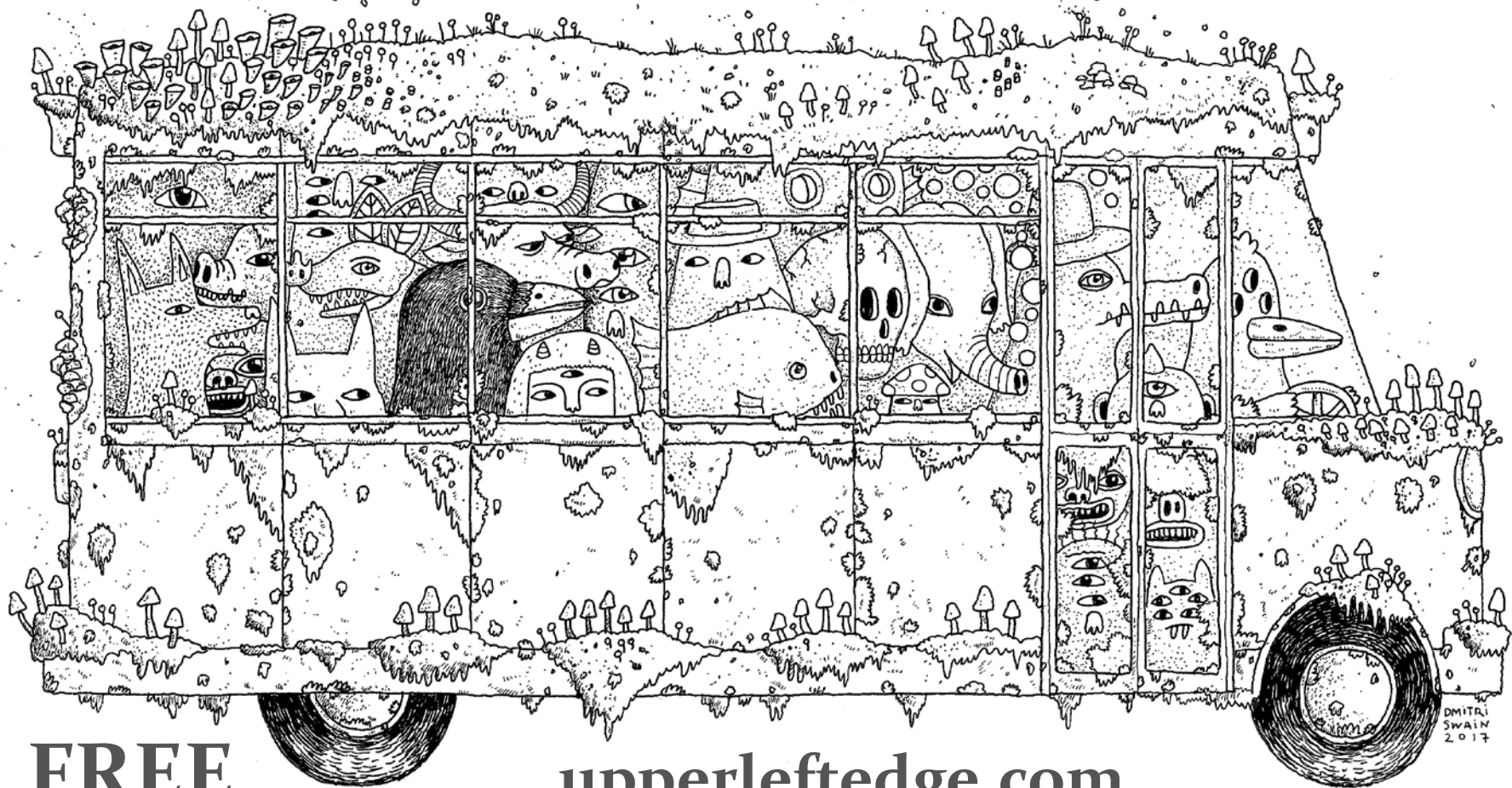


UPPER LEFT EDGE

2018 Spring Edition



Education in the broadest of true sense, will make an individual seek to help all people,
regardless of race, regardless of color, regardless of condition. ~ **George Washington Carver**

This is Not a Text

At first we intended to call this our “back to school” edition. It was supposed to come out last fall, just as public attention returned to the formative testing grounds of academia. I can still taste the brisk homecoming-game air of that idea. Yet creative labors don’t always adhere to institutional schedules.

This edition touches on *learning*, a theme that underlies much of life and certainly extends beyond the bounds of our educational system. It feels fitting to circulate these musings in the spring, when thinkers yearn to break free from the dens of convention. What lessons arise outside today’s classrooms? Let’s limber up our will to wonder.

Seems to me everything we do is part of a super-organic process of cognition. We participate in this process even when we think we’re doing nothing, maybe just watching TV, scrolling through Facebook, or spacing out on tabloid headlines while waiting in the check-out lines. Earth’s most sapient primates are hardwired to learn who and why we are by trading perceptions of each other and our surroundings. Reality finds shape in what flows from mind to mind, in the stuff that moves us for better or worse toward common understanding. We get there step by learned step, in formation.

Today this process is magnified by the exchange of digital data. Monkey see, monkey buy a new smartphone. The human herd has externalized our ability to assemble and transfer mass quantities of intelligence. Not only does this spotlight our braininess as a species, it’s given us another chance to show off our thumbs. Now info can flash like sheet lightning, thanks to our self-proclaimed sapience. Leaders authorized to launch nuclear weapons can boast about their executive powers while broadcasting catty insults on Twitter. Techies can instantly tell millions that a ballistic missile will soon make their data-plans irrelevant. Such amplifications of perspective rattle our existence.

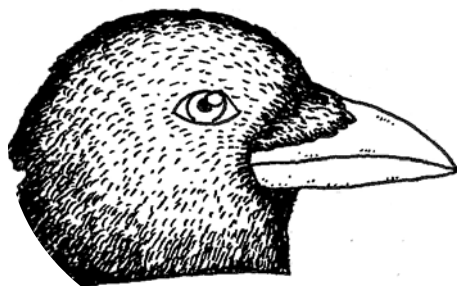
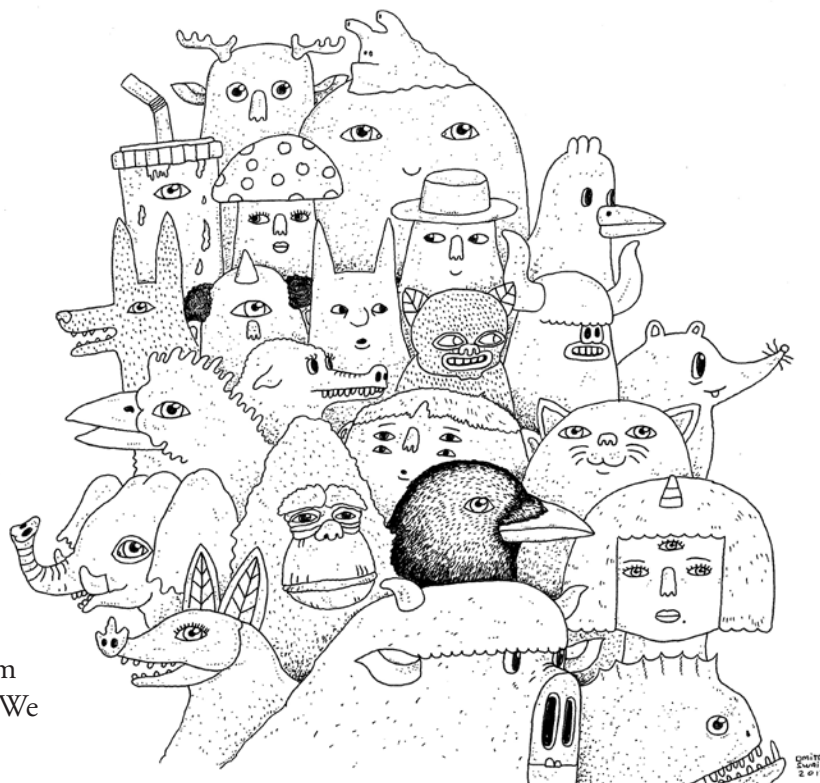
What does this global quickening teach? Part of what we take to heart with this slow little paper is that big fast data must be counterbalanced by the steady stir of local knowledge. Humanity hasn’t got much future if reality is tailored to whatever notions flick through the noggins of bigwigs and their footmen.

So we publish the poems and essays of everyday thinkers, folks who often go unnoticed yet have good things to share. Periodically we do this on actual paper. Our online platform archives past print editions and features additional writing. Wordsmiths are welcome to contribute to our website, and we gladly accept submissions for print. Also, we’d love to find a code-savvy person to help us become adaptive to all screens.

Our dream is to cultivate a patch of homegrown media where wisdom can thrive. If this were a corporate endeavor we might mine data in the process, use it to build our services for political high-rollers and large commercial advertisers. Instead we’re funded by resident businesses and benefactors who are rooted in community. Please support these gracious stewards. Spread the gratitude.

Read. Write. Help us do our small part, making space for new words, and keep the old school open for everyone.

~ **Watt Childress**



About the illustrator:

*Dmitri lives on the North Oregon Coast with his lovely talented daughter Lavender and amazing wife Zoe. They have a dog named Sheila who is very stubborn. The Swain family enjoys hiking, reading fun books, good food, laughter, music, board games, watching cartoons, making art and honoring nature in all its awe inspiring beauty. When not working on illustrations Dmitri sings and plays guitar with his wife Zoe in their band **Sugar Thistles**. Lavender acts as the family band manager.*

Educating the mind without educating the heart is no education at all. ~ Aristotle

the path next taken

by Lotte Greaver

I have a son graduating from high school this year, negotiating the path from secondary education to college and an independent life. Not without moments of hilarity and drama, it is unnerving and slightly surreal to have a child come of age during such uncertain times. I take the view that he is following that hero's path made popular by Joseph Campbell. This allows a conceit to look at events in this country in mythic terms - putting things at a remove and in a much broader context.

These are the days when the bright young hopes of our collective future have become commodities. Higher education has become a damned if you do and damned if you don't scenario of debt vs. future prospects. Yes, there is a pool of grants and scholarships available to offset the bottomless pit of educational debt that has collected in this country. But it all begins to feel like a strategy board-game called Human Capital. Playing this game can be a full time job, an end in itself before the first classroom door is even opened. Human capital is a precious thing and going forward in life it is vital to be aware of how it is invested and spent.

In considering the monetary investment of a college education, we talk of selecting the course of study that best prepares our children for a sound choice of career. Yet at least half of the jobs that will be available in their future world don't currently exist. A.I., coding, cyber security, robotics, algorithms, bio-tech, virtual reality, anything engineering, anything cyber in the coming quantum revolution...all these disciplines beckon our youth to the doorway of a new world where the definition of what it means to be human begins to dissipate. This path leads to a post mythical world if you will, where the signposts of moral action are missing. I don't speak of myth as a fiction but as the universal collected stories of our species that tell of our human patterns of right and wrong (morality).

As a parent watching a child begin their journey, and as a citizen watching a generation step forward, I would hope that the concept and realization of

a liberal education awaits. The origin of the liberal arts is the exploration of first principals of being. This will never go out of fashion or need. It is a form of education that is flexible to the times yet timeless. It facilitates the development of the autonomous free-thinking individual who can make the whole around them stronger. To understand our present and secure our future we need to have a fluid knowledge of our history, philosophy, ethics, arts and social sciences in concert with technical and STEM curricula. It overstates the obvious but a stem needs roots and leaves to flourish.

When Abraham Lincoln signed the Morrill Land Grant College Act of 1862, the government took a hand in democratizing higher education. In creating over 70 public colleges, the Act paved the way for increased access to education for all economic classes, not just the very rich. Colleges were required to provide vocational and agricultural based training for a better skilled worker class but this also laid the foundation for the tradition of the liberal arts education in this country. Some opposed the Act on the notion that the country had no need for educated farmers. In simplistic terms, such voices were predicated on the belief that learning and the enrichment of the individual should never be an end in itself. The deeper roots of this anti-intellectualism in America casts a long shadow over our state of affairs today.

As to spending human capital, I would hope my son and his peers could be guided not merely by the dictates of fitting oneself into the needs of a job, but by the aspiration to develop into rounded, versatile and innately moral human beings, suited to multiple endeavors in life. Taking the adage that the unexamined life is not worth living one step further, consider that it is also subject to manipulation and abuse. The Liberal Arts (*Liberalis Ars - Latin*) are the hallmark of a free society. *Liberalis* is freedom. *Ars* is arts or principled practice. It is the result of a true democracy and it is the means to perpetuate the same. That our youth must incur serious financial debt to take their place in this continuum is proof enough that we have stepped away from a democratic path. It is up to all of us to take up the challenge of this hero's journey - an investment that will pay untold dividends to the future.

Lotte Greaver lives on the Canadian side of Ecola Creek in Cannon Beach. She is eternally grateful for her college philosophy classes.

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HELL-MOUTH HIGH

BY MARGARET HAMMITT-McDONALD

Horror movies, T-shirts for death metal bands, grainy tabloid photos depicting aliens experimenting on drugged-out abductees—none can compete with medieval Europe’s lurid iconography. Poverty and plagues, persecutions and executions provided medieval artists with inspiration for their depictions of Hell and its torments. In manuscript illuminations, demons drive scrawny naked souls through perdition’s portals, represented as a monstrous Hell-Mouth. Hell is not just a place but a beast that will digest their souls over an agonizing eternity.

Once I showed my brother Will a Hell-Mouth reproduced from a fourteenth-century manuscript. He said, “Hey, that’s high school!” We immortalized Will’s realization in a drawing: “High School, a.k.a. Hell-Mouth,” a toadlike monstrosity devouring jocks, preps, and nerds.

“Traditional societies practiced rites of passage, celebrating the transition between childhood and adulthood. These rites weren’t fluffy.”

Some people remember high school as their glory days. Although few clouds of glory trail the hours they spent “just hanging around” after school, gossiping and passing beers, I can understand why those luxurious stretches of idle time seem like nirvana when compared with the soulless hours they now lose at work. The rest of us lug our high-school wounds around like a scruffy backpack we can never jam into a locker and forget about. After all, maybe some bruise stuffed *us* into that locker after our baggage.

Hell-Mouth High is an equation with variables that add up to a beast that devours young souls right when they’re at their most vigorous, hopeful, and promising.

First come the cliques with their relentless nastiness, their power to mock, batter, and exclude. Remember the famous conformity experiment where animal behaviorists painted a red spot on a bird’s beak—an avian *Scarlet Letter*—and the bird’s flock-mates viciously pecked him? That’s high school (and middle school, my personal Inferno). Michelle Anthony and Reyna Lindert, authors of *Little Girls Can Be Mean: Four Steps to Bully-Proof Girls in the Early Grades* (St. Martin’s Griffin, 2010), describe how children discover early on that exclusion is a powerful way to create group cohesion. The king- or queen-pins of a friendship group define the group not so much by shared interests but by who can’t belong, and they enlist the others to police the boundaries. By high school, the “in crowd” has honed cliquishness to a fine (or brutal) art. And until the Columbine school shooting woke the post-adolescent world from the illusion that social cruelty was normative (something for which the sensitive and different just “have to grow a thicker skin” to fend off), willfully ignorant adults turned their backs and allowed the kids to perpetuate a teen society that was part fascist state, part *Lord of the Flies*, where the adolescent *Übermenschen* stamped on the misfits.

The social aspect of secondary-school suffering looms large in our memories, but the academic travail was just as abhorrent. The prevailing rote-learning and over-testing educational practices quashed our curiosity and exuberance for learning. By drawing our focus away from inquiry to memorizing trivia and navigating multiple-choice tests, these outdated approaches drain any subject dry of whatever excitement could’ve enticed young people to study it. In *The Schools Our Children Deserve: Moving Beyond Traditional Classrooms and “Tougher Standards”* (Houghton Mifflin, 1999), educational reformer Alfie Kohn notes that although some elementary schools have embraced progressive curricular changes that facilitate creative, exploratory learning and critical thinking, few high schools have adopted these approaches. Instead, they are bastions of traditional “drill and kill” methods that keep kids bored, unmotivated, and in trouble. The class schedule fragments learning into discrete subject areas, bounded by a 50-minute period and a noisy bell that



terminates further discussion, discouraging intellectually stimulating interdisciplinary learning. And if you think you can escape it all when you get home, there’s homework: more of the same empty busywork requirements that prepare students for the meaningless workplace activities that await them when they graduate.

How did high school become hell? Why did North American mass-consumer culture elect to abandon its youth to bash their way through the pubertal wilderness without meaningful mentorship and a supportive community to embrace them when they emerge as new adults?

Traditional societies practiced rites of passage, celebrating the transition between childhood and adulthood. These rites weren’t fluffy. People understood that the transition was perilous, wrenching, and glorious at the same time, and challenge and pain were prominent features of the rituals. On the other side awaited adult responsibilities, but also acceptance into the community as a full person, imbued with dignity, grace, and (eventually) an elder’s wisdom.

Some societies still practice these rites, although altered to fit new times and new challenges. This society, distanced from natural cycles and processes, has relinquished the powerful idea of adolescence as a sacred time.

High school is hell because adolescence is hell. We don't remember the power and the strength, the passion and the sheer stubborn goodness of teenagers. Instead, we focus on the indignities. Here's the usual narrative: until puberty strikes, we go along companionably with our bodies, which jump, climb, run, and pitch fastballs when we tell them to. But then lo, those dependable vehicles go haywire: shooting up, spreading out, sprouting hair, odors, protuberances, and emotions we're unprepared to handle. Worse, we spend our days thrust in among other new adolescents, equally clueless and mortified about these bestial metamorphoses. Adults are no help. Teens are either too chagrined to ask them about the biochemical body-snatching, or time's passage has softened their remembrances and they give teens no useful directions through the humiliating, sweaty-palmed, gym-sock-smelling labyrinth.

And the worst of it all is that so often, those who're safely past adolescence turn around and lash at "kids today" with the perennial older-generation complaints about young people being self-centered, hedonistic, irresponsible, and threatening to the social order to which we've submitted. Some of these annoying features are consistent with adolescents' developmental stage. Others arise because older folks expect the wrong things of teens (instant obedience and undeserved adulation) and grant them so little respect.

The Hell-Mouth images of the Middle Ages had a triumphant side, a theme called the Harrowing of Hell, where Jesus as Warrior holds demons and Hell's very jaws at bay to release righteous souls who'd waited there for him to free them. The high-schoolers we love need us to help them pry open the Hell-Mouth and become free. To keep the infernal jaws from closing around our young people, we need to become active participants in their education, opening dialogue with teachers and administrators about practices that restore the excitement and meaning to learning. We need to provide prosocial education to kids long before they reach high school, to create what Anthony and Lindert call "caring communities" where pint-sized Social Darwinism is transformed into mutual caring and respect. We need to be active presences in young people's lives, not condescending and micromanaging with "tough standards" and "zero-tolerance discipline," but as confidantes, mentors, and encouragers, helping teens to release their true beauty and power—not just to escape hell but, with their fiery idealism and drive, to create their own earthly heavens.

Margaret Hammitt-McDonald is a naturopathic physician, licensed acupuncturist, and the Fire Mountain School librarian. She enjoys writing, reading, hiking, bicycling, dragonboating, gardening, wacky art projects with young artists, and quiet time with both human and feline family members.

Be Sure To Show Your Work

A bus takes two days
to reach your destination.
Better bring pizza.

When is a haiku
not a haiku, when it is
a run on sentence.

You're on a bus for
two days. Today is Monday.
You forgot pizza.

A haiku can be
greater than or lesser than
the sum of its parts.

It has been two days
and you're still on this damn bus.
What were you thinking?

If a haiku is
written and no one reads it
is it a haiku?

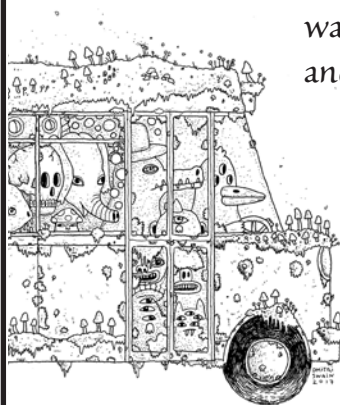
Today's lesson is:
When riding on a slow bus
always bring pizza.

There may be no wrong
questions but that doesn't mean
there's no wrong answers.

Don't blame my dog. I
was on a bus for two days
and very hungry.

~ Gambele Kerr

*Gambele Kerr is currently
enjoying life as an indoor cat.*



Learning to Swim

by LaNicia Williams

I am a true west coast girl. I was born in Inglewood, California, raised in Redondo Beach and graduated from high school in Manhattan Beach. It wasn't until my family moved to Omaha, Nebraska, in 1999, that I realized how important living near the water is for me. I felt landlocked. I never realized I had taken living by the ocean for granted. It is so much different than being around a manmade lake or a river. I don't remember my mom taking us to the beach or swimming often, but

“
**I am one of the few people
living on the north Oregon
coast with direct ancestry to
slavery from Africa.**

I was able to connect to the water during my time growing up, especially during my high school years attending a school less than two miles from the beach in Manhattan Beach, California.

While visiting a friend one day this past summer, we stumbled on a conversation about Black Americans and

swimming. At first I joked about the fact that a lot of Black people, at least women, don't swim because of our hair.

I'll be the first to admit I had a hard time doing anything to mess up my "do." I've heard all kinds of analogies of why Black women straighten our hair to look "White" and other types of reasons why Black women do what we do with our hair. My grandmother began taking me with her to the beauty shop when I was five years old. From Shirley Temple curls to the pressing comb to clippers, getting my hair done by a professional is what I've always done. Coko from SWV (Sisters with Voices, a 90s R&B group) was my inspiration for my "flat iron do" with a part down the middle. So when it came to getting my hair wet, um, no thank you. I just got my hair done and it's still "fresh." Even going to the club was reserved for Friday nights before my weekly Saturday appointment. It didn't matter what I looked like when I went to bed because I was going to be in my beautician's chair at 7 am the next day.

But this is about more than just hair.

I am one of the few people living on the north Oregon coast with direct ancestry to slavery from Africa. Fewer than two percent of the north coast population is African-American. I love living here on the coast. In fact, I've never felt more at home anywhere else, even my birth place in southern California. I don't offer my opinion as the voice of Black America, but as a Black woman in America who has often pondered the direct correlation between my inability or desire to swim and the passage of troubled waters my ancestors experienced on the slave ships that disconnected, dispersed, and drowned a whole race of people.

According to USA Swimming (the national governing body for the sport of swimming in the United States), 69% of Black children and 42% of White children have minimal or no swimming ability. As a result, Black children drown at a much higher rate than their White peers. When we look at most athletes of color we see them on the football field (70% of NFL players are Black men). We're not surprised

to see them on the basketball court (74% of NBA players are Black men). In contrast, the U.S. swimming team released its official report on the demographics of their 2014 year-round members and only 1% were Black. The movie *Pride* tells the story of James Ellis, who in 1971 formed the PDR (Pride, Determination, Resilience or Philadelphia Department of Recreation) swim team. As you can imagine, having a Black swim team in the early 70s was no easy feat, considering this was a time when "Whites only" signs were still posted over public swimming pools. This was the first African American swim team and was located in Nicetown, Pennsylvania. This program has now sent swimmers to the swimming trials for the U.S. Olympics every year since 1992.

So again, why don't Black people swim? Could it have anything to do with slavery and needing to reconcile with the waves and shores of its passage? Even after slavery was abolished, the laws of segregation around the country, like Jim Crow laws and the Declaration of Constitutional Principles, made it illegal for Black people to have access to water via public pools and beaches. This was an interesting concept my friend and I pondered out loud. Let's consider this notion together.

Millions of people watched in awe as Jamaican Alia Atkinson became the first woman of color to win a world swimming title in 2014. We then watched again in 2016 when Simone Manuel became the first Black woman to win a gold medal in swimming at the Olympic games in Rio. I consider my own upbringing and taking swimming lessons at Jesse Owens Park in Los Angeles (where I also learned how to play tennis) and coming close to drowning at Seaside Lagoon Water Park in Redondo Beach while on a school field trip. Growing up close to the beach didn't get in me in the water. As a matter of fact, I am just now beginning to enjoy the "beach life" on the coast even though I still only get knee deep.

**Growing up
close to the beach
didn't get me in the water.**

We can follow the trail back to the era of segregation. Black people (or Negroes back then), were legally denied access to swimming pools. Yes, it was against the law for Black people to swim or learn how to swim. It wasn't until 1970 that the YMCA was forced to desegregate recreational facilities as a result of a ruling by the U.S. courts. The Southern Poverty Law Center had filed a lawsuit on behalf of Vincent Smith and his cousin Edward Smith for being denied entry into the YMCA's summer camp program in Montgomery, Alabama. During the lawsuit, it was discovered the YMCA had an agreement with the city back in 1958 to outline a plan to maintain institutional racism.

The Atlantic slave trade began transporting Africans across the Atlantic to North American soil in the 16th century. Millions of lives were lost in the waters that were once considered safe and life giving. Before being separated from their homeland, many of those captured had to be swimmers, right? The coast land was the home for many who were enslaved. They were native to the culture of living on the coast:

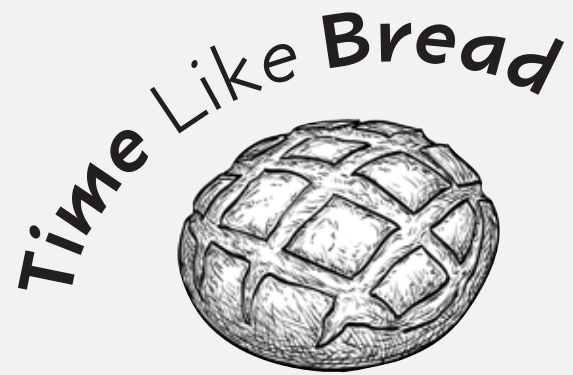
swimming, diving, and fishing had to be the normal way of living until the waters offered the imminent threat of death in what was once a source of life.

Could it be the effects of slavery have prevented Black people from wanting to swim? I believe the answer is yes. Generational relationships and curses are real. We see it with examples of abuse, alcoholism, mental illness, and hereditary diseases. Not all generational relationships are bad. I come from several generations of singers and ministers. Others have family lines full of service men and women, or teachers or doctors and lawyers. Somehow, unbeknownst to us we are tied by generational relationship to both the triumphs and tragedies of our ancestors. My conclusion is instead of the love of water and life the ocean gave to my forefathers and foremothers being my dominate trait, this was instead reseeded by fear and lack of resolve, which has been passed down generationally through my bloodline.

A new friend recently introduced me to the word epigenetics. In digging online, I also discovered the idea or theory of transgenerational epigenetic inheritance. I've concluded this means the effects of something can be passed through the bloodline without attaching itself to our DNA. As it pertains here, I will define it as the fear of water, from the effects of slavery, being passed on to me from my ancestors even as the love of water is in the construct and very essence of who we are. I know it sounds like a stretch, but is it really?

Consider the possibility of how the final and absolute destruction of racism could in fact restore the love of water for a nation of people who have never had the opportunity to find resolve with one of earth's basic elements. After all, our bodies are 60% water, and 71% of the earth's surface is covered in water. Mothers know the sign of birth when their "water" breaks. Since racism (systemic oppression) seems to also be the effect of transgenerational epigenetic inheritance, can we now find our way past the darkest parts of our bloodline and finally kill the root of our intolerance? I am hopeful the answer is yes. Coming into the knowledge of such a profound yet hidden obstacle at the core of our being is the beginning process of finding our healing back at the sea shore. If you'd like to meet me there, I'd be willing to join hands as we release the angst of the ocean and embrace the love it desires to breathe into our very existence. The waters brought peace before they were known to promote conflict. It's time for all of us to connect back to our roots, when water was our friend and provided sustenance, not anxiety.

LaNicia Williams has lived on the north Coast since September 2014. She is the owner of Coastal Soul, a private in-home dining experience where she turns kitchens into soul food sanctuaries. LaNicia is also the founder of the Love Coalition, a community group that helps people connect with one another without judgement or labels, acknowledging our differences in a healthy way so we can learn and grow, all while having the freedom to be authentic. Everything LaNicia does is seasoned with love and it's her heart's desire to share the message of love around the world.



**I am mother.
If I don't have
time,
I will make time.
I will form it with
my hands like
bread.
I will add yeast.
Filling your
childhood with
air so you can
breathe.
Then we wait.
I know. You want
to go faster
because it feels
too long.
But instead of
rushing we will
knead every last
dollop.
Folding in
memories.
Emptying the
cupboards of the
world.**

**Sprinkling your
days with raisins
and cinnamon,
honey and seeds.
And yes, we will
taste everything.
Twice.
Lick the spoon
clean.
All too soon you
will feel the
warmth, telling you
to rise.
We will stand
at the oven, a
moment of
hesitation.
I will hold on too
long and the heat
will burn my
fingers.
Blisters and tears,
but don't worry. I
will let you go.
When that day
comes the smell of
hot bread will
follow you.
It will taste as good
as a promise kept.
And then you
will go make time.**

- Winter Krane

Winter Krane is your average underachiever. She writes books, paints, crochets, DIY's everything from sewing her kids diapers to making her own shampoo, and in her free time she raises her five kids with her husband of thirteen years. She also lives with the mathematics disability, dyscalculia. Which means she writes L and R on her hands to remember directions, smiles and nods when people try to talk numbers to her, and constantly counts on her fingers when adding anything above six. She lives on the Oregon coast, and no, she doesn't mind the rain.

TEACHINGS by Keri Haken IN TRAUMA



It's hard to know whether to laugh or to cry at the human predicament. Here we are with so much wisdom and tenderness, and - without even knowing it - we cover it over to protect ourselves from insecurity. Although we have the potential to experience the freedom of a butterfly, we mysteriously prefer the small and fearful cocoon of ego.

The Places That Scare You ~ Pema Chodron

Learning and healing share many attributes. We must become aware of something in order to alleviate or correct it. By definition one begets the other. In general we certainly do not think of them as one and the same. Yet holistic thinkers do and always have connected them.

My own experience with physical trauma and that which I saw in my late husband Paul's experience with cancer showed me that bodily ailments can be great teachers. We each suffered from a serious illness that not only retrained our brains (literally in my case) but set us on new courses in this life.

Seven days after my thirty-fourth birthday I was having neurosurgery to remove an abscess that was threatening my life. Previously, it had been the unfound cause of months worth of physical pain. After an un-recollected period of time -- at least one week -- I awoke in a hospital room filled with family and friends but completely clueless. The surgery was successful at removing the abscess. It was also successful at leaving me without the use of one side of my body or my cognition. Physically it was as if I had suffered a stroke. We have placed blame for this on the surgery but I am sure it was a combination of surgery and abscess.

I was confused and unable to comprehend what had happened to me. I was not able to speak properly, stand, feel the left side of my body, or understand basic things. I was very afraid most days in the hospital without the ability to fathom what that feeling was all about. Therapists of all kinds as well as nurses and CNAs came to work with me several times per day. They were trying to retrain my brain and body so that I would form comprehensible sentences, be able to button a button, read with understanding, remember my birthday and walk again. Learning how to walk again at age 34 is frustrating and humiliating. Actually, so were all of the treatments. I hated physical therapy. It was very difficult because with each aided step I could recall being able to do it on my own. I was 34 years old, damn it.

During all of these exercises and therapies came the feelings and questions of what is going on, who am I, why? I was becoming a new me during this time. A

stronger and more secure woman was being born from this shell and its insecurities. My husband was my rock and my caregiver. In his eyes I found the sparks that kept my fire burning. Honestly, there were many times that I was ready to let my flames fade out.

All of these physical and neurological sufferings, changes and struggles proved to be my foundation when Paul was diagnosed with late stage pancreatic cancer at the end of that same year.

WTF does not even begin to describe life at that time. I had to suck it up because there was no time for my projected two-year recovery. By the time of his diagnosis I was walking and talking normally. My recovery was progressing well and with a few surprising results. I began to study everything I could on cancer. I needed to understand this enemy. Never mind that eight months prior I was unable to communicate coherently or walk a straight line. Somehow, eight months after brain surgery and with a looming terminal cancer diagnosis happening to my husband (my reason for surviving), I was not only reading biomedical papers and metabolic research on cancer but I understood them. The Poet English major that had never had an anatomy or chemistry class in her life was showing up at oncology appointments with a spiral notebook full of questions that occasionally stunned the doctor.

I had ceased believing any of the I can't excuses, which ultimately led me to I can and I will. A doctor once told me that I was a walking miracle. I will never forget that, and those words became my best medicine. I still take a shot of them as needed. During Paul's cancer journey I heard those words in my mind, heart and body daily.

For the most part I have made a full recovery. I continue to write poetry and in 2015 I completed a Holistic Nutrition program to become a certified Holistic Nutrition Consultant. That certification meant studying anatomy, physiology, some pathology and chemistry with an accredited nutrition school. These things we call miracles, healings, or unexplainable woo-woo are real and innate aspects of us as human beings living in this world. The more we learn about ourselves the greater our capacity to heal. The people that we are closely connected to can help us achieve this and vice versa. My husband did pass on in 2010. He had been given a 6 months at best prognosis at the end of 2007. He did the work and he taught himself how to be in his heart in this life. It was as if he began living without an ego. I witnessed an individual transformation that was in many aspects sacred.

It is my belief that wisdom and tenderness are our medicines and our best teachers. Humans have become disconnected to themselves, each other and the world in which we exist. Sometimes traumatic experiences prompt us to embrace our wisdom and tenderness, enabling us to proceed through life with more openness, willingness and a balance that allows harmony of body, mind and spirit. This is connection. It is our medicine. You have yours and I have mine.

I was born and raised in Kansas City, Mo and currently live in Portland, OR. I am the youngest of seven and an Auntie and Great Auntie to too many to count . In 1996 I earned my BA in English Literature and a minor in Philosophy from Rockhurst University. In 2015 I became a certified Holistic Nutrition Consultant from Hawthorn University. As a young woman I dreamed of being a poet and the dream continues. I was supported in this choice by my late husband, who was a musician, and my parents. In my younger years my influences were the confessional poets. I still enjoy them but find my spirituality (which is Native way, Lakota), my life experiences, and the natural world are my muses.

ONCE A NURSERY RHYME

*I hold my head and wonder,
An oasis of beauty opens in front of me,
Marshland, wetland
How little there is left.*

*Tall deep pink flowers, foxgloves,
Where is the fox? Long gone,
Stretch out through the now dryish land,
A color that will draw a happy gaze.*

*At the far end of the little still-a-swamp space
The trees begin, twisted and bending
This way and that
Reaching for a used-to-be clear sky.*

*Calmness, grace, and peace
Cloak the marshy grass
And a blue heron squawks her
Guttural cry as she makes her way by.*

*And just a little bit away
I watch the man find a board
And an exposed drift log
On this beach of dreams.*



*He places a young girl
On one end of that balanced board
And a little boy joins in
At the other end.*

*Seesaw Seesaw. Up and down
Goes my life as I try to find my balance
In this wounded world
Where each day grows warmer.*

*The man laughs as he pushes the girl down
And the little boy rises higher
And then he pulls her up
And the boy sinks to the sand.*

*Seesaw. Seesaw. The World whirls madly,
Searching for the balance it had before,
We look at each other and smile
The football game is about to begin.*

I wait for the rain

~ John Marshall

John Marshall returns to the Oregon coast, having lived here back in the seventies. With the ocean hemming him in for now with all her wild beauty, he finds himself often looking over his shoulder, sometimes apprehensively, wondering where we are going and what we are thinking, and whose world is this, anyway?

Six Eras

by Sam Steidel

Sitting on a stump, fresh cut, smelling of spruce, I overlook the fog sitting off shore. From here I can see the whole of my town, its length. Rooftops and paved roads dot and stretch in the quiet of distance. People move about in glimmering cars.

Today I can also look behind this scene. I can see the was-of-it, because I know a bit of what was. My imagination can view some of the history within this little patch of beach. It comes to me along the crisp fall air, the same air that carries fragrances so well. I can sense the six eras of this place tangled in one whiff. In the length of it. The whole of it in one view.

The first era I call *Magic*. Here is where rocks and sand were ground from the hearts of mountains to marry the land and sea, where the wind danced with clouds full of rain to settle and shape the hills. Forest and foliage enriched the air and soil. This era lasted as long as was needed, no way of knowing anyway. It is an imponderable, best left to dreaming long cool dreams of its wonder. Magic took its time to become this best of places -- just right, just so, just in time for us beings to enter stage right.

One day, way long ago, a man carried his daughter over the hill, yes that hill to our right, and he said to his daughter “child, this is our new home.” Their journey had come to an end, a search with unaccountable beginnings only to find one clear and obvious answer. He found for his family a place of magic. Her daughters and daughters of daughters formed families that stayed and thrived for so long.

This comprises the second era -- the *Original* era. I know little of this time but do thrill in the imagining of it. Rills of salmon crossed from ocean to creek, swimming under trees too old to call grandfather. A few long cedar plank roofs grew along the banks of the water. Smoke rose to catch the northerly breeze. Vast tall spruce and hemlock hid the beach at this angle because of their height. The tip of a verdant rock hosted a halo of birds and the same lazy fog bank, in the same spot as today.

Their lives may or may not have been tranquil. Surely these first folk traded and fished and sang songs around fires. Most assuredly they laughed and played in the sand. Generations became part of the magic of place.

Much, much later another man on a horse, his son beside him, grasped the salt-cleaned air in lungs full.

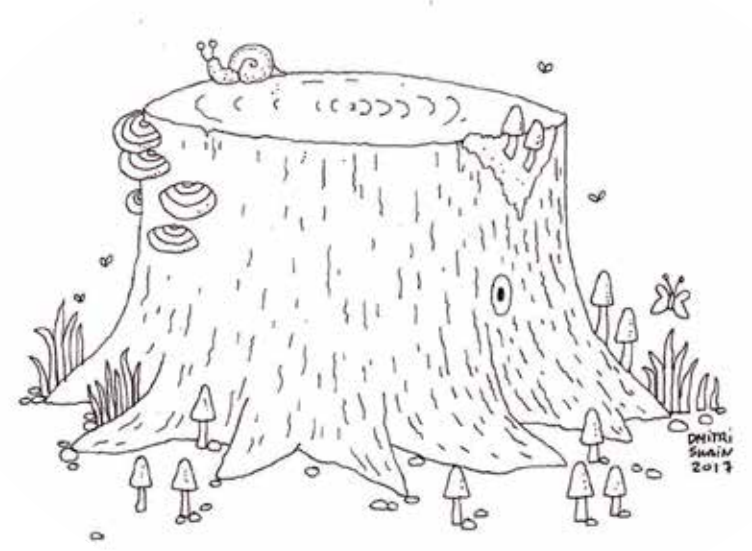
He claimed a parcel of land out on the southern reach of our vision. Freed from the steamboat whistles and soot, alone and away from the hustle and grab, his family built down the beach past that nob there. A new roof, trim and angular shone the gold of fresh split shingles. A round rock chimney climbed the wall and rose above the ridge. A garden, then a patchwork of tilled land, perhaps a goat or a cow meandered into the picture. Elk got their fill of rose buds and corn stalks. Wagons crossed over the creek on a wood pier bridge. Evening songs drifted up from revelers sharing house-made beer.

This forms the era of the *Pioneer*, of hearty souls who dared to live in the wilderness. Each bound to learn its comforts and trials, they accepted the shared history from those few remaining first folk. They learned of the tests this shore can bring to their door, like the winds and the long gray hum of endless rain. They found the souls of trees and heard the hearts of the waves welcoming rhythm. They sang with the sands and built between tides. Yet in their discovery they brought burdens with taints of distant boundaries. The baggage they carried from where they escaped filled the cracks forming between the lines of wondrous discoveries and bygone mistakes.

The fourth era is established, the *Founders*. Here came builders who cared less to learn from the prior discoverers. These were quantifiers who made lines: lines on paper to delineate ownerships and ledger values; lines along the ground for walking and hauling; lines to be divided again and again. They walked on lined sidewalks beside roads lined white and yellow. Their lines of words filled tomes of rules and regulations, ordinances and charters. Their lines on forms were filed and transmitted into articles of municipal formation. A town was born.

A city rose along those lines with roofs of substance, tar and asphalt. Signs on shops appeared as splotches of color, singular and gay. Festivals imported from across the land sang on frozen nights and sent brilliant bombs into a summer sky. Poles strung lines joining roofs to each other. And there! You see it from here don't you, the lights in the dark? No mere candles these or smoky oil lanterns. Power from afar.

The buzz of the mill rang into the night, audible from here, as are the axes and saws in amongst the



hills behind us. This very stump I sit upon today is then nothing more than a cone of hope from a fallen giant.

This era was a central point, a transitional balance of past and future on the verge of mediocrity, with one foot glued in the moss of history and the other desperately testing modernity with a calloused big toe. Founders learned how to care for the preciousness they knew they held. Folk here struggled to remember the ancestors and honor the descendants, learning how to corral their upbringings and the burdens of elsewhere. They longed for the spark of place to both live and share in its magic, like longing for a toy in the window. They pressed hard against the glass of learning, knowing the was-of-it by virtue of proximity. Close to that history, they savored its flavor, pleasant and comfortable. There, do you see it? The candy.

Then came us -- mine own generation, the era of the *Creators*. These are the artisans who plead and search for inspiration, that glory of place that breathes life over the unfurling petals of birth. We were charmed by the heart of the waves and their rhythms, twice a day in and out. We celebrated the wind, soaring in it's jester ways, and the curtains of rain that can be calming by enclosure. We hollered at the clouds and sang to the stars over the horizon. Yes, perhaps we can hear drifting up here where we are, the song from around a beach fire, if the wind allows. Maybe it's like the long ago song sung by the fire in a longhouse by the creek. Perhaps the distance makes it sound similar.

The creators designed and built more roofs, more lights. A fresh charm of place rose up. The aura of character melded with the sound of the waves reborn, each anew. The call of the gulls and the smell of the spruce cheered around us in swirls celebrating this union, art and place. Laughter of children on the dune vied with the tide for the attention of the winds. These sounds come and go in drifts up the hillside to our sticky stump.

Artisans partnered up with these fair surroundings. It felt quaint and far away, that odd world over behind us felt distant. Visitors praised and bought. Charmers peddled. Patrons asked their server what its like to live in such a place. Servers dreamed of the next wave. Dreamers built on stories biographic and fantastic, theatrics charming the life out of winter's doldrums. Words found pages while the waves stepped and toed, in and out. All the while, unnoticed over the rising commotion the sand sang a little less. The gulls became desperate for a fried bit of potato. Special days were scheduled from a need to tidy up, remove plastic bits from the sand. Upon their retirement from dodging nets, the salmon found the taste of their creek was not so inviting.

Today's pace of life panders to something less green than the tall forest of before. A man comes over the hill in his powerful utility vehicle, children huddle in the back behind small screens. But for one. See the boy there looking out the window in awe. The magical horizon has caught those big eyes. The aroma carries a whiff of salt, foreign to him, fresh smells moved along by that jester. This direction the spruce is overwhelming and sour, that way salty and languid.

From up here, the little village packs in more and more till tempers rise. The brown old rock looms over hunters of tranquility, rare to find elsewhere. And peace...how they look for a moment of peace. We have enough to share. The magic is pale yet strong, if not endless. It's just the gray concrete and black top that hide and tease the view of it. People can feel it even if unconsciously, it draws and beckons.

Partakers of the heart of the wave thrill to slide down the foam where surf carries man and board. Or strollers peruse walls and shelves of shops for traces of magic to take home. The creators have begun to learn that there is a price for creating. Too late? We might ask. Might be, but I see the elk still wander looking

for rose buds. Waves walk along relentless in measure. Fog sits wherever it wishes and from way up here we see the sand as white as ever.

We who know better, have we discovered the next era, perhaps our last one? Growing pains and developments leave this era as yet unnamed. Have we learned enough or is there an everlasting something more to seek? Thank you for musing here on my stump with me, as this was but a contemplation. It's a good stump, was a better tree. Now approaching is an era I prefer from another vantage. Not here. This vantage suits best the was-of-it. I will go down now and face the new era with some hope. Hope is the charm and the character, and most definitely the magic. This place where it all comes together. Hope is all I can bear to learn today.

Sam Steidel is a long time hobby writer who is interested in stories he can't find elsewhere. Raised in the arts and grown in Cannon Beach, he is active in the community (currently serving as mayor) and experiences history in the first person. He prefers his bike to the car, his dog wins out over meetings, and he believes trees listen better than most people.



Minus Tide

**Uneven runnels between larger outcrops
deepen, getting out to the surf-spray edge,
where waves confront black rocks in loud wallops.**

**Remarkably, what soothes from safe distance
urges eyes be wary for 'sneaker wave,'
its crescendo nearby in this instance.**

**Mussels hiss and mats of bladderwrack weep;
but now, the tide has turned. Ocean water
bathes the starfish, hidden crab take a peek.**

~ Rob Gourley

Rob Gourley resides in a 90-year-old 'shotgun' cottage by the marshy wetlands of Aberdeen, WA, which is convenient for observing deer, raccoons, & various birds. His verse has appeared in DEGU A Journal of Signs, Elohi Gadugi Journal, Ghost Town Poetry, Shot Glass Journal, Sunset Times, and the Upper Left Edge. He enjoys dropping by open-mic events, Olympia to Portland, for the stimulation of others and auditing new pieces he has been refining.

Education is **COMMUNICATION** by Matthew Ruona

When we hear the phrase “they are a good communicator,” we often assume that means the person being referred to has a way with words and chooses them so that their audience understands their message clearly. What has to be taken into account, however, is that the majority of our communication is transmitted via our body language and our tone of voice as opposed to the words we use. An example of this would be the way an adult often interacts with a baby. The adult, in an attempt to make the baby smile, may use sounds instead of words (ie: goo-goo, gaga) but they will be using a high-pitched voice as they make their eyes wide and their smile large. When the baby smiles they are not responding to any words but to the overall idea that is being communicated, which is that the adult is happy and not a threat.

Some studies have shown that the words used in one’s message only account for 7% of communication while tone of voice accounts for 38% and body language 55%. These numbers have their detractors, but even if they are not completely accurate they indicate that we need to pay close attention to these non-verbal aspects of our communication.

From 2009 to 2014 I worked in the Portland Public School District as a para-educator implementing education plans for kids in special education. It was one of the most fulfilling periods in my work life and I earned the nickname “The Autism Whisperer” at one school where I worked. This was due to my ability to connect with kids on the autism spectrum and to help them become comfortable in their new, unfamiliar surroundings.

I found that the techniques that I used with this population of students translated to the work I was doing with the general student population (at the time I was pursuing my Master of Education degree), and later to the interactions I’ve had with dogs in my current position as owner of Four Paws on the Beach in Manzanita, Oregon. In case it needs to be said, I am in no way equating those kids, whom I care for very deeply, with animals. Rather, I am simply discussing how many of the skills were transferable.

As children age they can extract more and more meaning out of the words that are used to communicate with them, but in those early years, tone of voice and body language dominate. Just imagine a room full of kindergartners listening to their teacher read a story. Imagine the teacher never looking up from the book and reading with a monotone voice. Can you see the kids starting to fidget in your mind? Now imagine the teacher telling the story by giving each character a different sounding voice, raising and lowering their voice to indicate levels of tension or surprise, and looking out at the little faces before them with animated expressions. A really good teacher will actually involve the kids in the story by asking them things like, “What do you think is going to happen next?” or “When that happened how did it make you feel?” Now the kids are hanging on every word, and not because of the words being used, but because of how they are being used.

Some dogs can understand what certain words mean (ie: sit, shake, down, etc.) but garner the vast majority of the information being communicated to them via tone and body language. An example might be a dog owner that thinks that their hound knows what the word “car” means because every time they say to the dog, “Let’s go get in the car!” the dog jumps in the front seat. The owner isn’t taking into account the fact that they are using a higher, friendlier tone of voice than usual and they are moving and indicating toward the car with their hands. The dog may hear the word “car” as well but it is a small part of the overall message leading the dog to believe they are going for a ride.

Temple Grandin is an Assistant Professor of Animal Science at Colorado State University and she has autism (you may have seen the movie about her starring Claire Danes). In her paper *Thinking the Way Animals Do: Unique Insights from a Person with a Singular Understanding* she writes: “People with autism and animals both think by making visual associations. These associations are like snapshots of events and tend to be very specific. For example, a horse might fear bearded men when it sees one in the barn, but bearded men might be tolerated in the riding arena. In this situation the horse may only fear bearded men in the barn because he may have had a bad past experience in the barn with a bearded man.”

I helped children with autism to be comfortable in their new surroundings by providing a positive “snapshot” for those children to refer to whenever they thought about going to school.

It is important to keep certain things in mind when meeting and approaching a dog, a very young child or a special needs student. First, is to approach on their level. If possible sit in a low chair or on the ground or take a knee. Have an open demeanor without arms crossed and a pleasant facial expression. Pay close attention to how they react to you and their comfort level. Do not force initial encounters but let them come to you. This is especially important when meeting kids with autism because their initial feelings about a person will stick with them; and if those feelings are negative and without trust, it can take a very long time to get past those feelings and to build a trusting, productive relationship.



**SUPPORT YOUR LOCAL
ANIMAL SHELTERS AND CONSERVATION GROUPS.**

The key to successful communication with almost anyone, but in particular with the groups I'm writing about, is for the communicator to let the audience give them an indication as to what their mood is, what their likes and dislikes are, and how they like to be approached. Take those cues and shape your approach and message to connect in the most positive and personal way. It is easy to let arrogance creep in and drown out our message because we "know" what needs to be communicated and the "best" way to get that message across. However, they will not hear anything you have to say if they feel threatened or unsafe in any way. If that child or dog is backing away and is looking at you with concern do not continue to approach them. Stop, get low and wait for them to approach you as you continue to speak in a genuinely friendly tone.

When you give them control of the situation and engage them utilizing their interests you will connect on a much deeper level. It can take a while as you figure out how to navigate an individual's particular pathways, but the reward of being able to communicate in a deeper and ongoing way will make that investment more than worth it.

Matthew Ruona is the owner, with his wife Meghan, of Four Paws on the Beach - a dog and cat boutique in Manzanita, Oregon. With their daughter, Montana, they moved to the coast from Portland when they bought the shop in the Summer of 2015. Prior to that Matt worked at Nike World Headquarters as a pre-school teacher and for Portland Public Schools as a para-educator. He realized he wanted to go into education while being a stay-at-home dad. It was quite a departure from his previous careers as an art director in the advertising industry and as a post production producer in the Los Angeles television industry.

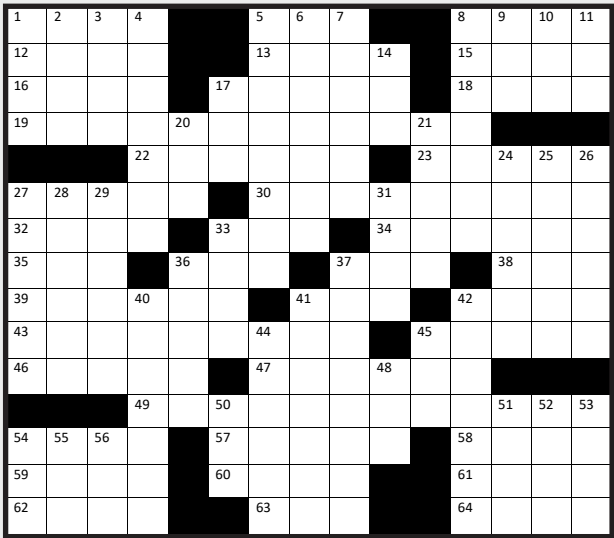


SCHOOL SCHOOL SCHOOL

by Jennifer & Danny Rasmussen

ACROSS

- 1. Qatari
- 5. NW
- 8. Fundamentals
- 12. Actress Rowlands
- 13. Randy Johnson and Pedro Martinez
- 15. Bank closing
- 16. Many SSI recipients
- 17. Soap holder
- 18. Auto price
- 19. School _____
- 22. Pedal pushers
- 23. Sound
- 27. Oscillated
- 30. School _____
- 32. Sharpen
- 33. Woody or Buzz
- 34. Dramatic Spanish verb
- 35. Tolkein race
- 36. Goal
- 37. _____ Park, IL
- 38. _____ mode
- 41. The Spurs, on scoreboards
- 42. _____ and a wink
- 43. School _____
- 45. Joe
- 46. Cleansing technique
- 47. "Scotch Free"
- 49. School's _____
- 54. Well known cookie maker, presumably
- 57. Diet foods
- 58. Othello's ensign



- 59. OR worker's agency
- 60. Largest First Nations group in Canada
- 61. Affleck flick
- 62. Breaks off
- 63. EMTs often end up in them
- 64. _____ free

DOWN

- 1. Belligerent, in slang
- 2. Bar
- 3. Coll. course
- 4. Common high school problem
- 5. Place to develop

- 6. Downsize
- 7. Share, on Facebook
- 8. Ready to embrace
- 9. School _____
- 10. Life saver (ABR.)
- 11. Scott Weiland band, to fans
- 14. "Just a _____"
- 17. Payroll service comp.
- 20. Scrap
- 21. Rap
- 24. "Night of the _____"
- 25. Hello, in Tel Aviv
- 26. Play the online market
- 27. Slang term for a woman
- 28. Chinese soup
- 29. False
- 31. Berkley's School of Business
- 33. Plateau
- 36. One special friend
- 37. Adult acorns
- 40. Transfer
- 41. Razor, for one
- 42. Aplastic and Sickle Cell
- 44. What one is if one makes three straight 3-pointers in NBA Jam
- 45. Homer's convenient friend
- 48. Donkey
- 50. 90s girl group
- 51. Cleo's Antony
- 52. Breakfast brand
- 53. Foundation
- 54. He's "honest"
- 55. Day of the week
- 56. _____ school

Jennifer and Danny fell in love over the New York Times Sunday crossword puzzle. They currently reside in Svensen, Oregon, where they hope to share their fondness of puzzles with a bunch of chickens and their daughter, Rosalee.



DMITRI
SWAIN
2017



Answers on page 17

Seekers on the Range by Watt Childress

Pursuit of higher learning marks the journey into adulthood. For many families this includes college. When young people leave home to matriculate, parents also come to a crossroads. What does a maturing Gen X couple do when the particles of our nuclear nest are split apart?

Road trip. Jen and I embarked on a car-camping expedition through the American west. For a month we travelled the byways of Oregon, Idaho, Montana, the Dakotas, Minnesota, and Wyoming.

Our first evening we tented by a mountain lake outside La Grande, Oregon. Near sunset we followed a dirt footpath to a spot where muddy wooden boards crossed a lakeside marsh. We held hands on the makeshift bridge and watched the sky's shifting colors over the water. I flashed on memories of family trips,

Travelling off the Interstates we celebrated the tapestry of rural scenery and lovable towns (most ranging in population from 20 to 2000). We rarely listened to the radio, read the papers, or logged into social media. We weren't avoiding the news; our senses were tuned to a broader wavelength.

Instead we listened to elk bugling all night in the backcountry of Yellowstone, imagining their breath in the freezing air. We got lost and found in a quiet prairie where we prayed for the return of thick fertile loam and thundering herds of bison. We watched a relative of those herds pee for three solid minutes and another one ford a river in powerful slow-motion surges, her nostrils barely above water. On a cold night near Devils Tower we were glad to find a room because local motels were full of UFO geeks, lured there by boosters who're still cashing in on "Close Encounters of the Third Kind." The next day we woke before dawn



***"We wanted to crack through the crust of everyday transactions,
tap into the cultural magma of our continent."***



when magic surrounded simple excursions with our daughters. People often use the word "pretend" to describe the enchantments of children. Yet those realities prepare us to tend our heart-fires and keep the wonder burning as we grow up.

A carload of high-spirited teens suddenly charged onto the scene and began unloading gear at an adjacent campsite. Thankfully their gusto was coupled with respect for other visitors, so they didn't flood the place with noise. We linked this courtesy with standards set by the campground host, a kind woman from Wallowa County who arrived several years ago. These folks were all good drivers of local culture.

In gratitude we gave them special cedar gleaned from trees growing on an old volcano, part of a bundle going to a Lakota elder in South Dakota. Western red cedar is used in indigenous ceremonies throughout America, yet it doesn't grow outside the Northwest. We gathered it with a friend who recently returned from Wounded Knee, where he was sanctioned to serve as an intercessor in the Sundance ceremony. He asked us to carry the evergreen to a descendent of Crazy Horse who advises him. Burning sage he prayed for our journey and tied a small piece of red cloth to the aerial of our car.

So we routed our trip through Indian Country, visiting as many reservations and heritage sites as possible. This was a good way to connect with America's soul and move deeper into our lives. We left portions of that cedar with a Standing Rock family who protects waterways from fossil fuel moguls, with an Oglala woman who educates visitors at Bear Butte, with a Rosebud man who tells stories at Devils Tower, with a Leech Lake woman who gave us directions to a grove of old-growth pines, and with White Earth angels who work to restore indigenous ownership of tribal land.

to circle the massive trunk of igneous rock that many people consider sacred and some link to stories about star beings. We sweated to the top of Bear Butte (also sacred) and later plunged into an alluring lake next to Black Elk Peak (all the earth is sacred).

We ate dumpling soup, white-bread sandwiches, and soft-serve ice cream at a dilapidated diner with four wizened Dakotan women who told tales about modern pioneers. We descended into the badlands from the rim of Roosevelt National Park and felt the evening fall as smooth as velvet. We hiked over hardened lava and crunchy cinder cones to see the sun rise like a ball of fire over Craters of the Moon National Monument.

We delivered gear to our daughters in the Twin Cities and dumpster-dived for furnishings to fill their new lodgings. We visited historic farmsteads in northern Minnesota and became even greater fans of Finnish resourcefulness. We canoed to a petroglyph in the Boundary Waters, enjoyed fried walleye and took a sauna. Next to a lake teeming with wildlife we watched Ojibwe folks launch a canoe to harvest wild rice.

One dark night in Idaho we ambled into a charming redneck bar full of vociferous dudes dressed in camo. Sound and motion stopped as we entered, except for two big canines that came up to sniff us. We petted the animals, and then the whole place erupted in peals of laughter when Jen announced that we'd just driven the back-way through the Sawtooth Mountains in a Prius. It took us three hours to cover 35 miles on a narrow rutted road comprised of 4 to 8 inch gravel. At one point we figured we would get stuck in the snowy middle of nowhere (also sacred). The pub grub that night tasted like a gourmet feast.

These are just a few surface images of lovebirds moving through big sky country. Yet we weren't merely sightseers on a second honeymoon. We were seeking

“Few of us respect the higher learning that grows outside our colonized economy.”



something meaningful to refill our empty nest, something more potent than anything hatched by the consumer economy. We wanted to crack through the crust of everyday transactions, tap into the cultural magma of our continent.

Along the way we encountered many markers lauding another tourist couple whose names are branded on America’s consciousness. Lewis and Clark were dispatched by colonial rulers to expand a commercial empire. The westward-ho duo surveyed a strategic swath of this land and her native inhabitants, gathering intelligence and preparing a route for conquest.

Skirting sprawl along old frontier trails we wondered what America would be like if settlement had been accompanied by cultural exchange rather than exploitation and genocide. Can we learn from mistakes and turn around? The consequences are becoming dire. Many times during our trip we had to change course due to large wildfires and spreading seas of smoke, phenomena that are increasing in frequency. The west is beset by a massive imbalance that stems from our abuse of natural resources. Retrieving indigenous wisdom is essential for survival.

In Indian Country we’ve often heard the expression “go in beauty,” or sometimes “walk the red road.” Praying for guidance, we made an altar on our dashboard. With each experience we added leaves, stones, feathers, and other gifts from nature, including the desiccated body of a dragonfly. These served as reminders that how we connect with what’s outside our cars is the true gauge of a good ride.

We experienced that truth at a hot spring one morning, on the same day we met the camo dudes. If not for directions from kindred spirits we would have missed the hidden treasure gurgling next to an unmarked pull-out on a dusty traffic corridor. Scouting among the weeds Jen spotted a narrow path leading 30 yards off the road to a trashed patch of paradise. We filled several big bags with aluminum cans, bottles, six-pack rings, snack wrappers, fast-food containers, and unmentionable items of personal hygiene. It was both gratifying and ironic to collect gobs of cigarette butts and then sprinkle the area with ceremonial tobacco.

After cleaning up we burned sage, then soaked alone in geothermal bliss as motorists sped by. In gratitude I sang a song I learned a few years ago while gathering cedar for a salmon celebration in Oregon. Leaning back into the heated water I heard the tonal vibrations thrum against my submerged eardrums. The sound became part of a roadside baptism.

I sang that same song to a Lakota elder, earlier in our trip, when we visited Wounded Knee and passed along the cedar bundle. When I finished he said something that astonished me. “I’ve travelled in that part of the country,” he responded with a smile. “This is a medicine picking song.”

In that moment my soul took a deep breath. I envisioned a boy, maybe 12 years of age, alone in the forest collecting evergreen for a village ceremony. The trees

taught him the right way to gather cedar for ceremonial use, and they also gave him a special song. Later he shared the song with fellow villagers who affirmed his experience and helped him weave it into the web of local knowledge.

Such deep connections with place are rare today, for we’ve cut ourselves off from creation. The resulting wounds are profound, yet society seldom recognizes the gifts that contribute to our healing. Few of us respect the higher learning that grows outside our colonized economy. We’re too obsessed with cashing in on nature to hear her songs.

Yet spirit still moves around. Someone in their fifties can carry a tune for several seasons, grateful to have received it from the forest. Maybe they don’t sing it to many people, figuring most would dismiss it as childish. But then they go on an important journey, and after driving 1,400 miles they meet an elder who understands.

Our new Lakota friend told us he and his people are working to regenerate cultural ways and means that have been trampled amidst the modern rubble. So should we all. Every human being benefits from the quest for wisdom. Lost meaning can be found.

Culture is the car parked in front of our minds, the rig we use to explore worldviews and navigate life’s passages. Today’s model mostly operates on news pumped out by institutional authorities. But America runs smooth on older fuel, if and where we can find it. Searching together, we children of all ages can learn the way home.

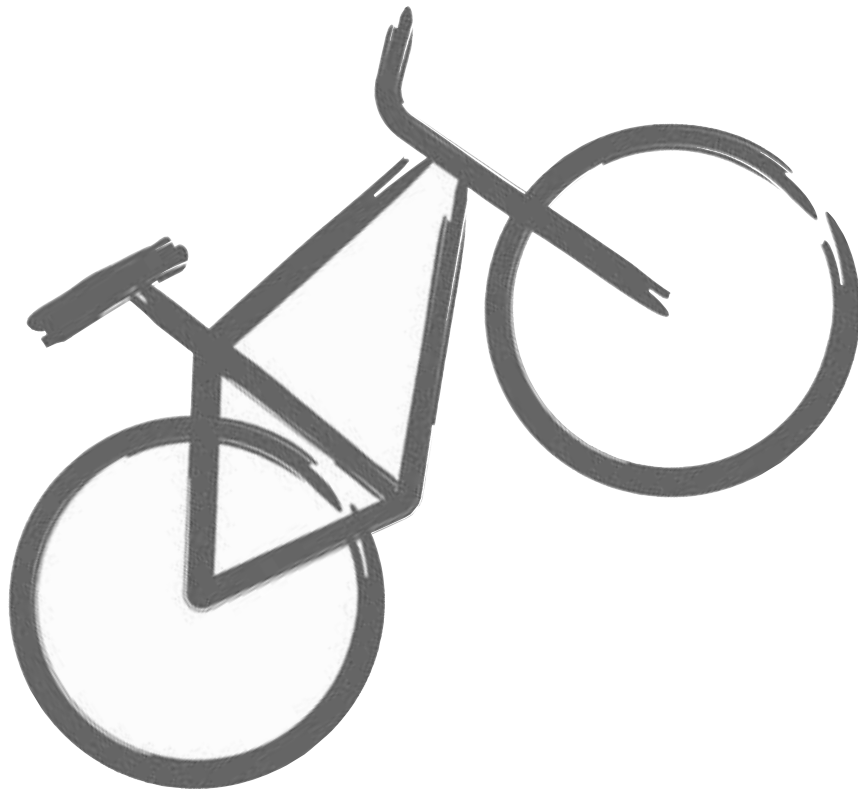
“Watt Childress owns Jupiter’s Books and he publishes the Upper Left Edge. He and his wife Jennifer live on a small farm in the Nehalem Valley.”



Following Senior Swim

As a girl, I failed to look away,
eyes helpless to the forbidden
(road kill, shattered car), at once
riveted and repelled, the steam
and hush only heightening the terror. Molten
tumbles of flesh, pin-tucked smocking of flesh,
blue webbing of capillaries, breasts
distended like cankers on a tree, or drawn
to naught like Jesus' old wine skins.

Four decades on, I disrobe to swim,
a lumbering seal to the reed I was, and I look
away—no longer in horror.
On the slope of wear, I'm nearer
the bottom than the top. Now
the voices edge on laughter, and the flaunted
flesh looks, from where I stand wrapped
in iron-clad modesty, like freedom.



by Tricia Gates-Brown



Watching Futbol at the Auto Repair Shop

Late breakfast Sunday. Boys trundle past
on bikes, zigzagging over puddles as gold spills
on our table glinting in nets of syrup and yolk.
“Did you and your siblings have bikes?”

I ask, remembering a burro but no bike, a tidbit
missed in years of chit-chat. Mind inventories bikes
of my youth, first one tasseled, bicentennial red, white,
and blue, next one pink, indistinct, last a candy-apple
ten-speed — aquamarine seat and stripes — that I loved.
You lick your lips clean and nod no. Once

I asked if you watched soccer on TV as a child.
“Yes,” you said, “once a week. We didn’t have electric.”
“Oh, did you hook it up to the car battery?”
“No, we didn’t have a car.”
“So how did you watch your TV?”
“Well,” you said, “we didn’t have a TV.”

Tricia Gates Brown, PhD, lives in the woods in the Nehalem River Valley, where she writes, edits, and practices emotional-wellness coaching.

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Puzzle answers from page 13



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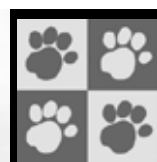
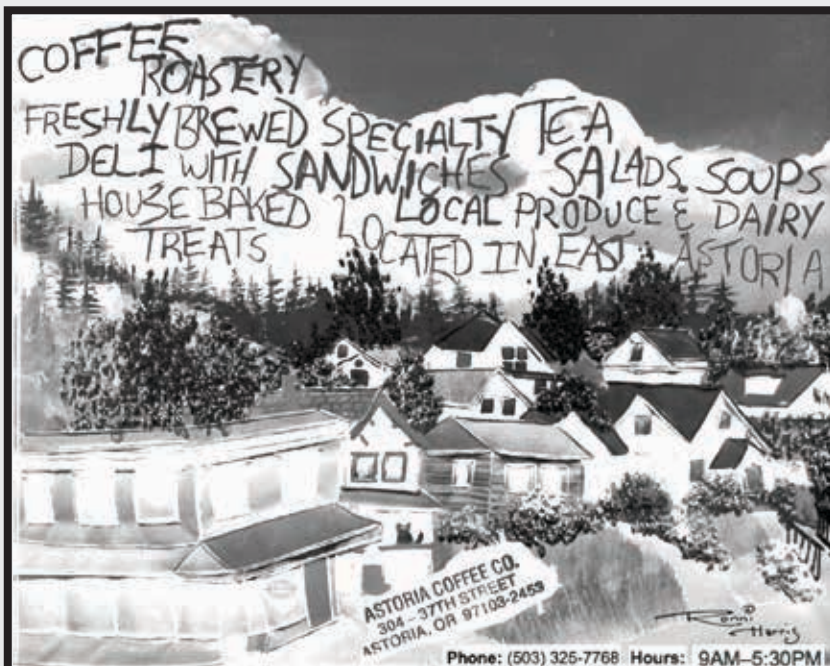
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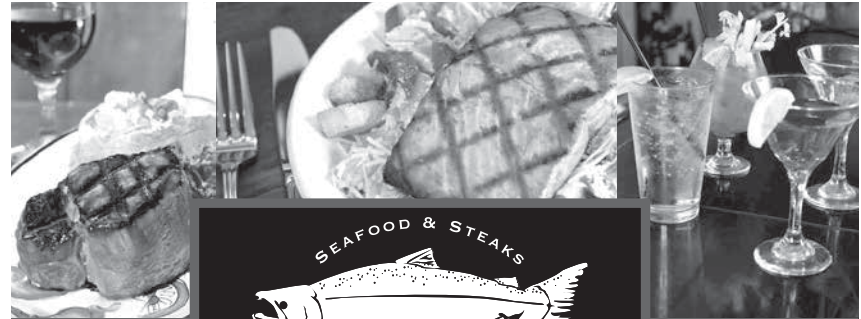
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