Dear CMind Friends,

Sawubona! We see you!

Welcome to *The Reservoir*, CMind’s new monthly newsletter. *The Reservoir* was created with the intention that it will be a moment of respite from the busyness of your day, a moment where ontology and epistemology collide with axiology and spirituality—a moment, however fleeting, that we can be and feel whole. My hope is that this newsletter not only serves as a vehicle of information but a reminder of our kinship and community and, like CMind, becomes one of the wells we can collectively draw from for strength, inspiration, and hope as we work to reweave the world from our respective corners and communities. Each month, we will read the words of an invited scholar-practitioner who will help us recollect who we are called to become, challenge us to think outside of what has been thought, and/or reflect on their personal journey in the cultivation of a contemplative body-mind.

A reservoir is a supply or source of something. While human beings are rivers—rivers of prophetic hope—trickling, cascading, roiling, and sometimes lazily flowing toward a return to wholeness; we all need
reservoirs of courage from which to draw. These reservoirs are deep, ancient pools of love bubbling up from whence we have come and where we shall all return. For me, this drawing from is an acknowledgment of the individual and collective suffering of the world, which we have all profoundly felt in these last few years. Yet, in equal if not greater measure, it is an invitation for each of us to discover, to drink, to become saturated, to swim and float in these abyssal pools of love available to each of us so that we may transform and be transformed in the renewing of our spirits.

Personally, I came to practice—the reservoir—searching for healing and what I found was myself. I learned, in Lucille Clifton’s words, “to pay attention to what sits inside yourself and watches you.” I came to understand that God is, I am, and We are.

This week, our Board Chair Dr. Michelle Chatman writes to us about the sense of belonging she experienced in the discovery of CMind as a new professor and member of the Academy. She writes, as many of you have remarked in our convenings over the first month of my tenure, that she found home and community with CMind. A community that allowed her to live a wholly integrated life divorced from any institutional judgement of her contemplative practice, pedagogical approach, or exuberant expression of her connection to Spirit, the Ancestors, and one another. In her words we feel her welcoming spirit, we perceive her invitation into deeper engagement and practice, and we understand more clearly that the CMind community is a well from which to drink where the water is clean, always cool, and can quench the most burning of thirsts. Truly, as our sister Angela Davis offers, “it is in collectivities that we find reservoirs of hope and optimism” and healing.

I thank Michelle for her being, the offering of her wisdom, and her heartful leadership.

Echoing James Baldwin, “This is the charged, the dangerous moment, when
everything must be re-examined, must be made new, when nothing at all can be taken for granted." So, too, it is for CMind. In the months ahead, you will hear more from me and the CMind Board regarding the vision for our work moving forward within higher education and the community. As you have already seen, I believe very strongly that we cannot be silent on anything that diminishes the human spirit, denies justice, or hinders equity. I want to be clear that the organization cannot be all things to all people, but we must become what is necessary for this moment to catalyze the transformations within institutions that are so desperately needed with respect to human becoming and flourishing. We are re-examining everything because we must. And we must do it together.

I believe we must also celebrate and express gratitude for every win! I am happy to announce that we exceeded our Giving Tuesday goal of $7,000 thanks to the generosity of a small group of individuals and board members! This win signals to me that we have the capacity to do more collectively in terms of fundraising. I will be calling on each of you for your continued support of time, talent, and treasure.

I've written way too long already, so please allow me to thank you in advance for holding intention with me and for your generative work ahead in collectively reimagining CMind.

This is my intention for each of us: grounded joy, prophetic hope, the discovery of untapped reservoirs of what your soul needs and your being in this moment in history requires to (re)make ourselves and the world anew, and the courage to be-do it.

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)
It Feels Like Freedom: Bringing Healing to Higher Education
Dr. Michelle C. Chatman

I learned about CMind in 2013 when I presented my research on gentrification and Black churches in Washington, D.C., at the ACMHE conference. I was still quite new to academia and adjusting to the myriad demands of a career as an assistant professor. It was a thrill to be teaching at my alma mater, The University of the District to Columbia, where I’d received some of my earliest scholarly mentoring, and presenting on one of my first externally funded research projects. The ACMHE conference was a truly remarkable experience. The presentations were intellectually stimulating and the attendees were open and inviting. We sat in silent meditation together and engaged in compassion practices that created an invisible web of connection and shared humanity between and among us. In conversations, we talked about our inner journeys with the same fervor as we did our teaching, research, and professional pathways. I’d never experienced anything like it and I wanted more. Over the years I continued my involvement as a member of ACMHE, serving on the planning committee for the summer session, the annual conference, and on special task forces on race and inclusion in the contemplative movement and the Building Campus Communities Initiative funded by the Fetzer Institute. In 2017, I was invited to join the CMind Board of Directors, and now hold the distinct honor of serving as Board Chair.

Like many of you, my academic career has had its share of trials (a traumatic conflict with a colleague, the termination of my academic program and subsequent layoff, my hire in a different academic unit and the restarting of my tenure clock, to name a few). Yet, through it all, the CMind/ACMHE family has always been there. In this organization I’ve found a community of scholar-activist-practitioners who have decided, as Parker Palmer says, to live a “divided life no more” by bringing an integrated wholeness to their roles in higher education. Here, I’ve found a scholarship and practice home where I can be my multifaceted self. Among friends I can engage my intellect, share my vulnerabilities and dreams, express my
rage at the world’s injustices, challenge the commodification of mindfulness and contemplative spaces, and belt out soulful tunes at our famed Summer Session open mic nights and annual karaoke takeover at Fitzwilly’s Bar in downtown Northampton. In this space I can be my complete, uninhibited, and unified self. This place within me and within our diverse community feels like freedom; it feels like home. And I know it feels the same for many of you.

Recently, while listening to a conversation between our new Executive Director, Dr. David Robinson-Morris and Clint Smith, acclaimed author of *How the Word is Passed*, I was reminded of the dissonant duality of America; how it has been a welcoming home of opportunity to millions from around the globe and how it has also been a place of horrific brutality for millions of Indigenous peoples, enslaved Africans and their descendants. The prosperity and humanity afforded to some is explicitly tied to the brutality and inhumanity imposed upon others. These interdependent histories and legacies continue to be enacted in our legal, economic, educational, and criminal institutions today. Their reverberations continue to be disproportionately felt by Black and Indigenous peoples. Even our institutions of higher learning reflect this duality standing as both sites of promise and possibility and also as places of immense harm and inequity BIPOC, differently abled, first generation, LGBTQ+, and other minoritized groups.

How do we heal forward when we have not purged ourselves of the historical terror upon which many of our institutions sit?

These times demand that we reimagine how we live and work in ways that support our equitable thriving. The traumas of the multiple injustices we are facing live in our collective and institutional bodies. As a leader in the field of contemplative approaches in education, we at CMind understand that intense inner work is the way forward. Inner approaches help us ground and reorient to our full humanity. They allow us to show up and engage with courage and empathy when we employ them in service to justice. Like many of you, I've relied upon spiritual and contemplative practices to support my personal resilience in these challenging times. I also incorporate practice to enliven my instruction, inspire my creativity, and connect with my students and colleagues in an authentic and generative way. As we know, contemplative practices afford us the ability to see where our institutions, policies, and practices are rooted in patriarchy
and dimensions of white supremacy culture such as competition, exploitation, individualism, and power hoarding—ways of being that are deeply embedded in how our universities and colleges operate and that completely undermine the cultivation of deep learning, justice, and belonging.

Higher education needs to heal.

CMind aspires to catalyze that healing by being the well from which our community draws its sustenance. We want to help fuel faculty, administrators, and students, as they undertake the complex and necessary work of institutional change. We want to support the cultivation of deep practice-based campus communities that can lead and sustain the transformation of the institutions we love and sometimes have been hurt by and within. And we want to revive the heart of higher education so we're not so weary at the end of the journey. Your involvement will be crucial in the months ahead as we reimagine how we lead and serve for times such as these.

May we proceed forthrightly in our collective work of creating this world anew in love and solidarity.

Michelle C. Chatman, Ph.D., President of the CMind Board of Directors, is Associate Professor of Crime, Justice, and Security Studies at the University of the District of Columbia. Michelle earned her doctorate in cultural anthropology from American University and teaches courses on urban inequality, youth development, and restorative and juvenile justice. A member of the Association for Contemplative Mind in Higher Education since 2011, Michelle has been active in leading numerous CMind initiatives. Michelle is a vibrant leader on her campus and directs the UDC the Mindfulness & Contemplative Learning Initiative. She is enthusiastic about spreading culturally relevant and critical contemplative approaches that foster belonging, justice, and liberated learning.
Feeling Freedom Practice

By Dr. Michelle C. Chatman

Sit with your body and breath for several minutes. Where would you like to experience more freedom—in your work, your creative life, your home, your rest? Allow yourself to do some freedom dreaming (Love, 2020). What can you imagine? Complete the statements with your own dreams. Write, sing, or dance whatever comes to your being. Resist the urge to edit and make it “right.” See what emerges. Enjoy!

**Freedom Feels** (like being suspended in the ocean, sun beaming on brown skin, body buoyed by time and space; ideas emerging with grace)

**Freedom Sounds** (like the hope of children’s play, singing, spinning, dizzying, falling down in fields of green)

**Freedom Smells** (of the smoke of archaic ideas borne of fear burning to the ground)

**Freedom Tastes** (as crisp clean water for all of Mother’s children and cinnamon sprinkled almond milk before bed)

**Freedom Sees** (dignity in all beings and the right to a good, thriving life)

**Freedom Braves** (laughter in lecture halls, silence before meetings, admitting you don't know, bold questions never before asked)

**Freedom Destroys** (systems of violence and oppression, mountains of inequity, ages of doubt)
Freedom Creates (expansion, possibilities, new earths, and universes of loving justice)

The first CMind Town Hall Evening with David Robinson-Morris and Michelle Chatman was originally broadcast on Wednesday, November 17, 2021, offering a chance to meet Dr. Robinson-Morris and discuss the vision for CMind. About 50 participants attended the Zoom meeting and the Facebook livestream.
Watch the 2021 Words & Music Festival Keynote, *How the Word is Passed*. Livestreamed on Thursday, November 18th, this keynote event includes a reading of *How the Word Is Passed: A Reckoning with the History of Slavery Across America* by acclaimed author Clint Smith, plus a conversation with David Robinson-Morris.

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**It's the end of the year!**

Please remember CMind in your year-end giving. Donations are tax-deductible, and gifts of any amount make a difference.

**DONATE TODAY**
Are you a new reader? Welcome!

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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