“A crisis creates the opportunity to dip deep into the reservoirs of our very being, to rise to levels of confidence, strength, and resolve that otherwise we didn't think we possessed.”

— Jon M. Huntsman Sr., Winners Never Cheat: Even in Difficult Times

Dear CMind Friends,

Sawubona! We see you!

We are one. This Earth is our home. Each of us—kin.

In the month of April, on April 22, we celebrate Earth Day. Earth Day is an annual event designed for people of the planet to demonstrate their support for environmental protections and the practice of environmental justice in response to the planet's environmental crisis. Today, we lift up the call to take action toward solving the climate crisis and building a healthy planet for future generations.

This month, we have the honor of hearing from my friend, former colleague, and CMind community member Bart Everson. Bart has been one of my teachers in the call for environmental justice and in understanding humanity's role in this living, breathing eco-system we call Planet Earth. Bart places before us a call for Right View in the perception of our
relationship to the Earth and one another. He writes:

The facts make it plain. We have entered an age of multiple interlocking ecological catastrophes, even as we stand again on the brink of nuclear apocalypse, to say nothing of America's ongoing reckoning with a long-deferred and long-denied quest for racial justice. All of it is predicated on separations which should never have been made in the first place, separations which became wounds, wounds which now fester.

Our Earth-wounds are many. Pollution, global warming, overpopulation, improper waste disposal, ocean acidification, the loss of biodiversity, deforestation, and ozone layer depletion are human-made issues that stem, perhaps, from our view of the Earth as resource and not as Source. The over commodification and misuse of Mother Earth’s gifts caused by human greed and the tendency to see ourselves as separate from the Earth itself have necessitated a price we must all pay for the violence we have done to Earth and one another in the name of progress—scientific and economic.

We understand that the climate crisis and inequities experienced by communities of the global majority share a common root: an unjust system that loves money more than the lives of human beings, species, and the earth. I will save you here from my diatribe on colonialism’s legacy of oppression, extraction, production, and labor and how it leads to exploitation, dehumanization, and an ongoing legacy of gross inequalities that perpetuate class, race, and gender-based oppression.

Why is this an important point to raise in a discussion on environmental justice? People of the global majority have and will continue to bear the burden of the effects of environmental injustice and climate change. There is an inextricable link between environmental justice and racial justice.

In this country, cancer and asthma rates taught us this and the impact of COVID-19 reiterated it: Environmental issues disproportionately impact Black people and other people of color. People of color are more likely to be exposed to polluted air, water, soil, and poor industrial working conditions. As one of the members of the Black Lives Matter movement recently said, “Racism is endemic to global inequality. This means that
those most affected – and killed – by climate change are Black and poor people.”

The research tells us: In the United States, people of color disproportionately live in places that are polluted with toxic waste, which leads to higher instances of the negative health effects such as cancer, asthma, degraded cardiac function, and high blood pressure.

Not to mention, research has also highlighted that race is a stronger influence on exposure to pollutants than poverty. This means it is likely that polluters not only site their activities in low income areas, but in some cases are actively selecting locations where there are high percentages of Black people in particular.

Outside of the U.S., climate change and environmental degradation is disproportionately impacting people of color from poor countries, and those in coastal or island communities are being threatened by rising sea levels. Indigenous populations are deeply impacted by the criminal deforestation in the Amazon; there is water pollution throughout India and growing desertification across the African continent.

I live in New Orleans and was appointed to serve on the Governor’s Climate Initiatives Task Force, Equity Advisory Group for the State of Louisiana, where we are experiencing first-hand the impact of the intertwined evils of racial and environmental injustice. Across our state, communities of color are disproportionately located in areas—due to redlining and other discriminatory housing practices born of the Jim Crow era and perpetuated—most vulnerable to climate hazards with unequal protection.

If we have ears to hear and hearts that listen,

The earth is telling us something about our conduct of living, as well as about our abuse of this covenant we live upon. Not one of us can believe himself or herself untouched by these messages, no matter where she or he lives, no matter under what illusion of safety or uninvolvment we may pretend to hide. Each one of us has some power that can be used, somewhere, somehow, to help save our Earth. (Audre Lorde, Of Generators & Survival—Hugo Letter, December 17, 1989)
Each of us has a responsibility to respect and protect our common home, and to awaken from the painful illusion that we are separate.

Please linger with Bart’s words in the days to come and determine what it is in your corner of the world you can do to awaken and help to save our planet.

**A Brief Update**

After nearly six years with CMind, Maya Elinevsky celebrated her last working day with the organization on Friday, March 18. We thank and honor Maya for all that she has contributed to CMind over the years in guiding and implementing our programming. As CMind’s Board Chair, Michelle Chatman wrote, “Maya has been integral in building a critical, compassionate, contemplative community.” We are grateful for her time with us and she will be missed by all within the community. We wish her and her family a next season filled with abundant joy and love.

As I have written before, but not so directly, CMind is undergoing a period of transformation. This transformation is guided by our need to meet the challenges of the present societal moment(s) and improve the fiscal health of the organization. To date, the three remaining CMind staff (Carrie Bergman, Caryn Blair, and myself) are working at 50 percent FTE to save the budget. My hope is that this reduction in full-time employment status is a temporary occurrence for the organization.

To say it more plainly, we are in need of building a robust donor base and sustainable streams of revenue to keep the organization solvent. The Board and I are committed to doing what is necessary to engage our members, donors, partners, philanthropic partners, and friends to ensure we garner the support necessary to continue to provide informative, thought-provoking, and enlightened programming focused on contemplative justice, equity, radical healing, human flourishing, and collective liberation within the realm of higher education and within the larger society.

As Executive Director, I am personally asking each of you to assist where you can to make certain we are around for another 25 years. Here’s how you can help:

- [Donate to CMind and/or become a sustaining donor with a monthly donation](#)
• Forward this email to potential donors and friends within your respective networks
• **Renew your membership to ACHME and encourage others to become members**
• Remember us on your pillows and lift us up in your respective practices
• **Communicate with us and tell us how we can improve and what you need**

Finally, please attend and promote our programming. The Board has approved a FY2022-23 Transformation Strategy that will include a host of new program offerings. Stay tuned and please attend.

I offer gratitude in advance for your continued support, and I call on all help—visible and invisible—to come to our aid and envelop us in support as we work to bring people home to themselves, provide spaciousness for radical healing, make just the environments for human flourishing, and enliven the courage for collective liberation.

Be well.
Be still.
Trust in the infinite.
Remember our shared humanity.
Be community.
Be of good courage.

DRM

David W. Robinson-Morris, Ph.D.
Executive Director
The Center for Contemplative Mind in Society (CMind)

13 April 2022

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**The Pain of Separation**

Bart Everson
We have imagined ourselves separate: from each other, and from the Earth. This delusion has many consequences that are very real indeed, as we have separated ourselves into tribes, races, sects, and nation-states. Especially painful is the exploitation which the delusion has been used to justify. The cruel enslavement of human beings is one sin committed under a doctrine of separateness; the rapacious extraction of resources from the natural world is another.

I’d like to be clear about who “we” are. Not everyone has fallen prey to this delusion. I don’t wish to exacerbate the very divides which I decry, yet some distinctions are necessary. When I use the first person, I’m referring to what is sometimes called the West, or the Global North. I’m referring to a worldview which was hatched in Europe but has spread around the world.

There’s some truth to any delusion, of course, and our most powerful delusions contain powerful kernels of truth. There are indeed many differences across humanity. There are many differences between humanity and other species. Each difference is a learning opportunity to be celebrated. We’ve emphasized and exaggerated them in the drive for differential advantage and exploitation. Great power has obviously derived from that emphasis.

Yet all these differences become trivial when viewed from the proper perspective. And the world is crying out for that proper perspective.

The facts make it plain. We have entered an age of multiple interlocking ecological catastrophes, even as we stand again on the brink of nuclear apocalypse, to say nothing of America’s ongoing reckoning with a long-deferred and long-denied quest for racial justice. All of it is predicated on separations which should never have been made in the first place, separations which became wounds, wounds which now fester.

It has often seemed to me that all pain has its origin in separation. Every painful event in my life has been a separation of one kind or another, from the falling away of my childhood faith to the recent death of my sister. Perhaps you’ve felt the same way. Our private pain can be difficult to bear. Even this notion is predicated on conceptions of separateness: that your pain is separate from mine, that I am separate from you.
There is another way to look at it all, a healing and a unitary vision, a perspective that emphasizes our solidarity and radical interdependence.

There are stores of ancient philosophy and Indigenous wisdom that surely apply here, and we need it now more than ever. What has particularly resonated with me, what I have found needful and necessary as we move through this alienated era, are the teachings of Earth system science and Gaia theory.

I hasten to add that I am not a scientist! I struggle, sometimes, to understand the details of the science in its own right. Nevertheless, as important as that is, there are extrapolations of a general nature which are even more crucial, and which can be taken to heart even by a layperson like myself.

Chief among these lessons is the understanding that there is no separation between humanity and nature. Just as evolutionary biology reveals that there is truly only one race – the human race – so ecological science reveals we are all a part of Gaia. I understand Gaia to be a metaphor for the coevolutionary, interconnected, planetary ecosystem.

As far as I know, virtually every culture of the world has revered and personified the Earth as the source and sustainer of life. The European-style alienation from nature is a fairly recent phenomenon, a mere blip in the historical record, but a blip with great historical consequences.

It's become clear that we need to change our way of living if we are to sustain any kind of life at all. As an intellectual exercise, that's simple logic, but the emotional reality can be difficult to grasp. In fact, for many, it's an absolute showstopper. We need practices that foster a unitary vision, that connect our hearts to Mother Earth. The intellectual and political struggles will find their renewal there.

**Bart Everson** helped found the Green Party of Louisiana as well as Friends of Lafitte Greenway, the Earth-Based Spirituality Action Team of Citizens' Climate Lobby, the Earth-Centered Special Interest Group of POD Network, the Greater New Orleans Interfaith Climate Coalition, and the Crescent City Gaian Guild. He is the author of *Spinning in Place: A Secular Humanist Embraces the Neo-Pagan Wheel of the Year*. He
Breath-Holding Practice

By Bart Everson

Breathe deeply, drawing richly-oxygenated air into your lungs, feeling the life-giving oxygen entering your bloodstream and flowing through your veins.

When you feel fully oxygenated, after five or six deep breaths, inhale as deeply as ever and then hold your breath.

While holding your breath, repeat to yourself these words: “I am separate from Gaia.”

Try to believe it.

As your need to breathe increases, lean into that assertion of your separateness, your independence, your proud autonomy.

When at last you are forced to draw breath again, admit the falsity of this premise. Acknowledge that you are, in fact, utterly dependent on Gaia.
The atmosphere not only sustains life but is produced by life.

That’s right: the air we breathe is maintained in its current beneficent proportions by the myriad actors and agents that comprise Gaia.

Repeat this process four or five times, then rest in gratitude.

Note: This practice is adapted from Erik Assadourian, who in turn was inspired by a comment made by scientist Dan Fiscus, in a conversation hosted by our nascent Gaian community. (See Gaianism.org for more information.)

Please join us for the final two programs in our webinar series - Healing Higher Education: Race, Reckoning, and Radical Reimagining, happening on Thursday, April 21st and 28th.
In case you missed it, here are the recordings from the first three Healing Higher Education series recordings.
Reimagining Contemplative Practice at the Community College - March 31, 2022
Save the Date!

The 18th Summer Session on Contemplative Practices in Higher Education: Introducing Earth-Care Practices in Higher Education

VIRTUAL

Monday, August 1 - Wednesday, August 3, 2022

A unique combination of experiential learning, community building, and time for practice.

Chair

Dr. Yuria Ceidwen

Facilitators

Dr. Valin S. Jordan

Dr. Jonathan H. X. Lee

Dr. Devora Neumark

Learn more here.
Please enjoy this recording from CMind's Executive Director Dr. David Robinson Morris' talk with the University of Southern Maine's Bertha Crosley Ball Center for Compassion.
Have you ever thought about what it meant to be so revolutionary that you could dismantle systems that hinder the people from living their fullest lives? Have you ever wanted to just say f-it and do the things that you wanted to do with your life? Dr. David Robinson-Morris joins Dr. Charles Corprew on Dr. Corprew's show "What's Your Revolution?" to help us blow up our lives and those aforementioned shackles. Interspersed with some prose from the legendary James Baldwin, a revolutionary spirit, and the strategies we need to move the world, DRM shakes up the status quo all the while detailing how we are better together than apart. Listen here.

The Association for Contemplative Mind in Higher Education (ACMHE) is a professional academic association for all who bring contemplative practices and perspectives into their work in higher education. Member benefits include fee discounts for ACMHE and CMind events, access to the Journal of
Contemplative Inquiry, a member directory, forum, webinar archive, and more.

Join over 800 members worldwide who are creating integrative, inclusive, and transformative education.

Join ACMHE Today

MAKE A GIFT TO SUPPORT THE
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This fund will support the Dr. Oliver W. Hill, Jr. Contemplative Justice in Action Award and Faculty Fellowship which will recognize a junior faculty member working at the intersectional embrace of contemplative practice, radical love, and social justice, honoring Dr. Hill’s vision of “transforming higher education to reflect contemplative values.”

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The Reservoir is a newsletter from CMind, The Center for Contemplative Mind in Society. We intend this newsletter as a moment of respite in your busy day.

Click Here to Subscribe to The Reservoir
The Center for Contemplative Mind in Society (CMind) is a global community of contemplative practitioners whose goal is the ongoing development of racial, social, economic, and environmental justice and the advancement of human flourishing. CMind’s mission is to positively and progressively transform society through diverse contemplative practices.

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