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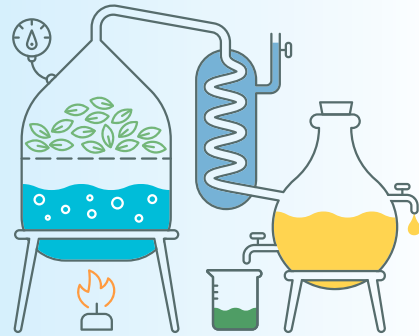
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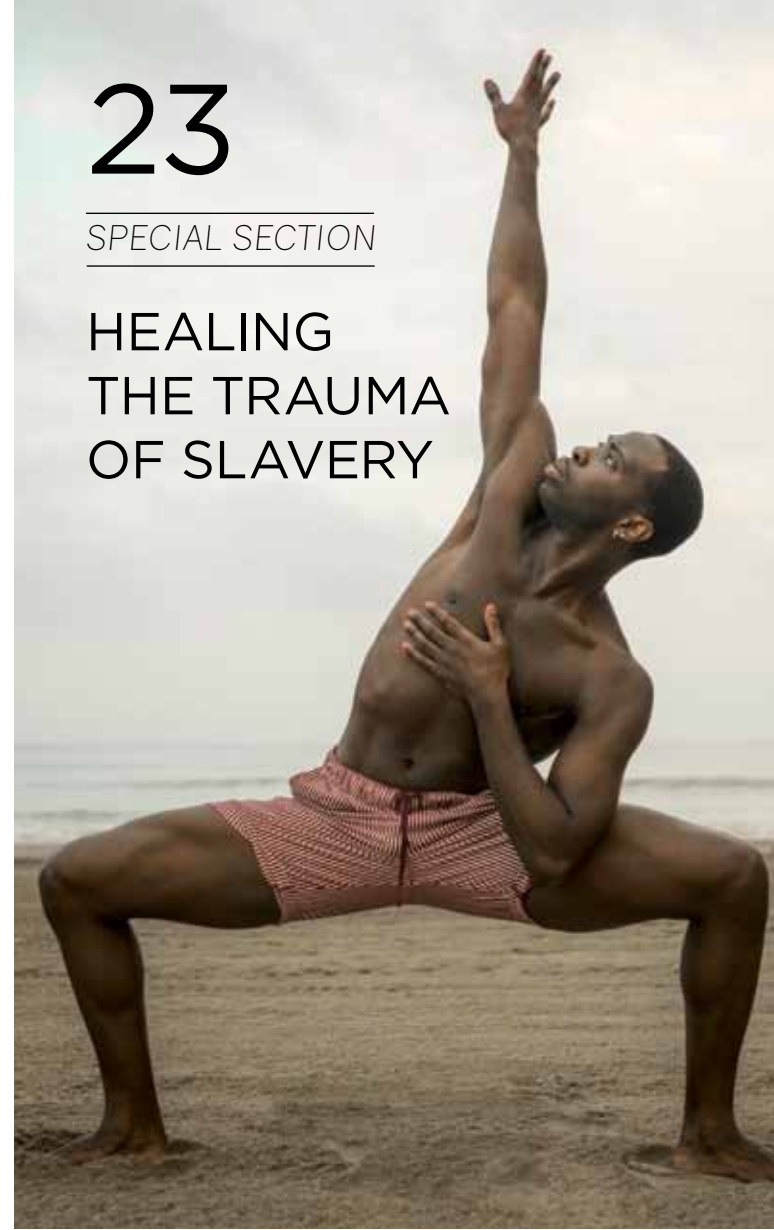
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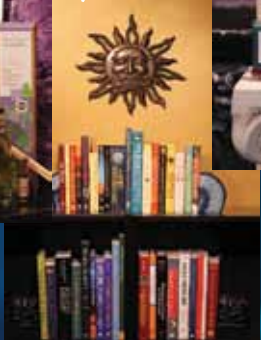
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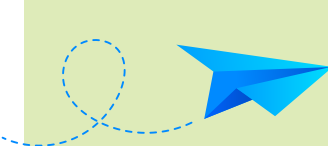
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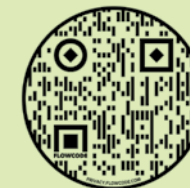
Happy Valentine's Day to all you loving couples! To celebrate romantic love, our reporter/producer Noah Chen spoke to three of Atlanta's premiere couples therapists about how lovers can take proactive action to deepen their relationships. You're not going to want to miss this!

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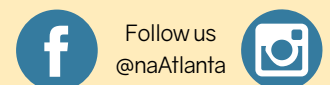
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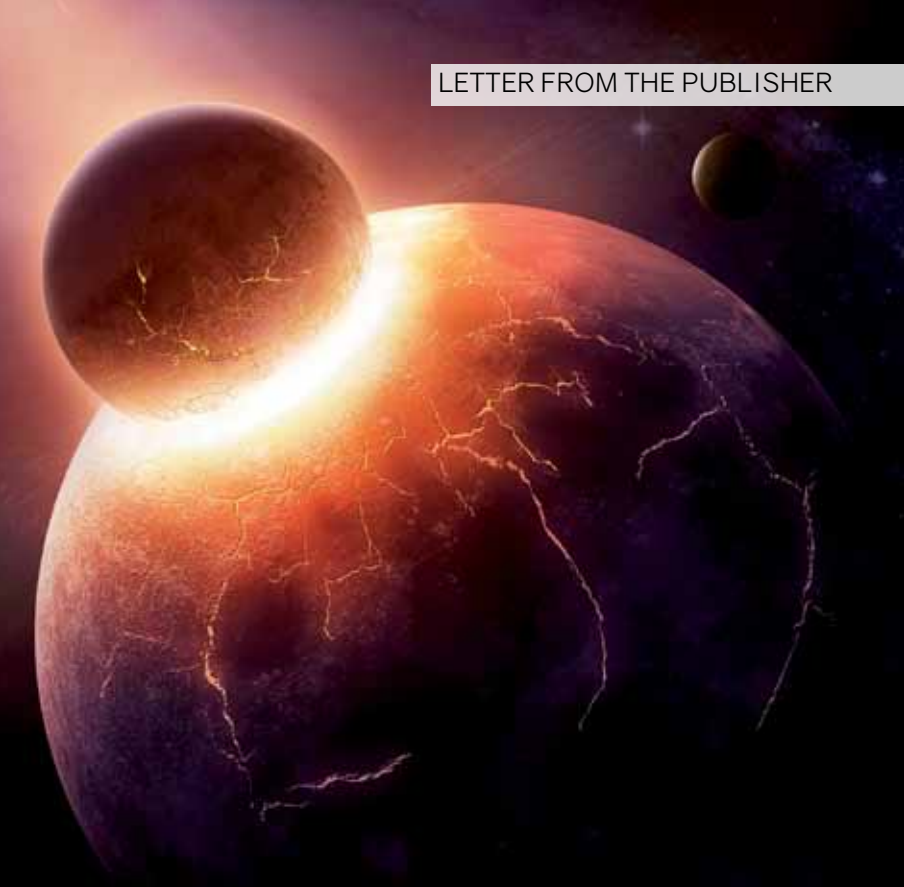
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But all our phrasing—race relations, racial chasm, racial justice, racial profiling, white privilege, even white supremacy—serves to obscure that racism is a visceral experience, that it dislodges brains, blocks airways, rips muscle, extracts organs, cracks bones, breaks teeth. You must never look away from this. You must always remember that the sociology, the history, the economics, the graphs, the charts, the regressions all land, with great violence, upon the body.

~Ta-Nehisi Coates,  
*Between the World and Me*



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Dear Reader,

Be warned: The articles within this issue's special section—"Healing from the Trauma of Slavery"—will probably trigger you!

No matter the shade of your skin color, the facts and ideas discussed within these pages are painful, uncomfortable and likely stomach-twisting. And as we wrote, we realized that the articles, in fact, stretch the boundaries of what this magazine usually focuses on: personal development and healing by means of providing information about effective, alternative methods to help heal illness and disease.

But the "illness" here is the ever-present trauma experienced by people of African heritage in this country; and the "healing" requires not just one person to manage their self-care and health journey, but for us as a nation to work together to eradicate causes of the dis-ease. As trauma expert Resmaa Menakem, a Black American, said in an interview with Sounds True's Tami Simon, "Individual growth is inadequate to deal with the communal brutalization and violence that still works and lives and was predicated on my body and bodies that look like mine."

As our team wrote and produced these articles, we have been humbled, awed, enlightened, shocked, moved to tears, moved to action and tempted to hope. We pray that your reading does the same for you.



Diane Eaton,  
 Managing Editor

When Worlds Collide

For me, this is the hardest issue we've ever done, by a magnitude of maybe 20. While Diane says we "stretched boundaries" in her letter, for me, the experience has been more like worlds colliding. We didn't stretch boundaries; we obliterated them.

Natural Awakenings has always been about healing and personal evolution. Our style is journalistic; our perspective relentlessly positive.

But in this second effort to shine a light on African American issues that intersect with our editorial scope, every one of those characteristics has been compromised. Nevertheless, I do not question whether we should have published this package or not.

The main article, written by Diane, was supposed to be all about healing, but you will find that it speaks more to the causes of the condition rather than its mitigation. To a large degree, that's because—much to our chagrin—healing the trauma of slavery is in its infancy.

More to the point, however, is the fact that the more we learned, the more we were forced to conclude that the story we tell here is the story that needs to be told in this moment; a principle of readership engagement is that you must meet people where they are.

One perspective that Natural Awakenings adheres to is that one's healing, while it might be assisted by others, is wholly an "inside job." But, as Diane states, the perceptions of the people we interviewed were that healing the trauma of slavery must involve white America.

I understand that, and I also agree that without such involvement, precious few will heal in the way most humans understand

Continued on Page 41.

# Homesteading Design Services

## Launched by Yogardener

Yogardener, an Atlanta landscaping company helmed by Everarde Calk, now offers homestead design, planning, and installation services. Homesteading emphasizes self-reliance and focuses on the use of regenerative and closed-loop systems to minimize effort and maximize “hammock time.”

An initial consultation is free. Rates vary depending on the scope of the work engaged.

Yogardener has been providing eco-friendly landscaping services in Atlanta since 2015. Founder Calk has more than 10 years’ experience in the horticultural industry and has built a unique portfolio of beautiful gardens with positive social impact.

Assisting people in taking “their self-reliance game to the next level,” Yogardener helps with any combination of composting, rainwater harvesting,

perennial fruit and vegetable polyculture, annual raised vegetable beds, native and pollinator-friendly gardens, raising chickens, installing solar panels and managing runoff and erosion.

“With many of us growing weary of the repetitive nature of quarantining within a chaotic and seemingly unclear world, there is ample opportunity to expand our conservation efforts within the home,” says Calk. “In permaculture design, we refer to this sphere of influence as ‘Zone 0’—the home. If you want to take responsibility for the ecological stewardship of your home, now is the time!”

Yogardener is located at 1226 Zonolite Road NE in Atlanta. For more information, visit [Yogardener.com](http://Yogardener.com) or contact Everarde at [yogardener404@gmail.com](mailto:yogardener404@gmail.com) or 404-623-2287.



# Energy Healing Specialists

## Amplify Impact of Pranic Healing

The Energy Healing Specialists, a group of six pranic healers from around the U.S. and Canada, recently launched their business and services at [TheEnergyHealingSpecialists.com](http://TheEnergyHealingSpecialists.com).

“We are a group of pranic healing professionals that specialize in powerful, on-going energy healing support for people experiencing major health ailments,” says Atlanta-based life coach and full-time pranic healer, Dawn Myers. “We can still support each other even from a distance!”

The six healers originally convened to help heal people with COVID-19. As they witnessed the amplified power of healing together as a group, they were inspired to offer a variety of services to help people move through major issues in

their lives. They work on a variety of concerns, including serious injuries, chronic illness, addictions, stress and burnout, depression and anxiety, addictions and more. Their work is recommended to help accelerate recovery, optimize physical performance, enhance mental faculties and more.

In addition to Myers, the other pranic energy healers include Liz Mangum in Atlanta, Ana Myers in New York, Gabrielle Swisher in the San Francisco Bay Area and Cynthia Holland and Andree Leclerc in Canada.

The group offers a free initial consultation as well as a selection of healing packages based on individual needs. In addition to the focused healing sessions, the packages

include consultation session, comprehensive health interview and and session feedback.

For more information, visit [TheEnergyHealingSpecialists.com](http://TheEnergyHealingSpecialists.com)



# ADVANCED WELLNESS

## Adds Cymatherapy Sound Healing

Advanced Wellness of Atlanta will be offering Cymatherapy sound healing to its patients on Tuesdays from noon to 4 p.m. through March 9. Kate Holland, sound education director of Cyma Technologies, is offering 30-minute sessions with the company’s AMI 750 technology, which delivers precise combinations of frequencies associated with healthy tissues and organs.

Cymatherapy involves applying sound through the feet or the hands to support optimal health, relieve pain, and keep the body de-stressed. When applied to the body, the frequencies can normalize imbalances and bring systems back into a natural state of vibrational resonance.

“With the pressures of life continuing to weigh heavy on our bodies both physically and mentally, Cymatherapy offers relief from this stress and pain in just 30 minutes,” says Holland.

“The new discoveries with Cymatherapy have shown us how



effective sound is in relieving stress, which is one of the major underlying causes of disease,” says Mandara Cromwell, CEO of Cyma Technologies. “If we can help our population with stress management, then we have done a lot to stop the onset and progression of many diseases.”

The owner of Advanced Wellness, Dr. Karen Tedeschi—known by many as “Dr. T”—is a chiropractor and applied kinesiologist. The clinic also offers LED Light Therapy and Energy Balance Cellular Cleanse Therapy, a detoxification footbath, among other services.

One 30-minute session of Cymatherapy costs \$30, and a four-session package is offered at \$80. To book a session, email [info@advancedwellnessatl.com](mailto:info@advancedwellnessatl.com) or call 404-320-0204. For more information, visit [AdvancedWellnessATL.com](http://AdvancedWellnessATL.com). Advanced Wellness of Atlanta is located at 1549 Clairmont Rd. #105 in Decatur.

# ChantLanta Cancelled

Due to concerns about the COVID-19 pandemic, the 2021 ChantLanta Sacred Music Festival, planned for the weekend of March 19, has been cancelled.

“We want everyone in our spiritual community to know how sad we are to have to cancel this year’s event,” says Ian Boccio, festival director, speaking for all of the event organizers. “But we put the safety of our staff, artists, presenters and attendees at the top of our priority list. Without knowing where we will be by March with COVID-19 vaccines, we feel it is best to err on the side of caution and look forward to a future time when we can all gather without fear to experience the bliss of sacred sound.”

Launched in 2010, ChantLanta’s simple beginnings consisted of a call for people interested in creating a chant event to support two charity partners. Now in its 11th year, the festival has grown to feature award-winning musicians, local bands, workshops, food, silent auctions and a diverse vendor market. It has also inspired the growth of chant music in Atlanta to be-



Musicians at ChantLanta 2019 (Photo: Julien Photography)

come “one of the most diverse and thriving chant communities in the U.S.,” according to the organization’s website.

ChantLanta has also become a significant fundraiser for meaningful charities. Over the years, it has raised more than \$50,000 in donations for nonprofits around the world. For several years, the organization partnered with The Learning Tea, helping to fund college education for impoverished women in India. It has also partnered with organizations

that improve lives of people suffering from Alzheimer’s disease, abuse and poverty.

“We will begin our usual planning and preparation for ChantLanta 2022 starting in early summer,” says Boccio. “We look forward to seeing everyone at next year’s festival on the weekend of March 18, 2022.”

For more information, visit [ChantLanta.org](http://ChantLanta.org) or email [ian@chantlanta.org](mailto:ian@chantlanta.org).

## Green Releases Second Novel, *Vicissitudes*

Kim Green, an award-winning author, blogger and writing coach, recently released her newest novel, *Vicissitudes*, a modern romance that explores the transformative power of love.

"I am very excited to release *Vicissitudes*," says Green. "It is a novel that was written with a lot of love and passion. It defies norms and asks readers to expand their minds and their hearts."

The story follows a divorced woman who is reluctant to date again. "Then she falls in love with a trans man who is still in transition, and they have to deal with an old lover of his who threatens to ruin the relationship," says Green. Self-love and acceptance are key themes.

Owner of Blank Page Consulting and Words, LLC, Green has also been a regular contributor to *Natural Awakenings* of Atlanta. Her first novel, *Hallucination*, won an Honorable Mention from the 2020 Writer's Digest Self-Published Book Awards.

*Vicissitudes* is available at bookstores, online, and at [WordsLLC.com](http://WordsLLC.com). For more information, visit [WordsLLC.com](http://WordsLLC.com).



## 16th Annual ALIVE! EXPO Set for April

Alive! Expo, a consumer event featuring natural products and green living, is rescheduled for April 24 and 25 at Cobb Galleria Centre in Atlanta.

Every year, Alive! Expo brings together local and national companies that specialize in natural and organic products, natural and organic foods, and environmental, green and eco-friendly products for the home, pets, and the whole family. Naturopathic and alternative practitioners, chiropractors, health food retailers and community non-profit organizations will be offering information, consultations, products and services.

2021 exhibitors will include Georgia Organics, Golden Ratio Products, Hello Fresh, Conscious Living Omni Media Group, Enzymedica, Delight Gluten-Free magazine and more.

"Our mission is to inspire and encourage individuals to embrace a life of health, wellness, fitness, and environmental and green living through awareness of natural, organic and alternative products and solutions, advanced medical research, education, nutrition, exercise and lifelong benefits of living a green, clean and healthy lifestyle," says president and founder, Patrycja Towns.

Doors open for the expo on April 24 at 10 a.m. and on April 25 at 11 a.m. and close at 6 p.m. on both days.

*Cobb Galleria Centre is located at Two Galleria Parkway in Atlanta. For more information, visit [AliveExpo.com](http://AliveExpo.com).*

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## DAWNCARRIE Launches Energy Speak Podcast

DawnCarrie, a Mindset and Energy Coach, recently launched her Energy Speak podcast, now available on Apple Podcasts, Spotify and Soundcloud.

"This podcast is about everything energy," says Dawn-Carrie. "It's about how we are energy, how we communicate in energy and how we connect to it, too."

The podcast includes discussions about getting back to nature, using intuition to guide us on our path, and the interconnected world views we hold. Listeners are invited to discuss real-world issues, shift their mindsets and consider solutions to some of today's toughest challenges.

After completing a four-year degree and "climbing the corporate ladder," DawnCarrie had enough with the corporate world and started her own business. "The moment I realized that my happiness and my success had to come from within me, my whole life changed. I not only found real happiness and success,

but I now live profoundly on a daily basis as I live out my soul's mission."

In her podcasts, she inquires into timeless concerns: "How do we let go of our old ideas and step into new solutions, surrounded by freedom and liberty and in our own light? How do we find and launch real meaningful work that feeds our soul? We can use this information to grow our community and relationships in profound ways and co-create a beautiful new world."

*New Energy Speak episodes are posted every Friday morning. For more information, visit [DawnCarrie.com](http://DawnCarrie.com), email [dawn@dawnkarrie.com](mailto:dawn@dawnkarrie.com) or call 321-946-1702.*



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# Ayurvedic Winter Care

Story & pictures by Jayashree Ramamutry

The winter solstice is behind us, but winter is still a force to contend with, and it will be for at least another couple of months. *Ayurveda*, a holistic healing system from ancient India very much in use today, focuses on seasonal

wellness and recommends shifting one's self-care accordingly to best adapt to the environment.

What does this mean in everyday practice? Daily routines must shift slowly from that of the preceding season to the succeeding one to maintain well-being. Winter is cold and dry; in Ayurvedic terms, it is the *vata* season. Ayurveda talks of three *doshas*, or fundamental life forces, called *vata*, *pitta*, and *kapha*. These doshas combine in unique ways to make up our natural constitutions. Knowing this helps one optimize one's health in both body and mind.

According to Ayurveda, the qualities of winter are cold, dry, rough, mobile, and light. These qualities tend to aggravate and unsettle the nervous system for many, especially those who are *vata* by nature. It means an increase in feelings of restlessness or instability and an increased propensity for anxiety and overwhelm. People who have trouble focusing on daily tasks or falling and staying asleep might find winter to be particularly challenging. Painful condi-

tions such as achy and arthritic joints also become more pronounced, as does dryness in the digestive tract, which can often manifest as constipation.

To maintain balance and stay healthy, it's advised to counter the attributes of winter with their opposites—warm, moist, smooth, slow, and heavy. It is best to favor heavy, moist foods made with good fats, such as ghee, virgin coconut oil, and sesame oil, especially to alleviate constipation and keep the bowels moving daily. It is recommended to include the natural tastes of sweet, sour, and salty and to reduce intake of foods that are astringent, bitter and pungent—as in large quantities of raw greens, which are naturally drying and cooling. It is also important to avoid cold, dry and light foods. Items such as chips, cereals, granola bars, and cold salads can aggravate dryness and imbalance the body.

Winter's produce typically includes starch-rich tubers and fleshy, sweet vegetables such as squashes. Also, winter lettuces are crisp, green and fresh and, when eaten in small to moderate amounts, they can bring a vibrant green energy into the daily diet. Rich, aromatic spices, such as cardamom, cinnamon, cloves, ginger, black pepper and nutmeg are warming and help digest heavier foods such as bean-based soups, chili and stews. In fact, the popular Indian blend *Garam Masala* is made from a combination of these spices, toasted dry and ground up. When cooking with these spices, it's important to first extract them in a good fat. In other words, put ghee or an expeller-pressed oil in the cooking pot, then heat, add the spice, and let them sizzle before adding other ingredients.

Ayurveda tells us that digestive power is highest in winter, a time when many people experience an increase in appetite. Each day, one's appetite follows the sun, peaking in the middle of the day. Eating smaller breakfasts and suppers and having the heaviest meal around the middle of the day allows the body to optimize digestion.

*Abhyanga* is a wonderfully soothing and calming Ayurvedic daily self-care practice that is helpful in the winter. *Abhyanga*, which involves massaging the body with custom oils, helps counter winter's drying and unsettling propensity, helps protect the

skin from the drying effect of a warm shower so much so that topical lotions often are not even needed afterward. To make the oil, start with extra virgin olive oil and add a few drops of a warming essential oil, such as frankincense, patchouli or ginger. Alternatively, sesame oil is traditionally used for its warming property.

The Ayurvedic daily practices of *neti* and *nasya* are invaluable to help protect nasal membranes and sinus passages during this dry time of year. *Neti* is the practice of washing the sinuses with saline water, which keeps sinus passages free of allergens and congestion. *Neti* pots are easily available online. *Nasya* is the practice of placing a few drops of oil—typically, sesame oil—inside each nostril with a dropper and inhaling deeply. *Nasya* keeps nasal passages from drying out, thus providing a strong barrier against seasonal germs.

In winter, take care not to expose the body to the drying effect of cold temperatures. It is best to protect against the elements, erring on the side of being warm rather than cold. On frosty mornings, a brisk yoga practice in a sunlit room may get the job done, creating warmth and flow, and making for an energetic start to the day.

These simple recommendations can help bring about the necessary balance for total well-being. 🌿



Jaya Ramamurthy, whose Indian roots inspired her to share the restorative wellness offered by Ayurveda's health care methods, is a state-certified clinical Ayurveda specialist in private practice. Reach her at [AyurWellness@gmail.com](mailto:AyurWellness@gmail.com) or [AyurJaya.com](http://AyurJaya.com).



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## Warming Kitchidee

YIELD: 4 SERVINGS

Kitchidee is a one-pot meal usually made of a cooked grain plus a cooked lentil, appropriately spiced. For detox and digestive rest purposes, white rice and mung lentils are typically used. Note that roasted cumin/coriander powder can be made ahead.

- 1 cup jasmine white rice
- ½ cup split yellow mung or whole green mung, sometimes called "moong dal"
- 2 to 3 Tbsp peeled and grated ginger
- 1 tsp turmeric
- 1 tsp roasted cumin/coriander powder
- ½ tsp coarse ground black pepper
- Coarse ground cumin seeds
- Seasonal vegetables, cleaned and diced evenly
- Fresh chopped cilantro to taste
- 3 Tbsp ghee or coconut oil



1. Cook the rice and lentils separately. Cooking methods vary for different kinds of lentils. If using whole green mung, soak them for a couple of hours in hot water. If using split mung, wash and cook them in 1 - 2 cups of water, covering lightly, until mushy and done. Whole mung takes a bit longer to cook.
2. In a large, heavy-bottom skillet, heat the ghee or coconut oil. Add the ginger and the rest of the spices, roasting them for a minute or two. (For convenience, you can take the same amount of turmeric that you used for the seeds and add it to the cumin/coriander powder and mix well.) Add the vegetables, then cover and let steam until you get the desired doneness.
3. Add the cooked rice and lentils to the skillet and run a potato masher through the kitchidee, making sure all the parts come together in a soupy whole.
4. Add sea salt to taste and remove from heat.
5. Garnish with fresh cilantro and enjoy warm with a drizzle of ghee or coconut oil.

## Roasted Cumin/Coriander Powder

Combine equal amounts of both seeds. Toast on a hot, dry skillet until they turn light brown. Let cool and turn into a powder using a coffee mill. Then store in an airtight jar and freeze the excess in a strong freezer bag. Keeps for six months.



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# VEGGIE TRICKS

## How to Get Kids to Eat Better

by Ronica O'Hara

It's the rare parent that doesn't have to plead and plot to get a child to eat vegetables. That's not surprising; almost no one is born with a natural hankering for broccoli, and being wary of strange new foods may be hardwired in us so we can survive as a species. Happily, clever workarounds can help move a child past exclaiming, "Yuck!" as these parenting bloggers, nutritionists and other grown-ups have learned in the veggies-are-good-for-you trenches.

**SERVE SMOOTHIES.** "The combinations are endless. Pack it full of spinach, kale, frozen zucchini or cauliflower. Then add a frozen banana or other fruit, plus your milk of choice (like cashew milk) then blend. Bam! You have a naturally sweetened, veggie-filled, delicious drink for your child, and they don't even know they're drinking their vegetables," writes Emily Lesh, at *ExperiencedMommy.com*.

**USE SPRINKLES.** "Everyone loves sprinkles! You can use chia seeds, microplaned broccoli head, flaxseed, grated carrots or even frozen yogurt dots. It transforms the food into something much more exciting," writes Danielle Zold, at *PickyEatingDietitian.com*.

**GET THEM COOKING.** "My kids love to help in the kitchen, and I have found that they are much more likely to try foods that they have helped to cook. We made our cranberries from scratch for Thanksgiving. My kids loved watching the cranberries boil and pop in the pot and seeing them change colors as they cooked. When dinnertime came, they were excited to try the cranberries, and my daughter ended up loving them!" writes Sarah Miller, at *HomeSchooling4Him.com*.

**ROTATE FAMILY CHOICES.** "Everyone in the family gets to choose one meal on one night of the

week. We all commit to eating whatever the family member has chosen. This has helped our kids to try meals that aren't on their favorite list, as they know that they'll get their turn to choose soon," writes Sophia Nomicos, at *MasAndPas.com*.

**TEMPT THEM.** "When I'm making dinner, I like to have carrots or cucumbers available on the counter. They always come in to try to get snacks and if they see those, they will 'sneak them away' to eat them, since I tell them no more snacks or food til dinner," writes Heather Hoke, at *EmbracingChaosWithLove.com*.

**REWARD MULTIPLE ATTEMPTS.** "Just because a kid hates a veggie the first 10 times you offer it doesn't mean they'll hate it forever. I try to make it fun by having kids track veggies they've tried and the number of times they've tried them with stickers on a veggie discovery table, which means even foods they dislike feel rewarding to try," writes Jess Dang, at *CookSmarts.com*.

**BE SNEAKY.** "Take something kids already like and make it with healthier ingredients. For example, if your kid loves meatballs, start by making them homemade, then adding in healthy things like frozen chopped spinach. I'll grate zucchini and carrots and put them in about any pasta, meatloaf, burgers. I used to think sneaking in veggies was a bad thing, but honestly, it's been great for our family," writes Stephanie Rapone, at *PantryToPlate.net*.

**TALK UP THE BENEFITS.** "I have found that when my son doesn't want to eat something, he is much more likely to eat it if I tell him its benefits. For example, I told him, 'When you eat carrots, they make your eyes stronger, and they help you see in the dark.' He loves to eat carrots now. He says, 'Now I will be able to see in the dark!' I am learning a lot this way, too. We Google the benefits of food at least once a day," writes Elizabeth Manly, at *DiscoveryPlayShop.com*.

**REINFORCE.** "Explain that when a child feels good, she can attribute it to eating healthy. For example, if we managed to get our daughter to eat an apple—her favorite fruit that she now eats every day—I would say, 'Wow, you sure ran around a lot at the playground. That apple you ate gave you a lot of energy,'" writes Kirsten Schuder, author of *Schooling Your Kids Through a Pandemic*.

Ronica O'Hara, a natural health writer, can be contacted at [OHaraRonica@gmail.com](mailto:OHaraRonica@gmail.com).

## What the Research Shows

**BE PERSISTENT.** Don't give up too soon. Researchers have found that it can take toddlers five to 10 times in tasting a new food before enjoying it; and for 3-to-4-year-olds, up to 15 trials.

**PUTTING ON AN APRON HELPS.** A study of Canadian fifth-graders in 151 schools found that those that helped with meal prep and cooking were more likely to eat vegetables and fruit.

**GIVING KIDS A CHOICE WORKS.** Australian kids that were offered a choice of broccoli, cauliflower or green beans for five weeks ate twice as many veggies as children offered only one vegetable.

**THINKING A FOOD IS RARE MAKES IT SPECIAL.** In a recent study, 5-year-olds that were told there weren't many more carrots than were on a plate ate 50 percent more carrots; 96 percent of those kids rated the carrots as yummy, compared to 67 percent in a no-limit carrot control group.



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# Five Reasons to Practice PARTNER YOGA

Story & pictures by Sheila Ewers

As we move forward into 2021 with little relief from the pandemic, many of us still feel the pangs of separation from friends and loved ones and long for personal connection. If you live or shelter with someone and have the opportunity, practicing yoga with a partner can provide the nourishment of touch along with many other benefits. Partner yoga connects people through movement, breath and awareness in a uniquely intimate way. It's also lots of fun!

Here are five reasons to give it a try:

**1 Working with a partner can help refine your alignment and allow you to access deeper poses.** In many partner poses, your partner's body becomes a prop, replacing traditional props like bolsters, blocks and straps. The ability to literally lean into another person with confidence and trust can allow you to open into postures that might not be available without support. Likewise, the gentle leveraging that happens through touch in partner poses might facilitate deeper twists and stretches.

**2 Interacting with someone else can become a mirror of awareness for your own inner experience.** When

you work with a partner in movement and breath awareness, you inevitably become more deeply aware of your own bodily sensations, breath patterns and thoughts. These are the very things yoga invites us to witness so that we might become more skillful in our engagement with both ourselves and the world. Even as you attune to the needs, resistance and challenges your partner faces, you will simultaneously refine your personal awareness, perhaps noticing many similar patterns that exist within you.

**3 Partner poses offer opportunities to practice non-verbal communication.** In our modern world, particularly in the midst of the Coronavirus pandemic, with masks and social distancing, we rely heavily on the faculty of speech to communicate our ideas, needs and concerns. But words make up only a fraction of total communication potential. Facial expressions, body position, gestures, touch and space are equally important tools for connection. When you invite a partner into your yoga practice and intentionally choose to keep as much silence as possible, you develop other skills to communicate needs, desires and boundaries.

**4 Sharing movement with a child, friend or lover can help promote greater intimacy and connection.**

One of the principles of partner yoga is synchronization of breath. This practice alone can create a sense of togetherness and harmony. Furthermore, trying something new together creates the opportunity to share challenges, successes and vulnerabilities. To work together effectively, you will need to develop trust, understanding and perhaps even a sense of humor. All of these can deepen the bonds of relationships as well as create new ones.

**5 Healthy touch has been proven to benefit both mind and body.** A series of studies conducted by Dr. James Lynch in 1977 revealed that physical touch lowers the heart rate, reduces blood pressure and speeds recovery from illness. In an April 2020 article published in *Time*, Dacher Keltner, a professor of Psychology at U.C. Berkeley, discussed his concerns about touch deprivation in the era of COVID. "Touch activates a big bundle of nerves in your body that improves your immune system, regulates digestion and helps you sleep well," he writes. "It also activates parts

of your brain that help you empathize." The intentional, supportive and collaborative touch of partner yoga fulfills the deep human psychological and physiological need to touch and be touched. And that, in turn, leads to greater wellness of mind and body.

You don't need to have any experience or skill to begin a partner yoga practice. The sequence below provides a great way to start.



## Breathe Together

Sit back-to-back with your partner in a comfortable position. If you need bolsters or pillows for support, ensure that both you and your partner are at the same height to allow your backs to fully connect with each other. With eyes closed or softly focused, notice your own breath and find a gentle rhythm that supports internal awareness. After a few moments, bring your attention to your partner's breath and begin to gently synchronize, breathing in and out together. Remain there for at least 10 breaths to establish a full connection.



## Partner Twist

Reach your right arm behind you to find your partner's left thigh, then bring your left hand to your right knee. Invite your partner to do the same. Elongate your spine with a deep breath in, and gently twist to

the right, leveraging the support of your partner. Remain sensitive to your own and your partner's edge and pause at a point that feels comfortably challenging for you both. Breathe together for five full breaths. Then release, pause and twist the other way.

## Stand Together



Reach back to catch your partner's arms and link at the elbows. Both partners bring both feet forward, flat on your mats, hip-distance apart. Press firmly into each other's backs to leverage your way into a Supported Chair Pose. Pause there for three breaths, then stand.



## Lateral Stretch

Face your partner, standing four to five feet from each other. Stand with feet firmly planted and soft knees. Both of you reach your right arms forward and catch your partner at the forearm with a firm grip. Hinge at your hips and bow halfway forward, pulling gently on each other's arms to create a deep side body stretch. Hold for five breaths, then support each other as you return to a standing position. Repeat on the opposite side.

The success of Yoga does not lie in the ability to perform postures but in how it positively changes the way we live our life and our relationships.

~ T.K.V.Desikacha

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### Partner Warrior II

Stand side by side, facing opposite directions, with the outer edge of your left feet touching. Connect to your partner, holding your left hands together. Step your right feet wide and turn your right toes to face the front edge of your mats. Reach your arms wide and turn your gaze toward your extended right fingers. Use the hand-to-hand connection with your partner for support as you bend more deeply into your right knee. Hold for three to five breaths, then stand upright and repeat on the opposite side.



### Supported Warrior III

Stand face to face with your arms reaching forward and resting on each other's shoulders. Walk your feet back and away from each other as you bow forward about 90 degrees. Micro-bend your right knees and gently reach your left legs out behind you. Use the support of your partner's shoulders to maintain balance while engaging your abdominal muscles for support. Hold for three to five breaths, then support each other as you stand up. Repeat on the second side.

Yoga is a light, which  
once lit will never dim.  
The better your practice,  
the brighter your flame.

~B.K.S Iyengar



### Partner Boat Pose

Sit facing each other with knees bent. Reach your arms forward on the outside of your legs to hold each other's wrists. Then connect the balls of your feet to your partner's and press firmly together as you press your legs upward. Try to keep your spine extended and your chest lifted even as you hold hands.



### Wide-legged Forward Fold

Sit facing each other with legs wide apart and your feet pressing into your partner's shins. Clasp each other's wrists, then gently lean back as your partner eases into a forward fold. Gently rock side to side for a few breaths, then return to an upright position. Switch roles.

### Resting Pose/Savasana

Thank your partner in whatever way feels appropriate to you, then return to your own space for savasana. Lower to a supine position with whatever support you need to remain in comfortable stillness. Notice what it feels like now to be on your own and allow your full awareness to drift inward. Remain in this space for five to ten minutes or more. 🙏



Sheila Ewers, ERYT500, YACEP, owns Blue Lotus Yoga in Johns Creek. A former professor of writing and literature, she leads group and private lessons, yoga philosophy workshops, yoga teacher training and retreats. Contact Sheila at [Sheila@JohnsCreekYoga.com](mailto:Sheila@JohnsCreekYoga.com).

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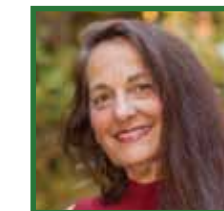


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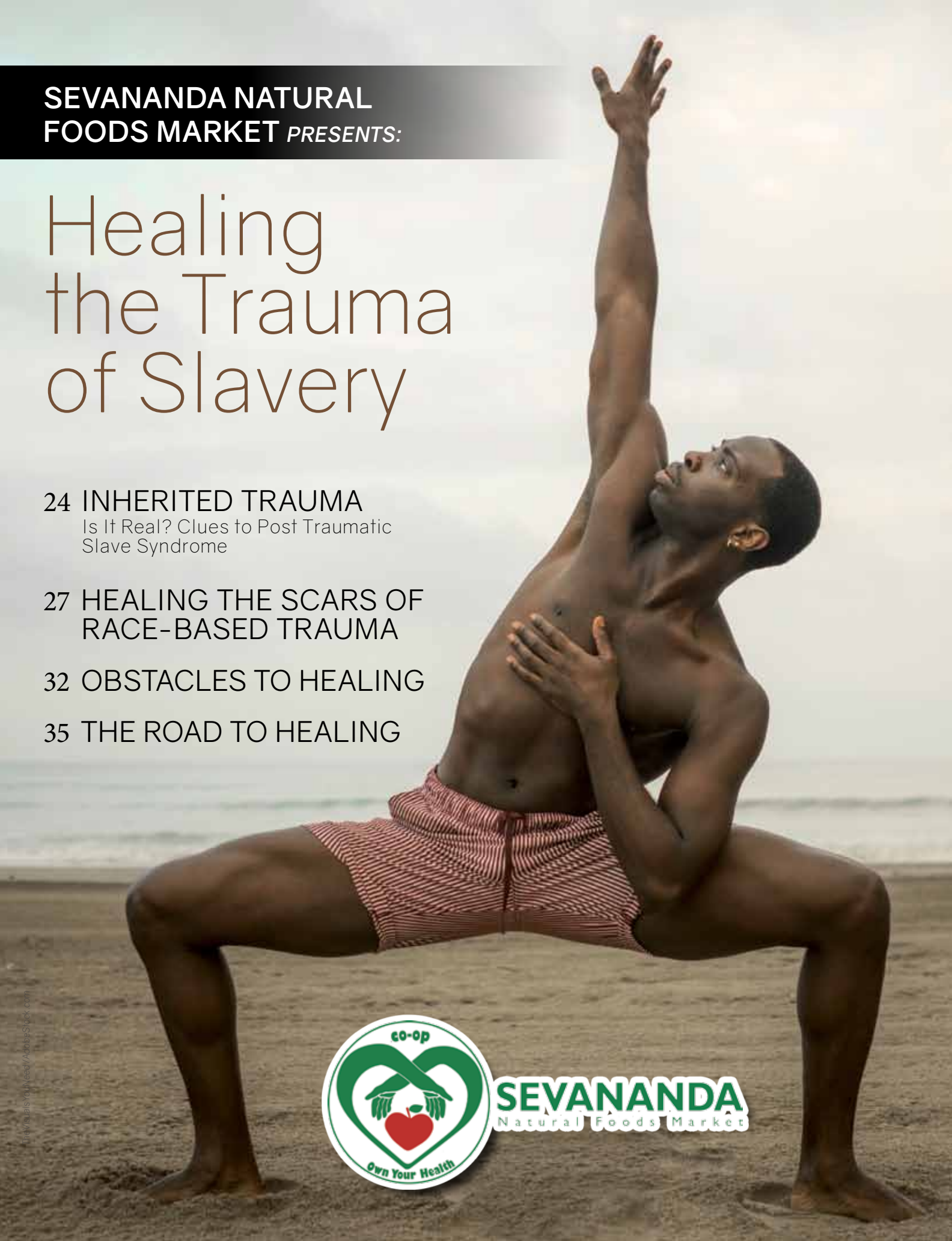
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# Inherited Trauma

## Is It Real? Clues to Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome

by Noah Chen

When he took a look at the world's collection of religions, Swiss psychiatrist and founder of analytical psychology Carl Jung was amazed by the number of similarities and connections that could be drawn between unconnected cultures around the world. Jung sensed that there might be some force connecting humanity with the experiences of our collective ancestors.

He named this force the “collective unconscious” and theorized that it was a bundle

of images, emotions, and memories of our ancestors' experiences and that it could be useful in helping the current generation.

It is clear that, yes, our ancestors are important insofar as they supply our unique genetic code—except for identical twins, whose code is not technically unique. Our genes are made up of DNA, half of which is supplied by the mother and half by the father, which shapes a good deal of our growth and development. It was originally thought that our genes and

experiences did not interact—and, in turn, that how our ancestors chose to live or what they experienced would not impact our genetic inheritance.

However, recent discoveries in psychology and biology have uncovered a reality closer to Jung's theories than many thought possible. Through the study of epigenetics, science is starting to recognize that it's not only possible that the broad tendencies of our ancestors shape our current psychology, but that traumas and specific

sensitivities of an individual can be passed down through numerous generations.

While the possibility of being closer to our ancestors is exciting for many, it does put one segment of America's population in a complicated position.

### Post-Traumatic Slave Syndrome

The truth is that the familial past of many African Americans contains pain, trauma, and heartbreak as a result of living in a racist environment. If the experiences of our ancestors can influence and shape our modern lives, then what does it mean for those whose families were forced to survive slavery, Jim Crow, and our current American culture?

Author Dr. Joy DeGruy has spent years researching and writing about this very subject. In her seminal book, *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome: America's Legacy of Enduring Injury & Healing*, DeGruy draws a line of causation from the hostilities that white people enacted on their Black slaves to behaviors present in the Black community today that, DeGruy argues, have been passed down through the generations, sometimes intentionally to help the next generation survive, but sometimes in ways that are unintentional.

“Social learning theory posits that we learn from the people in our environment, not just in terms of what they are literally teaching us, but by what is being modeled,” says DeGruy. For Black Americans, according to DeGruy, this means that the learned and modeled behaviors typically have to do with surviving an “incredibly hostile

environment.” It is these behaviors DeGruy points to as the effects of post-traumatic slave syndrome.

While researching the book, DeGruy learned that not only were traumatic behaviors being passed down but so were genes that had been altered by that same trauma. “I started to study a little more about epigenetics,” said DeGruy, referencing the recently-emerging area of science that studies how interactions with our environment impact the expression of our genes. If someone is placed in a stressful environment for an extended period of time, for example, epigenetics predicts there will be some changes in that individual's genetic expression.

DeGruy became especially interested in epigenetics because the changes to genetic expression can be passed down from generation to generation. DeGruy realized this meant that the trauma of slavery might still be encoded in the genes of many Black Americans today.

DeGruy recounts an experiment by Dr. Lei Cao-Lei and associates at the Douglas Mental Health University Institute and McGill University. They found that children of pregnant survivors of a 1998 snowstorm had a genetic tendency towards obesity—which may be attributed to that one specific traumatic experience their mothers had undergone.

“These children weren't there, and yet they are exhibiting different biological responses,” said DeGruy. “I had this moment where I was like, ‘Wow! What did hundreds of years of slavery do?’”

In their paper “Cultural Trauma and

Epigenetic Inheritance,” Amy Lehrner and Rachel Yehuda summarize several other discoveries in the world of epigenetics and outline the genetic changes for which environmental interactions can be responsible.

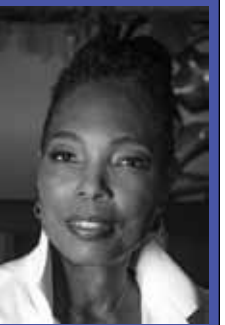
They note that a good deal of epigenetic research that focuses on inherited trauma looks at the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) axis. This is our internal system that helps us respond to stress by releasing chemicals that assist the fight-or-flight response. The HPA axis is deactivated after the stressful element has been eliminated or evaded. It does so by releasing glucocorticoids and cortisol, compounds that help return the body to its non-threatened state.

A common way that epigenetic change manifests is through the mechanism of methylation, which occurs when a methyl group molecule (CH3) gets attached to DNA, modifying its function and how it is expressed. Dr. Kerry Ressler, a Harvard professor and epigenetic researcher, explains. “Adding that methyl group on

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the DNA causes other proteins to bind to the DNA in different ways and to read our genes in different ways.”

Studies that looked at the offspring of women who survived either intimate partner violence, warzone stress or the Rwandan genocide found that their HPA axis had been born methylated; they had inherited it from their mothers as a result of severe stress. The effect of the methylation is that both the mothers and offspring were more sensitive to stress and more likely to develop mental health disorders as a result of exposure to stress.

### Stress Passed through the Generations

Dr. Ressler, working with Dr. Brian Dias, discovered that stress caused by an individual stimulus could be passed onto offspring as well. In their groundbreaking study, mice were taught to associate painful shocks with a powerful odor. Soon, the mice demonstrated a stress reaction to the smell alone, even when not being shocked. Dias and Ressler observed that their offspring also exhibited a similar stress reaction to the smell their parents grew to fear without ever having been shocked themselves.

Time and time again, with both humans and animals, studies have shown that an abundance of stress in the environment

of the parent makes the child more likely to be sensitive to stress, which in turn creates a host of other health issues. While Dias and Ressler’s findings are specific to mice, and it is unclear how the results will generalize to humans, other researchers found epigenetic changes within the human body that persisted through multiple generations.

In their paper, Lehrner and Yehuda discuss findings that children of Holocaust survivors who later experienced combat were more likely to develop post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), even though they had not experienced the Holocaust themselves. This heightened sensitivity to stress was found to be the result of epigenetic DNA methylation. This concurs with other epigenetic research that broadly indicates that if an individual’s parents or even grandparents were under traumatic levels of stress, there is an increased likelihood that they will be more sensitive to stress and develop mental illnesses as a result of this sensitivity.

### Everything is Subject to Change

While such epigenetic changes may have a negative effect as far as stress sensitivity is concerned, Ressler notes that those changes are likely not permanent. “Whatever is encoded at the epigenetic state should be manipulated or reversed at the epigenetic state,” says Ressler.

Ressler recommends that those who are more stress-sensitive place themselves in a supportive rather than a traumatic environment whenever possible. But, for some, that may prove easier said than done, as changing the American cultural environ-

ment to be more conducive to Black people flourishing would mean making extensive changes to many American institutions.

In terms of epigenetics, this means that reversing these trauma reactions on the genetic level is less likely to happen as long as the environment remains hostile. Unfortunately, for Black Americans, it continues to be anything but.

“You have people who say slavery is over,” says DeGruy. “Yeah, but the lynchings occurred. Most of the lynchings occurred *after* slavery. But you get this kind of mythology that slavery is ancient and everything is fine.”

However, individuals and family units still have immense power to influence themselves and those for whom they care.

DeGruy recounts a story where her daughter’s white workplace superior put his hands on her hair without consent. “When my daughter said that this white man did that to her, every hair on my body stood up,” said DeGruy. “But my daughter said to me, ‘Mom, calm down. I got this.’ She said, ‘Thank you for not passing on your injury,’” recalls DeGruy. “There is a freeness that she has because I did not pass along that heaviness.”

A growing body of evidence now suggests that the experiences of our ancestors are encoded in our genetics and might influence a great deal in us, from a likelihood to develop mental illness to our distaste of certain smells. For certain Americans, this means the trauma of the past is alive today, and only time will tell if those wounds will ever be fully allowed to heal. 🌱

# HEALING THE SCARS OF RACE-BASED TRAUMA

by Diane Eaton



joshua-abner/Pexels.com

Unseen and, for many, often forgotten, the extraordinary violence of American slavery in the first few hundred years of America’s inception has left a long and devastating imprint on the psyches, spirits, and bodies of African Americans today, according to a growing number of trauma experts, psychotherapists, sociologists and others.

Then followed 100 years of sanctioned post-slavery persecution and oppression known as Jim Crow, when many Christian ministers and theologians taught that whites were the chosen people and the laws allowed the restriction of African Americans’ rights. Still today, Black Americans continue to be unrelentingly victimized by racially biased institutions and individuals from childhood into adulthood.

Taking a penetrating look at the pervasive and devastating physical, emotional and behavioral legacy of American slavery and its aftermath in modern times—with

an eye to heal it—is no simple task, but a paradigm-shifting movement has started to take a full inventory of the traumas that have been perpetrated and the means to go about healing. Two experts, Dr. Joy DeGruy, an internationally renowned author, practicing researcher and educator, and Resmaa Menakem, trauma specialist, consultant, coach and *The New York Times* bestselling author, are at the forefront of the movement, guiding all those who care enough to learn what it might take to dismantle the injustices and heal the pain.

### Trauma Passes Through Generations

In her groundbreaking 2005 book, *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome: America’s Legacy of Enduring Injury & Healing*, DeGruy describes many of the damages and scars—what she calls “post-traumatic slave syndrome” (PTSS)—that African Americans have inherited from their enslaved ancestors through the genera-

tions, along with what it will take to heal them. An emerging cascade of research in epigenetics and psychology suggests that traumas experienced in previous generations might carry forward in both the DNA and the behavioral styles of future generations. On top of that, children model the behaviors and attitudes of their parents and caregivers. As a result, says DeGruy, many unhealthy, painful and even crippling behaviors persist for Black Americans, behaviors that have their roots in slavery. She writes that many behaviors in African American communities today can be traced to what people needed to do simply to survive while they were enslaved. “These behaviors and beliefs may have been necessary for survival at one time,” writes DeGruy, “but today they undermine our ability to succeed.”

One example of a behavior that originated as a survival tactic is punitive parenting. “Many of us grew up in families where corporeal punishment was the

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norm,” she writes. “For hundreds of years, enslaved mothers and fathers have been belittling their children in an effort to protect them.” Those parents might have been overly harsh to keep their children in line, preventing them from getting punished by enslavers who wielded harsher punishments, including family separation, dismemberment or even death. Severe punishment is still sometimes seen as protective even in modern days. A beating at home is preferable to a murder at the hands of police. It also can offer a misguided feeling of empowerment for parents. “For these reasons, overly punitive parenting has been perpetrated,” DeGruy writes.

Another behavior with likely roots in slavery is a fear of loving too much. If one never knows if a parent, spouse, child or friend might be taken away, beaten or murdered, loving becomes emotionally risky. The reality of slavery was a “uniquely cruel system of punishment that...absolutely, cat-



Dr. Joy DeGruy



Resmaa Menakem

egorically destroyed existing relationships and undermined people’s ability to form healthy new ones,” according to DeGruy.

Other expressions of slavery’s legacy in modern times include deflecting praise, body-shaming, family disintegration, and an antipathy or aversion for members of one’s own cultural group, says DeGruy. Perhaps even more pernicious are the three conditions that characterize PTSS: vacant esteem, ever-present anger and rac-

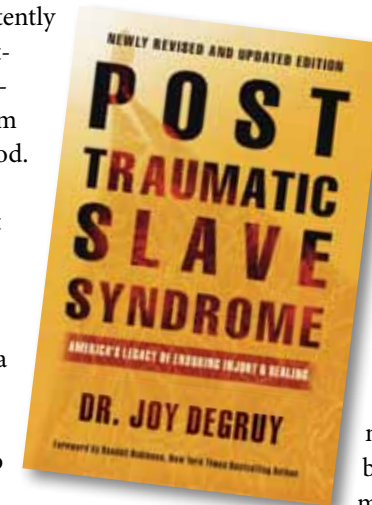
ist socialization.

DeGruy first defined “vacant esteem” in 2005, describing it as hopelessness, depression and a general self-destructive outlook, but her perspective has deepened over the years. While the temptation is to think of it as something like the more-familiar “low self-esteem,” it is wholly different. Low or high self-esteem is usually a measure of confidence and efficacy. But “vacant esteem” points to the very absence of a sense of self at all: “It’s a hugely bigger issue than not feeling good about yourself,” she said in a phone interview in January. “I’m talking about the lack of a whole fundamental sense of self in response to everything in this country that says you are deficient, defective, under-achieving...that anyone that looks like you is someone not worthy.”

DeGruy says that “ever-present anger” is understandable when someone’s personal, professional and life goals and

aspirations are consistently and repeatedly thwarted—and Black Americans experience it from childhood to adulthood. “There is an infinite number of things that get in the way—laws, redlining, attitudes, etc. And then you’re surprised that there’s a reaction!” The anger gets directed at society, of course, but also is expressed within families and communities.

“Racist socialization” is DeGruy’s term for the insidious way that society has encouraged Black, Indigenous and people of color (BIPOC) to see themselves as inferior, uneducated and powerless. For some who have fallen victim to it, antipathy for their own race and culture can develop. This is dramatized in the “doll test” of the 1930s. Black psychologists



Kenneth and Mamie Clark asked Black children to examine white and Black dolls and choose the “good” doll. Because of racist socialization and brewing self-hatred, Black children consistently favored the white doll.

How can people heal trauma that goes so deep and expresses itself in so many ways?

DeGruy writes, “Healing must occur on multiple levels because the injury occurred on multiple levels—individuals, families, communities and society itself.” As a foundation, she recommends that Black Americans take steps to nourish healthier patterns of behavior that build self-efficacy and establish real esteem, such as eating healthier foods, getting exercise and building nurturing relationships, for starters. Working with others in community can be helpful, too. Creating a “virtual village” of safety and respect—a space to

speak the truth, tell stories and learn more about who one is—can make a difference for many. Finally, DeGruy recommends “taking control of one’s inner world” by choosing one’s battles, getting support when needed, and building routines of self-care to create a foundation of health and stability.”

Still, when it comes to racial injustice, millions of Black Americans are regularly confronted with psychological, emotional and physical violence. Traumatic events are still being perpetrated. And while taking responsibility for one’s inner suffering is often the starting point and the hallmark of empowerment, DeGruy says that eradicating the country’s racial injustice is equally as necessary to heal the pain.

“Justice is needed. You cannot fix the angst in Black people, the anger, the fear, the reticence, the suspicion—because of the betrayals,” said DeGruy in our interview with her. “Justice happens when everybody can have the

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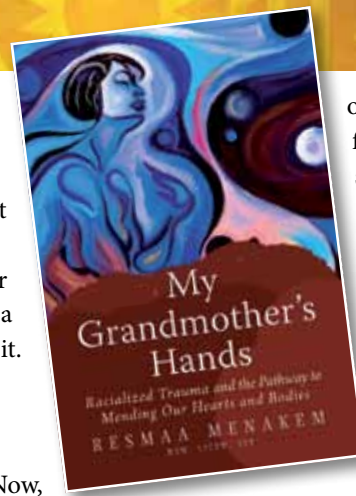
expectation that they get fair, equal and equitable access in every situation.” And justice can only come about if white Americans lean into the effort alongside Blacks. DeGruy asks white people to step outside of their comfort zone to see how they can forward justice: “Look around your professional environment, for example. Look in your world. Look outside yourself and ask, ‘Where can I make a change and promote healing?’ Don’t be meek. Talk about it. Ask people to do things. Don’t let injustice stand.”

### Healing Begins in the Body

Find a quiet, comfortable place where you can be alone. Now, think back to an incident in which you experienced a lack of regard from someone else. Relive and replay that interaction. Now replay it, paying close attention to your body. What sensations did you experience? Where, when and how does it experience discomfort or feel good?

So begins just one of many “body practices” peppered throughout *My Grandmother’s Hands: Racialized Trauma and the Pathway to Mending Our Hearts and Bodies*, authored by Resmaa Menakem, MSW, LICSW, SEP, a therapist, trauma specialist, consultant and coach.

Menakem states that healing the deep and abiding trauma of racism begins and ends with the body, not the mind. White bodies have inherited their own legacy of trauma, too, he points



out. Most white people in the U.S. come from ancestors who fled the brutality and suffering of the Middle Ages in Europe. But while white Americans have the advantage of not having to deal with their trauma, millions of Black Americans are regularly confronted with the psychological violence of disrespect, marginalization, disenfranchisement, dehumanization, legal inequities, brutality and wrongful incarceration. These patterns of assault on the African American mind, body and soul have

been relentless. White Americans also have some degree of investment in the status quo because it affords them tremendous advantages every day—both obvious and subtle—that can sour their motivation to do anything about it.

“Things happen so fast in the body and become decontextualized that these reactions [and] protective mechanisms happen way before the intellect or the conscious mind is even aware of it,” Menakem writes. Healing deep, internalized trauma requires that individuals take time with their own bodies, inquire into the trauma triggers, bring awareness to the pain. By allowing it to emerge, it can dissipate and finally heal. He asks, “Where does that land in you? Is it a lump or an ache? Does it radiate? ... Keep coming back to it and then notice what emerges from that place.” Only in this way, he says, will we at last heal our bodies, our families, and the social body of our nation.

Being with the pain in the body can be overwhelming and our natural inclination is to avoid and override it, says Menakem. “But those that stay with it develop more discernment, develop more conditioning and tempering as they’re going through it,” he said in an interview with Tami Simon of Sounds True.

Menakem says that, ingrained in the trauma in our bodies—and fueling it—is an underlying, unconscious assumption that impacts our perceptions of ourselves and everyone else, with devastating consequences. It is a covert belief that the white body is the supreme standard against which all others are measured and judged. He calls it “white body supremacy,” reflecting that it both *lives in*, and it is *about* our bodies. And while it makes its home in all bodies around the world—white and non-white—it has engendered tremendous damage to the African American psyche in this country. “We are currently in a nation, nay, a world, where the white body is considered the standard... Everything else is an aberration, a subclass and inferior, a deviation of that standard of humanness,” he said in a 2020 interview with Tara Brach. Such a perception can be crippling to all those that don’t meet the standard.

“We will not fix the problem of structural racism and racial violence in this country unless we heal the ways that racial trauma lives in our bodies, Menakem said in a 2020 interview with Kristin Moe.

But healing our bodies is only the beginning. To heal,

If we don’t address our ancient historical trauma, what will we pass down to our children and grandchildren?

people of all ethnic and racial identities need to educate themselves and their communities and acknowledge how deep the trauma goes. Then, the inner work begins. Menakem urges us to make long-term, committed efforts to explore the inner trauma, let it emerge and “process it” both individually and in safe, committed groups. He presses all Americans to engage in the inquiry, to be brutally honest with themselves and their own circles and to ask others to be accountable, too. Only in this way will it be possible to uproot and dismantle white body superiority and unshackle the nation’s consciousness from a fundamentally racist and inhumane premise.

“If we don’t address our ancient historical trauma, what will we pass down to our children and grandchildren?” he asks all of us. Healing is important, even before activism, says Menakem.

Where does one start? In his book, Menakem offers five possible paths to take: healing on one’s own, with another trusted person, in community, with the help of a body-focused professional and with the help of a trauma therapist. He offers simple healing practices, including song, touch, movement and breath to help calm the nervous system and reduce the fight/flight response.

Both DeGruy and Menakem offer a personal message they wanted to share with all people of color in this country. Says DeGruy: “Know that this injury does not define you or indicate any failure in you.” Menakem’s message is: “I want you to hear this from me: you are not defective. You are not wrong. You are not crazy. Something is happening and has continued to happen to your people, and the work that you’re trying to do is important and necessary.”

## The Realities of Treating PTSS A Therapist’s Perspective

Are therapists integrating the insights of post-traumatic slave syndrome (PTSS) into treatment? It might be too much to ask at this point in time. It’s still early.

“I don’t think any therapist is fully integrating [PTSS],” says Oronde Yero, MS, LPC, NCC, an Atlanta-based counselor and life coach, who has long been aware of theories about the intergenerational transmission of trauma. However, “we’re really just at the inception of this concept.”

In addition to Yero, *Natural Awakenings* interviewed two other African Americans who address trauma in their work, one with an extensive background in energy medicine and the other using trauma-informed yoga practices. Like Yero, they weren’t formally integrating PTSS theory into their practices, but they are acutely aware of the issues it produces because of lived experience.



Oronde Yero (Photo: Parris Starchia)

Making matters more challenging, unlike anxiety, depression or even PTSD, no one walks into a therapist’s office saying, “Hi. I’m suffering from PTSS. Please help!”

Yero sees PTSS as a model that helps diagnose and treat clients as it prompts one to consider the broader societal context for the individual. As examples, he cites three areas in which knowledge of PTSS theory can be helpful: academic performance, intragroup violence and “delinquency.”

“Does having good grades equal a good life?” asks Yero. “Probably not if you’ve been under oppression for a long time. So, why put up the effort to be excellent if it’s not going to equal a functional change in your life?” Moreover, “we have a situation where in our community, sometimes [if you’re] smart, you’re called ‘being white.’ So I have to choose. Either I’m going to be excellent and surrender my blackness, or I’m going to underachieve and be a part of the group.”

Without the lens of PTSS, many people readily see the root cause of Black peoples’ persistent lack of economic gain as them making “bad choices,” says Yero.

Yero also offers his theory about intragroup violence. “In my estimation, intragroup violence is an internalization of violence that maybe would have been otherwise directed at the oppressive force.” It exists, he believes, because of “the inability to establish an identity that one could be proud of, that one could feel a part of.”

He continues: “[The delinquent] behavior in an African American male—is it simply delinquency? Or is it the struggle of African American males trying to define manhood in the context of oppression? Is gang activity simply bad behavior? Or is it an attempt at establishing some sense of self-actualization? Is going to prison the new rite of passage for those living in a dysfunctional state? I can go into the prison system and come out with a badge of courage that I’ve overcome my fears, I’m strong and I’m tough.”

One can imagine that the treatment approach to searching for a definition of manhood in the face of centuries of servitude, practiced acquiescence and violence against one’s body would be significantly different from the treatment approach to delinquency.

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# Obstacles to Healing

by Paul B. Chen



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profound negligence in understanding the plight of people around them,” says DeGruy.

“White people have to begin to deal with their sense of superiority, often inherent feelings of superiority that they don’t even realize they have. They have to come to grips with the fact that there is a preponderance of evidence to suggest racism is alive and well, institutional and otherwise.”

Egerton, who is also a certified Enneagram practitioner, master teacher, and coach, says that even the notion of healing runs in opposition to what African American culture teaches its people.

“From the time we are born, we are told that we must be strong, that we must endure, that we must push through whatever is thrown at us,” says Egerton. “I think back to the words my mother used to say: ‘Don’t pray for an easy life. Pray for the strength to endure whatever life throws at you.’ That is not uncommon.

That is the voice of Black America. This is the way that we are socialized. So the concept of stopping and recognizing that we are wounded and that we need to heal is counterintuitive.”

Both DeGruy and Egerton see these attitudes changing among the younger generations of African Americans. DeGruy cites the growing number of young Blacks in the scientific and healing fields as one reason Black attitudes are changing.

Egerton notes, after describing how

much she and members of her generation have become experts at code-switching, the act of taking on the attitudes, behaviors and speech of a different culture in order to be accepted, that younger Blacks are not putting up with the notion that they have to code-switch.

“What we’re seeing now with the younger generation is that they’re not quite as amenable to code-switching,” she says. “The generations that came before this generation, we kind of tried to dilute the experience of who we were because it was not acceptable to take all of who we are into the world. But now, we’re looking at maybe we didn’t get that right. In reality, if you can’t take your whole self out into the world, then you’re never going to be able to self-actualize and become the best that you can be.”

Are the obstacles to healing too great for Blacks to actually heal? The answer

If you can’t take your whole self out into the world, then you’re never going to be able to self-actualize and become the best that you can be.

from both seems to be very nearly “yes”—but not quite.

“I’m a woman of faith, so I don’t believe that there’s any such thing as obstacles being too great,” says Egerton. “Of course, it’s possible. I couldn’t get up in the morning if I didn’t believe that. Is it going to be difficult, challenging, and sometimes feel totally impossible? Yes, that’s true as well.”

DeGruy offers a more conflicted response. On the one hand, she speaks to the need for white people to do the real work of justice: “There’s a mythology a lot

of white people like to believe, that they can just say ‘I’m sorry,’ pull down some statues, and go right back to how we’ve been, which is racist. The bottom line is that ‘I still get to benefit from my racism, but I did say I was sorry.’”

Resolving PTSS isn’t just about therapy, contends DeGruy. “Part of the healing is justice,” she continues. “You can’t have one without the other. It can’t be without that justice piece, without that community piece, without that economic piece.”

And yet, DeGruy believes healing can happen even while trauma is still being inflicted. “It’s not only possible; it’s what we’ve always been doing. We did it during slavery, people getting raped and beaten. My brother had a gun put in his mouth by a police officer. You just have to learn how to how to deal with it. We’ve been doing all this with no help, and the fact that people are still assaulting us.”

If awareness is the first step towards resolution, are African Americans well on their way to healing racial trauma?

Executive, life coach and spiritual coach Dr. Deborah Egerton says, “It’s difficult to heal when the wounds keep coming. We’ve never really been given an opportunity to heal without the continuation of daily indignities. This is what we face as African Americans.”

DeGruy says that the obstacles to healing include the denial of post-trau-

matic slave syndrome (PTSS) by society at large and by failing to understand the root cause of PTSS.

Post-traumatic slave syndrome is the focus of Dr. Joy DeGruy’s 2005 book, *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome: America’s Legacy of Enduring Injury & Healing*, in which she reveals the causes and evolution of racial attitudes and the signs of slavery’s enduring effects in America.

“I think that white people, the very first thing they have to look at, is their

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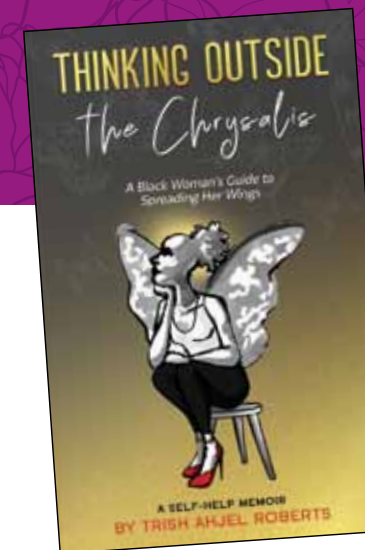
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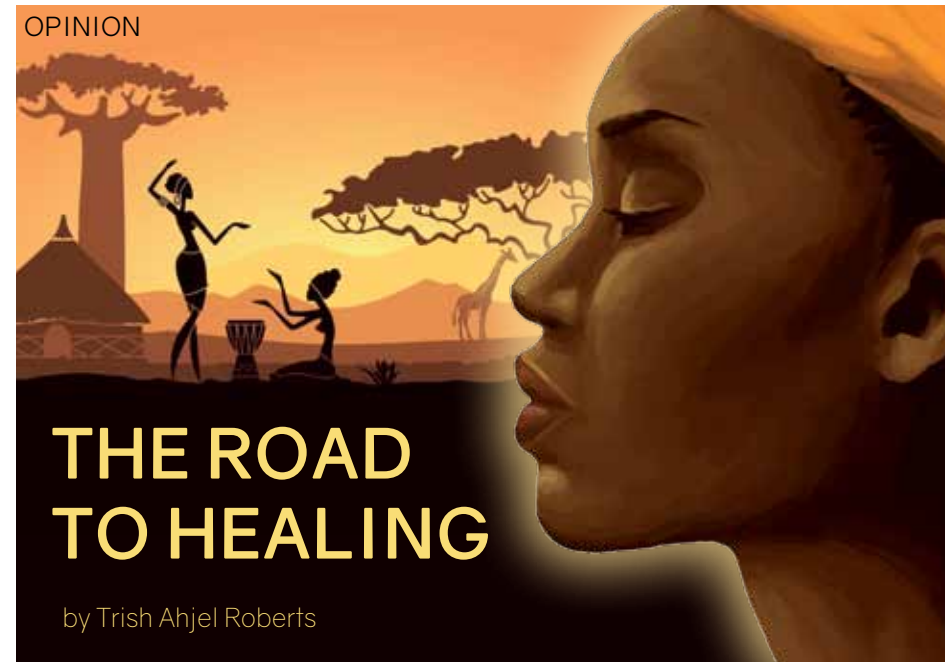
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OPINION



## THE ROAD TO HEALING

by Trish Ahjel Roberts

When I hear the word “slavery,” my stomach immediately tightens. I cringe when people refer to enslaved people as “slaves,” as if that is an identity instead of a circumstance. I am triggered by images of beautiful, young, brown-skinned souls that look like my uncles and aunties, barely clothed, chained and broken-hearted. It’s part of a brutal history that I would rather forget.

I’ve learned to manage this history in two ways: First, the proud recognition that my ancestors are survivors. Second, the profound love I have for the culture of the African diaspora. Whether I find my people in the Caribbean, Latin America, Europe, the Motherland or any other corner of the world, we carry a spiritual song in our bellies, a soulfulness that is beyond description. It is the link that connects Africans across the globe, even if we don’t speak the same language. We hear a drum, taste a spice, smell a fragrance, nod our head or swing our hips and we recognize ourselves. We add literal and metaphorical flavor to all we do. We are creative.

Africans traded with the Americas long before the kidnapping, enslavement and displacement of African people, which is described in detail in Ivan Van Ser-tima’s pioneering work, *They Came Before*

*Columbus*. And yet, most African Americans trace our history back to enslaved ancestors, often with a combination of the blood of our oppressors, marking a painful heritage of rape, dehumanization and destruction of families. This isn’t ancient history. The last living enslaved American, Sylvester Magee, died in 1971, only 50 years ago.

The history of slavery is an open wound in our nation that erupted in January at the U.S. Capitol. When we pretend white supremacy and institutional racism don’t exist, we continue to have uneducated and unhealed souls on both sides of this tragic legacy. In my opinion, as long as the electoral college allows us to overturn the popular vote of the people, we will not see racial equality and healing. We are a nation of gaslighting. One that beats Black children for learning to read, then tells them they are stupid. One that rapes Black women, then tells them they are whores. One that brutalizes Black men, then tells them they are violent.

It is always possible to heal from trauma if the time, motivation and resources are available. When it comes to this country’s ongoing institutional racism and oppression of Black and Brown people, some of us will heal. Each generation may

make it farther along the healing path. Society may progress and support oppressed and marginalized communities. However, in a country where “progressive” is often a dirty word, many of us will not find room to heal. We will be born into poverty, brutality, powerlessness and hunger. We will console ourselves with alcohol and drugs. We will not have support systems or resources. Nobody will expect anything from us. We will rise to no occasions. Society will throw us away and never look back. This profound loss of human potential is both avoidable and unforgivable.

The violent mob that stormed the Capitol in January possessed a primal rage. They think they are fighting for their lives when they are actually fighting for their status as the empowered majority. There is no pie. Power isn’t diminished when it is shared. We are always stronger when we work together.

One presidential election will not solve the complicated problem of racism and oppression in our nation. However, the Biden/Harris administration has created the most diverse cabinet in American history. It is a start toward national healing.

Reading *My Grandmother’s Hands* by Resmaa Menakem, *Pleasure Activism* by Adrienne Maree Brown, or my own book, *Thinking Outside the Chrysalis*, will not heal racialized trauma, but it can be a powerful step along the path. I encourage you to choose the voices of Black authors. I hope you are inspired to begin the journey. Become an independent thinker. Buck tradition. Create a self-care practice to nourish your soul after you’ve committed to the work of anti-racism. Meditate and pray. The road to healing is a long one, but it is the path of love. The only path worth traveling. 🌱



Trish Ahjel Roberts is a self-actualization coach and author of the self-help memoir, *Thinking Outside the Chrysalis: A Black Woman’s Guide to Spreading Her Wings*. Access her blog and free self-care e-book at [MindBlowingHappiness.com](http://MindBlowingHappiness.com).

# RESOURCES

## for Healing Race-based Trauma

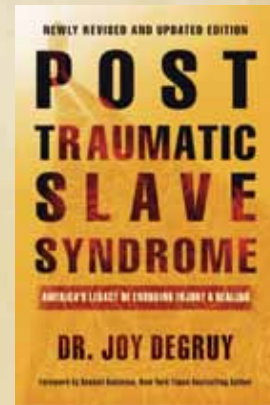
### BOOKS



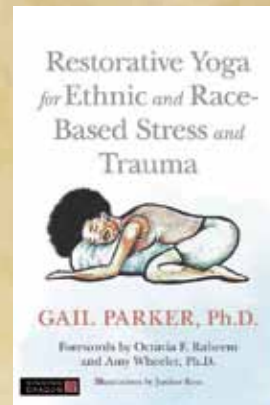
*Healing Racial Trauma: The Road to Resilience*  
by Sheila Wise Rowe



*My Grandmother's Hands: Racialized Trauma and the Pathway to Mending Our Hearts and Bodies*  
by Resmaa Menakem



*Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome: America's Legacy of Enduring Injury & Healing*  
by Dr. Joy DeGruy



*Restorative Yoga for Ethnic and Race-Based Stress and Trauma*  
by Dr. Gail Parker

### MEDIA

**Resmaa Menakem:**  
*Somatic Abolitionism*, an interview by Tami Simon of Sounds True. [[bit.ly/3sJoU9U](https://bit.ly/3sJoU9U)]

**Dr. Joy DeGruy:**  
*Post Traumatic Slave Disorder*, a presentation given in London, 2008 [[bit.ly/38ZyAFj](https://bit.ly/38ZyAFj)]

**Dr. Candice Nicole:**  
*Black Lives Matter Meditation for Healing Racial Trauma* [[bit.ly/3p0e6BR](https://bit.ly/3p0e6BR)]

### COURSES

**Free Racialized Trauma Course**  
[[bit.ly/3itbr12](https://bit.ly/3itbr12)]



This five-day course, featuring five 15-minute videos, was developed by Resmaa Menakem. The Minnesota Spokesman Recorder quoted the author: "The video piece is my way of getting to people who aren't able to sit down and read a 275-page book... [With this], people can begin to grapple with some of these pieces and affirm some of the things around them and maybe start on the journey on what to do to heal."

**To Close Our Eyes in Peace: A Guided Experience of Rest + Resilience for Black Women**  
[[bit.ly/3qzm84R](https://bit.ly/3qzm84R)]



Atlantan Siha Collins, a trauma-informed yoga and meditation teacher, describes this course as "supporting Black women in the recovery from grief and trauma resulting from the experience of a global pandemic and continued exposure to the many forms of violence from the systems of institutional racism and sexism." Note: The February class is closed; it is assumed there will be more offerings.

### LINKS

[SheilaWiseRowe.com](https://SheilaWiseRowe.com)  
[JoyDeGruy.com](https://JoyDeGruy.com)  
[Resmaa.com](https://Resmaa.com)

**Racial Trauma, Resiliency and Ally Resources**  
This page offers links to resources for understanding and healing from racial trauma from the University of California San Marco. [[csusm.edu/counseling/race.html](https://csusm.edu/counseling/race.html)]

### WISE WORDS

## Shefali Tsabary on Conscious Relationships

by Sandra Yeyati



Offering innovative approaches to mindful living, Shefali Tsabary, Ph.D., is a clinical psychologist, international keynote speaker and bestselling author of *The Conscious Parent*, *Out of Control* and her latest, *The Awakened Family*. She has presented talks at TEDx, the Kellogg Business School, The Dalai Lama Center for Peace and Education, and *SuperSoul Sessions with Oprah Winfrey*, who has endorsed her work as revolutionary and life-changing.

attract people who are going to be mirrors that show us how we need to repair ourselves and force us to repeat childhood patterns. If we have an issue of unworthiness, that's going to show up. If we have fear of rejection, that's going to show up, and all fingers point to the imperative that we do our own inner work.

### What does that inner work look like?

The first step is realizing that what's happening in the relationship is really a reflection of the inner state of being, and therefore isn't the other person's fault that I'm feeling rejected, hurt or unworthy. We stop trying to change, fix or blame the other. We then hire a therapist or join a self-development course and begin to understand our inner wounds from childhood that are being repeated in this current dynamic. We have to do the work. It's not easy. It's not going to happen just because we made an intellectual decision. It's a quest, a constant unfolding, unlayering, evolving and becoming more. The goal is your arrival into your most authentic self—into your whole, free self.

### How do we remain in a relationship while doing this work?

We become more honest, more up front, more candid and ready to meet the other

at our new place of growth. If the other doesn't want to grow and cannot do this inner work because of their own inner demons and resistance, then maybe you won't be able to continue on, but you will be conscious enough to be able to release the other of the expectation to continue on. A healthy relationship is a relationship where each person takes responsibility for their own inner growth and their own inner wounds, doesn't project their needs on the other, parents themselves into a state of wholeness and then releases the other to be free.

### How do you define love?

Most of us love egoically, which is loving the other because they make us feel good about ourselves, and the moment they stop making us feel good about ourselves, we actually leave them. That's why there's so much divorce. That's not love. Egoic love is possession, ownership and control. Most of us are mired in those kinds of relationships; the institution of marriage actually supports ownership, possession and control. True, or high love, is the understanding that the other is with you and you are with them to encourage each other's growth and to see each other be their most authentic, free selves. If that includes being with us, we're happy. If that includes not being with us, we're as happy. That's true love, because you're in love with the other person's essence and you're more invested in the other person's whole self rather than the self that you want to own and possess.

### What is conscious intimacy?

Conscious intimacy starts with how intimate and honest you are with yourself—how sexually connected you are with your needs and your desires. The more unabashed, bare, spontaneous and transparent you can be with yourself, the more you will seek and be around partners who can hold that space with you. ♡

For more information, including online courses, visit [DrShefali.com](https://DrShefali.com). Her *Free to Be* course specifically addresses conscious relationship issues.

Sandra Yeyati, J.D., is a professional writer. Reach her at [SandraYeyati@gmail.com](mailto:SandraYeyati@gmail.com).

# CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Publicize your event! This section hosts free and paid listings. Each month, we select a limited number of events — they must have broad appeal and cost no more than \$10 to attend — to list for free. Otherwise, basic listings are \$35 and enhanced listings are \$75.

Submit free listings to [calendar@naAtlanta.com](mailto:calendar@naAtlanta.com) and paid listings to [ads@naAtlanta.com](mailto:ads@naAtlanta.com).

## TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 2

**Reflexology Practitioner Course** – Tuesdays, Feb 2–May 4. 6:30–9:30pm. A 42+ hr, in-class certificate course with Roz Zollinger, Certified Reflexologist and Instructor. Heal Center, 270 Carpenter Dr NE, Ste 505, Sandy Springs. 404-303-0007. [HealCenterAtlanta.com](http://HealCenterAtlanta.com).

## WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 3

**Online Kundalini Yoga Embrace Your Warrior Spirit for Emotional Health** – 7–9pm. The kriyas and meditations of kundalini can connect you to your heart center and take away your fear of the future. Free. Register: [Tinyurl.com/yyae3l6d](http://Tinyurl.com/yyae3l6d).

## FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 5

**Virtual Color Therapy with White** – 11–11:30am. Party of a series of energy-centric classes with Jamie that you can take in any order. All virtual classes are recorded so no need to be disappointed if you missed class. \$10. More info & register: [JamieButlerMedium.com](http://JamieButlerMedium.com).

## SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 6

**Free First Saturday: Scales and Tails** – 1–2pm. Join us for a slithery, scaly good time. Dunwoody Nature Center, 5343 Roberts Dr, Dunwoody. 770-394-3322. [DunwoodyNature.org](http://DunwoodyNature.org).

## THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 11

**Sacred Sexy Self—Love to Bring Passion into your Life** – 6–8pm. It is time to awaken your wildest desires and live a life full of vitality. Become very intentional with your time and energy. Free. Via Zoom. [TheWildOnes.community](http://TheWildOnes.community).

## FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 12

**Lula Lake Day Hike** – 11am–3pm. Roughly 4-mi guided hike offers a number of incredible waterfall experiences and vistas atop Lookout Mountain. Space limited; masks required.

Lula Lake Land Trust, Core Preserve, 5000 Lula Lake Rd, Lookout Mountain. Register: [GeorgiaConservancy.org](http://GeorgiaConservancy.org).

## SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 13

**Saturday Volunteers** – 9am–12pm. For anyone in the community who wishes to volunteer. We welcome high school clubs, service organizations and other groups. To promote social distancing, sign-up is mandatory. Dunwoody Nature Center, 5343 Roberts Dr, Dunwoody. 770-394-3322. [DunwoodyNature.org](http://DunwoodyNature.org).

**Bioenergetic Healing, Part II: Working with Crystals** – Feb 13–14. 10am–6pm. Learn the basics of working with the energy field, to detect and correct existing energetic imbalances. Heal Center, 270 Carpenter Dr NE, Ste 505, Sandy Springs. 404-303-0007. [HealCenterAtlanta.com](http://HealCenterAtlanta.com).

## MONDAY, FEBRUARY 15

**Nature Lovers Book Club** – 9–10:30am. *Braiding Sweetgrass* by Robin Kimmerer. All nature enthusiasts and book worms invited. Free for members. Dunwoody Nature Center, 5343 Roberts Dr, Dunwoody. 770-394-3322. [DunwoodyNature.org](http://DunwoodyNature.org).

## THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 18

**Online Hypnosis Certification Training** – Feb 18–20. 10am–7pm, Thurs & Fri; 12–6pm, Sat. This intensive training will have you fully prepared to begin using your new hypnosis skills by the end of the third day. More info & register: [AwakenAnanda.com](http://AwakenAnanda.com).

## THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 25

**Nature Club** – 7–9pm. Due to social distancing guidelines advanced registration is required and limited to 30 participants. \$10/general, \$5/CNC Members. CNC, 9135 Willeo Rd, Roswell. Registration required by Feb 24: 770-992-2055 or [ChattNatureCenter.org](http://ChattNatureCenter.org).

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5531 ROSWELL RD NE, ATLANTA  
404-255-5207  
[PHOENIXANDDRAGON.COM](http://PHOENIXANDDRAGON.COM)

## FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 5

**Shamanic Women** – 7–9pm. With Vicki Evans. If you're a woman who has had shamanic training or feels called to the shaman's way of life, please join us at our monthly meetings. Limited to 10 people. \$20 via PayPal. To register: [PayPal.me/vickievanhealing](http://PayPal.me/vickievanhealing). [PhoenixAndDragon.com](http://PhoenixAndDragon.com).

## TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 16

**Witch's Brew with Damaris** – 7–8:30pm. Do you ever think of someone and the next day they call you? Do you have to be careful what you think because it may happen? Do you feel like you have a hidden power? If you answered yes, this class is definitely for you. \$20.

## THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 25

**Wisdom and Healing Through Shamanic Journeys** – 7–8:30pm. With Vicki Evans. An opportunity to connect with Spirit and your guides for healing and direction. You can use the journeys to ask about all areas of your life, not just the spiritual side. \$20 via PayPal. Phoenix & Dragon Bookstore, 5531 Roswell Rd NE, Atlanta. 404-255-5207. To register: [PayPal.me/vickievanhealing](http://PayPal.me/vickievanhealing). [PhoenixAndDragon.com](http://PhoenixAndDragon.com).

## SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 27

**Online Transmission Meditation** – 7:30pm. A meditation to help the world. Sponsored by Share International USA SE Region. Free. Via Zoom. Info: 404-680-7423, [InfoSE@Share-International.us](mailto:InfoSE@Share-International.us). [Share-International.us/se](http://Share-International.us/se). Tickets: [Tinyurl.com/yxv6hd8p](http://Tinyurl.com/yxv6hd8p).

## SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 28

**Virtual Vanilla Sunday** – Learn all about the fruit that flavors drinks, desserts and sauces in so many recipes, only without the popular ice cream sundae they've grown accustomed to sampling. More info: [AtlantaBG.org](http://AtlantaBG.org).

# ONGOING EVENTS

## daily

**Enchanted Woodland Trails Exhibit** – Thru Feb 28. More than 40 fairy houses and gnome homes will line the woodland trails. Included with General Admission. CNC, 9135 Willeo Rd, Roswell. Registration required: 770-992-2055 or [ChattNatureCenter.org](http://ChattNatureCenter.org).

## sunday

**Online Sunday Experience** – 9am, Adult Study; 9:30am, Meditation; 10am, Music; 10:30am, Service. With Spiritual Living Center of Atlanta. [slc-atlanta.org](http://slc-atlanta.org). To watch: [Facebook.com/spirituallivingcenteratlanta](http://Facebook.com/spirituallivingcenteratlanta).

**Red Clay Sangha Sunday Morning Service** – 9am, meditation; 10:30–11:30am, dharma discussion. Via Zoom. To watch: [RedClaySangha.org](http://RedClaySangha.org).

**Online Meditation Open House** – 10am. A 30-min meditation and a 30-min discussion via Zoom. To watch: [Atlanta.Shambhala.org](http://Atlanta.Shambhala.org).

**One World Spiritual Center Sunday Service** – 11am. To watch: [OneWorldSpiritualCenter.net](http://OneWorldSpiritualCenter.net).

**Shamanic Journey** – 11am. 1st Sun. A virtual healing experience brought to you by Heron House via Zoom. Free; donations accepted. To register: [Tinyurl.com/yctrp49j](http://Tinyurl.com/yctrp49j).

**Sunday Morning Talks and Discussion** – 11am–12pm. With Vedanta Center of Atlanta via Zoom. To watch: [VedantaAtlanta.org](http://VedantaAtlanta.org).

**Unity North Online Sunday Service** – 11:15am. To watch: [UnityNorth.org](http://UnityNorth.org).



## monday

**The {SAMA} Class: Virtual** – 9am. Also held Thurs & Fri. Incorporates 25 mins of yoga, 10 mins of breathwork, finishing off with 10 mins of meditation. Each teacher will bring their own spin to the class based on their particular lineage of training. More info: [SamaFoodForBalance.com](http://SamaFoodForBalance.com).

## tuesday

**Heart Jewel Chanted Prayers and Meditation** – Mon–Fri, 8–9am. Chanted Buddhist prayers and meditation. Free. To register for livestream: [MeditationInGeorgia.org](http://MeditationInGeorgia.org).

**Online Meditation Open House** – 7pm. A 30-min meditation and a 30-min discussion via Zoom. To watch: [Atlanta.Shambhala.org](http://Atlanta.Shambhala.org).

## wednesday

**Zoom Check In: Wellness Wednesdays** – 10am. Check in with your community during COVID-19 crisis. [slc-atlanta.org](http://slc-atlanta.org).

**Unity North Online Wednesday Evening Experience** – 7pm. To watch: [UnityNorth.org](http://UnityNorth.org).

**Weekly Wednesday Meditation Class** – 7–8:30pm. Open to all levels. Experience true inner peace. With the Venerable Nicholas Thannissaro of the Georgia Meditation Center via Zoom. To register: [MeditationCircle.org](http://MeditationCircle.org).

## thursday

**Virtual Qigong** – 6–6:45pm. More info & to register: [DecaturHealingArts.com](http://DecaturHealingArts.com).

**Dunwoody Beekeeping Club** – 6:30–7:30pm. 1st Thurs. Meeting features a program, followed by a question and answer session with the ability to meet and learn from other local beekeepers. Free. 5343 Roberts Dr, Dunwoody. 770-394-3322. [DunwoodyNature.org](http://DunwoodyNature.org).

**Twin Hearts Meditation** – 7pm. This meditation is an act of service. We use

divine energy to bless the planet, our loved ones and every part of our life. With Atlanta Pranic Healing Center via Zoom. To watch: [AtIPranicHealing.com](http://AtIPranicHealing.com).

## friday

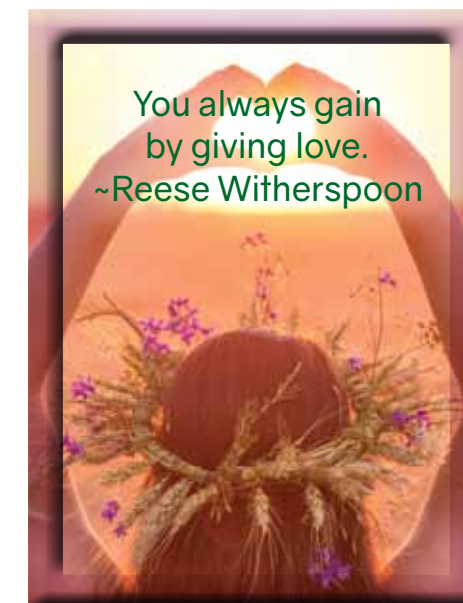
**Prayers for World Peace** – 6:30–7:15pm. An opportunity both to simply pray for world peace and to be a part of the solution. Includes a guided meditation, a short teaching and chanted prayers for world peace. To register for livestream: [MeditationInGeorgia.org](http://MeditationInGeorgia.org).

## saturday

**Free Saturday Meditations** – 8–8:30am. To register for livestream: [MeditationInGeorgia.org](http://MeditationInGeorgia.org).

**Dunwoody Nature Center Saturday Volunteers** – 9am–12pm. 2nd Sat. For anyone in the community who wishes to volunteer. A wonderful way to start off your weekend in nature and service. To promote social distancing, sign-up is mandatory; limited to 24 people. 5343 Roberts Dr, Dunwoody. 770-394-3322. [DunwoodyNature.org](http://DunwoodyNature.org).

**Free Online Guided Meditation for All** – 9:45–11am. Will go over basics and guided meditation. No prior experience is needed. Classes meant to come together and meditate and learn little by little. Via Zoom. Register: [Tinyurl.com/y3x5yy2s](http://Tinyurl.com/y3x5yy2s).



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the term. But I ultimately disagree with the premise because of my spiritual beliefs. Buddhism and yoga posit that the world we wake to every morning is no more real than the dreams we dream at night; indeed, my tradition uses the terms "conventional reality" and "ultimate reality" to make the point. It is the purpose of our precious human lives to fully realize the infinite and eternal Spirit within, which is our true nature. Society cannot do this for us; our spiritual communities can assist, but in the end, we must do the work.

Finally, we are a journalistic publication with a limited budget, and as such, we have never published an opinion piece before. Until now. Given the subject matter, it seemed appropriate and necessary to provide a direct channel for a Black voice to conclude our presentation.

Ta-Nehesi Coates' words at the top of this letter are clearly at odds with our "relentlessly positive" attitude. So, let me end with an uplifting excerpt from "The Hill We Climb," a poem by the star of last month's inauguration, the incredibly talented Amanda Gorman.

*The loss we carry,  
a sea we must wade*

*We've braved the belly of the beast  
We've learned that quiet isn't always peace*

*And the norms and notions  
of what just is*

*Isn't always just-ice*

*And yet the dawn is ours*

*before we knew it*

*Somehow we do it*

*Somehow we've weathered and witnessed*

*a nation that isn't broken*

*but simply unfinished*



*Paul Chen has been owner/publisher of Natural Awakenings Atlanta franchise since January 2017. He is a practicing Buddhist and a founding member of East Lake Commons, a cohousing community.*

Spread love everywhere you go.  
Let no one ever come to you without leaving happier.

~Mother Teresa





# LOVE LOST AND FOUND

by Kim Green

Just months after graduating from college, an extremely handsome man proposed to me on a park bench in the East Village. We both were proud Black punk rockers. I was in love with his good looks and roguish stance—or so I thought. We married in 1988 and divorced in 1989. My father refused to attend our City Hall nuptials. He saw what I couldn't.

K and I were often stopped on the streets because people couldn't resist the urge to comment on his tantalizing looks. For a once-homely girl who could barely look at herself in the mirror, he was quite a prize. He said he loved me because I wasn't impressed with his band. We were both over our heads.

Our marriage was tumultuous from the start. I was pretending to be a "wife" at 22 years of age; he never had the courtesy to pretend to be a husband. One day, he told me he was going to visit his mother. Then, hours later, he called to tell me he wouldn't be back.

When K disappeared, I was lucky to have friends who rushed to me like med-

ics, pulling me up and taking me out of my misery to see the possibilities that life still held. Then, about 27 years later, he dug me up on Facebook and private-messaged me.

"Are you the Kim Green from Sony Music?"

I had, in fact, once worked at Sony. And I was happy to hear from him; after all those years, the pain of what seemed a brutal divorce had melted away. I had seen the world and myself through new lenses. I had wondered about him after reading in a magazine that he had become ill with a chronic auto-immune illness. It was different than my own, but ironically, both of our bodies had succumbed to something environmental—or, dare I say, *emotional*.

After all, we had married in the formative years of our hearts' development, and, over the years, we each had a lot of time to think about our lives and our loves. I imagine he remembered his park bench proposal and how innocent we were then.

When he abandoned me, he didn't mean to hurt me; he had to save himself.

While I thought I was a woman

when we strutted down the aisle in the dusty City Hall chapel, I know now that my evolution came when I was able to be brutally honest with myself and the part that I played in my own infantile agony. Once I was able to find unconditional love in myself, I could even find love in my heart for the man who unceremoniously dumped me. When I think of my handsome ex-husband, I can only appreciate him for all he did *for* me, not *to* me. Our fragile marriage emboldened me. It gave me the courage to see what I don't want, the vision to wish for what I do want and the guts to pursue it.

Today, we are the best of friends. So, when he told me that he was getting married again—it would be his third—all I could feel was elation. I was so moved, I had to write about it.

When I look back on our marriage now, I see it as a rite of passage into my humanity. With that first, "I do," I crossed the threshold of myself. I understood the toughness it takes to grasp that love can be an unreliable emotion. On the road to love, I've made my share of mistakes and caused great suffering in myself and others. I broke promises, and others broke promises to me.

And love goes on. It is these very hard, very human truths that make me part of the human race. K behaved badly in the spirit of self-preservation. I know because I have lived long enough to have committed the same crime.

I now have a ritual of keeping promises to myself so I can more easily keep promises to others. After limping along the road to love, I learned how affirming it is to love myself and live my life the way I want, despite what others may think. I stopped making promises I can't keep. ♣



Author and coach, Kim Green is the owner of Blank Page Consulting, offering writing and life coaching. Her recently released second novel, *Vicissitudes*, is now

available wherever books are sold. For more information, reach her at [WordsLLC.com](http://WordsLLC.com) or 678-938-2777.



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