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THE CONSCIOUS LAWYER
Serving the Transition to a More Beautiful World

SPECIAL EDITION IN COLLABORATION WITH:
THE PROJECT FOR INTEGRATING SPIRITUALITY, LAW, AND POLITICS (PISLAP)

FAITH IS TAKING THE FIRST STEP EVEN WHEN YOU DON’T SEE THE STAIRS.
— MARTIN LUTHER KING
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EDITOR’S MESSAGE

Being a lawyer and having a spiritual practice, be it meditation, yoga or some form of prayer, alongside our work is hugely worthwhile and is becoming more common. Being a lawyer and allowing that spiritual practice to infuse and transform our work in law is altogether more powerful but it is still relatively rare. Though we may not yet be able to see the stairs, this magazine is here to support and encourage those of us that feel willing to take that next courageous step.

Whether it’s the experience of peace and stillness we feel in meditation, the sense of devotional love that swells our heart in a sacred chant, or the overwhelming awareness of interconnectedness and community in collective prayer or activism – it is possible to allow these moments to affect and influence us deeply enough as lawyers that we go beyond tolerating the status quo. We can uproot embedded features of our legal landscape like excessive adversarial tactics in the courtroom, stressful materialism in the office and boardroom, competitive striving and superficial professional speak, not to mention the hugely distorted focus on corporations, the wealthy and the privileged to the detriment of the most vulnerable.

Along with my co-editor, Peter Gabel - a founder of PISLAP and a true visionary for a spiritually-informed approach to law - I am delighted then to welcome you to this collaborative issue of The Conscious Lawyer with PISLAP, an issue I can honestly say is the best yet. Please feel a sense of solidarity and community here, and take inspiration from our contributors many of whom are either long-standing or more recent members of PISLAP, and all of whose ideals and work is aligned with PISLAP's principles, vision and mission (see right).

This issue was planned around a theme of “inspiring hope in these turbulent times” prior to the unprecedented crises of 2020. Following this year’s global health crisis, and the massive uprising of the Black Lives Matter movement following the tragic murder of George Floyd, the times are more turbulent than ever and we need all the hope and inspiration we can muster. Whether it is uplifting news of recent legal developments and initiatives; thought-provoking and innovative ideas and writing; striking artworks and images; quirky but impactful cartoons or the expression of feelings through poetry, we hope that you will find that inspiration here, and that your spark of idealism will continue to fan into flame.

A huge thanks to all of the writers, artists, innovators and poets in this issue.

A special thanks also to other members of PISLAP’s Executive Committee (Nanette Schorr, Bruce Peterson, and Perry Saidman); Adam Strömbergsson DeNora for his editorial assistance; and Robyn Kravitz for assistance with web and social media.

Elaine Quinn, Founder and Editor

Peter Gabel, PISLAP co-founder and issue co-editor

The Project for Integrating Spirituality, Law, and Politics (PISLAP) is an international network of lawyers, law professors, law students, legal workers, and others who are seeking to develop a new spiritually-informed approach to law and social change.
TRACING THE MOVEMENT

Would you like to write for this section and help highlight interesting developments in the field of conscious law? Email info@theconsciouslawyer.co.uk.

Images: Bruce Peterson & Open Source

The Project for Integrating Spirituality, Law and Politics — Who are we?
The Project for Integrating Spirituality, Law, and Politics (PISLAP pronounced Pie-slap) is an international group of lawyers, law professors, law students, and some non-legal fellow travelers who seek to build a new legal system that fosters empathy, compassion, and mutual understanding. Our existing legal system remains grounded in the 18th century idea that society consists of a collection of separated individuals operating according to their self-interest. While the legal system that was built around this idea has had many virtues—protecting individual liberty and to some extent extending that liberty to previously excluded groups—we have not created a public legal culture that speaks to the longing for authentic human connection that exists in the heart of all of us. And we have continued to limit our understanding of justice to the protection of individual rights vindicated through adversarial processes, rather than the bringing about of love and mutual relationships that are the true basis for social civilization that has over many generations broken us apart.

In normal non-COVID times, PISLAP holds annual or bi-annual conferences where we can hear from, see, and talk with one another. We also hold monthly zoom calls that at which members present on topics which help illuminate new ways to integrate the spiritual dimension of our common existence into our legal efforts to bring about a more socially just world. And we develop social policy proposals aimed at extending our cultural influence, such as the proposals for addition of a new section of the US Democratic Party Platform that we have submitted this year on reforming Child Support Laws in light of the Black Lives Matter movement (see Issue PP17), or our successful proposal submitted at the Democratic Party convention four years ago to support the greater use of Restorative Justice in resolving criminal cases in the United States. While we fully support efforts around the world to continue extending the granting of liberal rights to formerly excluded, marginalized, or oppressed groups, we are simultaneously determined to lay the groundwork for a new vision of law and justice that fosters the creation of a world based on mutuality, cooperation, and love. But to be successful in this effort, we must keep expanding our membership, both to increase our numbers, and to support our efforts through asking our members to pay very modest dues. Please go to our website at www.spiritualpolitics.org and join PISLAP, and become part of a world-wide effort to transform the law, and the world itself, so as to enable us to fully recognize and affirm each other’s common humanity.

Integrating Spirituality, Law and Politics, and Evolution (Bruce Peterson, US)
Many readers of this magazine are essentially reformers at heart. Could it be that there is reliable guidance on how legal and political systems can be reformed to foster connections rather than divisions between people? Are there proven pathways that can be followed to make these systems more humane and, in the end, simply more effective?

In a lengthy article published on the website of The Conscious Lawyer, recently retired Minnesota Judge and long-time PISLAP Executive Committee member Bruce Peterson turns to the science of behavioral evolution to provide the answers to these questions. He has arrived at through 20 years watching human nature unfold in the courtroom, teaching a law school course on Lawyers as Peacemakers, and informally and formally studying evolution.

Judge Peterson brings into focus four basic human instincts for caring and cooperation with deep evolutionary roots—kinship, reciprocity, group loyalty, and empathy—our “better angels”. He shows how current legal and political systems often ignore these fundamental human tendencies to their detriment, and how reforms can be more effective if they consciously rely on what humans do naturally.

Judge Peterson’s thought-provoking article, “Integrating Spirituality, Law, Politics—and Evolution” can BE FOUND HERE.

Deeper Understanding in a Time of Pandemic (Bonnie Silvestri, JD, CCEP, ADA-C)
Bonnie Silvestri, a Compliance Specialist and Countywide ADA (Americans with Disabilities) Coordinator for Sarasota County in Florida, has written two blog posts on The Compliance and Ethics Blog reflecting on the some of the deeper impacts on our lives from this time of pandemic.

Because of social distancing, we must each put much more thought into how we get our groceries, how we exercise, and how we support children who are now home as a result of school closings. We must see the world through a new lens and carefully think through the details of daily living due to regulations and restrictions that are now home as a result of school closings. We must see the world through a new lens and carefully think through the details of daily living due to regulations and restrictions.

The deep isolation that people around the world are feeling, perhaps for the first time, is an experience that those with disabilities tend to experience with far greater frequency, regardless of whether the barriers to facilities, resources, and programming are visible or invisible.

Books by mail, online resources, and reliance on delivery services that those with various health issues have been using for years will now be necessitated by physical distancing requirements. Web-based meetings and conferences will likely equalize participation for able-bodied and individuals with disabilities. Children with sensory difficulties, who could find group activities to be overstimulating, may now find greater comfort engaging in virtual activities in the comfort of their own homes.

We must take great care that we ensure that vulnerable populations are considered as we make decisions about cancelling programs and closing libraries and parks. But we can also rely upon the great work that has been done by those with disabilities in obtaining accommodations and fighting for their very inclusion in the public sphere. READ THE FULL BLOG POST HERE.

Becoming Fit for Law (Dr Emma Jones, UK)
With the support of the charity LawCare and in 2018 I ran a series of five focus groups with legal professionals in the UK and Republic of Ireland on their perceptions of wellbeing within the legal profession. The findings from these demonstrate that lawyers face a range of challenges to their wellbeing, ranging from the high billing targets imposed by law firms to the demands of being self-employed as a barrister.

Other potential issues include high levels of client demands and expectations, incivility within the
legal workplace, difficulties in maintaining a work-life balance and the sense of needing to project a strong and emotionless professional persona.

These findings were used to inform the development of the **FIT FOR LAW** project. A series of free online resources designed specifically for legal professionals in the UK and Republic of Ireland focused on the concepts of emotional competence and professional resilience. The introduction and first course (Managing and Understanding Yourself) are currently available at [WWW.FITFORLAW.ORG.UK](http://WWW.FITFORLAW.ORG.UK). They focus on understanding the role emotions play within legal work and the need to acknowledge, understand and reflect upon these emotions.

The next course, Working with Others, will be available in January 2021. The third course will be along the lines of a toolkit for employers, regulators and representative bodies to continue to raise awareness of the important structural and cultural issues that impact on the wellbeing of individual lawyers.

The focus group findings have also been written into a book **MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING IN THE LEGAL PROFESSION** due to be published in September 2020 (with all author royalties going to LawCare).

The hope of my colleagues and I is that this work will contribute to the growing discussions around wellbeing in the legal profession in the UK and Republic of Ireland. It is vital that these discussions are informed by empirical data and bring together academics, legal professionals and other key stakeholders within the profession to work towards sustainable long-term solutions to the wellbeing challenges which lawyers face. Doing this can enhance not only the wellbeing of individuals but also the status and reputation of the profession as a whole.

**Lawyers for the Future – Practicing law to protect the Planet**

(Sandy Abrahams, UK, Founder & Environmental Lawyer)

A new initiative is launching in the legal sector: Lawyers for the Future. We are all increasingly aware of the rapid cross-sectoral and cultural change necessary to avoid the worst impacts of the escalating climate and ecological catastrophe. Lawyers for the Future aims to create a significant cultural and behavioural shift in the legal sector, enabling lawyers to be part of the solution and allow them to stop being part of the problem.

**Changing what is acceptable**

Our goal is to shift what is considered acceptable in the legal sector. Our focus is firstly on empowering lawyers to bring conversations about climate risk into the boardroom. Lawyers are influential in investment and project decisions, and this should be leveraged to ensure climate risks are raised and a sustainable future is a key consideration in all transactions. It is not enough simply to raise concerns and risks. However, lawyers must also remove their support from the most damaging activities.

**Divesting services**

Divestment is one of the most powerful tools to effect change, and has been gaining traction within the financial sector. For example, the biggest pension fund in the UK, National Employment Savings Trust, has banned investments in companies involved in coal mining, oil from tar sands and arctic drilling from August onwards. In June, the Vatican called for the Catholic Church to divest from fossil fuels and the University of Oxford also announced the withdrawal of its endowment from fossil fuels back in April.

After divesting money, the next step is to divest services.

**A Charter of Environmental Ethics**

Lawyers for the Future will encourage individual lawyers and law firms to adhere to a Charter of environmental ethics, pledging to divest their services from environmentally damaging transactions, with an initial focus on fossil fuels. By removing the best legal support from damaging activities whilst encouraging lawyers to support sustainable actions, the social licence and business models surrounding damaging transactions will be undermined.

Launching this Autumn, we invite lawyers and law firms to adopt the Charter and pledge to practice law in a manner that is protective of, not destructive to the planet. Our campaigns will also engage with clients to create a virtuous cycle of change. Finally, we will create a community network guiding lawyers towards best practice and other opportunities for positive action.

If you are interested in this initiative or would like to get involved, please contact Sandy at sandy.ABRABHAMS@LUXNOVAPARTNERS.COM
Integrative Law Around the World (J. Kim Wright, US)

After 12 years of nomadic global travel, I am grounded in the USA for the foreseeable future. These days I am fond of saying that I’m not carrying luggage anymore but I’m still traveling the world in these projects and collaborations:

Law Essentials of India is a student-run initiative of law students in India. They’re running a series of webinars, Lawyers as Peacemakers, Integrative Law. The first session was on 30 August and the monthly series will include many guests. If you are interested in being included in the list of potential speakers, please contact me: LAWESSENTIALS1234@GMAIL.COM

Neetu Chetty has been part of designing a legal curriculum at Varsity College in Durban, South Africa. In the fourth year of the LLb program, students will experience a course on Integrative Law. I put together a reader of materials for the course. Amanda Lamond has also been mentoring a group of law students in Cape Town and they are excited about Integrative Law. (Something brewing?)

A group of Italian integrative professionals organized by MariaClaudia Perego, created a reader of their favorite excerpts from Lawyers as Peacemakers and Lawyers as Changemakers translated into Italian. Each translator will also write a reflective piece. Some sections of the book have been updated to reflect new projects. The ABA recently reverted foreign language rights to both books so I am now free to work with groups for translations into French, Portuguese, and Spanish.

The American Bar Association Law Practice Management section publications committee has approved a book proposal for a primer on trauma-informed lawyering. I am co-authoring with Brooke Denary-Goldfarb, Helgi Maki, Marjone Floresfal, and Myrna McCullum.

We have participants from 8 countries! Jacqueline Horani and Rhiannon Thomas are co-teaching Introduction to CONSCIOUS CONTRACTS with me from September 10 to October 22. Jacqueline was my co-teacher in a very successful summer clinic at Quinnipiac School of Law (Connecticut). We also presented at the IACCM. Rhiannon was a teaching assistant in an earlier online Conscious Contracts and is developing a CC course in South Africa. I’m also offering an Introduction to Spiral Dynamics in November.

Linda Alvarez and I just completed a mentoring program in Advanced Conscious Contracts and several participants have completed the requirements for certification! Fernanda Guerra is our first certified provider in Brazil. Practitioners are now meeting monthly.

Peter Lustig and I are developing an experiential one-year program tentatively called Holistic, Emergent Legal Practice, to be launched early 2021. Pete is an Australian collaborative lawyer and deeply involved in men’s work.

Professors Camilla Andersen, Lisa Toohey, Emily Aitken and I are curating a collection of legal designs. If you want to be included in the collection, write to me for more information at JKIMWRIGHT@GMAIL.COM

Forrest Webb is reorganizing to include more members and services. Our website will give updates as they happen. LAWYERSASDESIGNERS.COM

“We hope to transform law into the building of a binding culture in public spaces — in public rooms like courthouses and courtrooms and in written discourses like law books and legislation — that fosters empathy, compassion and human understanding, and is a force of healing and mutual recognition, rather than the mere parceling out of rights among solitary and adversarial individuals.”

— Peter Gabel, PISLAP co-founder

MONTHLY CONFERENCE CALL SERIES

Please join us this Fall as PISLAP hosts a series of zoom calls with authors featured in this collaborative issue of The Conscious Lawyer.

The first call in the series will take place on Thursday October 8th at 1pm Eastern time US with Jenipher Jones, civil rights lawyer and author of “Contemplative Lawyering - A Vocation of Service.”

To join this call, and to receive notifications about the rest of the series, please subscribe to the PISLAP email list at: http://www.spiritlawpolitics.org/ OR contactpislap@gmail.com

Details will also be shared via The Conscious Lawyer and PISLAP Facebook pages.

BECOME A MEMBER OF PISLAP

A network of lawyers, law professors, law students, legal workers, and others who are seeking to develop a new spiritually-informed approach to law and social change.

http://www.spiritlawpolitics.org/membership
The Georgia Justice Project — Family Restoration after Prison

The Need for Support rather than Punishment

Timothy was in some ways lucky. He was incarcerated for nearly 10 years, but due to his exemplary record, he spent the last year at Metro Reentry Facility, a special facility in Georgia dedicated to preparing incarcerated men for return and readjustment to society. At Metro Reentry, Timothy was able to take job training classes; he had freedom to move around mostly on his own volition; and guards referred to him not as “inmate” but as “returning citizen.” Timothy made good use of the resources available, and his easy demeanor and positive attitude impressed everyone. But as Timothy’s release date approached, he faced an incredibly difficult task. Timothy would leave with over $55,000 in debt, debt which accrued because of his inability to earn money and make child support payments while he was in prison. He therefore recognized the complexity of the problem more deeply than we did when Georgia Justice Project staff first met Timothy at Metro Reentry, because Timothy anticipated not only the typical reentry challenges that most formerly-incarcerated people encounter—including compounding discrimination on the basis of race, class, and criminal records—but also foresaw how legally-imposed child support debt and debt punishments could very likely trap him in poverty and force him back into incarceration.

In the State of Georgia and throughout much of the United States, an out-of-home parent’s inability to earn money and pay child support—whether because of job loss, disability, or incarceration—can quickly become a compounding cycle of punishment and poverty from which escape seems impossible. In Timothy’s case, child support debt triggered an automatic suspension of his driver’s license, which would make finding employment after incarceration even more challenging. Across the U.S., 86% of people drive to work, and many jobs require that a person have a driver’s license as a prerequisite to employment. The vast majority of U.S. towns and cities lack robust public transportation, including in Georgia, so a suspended driver’s license can also make it difficult for parents to access hospitals and doctors’ offices, get nutritious food and fulfill parenting activities for their kids. If one chooses to drive despite the suspended license—which in many cases might be a necessity—the risks getting arrested and charged with Driving with a Suspended License, one of the most frequent criminal charges in the U.S. and a common criminal record employment barrier. Remarkably, U.S. federal law actually requires that states suspend driver’s licenses of parents who are behind on child support; so millions of poor out-of-home parents around the country, like Timothy, must face this challenge.

Image Credits: Kim Vanderheiden, Ross Brockway, Georgia Justice Project, Open Source
Reading time: 7 minutes

Feature: GEORGIA JUSTICE PROJECT

The Tenderly Project is a meditation on the sacred beauty and value of each being. (Not all subjects of the project will be people.) Each poster features a representation of someone, along with the word “Tenderly,” interacting with a thick, jumbled tangle of plants and flowers representing the chaotic, exuberant, too-much-to-comprehend fullness of life. The artist’s social intention is through sharing the work, to nurture a collective awareness of holding that being, as well as others with shared experiences, tenderly in our thoughts, behaviors, laws, programs, and institutions, as a necessary component of supporting justice and peace in our world.” Read more here: HTTP://WWW.KIMVANDERHEIDEN.COM/BLOG/
Timothy would also have to worry about the threat of more incarceration if he found himself unable to pay off his child support debt after his release. Though debtors’ prisons were long ago banned in the U.S. (it was one of the reasons colonists fought the British for political independence), the State of Georgia continues to arrest and jail poor people when they are unable to pay their child support debt. With so many thousands of dollars accrued over his time in prison, on top of the already heightened barriers to employment that await every person newly released from incarceration, Timothy faced an especially high risk of getting locked up again. Unless he could secure from incarceration, Timothy faced an especially high risk of getting locked up again. Unless he could secure income and pay off his debt quickly, he could face a criminal “Child Abandonment” charge or indefinite jail time for a civil “Contempt of Court” judgment.

It is perhaps striking that responses to child support debt are so punitive in Georgia and other U.S. states, given how much we know about the weight of debt on low-income people and the destructive impact of criminal and financial punishments on a person’s ability to climb out of poverty and achieve economic self-sufficiency. And yet, because these punitive responses are justified by the appeal to reasonable goals—the financial care of children and single parents who bear the majority burden of everyday parenting—many people fail to realize that these debt mechanisms hurt poor children and families most of all. Prior to his arrest and prison sentence, Timothy had been a present and caring father, and, as he prepared to leave Metro Reentry, he was eager to reunite with his children and help guide them through the rest of their young lives; he especially wanted to make sure that they didn’t make the same mistakes he had made as a young man. While Timothy and his children’s mother, Patricia, had long ago separated, they had kept in communication and both had their children’s interest as their first priority. In fact, after some struggles in raising the kids on her own, Patricia was hopeful that Timothy would take custody of the children and assume the parenting responsibility that she had shouldered during his incarceration. Rather than seeking back-payment for the child support that Timothy had not paid and could not have paid, Patricia wanted to waive the debt and have him provide support in a more meaningful way—by caring for and raising their two children, something that Timothy also wanted. Unfortunately, however, U.S. law does not allow past-due child support to be waived or reduced, even when the at-home parent or child requests and sincerely wants it.

Thus in nearly every possible way, the law sought to make things worse rather than better for Timothy’s family. It stood ready to destroy Timothy’s ability to provide, and his children’s ability to receive, real parental support; it threatened to separate the family once again, even though they wanted desperately to reunite and work together; and it outright forbade the parents from solving their problems and restoring family relationships on their own. Unfortunately, the pressure put on Timothy and his family is not unique. While child support agreements and payment processes may often work well enough for families with sufficient resources, for low-income families, particularly families of color like Timothy’s, child support orders are set and enforced in ways that preclude parents’ efforts to creatively work through their challenges and come to common agreement, and that levy destructive punishments when the out-of-home parent struggles and has difficulty fulfilling the financial obligation. Instead of bringing the family together and supporting efforts to rise out of poverty and familial discord, instead of encouraging authentic co-parenting and honoring the myriad contributions that out-of-home parents can provide, U.S. child support law dismantles poor families and helps destroy the health, power, and internal bonds within poor communities of color. Although the U.S. no longer forcibly separates Black and Brown families through slavery and the Black Codes, and no longer rips apart American Indian families through forced separation and the taking of children, modern child support debt punishments nonetheless represent an insidious manifestation of the same practice of forcibly removing parents from children, often with similarly tragic results.

At the Georgia Justice Project we seek not only to provide legal services to people who otherwise could not afford a lawyer, but also to create and demonstrate a new and different way of legally supporting poor families and communities. Recognizing what is made plain through the U.S. child support system—that law so frequently works to enforce existing social and racial hierarchies, and to destroy, rather than restore, human bonds—we at the Georgia Justice Project provide assistance to our clients that goes beyond the formal acts of legal representation by also addressing their social and economic needs, from employment barriers and housing insecurity to addiction issues and mental health concerns. Furthermore, we form deep relationships with our clients and their families, such that we become lifelong friends and partners, rather than simply lawyers and clients. At the Georgia Justice Project, the relationships we form allow us to work in solidarity, standing arm-in-arm with clients as they face what are often the most trying challenges they have ever faced—their biggest demons and most frightening threats. And we maintain those relationships and that support long after our legal representation in the particular case has ended.

In addressing child support debt punishments, we bring our holistic services to bear to help out-of-home parent clients, many of whom are incarcerated or have criminal records, to get jobs and deal with other legal and socioeconomic problems they may face. We use the relationships we build with clients to also get to know their children, family members, and in some cases even the in-home parent whom the legal system would label and separate as the “opposing party.” With trust and connections built independently and authentically, we approach each case in creative ways that seek to solve problems and restore co-parenting relationships, rather than simply achieve a “win” for our client over the other parent. In Timothy’s case, we were able to get to know his ex-partner, Patricia, and found that what she most wanted was for Timothy to take on the burden of
Biography: Ross Brockway is an attorney and Equal Justice Works Fellow at the Georgia Justice Project, where he assists accused and formerly-accused people to overcome criminal punishments and records barriers, as well as low-income parents facing child support debt punishments because they lack the ability to pay off court-ordered debts. Ross also advocates for policy change to end Georgia’s widespread criminalization of poverty and system-created cycles of imprisonment, impoverishment, and forced separation of families. Prior to GJP, he worked as a criminal defense student attorney, a racial justice researcher and advocate, an anti-displacement and housing activist, and a teacher in high-poverty public schools. Ross received his law degree from Harvard Law School and undergraduate degree from Middlebury College.

CONFRONTING THE PROBLEM OF CHILD SUPPORT LAWS IN THE U.S —A PISLAP Initiative

Inspired in part by one of their monthly conference calls in early June following the killing of George Floyd in the U.S. - and which included a presentation from Ross Brockway about his work at the Georgia Justice Project - the Project for Integrating Spirituality, Law, and Politics (PISLAP) submitted a proposal to the Democratic Party Platform Committee for the 2020 Democratic Convention, on the subject of reform of Child Support Law toward a co-parenting, family-building model. We reproduce the 2020 Platform Proposal here in the hope that it will inspire hope and resolve that positive action, and real transformation, can result from our ideals, conversations, and gatherings. This initiative echoed earlier efforts when PISLAP made a policy proposal to the same Platform Committee in 2016 following our Drexel Conference in Philadelphia. That proposal focused on Restorative Justice and called for the creation of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission to address the legacy and harms of slavery in the U.S. The 2016 proposal on Restorative Justice was partly adopted. You can read both the 2020 and 2016 proposals in full on our website at www.SpiritLawPolitics.org.
1. Confronting the Problem of Child Support Laws: Reforming Existing Legal Processes that Disproportionately Harm Communities of Color and the Poor and Stigmatize and Demean the Non-Custodial Parent

The Project for Integrating Spirituality, Law, and Politics (PISLAP, pronounced pie-slap) is a nationwide group of lawyers, law professors, law students, and legal workers of diverse backgrounds and faiths who seek to shift the focus of our existing legal system toward the healing of broken relationships and the fostering of empathy, compassion, and mutual understanding. Our group has in recent years been seeking to respond constructively to the call for challenging the manifestations in law of institutional racism that remain part of the tragic legacy of slavery, our nation’s “original sin.”

While we recognize and affirm the importance of fundamentally reforming police practices following the police killing of George Floyd and many other African-Americans in recent years, we also believe that related disrespect, indignity, and social harm are inflicted upon African-Americans and other communities of color in other areas of law. These areas of law must also be transformed if we are to truly address the kind of systemic racial injustice that so many hundreds of thousands of demonstrators have been protesting against in recent weeks.

Central among these other areas of law is that of child support, in which our existing system often operates to reinforce existing cycles of poverty, in a way that punishes and humiliates those who cannot make child support payments. In the context of low-income families in particular, the operation of the current system can make more rather than less likely the destruction of family relationships, to the detriment of parents and wider communities affected by this system, and to the detriment of the children who will comprise the next generation within these same communities.

Because African-Americans are disproportionately represented in low-income communities, the harm suffered by black lives in the police context is mirrored in the child support context by subjecting many of those affected by current child support laws to disrespect and punishment, even if child support does not involve the same level of physical violence as does police misconduct. If “Black Lives Matter,” we must confront the problem of child support laws.

In our current system, the federal government underwrites public assistance payments made by states to custodial parents responsible for raising their children. In return, states are required to levy child support payments against the non-custodial parent, and in most states some or all of those payments are used to reimburse the government for federal monies spent in public assistance.

As mandated by federal law, if the non-custodial parent fails to make child support payments, the state routinely suspends the driver’s license of the parent who has fallen behind in his or her payments—often the first step in a series of punishments that push the non-custodial parent further into poverty and make it less likely that they will be able to constructively and carefully participate in the upbringing of his or her child. Without a driver’s license, the parent is effectively unable to work, loses his or her job, and thereby falls further behind in payments—so the state may fine the parent and discontinue the license suspension and decide to drive to work, risking arrest for driving without a license.

As mandated by federal law, if the non-custodial parent fails to make child support payments, the state routinely suspends the driver’s license of the parent who has fallen behind in his or her payments—often the first step in a series of punishments that push the non-custodial parent further into poverty and make it less likely that they will be able to constructively and carefully participate in the upbringing of his or her child. Without a driver’s license, the parent is effectively unable to work, loses his or her job, and thereby falls further behind in payments—so the state may fine the parent and discontinue the license suspension and decide to drive to work, risking arrest for driving without a license.

Such an arrest may, and in some states often does, lead to the imposition of a criminal record, which further undermines the parent’s ability to find employment. If the parent then continues to be unable to pay his or her child support debt, now hampered by further unemployment and lack of transportation, he or she then may face incarceration through criminal charges like “Child Abandonment” or, more commonly, civil contempt of court. This modern-day form of debtor’s prison leaves the now stigmatized parent not only enduring a term in a jail cell, but also leaves him or her deprived in debt and unable to find stable employment, much less a pathway to restoring relationships with his or her children and co-parent.

The destructive consequences of these practices authorized by our legal system have been evident since their first chronicled by Charles Dickens in novels such as Hard Times and Little Dorrit almost two hundred years ago. Punishing a person for his or her inability to pay a debt rarely helps that person pay off the debt and achieve self-sustainability. More often, such punishment pushes that person further into poverty and despair while severely damaging their connections to family, employer, and community. We need to adopt legal processes that succeed in holding parents accountable for their financial obligations while supporting them in their efforts to gain stable employment and to restore relationships with their co-parents and children. We therefore urge the Democratic Party Platform Committee to reject the use of punitive and ineffective methods to enforce child support obligations, and to embrace a fundamentally different paradigm that actively seeks to foster the building and stabilization of family relationships.

2. The Democratic Party should call for the reframing of the child support program as a whole from one shaped by a coercive enforcement paradigm to a paradigm that fosters the building of long-term family relationships. This new paradigm would empower parents to build an effective co-parenting relationship that treats both parents with dignity, and respects and enhances the many kinds of contributions they can make as co-parents to raising a healthy child.

As it is now constituted, the child support program is almost exclusively a one-dimensional program, based on the assumption that what non-custodial parents have to contribute to their children is a monthly payment. This is demeaning to non-custodial parents, most of whom love and support their children in a variety of ways—emotionally, financially, and with whatever gifts and in-kind contributions they can manage.

Moreover, the child support program usually ignores the family challenges of low-income unmarried parents; in a relationship that may be quite fragile, as they work through their respective parenting roles and how they will co-parent together to raise a healthy child. Instead of continuing to treat these challenged relationships through a punitive lens aimed at merely extracting financial contributions from the “deadbeat” parent, the new paradigm we are proposing would seek to strengthen the relationships of co-parents, and to empower both parties in recognizing the important roles and contributions of both mothers and fathers in developing the skills and understanding needed for effective co-parenting.

It is important in discussing this issue to recognize the strong concerns and reservations that advocates for women and survivors of domestic violence have to any co-parenting arrangements. There are situations and relationships (in the case of physical, sexual, emotional or financial abuse) where co-parenting is undesirable and should not be pursued; and for those who have experienced experience such abuse, collection of child support is a key path for achieving independence and self-sufficiency from an abusive partner. SEE, E.G., (HTTPS://WWW.NCLL.ORG/RESEARCH/HUMAN-SERVICES/CHILD-SUPPORT-AND DOMESTIC-VIOLENCE. ASPX).

The State of Minnesota has demonstrated a model co-parenting paradigm by creating a Co-Parenting Court that seeks to bring co-parents together with dignity and mutual respect, and has meaningfully addressed the concerns of domestic violence advocates, who did not want to see survivors of abuse forced together with those who have abused them. With simultaneous parent education and thoughtful mediation, this co-parenting court was able to help co-parents to work better together, to actually increase child support payments, and to enable fathers in particular to feel an increased sense of respect and optimism about the role they can play in their child’s life. The valuable contributions of Minnesota’s co-parenting court are highlighted in The U.S. Partnership on Mobility from Poverty’s report, “Transforming Child Support into a Family-Building System”(The report, which references on page 15 the Minnesota Co-Parenting court, can be found at HTTPS://WWW.MOBILITYPARTNERSHIP.ORG/FILE/1218896/DOWNLOAD?TOKEN=I5RJAT_7).
In the Minnesota Co-Parenting Court, a local domestic violence advocacy group joined the partnership of the co-parenting court, and were present at every meeting and court session. There was a carefully thought-through screening process that asked individuals about healthy relationships in an effort to cast as wide a net as possible to identify those for whom co-parenting would be a safety concern. We would suggest a similar approach in designing the co-parenting courts that we are recommending here.

While the Minnesota example is a powerful one, it is by no means a stand-alone effort. Many states have already recognized that a transition from a punitive to a family-centered approach to child support is necessary and far more effective in achieving the goal of enhancing the well-being of families overall. The suspension of driver’s licenses has been particularly noted as a problem.

We advocate, subject to the concerns raised above regarding domestic violence, that the Minnesota model be embraced in the Democratic Party platform as a model for the entire country. Such a step would show in a very practical and impactful way that the Democratic Party truly embraces the aspiration of the Black Lives Matter movement to reconceive how Black people are perceived and treated within the system as a whole and not just in isolated circumstances of discrimination by one or another bad actor. Such a shift in perspective would align the party toward healing a broken system that reproduces racial injustice and toward a system that values caring and human connection across races, a system based upon empathy, compassion and love.

Toward this end the following steps should be taken:

1. The Democratic Party should call for an end of the child-support program as a cost-recovery program for the government. This practice stigmatizes and demoralizes non-custodial parents, ignores the opportunity for resolving co-parenting and financial challenges in a way that can build families and human connection, and recoups only a tiny fraction of public assistance. The Minnesota example shows that child-support payments are more likely to occur through a dignifying paradigm emphasizing mutual responsibility and respect than through a coercive and punitive model. As a corollary to this point, all child-support payments by the non-custodial parent should go to the child or children they are intended to support, not to the government.

2. In order to empower parents to work together to decide how to best support their children, unless domestic violence or other good cause rules this out, co-parenting training and relationship mediation should be a central part of the legal response to the necessity of child support, in addition to imposing reasonable financial expectations on both parents.

3. The new model should integrate into the design of any co-parenting initiatives the involvement and participation of advocates for domestic violence survivors.

4. Parents should be assisted in the creation of enforceable agreements for the support of children, and custody and parenting time should be established in such agreements in addition to financial obligations. This kind of comprehensive co-parenting agreement should be extended to unmarried as well as divorcing co-parents.

5. Both parties should have the right and opportunity to agree that a non-custodial parent's parenting time and other non-monetary contributions to the co-parenting process should be credited toward any formal child-support obligation, in addition to monetary contributions. In addition, the monetary contribution expected of any parent should be limited to a reasonable share of a parent’s actual disposable income.

6. Finally, suspension of driver's licenses as a primary sanction for non-payment of child support to the government should be terminated.

Conclusion

The Project for Integrating Spirituality, Law, and Politics is founded on the belief that the legal system must reimagine its conception of justice to focus not only upon vindicating individual rights, but also upon the fostering of empathy, compassion, and human connection. In our view, that aspiration is also a fundamental aspect of the Black Lives Matter movement, as that movement has emerged through the recent protests against the demeaning of Black lives for hundreds of years in our own nation. While some of this racial injustice has been manifested in illegal acts of discrimination and violence, the vast majority of it has been carried out legally, through rules and social practices that have legitimized and enforced it. If we wish to heal and repair this unjust aspect of our national heritage, we must not only identify and prosecute illegal actions, but also transform piece by piece that legal order within which that injustice has previously been justified and has thus become—as it is often put—systemic.

The routine processing of child support obligations throughout the country has been one important arena in which this kind of systemic racism, disproportionately degrading our communities of color, has been justified and enforced. We call upon the Democratic Party to embrace the dignifying and family-supportive co-parenting paradigm that we have articulated here by including our recommendations in its 2020 platform.

Artist: Isabel Añino Granados, Spanish Lawyer, Artist, Teacher
Title: “En el espacio mítico” (part of ‘MACABRE FABLES DURING THE CONFINEMENT’, a series of daily drawings by Isabel inspired following the lockdown in March of this year)
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**Poetic Justice**

**The Other**

Money, property, people or states
The reasons for all gluttony and hate
"This is mine, while that is yours." The reason for all conflicts and wars.
I give commands while you obey
The hidden agendas to what we say
The black, the white and all the grey
The reason for widespread dismay
Stranger, friend or even my mother,
‘They are not me, they are some other
While I’m responsible only for me,
For my comfort, I can even kill thee.’
No judgements here, just stating facts.
Wondering if there’s a way to distract,
From this gap between me and the rest
That’s keeping humanity from its crest.
Distancing from the ideals of Peace-love
Making us hawks instead of doves
Quick to attack others for self-interest
Igniting wild fires of selfish quests.
Not pointing fingers here, at what others do
But contemplating how I’m responsible too
In manifesting this world of Me vs You
And making embers while I still can do.

— Nitya Bansal, Advocate and Mediator, India

**Gimme Distance**

Shelter in place
Reduced mobility and social distancing
The crowds have gone away
Away from the threats,
the hazards, the peril and the risk.
Safety no longer found in numbers.
But the anxiety and fear do not disappear.
We constantly search for new information
on the gravity of the menace.
Newsstand, CNN, BBC bombard us with breaking bulletins.
Evidence, data and the latest numbers flatter
our hopes for now.

— Thomas Telfer, Law Professor and Mindfulness Teacher, Canada

**Dear Lady Justice**

Can you tell your Honours
That Law is like a leaf
That has fallen from a tree?
Lying on the ground
Floating on the gusts of wind
In little circles round.
It seems so random
And thoughtless
But yet it is part of a
Mystical process
Built up of cells and nerves
And wondrous tiny woven spurs.
Thought out and lived through
By goddesses like Gaia, like Themis
And like you.
For centuries and agesless times
Created by unknown forces
Star dust and billions of lives.
That is what I call Law of Life
The Law of what we do and do not know
The Law of what we love and fear the most
This Law cannot be written in words
But it can be given and heard
By lawyers like your Honours
Attorneys and prosecutors.

Dear Lady Justice,
This is my prayer:
I wish that one day
We practice your Law
Just by looking at a leaf
Breathing the bright air
Honouring our ancestors and heirs
Living justice for what we can bear
For this world we love to care.

— Klaartje Freeke, Criminal Defence Lawyer with a holistic approach, The Netherlands
of Appeal affirmed this decision of the District Court, and took it one step further by basing this duty of care on the human rights provision of article 2 (the right to life) and 8 (the right to family and private life) of the European Convention of Human Rights. Then, in December 2019, the Dutch Supreme Court upheld this judgment, affirming that the Dutch government must reduce emissions in line with its human rights obligations. Finally, we have the important international movement to define the duty of care towards nature as a matter of criminal justice: Ecocide Law.

A legal duty of care is the legal responsibility to avoid any behaviors or omissions that could reasonably be foreseen to cause harm to others. In the examples above, the legal duty to avoid causing harm to others through climate change or the pollution of the environment is externally imposed by the justice system. The question arises whether environmentally caring behavior can be stimulated in ways that speak to our intrinsic motivation. In the words of the Synod of Bishops for the Amazon, who convened in October 2019: caring for our common home requires deep ecological conversion.

This article explores if Ecopsychology and Restorative Justice can help nurture an attitude of care towards the environment, and be the pillars of a new discipline that we call Positive Green Criminology: the study of human care for the environment.

Ecopsychology: how to stimulate an attitude of care for the environment

Ecopsychology, coined in 1992 by Theodore Roszak in his book The Voice of the Earth, studies the relationship between human beings and the natural world through ecological and psychological principles. It seeks to develop and understand ways of expanding the emotional connection between individuals and the natural world, thereby assisting individuals with developing sustainable lifestyles and remedying alienation from nature. A central premise of ecopsychology is that, while today the human mind is affected and shaped by the modern social world, its deep structure is inevitably adapted to, and informed by, the more-than-human natural environ-
The act of restoring or conserving the natural environment also assists in creating a sense of purpose and hopefulness. Since this activity is usually done in groups, it may further help to foster a sense of belonging and connectedness while simultaneously improving one’s mood. When an environmental offender does environmental restoration work as part of his or her sentence, this benefits not only the environment; it also contributes to the offender’s psychological healing and development. Such insights from ecotherapy are used in OFFENDERS & NATURE SCHEMES, a program in the United Kingdom that involves prisoners and probationers in forest maintenance activities in order to gain skills and work experience and increase confidence in securing future employment. This short overview suggests that interventions from Ecotherapy could assist in developing an attitude of care towards the environment, and contribute to environmentally caring behavior.

Restorative Justice

Restorative justice is a process whereby all the parties with a stake in a particular offence come together on a voluntary basis to collectively resolve how to deal with the aftermath of the offense and its implications for the future. Restorative justice’s emphasis on the healing of damaged relationships, its search for the roots of harmful behavior, and its community and forward-looking orientation make it well positioned to address environmental harms. In countries such as New Zealand, Australia, Canada and Brazil, Restorative Justice has been successfully applied to environmental offenses.

The Australian case Garrett v Williams (2007) is a good example of environmental and cultural education of the offender in a restorative setting. In this case, several Aboriginal artefacts were destroyed and an Aboriginal sacred place was damaged by mining operations. After listening to a traditional owner and Aboriginal artefacts expressing her grief about the destruction during a restorative justice conference, the defendant expressed his remorse and asked the elder for forgiveness for destroying her cultural heritage. The outcome of the conference included financial contributions for the victims, future training and employment opportunities for the local community, and a guarantee that the traditional owners would be involved in any future salvage operations of Aboriginal artefacts.

Restorative outcomes in other environmental restorative justice cases from New Zealand, Australia and Canada include: apologies, restoration of environmental harm and prevention of future harm through environmental training and education of the offender;

environmental audits of the activities of the offending company, compensatory restoration of environments elsewhere and community service work. In New Zealand and Canada, trees and rivers have been recognized as victims of environmental crime in their own right and have been represented by indigenous organizations in the restorative process. In Brazil, Dominic Barter’s work with restorative circles in the aftermath of the Rio Doce ecocide has contributed to the awakening that the River Doce as an entity with its own rights which needs to be restored to health.

Recognizing the environment as a victim of environmental harm and representing it in the restorative justice process can contribute to transforming humanity’s relationship with the natural world from one of exploitation toward one of care. More specifically, the confrontation with human and represented non-human victims during a conference can educate the offender about the harmful environmental effects of his or her behavior and create environmental awareness. Engaging in environmental restoration work following a conference can also foster in the offender a sense of belonging and connectedness to the natural world, according to the insights of Ecopsychology.

Positive Green Criminology: a new field of study?

Ecopsychology can be positioned as a part of Positive Psychology, in the way that Restorative Justice is seen as belonging to the movement of Positive Criminology, a term coined in the Netherlands by Marc Schuilenburg. The fields of Ecopsychology and Restorative Justice can help us find better ways of coping with, preventing, and restoring man-made environmental harm as well as developing intrinsically-motivated care for nature. They can therefore be the pillars of a positive multi-disciplinary approach to the prevention of environmental harm that we call Positive Green Criminology. Green Criminology is a fairly new criminological field which analyses environmental harms from a criminological perspective.

Characteristics of a Positive Green Criminology include:

• To adopt a more positive view of the relationship between humans and nature - moving from a paradigm in which nature can be controlled, owned and exploited by humans towards a more eco-centric worldview that is based on interconnectedness;
• To engage with, and stimulate, positive characteristics of people - their inclination to care for the environment and future generations, and to act accordingly;
• To raise awareness about the consequences of our behavior on the natural world;
• To give all victims of environmental harm a voice, including future generations and nature itself; and
• To facilitate and stimulate the restoration of environmental harm by the people who have caused this harm.

Conclusion

Last year, the United Nations General Assembly declared this new decade 2020-2030 to be the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration. To make our efforts in ecosystem restoration last, embodied care for the natural world is a crucial motivating force. In this article, we described how interventions from Ecotherapy can assist in developing an attitude of care towards the environment. In addition, Restorative justice processes can contribute to transforming our relationship with

Feature: POSITIVE GREEN CRIMINOLOGY

Feature: POSITIVE GREEN CRIMINOLOGY
connecting to care — fostering a deep emotional connection between humans and the natural world

The absence of a deep emotional connection between humans and the natural world is at the root of the environmental crisis...

We all know that there is lots of injustice in the world but most of us don’t step up. We might buy a keep cup. We might sign a petition or post something on social media but, in our professional lives, most of us are sadly lacking. I’m speaking from experience here. I’m not an environmental lawyer, but, as a corporate lawyer, I acted for companies whose values were completely out of sync with my own. I heard the word “greenies” used on several conference calls - a derogatory comment about people who are opposed to fracking, and who care about nature. I didn’t say anything at the time and rationalised that I was just doing my job, as most of us do. My silence conveyed my tacit agreement. Afterwards, I remember feeling ashamed of myself. Repeat a behaviour often enough though and we stop feeling so ashamed. It starts to feel normal.
I am interested in understanding what motivates people like Robert Bilott, an environmental lawyer portrayed in the film Dark Waters, who defended large chemical companies before he was approached for help in 1998 by Wilbur Tennant, a West Virginian farmer whose land was contaminated by chemical giant DuPont. Over the course of 20 years, at great personal cost, Bilott took a courageous stand against one of the most powerful corporations in the United States eventually winning a multi-million dollar settlement on behalf of thousands of plaintiffs who had been affected by DuPont’s actions.

Here is a thought experiment which might help provide an answer to why people like Bilott do what they do. You might like to try it?

Can you think of a place in nature that you know really well? Close your eyes for a moment and see what comes up.

Can you visualise the place in exquisite detail? The sounds, the colours, the smells, the subtleties that only you know.

Do memories surface? Perhaps you have known this place for a long time. Maybe you spent golden moments from your childhood here? There might be happy memories tinged with sadness or regret?

How does it feel when you bring this place to mind now?

Please don’t rush. Take a moment to connect.

Now, another question.

How would you feel if this same place was under imminent threat? Imagine someone is destroying it right now. What do you feel? Anger? Sadness? Shock? Resignation? Nothing at all?

Can you imagine that you might actually do something immediate and tangible to help protect this place?

So what did you notice? Be honest with yourself.

If you really have a deep connection with a place, it is likely that you might feel moved to do something. That’s obvious, right? We naturally and instinctively act to protect that which we care very deeply about.

But what if that deep connection with a place is absent? How would that affect your response? It’s a beautiful place but it’s not your place. Are you still likely to do something about it?

Let me paint two scenarios for you...

You are walking through town at night and you see your best friend looking dishevelled, sleeping rough on the street. You haven’t seen him for six months. There is probably an initial shock: “Oh my God, what happened?” You instinctively reach out for him. Before you know it your arm is on his shoulder. “Come home with me. Let me take care of you.”

Now another night. This time you see a random stranger looking dishevelled, sleeping rough on the street. Be honest. What do you do? Is it someone else’s problem? If your heart is big enough you might give him some money or buy him a sandwich but is he coming home to sleep on your couch? Perhaps you rationalise your inaction by reminding yourself that you donate to the local homeless charity. You might remind yourself to vote for a politician who appears committed to doing something. But most of the time most of us don’t do anything at all.

Why the difference? In the first scenario, you obviously have a deep emotional connection with your best friend and you have to act. In the second scenario, you might feel sad and, on an intellectual level, you might recognise the tragedy of the situation but there is no emotional connection between the two of you so more often than not you don’t act.

John Steinbeck put it very well when he commented on the Great Chinese Famine of 1959–61: “It means very little to know that a million Chinese are starving unless you know one Chinese who is starving.”

It makes sense then that Robert Bilott had an emotional connection with the community he stood up and acted for. Wilbur Tennant, the farmer who asked for his help, was a neighbour of his grandmother. Bilott loved his grandmother. He spent summers staying with her when he was a boy. When he is first contacted by Tennant it is the fact that he has been referred by Robert’s grandmother that moves him to agree to visit the farm where he then sees the devastation there with his own eyes – poisoned water and sickened, dying cattle. The impact of the experience, and the way it compelled him to act because of his own love of nature, is movingly described in Bilott’s book.

What can you do?

The first and most important step in my opinion is to simply rekindle our love of nature.

Do you regularly spend time outside, with no phone or other distraction - ‘being’ instead of ‘doing’?

It’s a rare thing in this day and age.

The Irish poet Patrick Kavanagh expressed it beautifully: “To know fully one field or one land is a lifetime’s experience. In the world of poetic experience it is depth that counts, not width. A gap in a hedge, a smooth rock surfacing a narrow lane, a view of woody meadows, the stream at the junction of four small fields – these are as much as any man can fully experience.”

Most of us have neither the time nor the inclination to pursue a deeper nature experience. For many, it is width that counts, not depth. We are addicted to new experiences, consuming new places in a very shallow and meaningless way. Rushing to the next moment. A nice photograph for Instagram, and another place ticked off the list.

What about the places where we live and work? The lane we pass on our way to the office. The horse chestnut tree in the field overlooking the car park. The park where we walk the dog. The canal where we eat our lunch everyday.

Do you sometimes stop and listen to the trees swaying in the breeze? Do you notice the first leaves of spring, and the very last leaves of winter? Do you know the call of each songbird? Have you noticed how the character of a place changes day by day and even moment by moment?

Can you slow down and pay attention in these moments?
It might seem like a drop in the ocean but it counts. It’s where we all need to start.

**Widening the circle of compassion**

I’m not suggesting for a moment that we should only care about the things which are happening on our doorsteps and wash our hands of the rest. My experience as a practitioner and a teacher suggests that when you start to practice mindfulness and compassion, there is a natural opening of the heart. Albert Einstein speaks to this process in his famous quote: “A human being is a part of the whole, called by us ‘Universe,’ a part limited in time and space. He experiences himself, his thoughts and feelings as something separated from the rest — a kind of optical delusion of his consciousness. This delusion is a kind of prison for us, restricting us to our personal desires and to affection for a few persons nearest to us. Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature in its beauty.”

One of the practices I really enjoy is simply paying attention to trees. There are a number of lovely trees around Dublin. My favourite tree was an old horse chestnut that overlooked my granny’s back garden. When she died, my parents moved in. That tree, which had spent its whole life making clean air for the birds who lived in the tree. What would my granny have said? As I write this sentence there is a lump in my throat. I am grateful for the experience because it helped me to really get in touch with my sadness about what is happening on a much bigger scale. What is happening right now in the Amazon and many other parts of the world is so sad. The lungs of our planet are being burned. Thousands of trees (just like the tree overlooking my granny’s back garden) have been cut down since you started reading this article. Do you feel as sad as I do when you visualise that?

It’s very easy to feel overwhelmed when you consider the scale of the problem. If you do care, my advice would be to start small. Do something.

Spend even five minutes appreciating nature?

Perhaps Robert Bilitz’s work can be an inspiration for you (as it has been for me). It shows what one person is capable of when they really care.

Biography Barry Lee: I worked as a corporate and commercial lawyer for over ten years. I learned about mindfulness and meditation early on in my career when I experienced burn-out. The practice of meditation completely changed my life for the better. Four years ago, I stopped practicing law in order to teach mindfulness and meditation early on in my career when I experienced burn-out. The practice of meditation completely changed my life for the better. Four years ago, I stopped practicing law in order to teach meditation full-time. In 2017, I founded MINDFULNESS FOR LAW and over the last three years I have facilitated many courses and workshops for some of the biggest law firms in Ireland and the UK. I teach Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction and Mindful Self Compassion. I have also facilitated workshops “outside” in nature called “Connecting To Care”. We use a mindfulness based approach to cultivate a deeper connection with the natural world. My hope is that it will inspire more people to take action.

**The Inner Work of Racial Justice – Healing Ourselves and Transforming Our Communities Through Mindfulness**

Rhonda V. Magee

I approached the reading of this book with some apprehension about whether or not I would have enough life experience and understanding to truly resonate with, and understand, its central theme let alone be able to write an informed book review. I recognised, at the same time, that this resistance suggested it was a project I should undertake and I am glad I did. For the first half of my life I have understood, or perhaps chosen to understand, the subject of racism in a simplistic way – deliberate acts of bias against people of a different race or colour. I was aware that the legacies of colonialism and oppression of indigenous peoples are still with us around the world today and palpable in societal structures, cultures and practices. In the Republic of Ireland, where I come from, the legacies of British rule can still be felt in different subtle ways as is poignantly captured in the song “Colony”, by Irish Singer, Damien Dempsey. Yet the naming of this as part of the wider phenomenon that is racism and the wake-up call that we are all, those of us with white skin in particular, contributing to it in subtle and unconscious ways, I understand in a new way.
– both subtle and explicit - keep replicating a status quo of “have and have-nots” that looks the same as it did fifty or even one hundred years ago?

Although the The Inner Work of Racial Justice mainly looks at how these issues are manifesting in lived experience in the U.S. “racism and colorism, in forms both implicit and explicit, along with additional forms of Othering and disrespecting people who are “not our kind,” exist in many parts, if not virtually every part of the world.” The practices and reflections it offers will be a welcome support for anyone, anywhere interested in this work.

The book has been published at a time when it is needed more than ever in the advent of the massive renewed uprising of the Black Lives Matter movement this summer. That was sparked by the violent murder of George Floyd, a black man whose life was taken in very public and violent way by white police officer, Derek Chauvin in Minneapolis. His death is preceded by countless others caused by police brutality and racism. Any of us wanting to sit with and feel, rather than numb out, the painful emotions that the imagery of the George Floyd murder has caused whether from watching the widely publicised video of his death (if we have chosen to do that) or associated imagery will find support in Magee’s book and meditations.

With a foreword by Jon Kabat-Zinn, the book is composed of five parts each representing a key dimension of Magee’s approach to racial justice work. It is an approach she calls ColorInsight, the opposite to the practice of getting over racism by looking beyond race and, in doing so, by-passing the suffering it causes. The approach combines practices of mindfulness and compassion with community engagement and sharing our stories around these issues.

In Part 1 we are Grounding ourselves in the courage and desire to turn toward, rather than away from, enquiries about race and racism; in Part 2 we are Seeing in a deeper and more nuanced way how race and racism operate in our lives today; in Part 3 we are looking beyond race and, in doing so, by-passing the suffering it causes; in Part 4 we are Doing what needs to be done, healing, standing up, speaking out; and finally, in Part 5, we are Liberating and working towards “opening the door of transformation that benefits us all.”

The practice of mindfulness is pivotal and offers a unique and ground-breaking way of seeing not only the work of racial justice, but also the work of social justice (inextricably linked and inseparable from the work of racial justice), and the work of justice and law more generally. Magee has for some years been at the forefront of integrating the practices and benefits of mindfulness into legal education and practice.

Throughout the journey of the book, we are continuously invited to pause, to breathe and to become present to our bodies as we digest the often-challenging material it presents. Space and breath in fact infuse the book in a way rarely, if ever, found in a book dealing with the subject of justice. Almost every chapter includes a meditation rich with invitations to both relax, pause and breathe and to reflect more deeply on our personal experiences of race and racism. For me, this had the effect of allowing the historical facts, the poignant stories of racial experience, and the accompanying contemplations to descend into a deeper level of my experience and to become a living enquiry that stayed with me throughout the day. This speaks, I think, to the transformative power of bringing a mindful perspective to our most difficult questions about law and justice.

One of the fundamental questions we are asked to consider at the outset of the book is “What is race?” I sense many of us have not stopped to think deeply about this question. Unfortunately, it is not often a feature of our history or science lessons as children. Race itself has no scientific backing, but is a mere “matter of social imagination and construction.”

A NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC ARTICLE strikingly tells us:

“Science today tells us that the visible differences between peoples are accidents of history. They reflect how our ancestors dealt with sun exposure, and not much else.” Magee asks: “ Might a closer look at your own history, going back several generations on both of your parents’ sides, reveal intersections with cultures or races previously unknown to you or your family members, whether from heritage groups here or abroad?” While many of us may embrace the idea of a common humanity, understanding the (lack of) science and the history of race can strengthen our conviction because, abstract ideals aside, we really are – one human family.

Racism, then, in one of the many definitions and explanations that Magee offers us, “is a complex of behaviour and explanatory stories that enable some human beings to assert power over other human beings.” We uproot and examine how racism touches our own lives on a journey through the parts, chapters and meditations of the book where we are invited into intimate, embodied contact with our reactions to questions like:

Q.  What do your skin and skin tone mean to you?
Q.  How have you been wounded or how have you benefited as a result of the particular skin that you live in?
Q.  What do you know about your ancestral heritage?
Q.  How are the legacies of these structural conditions shaping your life experiences – your opportunities, your challenges – now?
Q.  What laws, public policies, or private policies with racially disparate intentions or outcomes were in place? What were their effects on your predecessors? Your parents? On you?
Q.  What choices do you make on a daily basis to ally with others in the fight for equity and transformative justice?
Q.  What do you need to turn toward, to see more clearly, to enable you to get actively involved in the work of racial justice?

These questions are shared to give a sense of the span of enquiries the book invites us to. They are best answered though with the use of the meditations in which they appear as this lends itself to deeper enquiry and deeper transformation.
Rhonda V. Magee —

Social justice cannot exist apart from RACIAL JUSTICE.

Interview by: Elaine Quinn
Image Credit: Rhonda V. Magee, Open Source
Reading time: 6.5 minutes

Q: COULD YOU UNPACK WHAT JUSTICE, SOCIAL JUSTICE, AND RACIAL JUSTICE MEAN FOR YOU?

To begin, in defining justice, I am inspired by advocates like King and Ghandi. Martin Luther King Jr said “justice at its best is power correcting every thing that stands against love.” We find this power of love through recognising that we are all, without exception, vulnerable to suffering and all part of one human family. As a family, we each have responsibility for minimising that suffering and for attending to each other’s wellbeing. When they saw organised power standing against the wellbeing of other people, King and other advocates for justice throughout human history, sought to raise our consciousness about the responsibility we all have to try to oppose this, and to minimise this unnecessary suffering.

The social justice movements of all of our cultures seek to help us see that, in addition to this common suffering, there are also people among us systematically suffering, and more vulnerable, because of the way we have organised ourselves. For example, women because of the way we have arranged marriage law or people with disabilities because of the way we have arranged the accessibility of buildings and workplaces.

Social justice work is about looking then at what surplus suffering is flowing from the way we have organised our society for the distribution of resources. The answers will be unique to each culture and society but we must ask: Where in our culture are the marginalised populations? How are the patterns of organisation and who is suffering? How have we embedded in our laws and policies a sense of who matters more and who matters less? Where are we “othering” as opposed to “including”?

Social justice work and racial justice work are inextricably linked. There is no social justice without racial justice. With racial justice, we are examining the racial inputs and outputs through these patterns of maldistribution of resources. In the U.S.

Profile Heart to Heart: RHONDA MAGEE

Biography: Rhonda V. Magee (M.A. Sociology, J.D.) is a Professor of Law at the University of San Francisco and an internationally-recognized thought and practice leader focused on integrating mindfulness into higher education, law and social change work. A prolific author, she draws on law and legal history to weave storytelling, poetry, analysis and practices into inspiration for changing how we think, act and live better together in a rapidly changing world. Read more at: RHONDAMAGGE.COM

The Inner Work of Racial Justice will have a different impact on all of us depending on our skin colour, social identities and other myriad factors from our upbringing and location in the world. Its transformative potential for me lies in its simultaneous skilful grappling of the difficult reality of racism today, and in its consistent holding of a vision of us all as one Beloved Community - a community that recognises the immeasurable uniqueness and beauty in each one of us. As Magee puts it: “I have known since I was a child that the ways in which I had been trained to see myself were not reflective of who I really was. I somehow knew, at an early age, that the identity given to me by the social world was not nearly big or deep enough to hold the mystery-in-plain-sight that I was – that we all are. We have a sense of ourselves as racialised and gendered beings in specific cultural contexts, living as convention demands, but at the same time, some of us know, instinctively, that there is something much more to who we are. And yet, we

Magee is also clear that this work cannot successfully be achieved without community engagement. In our related interview, she spoke of the sometimes individualised, “put it on an app,” approach to mindfulfulness our culture can encourage despite it originating in centuries-old, traditional Asian cultures where its embeddedness in community was key. Sharing our experiences in community often can demand of us more authentic responses, can expose our blind-spots, and can trigger our insecurities, vulnerabilities and all myriad of emotions. It is where the emotional and social intelligence that this work calls for will really be tested and strengthened. It is also though where “we work on creating safer spaces for getting it wrong so that we may get it wrong less frequently elsewhere. And we work to build the will to repair, to reconcile, and to keep coming back to one another in hopes of building resilient relationships and robust community together.” The existence of these types of community spaces may be something we have to seek out or begin ourselves. For those reading based in London and interested, ST. ETHELBURGA’S CENTRE FOR RECONCILATION AND PEACE is offering this type of community space later this year.

The social justice work and racial justice work are inextricably linked. There is no social justice without racial justice. With racial justice, we are examining patterns of organisation and who is suffering? How have we embedded in our laws and policies a sense of who matters more and who matters less? Where are we “othering” as opposed to “including”? Social justice work is about looking then at what surplus suffering is flowing from the way we have organised our society for the distribution of resources. The answers will be unique to each culture and society but we must ask: Where in our culture are the marginalised populations? How are the resources organised? Who is benefiting from the patterns of organisation and who is suffering? How have we embedded in our laws and policies a sense of who matters more and who matters less? Where are we “othering” as opposed to “including”? Social justice work and racial justice work are inextricably linked. There is no social justice without racial justice. With racial justice, we are examining the racial inputs and outputs through these patterns of maldistribution of resources. In the U.S.

We are all generously invited – even, and perhaps most strongly, those of us who may feel we have not had to think about race much at all in our lives - into this book’s deep, rich and thought-provoking material and contemplations. Accepting that invitation, and willingly engaging with it, is likely to mobilise a transformation that will continue long after we put it back on the shelf. For those of us keenly interested in revolutionising the legal system and infusing it with a sense of justice that is more about love than fear, this book is a powerful affirmation of what is possible.
and other Westernised cultures we will see that, through a vast and intersecting set of policies, laws and practices (official and unofficial) from immigration to education to hospitalisation, white racialised people have been long preferred. This is the deep legacy of white supremacy.

We must ask the difficult questions about why we are still seeing the same outcomes in the officially non-racist societies of today as we saw in the explicitly racist societies of the past. These enquiries can, of course, get uncomfortable in part because often we may have another narrative or explanation—for example it’s about nationalism, or it’s about protecting our culture. If we want to advocate for racial justice, we must be willing to sit in hard conversations about this.

Q: COLORINSIGHT IS YOUR APPROACH TO RACIAL JUSTICE USING MINDFULNESS AND COMPRESSION PRACTICES—COULD YOU TELL US MORE?

ColorInsight is shorthand for the opposite to colorblindness. It is an approach that is about being curious and deepening one’s capacity to think, reflect and discuss how notions of race and racism might still be showing up in our midst. As promulgated in the U.S, colorblindness came in some ways from a way of thinking where we demonstrate that we are no longer racist is by not noticing race, by not having race as a feature of our public lives, by acting as if we are beyond race.

We all, however, have embedded within us deep notions of this called race. In the U.S., we are each given a race on our birth certificate. We are recognising race and factoring it into our decisions all the time—where to send our children to school, how to select our marriage partners, the neighbourhoods we want to live in. Our notions of certain environments are influenced by the racial demographics. The idea then that, on the one hand, we all have a race and know something about our country’s historical legacies and that, on the other hand, we are told not to talk about it creates unhealthy patterns.

ColorInsight is leaning into mindfulness practice to deepen our awareness that the legacies of race and racism are with us. We do this with compassion, because we are human beings in a world we did not create and the ways we do not create either. The only right response is deep compassion. We begin to understand how our lives have been impacted by race, how our inability to be aware of that may actually be part of what is causing the suffering, and we heed the call to be actively engaged in noticing the thoughts, emotions and sensations that travel with racial trauma experience in the world. We do this by bringing into the human experience our emotions of disrupting unconscious behaviour. ColorInsight is a touchstone then for the capacities that can arise when mindfulness is brought to bear on our relationship to race.

Q: THIS WORK FEELS PARTICULARLY RELEVANT AND IMPORTANT FOR THE LEGAL COMMUNITY?

Racial bias exists within the legal profession, and we have been trying to hold ourselves accountable to this in the U.S. for some time. Because of the deep historical trainings about race that pervade our social worlds, we must recognise, as lawyers and lawmakers, that there are subtle and unconscious ways we may be presuming and predicting outcomes, and making assumptions and decisions that rely, in often subtle ways, on these trainings in racism and other forms of bias.

When I was practising law, I would go to court to represent some large, wealthy insurance companies. It would be a surprise to discover that it was the lawyer acting on behalf of the insurer. The assumption of those present was that if I was not the actual person charged with some criminal offense, then at most, I only be representing the person charged with a crime, someone, presumably, who would also be black. This is all because of the way black racialised people are so very often charged, and brought into the criminal process, in the U.S. There have been many great books (for example, ‘The New Jim Crow’ by Michelle Alexander) about how criminal law in the U.S. has taken the place of segregation and explicit white supremacy in maintaining racial hierarchy, and has become the vehicle for dispossessing people of their civil and human rights.

There is much to look at in the intersection of mindfulness, law and racism. Mindfulness can be a support for becoming more present to how these may be running through even neutral processes and practices like the charging decisions of a prosecutor or decisions a law firm makes about the kind of lawyers they want to hire because of the clients they want to attract. All of these hidden, subtle or not so subtle assumptions, trainings and biases keep replicating a society of “have and have-nots” that, in many ways, looked the same fifty or even one hundred years ago.

It is important to look at the role of law in contributing to this persistent racial spread in who is on the top and who is on the bottom, and to have the courage to see how we have been trained to be colorblind but at the same time, we have allowed these colorblind practices and policies to replicate a society in which Latinos, Native Americans and black racialised people continue to find themselves disproportionately under the threat of race-based oppression. We, of course, saw this very vividly, visually, physically and violently with the video of the George Floyd killing this summer. We were reminded in a very visceral way that there can be subtleties in what we are talking about but that this is not always the case. Sometimes the legacies of racism are explicit and obvious, even today.

These patterns of bias can also show up in law through police interactions that are infused with a contempt for black life or for native indigenous American Indian life. Because of the legacy of the deep training of white supremacy, there can be a contempt for some of these traditionally marginalised people. Turning toward this is challenging, not least because often our brothers and sisters may be police officers, our friends and family members may be the lawyers, law enforcement officers or judges that hold the biases embedded in our culture.

This is why a compassionate approach to healing helps. It is not a courageous compassion, like Martin Luther King Jr. had, a fierce, courageous engaged awareness that says we do this, even though it is difficult, out of the love we feel for all of us. Because we all deserve better.

Q: YOU SPEAK IN YOUR BOOK ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF SPEAKING OUT, AND TAKING ACTION. ACROSS THE BOARD, THIS IS NOT ALWAYS EASY AND CAN COME WITH A COST. CAN YOU SPEAK MORE ABOUT THIS?

The circumstances we find ourselves in inevitably impact how much freedom we feel, and our ability to speak up, raise questions, enquire and challenge. For example, we may not be in a workplace setting where anybody welcomes us raising questions about the racial patterns of our hires and why some backgrounds are unrepresented or ignored. How do we face the vulnerability, and sometimes cost, to our livelihood that can come with speaking up when it goes against the grain? This is timely as we are all struggling to find ways to survive and thrive in the pandemic and post-pandemic world. It has left all of us feeling more vulnerable.

This is why politically-engaged mindfulness matters. Because it is about how our societal, economic, institutional, workplace values and settings can either impinge upon our sense of freedom or enable us to deploy our talents and skills in a way that feels meaningful, purposeful and consistent with our values and beliefs. These structures and settings can sometimes represent a knee on someone’s neck, and engaged mindfulness can assist us in figuring out how to remove it.

Racism, and other forms of oppression, are not necessarily about hatred. Often, they are more about power dynamics, and how we try to maintain power and its perceived social values. We must ask: “What is happening with power around here?” How is the system constantly promoting the same kind of voice and making these other voices more marginal? Why is that voice more important? Whether it is about race, gender, sex orientation, immigration— if we care about democratic principles, we need to look for and question these patterns of elevated and privileged voices and marginalised voices. We do not often have sophisticated conversations in the U.S. about this, and we are suffering as a nation because of it.

These are the critical reasons that I and others continue to build coalitions for a broad human rights-based, across the board conditions of basic thriving and surviving for all of us. We must move from our particular identity-based, or experience-based, political work and see the importance of building broad coalitions that include marginalised and vulnerable people across the board. We may enter the door by looking at racism but, in the end, this is as a broad human rights struggle through which we are trying maximise the basic freedom or enable us to deploy our talents and settings can sometimes represent ‘a knee on someone’s neck’, and engaged mindfulness can assist us in figuring out how to remove it.

Mindful lawyering does not always lead to progressive lawyering or lawyering for social change. There are people who want to be mindful lawyers, and who are not particularly interested in disrupting the status quo. I do think though that because mindfulness can support us in seeing ourselves, interconnectedness, seeing the unique suffering in our midst and developing a commitment to minimising the harm we have also move us in the direction of wanting to be a world where all of us can thrive and towards engaging in progressive politics.
Q: HOW CAN WE REMAIN PATIENT AND STAY INSPIRED WHILE WORKING TO BRING A NEW WORLD INTO BEING?

These practices are helping to change our cultures, and cultures do not change overnight. They may sometimes appear to but, generally speaking, any sudden cultural change has had generations and generations of people working on it.

We need then a deep commitment to the challenges we face and have inherited over hundreds of years. It is going to take some time for our cultures to reflect these deeper and different commitments we are developing. Can we sit, can we stay in the work together, despite what looks like not so much impact at times? Can we trust that, in some way, we are doing the part that we can?

Some argue that mindfulness can make us pacified but it is also about being realistic and pragmatic. On the one hand, I would like everything to change now. On the other hand, I recognise we are talking about human beings and even the best of us struggle. And I personally don’t want to engage in change-making in ways that enact even subtle forms of violence. Recognising that individually we all struggle when called to change a long-engrained habit or pattern, we are better able to bring patience and compassion to the collective process for genuine change. We are not interested in revolution or change that creates undue suffering in the process.

This is also about how we transform together. This is about trying to deepen our ability to thrive together. This is not about winning for “our side” in a way that humiliates and leaves somebody else as the outsider.

This is about disrupting our outmoded notions of separation, and envisioning ways we can together, once again, find common ground and ways of thriving on this one big precious planet we call home.
CONTEMPLATIVE LAWYERING

— A Vocation of Service

Introduction

"Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke? Then your light will break forth like the dawn, and your healing will quickly appear; . . . Your people will return to their former, Called the Restorer of Streets with Dwellings."— A Vocation of Service

Western law, particularly American law, has made many positive contributions to upholding modern democracy. However, in global comparison, Western law is an ineffective model. To be sure, this is not to say teachers and legal workers will rebuild the ancient ruins and will raise up the age-old foundations; you will be called Repairer of Broken Walls, Restorer of ‘Streets with Dwellings.’”—Isaiah 58: 6-7, 12.

The adversarial American legal system is characterized by reason, procedure, outcome, reaction, and technicity; rather than Universal Truth. Universal Truth may be defined as the Reality behind existence, beyond the three-dimensional plane, which can be articulated in numerous ways by many religions and spiritual practices – yet all expressing this one Reality, all life and therefore all beings are fundamentally One.

Yet there is an inexhaustible place from which a conscious lawyer may practice. Contemplative lawyering is an approach to legal representation and legal work that seeks to provide legal counsel from a place of Consciousness, the ground of being. In short, contemplative lawyering is a prophetic orientation towards Love— to engender social change from the unbounded reserve of Love. Contemplative lawyering seeks to dismantle systemic evil by invoking both the practices and principles of Universal Truth, which supersedes law. Contemplative lawyering acknowledges the oneness of humanity. At this imperative social and political juncture, at no time more than in the present, is contemplative lawyering so needed. From a place of Consciousness, contemplative lawyering provides a means to transcend and challenge dominant systems of oppression. As poet Audre Lorde so aptly stated, “the master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house.” It is by pulling from a stronger energetic field of Consciousness, soul force, or satyagraha, that contemplative lawyering does so.

(l) Contemplative Lawyering As A Means Of Challenging Systemic Evil

By conscious and unconscious individual and collective assent, we created the breach of separated consciousness. However, the remedy has always been present in our Oneness in Love. Father Richard Rohr posits in his book What Do We Do With Evil? that the primary concern of ‘The Bible’ is the collective tacit agreement to participate in unjust systems, rather than individual personal sin. Rohr suggests that these systems are veiled and seldom challenged at their root: wealth and its accumulation, as a dominant measure of success, individualism, war, and poverty. Rohr explains that everyone benefits and is complicit in these systems of evil, which is precisely why they are difficult to detect and uproot. Rohr argues that this is why Jesus and I an wondered about the inability of the rules to resolve human problems: “For sin shall no longer be your master, because you are not under the law, but under grace” (Romans 6:14). For law, as it was practiced first in a theological vein and now in secular terms, may be complicit in evil systems. By acknowledging and practicing the maxims of transcendence, one enters a state of grace, mercy, and love.

Rohr insists that a contemplative inner posture is necessary to act from a place of consciousness, which is distinctly necessary for activism. He states: “Too much activism, without enough inner work, insight, or examination of conscience inevitably leads to violence—to the self, to the project at hand, and invariably to others. If too much focus is placed upon systems, risks of individualism, too much outer focus risks superficiality, negativity (passing for love of justice), and various messiah complexes. Those on the right can lack love, and those on the left can lack love—they just wear two different disguises. We need both inner communion and outer service to be ‘Jesus’ in the world!”


(ii) Contemplative Lawyering In Practice: Servant Leadership As A Means To Liberation

“The Oneness of the Universe is Love” —Ram Dass

True Power is Circular Power. For circular power is sourced from the inexhaustibility of Consciousness, of Love, and is regenerative because it gives and creates unto itself. Distinct from hierarchal power, where power is held at the top. Circular Power is shared and regenerative in nature and is not held in a static manner, but rather evolves as a never-ending centripetal force. Servant leadership under the lens of liberation offers a transformative means of lawyering, not only to dismantle oppressive systems, but to repair, restore, and renew the Beloved Community.

Though practiced for thousands of years, originally coined by Robert Greenleaf in the United States, servant leadership encourages the “leader” as servant first to this: Practiced for thousands of years and first coined by Robert Greenleaf in the United States, servant leadership encourages “the leader” as servant first. This approach serves the health and growth of the community as a whole by focusing on those who are the least privileged in the group and encourages the same perspective in others. This example is most notable in the work of the late Reverend Gordon Cosby and his wife Mary, the founders of the Church of the Savior network of churches, retreat center, and the Festival Center located in Washington, D.C. By establishing non-hierarchical structures and practicing servant leadership. The Way of Jesus, these communities continue to evolve, deepen, grow, and flourish, even providing direct assistance and education to marginalized communities as ministries and offering a healing and liberatory process for all participants.

The same “bottom up” approach is present in the theology of liberation. In sum, the premise of liberation theology is that God holds a preferential option for the poor, and firmly stands with the poor and all oppressed amid their oppression. It is within this inner and outward stance that one may find social and spiritual salvation or liberation. In fact, liberation theology holds that it is the very work of churches and spiritual spaces to resist this stance as a catalyst for liberation. The late Rev. Dr. James H. Cone, the progenitor and preeminent scholar of black liberation theology, declared that “any theology that is indifferent to the theme of liberation is not a Christian theology” (A Black
"The Gospel of Jesus is not a Gospel of success... the Gospel of Jesus is ultimate success through obvious failure... that is why the Cross is at the center of the Gospel. The Cross is not a Gospel of success. Jesus did not succeed. He failed. But God took that failure and transformed that failure into success. When you talk about ultimate success, it’s not obvious... because when success becomes the focus, it loses its message and loses its mission. Because the Gospel said when you lose your life for the least of these, then you’ll find your life."
— The State of the Black Church (CSPAN, 2015)

Cone urged that his spiritual communities must be vigilant not to accept the notions and appearances of success promoted by dominant culture - so, too, must legal practitioners by holding an intentional proximate orientation of the profession away from the position of empire.

The murder of George Floyd revealed the long entrenched systemic evil of racism. From a necessary righteous anger born in the Soul, millions took to the streets the streets demanding change. Let us continue this holy and sacred work in this profession by extending our inexhaustible Light, which blazes from the Soul. If we will but do it, Grace will emerge, and mend our Beloved Community.

Biography Jenipher Jones: is a Clinical Fellow at the University of Denver Sturm College of Law - Civil Rights Clinic.

Jenipher studied at Bennett College for Women and earned a B.A. in Political Science. She then attended law school at Loyola University New Orleans College of Law with membership to the Loyola Maritime Law Journal, The International Legal Honor Society of Phi Delta Phi, and legal clinical study. Jenipher began her career in civil rights as a Fellow at the Albert Schweitzer Fellowship, Southern Poverty Law Center.

Jenipher has worked on law enforcement accountability issues, including a clerkship at the civilian law enforcement oversight agency, the City of New Orleans Office of the Independent Police Monitor (OIPM), and a landmark federal consent decree involving the New Orleans Police Department (NOPD). She has also practiced at the National Employment Litigation Unit (NELU) of the United States Postal Service handling class action employment discrimination matters.

Jenipher has more recently litigated complex civil litigation cases involving prisoners’ rights, law enforcement misconduct, and employment discrimination at a civil rights law firm. She has been published in both domestic and international publications. Jenipher has also advocated for the rights of prisoners in the United States before the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, the United Nations Association, and the U.S. Department of State Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor. None of the views or opinions expressed herein represent the University of Denver and/or University of Denver Sturm College of Law.
Dave Neita & NEITOONS

Dave Neita is a London-based barrister, a published poet, and recently cultivated his skills in cartoon creation. He has a chequered background ranging from preaching at St. Paul’s Cathedral in London to delivering motivational talks to young scientists at NASA in America. He has an MA in Cultural Leadership, volunteers his time in the community and served as the UK ambassador for the European Year of Equal Opportunity for All: Face of the Year Campaign.

Dave started drawing cartoons as a pastime as a teenager in a bid to promote his perspectives on society amongst his peers; however, it was not until the pandemic lockdown period of spring 2020 that he decided to take NEITOONS to a new level of completing one per day and sharing them with the public.

The NEITOONS series represents a whimsical pastiche of the moods of each day – both the mood cast by daily unfolding events and Dave's own mood and felt experience as he interpreted what was happening. Charting the period from the day of the lockdown, on the 23rd March until the 19th of June, Dave created just over 10 weeks of daily toons.

When viewed in its entirety, the series represents a documentation of this challenging period. It is hoped that the reader of these unique NEITOONS will feel a sense of shared experience, thoughtful reflection, and inspiration. Enjoy just some of the cartoons published here and to see the whole series, or to connect with Dave Neita, FIND HIM HERE ON TWITTER (@POETRYLAWYER).
We are in a profound spiritual crisis because the core operating principles of our civilization are based on domination and exploitation of people and planet, not on love for each other and our shared planetary home. Global warming, environmental degradation, tribalism and the uneven distribution of wealth threaten the very survival of civilization.

We can trace our current spiritual crisis to the Doctrine of Discovery, which originated in a series of papal bulls issued by the Vatican to the kings of Portugal and Spain in the 15th century. These bulls split the New World between Portugal and Spain and authorized their kings to conquer any non-Christian peoples in these territories and exploit them and their lands and resources. The Doctrine of Discovery established that white, European, male Christians were the superior humans. The Doctrine of Discovery became the moral and legal justification for European nations to seize foreign lands, vanquish their indigenous peoples and exploit them and their lands and resources for the benefit of the crown. The basic design of the corporation has not changed in 500 years. Corporations still conquer markets and exploit them for their owners.

Under the doctrine of shareholder primacy, the traditional corporation, by law or custom, has one legitimate purpose – to maximize stockholder welfare. Under this doctrine, it is morally acceptable to externalize the negative costs of corporate behavior onto society and the environment. As a result, we have a global economic system dominated by multinational corporations that are unwittingly prone by design to anti-social, sociopathic and even criminal behavior. Corporations are amoral actors in an amoral economic system nested within an amoral civilization. This amorality creates a hidden conflict between two incompatible moral systems. The moral compass for public corporations and those who run them is the requirement, by law or custom, to maximize profit for shareholders, often by externalizing the negative costs of corporate behavior onto society and the environment. The moral compass for individual citizens around the world, on the other hand, is each person’s responsibility to do unto others as you would have them do unto you. This conflict is hidden because the corporation’s moral compass of profit maximization operates behind closed doors in the board room. It’s the golden rule vs. the rule of gold.

There is growing acknowledgment, however, that capitalism as we know it is broken. Marc Benioff, the CEO and founder of Salesforce, recently declared in a New York Times editorial “...as a capitalist, I believe it’s time to say out loud what we all know to be true: Capitalism, as we know it, is dead.” Mr. Benioff was also one of 181 public company CEOs who recently signed a Business Roundtable letter advocating a new approach. “The time has come to redefine the nature of capitalism, from a system driven to maximize stockholder welfare for the golden rule. Little will change if we do not redefine the role of business so that its moral compass is not based on maximizing profit for shareholders but on a new vision of society and the environment. It’s the golden rule vs. the rule of gold.

Neoliberal economics may have helped the West win the Cold War, but as economist Kate Raworth, points out, it is no longer a viable model for the world. Ms. Raworth identifies the 11 underlying beliefs of neoliberal economics. Key among them, for example, are the beliefs that “the earth is inexhaustible, so take all you want” and “society, which is non-existent, so ignore it,” which are echoes of the Doctrine of Discovery.

Neoliberal economics are one of the root causes of the spiritual crisis facing humanity today. We’ve allowed business to substitute maximizing stockholder welfare for the golden rule. Little change unless we decide to hold business accountable to the golden rule or an equivalent common moral standard. Today, the struggle is not between the totalitarian and liberal orders but between the rule of gold and the golden rule. Neoliberal economics, which were...
a response to the post WWII conflict between competing ideologies, have unwittingly become a cause of our current spiritual crisis.

The good news is that the much of the infrastructure for a more just, inclusive, sustainable, and regenerative economic system is already in place. There is a global movement to endow the corporation with a social and environmental conscience with new corporate forms such as the Benefit Corporation (USA), La Societá Benefit (Italy) and L’entreprise à Mission (France).

Two small changes to the corporate code endow the benefit corporation, for example, with a social and environmental conscience that transcends and includes the usual pecuniary one. The fiduciary duties of the directors extend to all of the corporation’s stakeholders, including society and the environment. The benefit corporation also has an additional public purpose of creating a material positive impact on society and the environment. Directors in benefit corporations must optimize profit for shareholders while optimizing their corporations’ positive impact on society and the environment.

These new corporate forms begin to address the conflict in moral systems by requiring corporations to operate more in alignment with the golden rule. These changes make the corporation more prone to altruistic, rather than sociopathic, behavior.

There are encouraging signs that this way of doing business is becoming the global standard. The shareholders of Danone, the French multinational consumer packaged goods producer, just elected to become an “entreprise à mission,” the French equivalent of a benefit corporation, with more than 99% of the shareholders voting in favor. The shareholders of Amalgamated Bank recently approved benefit governance. Lemonade, an innovative insurance broker backed by prominent venture capital funds, and Vital Farms, a purveyor of pasture-raised eggs and butter, recently went public as benefit corporations. These four companies (with Danone) join the two corporations with benefit governance already trading on the NYSE or NASDAQ, Laureate Education and Natura of Brazil (the owner of Avon Products and The Body Shop).

Globalization has made it clear that we are one human family sharing one fragile planetary home. What will it take for business to embrace this reality and awaken as a force for good? The benefit corporation, societá benefit, and l’entreprise à mission may be the start of that awakening.

In conclusion, to change our civilization, we need to base it on love for each other and love for our planetary home. To change the economic system, we need businesses to act as responsible global citizens that take better care of people and planet.

To align ourselves with this new ethos, we lawyers need to expand our profession from its narrow focus on the zealous representation of each individual client’s individual self-interests to include having a broader responsibility for the collective well-being of society. This might mean, for example, revising our codes of ethics by expanding a lawyer’s ethical duties to the client to include society and the environment, as benefit corporation statutes expanded the fiduciary duties of directors to include all of a corporation’s stakeholders. Too often, our duty to zealously represent our clients’ interests blinds us to the potential social and environmental consequences of our representation and allows us to shrug these larger ethical issues.

We lawyers are in the best position to question whether the underlying principles of our respective legal systems actually reflect the values of a civilization based on love for each other and our planet. Do our laws provide access for everyone to a good standard of living? Do our laws help us live with the resource limitations of our biosphere? Do our laws encourage businesses to act as responsible global citizens? If not, let our profession become an agent of change to re-design our laws, as we have done to create benefit entities, to create a civilization that works for everyone. As Dr. David Hawkins said, “love is the ultimate law of the universe.”
Across Africa, a network of Earth jurisprudence Practitioners is accompanying traditional and indigenous communities in the revival and enhancement of their Earth-centred customary governance systems. In Kenya, Uganda, Benin, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Ethiopia and Cameroon, communities are reviving traditional knowledge and practices, restoring sacred natural sites and associated rituals, re-establishing indigenous seed diversity and food sovereignty, and strengthening ecological governance systems derived from the laws of the Earth. These civil-society-led initiatives to re-establish Earth-centred governance on the continent are founded on Africa’s rich indigenous legal traditions and cultural heritage and inspired by EARTH JURISPRUDENCE – a legal philosophy and ethical framework conceived of by eco-theologian Thomas Berry in the late twentieth century.

Thomas Berry understood that as humans of the twenty-first century, our task – the Great Work – is to transition from human-centred to Earth-centered consciousness and to enliven our senses once more to the numinous dimensions of the Universe, our ultimate context. Inspired by Nature, Thomas Berry recognised the Earth as the “primary text” from which the laws and customs of indigenous peoples are derived. This recognition is the foundation of his conception of Earth jurisprudence.

This recognition that the Earth system is lawful and ordered remains an integral part of indigenous understanding and governance in Africa. Moreover, whereas the dominant, human-centred legal paradigm objectifies the natural world as “prop-erty,” “resource” or “commodity,” identifying humans as sole subjects of law, the cosmologies of traditional peoples de-centre and re-situate the human as part of a “communion of subjects” within Nature. Humans are understood to be one constituent member among many others in a vibrant web of interdependent relationships that collectively compose Gaia, our living Earth.

Over the past two decades, an Earth jurisprudence network has been growing in Africa, dedicated to seeking strategies for reclaiming indigenous ways of being in partnership with, rather than in domination over, Mother Earth. Customary governance systems were severely undermined during the colonial era in Africa. And yet these traditions – passed down orally from generation to generation over millennia, in the form of myth and lore and song – have been safeguarded to this day by the elders within a diversity of land-based communities on the continent.

Although domestic laws in each African state are in the thrall of the modern industrial growth and development paradigm, Africa’s law is multi-layered and far more diverse than state law alone; its origins go far deeper than the birth of the modern, industrial nation state and are rooted in the customary governance systems of its indigenous and traditional communities. SACRED NATURAL SITES AND TERRITORIES (“SNST”), and their custodian communities,

Image Credits: The Gaia Foundation
Reading time: 5 minutes
are the legacy of Africa’s pre-colonial heritage. They include diverse natural features, places where spirits and ancestors are present – focal points of the community’s connection with the spiritual world, where rituals are practised to express respect and gratitude. Custodian communities read the law in the land and carry out rituals in SNST when justice or balance needs to be restored. The recognition of the inherent rights of SNST not to be degraded or “developed” has profound significance for the health of the local ecosystems, peoples and cultures that depend upon them.

The Gaia Foundation later developed a **THREE-YEAR COURSE** to enable African civil society leaders to explore Earth jurisprudence in more depth. Blending wilderness experience and practices to learn the laws of the Earth, the course delves into African and western philosophical and legal traditions, analysis of the impacts of the industrial growth economy, and practices for reviving indigenous knowledge systems. The graduates, Earth Jurisprudence Practitioners, are now collaborating with traditional communities to play a pivotal role in practice-based advocacy for the recognition of customary, Earth-centred laws and governance from local to pan-African levels.

The growing body of Earth Jurisprudence in Africa includes the **RESOLUTION OF THE AFRICAN COMMISSION ON HUMAN AND PEOPLES’ RIGHTS** on the recognition and protection of SNST and the rights of custodian communities (ACHPR/Res. 372 (LX) 2017). Building on a series of policy resolutions and recommendations achieved at IUCN World Conservation Congresses and other international fora, ACHPR/Res.372 heralds a new chapter in Africa’s acknowledgement of the critical role that SNST and their associated governance systems play in the protection of African ecosystems and in the realisation of human, peoples’ and Nature’s rights. Earth-centred law is finding resonance at local level. For instance, in western Uganda, Buliisa District Council has passed a resolution recognising the customary laws of the Bagungu People. Among other aspects of community life, these customary laws pertain to sacred natural sites and the role of their Bagungu custodians and expressly recognise the rights of Nature and of future generations. The District Council and the Bagungu Custodian Clans are now developing an ordinance which will demonstrate how plural-legal systems comprising state and customary law can be implemented at district level.

"The Ugandan authorities are recognising the Bagungu’s work and opening the door to a different kind of future for our country – by decolonising our minds and drawing on our rich ancestry to remember that development and well-being can and must be attained in harmony with Nature. Uganda is now poised to become a leader in Africa and globally as it takes this opportunity," comments Dennis Takoita, an Earth Jurisprudence Practitioner who has been accompanying the Bagungu on their journey of cultural revival since 2013. "These communities are showing the way for many others in our nation who have suffered colonialism and now find themselves facing the realities of climate change and destructive projects. They have revived their ecological knowledge together and are healing their ecosystems for present and future generations."

In 2015, a historic gathering of custodians of sacred natural sites from across Africa took place in Ethiopia’s Rift Valley. Bagungu custodian Kagole Margaret was one of the participants and upon her return, galvanised by the gathering, she worked with Dennis, among others, to initiate intergenerational community dialogues among the Bagungu around indigenous and sacred seed, sacred natural sites, customary laws and the revival of traditional culture within her community.

In November 2018, Bagungu Clans came together to develop their eco-cultural maps and calendars and to document their content. Earth-centred law is also finding expression within national legislation in Africa. In 2012, civil society and communities successfully advocated for the enactment of a **NATIONAL LAW IN BENIN** recog- nising sacred forests as protected areas. In 2019, Uganda became the first African country to recognise **THE RIGHTS OF NATURE WITHIN NATIONAL LEGISLATION;** a paradigm-shifting precedent that was the result of three years sustained advocacy by Advocates for Natural Resources and Development (ANARDE), supported by The Gaia Foundation, NAPE, AFRICE and the Open Society Initiative for East Africa.

These regional and national developments find resonance at local level. For instance, in western Uganda, Buliisa District Council has passed a resolution recognising the customary laws of the Bagungu People. Among other aspects of community life, these customary laws pertain to sacred natural sites and the role of their Bagungu custodians and expressly recognise the rights of Nature and of future generations. The District Council and the Bagungu Custodian Clans are now developing an ordinance which will demonstrate how plural-legal systems comprising state and customary law can be implemented at district level.

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The emergence of Earth jurisprudence in Africa is at once innovative and ancient, radical and rooted: a revival and enhancement of time-honoured, Earth-centred human traditions offering a fresh orientation with which the continent might navigate its way into a flourishing, life-sustaining future. The legal developments cited above and others are further detailed in a chapter on Earth Law in Africa co-written by Roger Chennells, a South African lawyer and facilitator of the three-year Earth Jurisprudence Trainings referenced above from in South Africa, and The Gaia Foundation. The chapter is published this month in Earth Law: Emerging Ecocentric Law - A Guide for Practitioners – the first legal coursebook comprehensively addressing ecocentric law and jurisprudence, forming part of the Aspen Casebook Coursebook Series.
Between September and December 2018, students of the Amsterdam Law School (UvA) and Architectural Design students of the Rietveld Academy engaged in a collaborative project that involved challenging the current structures of the criminal courtroom and developing design concepts for the ideal space for justice. Thirteen innovative, inspired and thought-provoking designs were created. After a presentation to members of the courthouse in Amsterdam, including senior judges, it was agreed that two new juvenile justice courtrooms should be created, inspired by the students’ designs. The new courtrooms are due to open in early 2021, and represent a great step forward for a more human approach to criminal law. Similar projects are now underway in other Dutch cities.

On 22 July 2020, Elaine Quinn spoke with one of the founders of the project, lawyer Wikke Monster, of Freeke & Monster criminal law practice in Amsterdam. Below is Elaine’s edited account of Wikke’s words alongside inspirational imagery and words from the students’ designs.

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“What the courthouse needs is someone who is not there to judge, but someone who hears you, who sees you... who supports and wants to help you.”
— Annan Yap, Design Student

I used to practice criminal defence law in a very conventional way – always battling, always “making noise,” always working hard to defend my clients and prevent the prosecutor from winning the case. In 2014, I founded a different type of criminal law practice with my colleague Klaartje Freeke. We transformed our way of practising law. Our focus turned to searching for the balance in a criminal proceeding. We deal with all types of criminal cases – from murder, drug trafficking, violent assault, fraud and embezzlement to more minor offences. Nowadays, the common thread is: “Are you willing to take responsibility?” I am not talking about admitting guilt here, that’s a different question. I am talking about a holistic approach in which our clients work on accepting that the conflict in their lives may be trying to teach them what they most need to learn. This applies for all parties in a criminal proceeding, so also victims. We talk with our clients about the possibilities of reconciliation and forgiveness. For us, this is a much more fulfilling and soulful way to work, much closer to the true meaning of justice, and much closer to why we became lawyers in the first place.

“The court-sessions are daily business for the judges. For most suspects, it is a one-off meeting with the judge who can make a life-changing decision. My rituals would contain an introduction, poetry and a mindful breathing exercise.”
— Milou Francisca, Law Student

Alongside our criminal practice and day-to-day work, we have a foundation called Lawyers as Changemakers which is involved in various projects about transformation of the legal system. Into a more human, smarter and sustainable system. The idea for ‘A Design for Justice: The Courtroom of the Future’ came one day after I had been working at court, I was cycling back home and reflecting on the court session that day. I was trying to imagine how a suspect must feel in the environment of the courtroom having all the lawyers looming around, the judge sitting up front, the prosecutor standing to one side, and the victim possibly sitting behind. The society – and in particular judges, prosecutors and victims – so much want the suspect to be honest and take responsibility. But how can we expect this to happen in this context? Can he or she possibly feel comfortable enough to be vulnerable and to take responsibility for the offence? I found myself imagining and envisioning a different type of courtroom, a different type of environment, one which would evoke feelings of safety and trust, one which might actually encourage a suspect to take responsibility more readily.

A renovation project was about to begin on the courthouse in Amsterdam and so, with my colleagues, we took the chance of approaching the court about the possibility of engaging in a design project to rethink one of the courtrooms. They were immediately enthusiastic. At this point we had no idea that the designs would eventually be taken up and would become a reality. That has been an incredible outcome. In the beginning, we were simply allowing ourselves to envision something better. “By applying the organic and calming aspects of nature, I’m creating an equal and soothing environment. A space that can engender an intimate conversation and that can enable personal adaptation for the body.” — Lisa Andren, Design Student

We planned the course as a collaboration between law and design students. From the beginning, we were certain that, for this type of new courtroom, we needed artists. I believe that we need artists to help transform the legal system. We told the students: “The sky is the limit. Do not be held back by practical considerations.” Of course, as founders of the project, we were interested in what would really work but for the creative process itself, we did not want there to be any limitations.

“Nature and the womb were sources of inspiration.”
— Chaja Laurey, Law Student

During the course, which took place over 3 months from September to December 2018, the students had interactive learning sessions about the court system from judges, lawyers, a suspect and a victim. The sessions took place in the courthouse, and tours of the courthouse and the police cells were organised.
It was a unique, immersive learning experience and we think there were some remarkable results. For the students, it was an extremely meaningful learning experience and this is reflected in the designs. You can sense not only the care and thoughtfulness that went into the process, but also the vision and possibility.

"...I created a calming courtyard with the intention to get people's minds out of (an) often stressful courthouse and (to) bring them back to earth.” — Annan Yap, Design Student

Apart from the design of the courtroom space itself, students looked at other important elements like the chairs, the costumes, and the various rituals and processes. One student illuminated our understanding about how our feeling of confidence, power and authority can change depending on whether we are sitting on a large, expensive chair or a small, cheaper chair. Of course, in most courtrooms, the suspects sit on small, often uncomfortable, chairs while the judges (and maybe lawyers) sit on large, comfortable, expensive chairs. Can we reflect on this and how it may be impacting behaviour in court?

"The chair you are sitting on affects not only your body posture, it also affects your behaviour.” — Birte Geraerts, Law Student

Legal dress in the Netherlands is unimaginative, all of the gowns are black with a white collar regardless of the legal party’s position in the proceeding. One student worked on reimagining their look, design and colour – a really exciting prospect. Her focus was on emphasising the independence of the prosecution to support the feeling of a fairer procedure. There were thought-provoking questions around the positive and negative emotions that different colours can have, and the legitimacy of considering all of these emotions. For example, rather than ignore it, can we acknowledge fear and think about its function in the proceeding?

"Just outside of the courtroom is a corridor. Leaving the courtroom without actually leaving the process is possible to stimulate conversation, thought-process and a feeling of safety.” — Esther Ruiter, Law Student

Another enlightened idea was the importance of movement, and an exploration of the courtroom as a sports field. Usually, in court, we are fairly static - we sit, we stand, we read, we talk. But if we consider the fact that there is almost always conflict and therefore tension present, we can see how important movement is. This student included adjustable spaces so that parties could move closer together, or further away, during the process; a central high table where conversations could take place, and a corridor or garden around the courtroom where he envisioned the judge and the suspect could have a private walk and talk.

"Based on sawas and waterfalls, I came up with a layered arrangement for the trial participants. ... Differences in height are not dictated by position or role, but by choice of the participants.” — Chaja Laurey, Student

An unexpected result of this project is the way it has been embraced by members of the courthouse here in Amsterdam. The timing was perfect because the renovation was underway and there was an openness to trying something new. The design aspect that has been taken up, and now upgraded into a professional architectural design, is the circular table.

In early 2021, two new juvenile courtrooms will open with these new designs. It feels like a wonderful success that this is moving ahead particularly with everything that is happening in the world right now. Although not all of the students’ ideas have been adopted (many because of practicalities), we want to continue to explore them. We also plan on monitoring the effectiveness of the new courtrooms when they open to see what impact the new space will have on parties and the decisions.

It feels important for us to keep moving, to keep progressing, and to keep asking questions. We are delighted that the project has also been taken up now, and will continue, in three other Dutch cities – Amelo, Arnhem and the Hague – with further collaborations between the law and art students in those cities.

We are delighted that the seed of the original vision of a courtroom of the future has been planted, and that the sprouts of something truly different and hope-giving are beginning to appear.

— Birte Geraerts, Law Student

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A poem for Papatūānuku – Mother Earth
— by Ngāti Hine/Ngāpuhi writer Nadine Anne Hura,
and shared by Jacinda Ardern, Prime Minister of New Zealand
at the beginning of lockdown 2020

Rest now, e Papatūānuku
Breathe easy and settle
Right here where you are
We’ll not move upon you
For awhile
We’ll stop, we’ll cease
We’ll slow down and stay home
Draw each other close and be kind
Kinder than we’ve ever been.
I wish we could say we were doing it for you
as much as ourselves
But hei aha
We’re doing it anyway
It’s right. It’s time
Time to return
Time to remember
Time to listen and forgive
Time to withhold judgment
Time to cry
Time to think
About others
Remove our shoes
Press hands to soil
Sift grains between fingers
Gentle palms
Time to plant
Time to wait

Time to notice
To whom we belong
For now it’s just you
And the wind
And the forests and the oceans and the sky full of rain

Finally, it’s raining!
Ka turuturu te wai kamo o Rangi ki runga i a koe
Embrace it
This sacrifice of solitude we have carved out for you
He iti noaiho – a small offering
People always said it wasn’t possible
To ground flights and stay home and stop our habits
of consumption
But it was
It always was.
We were just afraid of how much it was going to hurt
– and it IS hurting and it will hurt and continue to hurt
But not as much as you have been hurt.
So be still now
Wrap your hills around our absence
Loosen the concrete belt cinched tight at your waist
Rest.
Breathe.
Recover.
Heal –
And we will do the same.

WE HOPE THIS HAS BEEN INSPIRING — LET’S CONTINUE

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