

OCTOBER 2023

MONTHLY MUSINGS FROM UUMFE

uumfe.org



Welcome to Monthly Musings from UUMFE

The Unitarian Universalist Ministry for Earth is delighted to share worship and small group ministry resources that are Earth-centered and focused on climate justice. They are organized by our theory of change and what we call our "Three Es":



This month, we gather to expand our definition of community to include those who came before us: our ancestors - biological or chosen, religious, political - and the ancestors of the land. All communities are shaped by our ancestors.

October: Ancestors

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UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST
MINISTRY FOR EARTH

Respect Life. Restore Earth. Renew Spirit.



EMBODIMENT - Spiritual Grounding

CHALICE LIGHTING

#451 Flame of fire, spark of the universe that warmed our ancestral hearth - agent of life and death, symbol of truth and freedom. We strive to understand ourselves and our earthly home. Leslie Pohl-Kosbau

OPENING WORDS

In religious traditions across the world, this is a time of year when we honor ancestors and departed loved ones. To name a few:

In Mexico: Dia de Los Muertos translates literally to “day of the dead”

In China: Zhongyuan Festival

In Japan: Bon Festival

In Christianity across the world: Halloween or All Hallows’ Eve, All Saints Day and All Souls Day

Come into this time of worship as we honor our ancestors and their connection to Earth.

SERMON PROMPT:

We will begin to investigate our family stories and our ancestors’ connection with Earth. Our UUA President, Rev. Dr. Sofia Betancourt says this: “It is to inherited environmental practices themselves that ecowomanism [and we] must turn for rehumanizing ways of knowing in relation to Earth” (Ecowomanism at the Panamá Canal: Black Women, Labor, and Environmental Ethics: Environment and Religion in Feminist-Womanist, Queer, and Indigenous Perspectives, p.134).

Ecowomanism includes honoring and mining ecomemory (Melanie Harris). Can non-Black people use ecowomanism? Yes. Start with your own ecomemory. What is your eco-story? Who are your ancestors, both familial and religious? What are their ecostories? Look with honesty at all of these stories. Gifts and burdens, all ancestral lineages come with both. What gifts did these people offer you? Did any of them do harm to Nature or humanity? Consider how you can stop that legacy of harm.

READING

From Rev. Dr. Sofia Betancourt's book, "Ecowomanism at the Panamá Canal: Black Women, Labor, and Environmental Ethics (Environment and Religion in Feminist-Womanist, Queer, and Indigenous Perspectives)," pages 134 and 146.

It is to inherited environmental practices themselves that ecowomanism must turn for rehumanizing ways of knowing in relation to Earth... A methodology of reclaiming inherited environmental cultures in the quest to center justice in living out the best of our human nature requires the wisdom of all of our grandmothers. In our diverse ethnic identities, even those so silenced by mythologies of whiteness as to seem lost to the tides of history, there exist relationships to nonhuman nature that predate settler colonial worldviews, resource theft and control, abhorrent religious justifications for enslavement, and the imposition of colonized and otherized identities. It is these lasting stories, many of which masquerade as unexplained family traditions (those things that are educated out of us in the name of progress or success), that might serve to ground an ecowomanist moral anthropology and release us from the environmental apathy of the day.

Meditation

It is the breath that connects us to the web of life. With every breath, we are exchanging molecules with all of life, including those who came before us. We are the breath of our ancestors. I invite you into a time of meditation. Straighten your back so your body is both erect and relaxed. You can close your eyes or keep them open. Now shift your attention from the outside world into your inside world. Into your body. What is happening to your breathing right now? You may notice air coming in and going out again through the tip of your nose. What happens when you direct your attention there? Is the air cold or a bit warm? Maybe you are breathing through your mouth. Just keep noticing. And now that you're tuned into your breathing, just draw a few deeper breaths. Breathing in the oxygen that plant life offers us, feel your connection. Now focus on your outbreath and the way you are offering carbon dioxide to the plant life; a gift they receive and need. In this way, we connect. We connect through our breath.



Closing words

They Are Still With Us by Rev.

Kathleen McTigue

<https://www.uua.org/worship/words/affirmation/they-are-us-still>

Excerpt:

They are with us still.

The lives they lived hold us steady.

Their words remind us and call us back to ourselves.

Their courage and love evoke our own.

We, the living, carry them with us: we are their voices, their hands and their hearts.

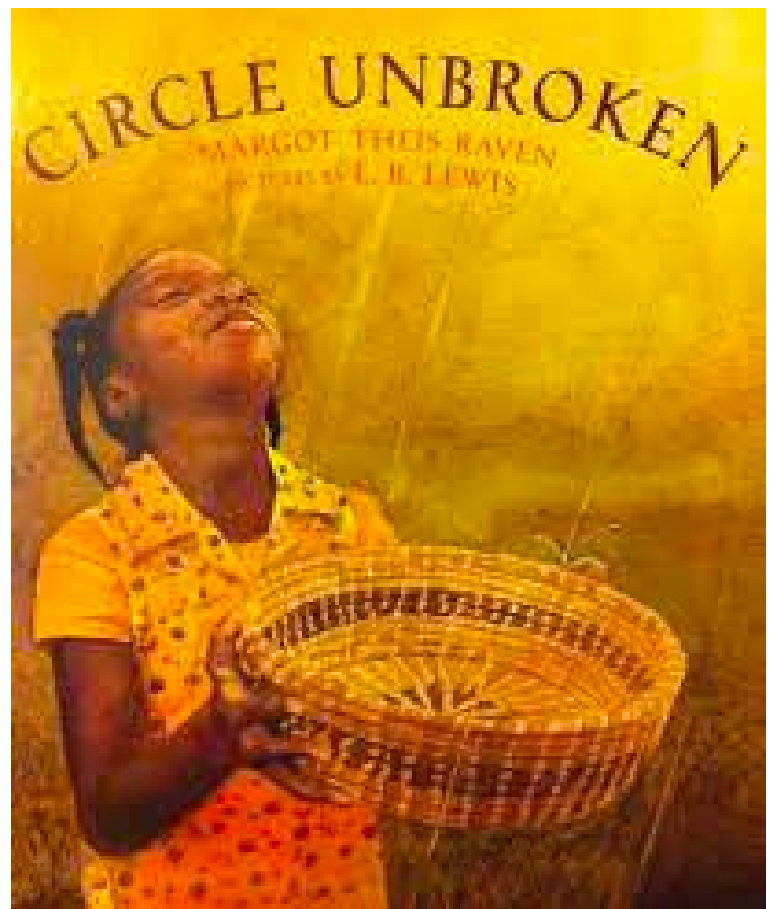
We take them with us, and with them choose the deeper path of living.

TIME FOR ALL AGES

[Circle Unbroken](#) by Margot Theis Raven

RITUAL

Ahead of time, invite people to bring symbols or photos of ancestors who honored Earth and Nature. During the service, invite people to come forward and place the items on an altar.



EMPOWERMENT - Lifelong Learning and Community

Resource Suggestions and

Activities

Check out Ancestral Mathematics:

<https://lyricalzen.com/ancestral-mathematics/>

In the 2023 Ware Lecture at GA, Imani Perry suggested we honor our own (biological or chosen) familial ancestors and our religious ancestors. She suggested we build two altars: one for family and one for guidance from our religion and beyond. Look with honesty at both. What gifts did these people offer you? What are their eco-stories? And did any of them do harm? How can you stop that legacy of harm?

Ecowomanism, which Melanie L. Harris defines, is an approach to environmental justice that centers the perspectives of women of African descent and reflects upon these women's activist methods, religious practices, and theories on how to engage earth justice. As a part of the womanist tradition, methodologically ecowomanism features race, class, gender intersectional analysis to examine environmental injustice around the planet. Thus, it builds upon an environmental justice paradigm that also links social justice to environmental justice. Harris says that non-Black people may use this method because it starts with honoring and reflecting on your own experience. The methodology includes seven steps:

- Honoring experience (ecomemory)
- Reflecting on the experience
 - Connection with Earth
 - Earth as sacred
 - Shared experiences of beauty and suffering
 - Parallel oppressions between Black Women and Earth
- Conducting womanist social analysis (race, gender class)
- Critically exploring tradition
- Engaging transformation
- Sharing dialogue
- Taking action for justice
 - Sharing in justice work as a protest to the logic of domination, racial ignorance, and white supremacy

Source: Interview with Melanie Harris at Boston College School of Theology- Fall 2022

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T2LTkyM7I0M>

Small Group Ministry Discussion Prompts

What is your own eco-story (how you came into relationship with Earth)? Who are your ancestors, both familial and religious? What are their ecostories? Look with honesty at both types of ancestors. Share what gifts these people offer you. Share if any of them did harm to Nature or humanity. Share how you can stop that legacy of harm.

More on Ecowomanism

ENGAGEMENT - Partnering and Support for Climate Justice Activism



Who are the ancestors of the land? [You can learn more here.](#) How is the culture and governments of these ancestors living still today? What are those ancestors doing for [Indigenous People's Day?](#) And how about reparations? Landback is a movement that has existed for generations with a long legacy of organizing and sacrifice to get Indigenous Lands back into Indigenous hands. Currently, there are land back battles being fought all across Turtle Island, to the north and the South. [Learn more here.](#) [And here is an example](#) of rematriation, Indigenous women-led work to restore sacred relationships between Indigenous people and our ancestral land, honoring our matrilineal societies, and in opposition of patriarchal violence and dynamics.

****If you have been enjoying Monthly Musings, consider attending or promoting our new Weekly Live Meditations. Starting Thursday Sept. 14, 2023 join UUMFE for a weekly, online, live meditation for 30 minutes. More info:**
<https://www.uumfe.org/spiritual-gatherings/weekly-live-meditation-gatherings/>

VISIT OUR WEBSITE UUMFE.ORG

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