, ritual garments, and gestures.

From childhood, I had always performed ritual, either mimicked from what I saw at home or at church, or which I invented and improvised. The only difference, I believe, is a matter of focus and belief, from monotheistic myth to the myths of paganism.

In my mid-twenties in college,

I had already read widely enough in literature, history, anthropology, and comparative religions to know, at least in theory, of many different forms of ritual. I took courses in archaeology at the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México and was well-grounded in the cosmology and myths of the Meso-American cultures.

The more I studied in monotheistic theology the more untenable it became. I came to suspect that it was not so much that its a priori God had made us in his image but that we had made him in ours.

In the summer of my senior year at

was untouchable by language, and not far away or separate, but present; everything manifests It and It manifests everything. Gods are of a subordinate order. And I became born again a pagan. As I and all children are in their very early years of consciousness before indoctrination takes place.

However, it wasn't until the late 60s, early 70s, about six years later, in the midst of the Vietnam war, that, with my study into the Nahuatl, Maya, Huichol cultures of Mexico, I began to take pagan ritual seriously. I created a sacred text which I made into a little book

of worship. I incorporated what I knew of Nahuatl literature and thought and what I had learned of the Huicholes through reading and in the trips I took to Mexico to collect their art, and tentatively created rites. I began to make ritual clothing, embroidering a denim jacket

with the image of the plumed-serpent, signifying enlightenment in indigenous Mexican belief, and collected and created objects of power.

I performed these rituals in private for myself, or shared them with a few intimate friends. These gradually evolved into healing rituals through

IN A GLOBALIZED WORLD WITH A GROWING  
AND MUCH NEEDED GLOBAL PAGANISM,  
WE MUST BORROW WHERE WE CAN,  
RESPECTFULLY, WITH LOVE AND WITH CARE,  
FOR THE EARTH IS ONE WHOLE, AND WE MUST  
HEAL IN WHAT WAYS WE CAN.

the University of Texas, El Paso (Texas Western College of the University of Texas then), friends introduced me to sacred peyote. After the vileness of the taste in my mouth and the nausea, the world took on a shine, an ineffable immediacy, an Isness I'd not experienced since a very young child. I experienced communion. And God and I became friends. I knew that the Absolute

*continued on next page*



## PAGAN PRIEST

*continued from preceding page*

which I guided friends torn by personal trials or by the tormenting exigencies of the cruel, unjust, and unjustifiable war in Vietnam. I performed these rituals in preparation for taking part in demonstrations and acts of civil disobedience, advising conscientious objectors, teach-ins, for my political activism has always been informed by a sense of the sacred.

In 1982, I attended a Medicine Wheel in Cazadero, California conducted by the Chippewa medicine man, Sun Bear. I attended partly because Joan Halifax, whom I had met earlier through a mutual friend, Barbara Myerhoff, a scholar in the Huichol culture, at a symposium on the Huichol at the de Young Museum, was among the presenters.

Sun Bear asked me to lay one of the stones of the axis of the North in the Medicine Wheel which opened me

to participate in pagan rituals more publicly. My conversations with Joan and Sun Bear made me think more deeply about ritual as a more public act, and Sun Bear encouraged me to study and conduct medicine wheels on my own. Returning home, I had vivid dreams in which I saw clearly the design of a ceremonial staff and a talking stick which I knew I had to create.

It was also at this time that I became most active in the anti-nuclear movement. I decided to take a leave of absence from my teaching at Laney College in Oakland, California to work with the Livermore Action Group in Berkeley to organize the first (and only) International Day of Nuclear Disarmament in 1983.

That summer, the University of North Texas had invited my friend Geri Gray to mount an exhibit of her installations and me to give a reading of my poetry. She and I drove there, stopping on the way to attend the Summer Dances of the Hopi on the

Third Mesa.

I took sacred medicine and the kachina dance was a visionary experience in which I came by my medicine name. I had told Geri that I needed raven's wings and claws with which to create the ritual objects I had dreamt and, coming down from the mesa after the dances, she suddenly brought the car to a halt and said, "I have the wings for you." She had spotted a dead crow just off the road, unblemished, without a sign of trauma or a drop of blood. (As soon as I returned home to San Francisco Bay, I fashioned my staff and my talking stick.)

1983 was an intense year in which I was arrested several times for blockading the testing of the MX first-strike missile at Vandenberg Air Force Base, the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory, the Federal Building in San Francisco, consulates, armed forces recruitment offices. I attended meetings with anti-nuclear groups

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## PAGAN PRIEST

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from the western and southwestern states to coordinate actions. I attended what seemed interminable meetings to organize the International Day of Nuclear Disarmament. Before all these activities, I conducted ritual involving, at the very least, the burning of copal or sage and invoking the four sacred directions.

It was in working to bring about the International Day of Nuclear Disarmament that Starhawk and I met and became friends. We were both adamant that the date set for the day of protest had to be one of universal significance transcending national or ethnic identities, political references, varying religious traditions — it had to be a day holy to the Earth. And so, after interminable discussion, consensus was reached — the day was set for the Summer Solstice 1983.

Very early that day, Lifers, my affinity group, prepared ourselves ritually and marched to the gates of the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory where I, wearing my embroidered ritual denim jacket and ritual mask, invoked the four directions before we all sat in front of the gates

as an act of both civil disobedience and worship. Later after our arrest, in Santa Rita Jail, the five-hundred some odd men in our part of the jail and the five-hundred some-odd women in their section formed our circles to celebrate the solstice and sang to each other across a wide ravine.

Returning home after actions of civil disobedience and being held in jail for varying periods of time, many experienced disorientation and what we termed the “post-action” or “post-jail” blues. I led small medicine wheels for Lifers to center and ground ourselves. These included our families and support groups. Hearing of these, people from Change of Heart cluster began joining us on Mt. Tamalpais where our medicine wheels grew and grew and began to be regularly held at the Equinoxes and Solstices.

This gave rise to the Wakwa Society which for more than a decade afterward organized these seasonal wheels. The largest wheel (more than five hundred attending) undertaken by the Wakwa Society was for the 20th anniversary of Earth Day, held in Golden Gate Park, which I led with Halifu Osumare, a Yoruba-Santeria priestess.

By the early nineties, when I joined Starhawk to lead a series of multi-

cultural rituals for Samhain/Día de Muertos, I was participating in public ritual often to open Men’s conferences, to perform naming ceremonies, marriages, quinceañera celebrations, boys’ puberty rites, healing sessions. (It was at this time that I and three friends founded Xochipilli, a Latino men’s ritual group.) Now, for the past fifteen years, I have conducted the ofrenda ceremonies at the Oakland Museum of California’s yearly Días de Muertos Community Celebration.

So I became a priest after all, albeit a pagan priest, who exercises his priestly duties with borrowed rites, modified and appropriated, if you will, though I have escaped such accusation from Indigenous folk, more direct heirs to pagan traditions and jealous of their heritage. I am sure it is because I am Mexican and Indigenous blood runs in my veins.

But it can’t be helped. In a globalized world with a growing and much needed global paganism, we must borrow where we can, respectfully, with love and with care, for the Earth is one whole, and we must heal in what ways we can.

*Rafael Jesús González, Prof. Emeritus of Creative Writing & Literature, was honored by the City of Berkeley in 2009 for a lifetime of writing & art, teaching, & social activism. His most recent book is La musa lunática/The Lunatic Muse.*

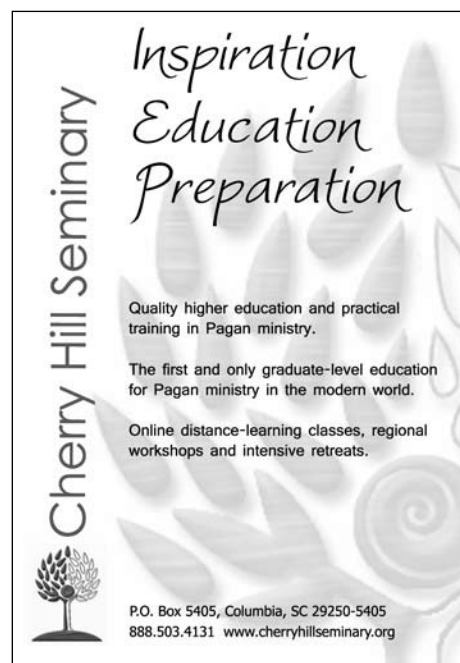


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# Luna en perigeo después de terremoto

(a mi amigo el Prof. Naoshi Koriyama  
y a la gente del Japón después del terremoto  
y *tsunami* del 11 de marzo 2011)

Una luna de raro tamaño y belleza  
sale arrastrando más altas las mareas.  
¿Tal vez como las de Jokusai?  
No es necesaria para eso  
una luna en perigeo —  
la Tierra es lo suficiente poderosa  
en su inquietud violenta  
para despedazar el suelo,  
para sacudir las cazuelas de los océanos,  
para batir las aguas  
y causar estragos en la tierra  
sin ayuda de la luna.

La Madre, los antiguos sabían,  
no es siempre amable.

Pero la luna,  
protegiendo como pueda a la Tierra  
de la lluvia de meteoritos  
siempre lo ha sido  
aunque nos guste culparle  
de nuestra locura.

Ahora la luna se hace grande  
como si para consolar  
con un poquito más de luz.

# Perigee moon after earthquake

(to my friend Prof. Naoshi Koriyama  
& the people of Japan after the earthquake  
& *tsunami* of March 11, 2011)

A moon of rare size & beauty  
rises pulling the tides higher.  
Waves perhaps like Hokusai's?  
There is no need  
of a perigee moon for that —  
the Earth is powerful enough  
in her violent unrest  
to tear apart the ground,  
to shake the bowls of the oceans,  
& churn the waters,  
& wreak devastation on the land  
without help from the moon.

The Mother, the ancients knew,  
is not always kind.

But the moon,  
shielding the Earth as she can  
from the rain of meteorites,  
has always been,  
though we like to blame her  
for our madness.

Now the moon grows large  
as if to comfort  
with a bit more light.

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Image © 2011 Fil

# The Crossroads

## or, Why I Practice More Than One Tradition

by *Great Serpent*

The crossroads plays a big part in New Orleans Vodou, which I practice. Legba, the lwa (Vodou spirit) who opens the gate to let the other lwa through, represents the crossroads, the doorway.

Until a few years ago, I was an unspiritual person. I knew nothing about magick, and I hadn't set foot in a church or any other place of worship in years, except at Christmastime to hear organ music and sing Christmas carols. However, I always had an interest in Tarot cards and ghosts since I was a kid.

In recent years, my interest in tarot cards and ghosts widened to a curiosity about different types of magick and a desire to study them. I started out as a Rosicrucian, which I plan to get back into one day, then got interested in Vodou and Reclaiming. At first, I was interested in mysticism. Eventually I got interested in magick. Of course, I don't plan to study every single tradition in the world since one has only so much time, but I do like being well-rounded.

I practice two traditions for self-empowerment. Vodou and Reclaiming have many differences, but one thing they have in common is they teach you how to protect yourself, defend yourself if necessary, and to do things for yourself. They also teach you how to do the same for others. They emphasize community.

All this may sound obvious, but I am amazed how much mainstream society — at least in the United States — teaches us to do the opposite. In mainstream culture, we are taught by a corporate-run media not to think for ourselves, to believe only what pundits tell us, to trust “experts,” and to feel bad about ourselves if we don't fit a demographic or look a certain way. Ads tell us to buy things that will supposedly “fix” us. If there's something “wrong” with us, the only way to fix it is to buy a product they're selling.

My experience with magick — whether it's Vodou, Reclaiming, or any other kind — is that it diagnoses the problem and points to possible solutions. Looking for a job? Want a lover? Cast a spell. Or call and make a sacrifice to an lwa (Vodou spirit).

You may not always get your wish, but at least you're taking action to solve your problem.

Through this process you're also developing a relationship with the unseen. The greater your connection to the invisible is, the more insights into your problem you will have. You may also discover things about your problem you never knew before, and find that it is a symptom of something else. Magick helps you dig deep into the root of a situation, and thus find the proper tools for dealing with it. Magick can give you power, and help you feel stronger.

But perhaps the biggest reason I practice two traditions is because I have often found myself in situations where different cultures, systems, practices, or energies intersect. Some examples:

I was born near the cusp of two astrological signs.

Many people in my father's family were originally from France, Germany, and Alsace-Lorraine, a region warred over by both countries for centuries, and consequently a land of both French and German cultures.

I am originally from Louisville, Kentucky, a city with both Southern and Midwestern



Luz

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## The Crossroads

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influences. Historically, Northern and Southern cultures have often met, and clashed, here. Kentucky was also a border state that was neutral — meaning that it was neither pro-Union nor pro-secession — during the Civil War. Many people in Kentucky supported slavery, but the city of Louisville also had many abolitionists. Louisville is called the crossroads for all these reasons.

The crossroads plays a big part in New Orleans Vodou, which I practice. Legba, the lwa who opens the gate to let the other lwa through, represents the crossroads, the doorway. The crossroads marks the border between the visible and invisible worlds, the material and spirit worlds. Before you connect with the other lwa, it makes sense to call Papa Legba first. Establish a relationship with him because the power to open the door to the spirit world, to create a conduit

between the material and spirit worlds, is in his hands. Give him a sacrifice or two. He likes rum and cigars. You can also give him a cane, since he is an elderly man. Because Vodou is practiced differently in Louisiana, parts of Haiti and the Dominican Republic, and Africa, serving Papa Legba and the other lwa may vary between these places.

In Reclaiming, the crossroads also has a presence, although it is not referred to as such. Rather, Reclaiming rituals discuss being “between the worlds.” A Reclaiming ritual starts with the casting of a circle. At the beginning of this casting, someone often says: “The circle is cast. We are between the worlds. And what happens between the worlds changes all the worlds.” After the circle is cast, you are between these worlds until the circle “is open, but not unbroken,” and the ritual ends.

When you are in the crossroads, I find, you are exposed to and learn different things. You learn different perspectives. Consequently, you have



Luz

different experiences, which enrich your life. Practicing different traditions allows me to experience the crossroads in a variety of ways. The more time I spend in the crossroads, the more I can determine the next path I will take.

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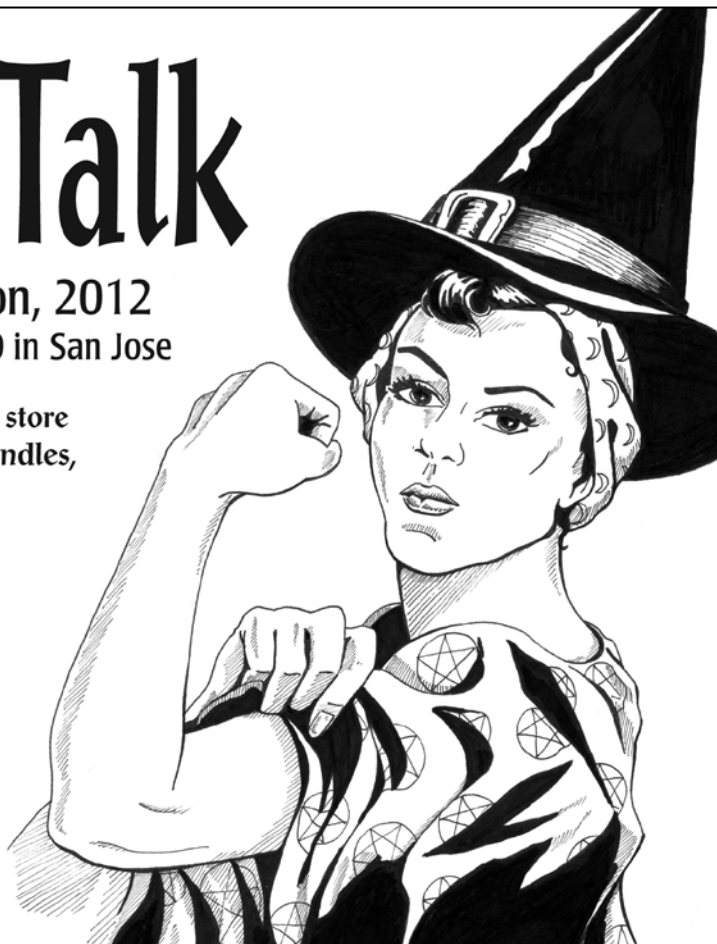


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# Myth Running

Magic is the process of conscious manifestation

Photos and text by Luz

## THE STRUCTURE OF STORY

I was running late... again. I had sporadically glanced at the clock while getting ready to leave my home, attempting to change my chronic lateness by applying more time-focus. Yet by the time I was ready to drive away, the hour displayed on the car dash seemed unreal.

How did this consistently happen? Finding ways to shorten the drive-time or noticing that my walking in late was not problematic provided an occasional remedy but no resolution. It should only take 20 minutes to make and eat breakfast, 15 to shower and dress, and how much time could it possibly take to pack up and get into the car? My brain fogged up trying to figure it out. It was as if time had disappeared into a black hole.

How familiar does this story feel? Your own context might involve some other seemingly mundane issue, or maybe talking more authentically with loved ones, or creating a sustainable life and world where you feel peaceful, free, and nourished.

We all run patterns involving behaviors, values, beliefs, our sense of who we are, our biological drive for safety and survival, a mindset for how we perceive the world, and our connections that extend beyond ourselves. These patterns mostly run unconsciously. They are best known as “habits.” They’re like standard operating procedures [SOPs] for oneself.

Our unique patterns actually reside in physical structures, in complex combinations of neuro-pathways. The larger and stronger of our brain circuits – those accessed and used more frequently – function as defaults that drive what gets enacted – the SOPs.

We all talk to ourselves. We think certain thoughts, and if we really tune in attentively, we may hear actual words internally. We do this to help map out what we’re doing, what we’re not doing, and why we’re doing or not doing. Some of us also carefully listen to our body, feeling the sensations, experiencing the emotions, and then make cognitive sense of our somatic wisdom.

We all have personal stories. Stories represent the fuller picture of what we tell ourselves and others. *I could never make a living doing X!* They may also be what others tell us, and which we believe. *We must all sacrifice in these hard times.* Some stories just seem to exist in the culture and are assumed to be true. *The UN Security Council has approved a no-fly zone to protect civilians and we must deploy resources to defend it.* Some stories grow large, beyond simple parameters to become a form of personalized or socialized myth, what we are expected to believe, and what the news pundits often call “narratives.”

Let’s clarify our terms for purposes of this article. The great Myths come down from all traditions, offering us nourishing archetypal perspectives by which to review, guide, and enrich our lives. Those Myths are not the subject of this article. While contextual meanings vary, I am using story, myth, narrative, message, and frame as name words that encapsulate and codify ideas, reflecting values and beliefs that drive our actions. Such a container might hold an idea that is harmful to the individual or the collective.

Careful the wish you make  
Wishes are children  
Careful the path they take  
Wishes come true, not free  
Careful the spell you cast  
Not just on children  
Sometimes the spell may last  
Past what you can see  
And turn against you  
Careful the tale you tell  
That is the spell  
Children will listen

*Into the Woods*  
by Stephen Sondheim

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## Myth Running

*continued from preceding page*

Likewise it can hold an idea that can be used to empower or inspire.

When we hear a story and take it in, consciously or unconsciously, we are affected by it in powerful ways. The story does not have to be “true” for it to work its effect. Stories plant values and beliefs inside us. This happens physically. New neural pathways are created in our brain. The more we think about and thereby integrate such values and beliefs, the stronger these physical structures grow and the more these default patterns are used. Myth and story can cripple or grow our capacity to act in our own best interest and with consideration for the web of life on which we all depend.

What myths run you? What myths run people you know?

How often do we inquire into myths and stories to assess if they are actually true? Who benefits when large numbers of people believe a particular frame or narrative? Do we notice how certain stories may limit us, and can we recognize whose strategies those stories might serve?

I believe that we all live by unexamined narratives and myths, likely more than we realize or would want to admit. The price for doing so is enormous. How curious are we willing to be?

### DECONSTRUCTING THE STORY

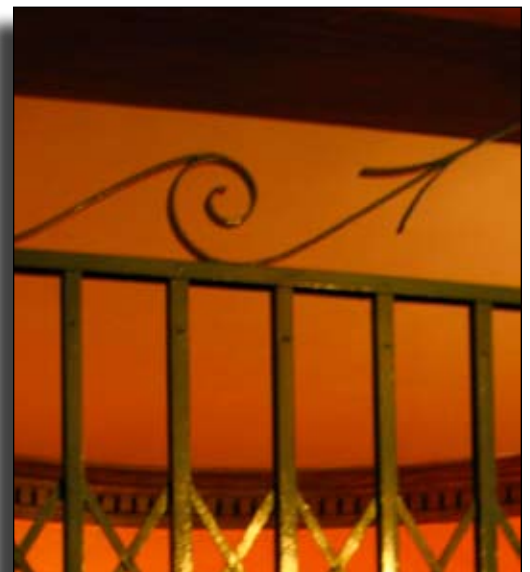
Time-focused does not describe me. My father’s habitual get-there-early mentality maddened me as a teen, especially when the family waited in the car, engine running, while I rushed to get out the door, dropping things in my anxiety. I ran on my adolescent feelings, needs, and cool things happening in my relationships.

As an adult, I can now recognize that I live and work in a society that runs on timeliness. That reality confronts me with choices. If I want credibility from peers and clients or need to be fully present for what happens in a meeting, I need to conform to this ubiquitous expectation. While I acknowledge that my life would benefit from more balanced practices, part of me is discomforted and feels uncertain about making sustainable changes on the time issue.

Let’s excavate this example to understand the deeper dynamics of change and what a crucial role myth plays. Obviously I have pessimistic feelings that may block the possibility of changing what is clearly a long-established habit. I pride myself as someone who values relational aspects of life more than a cultural time priority. The fact that my identity is involved reflects how thoroughly this issue is interwoven with my psyche. Issues that “live” at such a highly organized neurological level signify a major challenge to successful change efforts. That means there is a lot more complexity to navigate.

The fact that “my brain fogged up trying to figure it out” is clear evidence that strong emotions temporarily blocked access to higher cognitive functions. Rather than having hard data, I postulated a theory, “It should only take 20 minutes to...” and in frustration, exclaimed to myself, “How much time could it possibly take to...?” These are slippery notions and not true quantitative measures. Combined with my blaming an external cause, specifically that time had disappeared, these assumptions serve to keep my story intact. Unless deconstructed they deflect any examination of the overarching story and prevent any positive resolution of the problem.

The myth running me has been my belief that I have no power to change this habit. But listening more deeply, my breath catches and tears well up. I have discovered a secret belief. I truly fear that I can never have the life I



Photos by Luz

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## Myth Running

*continued from preceding page*

desire. Living as if this were true, why bother with the small stuff? I remained stuck in a familiar, dysfunctional pattern. While this problem first presented as mundane, it actually masked a deeper core issue. Core problems live everywhere.

What happens when we live as though our assumptions, beliefs, or myths are true? How can we make up what, upon rigorous inquiry, prove to be flimsy or even preposterous stories? What do we lose when we are at the effect of a force outside ourselves? What happens when we internalize other people's proclamations, stories, and admonishments as true words to live by, to fight and die for, to lie for? We see the consequences all around us, in our personal lives, the deep divides of antagonistic opinions, and the social, political, and economic breakdowns occurring in our world now. The power of language and belief play a key role.

### TRANSFORMING THE STORY

In the face of consistent incongruity between my "disappearing time" assumption, ludicrous as it was, and what showed up as my real problem, something finally broke down. It's hard to live with cognitive dissonance for very long. I stopped assuming and began to wonder how many minutes it actually took to complete the necessary tasks before leaving the house. So began a powerful and utterly simple experiment. I tracked and wrote down the exact times it took for all the activities in different circumstances over a few days. The combined mathematical results offered irrefutable evidence that my story was false. I was astonished and chagrined. I hadn't "lost" time, but had never calculated the real minutes it took to get everything done. With my former framing of the problem, it was unrealistic to expect that I could ever be on time.

With real data finally in hand, I recognized that I had never used a quantitative process to determine when I needed to begin my departure tasks. I had been chronically overwhelmed by fuzzy thinking generated from my strong emotions about this issue. Perhaps I had been too fearful of discovering the true cause for this habit, later revealed as my secret belief that I would never have the life I truly desired.

I could almost feel my synapses sear as they lit up my brain with liberating new insights. Many issues could be averted if we asked ourselves, what do we really know and what are we assuming, guessing, or making up? Well versed in guiding clients to surface and challenge their assumptions, I had been ensnared by the lack of examining my own until the internal discord became too painful. The emotional power embedded in a dysfunctional belief is strong enough to short-circuit our ability to act in ways that promote our wellbeing. Working with such insights and transforming my secret belief is gradually supporting me to grow a new sense of identity aligned with effective behavior that builds my desired life.

### THE STRUCTURE OF REALITY

Leaving home and moving into a university setting allowed me the freedom to engage with new ways of viewing the world. Political narratives became more transparent to me. I came of age during the era when males of various colors were called upon to fight each other in a US-provoked war in Vietnam. My freshman year morphed into full exposure to the fires of political dissent as students at my Jesuit university called a moratorium on institutional classes. Hanging out in the student-run alternative teach-in space, I heard statements at odds with my military

The federal deficit is the problem.  
The people united will never be defeated.  
Government's job is to protect business.  
The US economy is going broke.

Vegetarianism will end hunger.  
We must all sacrifice in these hard times.  
We cannot afford entitlement programs.  
Si, se puede!

We shall overcome — some day.  
Nuclear is green, renewable energy.  
My people lived here before yours did.  
Tax breaks create jobs.

*continued on next page*



## Myth Running

*continued from preceding page*

family's staunch beliefs. My inner cacophony thundered as loudly as the outside voices:

*Stop the war NOW!*

*We've always had war; we'll always have war.*

*We cannot kill those people.*

*We're ridding the world of Communism.*

The reason for differing stories relates to the fact that we are meaning-making creatures. To successfully navigate this world, we necessarily engage in deleting, distorting, and generalizing many of the gazillion data bytes that rush upon us every second. We each develop filters that help us avoid being overrun by data that in a nanosecond we must deem irrelevant. Combined with other socializing factors we each create our own unique sense of the world, our "reality" as it were. We filter some data in and filter a great deal out.

As a result, we become unable to perceive outside our own filters. I may not notice what someone else, with a different set of filters about the world, will perceive. Without enlarging our filters, our lives tend to be narrowly defined, putting us at even greater risk for unconscious myth running.

Filters are part of the SOP process. On any particular day I may feel out of sorts. If I typically tend to notice negative things, that habit may soon make me feel much worse. Living with that kind of default filter likely means telling myself an old story that essentially says that the world is a mess or dangerous and nothing is going right in my life. My lived experience, viewed through that negative filter, proves that I'm right, which in turn reinforces those beliefs in a loop that maintains the overall myth running my life. I can also choose to change my story, which takes extra effort and yet makes all the difference.

Words have power. The words we use reflect the way we perceive our world and create a telling map of our inner reality. Words shift the energetic field, and when strung together into combinations of new meaning, namely ideas, they change our world. Humans need biological stability, homeostasis, to survive. Psychologically we need congruence. When we hold a certain idea to be true, the body's system orients itself to perceive the world aligned with that "truth," filtering for those things we "know" to be "true." We act as if this idea were true in the world.

Yet that idea or myth might be constructive, or it might be hurtful and toxic. Toxic beliefs and myths have the power to railroad us into a life we might not have chosen with eyes and heart open. It is in reclaiming our power to undo the straightjacket of imposed myths that we give ourselves the permission to look for the good in the world as well as what needs changing, to perceive and create opportunities, and to follow our deepest longings.

It takes conscious discipline to inquire into myths. To excavate the terrain of a story and glean the real structure is a critical act. Deconstructing is essential, but not enough. We may finally decide what we don't want anymore; but what do we want instead? What kind of future can we cast our sight upon? What is it that causes our spirits to rise up and soar? It is the forward movement of creating new beliefs, new stories, and new myths to nourish us and our dreams that will save us and our world. How will you respond to the call?

As for me... having recognized my secret belief in the course of writing this article has been very powerful. After unconsciously manifesting its disempowering message for many years, I have entered into a process of creating and strengthening new beliefs that inspire me to create a better story, a more positive template, for the life I truly desire. See the Process article that follows for general instructions, along with an example of one way I am proceeding with this work.



Luz

*Luz is an artist practicing many disciplines. What moves her spirit these days is the recognition of how powerfully our beliefs constrain or nourish our soul's development and our life's satisfaction. The long journey of writing this article birthed her intention to move this wisdom into the world.*

*continued on next page*



# Process to gently change a belief/myth

by Luz

Recognize ~ that there's a part of you that believes a particular myth which has been running your life in a hurtful way. Determine your openness and readiness to explore it.

*Luz – This myth has constrained my life for too long. It's time to really look at it. I'm ready.*

Inquire ~ into this situation with fresh eyes. Suspend judgment. Explore the shape of this myth, using a range of intuitive, somatic, and analytical methods of perceiving what it is and how it came to be in your life.

*Luz – My dreams are telling me that I don't fully live in my life. I feel worn down from its many challenges. Life has always felt edgy with too much work and too little ease and enjoyment. It seems that I've had to fight for everything I ever got. My parents often told me that life is hard. My dad feared I'd not be able to support myself after I changed my major to theatre. I learned to fear going for what I really loved and came to believe that I cannot have the life I desire.*

Appreciate ~ that this belief has served some useful purpose in an earlier phase of your life. The fact that you are now aware of its limitations for your current life is good news. You can now better calibrate how you want to show up for yourself. Let yourself wonder what a part of you might be offering with this myth, in a larger context. Dig under the surface. What is its highest sacred intention for you? There are many behavioral ways to manifest a sacred intention... to "kiss the ground."

*Luz – This is a tough question. As a young graduate, I did not yet have enough life exposure to even know what all I might want. I felt overwhelmed by my intense feelings and was pained yet proud by how differently I showed up compared to other people. My life seemed surreal. I wonder if this myth stopped me from making choices before I knew enough to choose well. Perhaps its intention was to protect me through buying me time until I was more experienced and self-aware. Sadly, I overused the myth for too long.*

Align ~ yourself with that high sacred intention. Create a temple within which to meet that part of yourself that has believed this particular myth as the way of achieving that sacred intention. Honor that part of you for its past benevolent service.

*Luz – I can feel the congruence of the logic inherent in this myth. I do want protection from doing stupid things that are not good for me. An internal pause button can be a good thing! I do appreciate that part of me that took care of me in this way all those years. And I need a different expression of that caring protection in my life now.*

Transform ~ Make common cause with that part of you to create new options for achieving that sacred intention by using a new empowering myth/belief. A simple shared commitment can seal the alliance. What new belief would best serve your life now? In what way might you need to update the operating system for your life?

*Luz – Wow, an upgrade captures the kind of shift I want! I can agree to being protected by keeping the pause button, but the choosing criteria must be broader, given my greater wisdom now. I want more liberty to exercise greater agency to create the life I want. I feel a need to reassure myself that I deserve this more fulfilling life. A fitting new belief might be something like: I can/will use my wisdom and intuition to create a luscious life that fills me with joy. I'll live with that awhile and tweak it as needed.*

Invoke ~ your heart, will, passion, and values. Engage forces to assist you – gods/goddesses, nature, your unconscious, etc. Visualize yourself already having the new empowering belief that truly serves your sacred intention and rebalances your life. State the new belief in one easy sentence, using simple words. In your mind's eye notice yourself behaving in new ways that enact that intention. Use all your sensory channels to make this [future] experience a reality NOW. You are already living it NOW. You're seeing [visual] what it's like to act from this new belief. You're

*continued on next page*



## Process for changing a myth

*continued from preceding page*

hearing [auditory] what's around you when you act in this new way, and hearing different self-talk. You're feeling [kinesthetic] your new emotions and perhaps physical sensations as you go about living in this new way. You're smelling [olfactory] and tasting [gustatory] the delicious different life you now lead.

Feel all this strongly and vividly. Play it out in your mind's eye, seeing yourself acting in new ways through the coming days and weeks, in specific situations when you anticipate such a new belief will be valuable for you. See it, hear it, feel it, smell it, taste it. Make it totally sensory-based and real for yourself. When you're ready, come back to the room and be in present time, knowing that this new life is already here... in your next breath and all the ones to follow.

*Luz – I hold the belief that I can/will use my wisdom and intuition to create a luscious life that fills me with joy. I feel the fire with me. I invoke Isis, the great Goddess of transformation, among other energies. When I actually use this process, I feel the magnetic pull toward that future enriching life. I know that perceiving my new life in such a compelling, tangible way always helps me flow into this new reality. It feels really good.*

And is this not magic?! Find the life that is already calling you. Create a belief that engages you to go live that new life. Do it NOW!

So mote it be.



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."

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Hear song-samples and order this beautiful CD at [www.ReclaimingQuarterly.org](http://www.ReclaimingQuarterly.org), or send \$16 per copy to RQ, Box 14404, San Francisco CA 94114.



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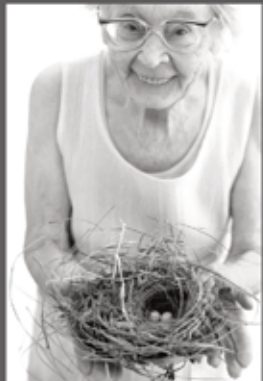
Please visit [www.bcwitchcamp.ca](http://www.bcwitchcamp.ca) for a  
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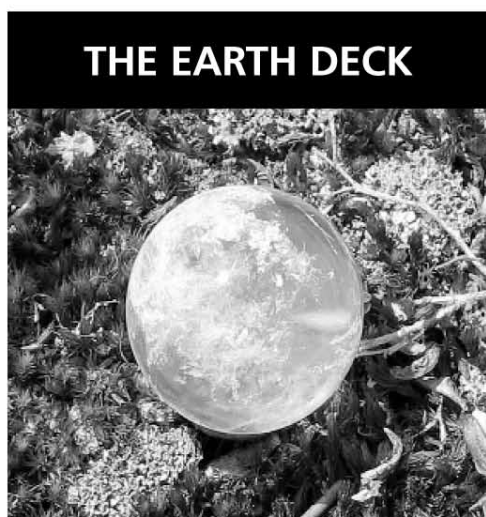
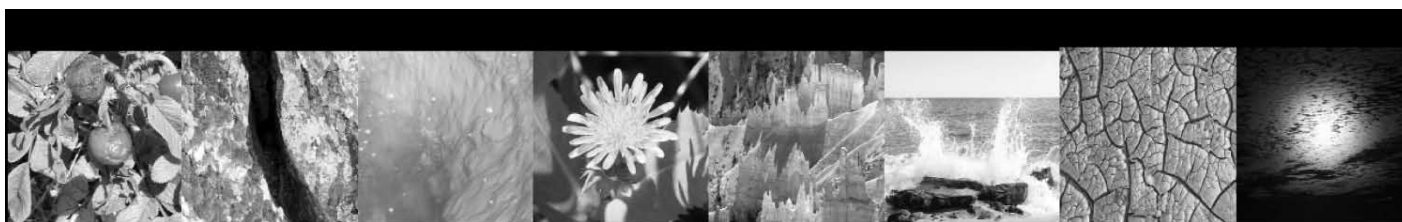
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Set of 8"x 8" laminated cards comes with carrying pouch.

*"The Earth Deck is a wonderful, magical tool for divination, that reminds us what our true sacred text is: Nature herself. A great tool for activating the intuition and imagination. And Gail's beautiful images can be enjoyed just for themselves!"*

—Starhawk

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# Reclaiming Quarterly ~ now published in selected quarters

The deadline for our next issue is about a month before it's published. When is that? Good question!

When we know, we'll announce it on Reclaiming's elists, including the RIDL list, which is open to all. To join RIDL, email [quarterly@reclaiming.org](mailto:quarterly@reclaiming.org)

Meanwhile, you can submit articles, photographs, graphics, mini-reviews, fan mail, chocolate, etc at any time. The sooner you send something, the sooner we can start trying to work it into the next issue.

Email submissions to [quarterly@reclaiming.org](mailto:quarterly@reclaiming.org)

## **The 1st Annual Conference on Earth-Based, Nature-Centered, Polytheistic & Indigenous Faiths**

**2011 Theme: Gender & Earth-Based Spiritualities**

*Presented by The Pagan Alliance*

The Pagan Alliance's first annual on Earth-Based, Nature-Centered, Polytheistic & Indigenous Faiths, co-sponsored by Circle of Dionysos, in 2011 will examine the interrelationship of Earth-based spirituality and gender. Presentations, workshops and panels will address the Construct of Dualism, Transgender Issues, Men's Mysteries, Queer Mysteries, Womyn's Mysteries, Gender & Indigenous Beliefs, Gender in the Spiral of Life, Genderqueer Theology, Gender & Minority Faith Parenting.

The conference will include presenters who grapple with issues relating to gender in their academic scholarship, as well as those who are leaders within their spiritual communities.

**Saturday September 24, 2011 9am-5pm**

**Luncheon Noon** (Reservation required)

**Special Mixer with the Presenters 6-8pm** (Limited Seats)

First Unitarian Universalist Church and Center  
1187 Franklin Street, San Francisco CA 94109

Presenter Submissions will open soon, please  
watch the website for more information.  
Attendee Registration will open in June.

**\$25-\$110**

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For more info please email:

JoHanna White, the Pagan Alliance president  
[johanna@thepaganalliance.org](mailto:johanna@thepaganalliance.org)

**[www.thepaganalliance.org](http://www.thepaganalliance.org)**

## The Magical Writer ~ Online

An Online Writing Intensive  
in the Reclaiming Tradition

With George Franklin and Guest Teachers

Want to write a novel, memoir, or other narrative?  
Want to jump-start your writing, regardless of the  
style? Let Reclaiming magic help!

We'll look at the craft of writing and the emotional blocks that keep us from reaching our full artistic potential.



We'll meet in sacred space, share writing and support over the web, and gain understanding and skill from working with others. Writing can be an isolating practice - we'll use magic to weave a web of support and encouragement.

With magical tools such as circle-casting, ancestor invocations, trances, and spellwork, we'll free our expressive gifts and strengthen our belief in ourselves as artists.

We will also work on writing that expresses our unique voice, creating plot-structures, developing characters, and other aspects of the writers' craft. Each class includes directed writing time.

Class is suitable for those working on writing projects who want a supportive circle and new inspiration, and those looking to begin the process. Although you'll determine your own work-pace, be prepared to dedicate time to your writing, and to write for at least ten minutes each day.

For more information, contact George,  
[george@directaction.org](mailto:george@directaction.org), (415) 255-7623

## Reclaiming News

# Teen Earth Magic

Teen Earth Magic, held each June near Nevada City in Northern California, brings together over two dozen teens and young adults for five days of magic and activism.

Our 2009 camp followed the Journey of the Salmon. The 2010 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](http://RQ.org)

The fourth Teen Earth Magic retreat is in June 2011. We welcome youth and young adults ages 13-25 (ages 19-25 can apply to be part of a mentoring path).

For more information, contact RQ — [quarterly@reclaiming.org](mailto:quarterly@reclaiming.org)



*Photo by Will/RQ*



Suzanne Sterling  
Yoga, Music and Ritual Arts

Nationwide Yoga and Activism Intensives  
<http://www.offthematintotheworld.org>

Year long Priestess Trainings  
Bay Area training begins March 2010

New album "Blue Fire Soul"  
releasing on White Swan Records December 2009

<http://www.suzannesterling.com>



FIFTH BIENNIAL ALL-RECLAIMING

# DANDELION GATHERING

PACIFIC NORTHWEST • 2012

In 2012, dozens of Reclaiming folks will gather together at the fifth biennial Dandelion Gathering. This time Dandelion is in the Pacific Northwest.

Dandelion 5 is coming to the beautiful Pacific Northwest!

Planning is happening now for holding D5 in the Portland, Oregon area in 2012. (Firmer dates and more details to be posted soon. The most likely timing is early to mid May or early Fall, in mid-September or early October).

Join us for:

- beautiful country
- good company
- great food
- important exchange of ideas
- market, music, and magic to be made!



*Photographs from Dandelion Gathering 2006 in Massachusetts by RQ.*



## HELP ORGANIZE DANDELION 2012

We invite you to be part of the action as Reclaiming comes together again! Visit the Dandelion Gathering website, [www.dandeliongathering.org](http://www.dandeliongathering.org), for further updates in the near future.

If you want to get involved in organizing Dandelion 5, contact Satya Peterson, [satya.peterson@gmail.com](mailto:satya.peterson@gmail.com), (971) 219-0012.

We are excited to have people engaged from our myriad Reclaiming communities and look forward to seeing you in the Pacific Northwest next year.

# THE SPIRAL DANCE: THE BEGINNING

by *Gede Parma*

And so we enter the holy space...that place trembling with the anticipation of Other...that place we of the Wise know so well. Descending by aid of Graces, we are made blessed again – renewed – with each droplet of water infused into our breathing skin. I bow to the sovereignty of that touch, of that embrace by invisible hands that take on silver hues as I walk deeper into that place between.

I bow to each Altar...I bow to the youth, who in their hour of need fell, but will be reborn to Love...I bow to the wounded Yemaya, the Great Black Mother whose blackening by oil has desecrated the light that shines forth from her brilliant sheen evoked forth by the kiss of the Lady Moon...I bow to the other nations – to those of the fur, the feather, the scale and the fin – I

pray for their salvation...And I bow to the Directions – the South and the Fire and the Phoenix ushering forth impassioned pleas for *life*, the West and the Water and the

healing rivers that run deep, the North and Earth and the harvest we all gather in. I come last to East and Air, where the Eagle crests the dawning sun.



I sit, not to wait, but to breathe and live in the space; to become acquainted with the holy ground that we shall chant, sing, love, and dance upon. I watch as a sacred circle is traced by the death-walkers as they read the names of our Beloved Dead, those that have passed over the Sunless Sea and alighted upon the Holy Isle of Apples...I hear their sacred litany and can only chant back – What is remembered lives.

Music...a symphony is struck... suddenly a cacophany of child-like shrieks...I listen and I heed the intent. We banish. Widdershins they streak in chaos and the besom becomes the focus for a communal spell of “be gone all that is profane.” Lest we paint the dangerous

**Top: Kesar Pavilion in San Francisco's Haight Ashbury neighborhood — sacred temple for sports, concerts, and spiral dances. Lower: Volunteers circle before the ritual begins. All photos © 2010 Michael Rauner — [www.michaelrauner.com](http://www.michaelrauner.com)**

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## SPIRAL DANCE

*continued from preceding page*

dichotomy, it must be remembered that what is profane is the thought that profanity is possible. We let go of this human folly and we surrender to the Abyss...which is filled with the Circle!

*By the Earth that is Her Body and the Grove that is His Home,*

*By the Air that is Her Breath and the Wind that is His Song,*

*By the Fire of Her Bright Spirit and the Heat that is His Passion,*

*By the Waters of Her Living Womb and the Dew of His Tears,*

*The Circle is cast.*

I relax, and then the chorus begins... heavenly, and yet filled with an intensity unmatched by the calamities of mortality. I yearn to join them – the dancers, as they weave tales of the essences of Life, of the Elements coming together to make the Hidden Quality we long for, yet know intimately is ours.



I watch as yellow becomes red becomes blue becomes a forest of nymphs...I rejoice as the Feathered Twins make love held by our silent reverence, as the Goddess is honoured in Her faces as Transgendered, Maiden, Mother, Crone and Activist! I weep as I watch children of manifold families and clans hold heralds of justice, sovereignty, empowerment, and equality. My face becomes streaked in the



signs that I am home. I am Reclaiming...

And oh, the Lust in the Air as we breathe in the dark of the moist Earth and the Light of Heaven's splendour...more tears roll down my coffee-coloured skin – I think of my colouring in that moment, something I take for granted. I cherish the ancestors who gave me this beauty, this skin to keep safe the spirit within. I look around and see *shining* everywhere. The beauty that surrounds me. I re-member...I am *here*...I am *now*.

We whisper and weave stories of our Dead... the Mighty...the Beloved...the Ancestors...and those who have come and will come new-born from the Cauldron of Immortality. The babes are blessed in the name of renewal – for in death there is life.

I stand now. I stand proud and tall, and the rhythms of magick move my pulsating flesh, as I follow a humble voice of priestess, of shifter, of

**Spiral Dance 2010 — invocations to the West and North, food blessing**  
All photos ©2010 by Michael Rauner, [www.michaelrauner.com](http://www.michaelrauner.com)

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## SPIRAL DANCE

*continued from preceding page*

changer, of poet, of Witch, and I am brought from the shores of this world to the Other. I come to the Land of Youth that I know so well, and I smell the red flesh of apples and taste their sweetness on the breeze. I come to the Well and I perceive Blue Flame, only to kneel before the Mother of the World, of Mercy, Healing and Compassion to have her say, Be Free – You are Alive, You are ever your own forgiveness. It rains, the heavens heave and tremble as the cascades of pure water saturate my being...I drink in the depths upturned and I too am shining. The voice leads me back to the Circle of Life...and the Dance that we call Spiral begins.

*Let it begin with each step we take,  
Let it begin with each change we make,  
Let it begin with each chain we break,  
And let it begin every time we awake!*

Our song of power ebbs and flows as our serpent enlivens itself and uncoils. I pound the Earth with my feet saying “Mother, can you hear me, I am free, and I unshackle you!” I look deeply into



the shining pools of soul that dance past me and I swim in succour I have barely tasted until now. I *am* free and this sacred truth is tearing my skin away in strips. I am blood, bone, muscle, and marrow and I am spirit, soul, mind, and heart...And I am ever a part of the Goddess, the Living Mystery. I love everything and everyone. I am reconciled beyond the need for reconciliation. I am *awake*! I no longer value perception...I am in my Deep Core.

I have found the Grace, and the dance my feet take me on is a dance that can only be woven by the thousandfold feet of the Many who are One.

Release! Breathe in and hum to the Earth – for this year we renew Her. Oh, to be her son, oh to be her lover and her guardian. These relationships are precious beyond understanding. I am relinquished of the sorrow of ignorance, I am simply given into the keeping of the Secret

That Bears No Name and is Ever-Revealed. I am looking now, I am listening and as I journey back upon the moon-boat, across the sunless sea, to the shores of this time and place, I can only breathe in Magick.

We unravel and embrace. The drum never stops its pounding, and the blood can only call back in hysteria!

I pause and look inward. I see the mirror and the Goddess has no words, only that look that seems to mean the three words with any semblance of meaning, of truth:

I love you.

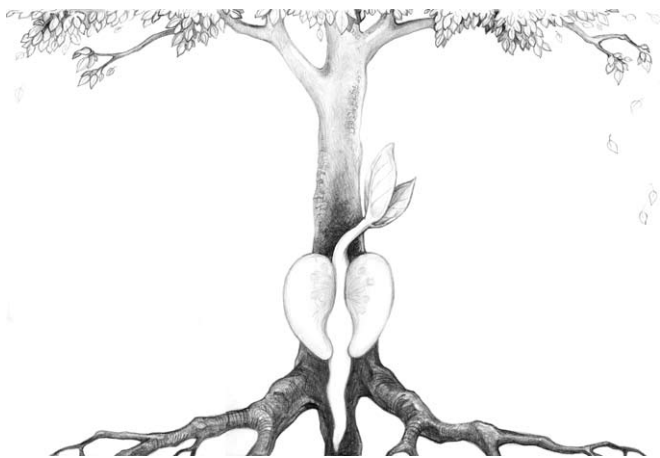
*Gede Parma is a Witch, initiated priest and teacher of the WildWood Tradition. He weaves threads of Feri, Reclaiming, Stregheria, WildWood, Greek Paganism, British Traditional Witchcraft and ancestral traditions into his personal syncretic and shamanic path.*



**Spiral Dance 2010 — hundreds of participants dance the spiral of rebirth**

**All photos ©2010 by Michael Rauner, [www.michaelrauner.com](http://www.michaelrauner.com)**





# Reclaiming Pages

Information and Events in the Reclaiming Tradition

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.

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'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



## 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

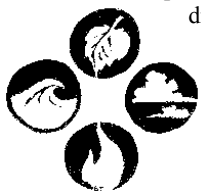
space, spell crafting,

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](mailto:quarterly@reclaiming.org)

Classes are announced throughout the year. Visit Reclaiming's website, [www.reclaiming.org](http://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.

## 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.

### RECLAIMING.ORG

Reclaiming's website (as well as the sibling site [ReclaimingQuarterly.org](http://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

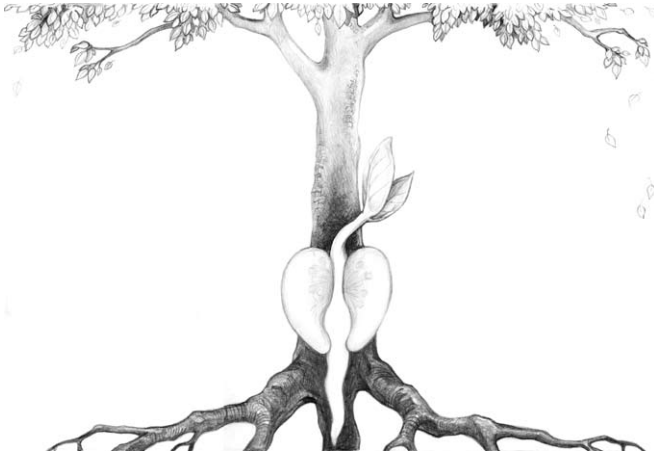
Reclaiming offers four CDs of Earth-centered chants and songs — see the back cover of this issue for more information, or visit our website.

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 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](mailto:quarterly@reclaiming.org)

## Australia

Australian Reclaiming Community  
[www.australiareclaiming.org.au](http://www.australiareclaiming.org.au)  
[ecell@australiareclaiming.org.au](mailto:ecell@australiareclaiming.org.au)

## Continental Europe

Reclaiming Réseau Francophone (France)  
[reclaiming.online.fr](http://reclaiming.online.fr)

Reclaiming Deutschland (Germany)  
[www.reclaiming.de](http://www.reclaiming.de)

Sternschnuppe  
[www.sternschnuppe-oldenbuettel.info/](http://www.sternschnuppe-oldenbuettel.info/)  
 0049-4872-967784

Reclaiming Netherlands  
[www.yoeke.com/spiritueel/reclaiming.php](http://www.yoeke.com/spiritueel/reclaiming.php)

Heart of the Witch  
[www.heartofthewitch.eu](http://www.heartofthewitch.eu)

Phoenix Witchcamp (Germany)  
 Deutsch: [www.phoenixcamp.eu](http://www.phoenixcamp.eu)  
 English: [phoenixcamp.eu/englishhome.html](http://phoenixcamp.eu/englishhome.html)

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

## Britain

British Reclaiming  
[www.britishreclaiming.org.uk](http://www.britishreclaiming.org.uk)

West Wales  
[moonroot@uko2.co.uk](mailto:moonroot@uko2.co.uk), (+44) 01267 281414

Cambridge  
[cradle@globalnet.co.uk](mailto:cradle@globalnet.co.uk)

Devon  
[flamingirondragon@googlemail.com](mailto:flamingirondragon@googlemail.com)

Hertfordshire  
[suparnovajuce@gmail.com](mailto:suparnovajuce@gmail.com)

Nottingham  
[jeanniejonathan@aol.com](mailto:jeanniejonathan@aol.com)

Derby  
[mazmc@macunlimited.net](mailto:mazmc@macunlimited.net)

West Sussex  
[georgia.conway@btopenworld.com](mailto:georgia.conway@btopenworld.com)

Scotland  
[reclaimingscotia.wordpress.com](http://reclaimingscotia.wordpress.com)  
[reclaimingscotia@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:reclaimingscotia@yahoo.co.uk)

Buckinghamshire  
[amhranai.annemarie@gmail.com](mailto:amhranai.annemarie@gmail.com)

Avalon Spring Witchcamp  
[www.avaloncamp.org.uk](http://www.avaloncamp.org.uk)  
[avaloncamp@gmail.com](mailto:avaloncamp@gmail.com)

DragonRise Camp  
[www.dragonrise.org](http://www.dragonrise.org)  
[sunrisecamp@yahoo.com](mailto:sunrisecamp@yahoo.com)

## Canada

British Columbia Witchcamp Community  
[www.bewitchcamp.ca](http://www.bewitchcamp.ca)  
[witchcampbcinfo@gmail.com](mailto:witchcampbcinfo@gmail.com)  
 (250) 598-9229

Vancouver Reclaiming Community  
[www.vancouverreclaiming.org](http://www.vancouverreclaiming.org)

Alberta Reclaiming Community  
[ca.groups.yahoo.com/group/albertareclaiming/](http://ca.groups.yahoo.com/group/albertareclaiming/)

Wild Ginger Witchcamp (Ontario)  
[www.wildgingerwitches.org](http://www.wildgingerwitches.org)  
[wychwood@rogers.com](mailto:wychwood@rogers.com)  
 (519) 439-6252

Fredericton (New Brunswick)  
[groups.yahoo.com/group/paganrituals/](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/paganrituals/)

Montreal Reclaiming  
[www.cosmic-muse.com/reclaiming](http://www.cosmic-muse.com/reclaiming)

## United States

### California

San Francisco Bay Area and North Bay  
[www.reclaiming.org/rituals](http://www.reclaiming.org/rituals)  
[www.reclaiming.org/classevents](http://www.reclaiming.org/classevents)  
[groups.yahoo.com/group/BAREclaiming](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/BAREclaiming)  
 PO Box 14404, San Francisco, CA 94114

North Bay Reclaiming  
[www.northbayreclaiming.org](http://www.northbayreclaiming.org)  
[northbayreclaiming@yahoo.com](mailto:northbayreclaiming@yahoo.com)

California Witchcamp  
[www.californiawitchcamp.org](http://www.californiawitchcamp.org)  
[info@californiawitchcamp.org](mailto:info@californiawitchcamp.org)  
 (510) 534-9600

Witchlets in the Woods Family Camp  
[www.witchletsinthewoods.org](http://www.witchletsinthewoods.org)  
[info@witchletsinthewoods.org](mailto:info@witchletsinthewoods.org)

Indigo Artichoke Heart (Southern California: Valley/West Los Angeles/Laguna Nigel)  
[groups.yahoo.com/group/IAH-Discussion](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/IAH-Discussion)

Mountain Circle (Truckee/Incline/Reno)  
[sismhall1@aol.com](mailto:sismhall1@aol.com), (530) 546-4226

### Oregon

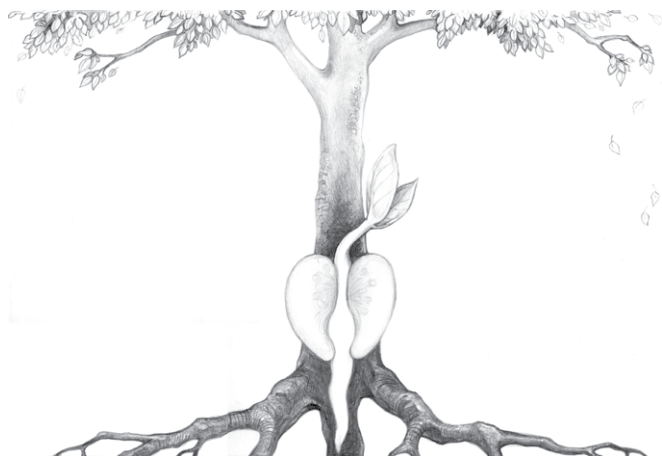
Portland Reclaiming  
[www.portlandreclaiming.org](http://www.portlandreclaiming.org)  
[webgeek@portlandreclaiming.org](mailto:webgeek@portlandreclaiming.org)

Free Activist Camp (Oregon/Washington)  
[www.freewitchcamp.org](http://www.freewitchcamp.org)  
[freeactivistwitchcamp@gmail.com](mailto:freeactivistwitchcamp@gmail.com)

### Washington

Turning Tide (Seattle)  
[www.seattlereclaiming.spiderweb.net](http://www.seattlereclaiming.spiderweb.net)  
[groups.yahoo.com/group/SeattleReclaiming/](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/SeattleReclaiming/)

Cascadia Village Camp  
[home.comcast.net/~cascadiavillagecamp](http://home.comcast.net/~cascadiavillagecamp)  
[cascadiavillagecamp@comcast.net](mailto:cascadiavillagecamp@comcast.net)  
 (206) 517-7876



# 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](mailto:quarterly@reclaiming.org)

## Texas

Tejas Web (Austin)  
[www.tejasweb.org](http://www.tejasweb.org)  
[groups.yahoo.com/subscribe/tejas\\_web/](http://groups.yahoo.com/subscribe/tejas_web/)

Tejas Web Witchcamp  
[witchcamp.tejasweb.org](http://witchcamp.tejasweb.org)  
[witchcamp@tejasweb.org](mailto:witchcamp@tejasweb.org)  
 (512) 282-5541

## Colorado

Colorado Springs  
[www.reclaimingcoloradosprings.org](http://www.reclaimingcoloradosprings.org)

Reclaiming Spirit (Denver)  
[www.reclaimingspirit.org](http://www.reclaimingspirit.org)  
[groups.yahoo.com/group/reclaimingspirit/](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/reclaimingspirit/)

## Midwest

Midwest Witchcamp  
[sayre@sevensapphires.net](mailto:sayre@sevensapphires.net), (773) 458-0170  
[feriflame@yahoo.com](mailto:feriflame@yahoo.com), (317) 694-8562  
[odyssa@gmail.com](mailto:odyssa@gmail.com), (608) 217-9175

## Minnesota

Twin Cities Reclaiming  
[TwinCitiesReclaiming@yahoogroups.com](mailto:TwinCitiesReclaiming@yahoogroups.com)

Winter Witchcamp  
[www.winterwitchcamp.org](http://www.winterwitchcamp.org)  
[winterwitchcamp13@yahoo.com](mailto:winterwitchcamp13@yahoo.com)

## Michigan

Trillium Reclaiming (Southeast Michigan)  
[groups.yahoo.com/group/trilliumreclaiming](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/trilliumreclaiming)

## Illinois

Chicago Reclaiming  
[www.chicagoreclaiming.net](http://www.chicagoreclaiming.net)  
[groups.yahoo.com/subscribe/chireclaim/](http://groups.yahoo.com/subscribe/chireclaim/)

Weaving Women (Champaign-Urbana)  
[slvr\\_moon@ifairtrade.net](mailto:slvr_moon@ifairtrade.net)

## Tri-State

Tri-State Reclaiming (OH, KY, WV)  
[groups.yahoo.com/group/TriStateReclaiming/](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/TriStateReclaiming/)

## Vermont

Vermont Witchcamp  
[www.vermontwitchcamp.net](http://www.vermontwitchcamp.net)  
[information@vermontwitchcamp.net](mailto:information@vermontwitchcamp.net)  
 (603) 894-5871 or (802) 425-2984

## Massachusetts

Boston Area  
[qb.skraus4828@real-cheap-email.com](mailto:qb.skraus4828@real-cheap-email.com)  
 (781) 658-2687

Viriditas  
[community.livejournal.com/viriditasboston/](http://community.livejournal.com/viriditasboston/)  
[groups.yahoo.com/group/viriditas/](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/viriditas/)

## New York

Ithaca Reclaiming  
[www.ithacareclaiming.org](http://www.ithacareclaiming.org) [soulspirals@](mailto:soulspirals@soulspirals.net)  
[soulspirals.net](http://soulspirals.net), (607) 227-5852  
[groups.yahoo.com/group/IthacaReclaimingCollective/](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/IthacaReclaimingCollective/)

Long Island Reclaiming (Suffolk County)  
[www.lireclaiming.org](http://www.lireclaiming.org)  
[asherahscauldson@msn.com](mailto:asherahscauldson@msn.com)  
 (631) 751-3477

## New York / New Jersey / Pennsylvania

New York / New Jersey / Pennsylvania  
[NyNjPa-Reclaiming@yahoogroups.com](mailto:NyNjPa-Reclaiming@yahoogroups.com)

## Delaware Valley

Delaware Valley Reclaiming  
 (PA, NJ, DE, NY - Greater Philadelphia)  
[DelValReclaiming@yahoogroups.com](mailto:DelValReclaiming@yahoogroups.com)

## Pennsylvania

Reclaiming3Rivers (Pittsburgh)  
[reclaiming3rivers@yahoo.com](mailto:reclaiming3rivers@yahoo.com)  
[groups.yahoo.com/group/Reclaiming3River/](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Reclaiming3River/)  
 (412) 722-9117

## Maryland

Baltimore Reclaiming  
[groups.yahoo.com/group/bmorereclaiming/](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/bmorereclaiming/)  
 facebook: Baltimore Reclaiming

## Mid-Atlantic

SpiralHeart Witchcamp Community  
[www.spiralheart.org](http://www.spiralheart.org)  
[info@spiralheart.org](mailto:info@spiralheart.org), (202) 728-7510  
[groups.yahoo.com/group/spiralheart/](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/spiralheart/)

Otters of the Fae (Central Virginia)  
[ReclaimingCVA@yahoogroups.com](mailto:ReclaimingCVA@yahoogroups.com)

Dragon's Cauldron (Raleigh/Durham)  
[www.dragonscauldron.org](http://www.dragonscauldron.org)  
[groups.yahoo.com/subscribe/RTPReclaiming](http://groups.yahoo.com/subscribe/RTPReclaiming)

Wild Child Camp (Richmond, Virginia)  
[www.spiralheart.org/events/wildchild/](http://www.spiralheart.org/events/wildchild/)

## Florida

Earthwater Glade  
[www.myspace.com/earthwaterglade](http://www.myspace.com/earthwaterglade)  
[www.groups.yahoo.com/group/earthwaterglade](http://www.groups.yahoo.com/group/earthwaterglade)

Magnolia Circle (Tallahassee)  
[www.magnoliacircle.org](http://www.magnoliacircle.org)  
[DragonWing56@aol.com](mailto:DragonWing56@aol.com), (850) 320-0823

Updated regional listings can be found at  
[www.reclaiming.org/worldwide/](http://www.reclaiming.org/worldwide/)

Please email updates and corrections to:  
[quarterly@reclaiming.org](mailto:quarterly@reclaiming.org)





# 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](http://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](http://www.winterwitchcamp.org), [winterwitchcamp13@yahoo.com](mailto:winterwitchcamp13@yahoo.com)

**European Winter Witchcamp (Spain)** • February-March  
[www.reclaimingspain.org](http://www.reclaimingspain.org), [m.morgaine@sie.es](mailto:m.morgaine@sie.es), (0034) 920 37 25 73

**Australian Community Witchcamp** • Spring  
[witchcamp.australiareclaiming.org.au](http://witchcamp.australiareclaiming.org.au), [ecell@australiareclaiming.org.au](mailto:ecell@australiareclaiming.org.au)

**Avalon Spring (England)** • April  
[www.avaloncamp.org.uk](http://www.avaloncamp.org.uk), [avaloncamp@gmail.com](mailto:avaloncamp@gmail.com)

**Wild Child (SpiralHeart-Virginia)\*** • May  
[spiralheart.org/events/wildchild/](http://spiralheart.org/events/wildchild/), [wildchild@spiralheart.org](mailto:wildchild@spiralheart.org)

**MidWest** • TBA  
[sayre@sevensapphires.net](mailto:sayre@sevensapphires.net), (773) 458-0170 or [feriflame@yahoo.com](mailto:feriflame@yahoo.com), (317) 694-8562

**Teen Earth Magic (Northern California)\*** • June  
[www.reclaimingquarterly.org/web/tem/](http://www.reclaimingquarterly.org/web/tem/), [quarterly@reclaiming.org](mailto:quarterly@reclaiming.org)

**Wild Ginger Witchcamp (Ontario)\*** • June  
[www.wildgingerwitches.org](http://www.wildgingerwitches.org), [wychwood@rogers.com](mailto:wychwood@rogers.com), (519) 439-6252

**California (Mendocino Woodlands)** • June-July  
[www.californiawitchcamp.org](http://www.californiawitchcamp.org), [info@californiawitchcamp.org](mailto:info@californiawitchcamp.org), (510) 534-9600

**Cascadia Village Camp (Washington)\*** • July  
[home.comcast.net/~cascadiavillagecamp](http://home.comcast.net/~cascadiavillagecamp), [cascadiavillagecamp@comcast.net](mailto:cascadiavillagecamp@comcast.net), (206) 517-7876

**Free Cascadia WitchCamp (Oregon/Washington)\*** • July  
[www.freewitchcamp.org](http://www.freewitchcamp.org), [freecascadiawitchcamp@gmail.com](mailto:freecascadiawitchcamp@gmail.com)

**SpiralHeart (MidAtlantic)** • August  
[www.spiralheart.org](http://www.spiralheart.org), [info@spiralheart.org](mailto:info@spiralheart.org), (202) 728-7510

**Witchlets in the Woods (California)\*** • August  
[www.witchletsinthewoods.org](http://www.witchletsinthewoods.org), [info@witchletsinthewoods.org](mailto:info@witchletsinthewoods.org), (415) 946-7798

**DragonRise (Wales)\*** • August  
[www.dragonrise.org](http://www.dragonrise.org), [sunrisecamp@yahoo.com](mailto:sunrisecamp@yahoo.com)

**British Columbia** • August  
[bewitchcamp.ca](http://bewitchcamp.ca), [witchcampbcinfo@gmail.com](mailto:witchcampbcinfo@gmail.com), (250) 598-9229

**Vermont\*** • Late August  
[www.vermontwitchcamp.net](http://www.vermontwitchcamp.net), [information@vermontwitchcamp.net](mailto:information@vermontwitchcamp.net), (802) 436-3451, (603) 894-5871 or (413) 369-4049

**Phoenix (Germany)** • September  
 Deutsch: [www.phoenixcamp.eu](http://www.phoenixcamp.eu)  
 English: [www.phoenixcamp.eu/englishhome.html](http://www.phoenixcamp.eu/englishhome.html)



Photos from top: Robin Parrott;  
 Randy Ralston; Otter

\* means camp has included children and/or teens some years. Contact camps for more info.





# 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](http://www.Reclaiming.org)

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.

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*Descriptions are adapted from "The Spiral Dance," by Starhawk, ©1989, Harper San Francisco.*

# Reclaiming Regional News

## RQ Archives Project

### - old RQs on the way

Reclaiming Quarterly celebrated our 100th edition by beginning to re-issue our complete archives, going back to the first Reclaiming Newsletter in Winter 1980-81.

The archives are being 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/](http://www.reclaimingquarterly.org/archives/)*



## Australian Witchcamp ~ Bloody Be!

The first Australian Reclaiming Witchcamp took place over Easter in Healesville, Victoria: a countryside of looming forested hills, heavy mists, and autumnal damp. White cockatoos screeched overhead, and on the final day an eagle circled high above the camp...

Our story and theme were: Australian Reclaiming envisions our first Witchcamp as celebrating this ancient land, our energetic threads of connection and our interaction with nature. We see a story arising from our birth out of the ocean and the Earth, the web of life, and our grounded rapture and innate wisdom.

We invoked the Star Goddess, spirits of the land, and the ancestors of blood, spirit, and craft.

There were three Paths: Elements Path, taught by John Brazaitis and Rhonda King; Earth Song: Listening to the Voice of Nature, taught by Ravyn Stanfield and Fiona Mariposa; and Inner Path of Power, taught by myself and Gede Parma.

Fifty people took part. One of the strongest aspects of camp was how willing, enthusiastic, open, and friendly everyone was. Only a few had ever been to a Witchcamp before. But many people took roles in the evening rituals, and there was a great variety of optional offerings led by campers — from a drumming circle to a discussion on polyamory. We had a Bardic night with beautiful singing, stories, dancing, and an hilarious skit by the Organisers which replaced the tired and timid "Blessed Be" with "Bloody Be, when you're Down Under."

The weather was damp and the ground never really dried out, and with sunset at 5:30pm, we did all our evening rituals in the lovingly decorated hall with its beautiful altars and warm fire!

Our magical intent was to sow the seeds of Reclaiming across Australia — and it is done.

Looking forward to the next one!

*by Jane Meredith*

## 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](mailto: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](http://www.reclaiming.org/rituals). For email reminders, contact [quarterly@reclaiming.org](mailto:quarterly@reclaiming.org)

## Bay Area Class Listings Now Online

Visit [www.reclaiming.org](http://www.reclaiming.org) ~ RQ welcomes feedback on new listings

Reclaiming Bay Area teachers offer core classes plus courses in spellwork, music and drumming, meditation, permaculture, tarot, astrology, dreamwork, and many other topics and skills.

Classes are offered in San Francisco, East Bay, North Bay, and occasionally the South Bay and Central Valley. Some are held on weeknights, and others as weekend intensives.

Reclaiming teachers often team up with other teachers to bring a variety of approaches to their classes.

For an up-to-date listing of Bay Area classes, rituals, retreats, workshops, and other events, visit [www.reclaiming.org/classevents/](http://www.reclaiming.org/classevents/)

You may also want to join the Bay Area Reclaiming discussion elist (BARD). Send an email to [sfrpc@yahoogroups.com](mailto:sfrpc@yahoogroups.com) to join.

Contacts for other regions can be found at [www.reclaiming.org/worldwide](http://www.reclaiming.org/worldwide)

If you don't have internet access, and using cafés or libraries is not an option, contact RQ and we'll try to help.



## Illegal Brigid Pledge Coaching Raises Furor

Rising discontent with the role of pledge coaches during the Brigid's Cauldron Ritual has led to calls for an outright ban on the practice.

The mid-Winter ritual originally developed as a way for each participant to have a deep personal encounter with the Goddess of the flaming cauldron.

Reclaiming etiquette has always allowed the support of a pledge coach when one approaches the cauldron. Coaches traditionally sit in a designated space near the altar and communicate with their clients via hand-signals during the pledges.

The occasional whispered reminder was tolerated so long as coaches didn't go so far as to instruct their clients what words to speak.

In recent years, however, pledge coaches have grown bolder. To circumvent prohibitions against coaches writing the actual words of commitment, elaborate number codes have developed.

For instance, the number 33 is widely used to remind pledgers to speak the Goddess's name, while 69 is a signal to invoke more passion into one's life. Thirteen means slow down and breathe, while 99 means enough, already.

Complaints reached a boiling point this year when pledge coach Clarity Eldervision stormed out onto the floor and berated one of her clients who had fumbled the words of his pledge. Grab-

## Dandelion Weighs Principles of Unity

The Dandelion Gathering has initiated steps to amend Reclaiming's Principles of Unity (PoU — see page 76 of this issue), the fundamental constitution of the otherwise nebulous network of anarcho-pagans.

The PoU, adopted in the 1990s, have never been altered. One wing of Reclaiming, the Coven of the Letter, considers the document to be part of the sacred texts (along with *The Spiral Dance*, *Reclaiming Quarterly*, and the *Revolutionary Pagan Workers Vanguard*.)

The Coven of the Letter gained notoriety in 1999 when adherents gathered outside Reclaiming's Samhain ritual and burned copies of the revised edition of *The Spiral Dance*.

The strictures of the fundamentalists

notwithstanding, suggestions have been heard in recent years to alter several aspects of the PoU.

Proposals have been introduced to broaden the gender language of the statement, and also to remove language which suggests that Australian Witches are standing on their heads.

### BITTER DIVISION OVER PRINCIPLES

Nothing has proven more controversial, however, than proposed amendments to the political sections of the Principles.

Several years of intense debate and discussion led to the formulation of this proposed new language:

"We are for all good things, and against all bad things."

Despite the apparent inclusivity, a brouhaha erupted over the binary opposition. "So I guess everything has to be black or white," lamented polypolitical priestess Sunshine Moonbeam. "You'd think they never heard of a Third Way."

Sponsors of the proposal agreed to accept an amendment by Flaming Dumbek Circle:

"Acknowledging the irreducibility of moral categories to simple binary constructs, and recognizing the critical importance of the shadow in our magical and political work, we nevertheless are, generally speaking, for lots of good things and against pretty much all bad things."

But many weren't mollified. "What about things that aren't especially good for you, but not really all that bad ei-

*continued on page D-125*



*A cheer goes up as the street is declared swept by The Right Ancient Order of the Bristling Broom, a devotional guild of Custodial Witches who clean up each year after PaganFest.*

## 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](http://www.ReclaimingQuarterly.org)

# ReclaimingQuarterly.org

Current RQ website features include:

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Revolutionary Pagan Workers Vanguard and other humor

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(\* - RQ online photo-features)

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## 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.



## MORE RECLAIMING ONLINE RESOURCES

### 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.

### RIDL International Elist

Link up with Reclaiming folks around the world. With subscribers across Europe, North America, and Australia, the dialog never sleeps on the RIDL elist. Email [quarterly@reclaiming.org](mailto:quarterly@reclaiming.org) to join.



# Music from Reclaiming

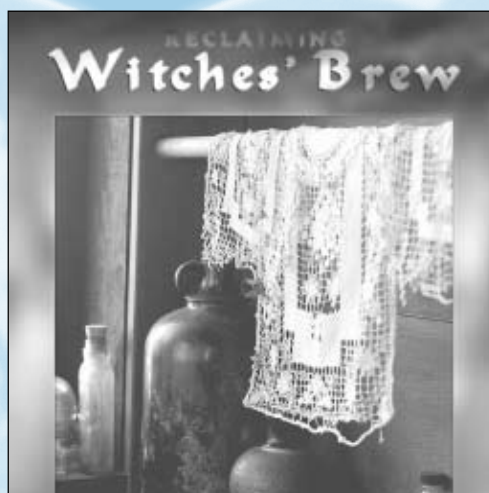
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Our latest CD is *Witches' Brew: Songs and Chants from the Reclaiming Cauldron*, featuring songs by over a dozen Reclaiming teachers and musicians.

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Samples and online ordering at [www.ReclaimingQuarterly.org](http://www.ReclaimingQuarterly.org)  
Mail orders — \$16 per copy to RQ at PO Box 14404, San Francisco CA 94114

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