

# *Gaïan Voices*

*Earth Spirit, Earth Action, Earth Stories*

Volume 9, Number 3 & 4



*The Resistance is Now -  
An Interview with  
Jesse Wolf Hardin*

*You Say You Want  
a Revolution -  
Special "Occupy" Section*

*Sandra Steingraber -  
Household Tips from  
Warrior Mom!*

*Gaian Voices: Earth Spirit, Earth Action, and Earth Stories* is a limited-edition newsletter published by Susan Meeker-Lowry since 2002. This is the last issue, however back issues are still available, most in B&W print, all in full-color PDF format. If you like this issue and you want more, don't hesitate to contact Susan at the address/phone/email below. She will be happy to help you.

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**Cover photo:** Colin Lowry



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**Y**ou cannot take what you have not given, and you must give yourself. You cannot buy the Revolution. You cannot make the Revolution. You can only be the Revolution. It is in your spirit, or it is nowhere.  
 - Ursula Le Guin

As some of you already know, this is the last issue of *Gaian Voices*. For the past nine years, *Gaian Voices* has been a labor of love, and I have enjoyed everything involved in the process, especially the connections I've made with you, the readers, and the many wonderful, talented contributors of articles, photos, graphics, and poetry. I am so very grateful for your generosity and I'm going to miss you all. *Gaian Voices* would not have existed without you!

I started this publication because I felt called to do so. My life's purpose is: "Listen to the earth, write what she tells me, and share it with others". After moving to Maine and leaving my activist life behind, *Gaian Voices* was my way of continuing to fulfill my life's work. I committed to publishing it "until the next thing came along". And so it has. As mentioned in the last issue, I recently started a small, home-based herbal business called Gaia's Garden Herbs. So far the focus is on skin care. I'm having a great time. My products can be purchased in a few local stores or directly through me. Eventually they'll be available online once a website is built. I'm also planning to offer a limited selection of tinctures and elixirs created as the spirit, and Gaia, inspire. Some herbal workshops are being scheduled as well.

Gaia's Garden Herbs is the next incarnation of my purpose. I listen to the earth as she speaks in the language of the healing plants and trees, I "write what she tells me" metaphorically by creating oils, creams, and salves, and the "sharing" – well, that's obvious. I love that my products are nourishment for the body as well as the spirit. Still, I am a writer and so I expect I'll eventually be sharing my experiences, insights, and how-to's in articles published . . . somewhere.

There are a couple of other factors that influenced my decision to stop publication. Not least among these is money. I am grateful to those of you who consistently renewed, and to the supporters who donated above-and-beyond the subscriber level. But marketing is not my strong point (to put it mildly), so expanding the subscriber base proved difficult. I'm not saying it would be impossible, it would just require more time, energy, and money than I can put into it.

The other factor has to do with the times we live in. Climate change is speeding up. It's hard to wrap my mind

around just the extreme weather we've experienced this past year alone in the United States, let alone around the world. Droughts, raging fires, massive tornados, storms dumping over a foot of rain in hours, feet of snow where even inches are rare, the incredibly destructive Hurricane/Tropical Storm Irene devastating Vermont and parts of New York, and most recently the rare October snow storm. Why more people aren't demanding equally extreme lifestyle changes is beyond me. Then there's the economy. Not just that it's tanking, but that it's totally taken precedence over everything – no one thinks or cares about anything except money, it seems.

The Occupy Movement is a bit of optimism and this issue contains an article by Sandy LeonVest and excerpts from others I respect. I only hope Occupy eventually includes the earth and other species in its demands for justice. But aside from that bright spot, things are bleak indeed and politics are unspeakably irritating, frustrating, and just downright ridiculous. And coming from an activist background, I felt that if I was going to write about an issue, or publish a piece by someone else, I had to keep up on the latest news and research, sometimes on a daily basis especially around the times when I'd be gathering material for an issue. I can't do it anymore. It's too depressing and impacts how I feel about myself, my life, everything. For my own sanity and peace of mind I need to focus on growing things, on healing and beauty and gratitude and love so I can be a positive force in the

world, or at least in my family and community. When I'm in the garden planting, tending, and harvesting; or gathering in the woods and fields; or in the kitchen making creams, salves, and other herbal delights, I'm fully present, focused on scents and colors and textures, listening to my intuition, and my heart is full. It feels right.

I'm going to end this last editorial with the same words I ended the very first one with. I still believe them with every fiber of my being. I hope you do too:

"I believe the earth is alive and that everything from human beings to the tiniest microorganism has spirit. There is no separation between body and soul, spirit and matter, human and non-human. "We are one" may be a trite phrase but it is true nonetheless. One of the biggest challenges for *Gaian Voices* [was] to communicate this connection in ways that resonate so that you, the reader, [would] say, "Yes! I know that feeling. I've been there." When we allow Gaian or earth consciousness to enter our hearts our vision expands. Even ordinary things – rocks, bark, moss-covered stumps – shimmer with a vitality that fairly shouts, "I'm alive, I'm here, be with me!". Animals, sensing something different about "that strange human" may stop for a moment before scampering off and look right into your eyes – into your soul perhaps – and give you a message. A bird song may be just what you needed to hear. Rivers talk, trees provide strength. It's a magical world just waiting for you to sit up and take notice. I'm convinced that the power of this magic will be what saves us."



Photo: SML

# The End of Gaian Voices - Or - "No! Tell me it Ain't so!"

by Irajā

I knew I'd been subscribing to *Gaian Voices* for a long time but I didn't know it was 9 years! I found *Gaian Voices* online just when I was searching for a name for my feelings about the Earth, and my own spirituality.

For years, I knew that I was not a follower of mainstream religion. I had been attending different Spiritualist churches around town but they just didn't quite get it for me. All I knew was that I felt that if there was a higher power, it must be the Earth. I already knew about James Lovelock and his Gaia Hypothesis, so I did a search for anything on line about Gaia. That is how I discovered *Gaian Voices*.

My first issue was Volume 1, Number 3. (I since have obtained numbers 1 and 2.) I was impressed that it was printed on paper that was 25% hemp and 75% post-consumer waste. Among others, there was an article by Jesse Wolf Hardin. That led me to look him up as well, and I learned about his work in New Mexico and Anima. I fell in love with Wolf's art especially. I have a tattoo I fashioned from one of his drawings. I have included a picture of it here. The word in the tree roots is "Yoni" in Sanskrit.

I began exploring more about Earth centered spirituality and discovered that I'm Pagan. Then later, after more soul-searching, I discovered Shakti, the feminine force in the Hindu traditions. Now I call myself IndoPagan. I am Pagan and follow the philosophy of the Hindu traditions, especially Shakti.

What does my being IndoPagan have to do with *Gaian Voices*? My spirituality today and who I am can be traced back to that search I made for something having to do with Gaia.

Over the years, I became aware of other authors such as Morgan Two Feathers and Thomas Berry. I learned a lot about stone circles from Rob Roy. I read beautiful poetry and book reviews, which opened me up to more authors and artists. I discovered *Sage Woman* magazine and *Blessed Bee* publications. I told others about *Gaian Voices* and sometimes, they started following it. I have always looked forward to seeing the magazine in my mailbox.

*Gaian Voices* is also the first place that I have had articles and poetry published; actually the only place. I write under my chosen Sanskrit name, Irajā, which loosely translates to "daughter of the wind".

Thank you, Susan, for introducing me to this whole new world that I needed to discover. Thank you for telling me about Jesse Wolf Hardin, Thomas Berry, and all the others who have graced your pages over the years. Thank you for sharing your son Colin's beautiful photography, as well as that of your father. Thank you for allowing me to be one of those who shared my love of Mother Earth by publishing my writings.

I will miss *Gaian Voices*.

Our Mother

Who is with us,

Holy is Our Being.

Thy Kin-dom is present.

Thy Desire is felt throughout the Cosmos.

We graciously receive your Infinite Daily Abundance.

May we forgive each other our lack of skill and insensitivity.

May we understand our Inner Guidance,  
and perceive each other's needs.

For Thine is the Kin-dom, the Power and the Story,  
in never-ending renewal.

Blessed Be.

- Glenys Livingstone, Ph.D.

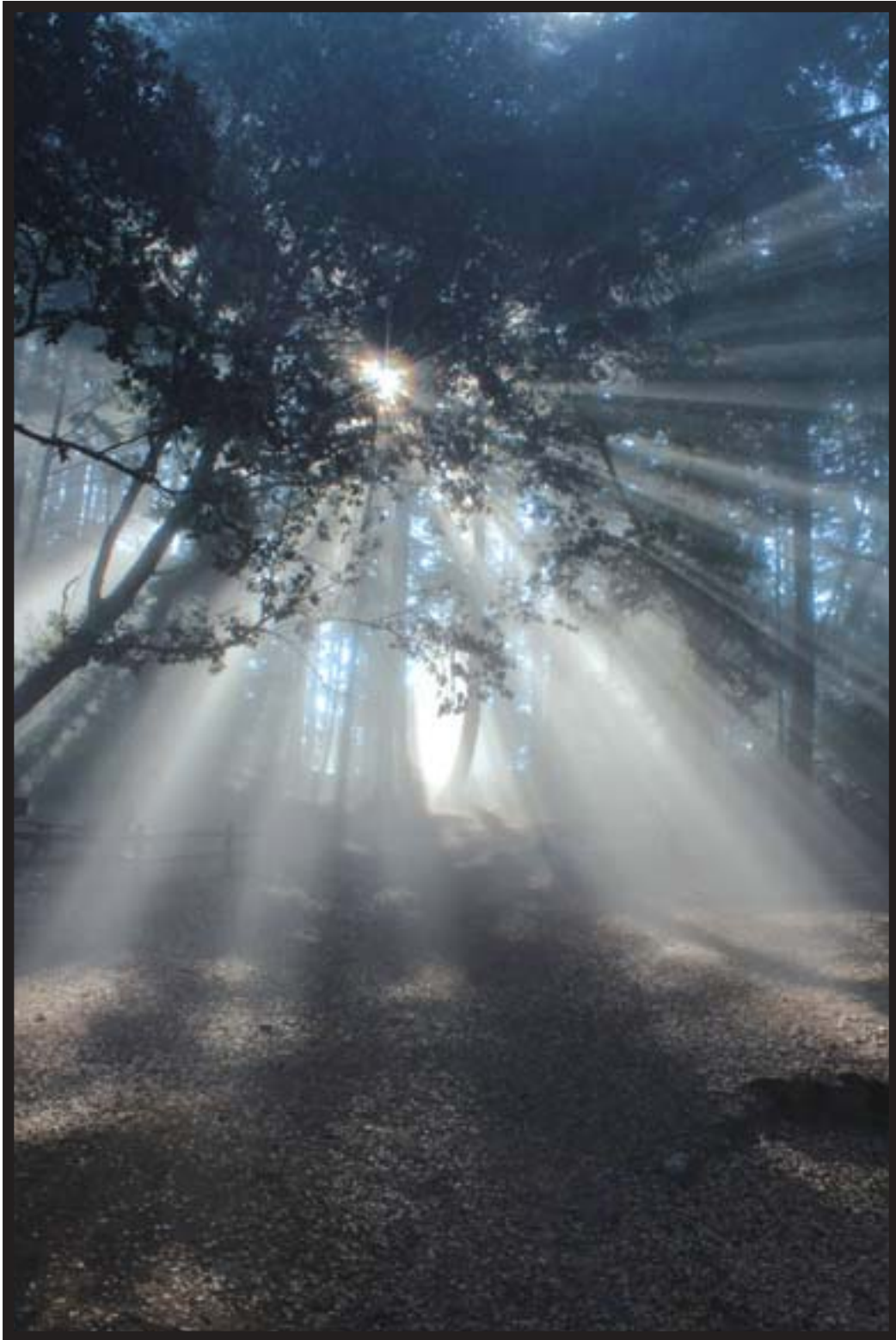


Photo: Colin Lowry

**F**rom a certain point onward, there is no turning back.  
That is the point that must be reached.  
- Franz Kafka

# Household Tips from Warrior Mom!

## On the desire to change lightbulbs instead of paradigms.

by Sandra Steingraber

A decade ago, I published a book about the links between chemical exposures and cancer. The research for it required four years, two postdoctoral fellowships, and fluency with Freedom of Information Act requests. I attended workshops on cluster analysis and taught myself molecular epidemiology. I made field trips to cancer laboratories, studied tumor patterns among wildlife populations, and rode a cable down a three-hundred-foot shaft to look at groundwater. When the writing was all done, I helped prepare the publicity materials, which, among other things, claimed that my book was the first to bring together data on toxic releases with data from U.S. cancer registries. No one had attempted that before. It was a big book.

One of my first stops on the author tour was a television talk show that taped in Hollywood. Dropping by for the requisite preinterview, I was greeted in the studio by a woman in a diminutive orange dress who said her name was—I'm not making this up—Tangerine. Tangerine instructed me to fill out seven index cards and bring them to the interview the next day. On each one, I was to jot down a single "cancer prevention tip." These seven tips would appear as bullet points below my talking head. Tangerine encouraged me to think hard about each tip.

Back at the hotel, I thought hard. Finally, I came up with my first tip: IDENTIFY CORPORATE POLLUTERS IN YOUR COMMUNITY.

My second tip was something like, CONFRONT THEM.

The next day, Tangerine freaked out. These weren't at all what she had in mind. A frantic conversation ensued, and by the end of it, CONFRONT CORPORATE POLLUTERS had been transformed into AVOID DRY CLEANERS.

We're going live in five . . . four . . . three . . . two . . . and . . . !

When my on-air host came to the first tip, she turned her gaze, Oprah-like, into the camera to ask, "You mean my clothes cause cancer?" I blinked, leveled my own gaze at the camera, and said that dry-cleaning solvent, perchloroethylene, is a common groundwater pollutant in many communities. It is indeed linked to bladder cancer, especially among workers in the dry-cleaning industry.

By now, my host was breathing a sigh of relief, and I knew we weren't going to make it to Tip #7: REQUIRE TESTING OF CHEMICALS AS A PRECONDITION FOR MARKETING THEM.

We still haven't made it there. But now I'm clearer about why.

After writing a second book on environmental health—this one focused on pregnancy—I was asked to participate in an

online project that would provide expectant mothers with tips synced to their prenatal calendars. In other words, a subscriber would receive, say, in month five (a period of rapid brain growth) advice about house paint (which can be neurotoxic). In month eight, she'd receive advice about choosing plastics free of plasticizers linked to preterm birth. And so on. The presumption was that, once invested in toxic-free products, parents-to-be would "ramp up."

After a few months of this, it was my distinct impression that just the opposite was happening: when people believed they could avoid harm through acts of individual self-protection, they felt less urgency about eliminating those threats by pushing for environmental reform. This observation, as it turns out, is backed by data. In his 2007 book, *Shopping Our Way to Safety*, sociologist Andrew Szasz demonstrates how the desire for personal security actually undermines the goal of environmental protection.

Szasz traces the fantasy of the toxic-free pod back to 1961, when the nation was gripped in a frenzy of fallout shelter construction. In hindsight, faith in the family bomb shelter was delusional. Stocked with canned goods and Band-Aids, it was useless against radiation exposure. Worse, the shelter's soothing promise of protection actually increased the risk of nuclear hostilities. Religious leaders, peace activists, and scientists argued as much at the time, pointing out that the construction of

shelters was a distraction from the urgent task of defusing the crisis. Eventually, their message won out.

Stop digging. Disarm. Was that my message, too? Or, in a time of environmental calamity, was I peddling blueprints for bomb shelters?

I decided to avoid answering questions from audiences who just wanted to know what they should buy. This was tougher than it seemed, if only because listeners were wily and turned the questions around. What did I feed my children? What sort of water did I drink? How did I clean my bathroom? My kids eat food grown by local farmers. We all drink tap water. And, um, basically, nobody cleans my bathroom. Now, to get back to toxic chemical reform . . .

After one discomfiting exchange on a college campus, a man from the audience approached me with a suggestion: Read Gerhart Wiebe, a psychologist who wrote, in 1973, that information about a problem over which people feel little sense of personal agency gives rise to "well-informed futility." The more knowledgeable we are about such a problem, the more we are filled with paralyzing futility. Futility, in turn, forestalls action. Eventually, we turn away from the knowledge itself; no one likes to feel intolerably guilty, helpless, or afraid.

I read Wiebe. And I read his revisionist modernizer,

When people believed they could avoid harm through acts of individual self-protection, they felt less urgency about eliminating those threats by pushing for environmental reform.

Peter Sandman, who goes on to say that well-informed futility flourishes whenever there are discontinuities in the messages we receive, as when we are told that a problem is dire (climate chaos) but the proposed solution (buy new light bulbs) seems trivial. If the problem were truly huge, wouldn't we be asked to respond with actions of equivalent magnitude?

With this, I knew I had the beginning of a new book. I would write about environmental threats facing children, and I would write in the voice of a mother. I would start with a description of well-informed futility and then march my readers right out of that bad place. I would do so by admitting that our situation was dire and so required huge, collective heroic action—nothing less than a complete redesign of our energy and materials economy. Our kids' books are full of heroes. Why not aspire to be like them—especially when our children's survival is at stake? History

was full of heroes. What if I titled the book after an abolitionist hero—say, Elijah Lovejoy, my son's namesake?

So, I did all that. And my first piece of fan mail was from a woman who said she loved the pizza recipe. (Having spent months researching agricultural economics, I had intended the recipe to serve as a heuristic about the differential cost of organic and conventional wheat, tomatoes, and milk.) Another reader wrote to say that I should brand myself as "warrior mom": like tiger mom for a clean environment. Talk radio callers asked about bathroom cleansers. A freelancer for a pregnancy magazine asked for diet tips. Reimagining the world's food production systems was, sorry, outside the bounds of her story. So was the fact that natural gas is the feedstock for farm chemicals linked to pregnancy loss. And the fact that fracking for natural gas releases reproduc-

tive toxicants into communities where pregnant women live.

While writing this column, I entertained a phone call from a reporter who had questions for me about light bulbs. Soon after, came an urgent query about cabinetry. (Now that formaldehyde has been classified as a carcinogen, what sort of particleboard should consumers avoid in their kitchens?)

So my new observations are these: It's really hard to leave the bomb shelter. It's even harder to leave a beautifully appointed bomb shelter. But staying in there ultimately generates more futility than standing unsheltered in the pitiless storm and admitting, like blind King Lear, that, yes, truly, we have taken too little care of this.

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Photo: Woody Meeker

# What Now?

by Morwen Two Feathers

**I**t's hard not to say "I told you so. Not to you, dear *Gaian Voices* readers. You, like me, have been thinking about "the greenhouse effect," global warming, and (now) climate change for 25 or 30 years. You have been reading the literature and the signs, trying to live lightly, reduce your carbon footprint, go green. When it comes to you, it's more like, "We told us so."

And now it's happening. It's so very obvious. Severe storms, floods, tsunamis, tornadoes, droughts, wildfires. Rising sea level. Rising oil prices as production peaks. Rising population. Ok, that's a different issue. But as you know, everything is connected; that's what we mean by "Gaia," after all.

Anyone who is paying attention has heard the comment that it is beyond the point where mitigation will solve the problem; that is, even if everyone on Earth were to somehow drop our carbon emissions to zero tomorrow, the planet will continue to warm and the changes we are already seeing will not be reversed for hundreds of years, if ever. Not that we should give up on mitigation, especially those of us in developed countries whose consumption is way out of proportion to the rest of the world. But it is (past) time to think about adaptation to the inevitable changes.

So, what does that mean?

Back in 1999, my husband Jimi and I were talking with others in our suburban community about the potential danger posed by the Y2K computer bug. Not long before, an ice storm in Canada had left people without power for more than three weeks. It was a graphic example of how dependent we are on the electrical grid, especially in New England in the wintertime. The possibility that there could be widespread loss of power due to computer failure as the clock turned over from 1999 to 2000 was sobering. Jimi went to house parties in neighborhoods around town, talking about how to prepare: how to store food and water, handle sanitation, and anticipate health and safety needs. Most importantly, a group of organizers talked about how neighbors could help and support each other in a crisis. "Who has a generator in your neighborhood?" we asked. "Who needs medication that might not be available in a long-term emergency? Which households have babies or elderly people who

will be at risk without heat? Who has useful or critical skills: health care, carpentry, etc?" We realized that in a widespread emergency, our first responders would not be available to help everyone, and we would need to take care of ourselves and each other. Out of these conversations came a town-wide neighborhood network, neighborhoods organizing to share information and resources for emergency planning.

The Y2K computer bug turned out not to be a problem (not because it was a hoax, but because many people worked long and hard to fix it before the deadline). But because of the Canadian ice storm, people were aware that maintaining the neighborhood network was a good idea anyway. Then came 9/11. Suddenly emergency preparation was on everyone's mind. Even the Federal government got in on it, putting out guidelines about how your household should prepare for emergencies, most of which involved buying stuff: duct tape and plastic, bulk food supplies, special containers for storing water, and so on. Those guidelines assumed that nuclear family households would each do their own separate preparations, that

*Cont'd on page 28*



Photo: SML

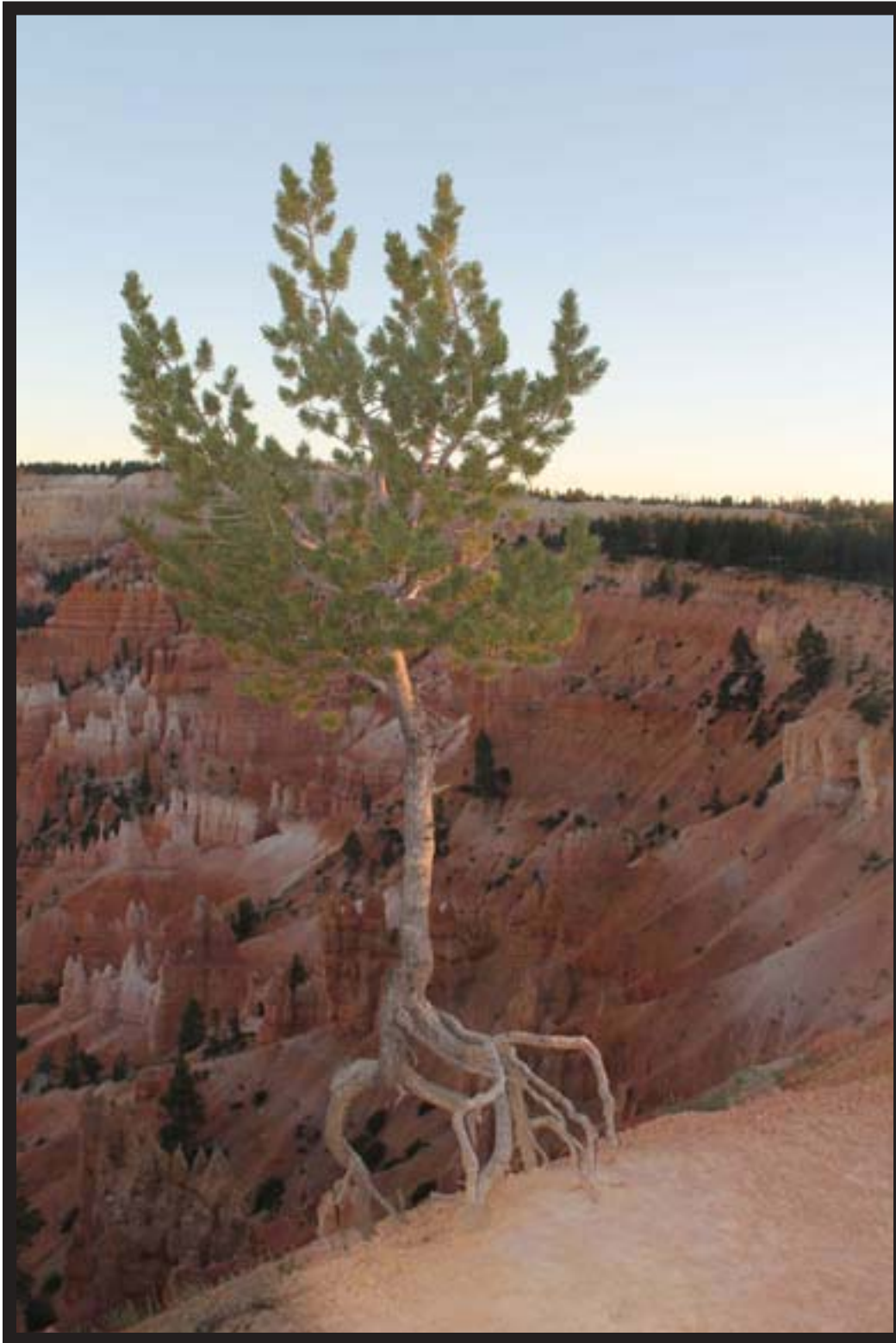


Photo: Marshall Allan

**T**he real challenge is not simply to survive. Hell, anyone can do that. It's to survive as yourself, undiminished.

- Elia Kazan



# The Resistance is Now -

## An Interview with Jesse Wolf Hardin

The illusion of separateness falls away in the time of trial. It is time to re-empower our selves, time to set out the prayer-sticks. The fall of Babylon is not the end of life. . . . Let those who dare be the seeds! Seeds of consciousness, of love, of change. . . . I touch you from across our fire-lit shelter. You touch back without turning, arranging the prayer-sticks in a way that points the direction we must travel - together . . .

- Wolf

Wolf and I met many years ago when he came to Montpelier, Vermont where I lived. At that time, he was known as Lone Wolf Circles and traveled around the country presenting his "Deep Ecology Medicine Shows", a transformative blend of ritual, music, dance, and chant. He also spoke at conferences and other events, and frequently incited acts of resistance and civil disobedience.

At our first meeting, Wolf and I sat at my kitchen table while he interviewed me for a publication he was working with called *Talking Leaves*. I still have that issue, now yellowed with time. During the interview we discussed what I called Gaian Economics. But I also shared my dreams and visions, the signs that confirmed to me I was doing my true work (including the message from the redwoods and meeting Thomas Berry), even the recurring dream I had as a child. I this dream several times over a period of years. Each time the people were the same, but time had passed and our conversations evolved. When I was 12, the people in the dream, who had become a family to me, said I would not be dreaming of

them again, but that someday I would meet them and work with them. When I asked how I would know who they were I was told, "You shall know them by their eyes". And so it was. In the 1980s I started on the path of what I consider my life's work, and almost immediately I met, and recognized, them. And it was mutual. Wolf is one of those people. There are others. Some I've met, many I haven't - I expect over the years I'll meet more. This, to me, is the Tribe Wolf and I speak of.

Wolf has been extremely generous with his work and time over the nine years of publication - his articles have appeared in almost every issue - and his spirit, energy, and intuitive connection with the earth have been a source of deep inspiration to me over the years. I hope he has been to you, readers of *Gaian Voices*, as well. For nearly four decades, Wolf has taught awareness and deep ecological wisdom. His numerous books including *Gaia Eros*, and an illustrated book for child herbalists, *I'm A Medicine Woman Too!*. He is the coeditor of the acclaimed *Plant Healer Magazine*, a journal of folk

herbalism (www.PlantHealerMagazine.com), and codirector of the Traditions in Western Herbalism Conference (www.TraditionsInWesternHerbalism.org) held each September in the Coconino forest of northern Arizona. He writes and teaches at the Anima School and Sanctuary in a remote river canyon ecosystem he restored, hosting wilderness retreats (www.AnimaCenter.org), and publishing the Anima blog (www.AnimaCenter.org/blog).

Enjoy the interview, and do stay connected to Anima through their website and blogs, by subscribing to *Plant Healer Magazine* or, if your heart urges, by attending the next TWHC event.

*GV: Over the years I've noticed the core message of your work has stayed the same, though the way it manifests has shifted, from the early EF! roadshow days when we first met, to your early years in the Canyon, then Loba came and your art and music seemed to blossom, then with the arrival of Kiva Rose your teachings expanded and deepened.*

Wolf: The core has remained consistent, grounded in earthen purpose and informed by the lessons of nature. And in every form, this Anima teaching has conveyed the necessity of not only increased awareness and connection, but of manifestation and action as well. And I find it interesting that even as an activist inspiring direct action in the 1980s, I called our concerts and talks "Deep Ecology Medicine Shows" after the traveling inspirational speakers and healers of history. My role at that point was getting hard core activists to include healing themselves, their communities, and the environment as part of their activism, and lately I teach herbalists and other healers how vital it is to integrate action to heal political, social, and environmental imbalance with their treating of personal and client illness.

We've effectively raised awareness and affected thousands of people's lives through this 38+ years process. Yet the work must go on, for at the same time, wild places and plant and animal

diversity have continued to contract, and even the most "progressive" president presides over environmental destruction, expanding wars, decreasing liberties, and rule by the elite.

*GV: I agree. Even though more people have become aware of the ecological degradation, climate change and all, things are getting worse. It's disempowering.*

Wolf: Not so much disempowering, since truly only we, and not authority, can empower ourselves. I wish it was as simple as the system or the paradigm of the government or religious institutions taking away our power. You'd know which mouse to root for in that Redwall tale. More problematically, the very idea of taking power in their own hands is unthinkable for most people, imagining that we can't have an impact, or that the cost we'd pay is too high.

*GV: People often say that the only thing we can do is take care of ourselves, that striving to change anything more is impossible. And of course that's totally the antithesis of what I believe.*

Wolf: It is, to put it bluntly, complete and utter bullshit. We know from reading history that it only takes only from 5 to 15 percent of a population responding to a situation to initiate a change. Things don't necessarily change for the better of course, but it only takes a small number of people to usher in major cultural and political transformation. The few could indeed change the entire ways that we relate to each other and to the natural world, if it was our priority as well as committed goal.

*GV: But something happened. It seemed like something shifted. People went inside. Maybe it was the economy.*

Wolf: Definitely the economy had something to do with it, in a society where ecological health and giving time to activism are both treated as luxuries. But people also need to rotate out of full-on activism, with others rotating in, so that we can feed our other needs and interests, explore other ways of giving to ourselves and the world. Gardening, restoring land, home schooling our children, or even taking time to learn a musical instrument are not inward so much as grounding, providing strength for the ways we reach out, including our

activism. The people we worked with decades ago are still doing the good work, though perhaps more regionally and intimately, in their communities and watersheds.

What is still needed most is the coming together, not just sharing values but sharing life, building an active, participatory community.

*GV: One of the things you said after the last Traditions in Western Herbalism Conference is that you felt it was the tribe coming together.*

Wolf: Yes. And once again that will require instigating, inciting, developing the kind of tribal interactions that survive throughout the year, that aren't just dependent on an event or personality. Of the TWHC participants, 2/3 say they don't go to any other conferences because they usually don't like them, many sleep in their cars because they're free clinic volunteers and people working for next to nothing in their communities. These are people who are in resistance to the paradigm in every way. Herbalism is simply one important way in which this manifests. If Kiva and I can feed this so that it grows and spreads roots throughout the winters between the summer events, we'll be satisfied that the tribe is indeed gathering and coalescing. But the next step has to be the one that most contemporary movements haven't taken, which is to make it real and continuous in our daily lives.

*GV: Have you thought about having regional gatherings?*

Wolf: Definitely, though we don't have the time to do that ourselves. The magazine and conference feel like a seeding, as we provide the nutrient medium for the sprouting bioregional herbal-focused groups.

*GV: What do you think about all the Occupy movements that are happening around the country right now?*

Wolf: There's not going to be any real environmental or social change in this country or the world until there's been a complete confrontation of and collapse of the economic system that rules the world. At the same time, I wish it didn't require financial hardship to make people aware of and responsive to a

*Continued on page 12*

*Wolf. . . from page 11*

need for change. I'm tickled that it's happening but I wish the uniting inspiration could have been something besides the fact that folks are getting paid so much less than the bankers who are screwing them.

*GV: Like coming together because we love the earth and want to live differently. For years people would ask me, "What is it going to take?" And for years I've been saying, "It's going to take thousands of people in the streets, not just in one place at one time, but everywhere at once." Like you said, we need the economic system to collapse, and the consumer system to collapse.*

*Wolf: Unfortunately, it needs to get worse before it can possibly get better. It's impossible to go directly from a state of exploitation, elitism and control to a more balanced, harmonic, healthy world. We know this from history. It will require a difficult time in which we don't see more justice but less, when we don't have more comforts and healthier food but less or none.*

*GV: Yes. There are too many of us for one thing, and people are going to get hurt. There's really no way around it. One of the things I think about a lot is how vulnerable we are. If our power went out and didn't come back on for example. Everything depends on electricity. Most people don't think about this too much and when I talk about it, and say that it freaks me out, they look at me like I'm insane.*

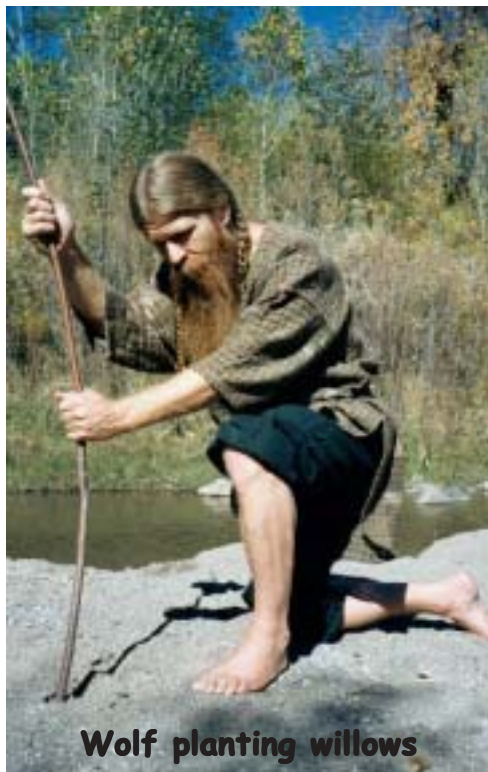
*Wolf: You're insane if you don't see the dangers of a population that just hit the 7 billion mark. Insane if you can ignore the opportunistic corporate financial system that depends on endless new mouths and demands, and the destruction and oppression this nonstop increase in the number of consumers causes. And you are in danger of insanity, if you know all these things and do not do whatever it takes to create for yourselves and others an alternative.*

*GV: Exactly!*

*Wolf: Crazy, would be waiting to be sure we'll succeed before initiating changes in our lives and our community, or trying to ensure our security before taking risks. The good work, and the rewards that*

*come with it, always happen in the now. The party is now, the activism is now, the garden is now, the love is now, and the resistance is now. Regardless of outcome or the chances of success, in the face of almost impossible odds, it has to be done. And this glad doing, hard as it can be, tastes ever so sweet.*

*GV: I've tried to live my life that way, then I came here because my sister can't live alone. It's beautiful here with mountain views and really old trees, but it's not what I would have chosen. My vision was for a place more rustic, ideally off-grid, more sustainable. I also wanted to have a small do-it-yourself kind of herb shop. But this year I started Gaia's Garden Herbals, and I'm going to offer*



**Wolf planting willows**

*some workshops, even though I'm nervous about putting myself out there as "teacher". I feel I don't know enough, more what I want to do is share a perspective.*

*Wolf: That's what teaching is. It's sharing tools and perspective. Both of which you present in a way that is optional. And you know the nice thing is, no matter where you are, healing is a bridge because most people, regardless of lifestyle or income, understand that our modern allopathic medical system does more damage, is unfair and unjust, is too expensive with limited access, and*

*so on. In other words we can take a retired person out of Aspen or a cowboy out of Reverse, NM and have them immediately understand the language of empowerment when it comes to self-care.*

*GV: And learning what's growing around you. Like goldenrod. Most people think of it as a weed but it's so much more.*

*Wolf: It's a bridge. If goldenrod helps what ails them, they'll realize it's not a "weed" to be denigrated and removed, which could open them up to other possibilities. Maybe they'll want to know more about other uninvited plant guests growing in their yard rather than yanking them out. The next step might be for them to plant some native medicinals that used to be prolific but had become rare. In this way, herbalism becomes a language people can hear, and perceptual as well as clinical tools for them to use. That's why I'm so heavily into herbs now. If it were just about fixing one's physical "owies", I wouldn't give myself so fully to this effort. What excites me is the way that the study and use of herbs can be a bridge to a larger concept of healing and living, to healing others, our disjointed and denatured culture, and the living land of which we are a part.*

*GV: I want to talk about the Wallow Fire of 2011. In one of your updates during that time, you wrote that you always loved the wind, but the wind brought the fire closer and closer. Did it change the nature of your relationship with it?*

*Wolf: It was especially hard for me because I've always heard from everybody, from my mother to my friends, that the wind is unsettling, they just wish it would stop. But for me, it was always a way that I felt connected to everything around me, awakening a sense of air's molecules connecting us physically to the breath and being of every living thing. Experiencing wind as a connective force uniting me physically with everything, was a spiritual sense made physical for me. And when it got too strong, I was proud that I was the one who stayed out because I liked being humbled by something I could barely walk headfirst into.*

*But during the Wallow Fire, every time the wind slowed we could see on the progression maps that the fire had*

stopped moving in our direction. And every time it picked up, we'd see it suddenly rush three or four miles in a single night in our direction, until by the time the fire finally stopped at the end of June it was in some places only seven miles from the Anima School and Botanical Sanctuary. You can drive just a short ways from here and see where the trees are burned and dead. The ponderosas will be replaced by a succession of junipers and not by old growth pines, because of the drought cycle the Southwest is in. The pain from this thought and threat was indescribable. All the trees in the canyon, except for the ponderosas, are in a sense my babies. None were here until I mercilessly started chasing cows out when I first arrived, swinging my rusty Confederate sword, screaming at them at the top of my lungs. Until then, there were no cottonwoods, no willows, no medicinal plants growing because the cows had eaten everything. So here's this wind that I experience as an extension of my spirit - the anima - also feeding the flames of impending forest destruction.

I'll tell you a story. Not so awfully long before, I'd hit a low point, mourning that no lover chose to stay and make a home in this wilderness with me, that my children were taken from me and no longer under my protection and influence, and that it seemed I needed to travel in order to properly champion these and all wild places. At one point while on the road, a sweetheart wrote to say she didn't want to see me because I was "too intense", the caretaker I left tending my home bailed, and the borrowed vehicle I was touring in blew up. Hitchhiking home, I then walked straight away to the sacred cliffs below our property to do the one thing that felt most authentic for a mixed blood Cossack to do . . . I cried. And in the process of crying I felt my heart saying to the cliffs, to this canyon and region, "I'm yours. I will not leave you. No matter what happens, I will not leave you. If I never have a mate, if I never have an income, if I can't get my art and writing out to the people, it still won't drive me away. I am here for you."

And so, if the Wallow Fire had come through, after that force of life and death that is the wind had roared over

this land, I knew I would still be here. In case I couldn't save the cabin where we write, I had picking the spot where I'd set up my tent in the midst of the black ash, from which I would start planting the seeds of green and home and wildness anew.

*GV: That had to be really intense.*

Wolf: Yeah, and especially happening right before the conference and when our Plant Healer Magazine was due out.

*GV: I know! It was unreal. I've never visited your home, but I feel a real connection, because of you of course, and the way you live and your commitment to the land. So the thought of that fire coming through - there wasn't a moment in the day during that time that I wasn't aware of it in some way. And there were many, many people who felt the same.*

**In my heart of hearts I believe there's one place in all the world for everybody that calls to them louder and more insistently than all others, a place that will support them in being their most authentic selves, and that perhaps needs us the most.**

*Part of it is the commitment you've all made to the place, and the relationship that's reciprocal back and forth between you humans and the rest of life there. It's also the writing and photography you and Kiva share. I think it helps people to become more aware of and open to their own places. The fire also got me thinking about my own fears. To acknowledge and honor that beauty that is all around me and then to have it destroyed by a fire and still remain here, to be able to see the potential of the beauty that would still be there, that would be revealed over time but in a different way.*

Wolf: There's two things we teach in the Anima courses with regards to place. One is to feel at home everywhere you are, even on a park bench in the largest city, connecting deeply wherever we are, sending out not necessarily roots but feelers, like tendrils that sense the being

and messages of where we are now.

The second thing is, in my heart of hearts I believe there's one place in all the world for everybody that calls to them louder and more insistently than all others, a place that will support them in being their most authentic selves, and that perhaps needs us the most. Finding that one place is kind of like the child's game where one kid tries to find a hidden treasure while blindfolded, with the only clues being the other children shouting out "warm or warmer" as they stumble closer to the prize, and "cold and colder" whenever they moved away. When we travel even a few miles from this home, things will feel a little colder in a sense, and on the way back it will feel increasingly warmer until we're settled into the heart and center of that place again. It's not just a matter of thinking "I like pine trees, so I should be in a pine forest." Sure, it's a hint. But it

will be more than pines that distinguish your home, more like the qualities of a particular forest, a specific grove, a certain watershed or section of coast, a definitive square mile. And it will be the site of greatest potential when it comes to being at home in both your self and your place.

I ask that people connect with, learn from, honor and repay any place

where we might be. But at the same time, we have a responsibility to seek the place that brings us into our power and best aids our gifting to the world - regardless of income potential, inconvenience, or disruption, and even - if I may be so personal - if caring for a handicapped sister makes it more complicated and difficult. The search for that one place to root and settle, is in itself an unsettling process, just as is following the calling of your gifts and what to do with them. It requires discomfort and movement, with great sensitivity to the signs.

*GV: I still have the interview you did with me so many years ago. We talked about Gaian Economics, among other things. It's strange, but I still feel exactly the same way I did back then. Everything we talked about - the economic alternatives people were starting, still*

*Continued on page 14*

*Wolf. . . from page 13*

*exist. If I were to do a Google search I'd find all kinds of cool stuff, but they seem isolated from each other, and the potential comes from connection and working consciously together. For that to happen we need more than email, we need face-to-face communication. That's one of the things I miss so much from the days of the bioregional congresses. When we stopped getting together regularly it was like losing a part of myself. The times we're living in need us to have that kind of connection again.*

Wolf: In part, we need to break bonds, because so many of the bonds in this paradigm, in this society, are unhealthy. They're obligations instead of responsibilities. They're laws that we obey instead of things that we do out of consideration and care. We need to rip ourselves asunder from our own comforts, from our imaginary limitations, and from this gawdawful system, yet at the same time we need to make and nourish existing connections. As much enjoyment as I get from needed revolutionary acts, it seems my main job now is not to go around severing with scissors so much as casting the luminous threads of co-mingled purpose and shared values that might possibly lead to the re-creation of a living, organic, Gaian tribe. It's funny that the wild eyed hell-raiser that I always took pride in being, is now so dedicated to the nearly impossible work of mending existing conduits and creating new connections, pathways, and circuits – for drawing us together.

*GV: A lot of people are being connected because of your work. You, Loba, and Kiva Rose have created a vehicle for people to be attracted to. You're bringing people together and helping to make those connections.*

Wolf: I've always been afraid of just entertaining or affirming the "choir", as they say. Each of us has to reach out to those who still buy into the lies of the old paradigm, who are by far the majority. To find common ground, common loves, common language with people who aren't that much like me, to have an effect on them that they may not even be aware of until after the fact, that's very Loki or Coyote - the Trickster, as we say in the southwest, and it's

absolutely delightful. And we need never miss an opportunity to do this magic. So if I briefly have a local carpenter's attention, for example, I'm going to find things to say in the metaphor of his tools and livelihood that are very much Gaian and deep ecological, very much incendiary and revolutionary and that lead him to thinking.

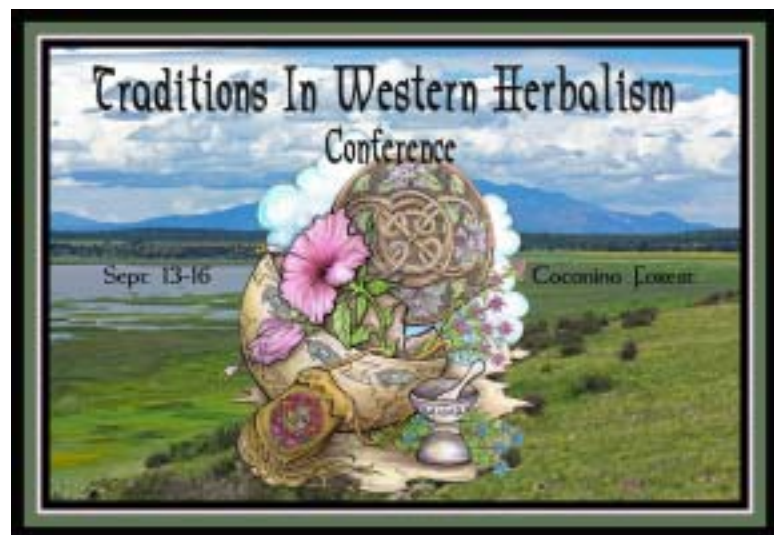
I council everybody to do this. Whether you're 18 years old or 80, whether you're in front of a class or client, or if you temporarily have the attention of a distracted checker in a grocery store, that's your opportunity to teach, affirm, or disrupt as needed.

That's your audience in the moment. You can rock that checker's world! There's something you can give her that's exactly what she may be least ready to hear but most in need of understanding.

It's each and every minute that we need to do this work, every minute that we need to be resisting injustice, and every minute seeking our home, our place and purpose until we've found it, and it has found us. We're certainly not waiting for anybody's qualification or certification. We're not even waiting for our own self-confidence to catch up.

As is necessary, we're doing it now.

*Plant Healer Magazine is an over 200 page long, full color, quarterly digital journal of folk herbalism, enlivening the practice, culture and art of folk herbalism today. Writers include the esteemed Paul Bergner, Aviva Romm, Susun Weed and many more, each pushing the envelope with their most adventurous and in-depth topics. Subscriptions include hundreds of dollars worth of bonuses, and can be purchased at: [www.PlantHealerMagazine.com](http://www.PlantHealerMagazine.com)*



**T**he Traditions in Western Herbalism Conference (Sept 13-16) is the only one of its kind, with over 30 teachers and 40 cutting edge classes on topics from the techniques of clinical herbal practice to how to set up a free clinic. Hosted in the Coconino Forest south of Flagstaff, Arizona, the 2012 TWHC will also feature plant identification walks, plus two full nights of live music that includes an amazing Roma (Gypsy) band. Special discounts for early registration, at: [www.TraditionsInWesternHerbalism.org](http://www.TraditionsInWesternHerbalism.org)

# Roots of Past, Seeds of Future.

## In-between is You

by Ananda Wilson

*My house says to me, "Do not leave me, for here dwells your past."*

*And the road says to me, "Come and follow me, for I am your future."*

*And I say to both my house and the road, "I have no past, nor have I a future. If I stay here, there is a going in my staying; and if I go there is a staying in my going. Only love and death will change all things."*

- Kahlil Gibran

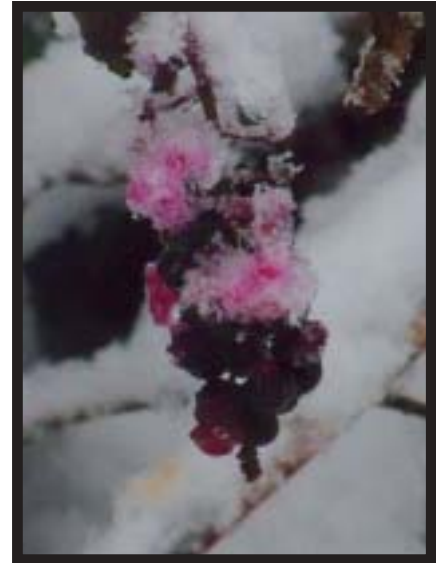


Photo: A. Wilson

**N**ovember is always the time of in between to me. And as primarily a wildcrafter and forager, it's the time when roots are tended and seeds are planted (as opposed to spring gardening).

### **Under the snow, sleep the roots**

When I said the first real snowfall was coming, I really had no idea what Nature was planning. I had no idea there would be mass blackouts and families everywhere moving their fish and pets into shelters so they didn't freeze to death.

I had no idea there would be trees fallen everywhere, and countless people rushed to the ER from carbon monoxide poisoning, some of them crossing over on the Day of the Dead.

I had no idea how much it would make me think about what I can do to strengthen the fibers of people I care about, so that we become more prepared to handle stress and challenges heading our way, and what strength of wholeness - mind, body, and spirit equally - it will require of us. In times of blackout, I

am ridiculously grateful that I know how to gather plants for medicine, start a fire, and find my friends who hunt if it came to that.

It also makes me acutely aware of the ways in which I am completely unprepared, and at the mercy of others, regardless of being on, or off, the grid. Interdependence is perhaps a lost art. Yet we can find our way back to it by following the wisdom found in nature.

### **Root Doctor, Seed Sweetener**

In some traditions, Autumn is the time of letting go (seeds), and grieving, (fear of the unknown and the feeling of being disconnected from that which roots us).

And there is a waiting time. We let go, we sleep, we get up the next day and wonder. We do this for months.

And while we (up here in our aerial brain parts) wonder . . . the roots continue their biological duty: gathering nutrients from their deepest place of resources. They are drinking up from the ever-steady 50 - 55 degree temperature environment of mineral rich soil and water.

While lots of stuff was doomed to go bad during the power outages, my yams and sauerkraut were perfect. They are happy in the cool temperature, and continue feeding during difficult times, along with other nutrient dense foods like dried meats, dried fruits, and nuts. My neighbor gave us fresh eggs, which will be eaten far before their time to go bad.

OK, my point here is not to tell you what's in my pantry - *but to consider what each season asks of us.*

*What does the time of seeds and roots ask of you? And how are you responding? Are you ensuring your biological duties such as eating and sleeping and absorbing love?*

I find that the majority of people I talk to about SAD, report very specific ailments. They are usually about feeling a sense of fighting their days (swimming upstream), feeling abandoned by nature (disconnected), and isolated (loneliness and fear of lack).

Roots are good medicine for all of these - both literally and metaphorically.

*I invite you to nourish*

*Continued on page 28*

## You Say You Want a Revolution . . . Special "Occupy" Section

**A**s I am working on this issue, getting it ready for printing, the media is full of stories of protesters being forcibly removed from their sites - in Zuccotti Park, NYC, in Dallas and elsewhere. I expect this will continue, especially in larger cities. Violence has broken out as well, most often as far as I can tell, as a response to strong-arm tactics of police. There have also been reports of drug abuse and sex crimes and that in some places occupations have become havens for the homeless (I'm not inclined to think that's a bad thing, but that's just me). On the other hand, occupations

such as in Portland, ME (where the pictures accompanying this section were taken) have been orderly and respectful with occupiers helping the homeless and those without health insurance with medical care and donations of extra clothing, tarps, etc. The latest info coming out of Occupy Maine (as of 11/15) indicates meetings to discuss preparations for winter. So occupations are as diverse as the places being occupied. While my personal preference is that the occupations continue as long as possible, I'm also getting a bit anxious for the next step.

Keeping in mind that the

Occupy Movement shifts and changes daily, I decided to include a selection of articles and excerpts written by those whose opinions I respect, whose writings have appeared in past issues of *Gaian Voices*, with a focus on what I feel is the most important question: What's next? Will Occupy be the beginning of the [r]evolution into a new paradigm or will it fizzle and die? If it's the beginning, and I pray it is, then it must spread beyond the streets and parks to the sites of destruction, to the headquarters of corporate elites, to the halls of the institutions responsible for ecological destruction and injustice.

The Occupy Movement has joined thousands of other resistance movements all over the world in which the poorest of the poor people are standing up and stopping the richest corporations in their tracks. Few of us dreamed that we would see you, the people of the United States on our side, trying to do this in the heart of Empire. I don't know how to communicate the enormity of what this means.

- Arundhati Roy, 11/16/11



Photo: Robin Farrin

# The Magnetic Force of the Moment - Perils & Potential on the Road to Transformation

by Sandy LeonVest

For all the head-scratching and hand-wringing in the corporate media over the “message” – or lack of one – as it turns out, the American people understand exactly what the Occupy Wall Street movement is talking about.

Evidence that the occupy movement has triggered some deeply dormant impulse in the American psyche is everywhere. Here in Northern California, “occupiers” are standing their ground in San Francisco, Oakland, and other major cities. In San Francisco, protesters are refusing to leave Justin Herman Plaza, and police are preparing for a standoff. In the largely working class city of Oakland, where poverty is endemic and gang-related shootings are a near-daily occurrence, the protests are growing larger by the day. Last week, “Occupy Oakland” was given a notice by city officials to vacate Frank Ogawa Plaza. There too, demonstrators are refusing to leave until their demands are taken seriously. Those demands include increased regulation of banks and Wall Street investment firms and fundamental changes to the system of economic distribution.

In other parts of the Golden State, Wells Fargo is being targeted by occupiers in an organized effort to collectively withdraw funds. Earlier this month, hundreds of protestors shut down a Wells Fargo Bank in San Francisco's Financial District. Others are participating in protests, teach-ins and non-violence trainings in their cities or communities.

Here in Northern California, and across the nation, the “electricity of change” permeates the atmosphere. The potential for a collective awakening of “we the people” from cultural unconsciousness induced by the anesthesia of corporate consumerism is omnipresent.

## It is a “Howard Beale moment.”

Americans are “mad as hell,” all right, but we’re also relieved as hell. Finally, a political space is opening up (or, more to the point, being carved out) for the 99% to stand up and say, “We’re not going to take it any more.” Really.

In neighborhoods from New York to the Hawaiian Islands – whether or not they are part of the protests – the “99 percent” of Americans who have lost their jobs, retirements, homes, healthcare, savings and/or good credit ratings, all of those “losers” who know they’re not losers, but have nonetheless lost so much, are seeing something familiar in this movement – their own reflections.

## They too are caught up in the magnetic force of the moment.

Yet, this moment - this window in time - in which Americans seem to have awakened from an overly long slumber, is

The space for real transformation will only be created when we stop contributing to our own enslavement (and empowering our corporate captors) by consuming their products.

only the beginning of what will likely be a long transitional journey. And transitions are always rife with challenges and potential pitfalls.

The 99% best be prepared for the “equal and opposite” reaction that will inevitably come. “We the people” should understand that this “opposite reaction” represents a formidable force – one that exists right alongside our dream of change. In this universe, it is fear, not revolutionary courage that permeates the atmosphere. Fear of the unknown, fear of rage and despair, fear of abandoning our comfort zones, fear of what could come next.

## Fear of real transformation.

In such a universe, the 99% have been so steeped for so long in corporate values (and the corporate culture that created those values), that we can no longer differentiate – or extract – ourselves from it. The idea of radical change no longer feels inspiring. It feels threatening. In this universe, the “American Awakening” is quickly “put down.”

## It falls quietly back into its self-induced coma – by sheer force of habit.

To avoid such a disastrous scenario, we will need to think and act fearlessly, as we face down corporate forces – and our own darkest demons. If we are to succeed in creating the better world we envision, we’ll need to look, not only outward and backward at the role of corporate greed and corruption in today’s global crisis of greed and inequity, but forward at what kind of future we want, and – perhaps most challenging – inward at our own complicity in the problems we now face.

The transition from revolution to transformation will provoke the corporate classes in both predictable and unpredictable ways. We have yet to see the big dogs of disaster capitalism unleash their full fury on the nation. But, as corporate power brokers begin to understand that their power is being seriously challenged by the 99%, – once it dawns on them that it really is down to “us or them” – that fury will be felt in cities, towns and communities all over the country – and the world.

Here in the US, the impact of disaster capitalism is already devastating communities. Financial stress has been successfully exploited to expand the privatization of the public school system; healthcare “reform” has been twisted

*Continued on page 18*

beyond recognition into a profit machine for the pharmaceutical and health insurance industries; investor-owned water utilities all over the country are attempting to push unreasonable rate schemes on consumers to increase their profit margins.

In the realm of (public versus private) power, even relatively wealthy Northern California has seen its public power movement reduced to a corporate image of itself, in the wake of disaster capitalism. In Marin, after a protracted battle with dominant utility PG&E, the county managed to break away from the mega-monopoly to form its own "Community Choice Aggregation" (CCA), only to find itself "forced" to contract with Shell Energy North America "in order to be competitive on the open energy market." Only this month, San Francisco followed in Marin's footsteps, and is currently in negotiations with Shell to put the oil and gas company in charge of its CCA (aka CleanPowerSF). Today, Northern California's once vibrant public power movement is in serious jeopardy of becoming a corporate-controlled "public power program" – an oxymoron if ever there was one, and a serious setback to the dream of "energy democracy" (local ownership of energy sources) once envisioned by local activists.

The rise of disaster capitalism needs also to be viewed through the lens of consumer complicity. The compelling nature of corporate seduction - or the power of our own consumer addictions to undermine our best intentions – cannot be overstated. Transitions, by their very nature, render people vulnerable. At this critical juncture, we the people, having made our stand, marched in the streets, yelled at the television and/or carried signs that screamed "Give it Back," are particularly vulnerable to falling into the familiar (and more comfortable) role of "consumers."

With the corporate-inspired holidays now threatening to invade every corner of American culture, the 99 percent faces yet another defining moment. How will we cope with the temptation to revert to consumer habits and corporate comforts? Will we organize boycotts, walk-outs and "credit-card burnings?" Or will Americans - at least those still fortunate enough to have an income - reflexively pull out our credit cards (the ones we meant to cut up) and use what little credit we have left to further enrich those we (claim to) oppose?

**During this critical transition, on which so much depends, will the 99 percent go to the malls to picket – or to shop?**

Individuals and communities will need to look closely at the ways in which we keep the "corporate powers that be" in place if we hope to make it through the transition. The space for real transformation will only be created when we stop contributing to our own enslavement (and empowering our corporate captors) by consuming their products – in many cases, without even knowing where the products were made, by whom and under what conditions.

Real transformation means building a more sustainable world. We'll need to be less reliant on corporate sources for our food, energy and water. One look at what's happening in Alabama, where people are being denied access to water (if

they don't have "proper identification"), should be evidence enough that we'll need to grow more of our own food, generate our own renewable power and cultivate local water sources whenever and wherever possible.

The magnetic force of this particular moment will not last. Right now the 99% are taking the moment and running with it. But, if "we the people" are to win the struggle for human and environmental rights over the forces of corporate gluttony, we should add to our list the task of disconnecting ourselves from the feeding tube that sustains it.

**Excerpt from "Occupy America"  
by Michael Parenti  
(CommonDreams.org, 11/9/11)**

**W**here does this movement go? What is to be done? The answers are already arising from the actions of the 99%:

- \* Discourage military recruitment and support conscientious objectors. Starve the empire of its legions. Organize massive tax resistance in protest of corrupt, wasteful, unlawful, and destructive Pentagon spending
- \* Transfer funds from corporate banks to credit unions and community banks. Support programs that assist the unemployed and the dispossessed. It was Giulio Tremonti, Italy's embattled finance minister who declared: "Salvate il popolo, non le banche" ("Save the people, not the banks"). It would be nice to hear such sentiments emanating from the U.S. Treasury Department or the White House.
- \* Coordinate actions with organized labor. Unions still are the 99%'s largest and best financed groups. Consider what was done in Oakland: occupiers joined with longshoremen, truckers, and other workers to close the port. Already there are plans for a general strike in various communities. Such actions improve greatly if organized labor is playing a role.
- \* We need new electoral strategies, a viable third party, proportional representation, and even a new Constitution, one that establishes firm rules for an egalitarian democracy and is not a rigma-role designed to protect the moneyed class. The call for a constitutional convention (a perfectly legitimate procedure under the present U.S. Constitution) seems long overdue.
- \* Perhaps most of all, we need ideological education regarding the relationship between wealth and power, the nature of capitalism, and the crimes of an unbridled profit-driven financial system. And again the occupiers seem to be moving in that direction: in early November 2011, people nationwide began gathering to join teach-ins on "How the 1% Crashed the Economy." . . .

When the people liberate their own minds and take a hard clear look at what the 1% is doing and what the 99% should be doing, then serious stuff begins to happen. It is already happening. It may eventually fade away or it may create a new chapter in our history. Even if it does not achieve its major goals, the Occupy movement has already registered upon our rulers the anger and unhappiness of a populace betrayed.

**Excerpt from "Occupy Demands:  
Let's Radicalize Our Analysis of  
Empire, Economics, Ecology"  
by Robert Jensen**

**Robert Jensen's Updates, 11/1/11**

*Tomorrow the world may burst into fragments. In that threat hanging over our heads there is a lesson of truth. As we face such a future, hierarchies, titles, honors are reduced to what they are in reality: a passing puff of smoke. And the only certainty left to us is that of naked suffering, common to all, intermingling its roots with those of a stubborn hope.*

- Albert Camus

A stubborn hope is more necessary than ever. As political, economic, and ecological systems spiral down, it's likely we will see levels of human suffering that dwarf even the horrors of the 20th century. Even more challenging is the harsh realization that we don't have at hand simple solutions – and maybe no solutions at all – to some of the most vexing problems. We may be past the point of no return in ecological damage, and the question is not how to prevent crises but how to mitigate the worst effects. No one can predict the rate of collapse if we stay on this trajectory, and we don't know if we can change the trajectory in time.

There is much we don't know, but everything I see suggests that the world in which we will pursue political goals will change dramatically in the next decade or two, almost certainly for the worse. Organizing has to adapt not only to changes in societies but to these fundamental changes in the ecosphere. In short: We are organizing in a period of contraction, not expansion. We have to acknowledge that human attempts to dominate the non-human world have failed. We are destroying the planet and in the process

destroying ourselves. Here, just as in human relationships, we either abandon the dominance/subordination dynamic or we don't survive. . . .

The Occupy gatherings do not yet constitute a coherent movement with demands, but they are well-springs of reasonable illusions. Rejecting the political babble around us in election campaigns and on mass media, these gatherings are an experiment in a different kind of public dialogue about our common life, one that can reject the forces of terror deployed by concentrated wealth and power.

With that understanding, the central task is to keep the experiment going, to remember the latent power in people who do not accept the legitimacy of a system. Singer/songwriter John Gorka, writing about what appears to be impossible, offers the perfect

*They think they can tame you,  
name you and frame you,  
aim you where you don't belong.  
They know where you've been  
but not where you're going,  
that is the source of the songs.*



Photo: Robin Farrin

# How the Occupy Movement May be Off-Base, & How It Can Evolve

by Jan Lundberg, 11/4/11

The Occupy movement is by and large preoccupied with most wealth being hoarded "on Wall Street" in the hands of "the 1%". While it's true statistically that the money is there, what will ultimately prove to matter more to the "the 99%" is access to healthy land that can support life and human subsistence. When the total financial meltdown hits, it won't be the money in digital accounts that matters, but productive land that is held privately or in common.

Power as people commonly perceive it is not on Wall Street. Neither is the power in Washington, D.C. The 20th century saying goes, "political power comes out of the barrel of a gun." But this is also a short-sighted analysis that ignores the future – for a world of 7 billion people on a collision course with sustainability. So, where is the power and wealth today really at, and can a transfer of wealth for equitable redistribution – if that were indeed possible – really transform people's lives positively?

What folks in "poor" countries have always understood is that their power and survival lie in possessing their own land. Land reform in many parts of our increasingly crowded world is a burning issue. Many people live and die for the struggle for their right to live on their ancestral lands. A movement in the U.S. for the masses to take back the land from the few is inevitable.

Better late than never; many decades have passed during which the importance for consumers of being close to the land was greatly diminished. Real wealth, the land, was given up for wages and cheap petroleum's technology explosion. Population growth has happened so fast that a new generation didn't know it was inheriting a world less and less free and no longer abundant in life-giving resources ("ecological services").

But as the sun sets on the system of vast, false monetary wealth and on the oppression it has wielded, nature may first

wake us up rudely, before people in the U.S. can go about land reform. If so, after societal and possibly ecological collapse, there may be quite a bit of land available and to share after the population has diminished sufficiently in size. This was the case in Europe after the 14th century plagues took their toll. However, in no way should such drastic "solutions" be pursued.

"Occupying" the heart of cities today does mean something in today's world of artificial environments, material culture, and middle class values. But instead of occupying the cities, the movement should be about running away from cities. Instead of occupying Wall Street, run away from it: abandon it, abandon the system, abandon consuming, and embrace simple living on the land. This ought to be the prime goal, rather than a stampede today or tomorrow. . . . Apart from quality-of-life considerations and ethical values, how we live today for a sustainable future

can't be ignored: the simple fact is that U.S. cities feed themselves through massive petroleum inputs, such as for distribution of food grown on average 1,500 miles away. So we must enhance community economics and solidarity with our neighbors or tribe.

Occupy Big Oil (TransitionVoice.com) . . . points out that the billions of dollars in increased profits of major oil companies are tied to Wall Street. But "running away from Big Oil" – boycotting petroleum – is much more effective and life-changing than trying to redistribute wealth. There is no social justice on a dead planet. Nor is there going to be abundant, clean energy for a crippled consumer economy. And to demand alternative energy that would replace cheap oil on a similar scale is unfortunately the naive position of too many Occupiers. . . .

Another problem facing the

*Continued on next page*

**A** society can change much faster than a culture. But for our predicament, which can be terminal because of our ecological mess, only a rapid and radical change in values and behavior will save our species (and fellow life forms we're rapidly losing) from going extinct in the relatively near future. Several degrees of warming of the globe in a matter of decades will see to that. There's also the potential consequences of nukes and perhaps the plastic plague.

Only a total, immediate curtailment of fossil-fuels combustion, along with all out tree planting involving the whole world, plus other practices to sequester carbon and save soil, water, and endangered species, can possibly salvage life as we know it. A runaway greenhouse effect is our present course, and we don't know if it is already too late.

A just society will be required to pull this off. . . . Our responsibility as individuals, taking action cooperatively, must be the collective answer. This is cosmically possible, even if it is hard to see through today's fog of despair, illusion, waste, and conditioning. But the question is, "what can get us there?" Increasingly, it seems that total collapse of the dominant order is required for seeing sufficient change.

-Jan Lundberg, 11/14/11

Occupy movement is that the contest is really between "the 1%" and another 1%. The latter refers to the approximate bulk of the intelligentsia nestled in "the 99%" that actually turns out for protests, or that is active compared to the average consumer. A third of the U.S. population does seem to support the Occupiers, which can spell success: the American Revolution was carried out by approximately a third of the colonists (active and supportive). . . .

The relatively small turnouts to date at Occupy sites are not as much of a problem as the possible dispersion or fragmenting of the movement. If there is a push by a faction for boycotting corporate products, for example, this might gain enough support to see the movement graduate to a specific agenda. Attempting car-free living . . . [and] taking over land for food production, like the Diggers in 1649

in England, is more germane to our true need today as modern humans separated from nature and her gifts.

Where does it end? The illusions of materialism and artificial living have yet to be shattered. . . . Let us guestimate that we are the ecological 1%. We are awake and active. Join us, you other 98% of the mass and even you 1% holding your false vast wealth!

Occupy the land!

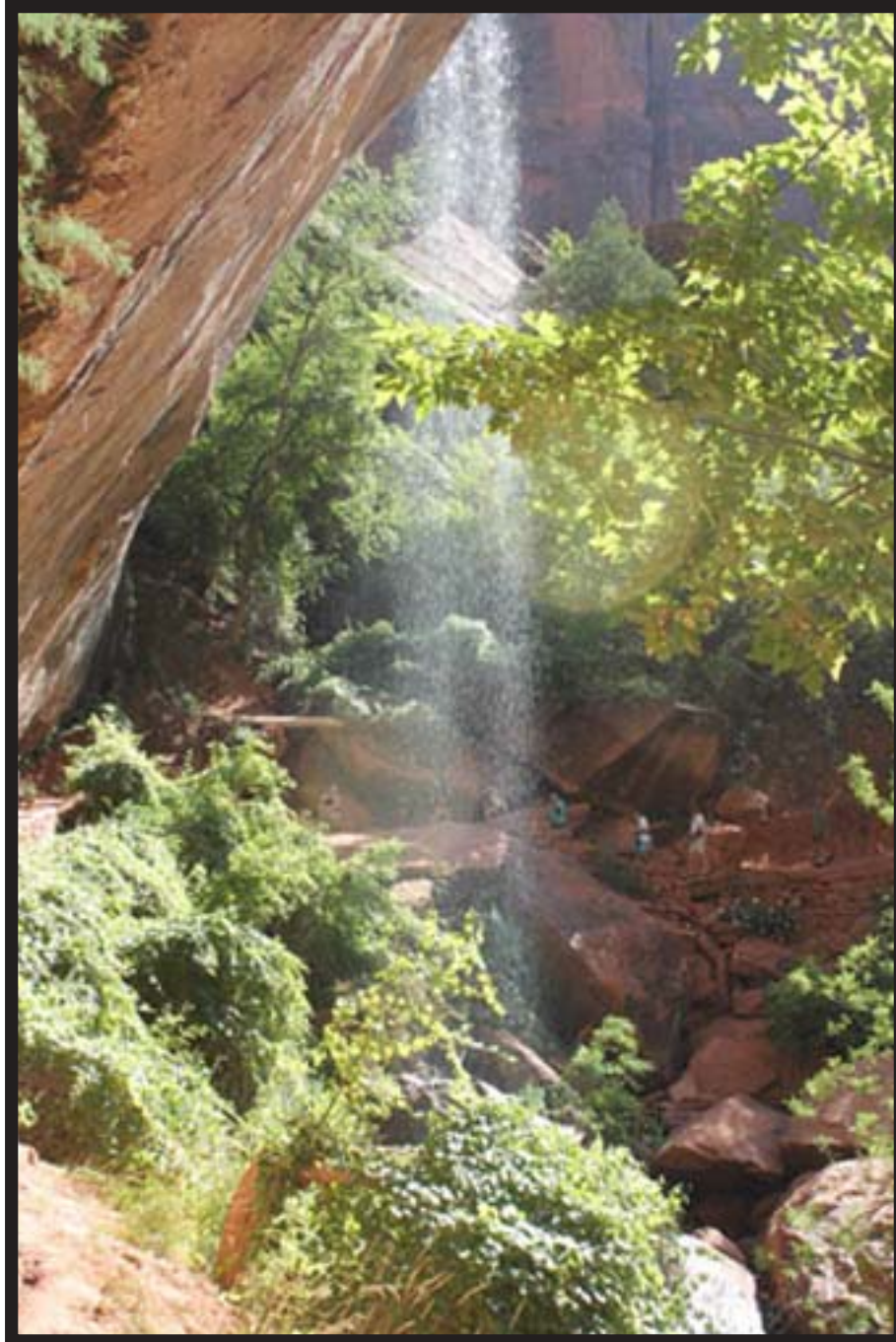


Photo: Marshall Allan

# The Garden of Eden

by Henry Niese

Teaching is metaphor a lot of the time. If we miss that fact, we miss the understanding. “Life is like a box of chocolates” - a simile, is very different from “life is a box of chocolates” - a metaphor. Teachers can be very concrete and specific at times, many times they teach in the abstract, using metaphor. Because of a literal turn of mind, we miss the point of the metaphor, and take the metaphor as fact, or history, or truth engraved in stone. Fundamental Christians tend to do this with the Bible, proclaiming it as something it was never intended to be - absolute, unequivocal. God’s Word.

Tribal people wrote and preserved the Bible - the book. Tribal people - what is left of them - still teach, using metaphor, jokes, and wry situations to get across their points. It is easy to take at face value, unless you realize that what they are talking about is *not* what they are talking about.

I was very lucky to have the benefit of this sort of teaching by several elder tribal leaders, including Henry Crow Dog, a *Sic’ang’u Lakota*, whose metaphorical teaching only became somewhat clear to me after I was 54 years old. Old men like Henry teach in parables, like the old tribal Jews.

In the late 1970s, about 60 of us had been sitting in a big council tipi, about 18’ by 30’, which is put together with two tipis and additional poles and canvas, making a large hall-like structure. The sun was beginning to rise. We had been sitting there since sundown the night before. The ceremony was nearly over. Grandpa Henry had been presiding. People were packing their ceremonial objects and instruments away.

Among other things, Henry was a joker, or *Heyoka* - a contrary. So when he started to speak, and tell a funny story,

a giggle went through the crowd. We figured he was cheering us up after a long, hard, prayerful night. This is what he said:

“Well, someone said - I heard - the white man’s book has a story about a fish that swallowed a man. They call it Jonah and the Whale. Now - when that fish swallowed up Jonah - well, he was pretty scared. It was dark down there in the whale’s belly. He didn’t have anything to eat. Pretty soon he looked up - saw that big liver. So - they say - he took out his knife and cut himself a piece. Re-eally good! Nothing like fresh liver. So he went over there - to a soft spot in the whale’s stomach, and lays himself down comfortable. This is nice, he says to himself. And - what they say - is, he’s eating his lunch when the Whale says, ‘uh-h, Jonah!’ And Jonah is wiping the blood from the liver off his chin, he says, ‘what, Whale?’ Whale says, ‘u-uh Jonah! *Taku tokahwo* - what’s going on?’ Jonah says, ‘Whale, keep on swimming and mind your own business - leave me alone, I’m comfortable, and got plenty to eat.’ And that Jonah - they say - he’s still in there.”

Everybody was laughing at Grandpa’s funny story. We were, as they say, “all Peyote’d up” from the night’s Native American Church ceremony. It took me a couple of years to figure out that metaphor.

The Garden of Eden is another metaphor. The Bible is history, with important metaphors included - like Moses and those stones he brought down from the mountaintop, and Jesus’ words. Adam and Eve, the Garden and the Snake, the Tree, the Fruit from the Tree of Knowledge, and the Expulsion. That is the grand metaphor, the whole history of humanity. The Garden of Eden is being destroyed. This isn’t history, this is now. The fruit of our techno-wisdom is doing it. The Expulsion will happen. We will soon be kicked out of the bed we have made and now lie in.



Photo: Colin Lowry

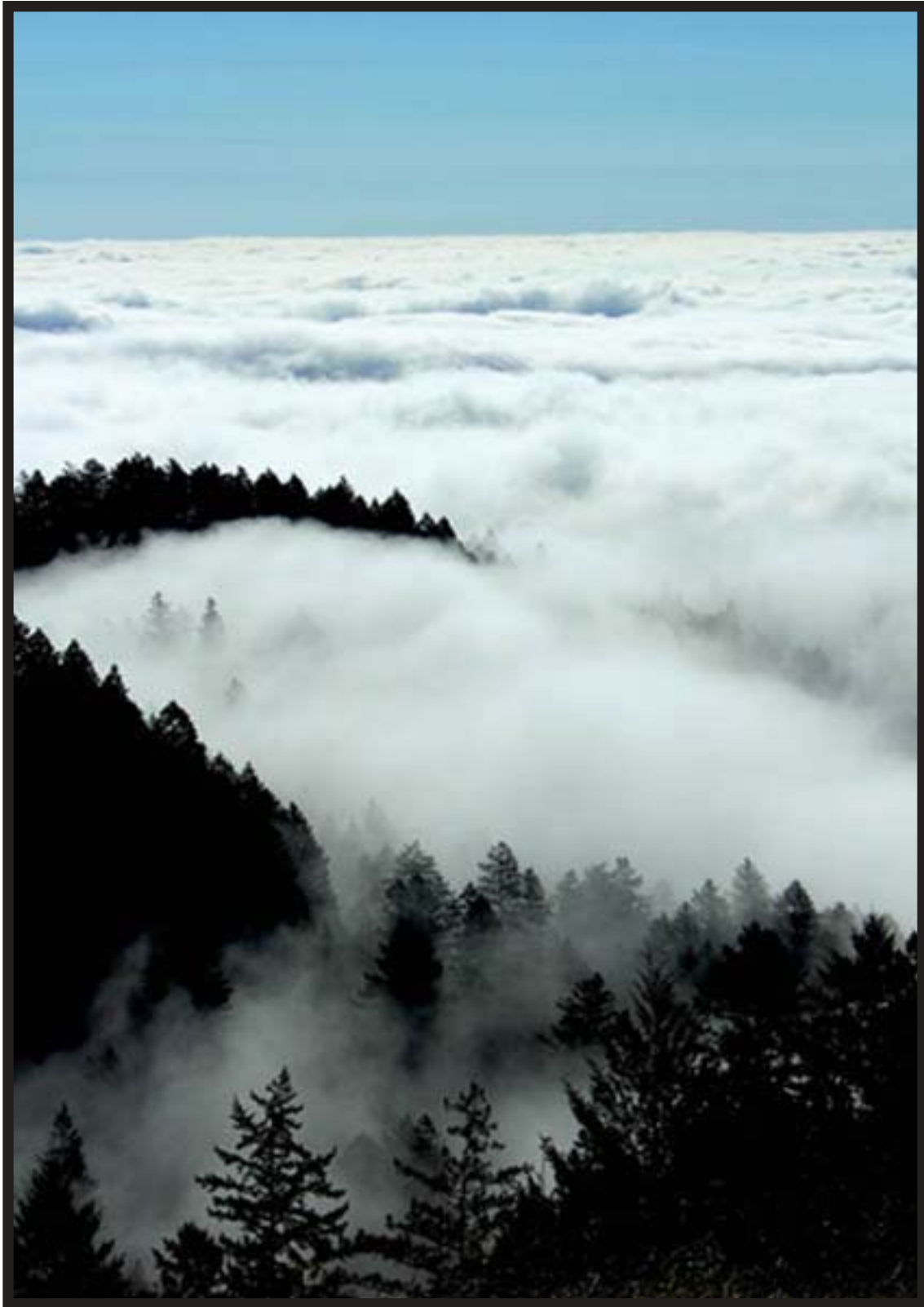


Photo: Colin Lowry

**I** have come to drag you out of yourself and take you in my heart. I have come to bring out the beauty you never knew you had, and lift you up like a prayer to the sky.  
- Rumi

# Flower Essences

by Susan Meeker-Lowry

*What fun life is! For us, to hold each little atom in its pattern is to hold it in joy. We see you humans at times glumly encountering experience, doing things because they have to be done. We marvel that your sparkling life could be so filtered down and disguised. Life is abundant joy. Each little bite of a caterpillar into a leaf is done with more zest than we sometimes feel in you humans. We would love to shake the sluggishness out of you and have you see life as bring and blooming, waxing and waning, eternal and one.*

- Mock Orange Deva, To Honor the Earth, Dorothy Maclean

There's something about flower essences that feels so good and right to me. Imagine taking the essential energy of a beautiful plant being into your body - for that's what happens when you place those drops of flower essence onto your tongue. If you know the plant personally, if you've grown it in your garden, for example, then you can close your eyes as the drops fall into your mouth and envision how it looks on a beautiful sunny day, you can remember its scent, how the stem feels in your hand, how the petals welcome the bees.

My first experience with flower essences was many years ago. I was going through a rough time and a friend introduced me to a woman who worked with the Bach Flower Essences. I contacted her because the idea of something so essential, so basically energetic, appealed to me. Using a pendulum, she helped guide my choices. At first they seemed to make a difference, then I wasn't so sure. After all, it wasn't like I had a physical ailment that I could be cured of, rather it was more an emotional, spiritual imbalance I needed help with.

Every once in a while I'd think it might be time to choose another essence, but I didn't. So with the exception of Rescue Remedy, which I find amazingly effective, I hadn't thought much about flower essences until I moved to Maine and started my own garden. And even then I didn't seriously think about making my own essences until one rainy summer when Bee Balm



Photo: SML

literally shouted at me to get my attention. I've told this story in the pages of Gaian Voices before, but to refresh your memory: I was doing my

daily walk-around, looking for rotting leaves and stems (it was a VERY rainy summer). My mood was dour. All I wanted was for the sun to come out. It had been days and days of rain and mist and gray. As I approached the vicinity of the Bee Balm I heard a voice, "Look at me." I ignored it. After all, I was alone in the garden, who could be talking to me? Again: "Look at me."

Still I ignored it. Finally: "LOOK AT ME!" This got my attention and I looked. I was standing right in front of the Bee Balm and it was literally glowing as if the sun was shining full on it. It swayed and hummed with vibrancy, moving me to tears. Suddenly I was given a huge lesson: The plants were not suffering over the rainy summer. They totally accepted it. The Bee Balm was particularly joyful. My suffering was mine alone. I was my choice. Did I want to feel miserable? No. And I knew that Bee Balm would help me experience joy and peace regardless of the weather. So later that

summer, on a beautiful sunny day (yes the sun did eventually come out), I picked some perfect flowers, set them in a clear glass bowl of water in

the Bee Balm patch, and made my first flower essence.

This year I discovered the amazingly magical flower essences made at Green Hope Farm (PO Box 125, Meriden, NH 03770; [www.greenhopeessences.com](http://www.greenhopeessences.com)). Several co-workers swore by them, for themselves, their children, and their pets. These essences not only helped with emotional issues, but physical ailments as well. And the choices are bountiful. There are numerous collections of single and combination essences, including several made from flowers grown at the farm, and from gardens planted for specific reasons, under the guidance of Angels and Elementals. Okay, you can think this is strange, but check out their website or obtain their 300 page *Guide to Green Hope Farm Flower Essences* before making any snap judgments.

I ordered my first

three essences, chosen intuitively. When they arrived and I removed the small box that contained them from the larger packaging, I could feel the hairs go up on the back of my neck. I had totally not expected such a response simply from opening the box! So it's been a few days now and I have to say these essences are very powerful. How do they "work"? According to the *Guide*, "Flower Essences are energetic tools. They offer us information of an energetic nature. We experience them energetically and use them in our energetic systems, something I also refer to as our electrical systems. . . . To continue to live and prosper, each Flower in creation must solve the specific problems it confronts in its ecosystem. . . . The solutions Flowers develop in response to the problems they face become part of the Flower's architecture and growing habits as well as its

energetic vibration. This vibration is the unique electrical pattern each Flower has. . . . There is a Flower that has successfully tackled just about every tangle we could possibly experience. When we work with a helpful Flower Essence, the information of the Essence helps us untangle our energetic logjams be they emotional, mental, spiritual, or physical."

I wanted to share with you the gift of Green Hope Farm essences that I've just discovered. They came into my life at just the right time - as I'm letting go of what has been a very important piece of my life's work - *Gaian Voices* - and moving on with Gaia's Garden Herbals. Timing is everything, as the saying goes. And it's time for me to become more awake, more conscious, and more open to Gaia. With gratitude to the rooted beings that surround me, that grow in my garden, and in the woods and the fields.



Photo: SML

**I**t is impossible to give rules about how to cooperate with nature, because each of us has his or her own unique way to follow, which can only be discovered individually. Love and appreciation are always our surest links with all life. In our human process of unfolding ourselves, we enter into cooperation with both our own inner capabilities and the archetypes of nature itself.

- Dorothy Mclean

# ToGaianness

by Taffy Seaborne

*The Western tendency to focus far more on substance and category than on process and dynamic relationship was intensified with the emergence of the modern era. A child born today, however, will grow up with a decidedly different perception of reality.*

- Charlene Spretnak, *Relational Reality*, p11

ToGaianness, is an expression I often use while contemplating my relationship with Self, other and all-that-is. ToGaianness grows out of my PaGaian earth-based spiritual practice and a conviction that we humans have for better and for worse, long since become a religious animal. I like to think that once our primate ancestors left the relative safety of their African treetop homes and started to spread out across the continents, their expanding sense of place, belonging and awe soon had them imagining and storying how much more they might discover and become.

For some of us modern day humans, our sense of place and belonging is again rapidly changing: we can now accept that each one of us is a unique centre of creativity within an ever expanding omni-centred universe. Most of us are no longer confined to particular places in space or time because we can physically travel at great speed from one place to another and we can communicate with each other in real time, irrespective of distance. Modern communication technology is having a rapidly increasing influence on our thinking, imagination and behaviour, to the point where it is now probably the major influence on our collective global consciousness.

Even though we find ourselves immersed in such a dynamic period of human creativity and invention, often referred to as the information technology (IT) revolution, we still experience or at least learn from it, of mass inequality and human suffering throughout the planet. Unfortunately, as clever as we have been technologically, the quality of our relationship with Self, other and all-that-is appears to be deteriorating. Maybe we are being a bit too clever for our own good.

ToGaianness also recognizes that we humans are the planet Earth's principle

story-telling species, and that it is our story-telling that serves to not only inform and shape human consciousness but it now also shapes the destiny of most if not all other species as well. How then might our story-telling help us to visualise, imagine and shape more sustainable and enjoyable ways of relating to Self, other and all-that-is?

From my PaGaian perspective I believe we need new ways of storying consciousness that can replace the dominant patriarchal (fatherhood) influence with a more balanced parental (motherhood and fatherhood) influence, on our children in particular and on society in general. New ways of storying can benefit from deep remembering: that is, a remembering of some of our earlier more traditional ways of knowing and being and pondering on how such her and his-story has influenced and served us in the past.

My way of storying ToGaianness is very much influenced by what I learned while living among the Anangu traditional owners of Uluru in Central Australia (1990-98), particularly about the way young Anangu boys were traditionally grown up by their mothers, fathers and elders to become adult men. In this context I have found it valuable to compare the development from boy infant to adult male within an indigenous Australian culture with the development of human consciousness as if evolving over eons of time from an original infant form into a future mature adult form.

From mature Primate to infant Homo sapien, lets say about 5 million to 50,000 years ago, our more ancient ancestors experienced a relatively less violent co-existence with other and all-that-is, a period when wildness, mystery, early symbolic expression and sign language first started to shape human consciousness. This period I relate closely to the time when the infant suckling boy was being nurtured by

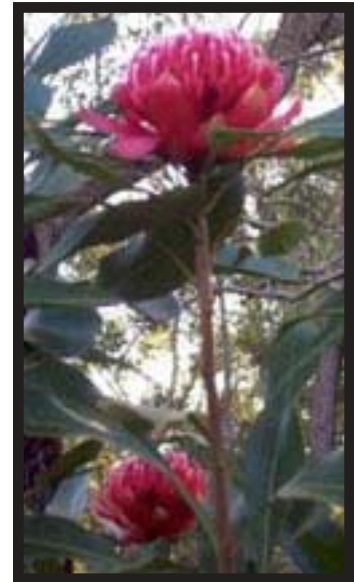


Photo: Sheila Quonoe

females, when he too is completely at one with Self, other and all-that-is. Then we move into what I call child Homo sapien about 50,000 years ago to 10,000 BCE, still a relatively less violent co-existence with other and all-that-is, a period during which verbal language, and ritual shapes much of human consciousness. This is a period I relate closely to that when the boy child is still being nurtured by females, still at one with Self, other and all-that-is, but now he is also being taught about his relationship with kin.

With the emergence of what I call adolescent Homo sapien from about 10,000 BCE to 5,000 BCE story telling embraces the greater mystery of all-that-is. This continuing period of relatively less violence and co-existence with other sees the emergence of symbolic and written expression and the storying of the Divine Feminine and seasonal celebration shaping much of human consciousness. I relate this period of human consciousness to the nurturing of the boy child as he approaches adolescence, he is still at one with Self, other and all-that-is but now he is also being taught about Self and his relationship to totem. Then, still during his adolescence a boy is ritually handed over to male elders for initiation into adulthood, he is deliberately separated from his nurturing female parents in preparation for becoming adult male, hunter, provider and himself a mature nurturing parent.

In the storying of ToGaianness I relate this period of adolescence and deliberate separation to the emergence of

child Homo sapien-sapien, from about 5,000 BCE to the 18th Century CE. This is a period during which the divine feminine is slain and replaced by the story of the sky God who thereafter dominates human consciousness - a period when human consciousness both influences and is influenced by, increasing violence. It is the period that sees the emergence of theocracy, kingdoms, chronic warfare, philosophy, science, nation states and colonialism. During the next three centuries from the 19th to the 21st Century CE the period I refer to as adolescent Homo sapien-sapien, violence increases with two

world wars followed closely by globalisation, religious fundamentalism and the noise of the market place now dominating human consciousness. Boy adolescent is ceremonially circumcised, he experiences the pain and fear of death, he learns about deliberately, ritually spilled wise blood, how to be brave and how to survive on his own in the wild, as part of his preparation for re-entering the world as adult male.

This brings my storying of ToGaianess to the present 21st Century CE and hopefully into what the late Thomas Berry named the Ecozoic era, a period I like to think of as a time when

Homo sapien, sapien becomes adult. Again from my PaGaian and Aboriginal influenced perspective, this is a period when the initiation into adult man requires him to embark on a solitary vision quest, this being his final challenge in preparation for being able to return to community and female companionship as adult man, hunter, protector and eventually mature nurturing parent. The emerging Ecozoic era could likewise be our time for visualising and storying a more mature, realistic and enjoyable relationship with Self, Other and All-That-Is.

## Sudden Discovery & Thomas Berry

### By Margaret Berry

Of the 151 tributes to Thomas Berry in the remarkable volume produced in 2009 by Herman Greene and his Center for Ecozoic Studies, many contributors view their experience of Thomas's thought as a sudden, powerful opening to a hitherto unsuspected, major, and life-altering reality. That reality might be expressed as the unity of a sacred Earth community in which humans are [but] the climactic part in a unified, interdependent, evolutionary, and divinity-revealing enterprise.

The suddenness of such an event, the abrupt coming upon a great truth with powerful impact and implication, has been treated memorably in one of the greatest short poems in English, John Keats's 1816 sonnet *On First Discovering Chapman's Homer*. Limited to Latin in his linguistic education, Keats had, until 1816, known Homer (the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*) only through 18th-century heroic-couplet translations lacking the freedom and power of Homeric narrative. One evening a friend introduced 20-year-old Keats to George Chapman's 1616 prose translation of the Homeric epics. The friends reportedly sat together till daylight reading the translation, Keats "shouting with delight at some especially energizing passages." At breakfast the next morning Keats's friend found the sonnet on his breakfast-table:

#### *On First Looking into Chapman's Homer*

Much have I travell'd in the realms of gold,  
And many goodly states and kingdoms seen;  
Round many western islands have I been  
Which bards in fealty to Apollo hold.  
Oft of one wide expanse had I been told  
That deep-browed Homer ruled as his demesne;  
Yet did I never breathe its pure serene  
Till I heard Chapman speak out loud and bold:  
Then felt I like some watcher of the skies  
When a new planet swims into his ken;  
Or like stout Cortez when with eagle eyes  
He star'd at the Pacific — and all his men  
Look'd at each other with a wild surmise —  
Silent, upon a peak in Darien.

Essentially an analogy, the sonnet offers at its primary

level three realities: 1) the explorer (mistakenly named) Cortez and his crew wandering about the Isthmus of Panama; 2) their sudden coming upon the Pacific Ocean, of which they had heard from natives; 3) the Pacific Ocean itself in all its expanse and grandeur.

At the secondary level the analogy equates 1) the explorer and his crew with Keats struggling to access the essential Homer; 2) the sudden sighting of the Ocean with Keats's sudden grasp of the authentic Homer by means of the Chapman translation; 3) the greatness of the Ocean itself with the expanse and power of Homeric poetry.

Thomas Berry's role in contemporary cosmological thought, I propose, is for many analogous with Chapman's role as portrayed in the Keats sonnet. In other words, for many Thomas has functioned as a translator of cosmological structure and history in leading people to see, to grasp, to understand for the first time the ultimate truth about human relations with nature, the universe, specifically with Earth. What I propose is, in short, that Thomas's role may be appreciated with special clarity when seen as an *analogy of an analogy*.

In this analogy, at any one of the three levels proposed, there is the basic concept of *seeing* in its multiple sense of physical, intellectual, and psychic vision; ergo the repetition in the poem of the long *i* (eye) 14 times, culminating in the ecstatic "wild surprise, silent" near the ending. Subterranean connections with the ego *I*, also, cannot be dismissed. It is the poet's gift so to organize sound, sense, and intuition into a perfect whole.

And nowhere did Keats better exemplify poetic genius than in his refusal to change the factually mistaken, but artistically exact, name of Cortez.\* A lesser poet, by a "correction," might have weakened the impact of the episode, not only metrically and phonetically, but also in the sense of character extension raising the poem from a particular to a universal insight. Other technical aspects of the sonnet resonating in Thomas's "translation" have to do with images of vastness, as planets *swim* through the heavenly expanse mirrored in the Ocean below, and wherein *see* and *sea* are inextricably intertwined.

*Continued on page 28*

*What Now? . . . from page 8*

the relevant "response units" were families and government. Except in a few places, there was not much awareness of the importance of local community.

Now it's ten years later, and I'm feeling a weird sense of *déjà vu*. Even when people understand that there is a crisis happening now that requires us to respond, most of the suggested responses involve personal choices or government action: Turn down your thermostat and insulate your house. Grow your own food. Buy an electric car. Set up a cap-and-trade system for carbon emissions, establish taxes or tariffs or on some other way use government policy to encourage or force responsible individual choices.

But it turns out that local community is a key part of both mitigation and adaptation. Putting energy into local community both reduces our carbon footprints and strengthens the local economy, increasing local self-sufficiency and resilience. It's not just what we each choose for ourselves. It's how we relate to each other, how well we put the insight that all things are interconnected into practice in our lives, that makes a difference.

For a lot of years, we who understand this have been pariahs, talking to each other in forums like *Gaian Voices*, but not heard by many of our family members, co-workers, and friends who preferred to be comforted by denial. But it's getting serious now. People are starting to wake up. And now *Gaian Voices* is going away. It's sad to think that this way of connecting with others of like mind will be gone... but there is a silver

lining, too. We will need to find new outlets for our expressions of urgency, of awe and wonder at the beauty of nature, of passion for what needs to be done to preserve ourselves in relationship to it. There is an opportunity here for us to take that passion to our local communities, to build a new way of being on the planet together.

It is hard not to say "I told you so," but I am going to try. We can only start from where we are, and go forward from here. I'll be working in my local community. It helps to know that you are out there doing what you do. Thank you, and thanks especially to Susan, for being there for all these years. The ripples will continue to go out.

*Roots . . . from page 15*

*your roots.*

Look around you in your dark or wintry cave - *do you have rooted company?* Do you need to make a coping-date once or twice a month with someone who lifts your spirits and makes you laugh? You (or they) may not reach out during the dark months - make the dates now.

*What is in your pantry* - do you have some beets, yams, onions, and mineral rich foods to accompany them? Our soils are not what they used to be, so minerals from bones and seaweed become essential to include. Long steeped brews of herbal roots are welcome nourishment for wintertime; burdock, astragalus, marsh-mallow, licorice, and sassafras together make a delicious tonic.

*What seeds are you dropping?* Are they seeds right under you that need loam and compost like an acorn? (Family?) Are they far-

reaching seeds that need wind and currents like a dandelion? (Outreach, communications, non-profit work?) Or perhaps they are water-carried seeds: emotions which need transformation, emollient tending, and purification, like the little linden seeds.

Consider the nature of the seeds you are dispersing.

Each type of seed requires a timing, a mode of transportation, a temperature, and a specific means of protection as it germinates. Some require a catalyst like fire.

Many wild edible seeds don't even get sweet until they've been kissed by frost, like rose hips and hawthorn.

Go inside and nourish you, get outside and harvest roots and seeds.

*Sudden Discovery . . . from page 27*

Like Cortez and his crew, we humans explore unfamiliar terrain for clarification of the truth about who we are, where we are, why we are, and how best to reach the ideal. Like Keats we often resort to the arts, sacred and secular, in our search for adequate answers. Like him we often need a translator to interpret and understand the answers we receive. For many Thomas Berry performs that task, and in that capacity has freed questors from the anthropocentrism vitiating recent history and from excessive emphasis on Redemption to the detriment and diminishing of Creation. He has, in fine, bridged the centuries-old chasm between humans and nature so that the part is reconciled with the whole and the ideal is achieved of a mutually enhancing relationship between humans and Earth.

\*Keats had been reading in William Robertson's 1777 *History of America* about both Vasco Nuñez de Balboa (founding of the Pacific Ocean, 1513) and Hernán Cortez (entering the Valley of Mexico, 1519), and in the heat of inspiration confused the two factually without in any way altering the sense of his statement.



Photo: Colin Lowry

**A**t this time in our history, it is important to view the concept of "trees as relations" not as a religious theory put forth by shamans and visionaries, but as a scientific fact. This approach calls for a different focus, a more inclusive attitude, and a more encompassing world view. Some believe that if a person can begin to identify with trees as actual relatives, as well as friends, the step toward a more universal identification with all other forms of life cannot be far behind.

- Nathaniel Altman, *Sacred Trees*, pg. 202

**I**magine [the Earth] is your biological mother - because, in a very real sense, she is. Imagine the Sun is your biological father - because, in equally real, life giving ways, he is. Imagine that after the spirit of God touched them, your distant but brilliant father and 70-million-square-mile mother not only fell in love, but began making love: imagine Ocean and Sun in coitus for eternity - because they are. Imagine your ocean mother's wombs are countless, that her fecundity is infinitely varied, and that her endless slow lovemaking with Sun brings about countless gestations and births and an infinity of beings: great blue whales and great white sharks; endless living castles of coral; vast phalanxes of fishes; incalculable flocks of birds; gigantic typhoons; weather patterns the size of continents - because it does.

- David James Duncan, *My Story as Told by Water*, pg. 185



Photo: Marshall Allan



## About the Contributors

**Sandy LeonVest** is a radio and print journalist and the editor of *SolarTimes* ([www.solartimes.org](http://www.solartimes.org)), a publication that looks at energy from a progressive and humanitarian perspective. *SolarTimes* is distributed throughout the San Francisco Bay Area and beyond. Sandy is the host of "Political Analysis," a weekly program aired on the Progressive Radio Network every Tuesday at 6pm EST/3pm PST.

**Morwen Two Feathers** is a drummer, community organizer, writer, teacher, artist, mother, and activist for Gaia. She is co-founder of Earth Drum Council and a long-time member of the EarthSpirit Community. She lives with her family in Concord, MA, where she is active in the Sustainable Concord networking group and involves herself in projects that connect people with nature and art.

**Jan Lundberg** is a former oil industry insider (Lundberg Survey, Inc.) turned activist. He founded the Sustainable Energy Institute in 1988, and publishes Culture Change, now available online. He is also a musician and father. Contact: [www.culturechange.org](http://www.culturechange.org).

**Henry Niese** is a painter whose works are in the Whitney Museum, The National Museum of American Art (Smithsonian), and other museums and collections. His book, *The Man who Knew the Medicine*, relates his learning experiences with Eagle Feather, medicine man and Sundance chief of the Lakota.

**Robin Farrin** has recently relocated from the Bar Harbor area to Greater Portland. She has spent over 20 years photographing life's celebrations and is now passionate about extending her love of capturing emotions and "pretty pictures" to documenting the power of creating change, particularly change for the good of all. She has recently chosen to re-enter college (USM) and is working towards educating herself in the field of communication/media to enhance her desire to contribute towards the change she and many others are working to create. Her motto is: Don't settle - Walk Your Talk. Contact: [www.farrinphotography.com](http://www.farrinphotography.com).

**Margaret Berry** is Thomas Berry's sister and aid. She is also a long-time supporter of *Gaian Voices*.

**Ananda Wilson** is an herbalist, dancer, teacher, and mother who lives in Northampton, MA. She makes awesome herbal products and her writings can be found at [www.plantjourneys.blogspot.com](http://www.plantjourneys.blogspot.com)

**Glenys Livingstone, Ph.D.** is the author of *PaGaian Cosmology: Re-inventing Earth-Based Goddess Religion*, and is a graduate in Social Ecology. Glenys lives in Australia and writes, teaches, and facilitates Seasonal Rituals according to her place on the planet. Contact: [www.pagaian.org](http://www.pagaian.org).

**Taffy Seabome** lives with his partner Glenys Livingstone in the Blue Mountains west of Sydney where they hold a sacred space for celebrating the seasonal wheel of the year as it unfolds in their part of the Southern Hemisphere. Contact: [www.pagaian.org](http://www.pagaian.org).

**Sheila Quonoey**, a Religions Sister who lives in the Blue Mountains of west Sydney, Australia, tries to live organically and live out the challenges of the Universe Story.

**Sandra Steingraber, Ph.D.**, is an ecologist, author, cancer survivor, and internationally recognized authority on the environment links to cancer and human health. She is the author of *Living Downstream: An Ecologist's Personal Investigation of Cancer and the Environment*; *Having Faith: An Ecologist's Journey to Motherhood*, and *Raising Elijah: Protecting our Children in an Age of Environmental Crisis*. Steingraber has received numerous honors for her work and is a much sought-after public speaker. She is currently a columnist for Orion magazine, and a scholar in residence in Ithaca College in Ithaca, New York.

**Iraja Sundari** is a mother, grandmother, and teacher who lives in Indianapolis, IN. Iraja has been a subscriber for many years.

**Colin Lowry** took the photos that appear in this issue on a recent trip to the west coast where he and his wife, Lynn, slept with the Redwoods. He recently moved from Bar Harbor to Albany, NY.

**Marshall Allan** is a long-time friend and amateur photographer whose photos in this issue were taken on his summer trip to the Southwest. Marshall lives in North Conway, NH.

**Woody Mecker** is Susan's father, now deceased. He loved nothing more than walking in his beloved White Mountains, a love he passed on to Susan.

# The Back Page

If you would live life in all its richness, then make friends with your trees, your neighbor's trees, the trees of the hillside and the highway. To form such a friendship means serenity of being, better health, and above all, lasting happiness. No tree ever proves to be a false friend.

- P. G. Cross

We didn't invent compassion, but it's flowing through us – or it could. The phase change that we're in seems, to me, to depend upon that comprehensive compassion unfurling in the human species.

- Brian Swimme

What did you do, once you knew?

- Drew Dellinger

I want to remember the weather without elegizing it. A day from my childhood, a day of slow, comfortable heat, when I lay on cool sheets by the window with a glass of mostly ice, a little Coca-Cola poured over it. No school. A book. White hush of fan.

A day like a blank piece of paper: reticent skies streaked with watery blue; the air cool and flat, with a metallic undertone. Kicking the gravel, waiting on something.

My first snow. The simple hereness of it. Inconsequential pines behind my cousin's house suddenly grave and dark against the drifts. A laugh, a scuffle. Nearby sounds louder, farther ones hushed.

A day of rain so gentle it was as though it didn't fall, just drifted on the air. Trees brightly green with water, their limbs black with it. We walked through soft streets, everything freshness and glowing.

- Nico Alvarado, *Orion*, Nov/Dec 2011



Photo: Colin Lowry