

Equity, Belonging, and Law as a Healing Practice

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Belonging

What it is:

- The awareness that I am a part of something, that I have a role to play, am worthy simply because I am.
- That I share that worthiness with all life, with Nature; each of us a co-evolved expression of evolutionary intelligence across millennia and beyond comprehension in intellectual terms/ with the rational mind
- And that our fates are intertwined; depend on each other
- As MLK said ***"I can never be what I ought to be until you are what you ought to be. You can never be what you ought to be until I am what I ought to be... This is the inter-related structure of reality."***

Why it matters:

- Belonging is **the awareness and orientation from which we can feel out, dynamically our role to play, our service to provide, how to simultaneously support, care for, tend the vast systems of which we are a part and each other** in a way that is balanced, whole, regenerative...

Equity

What it is:

- **Equity** can be conceptualized as the experience of inclusion, of feeling seen and valued as a meaningful part of a whole; as an experience of fairness that arises in a system where the diverse parts are valued for their diverse gifts and contributions, and in which the health of the system is an expression of those diverse parts and their relationships with each other.

Why it matters:

- **It is a measure and reflection of ours and others experience and expression of belonging in a system.** It is feedback that helps us understand and calibrate to the experience we are having of the relationships and systems we are part of.
- Understanding our own and others experience of equity and cultivating that experience provides guidance towards service to the systems of which we are a part, to which we belong

Belonging and Equity – practices to get there?

- Cultivating a sense of self love and self-worth independent of external value structures
- Cultivating respect, love, and an orientation towards care for other people and for all life
- Authenticity and Vulnerability – Showing up with our whole selves and letting others in
- Deep listening – To hear, absorb, and attune to the experiences of others

- Education, exposure, dialogue
- Healing

Healing

What it is:

- **The cultivation and restoration of capacity and resilience**

Why it matters:

- In our engagement with **Water in California** we are working heal the systemic (ecosystem collapse, human communities and right to water) but are still struggling to heal that which the system is composed of and expressing: the **personal wounds** (lack of self-love, lack of belonging) and the **interpersonal wounds** (othering and relational trauma, harm we have inflicted or that has been inflicted on us; victim and perpetrator identities; lack of trust and shame/ defensiveness) all of which the system is expressing.
- **The wounding from traumas we have each experienced can create constraints, limitations, triggers** – We can encode even to the extent that they can be down to our progeny, transmitted intergenerationally
 - Traumas and their wounds can cause us to dis-like, judge, or reject part or aspects of ourselves, or parts or aspects of other people.
- **We each may also cultivate amazing gifts from our Traumas**
- **Healing** involves **seeing those part of ourselves and of others not as things that are fundamentally broken or unworthy, but that are wounded, constrained, not fully expressed**
- It invites us to **ask ourselves what those part and people might have to teach us, what gifts they might have for us, what evolutionary gifts and contributions they have for the whole**
- It invites us to care for them and support their healing, realization and expression that they might confer those gifts and that intelligence
- It enables us to separate the gifts we developed in response to our traumas from the painful wounds those traumas inflicted and use those gifts to create and express instead of just to survive
- It restores our resilience by diversifying the range of responses we can bring to bear in any given moment, in the face of that which challenges us

[Example: Endangered Species; Winter Run Chinook Salmon]

How we get there:

- **Inner work** (introspection, therapy, education, **forgiveness**) **to engage, understand, and cultivate compassion for** the things that have and are shaping us and our responses to ourselves, others, and the world
- **Outer work** (listening, service orientation, vulnerability, **forgiveness**) **to engage, understand, and cultivate compassion for** the experiences, values, and motivation of others; the things that have and continue to shape them and their responses

- **Practice** – releasing the pursuit of some particular end, some imagined static perfection or arrival in exchange for a dynamic state of being that we are cultivating and tending to.

Law as Roadmap

- In a sense, **law is**:
 - **a record of our collective wounds and fears**, of our responses to being harmed, to the fears we or those who came before us carried and the historic power asymmetries around those.
 - the rules that those of us with sufficient power and privilege have made to enshrine our hurt places and defend against that which we perceive as having threatened or harmed us in the past and/ or which we believe may harm us in the future.
 - a suite of agreements that we erect and invoke in areas where we do not feel safe.
 - a plot of the progression of our disempowerment, constraint, or loss at the hands of the fears of others.

[Example: 5937 Differing perspectives and enforcement]

- This Facet of law's nature means that **the "field" of law has gravity towards the triggering of wounded places, and towards trauma response**. It can draw out the defensiveness and shame, the distrust and fear.
- Navigating the legal field with **an orientation towards healing, towards equity and towards belonging invites a legal "practice" that cultivates and tends that orientation** amidst the field's gravity.
- As a core component of this practice, we recast the record of where we have been, into a reflection of where we are and a map for the path ahead; a catalog of our past fears hurts, becomes a sketch of the landscape of our sensitivities; a guide through the minefield of our trigger points.
- Both the **laws themselves and the responses and dynamics they generate point to what must be witnessed, accounted for, reconciled, forgiven, and ultimately healed in order for us to Belong and in order for the systems which we make up to behave differently**.

[Example: Reorienting to Recovery]