

FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY EDITION • REFLECTIONS AND VISIONS

# COMMUNITIES

Life in Cooperative Culture

Winter 2022 • Issue #197

\$10 US / \$13 Canada

A photograph of five people standing around a dining table in a homey interior. The table is set with plates, bowls, and a pitcher. The people are dressed in casual, practical clothing. The background shows a wall with framed pictures and a doorway.

## The Long Haul

Will It Happen to Us?

Coming Home to History

Loving Is a Political Task

When Short and Long Hauls Collide

Guide to My Longevity in Community



**CohoUS is a national nonprofit advancing cohousing and shifting culture. We envision a future where every home is surrounded by caring, collaborative neighbors who use less of the earth's resources while living an abundant life.**

**We support a more collaborative and sustainable society through:**



## **EDUCATION**

Using events, a learning platform, newsletters and social media to help people understand, build and support cohousing and its impacts.



## **ADVOCACY**

We advocate for cohousing through outreach, research, and publications.



## **NETWORKING**

CohoUS is a hub for networking between past, current and future cohousers and our allies.

**Cohousing.org**

## VISION #1:

# Five Benefactors Could Provide COMMUNITIES Print Subscriptions to 500 High-Impact Hubs

(See page 4 for background to this vision, and back cover for vision #2.)

**C**ommunities hopes to find **five** benefactors who each support the magazine at the level of **\$5,000 per year** to assure that its finances remain healthy and also to achieve the following boost to its ability to fulfill its mission:

Each benefactor who contributes \$5,000 per year may choose to support **100\*** complimentary annual print + digital subscriptions to either:

**1. INTENTIONAL COMMUNITIES**—you choose and/or we choose 100 intentional communities to receive complimentary subscriptions to COMMUNITIES. We've seen the impact that the magazine can have in individual communities countless times, yet most communities do not actually subscribe. A benefactor could change that.

**2. PUBLIC LIBRARIES**—you choose and/or we choose 100 public libraries to receive complimentary subscriptions to COMMUNITIES. As with issues received by communities, those that go to libraries can reach many readers, multiplying the opportunities for making a difference in people's lives.

**3. COLLEGE/UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES**—you choose and/or we choose 100 college/university libraries to receive complimentary subscriptions to COMMUNITIES. Copies in the libraries of colleges and universities can reach readers at a particularly formative time in their lives, increasing the chances of ripple effects in the years that follow.

**4. EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS AND GROUPS**—you choose and/or we choose 100 educational programs, departments, or groups to receive complimentary subscriptions to COMMUNITIES. Certain groups of students are already primed to be interested in our themes. Students of environmental studies, group process, political

empowerment, cultural evolution, psychology, and even storytelling, journalism, and more may find the magazine particularly relevant. What educational programs do you know that could benefit from a COMMUNITIES subscription?

**5. NONPROFIT GROUPS**—you choose and/or we choose 100 nonprofit groups to receive complimentary subscriptions to COMMUNITIES. Intentional communities and nonprofits have much in common, and in fact some groups have both identities; moreover, the goals of many nonprofits align with the themes and aspirations explored in the magazine.

**BULK ISSUES**—as an alternative or supplement to a set of subscriptions, a benefactor may choose to have one or several boxes of each new issue (44 copies per box) sent to any US address(es), for distribution at events, suitable locations, to friends, associates, or whoever could benefit from them.

**If you are interested in supporting any, several, or all of these projects to enhance COMMUNITIES' reach and its viability in fulfilling its mission—or if you know anyone who may be inspired and able to support these visions—please contact us** (at [editor@gen-us.net](mailto:editor@gen-us.net), 541-335-1566, or c/o 330 Morgan St., Oberlin OH 44074). **Benefactors' sponsored projects can be tailored, mixed-and-matched, and scaled according to interests and capacities.**

However you support and contribute to COMMUNITIES currently, thank you. Every level and every form of support and involvement, nonmonetary as well as monetary, is appreciated! Thank you for being part of this community. And we hope you share our desire for it to not only endure, but expand.

*\*These numbers would apply to US-based subscribers; because of postage costs, numbers would need to be adjusted for international addresses.*



# THE LONG HAUL

- 1 **Vision #1: Providing 500 Print Subscriptions to Groups, Programs, and Libraries**
- 4 **Notes from the Editor: COMMUNITIES' Impact**  
**Chris Roth**  
Always a force for transformation, the magazine now seeks support to expand its reach.
- 5 **Language of Twin Oaks: Crossword Solution**  
**Stephan Nashoba**  
“Commune” is not a four-letter word, and other answers to last issue’s puzzling questions.
- 6 **Notes in Passing: Personals**  
**Paul Freundlich**  
For 50 years, COMMUNITIES has collected contributors’ insights on *how to be human together, in small enough groupings to mean anything to each other, large enough to survive...*
- 8 **Will It Happen to Us?**  
**Anton Marks**  
A founding member of Kibbutz Mishol looks at patterns common elsewhere and wonders: Are privatization and decline inevitable?
- 10 **Guide to My Longevity in an Intentional Community**  
**Colin Doyle**  
A communitarian identifies a dozen attitudes and circumstances that helped him last more than a decade at Lost Valley.
- 14 **Reflections on Fifty Years of Community**  
**Daniel Brown**  
The Brotherhood of the Spirit/Renaissance Community offers enduring lessons even after its demise.
- 18 **Belonging, for the Long Haul**  
**Riana Good**  
A resident of TerraSante Village discovers that shifting the question of “Do I belong?” to “How do I belong?” leads to a more satisfying, inclusive community life.
  - **What Does It Mean to Belong?**
- 20 **Loving Is a Political Task**  
**Achim Ecker**  
A long-time member of ZEGG observes a powerful pull in a direction away from close community and asks: Can we become a whole community again?
- 26 **Network for New Culture Meets Holistic Resistance: A Potential Partnership towards Liberation from White Supremacy**  
**Melanie Rios**  
Bringing together these diverse communities creates new understandings and demonstrates the transformative power of listening with love and forgiving mistakes.
  - **Challenges to be Addressed**
- 30 **Farming for the Long Haul: Leisure, Work, and Community**  
**Michael Foley**  
Traditional societies can show us the way forward—not only in farming, but in life.



18



20



41

## 35 Eating for the Long Haul

**Dena Smith Ellis**

A holistic wellness educator finds herself unexpectedly humbled by seniors whose memories of simple, fresh, local, and unadulterated food suggest not only our past but our future.

## 37 Why Community Was the Best Time of My Life

**Hugh Perry**

A Canadian community veteran sees seeds sown after the dispersal of '60s-era communities sprouting in the evolved thinking of today.

## 40 Cultivating Peace for the Long Haul

**Kim Goodwin**

Is it possible that, contrary to activist assumptions, “If you aren’t *at peace*, you aren’t paying attention”?

## 41 When Short and Long Hauls Collide: A Cohousing Case Study

**Anonymous**

A new arrival to cohousing discovers the hard way that complex economics and conflicting interests can complicate living as a renter in a non-income sharing community.

## 44 Working Effectively with Especially Challenging Behaviors, Part Four

**Diana Leafe Christian**

Personal experiences with fellow community members lead to the development of important strategies to mitigate the effects of a slew of previously demoralizing and even debilitating behaviors in others.

- “Especially Challenging” Attitudes and Behaviors
- Recognizing Challenging Behaviors

## 50 The Early Years of COMMUNITIES Magazine

**A. Allen Butcher**

A communal scholar explores the genesis of COMMUNITIES and its early metamorphoses.

## 51 Cmag and Me

**Laird Schaub**

A long-time publisher reflects on his relationship with the magazine in this, its Golden Anniversary issue.

## 54 Coming Home to History (Review: *The Dawn of Everything: A New History of Humanity*)

**Chris Roth**

A new view of history aligns to a remarkable degree with characteristics and trends observed on a personal journey in the world of intentional community.

## 58 REACH

## 64 Remembering Lina

**Laird Schaub**

Caroline Estes of Alpha Farm, groundbreaking consensus trainer and facilitator, led a life of dedication and service; as a friend, mentor, and grandmother of secular consensus, her influence lives on.

## Back Cover

## Vision #2: Making Digital COMMUNITIES Free to the World

## ON THE COVER



Caroline Estes (in beige shawl), her husband Jim (in black cap), and other community residents circle before a meal at Alpha Farm (Deadwood,

Oregon), April 2, 2009. Founded in 1972, Alpha Farm, like COMMUNITIES, turned 50 this year. A highly influential consensus pioneer, facilitator, and trainer, and longtime communitarian, Caroline died in July. See “Remembering Lina,” p. 64. Photo by Kate Harnedy, [@katephoto](http://katephoto.com).

## EDITOR

Chris Roth (*Lost Valley/Meadowsong*)

## ART DIRECTOR

Yulia Zarubina-Brill

## ADVERTISING MANAGER

Joyce Bressler (*Community of Living Traditions*)

## ACCOUNTANT

Kim Scheidt (*Red Earth Farms*)

## WEBSITE/TECH SUPPORT

Orlando Balbas

## BACK ISSUE FULFILLMENT

Chris Roth/Volunteers (*Lost Valley/Meadowsong*)

## PUBLISHER LIAISONS

Diana Leafe Christian (*Earthaven*)

Keala Young (*Atlan*)

## EDITORIAL REVIEW BOARD

Crystal Farmer (*Charlotte Cohousing*)

Valerie Renwick (*Twin Oaks*)

Diana Leafe Christian (*Earthaven*)

Lois Arkin (*Los Angeles Eco-Village*)

Giovanni Ciarlo (*Huehucocoyotl*)

Daniel Greenberg (*Auroville*)

**COMMUNITIES** (ISSN 0199-9346) is published quarterly by the Global Ecovillage Network—United States (GEN-US) at 4712 W. 10th Ave, Denver CO 80204. Postmaster: Send address changes to Communities, 81868 Lost Valley Ln, Dexter OR 97431. Indexed in the Alternative Press Index.

**SUBSCRIPTIONS:** \$30 US, \$40 outside US for four issues via periodical/surface mail. Supporters add \$10 per year; Sustainers add \$20 per year. Digital-only subscriptions cost \$10 less. Single copies are \$10 postpaid US, \$13 postpaid Canada, \$18 postpaid other international. All payments in US dollars. Available from Communities, c/o 330 Morgan St., Oberlin, OH 44074; [order@gen-us.net](mailto:order@gen-us.net); 541-937-5221 for more info. (please leave message); [gen-us.net/subscribe](http://gen-us.net/subscribe).

**BACK ISSUES:** Communities, c/o 330 Morgan St., Oberlin, OH 44074; [order@gen-us.net](mailto:order@gen-us.net); 541-937-5221 for more info. (please leave message); [gen-us.net/back-issues](http://gen-us.net/back-issues).

**EDITORIAL OFFICE:** Chris Roth, Editor, Communities, 81868 Lost Valley Ln, Dexter OR 97431; [editor@gen-us.net](mailto:editor@gen-us.net); 541-937-5221 (please leave message).

© 2022 by Global Ecovillage Network—United States (GEN-US) and individual authors. All rights reserved. Printed in the USA. Opinions expressed by authors and correspondents are their own and do not necessarily reflect those of the publisher.

**GLOBAL ECOVILLAGE NETWORK—UNITED STATES:** GEN-US, attn.: Communities, 4712 W. 10th Ave, Denver CO 80204; [admin@gen-us.net](mailto:admin@gen-us.net); 541-937-5221 (please leave message); [gen-us.net](http://gen-us.net).

**REPRINT PERMISSION:** Community groups may reprint with permission. Please contact Communities, 81868 Lost Valley Ln, Dexter OR 97431; [communities@gen-us.net](mailto:communities@gen-us.net); 541-937-5221 (please leave message).

**ADVERTISING:** Joyce Bressler, Communities Advertising Manager, [ads@gen-us.net](mailto:ads@gen-us.net); 845-558-4492.

**WEBSITE:** [gen-us.net/communities](http://gen-us.net/communities).

This magazine printed by Sundance Press, Tucson AZ.

# COMMUNITIES' Impact



We hear regularly about how COMMUNITIES has helped transform people's lives. Year after year, for 50 years now, the magazine has inspired readers to seek out cooperative alternatives or a community to join, or to start a project, a group, or even a new community together with others. Articles have given many of us essential guidance on implementing design strategies and techniques related to physical sustenance, infrastructure, and the land. Practical wisdom shared in our pages has helped individuals and groups course-correct in the areas of communication, decision-making, and cultivating healthy relationships. Contributors' stories have provided a mirror for readers' own challenges and struggles, often aiding the process of healing and leading to renewed energy and inspiration to move forward after difficult experiences. Authors themselves tell us they have reached new understandings through writing, allowing them to become more productive and creative after sharing their experiences in this format.

In addition to the many individuals who are conscious of COMMUNITIES' impact in their lives, many more have felt its effects without even knowing. Every person touched by a project which owes some of its existence or success to COMMUNITIES benefits from it. The magazine has endured for 50 years because it fills a unique, essential niche in the movement to encourage more humane, sensible, harmonious, and regenerative human societies, inhabiting a world in which our species has a chance of surviving.

COMMUNITIES is a way of "remembering who we are" as human beings and as members of the earth community and acting to put that awareness into practice, despite many countervailing forces and discouraging trends on the world stage. Those of us who've lived in community know that there are always alternatives, always a variety of paths to take, always a chance of renewal after things seem to fall apart. We are not powerless, especially when we join with others. We *can* find a better way, in our own lives, in our societies, as a species. The experiences, insights, practices, and knowledge authors share in our pages offer guidance for remaking our ways of living with good chances of success, for helping dreams become reality, and for helping us find ways out of individual or collective jams in ways we didn't even dream were possible.

We who create and publish COMMUNITIES often wonder how its benefits can reach more people. We also wonder how, year to year, we can generate the financial support for the project that will allow it to have the impact it could have—or even simply keep core staff being paid the entire year without going through periods of being laid off in order to balance the budget and keep the magazine afloat.

We've been fortunate to receive substantial donations from several individuals and groups, as well as smaller donations from subscribers, many of whom choose to subscribe at "supporter" or "sustainer" levels that reflect more accurately a subscription price that could support our current circulation and production expenses. Thank you!

In order to meet more of our potential, however, while also ensuring that financial

worries don't negatively impact the magazine or its shepherds, we are now seeking new forms of support, allowing us to manifest one of more of these visions:

**VISION #1: Five benefactors provide funding for 500 new subscriptions to groups and institutions where the print edition of COMMUNITIES can make the most collective impact (see page 1).**

**VISION #2: One major benefactor (or a team of several) makes the digital COMMUNITIES free to the world (see back cover).**

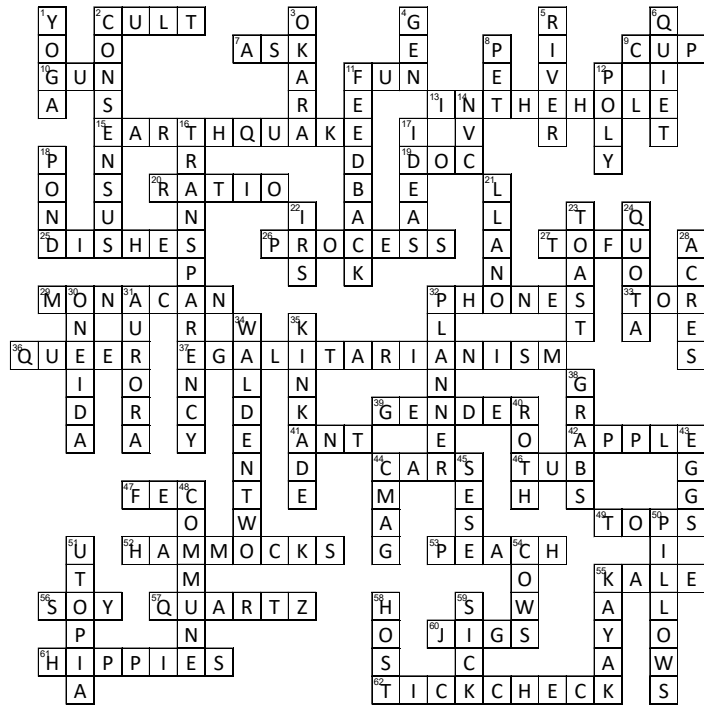
We would love to manifest both visions! Please be in touch with us directly if you too are inspired by these and would be interested in helping in any way. (See details on those pages.)

Thank you again for joining us in COMMUNITIES! 🍷

*Chris Roth (editor@gen-us.net) has edited COMMUNITIES for nearly 15 years.*

## Language of Twin Oaks: Crossword Solution

Here are the answers to the puzzle featured on pages 28-29 of COMMUNITIES #196; clues by Stephan Nashoba, layout by crosswordhobbyist.com.



## The NEW FARMER LIBRARY

Innovative Ideas & Practical Advice for the Next Generation



USE CODE CGP35 FOR 35% OFF ALL TITLES ON CHELSEAGREEN.COM

## EXPERIENCE COOPERATIVE LIVING IN NEW YORK CITY



Established in 1980, we are a 60 person intentional community. We live in 7 comfortable, well-maintained houses, with gardens and a small swimming pool, on the north shore of Staten Island, a short walk from the free ferry to Manhattan.

Learn about collective decision making, problem solving, and community living. Share resources and shrink your carbon footprint. We have space available.

Monthly expenses are very affordable and include food, utilities, laundry facilities, toiletries, and wifi.

If you are interested, contact Susan at [info@ganas.org](mailto:info@ganas.org)

For more information see [www.ganas.org](http://www.ganas.org)



**COMMUNITIES Editorial Policy**

COMMUNITIES is a forum for exploring intentional communities, cooperative living, and ways our readers can bring a sense of community into their daily lives. Contributors include people who live or have lived in community, and anyone with insights relevant to cooperative living or shared projects.

Through fact, fiction, and opinion, we offer fresh ideas about how to live and work cooperatively, how to solve problems peacefully, and how individual lives can be enhanced by living purposefully with others. We contribute articles that profile community living and why people choose it, descriptions of what's difficult and what works well, news about existing and forming communities, or articles that illuminate community experiences—past and present—offering insights into mainstream cultural issues. We also seek articles about cooperative ventures of all sorts—in workplaces, in neighborhoods, among people sharing common interests—and about “creating community where you are.”

We do not intend to promote one kind of group over another, and take no official position on a community's economic structure, political agenda, spiritual beliefs, environmental issues, or decision-making style. As long as submitted articles are related thematically to community living and/or cooperation, we will consider them for publication. However, we do not publish articles that 1) advocate violent practices, or 2) advocate that a community interfere with its members' right to leave.

Our aim is to be as balanced in our reporting as possible, and whenever we print an article critical of a particular community, we invite that community to respond with its own perspective.

**Submissions Policy**

To submit an article, please first request Writers' Guidelines; email [editor@gen-us.net](mailto:editor@gen-us.net). To obtain Photo Guidelines, email [layout@gen-us.net](mailto:layout@gen-us.net). Both are also available online at [gen-us.net/communities](http://gen-us.net/communities).

**Advertising Policy**

Please check [gen-us.net/communities](http://gen-us.net/communities) or email [ads@gen-us.net](mailto:ads@gen-us.net) for advertising information.

We accept paid advertising in COMMUNITIES because our mission is to provide our readers with helpful and inspiring information—and because advertising revenues help pay the bills.

We handpick our advertisers, selecting only those whose products and services we believe will be helpful to our readers. That said, we are not in a position to verify the accuracy or fairness of statements made in advertisements nor in REACH listings, and publication of ads should not be considered a GEN-US endorsement.

If you experience a problem with an advertisement or listing, we invite you to call this to our attention and we'll look into it. Our first priority in such instances is to make a good-faith attempt to resolve any differences by working directly with the advertiser/listener and complainant. If, as someone raising a concern, you are not willing to attempt this, we cannot promise that any action will be taken.

**What is an “Intentional Community”?**

An “intentional community” is a group of people who have chosen to live or work together in pursuit of a common ideal or vision. Most, though not all, share land or housing. Intentional communities come in all shapes and sizes, and display amazing diversity in their common values, which may be social, economic, spiritual, political, and/or ecological. Some are rural; some urban. Some live all in a single residence; some in separate households. Some raise children; some don't. Some are secular, some are spiritually based; others are both. For all their variety, though, the communities featured in our magazine hold a common commitment to living cooperatively, to solving problems nonviolently, and to sharing their experiences with others.

# Personals

Over the half century of this publication, COMMUNITIES has always been more about chronicling and serving a movement than a dispassionate, journalistic endeavor. Journalism is mostly about the outside looking in; COMMUNITIES is a rolling, sometimes roiling, collection of insider insights.

For the folks who went to ground in the aftermath of the '60s, sex, drugs, rock 'n' roll, and confronting a brutal war, racism, and misogyny required a new ethos and set of tools. And for 50 years, as editors, contributors, and participants, we've tried to define and present what we've learned in our small outposts.

Cooperation and collaboration run counter to much that is valued and taught in the market economy. Yet those values, as played out in our community experience, offer guidance to individuals and groups seeking to make a difference in their own lives, and even some hope of relevance to society at large.

Together, we have a chance to respond effectively to climate change, threats to democracy, and a host of interrelated challenges. The rewards for living in our “cooperative cultures,” with all the likely contradictions, remain provocative: trust and love, healing and creation, mutuality and regeneration.

Our movement may be idiosyncratic and disparate, yet a common language of community is spoken in the many tribes of humankind: in the mainstream media as aspiration; in acts of connection and continuity in our villages and neighborhoods, sometimes transcending barriers of class and race; in a worldwide cooperative movement involving millions; in a hopeful drawing together as new generations insist on having a future.

My own shorthand to capture the essence of the appropriately possible ran on the back cover of COMMUNITIES for years:



**PERSONALS**

*Human beings concerned  
about planet  
How to be human  
together  
in small enough groupings  
to mean anything  
to each other,  
large enough to survive  
Women and men  
respecting personhood  
sharing insights  
urban, rural touching  
of the universe  
Prepared to build  
political, social, economic,  
ethical models  
toward spiritual growth  
Please,  
make contact*

To that, I'd probably add, “and keep on dancing.” 🌱

*Paul Freundlich has been an active participant and creator in the development of cooperative, communitarian, and sustainable alternatives for 60 years. See [exemplars.world](http://exemplars.world) and past issues of COMMUNITIES for more of his writing.*



# Carmelita Gardens

## a Sustainable Off-Grid Community



Carmelita Gardens is a Sustainable Riverfront Village in the tropical Cayo District of Belize, the “Breadbasket of the Caribbean”.

Founded in 2010 on 98-acres of rich farmland we are growing steadily and organically in the beautiful and verdant Belize River Valley.



### OUR VISION

“Independent Together” is the motto adopted by Carmelita Gardens to describe the spirit of the individual and the community. With ample sunshine, rainwater, fertile soil, and river front we are blessed with the pure and essential natural resources needed to build a self-sufficient community in the Heartland of Belize.

In Carmelita Gardens our homes are off-grid, our residents are independent individuals, and together we are a safe, peaceful, and comfortable community.



[CarmelitaGardens.com](http://CarmelitaGardens.com)

# Will It Happen to Us?

*By Anton Marks*

This past summer I attended the wonderful triennial conference of the International Communal Studies Association (ICSA). The conference is an incredible opportunity to meet community scholars and community builders, and to physically visit a multitude of actual living communities. The conference took place in Denmark, and we managed to visit a dozen or so local communities on both the pre- and post-conference tours.

Spending a week immersed in the world of intentional communities, one can't help but recognise the existence of a rich variety of communities, whilst also distinguishing the patterns and trends that transcend geography.

In particular, the similarities I recognised from three very distinct communities, whose stories I re-encountered this summer, sent my mind racing in an attempt to understand the implications for my own community.

I didn't need to travel to Denmark to find out about the classic, rural kibbutz communities that dot the Israeli landscape that I call my home. I've spent decades as an observer, student, and teacher of the over 100 years of kibbutz existence. The story of how these once ideological bastions of socialist living have become less and less communal and more individualistic has been written about extensively elsewhere. But the ooh's and aah's of the Israeli contingent to the conference, when they perceived striking similarities to their own kibbutz experience in the communities that we visited, were noteworthy.

Svanholm, the rural Danish community which we visited on the post-conference tour, is a well-established community that has also undergone a process of change, with a significant reduction in the income-sharing element, the timeframe of this process eerily occurring exactly in parallel to the privatisation process of the kibbutzim in Israel.

At the conference we also heard from old friends Ina Meyer-Stoll and Achim Ecker, who described what they perceive to be a painful transition that their community of ZEGG in Germany has undergone over the past 20 years. In this case, Ina and Achim shared with us the change that they have experienced in relation to the receding focus on strengthening interpersonal relationships in their community, as opposed to more attention being paid to the business side of things. They are currently questioning everything about what they have spent decades founding and building, and are actually asking themselves some really fundamental questions such as: Is ZEGG still striving to be an alternative to the surrounding society?

Which all brings me back to my community. I'm a member of Kibbutz Mishol, a full-income-sharing urban kibbutz of 150 people all living under one roof. We've been going for over 20 years, the oldest members have already turned 50, and the oldest kids are starting to leave the community. Unlike the classic kibbutz, our model is one of a one-generational community; we don't expect or necessarily even want our kids to continue living with us as members. The classic kibbutz depended on their kids to take over the work and financial burden of the kibbutz as the members grew old—to such an extent that they didn't even invest in pension plans. This decision came back to haunt them when their kids stopped coming back to the community, members switched to differential private incomes, and many seniors overnight found themselves unable to pay to put food on their tables.

My community is built in the image of its members—why would we be so arrogant to believe that this is how our kids, born into a community they didn't choose, want to live their lives? I'd love our kids to take the values which we are surrounding them with, and become agents of change in a world that is crying out for people with a sense of responsibility, maybe even establish their own kibbutz, but our as-

---

Svanholm has also undergone a process of change, with a significant reduction in the income-sharing element—its timeframe eerily paralleling the privatisation process of the kibbutzim.

---

sumption is that they'll probably move away from their parents and get a regular job and lead more conventional lives.

Our growth plan is based on guiding the young people that we work with, in the educational projects that we run all over the country, including a youth movement; we encourage them to build their own kibbutz communities, which will almost certainly look quite different from how we have set up ours. We have so far established five communities in this way, and the projection is for more.

Members of Kibbutz Mishol are growing old together. We will become an old people's home—a socialist old people's home, but an old people's home nevertheless. The last remaining members will turn off the lights of this incredible community, hopefully with few regrets.

So what haunts me so much from the stories that I'm hearing? These stories, old and new, describe communities that over time become less and less radical, more and more like the surrounding society. How can we prevent the same processes happening to us?

We're working on our interpersonal relationships, and trying to not supersede them with bylaws and standardisation—understanding that each individual is unique and autonomous in making decisions for themselves.

We're investing in our future with long-term financial planning, but also for our ongoing housing requirements, for our adult kids (not as future members, but we'll continue to be responsible for them as their parents!), and for the sustainability of all our educational projects in the inner cities up and down the country.

Could we be doing more to stave off what the cynics would say is the inevitable?

Of course!

Can we guarantee that we will still be the community that we are trying to be now, 20 years down the line?

No way!

Will we crawl over the line, run over the line, or even make it to the line at all, when the last elderly members declare the natural end of the community?

I have no idea!

Do I worry about what the future holds for us as a socially activist, full-income-shar-

ing intentional community of educators?

Yes, I do. But I also recognise that what will be is purely in our own hands. It's incumbent upon us to learn from the experiences of others, but to also understand that nothing is destined just because it happened to someone else. 🌊

---

*Anton Marks is Editor of Communities At Large Letter (C.A.L.L.), a board member of the International Communal Studies Association (ICSA), and a founder member of the largest urban kibbutz in Israel, Kibbutz Mishol. He has been an informal educator for the last 25 years and has a passion for kibbutz and intentional communities generally.*



*The author with Jan Bang running a session at the conference.*



*The author with Pauline at Svanholm this summer on the post-conference tour.*



*Community dining room at Svanholm—the kibbutzniks in attendance were reminded of home.*

Photos courtesy of Anton Marks

# Guide to My Longevity in an Intentional Community

*By Colin Doyle*

In October 2010 I landed at Lost Valley Education and Event Center outside of Eugene, Oregon. Since then I have lived in the onsite aspiring ecovillage for 11 years, coordinated the education programs for nine years, and managed outside event rental for about five years. By the time you read this article, I will have shoved off to a different and new venture elsewhere in the world, by getting married and moving to the tropics.

In reflection on my time at Lost Valley, I see a cluster of a dozen attitudes and circumstances that served me very well for this last decade-plus; without them, I almost surely would have left a long time ago. This piece acts as an unofficial checklist of what has kept me in intentional community in a good way—a sort of guide to my longevity. I hope this can be helpful for those going through challenges in your own community, or intent observers considering wading into the pool of cooperative living and wanting to do so in an informed way.

Here is a list of the sections that make up this article. Each is teased out further below:

1. Researched communities beforehand
2. Did similar things previously
3. Attitude of equanimity
4. The world's not ending
5. Steady and dependable
6. 3 Ps: Project, People, and Place
7. Employed on the property
8. A marathon, not a sprint
9. Not overworking
10. Staying out of resentment
11. Healthy self/group balance
12. Two essential characteristics

---

Being able to partially relax into a perspective that the world isn't going to end because of the issue I/we are currently facing has helped give me valuable emotional distance.

---

**1.** The first activity that benefited me was researching communities thoroughly, not just floating into one by chance. I looked within myself for some months, at where to best direct my service-orientation while at the same time having a high quality of life. My desire to live daily around others with similar values (not the mainstream, in my case) plus the historical reality that my home country is the one that needs to change first, led to my choice to live in an intentional community, a modern permutation on traditional villages. I used [ic.org](http://ic.org)'s amazing community listings to hone in on ones that fit my targeted geographical area, size, and length of existence. I contacted the ones that seemed like best fits for me. In short, I did my homework, and that thoughtfulness and research before I even arrived in the state paid dividends ever since, because I've felt that I'm in a place that suits me.

**2.** This has been my first actual intentional community—which is the case for the majority of people who come to Lost Valley—but I'd previously done things that felt similar. These included being one of a dozen teens in a month-long international exchange program in Australia, participating in a 10-person semester-abroad program in Botswana, living in a cohort at a nonprofit training center in Denmark, running trail crews for a summer, and leading backcountry trips with teenagers for

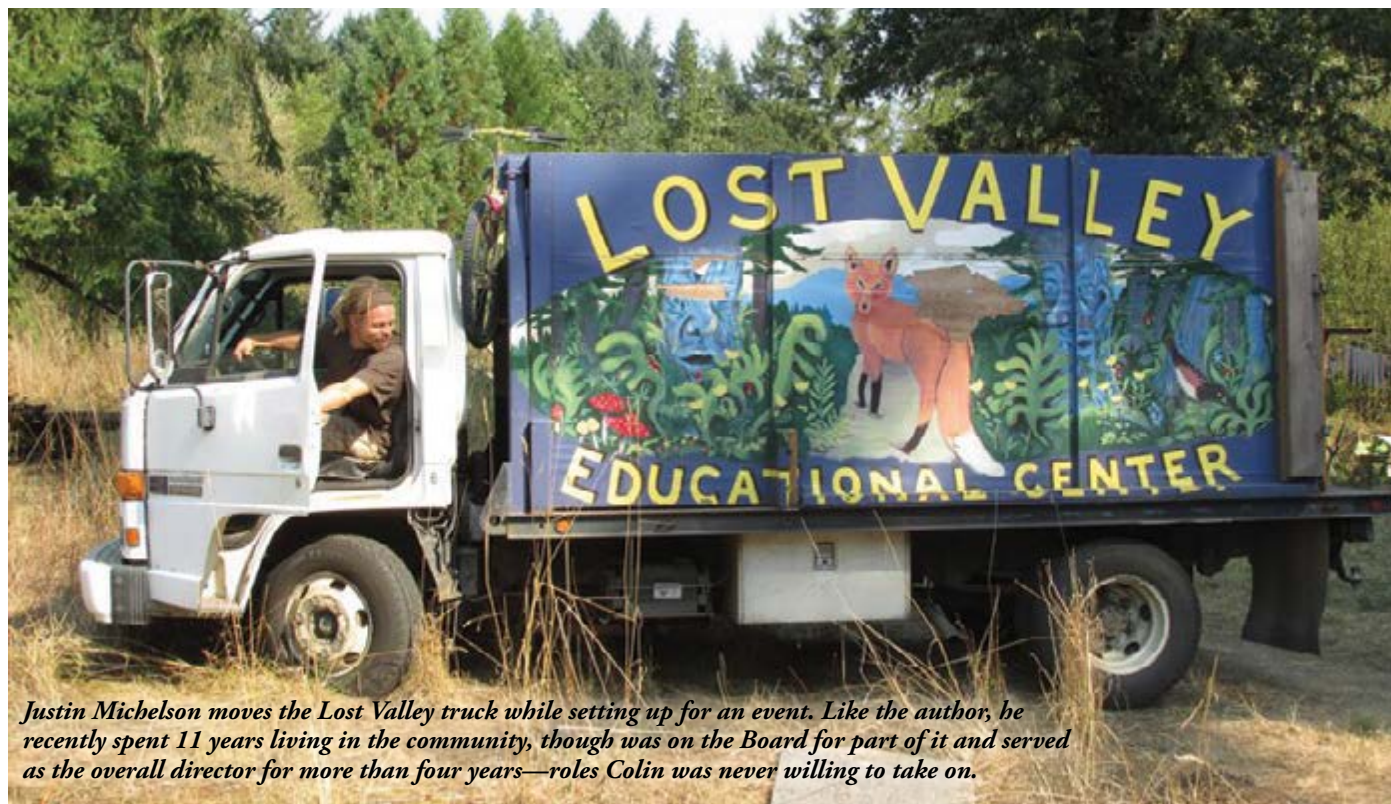
up to two weeks each. Thus I understood “expedition behavior” of throwing in together and prioritizing the group. In an American culture of “Me,” I entered community with experience of working as a “We,” and that has served me well.

**3.** I soon discovered that an attitude of equanimity was an essential characteristic. Shortly after I moved to Lost Valley, a financial crisis ensued, centered around discovering a second checkbook that had been used to pay community costs but wasn't entered into Quick-Books. This meant we were suddenly \$7,000-\$8,000 in the hole and in danger of defaulting on everything. There were grumbling residents who refused to pay rent (full-on calcified resentment; see below) and a recent breakdown in many of the social infrastructure elements. I counted about three bombshells per week, like “So-and-so is leaving,” or “What's-his-name is suing us,” or “The water just tested positive for really bad stuff.” It took strong grounding and solidarity to withstand the challenges—all in a dark, rainy Oregon winter. Being a pretty quantitative person, for fun I guesstimated the likelihood that Lost Valley would survive that current phase

and still be around in five years. The lowest I ever came up with was a 82 percent chance of continuing. So after existing for 20+ years (at that point), this rare intentional community might fail. And it might need to fail—if it has a nonviable business model, maybe that is the right thing to have happen. I came to peace with the notion of organizational dissolution, after all the years and faces and effort. This nonattachment to the community experiment persisting was a freeing attitude, and allowed me to care and work hard without *needing* something by having an emotional dependency on an outcome outside myself.

**4.** A Board member and former staff person said something both insightful and humorous during a tense period onsite. In an extended email thread he wrote something to the effect of: “This is the biggest thing ever! And four months from now when some other heavy issue flares up, it will be the biggest thing ever!” I took that as a merry poke at us acting more dour than is helpful, as well as a nugget of wisdom. I have remembered that in the many years since: when zoomed out, the injustice or challenge or tragedy of this moment is just one in a line through time—it isn't the end-all-be-all, and not the defining moment of our age. Let's deal with it well, but not get stuck on it. Being able to partially relax into a perspective that the world isn't going to end because of the issue I/we are currently facing has helped give me valuable emotional distance.

**5.** I moved into a community with a lot of transiency and watery energy. It happened to be good timing that the toughest period of my Lost Valley tenure was soon after I arrived, with plenty of fuel in my tanks to contribute to the project (namely, keep Lost Valley afloat when we were financially beached and there were major interpersonal rifts onsite). I recognized that my ability to be steady and dependable would clearly be of use, so I employed that muscle early and often. Things got gradually better over the months, and as robust community and business practices grew stronger around me over the years, it became more optional to be solid, because the reliability and professionalism of others involved had improved. But the ability to be a calm adult has always served me well at Lost Valley.



*Justin Michelson moves the Lost Valley truck while setting up for an event. Like the author, he recently spent 11 years living in the community, though was on the Board for part of it and served as the overall director for more than four years—roles Colin was never willing to take on.*

Photos courtesy of Lost Valley Educational Center



*The author leads a natural building class in the 2019 Permaculture Design Certification course at Lost Valley.*

**6.** When people ask me why I've persisted here so long, it has given me the opportunity to reflect on my fit from a bird's-eye perspective. I have come to see three elements of any given situation, whether that's community, work, home, or otherwise. They are the 3 Ps. This sounds cliché, the kind of thing you'd get from an enthusiastic, caffeinated, and polished motivational speaker in a hotel conference room, but it rings true to me. The first element of any work is the *project*, what it is the group is trying to accomplish in the world. The second is the *people*, who it's done with/around. And the third is *place*, the natural setting and geographic location of the work. At Lost Valley, I came for the community and outward-facing education center, and in the course of it discovered permaculture too—great! So the project has always resonated with me. The people are great, being of similar mind; this includes fellow residents, students or interns who commonly come for three months, people who pass through for monthly ecstatic dances (well, at least pre-Covid), plus the overall culture of Eugene and the Pacific Northwest. And finally the location of Lost Valley is great, situated on 87 acres of lush and varied terrain in a county that by itself goes from Big Sur-esque coastline through temperate forest to high, glaciated peaks. So all three of the Ps have suited me well here—no wonder I stayed for so long! I expect it would be harder for me to feel satisfied in a place like northeast Missouri, where Dancing Rabbit and other communities are, because of the local culture and a landform that doesn't inspire me. Or in Denmark (where communities are normal) because of the language/culture gap and harsh climate.

**7.** One challenge at Lost Valley—and presumably many other communities—is the need to make money for life costs. I've been lucky that 95 percent of my employment over my time in residency at Lost Valley was on the property, mostly as program director. I see fellow residents take jobs 30 minutes away in town, and know that that is a constant pull away from the community—eventually the city often wins. In my case, my locus of financial energy kept me focused *inside* the community, not *outside* of it, which helped facilitate a long stay.

**8.** I have always approached being in community (and a leader in it) as a marathon, not a sprint. Short-term major contributions followed by burnout and departure doesn't look fun, and doesn't serve the collective as well in the long term as tempered contributions over many years. From the beginning I've shot for what is doable and

sustainable, not working myself to the bone and ending up a martyr who goes down with the ship. With this in mind, I've steered clear of being Lost Valley's main director or on the Board—I know for me those roles could be a rapid route to unhappiness, self-doubt, and burnout. There has been enough challenge, bureaucracy, and conflict navigation without me taking on five-year plans, IRS interfacing, naysayers, and staff flare-ups. I have a saying that "Around here shit rolls uphill," meaning core staff and directors have to deal with whatever comes at them. Having strategically kept myself outside of the managerial roles that would have to deal with most of it was a wise move for my sanity and longevity in the community.

I also did not carry out staff roles that I find tend to be targets for other people's projections. In addition to the director and Board, this means the property manager and bookkeeper. Residents can get reactive or suspicious when it comes to their lease agreements, ability to continue residency, and monthly amount due to the organization. By not being involved in residency management, instead carrying out seasonal education programs or hosting outside group rentals, I was not in the line of suspicion from some people, and was able to maintain personal relationships unencumbered by my staff roles.

**9.** Related to this, I did not let myself overwork for long. I rode the edge of what you could call my Line of Willingness, the amount of community work I could do before grumbling internally about it. I organically found that to be about 30 hours of Education Director or Event Director work per week before it felt like too much. I only went over that for rare stints of roughly one to two weeks per year. Afterward I would recover from such a foray with a partial month of perhaps 15 hours of work per week after one of 55, finding a natural balance. This is personal sustainability, and aided me as a natural boundary that I noticed within myself and mostly abided by.

**10.** I learned to be mindful of crossing into the realm of resentment, not just in weekly work but in a

given moment or day. This is danger territory, where grouchy stories in my head get fed as much as they want. Long term, that's a corrosive way to be. It reminds me of high-altitude hypoxia that mountain climbers experience—they say you can't stay over 8000 meters for long or it will kill you. It's the same in collective endeavors—staying in the resentment zone long leads to motivational death and people moving apart from each other by either resignation or conflict. At Lost Valley I discovered my resentment line doing a long kitchen shift weekly, cooking (usually solo) for three hours for 10-30 community members, then after the meal doing a two-hour cleanup shift. It was very common for me to get internally complaintive part way through the clean shift. However, if I did *just* the cooking portion *or* the cleaning part, and not both on the same night, I didn't trip that trigger. So I rescheduled myself that way, and starved the irk monster.

**11.** Another element of my success in the community was finding a good balance of time between myself and the group. This allowed for plenty of solo reflection and regeneration while also having a good amount of connection, learning, and being in service. A summer evening example might be community dinner (social) followed by me taking a walk by myself. I've seen others play with this balance, finding what spot works for them on the spectrum of group activity vs. solo time. There were periods (especially early on) when I didn't feel enough interpersonal connection, but I can handle a lot of alone time, so that wasn't a dealbreaker.

As a side note, it's really nice to live in a situation in which loneliness isn't a part of my life, as it sometimes was pre-community. This is especially true during Covid restrictions, when so many people have achingly missed real, live souls—pandemic response disrupted the Lost Valley community, but not as badly as most of the society.

**12.** Finally, I've come to see that there are two essential characteristics for any communitarian, and really any person: reasonableness and emo-

tional maturity. If those are both present in a given individual, the rest can probably be worked with, but if they are consistently not, let the person go and don't even try. I credit Melanie Rios (former instructor and director at Lost Valley) with the core of this idea. It's a simple and useful metric for evaluating a person's behavior in a given situation: Are they in violation of either of these basic needs? Granted, different evaluators can have wildly different answers to this question, because what is reasonable (for example) is somewhat subjective. But certain flags to keep an eye out for are: responses that are very emotionally inflamed compared to the subject at hand, an inability to see situations from another party's viewpoint, or making ultimatums or threats. Examples of behavior I find mature and reasonable are: admitting imperfection and perhaps fault, seeing each other as individuals and not stand-ins for a certain demographic, communicating well even if somewhat triggered, making offers or requests that are easy for others to agree to, and seeking resolution at a healthy pace (not immediately out of docility, nor dragged out so as to maximize conflict/damage). I suppose I have persisted for over a decade at Lost Valley, with never a whiff of being asked to leave, because I have exhibited reasonableness and emotional maturity.

**I**n conclusion, the above are a series of a dozen attitudes that I exhibited, as well as circumstances for me at Lost Valley, that facilitated my longevity in the community. Try them on for yourself, if you're so inclined, and see if they serve you well too. At the minimum, I think this lens can help communitarians who are lumbering through hard times see more clearly what's going on. For example, "Ah, I'm working too hard and getting resentful—that's what's happening," or "I think he's too self-focused for this group," or "As a cofounder, she identifies herself so closely with this community that she won't allow herself to consider the possibility of it dissolving." I hope this swan song mini-opus of mine is helpful for you, dear reader, and I welcome you to add or modify elements you find helpful in long-haul community. Don't forget to submit that to COMMUNITIES, so we all can learn from each other! 🌱

---

*Colin Doyle lived at Meadowsong Ecovillage from 2010 to 2022, and for many years ran education and events at onsite Lost Valley Educational Center. Upon exit he was the second-longest-running member, out of 50+ residents in the community. He has moved away to get married and homestead in Costa Rica, potentially in a small community—you can follow the project at [thelivingjournal.com](http://thelivingjournal.com). His final act as a resident was being wed in the meadow at Lost Valley.*



*The author delivers a keynote speech at the 2015 Northwest Permaculture Convergence in Eugene, Oregon.*

# Reflections on Fifty Years of Community

*By Daniel Brown*

In observing the present and future of community living, let's first begin with the past.

I find it to be no coincidence that the modern communal movement in the United States began in the late 1960s. While the decade itself was fraught throughout with change, it was the period between 1967-1970 that saw a mass migration as hundreds of thousands of young Americans left their colleges, cities, and homes to attempt new lifestyles in predominantly rural settings.

That time period encompassed several major events that signaled that the Old Order was rapidly changing but not being completely replaced. While the 1967 Summer of Love and Woodstock in 1969 announced that there was a new model in which to create community based on love and peace, the Chicago Police Riot of 1968 and the 1970 Kent State Massacre made clear that the Old Order was not only firmly entrenched but quite willing to kill its rebellious offspring. The first Earth Day in April 1970 celebrated a return to the imagined purity of nature while condemning the polluting of our planet. And so, the Farm in Tennessee, Hog Farm and New Buffalo in New Mexico, Total Loss Farm in Vermont, and the Brotherhood of the Spirit in Massachusetts, just to name a few, came into being and rapidly expanded within these four short years.

By the summer of 1970, I was convinced that the United States was about to implode into several civil wars. Black against white; young versus old; pro-war and pro-peace; the mainstream set against the counterculture. A poll released after Kent State showed that most Americans approved of the killings, which explains Neil Young's cryptic lyric, "Should have been done long ago" in his anthem "Ohio." I dropped out of college that year

despite my draft number of "4." During that summer, I briefly entertained the notion of becoming a violent revolutionary but fortunately concluded that I lacked the mindset. I instead became a member of the Brotherhood of the Spirit commune located in the tiny hamlet of Warwick, Massachusetts, below the border with New Hampshire.

The spiritually-oriented Brotherhood (renamed the Renaissance Community in 1974) was a true example of the Long Haul. Potential members were expected to not only contribute their personal belongings (which wasn't much for many of us) but to make a "Lifetime Commitment to the Energy" which implied that we would spend the rest of our lives in the commune with its vow to save the world by demonstrating an example of pure loving brotherhood. For the first few years, drugs, alcohol, and cigarettes were banned and an enforced work ethic weeded out those who were merely seeking a spot to crash and be fed. The Brotherhood lasted 20 years (1968-1988) and encompassed nearly a thousand people but, as my previous articles for this magazine have documented, followed the same Shakespearean Tragedy path of many such communities founded during that era. A charismatic visionary gathers people for the purpose of changing the world for the better but is corrupted by power and ego, resulting in the destruction of his/her original goal. Whenever I tell about our demise to other veterans of the early commune movement, they laugh and observe, "Yeah, that's what happened to us, too."

In the end, I and others who have written for this journal found that in trying to create a new vision, all the negative attributes we vowed to replace were manifested within the borders of our communities. But it wasn't all for naught. Although some former members of my community feel shame, guilt, and anger at giving their lives over to a perceived failure, most see it as a momentous event that made them better people and reshaped their worldview in ways that have carried on through half a century.

As of this writing, we find ourselves once again at another critical moment in history. Mass shootings have become a national epidemic, global warming is ticking the clock towards extinction, wars and potential wars, including nuclear, threaten survival, and our political, social, medical, and economic infrastructures appear on the verge of collapse. Representative democracy is in danger of being replaced by "soft" totalitarianism. Times of chaos and uncertainty have always bred radical change, so I'm not surprised that there is a renewed interest in cooperative living and resiliency. As there are lessons we older folk learned when we tried to manifest our vision, it's time for us to give support to the younger generations trying to make sense of an increasingly senseless world.

I lived at the Brotherhood/Renaissance from ages 20 to 34, which means I came of age entrenched in an alternative reality. And although it came to a traumatic conclusion, the community saga has influenced my life for the better ever since. As such, I feel obligated to share the lessons learned from my past, and have been allowed several opportunities to do so. As an example, I was recently approached by a young member of the Heartland project in New York City ([laurenstobierski.myportfolio.com/heartland](http://laurenstobierski.myportfolio.com/heartland)) which is attempting to attract urban dwellers to form potential rural communities. Knowing my background, she solicited my advice, which had the added advantage of allowing me to reflect on the pros and cons of communal living. I was also interviewed by two high school students who were studying my community for their AP History presentation. Both were uplifting interactions which reminded me of the enthusiasm and desire to improve the world that had once motivated my



group. In sharing my views, in no way did I pretend to be an “expert.” I wanted to be of service to them and hopefully to others. The following could be seen as the main “Bullet Points” of our conversations.

First and foremost, a community must chart an intentional vision. It doesn't need to be as grandiose as, say, “Saving the Earth,” but a common purpose brings people together and maintains their focus. It is vital that newcomers are acquainted right from the start with this vision and understand its life-changing implications, benefits, and responsibilities. A community can, like ours, require a “Lifetime Commitment,” or be content to allow people to come and go as they please (no one at the Brotherhood/Renaissance was ever physically prevented from leaving but there was plenty of guilt-tripping).

From what I have read in these pages, newer communities are no longer based on a sole charismatic individual but are more egalitarian in nature. The strong leader was necessary in the late '60s to herd the cats of diverse personalities, egos, and temperaments. With no previous roadmap or guidebook, these leaders were making it up as they went along, but today there is a wealth of communal data to draw upon and

creating community is rarely seen as a threat by the outside world. Crises, however, will occur and must be dealt with in a timely fashion. While the sole authority paradigm might be over, there are individuals who are natural, level-headed leaders who are at their best when things get dicey. I believe consensus to be unwieldy in a large group and impractical in a crisis where fast decisive action is a necessity. A challenge will be to inspire leadership (or a leadership council) without creating a hierarchy.

The young people who entered the communal movement of the '60s differed



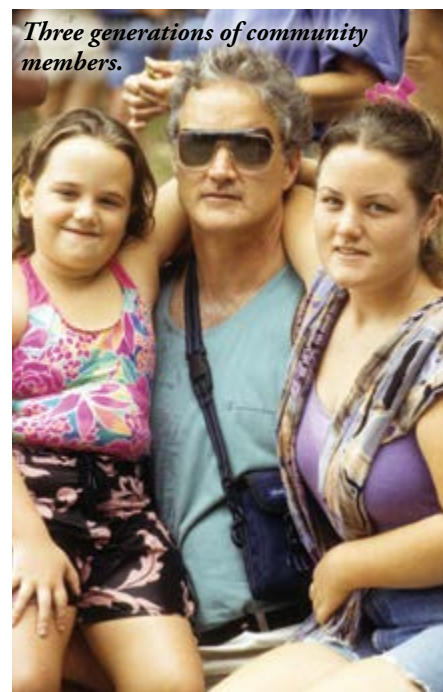
*The author in 1972.*



*The Brotherhood of the Spirit encompassed a strong work ethic. Preparing the commune's garden in the summer of 1970.*

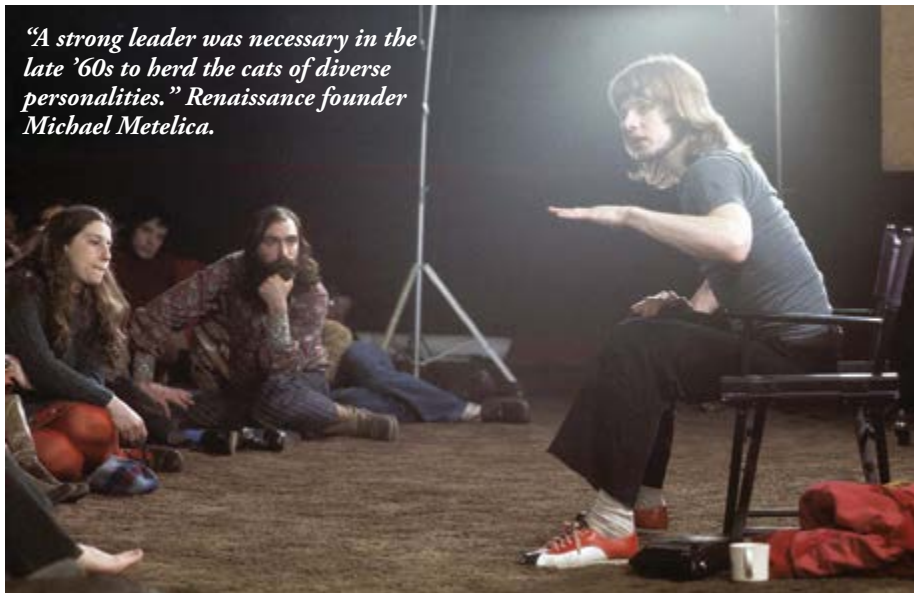


*Celebrating the 50th anniversary of the founding of the Renaissance Community in 2018.*



*Three generations of community members.*

Photos courtesy of Daniel A. Brown



*"A strong leader was necessary in the late '60s to herd the cats of diverse personalities." Renaissance founder Michael Metelica.*

for a vital and nourishing compost that enriches the whole.

For me, a major attribute of living in community was learning to adapt. Our commune survived as long as it did because it wasn't afraid to radically shift with the times. The small initial band of ragged hippies (1960s) became business entrepreneurs and creative artists (1970s) before constructing a self-sufficient village (1980s) utilizing alternative energies. Along the way, we learned to adapt to a diverse range of temperaments and personalities while learning new skills and adjusting to unexpected situations. For example, all us urban kids wanted to "Get back to the land" only to realize that we didn't know squat about the hardships of farming. But adapt we did and some of us even became quite proficient at it.

When the Brotherhood/Renaissance began in 1968, we made the cardinal error of not taking the time to know our local community, in this case, a tiny conservative town in rural Massachusetts. Although hippies in any form were feared and distrusted by the mainstream society, we came on too strong, filled with the self-righteous zeal of youth, so that even our outreach was met with suspicion. Over the years, however, we toned down our rhetoric, created retail and contracting businesses that served the wider community, worked at local hospitals, offered free public events, and eventually got involved in town administration. Our most popular outreach venture was the annual Christmas Dinner whereby hundreds of townsfolk came for a free sumptuous meal, musical entertainment, and Santa Claus distributing gifts for the kids. We even fielded a baseball team in the county league (our first season record was 2–20 but it was lots of fun!) and a darts squad at the town watering hole. From 1972–1977, 75 of us worked at the Belchertown State School and brought a measure of humanity to those incarcerated on the wards. Recently, one of our commune founders was honored for the 33 years he spent as a member of his town's Board of Health.

I left my community because its leader degenerated into intolerable abuses of power. That should not be a factor today. But, in retrospect, I'm glad I departed. A pitfall of a long haul community is that



*One successful outreach was the 1975 Renaissance Faire which attracted 3,000 people from surrounding towns.*

in many respects from those who are today seeking such a lifestyle. For one, many of us were estranged from our families—the much ballyhooed "Generation Gap" was a real thing—and so saw community as a family surrogate although few at the time recognized or admitted to that fact. As drug use was prominent, communal founders had to deal with a host of dysfunctional behaviors. Many communes from that era failed early on because they refused to enact a work ethic or stringent rules of conduct. Collectives of stoned, naked, "Free love" hippies disappeared in a hurry. Structure is necessary and while there will always be those who consider it to be authoritarian, every society throughout history from clans to nations have had to impose it for their own survival.

Screening newcomers is a necessity because there will be those attracted to community for all the wrong reasons, mainly lonely or emotionally needy people who will expect to be taken care of while giving little in return. The great eco-activist Starhawk once gave a presentation where she warned about "Power Under" people who can single-handedly destroy a group by their chronic selfishness. This is rarely an issue for those communities begun by a close-knit group of friends who have known each other for years. Another factor that aids in success is attracting not only families, who are automatically geared towards responsibility, but a multi-generational population. The passion and energy of youth added to the wisdom and experience of the elders makes

it's easy for members to become "Institutionalized" and too sedentary no matter how noble the purpose. However, for those in for the duration, I would suggest taking periodic sabbaticals. I did half-way through my commune stint and I returned more committed than ever. Go on a camping trip; travel to see the nation and the world. Explore other communities. Visit your family of origin. Most important, have fun! For many years, we were so damn serious about our mission that we forgot that elemental necessity. Once we allowed ourselves to go to the movies, have dinner in a nice restaurant, or spend a weekend at the beach, we became not only happier but more relaxed with ourselves and with each other.

A word of friendly advice. Avoid too many group meetings. Everyone secretly hates them!

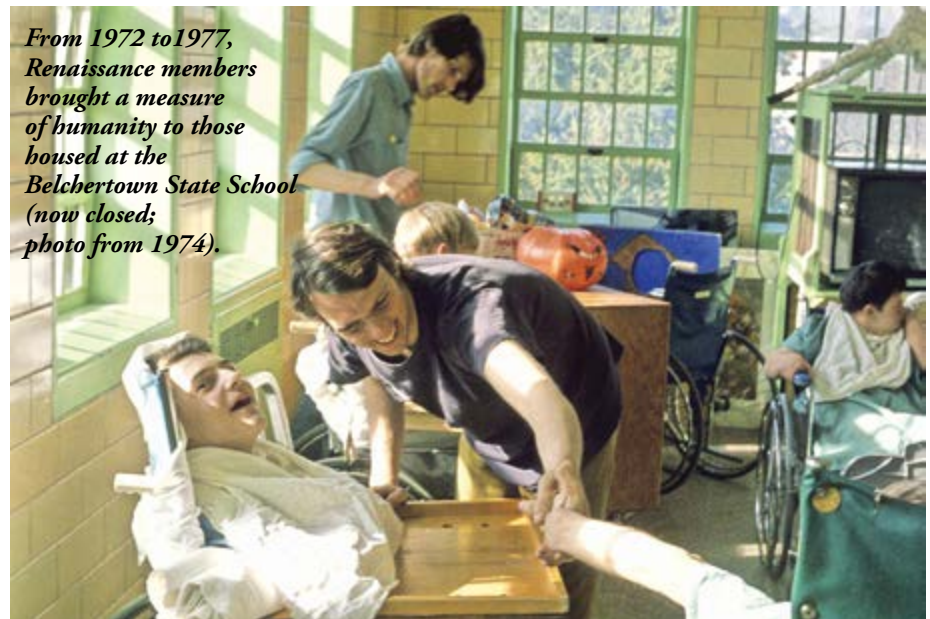
Be aware that your community could have a natural life span, not fated to be a long haul endeavor. There is nothing wrong with that. When that time approaches, the end might be gradual or sudden but should not be feared. There will be the usual "Now what?" tremors and even self-recrimination, but faith in the future and one's own inner strength will be antidotes. The lessons learned even from a "Failed" enterprise will be incorporated and utilized for the remainder of your life. My time at the Brotherhood/Renaissance made me a better person and allowed me to be a stronger contributor to my family, friends, and to our society

at large. I have been a teacher for over 35 years and never doubt that my communal experience provided a solid foundation. My personal "Long Haul" continues in providing a source of useful information that might allow others to manifest their vision of a better world. I'm proud to note that many of my communal comrades are still involved in a variety of political, spiritual, and social justice venues.

In conclusion, I believe that we are heading into years of rapid transformation where the next two decades will look nothing like the last two. There will be challenges that are at present unimaginable and will necessitate quick thinking and eyes wide open. For all the younger people who are embarking or about to embark on community enterprises, I thank you for your vision and pray that you will be well equipped to deal with whatever comes your way. 🌸

---

*Daniel A. Brown was born in New York City in 1950. He lived at the Brotherhood of the Spirit/Renaissance Community from 1970-1984 and is one of its archivists-history keepers. Since leaving Renaissance, Brown has been a classroom teacher, general aviation pilot, drum circle leader, published author, and exhibition artist and photographer. He currently lives in Taos, New Mexico with his wife, Lisa and dog, Cody. Brown's artwork can be seen at [www.intothewildblue.com](http://www.intothewildblue.com).*



*From 1972 to 1977, Renaissance members brought a measure of humanity to those housed at the Belchertown State School (now closed; photo from 1974).*



*A close-knit bond of family and friends ensures a successful community.*



*In these challenging times, young people are once again exploring cooperative living.*

# Belonging, for the Long Haul

By Riana Good

I have long longed to belong. Finally knowing that I inherently belong has helped me to commit to community for the long haul.

I resonate with the adage, “Wherever you go, there you are,” because in shifting my own feelings around belonging, *who* I am becomes more important than *where* I am, so I end up sticking around longer.

Shifting the question of “Do I belong?” to “How do I belong?” has deepened my inherent sense of belonging and led me to beautiful, inclusive community life.

## Belonging and Separation

When I seek belonging, I yearn for belonging to self (autonomy), to others (community), and to the earth (home). It has been easy for me to feel the dignity of belonging to myself and the blessing of belonging to the earth. Developing the feeling that I belong to people and to community, however, has required new understandings.

It is no coincidence that many of us question our belonging. We are made to question it. Westernized thinking has led us to feel separate from the earth, from each other, and from ourselves. Feeling separate leads us to feeling better-than or less-than, creating a false dichotomy of insider/outsider, us/them, and valuable/disposable. This dualistic mindset persists because it has been shoved into our heads, and we uphold it by internalizing it and acting accordingly. By resisting these systems of oppression, however, we can reclaim our inherent belonging to ourselves, each other, and the earth.

It took me almost 40 years to figure out that the more I believed I didn't belong, the more I acted that way, and the more I acted as if I didn't belong, the more that people would treat me that way, and the more that people treated me that way, the more that I believed it. And, in wanting to avoid the discomfort of feeling unwanted, I avoided committing to groups.

## Then

Growing up, I considered myself an expert “outsider,” in part because of my identity as a smart/nerdy, fat, queerish, white Jewish female. In high school I longed to have a group of friends, though I felt too earthy to be with the nerds, too fat to be with the athletes, too straight to be with the queers, too queer to be with the straights, too cool to be with the role-playing gamers, and too square to be with the drama club.

Because of intersectionality (overlapping and interdependent systems of social categorizations), it is challenging to tease apart my identities, though they ultimately combined to make me act and feel left out a whole lot. At the same time, I loved my bold, spunky, exuberant, outspoken self. I chose not to assimilate, thus trading conformity and a sense of belonging for being true to myself. Now, I realize that I can be true to myself and also close to and connected with others.

## Now

Since February 2019, I have lived much of the year with about 16 others at TerraSante Village, where it feels like sitting at the warm kids table in the cafeteria. “The warm kids table?!” you may ask. Yep, not the “cool” kids table—or the “outsiders” table, with which so many of us had experiences—but the warm, inviting table where there is room for everyone, and everyone is included. We say, “Hey, come join us at

the warm kids table!” It's presumed that you're wanted unless explicitly otherwise stated. In our community, we're here to practice acting with the knowledge that we belong and everyone belongs.

Whether it is because we are retired, disabled, we are living minimalist lives, or have the means to spend minimal time working, most of us at TerraSante go more slowly than most in the developed world. Many of us spend a lot of time together in unstructured ways. A bunch of us drink warm beverages together each morning. A bunch of us sit on the west-facing porch to watch the sunset each night. We share spontaneous meals. Many of us work on community projects or individual projects together. We have unstructured meetings on Tuesday mornings and full moon drum circles, and that's all that's on our calendar. If you choose to join morning beverage time or evening sunset time, you belong and are welcome. If you choose not to, or are unable to, you also belong, and nobody will castigate or denigrate you for that.

Most residents have lived at TerraSante for six or seven years, with others upwards of a decade, and Bruce first rolled up on the land over 20 years ago. There is certainly some turnover, though residents are generally committed for the long haul.

We accept, we co-exist, and it is presumed that everyone is meant to be here unless they are actively doing harm to upset the balance. We practice benefit of the doubt: you don't have to prove or sell yourself to join the community. It's presumed that you belong if you end up here and there is space available, unless there's a strong reason to believe otherwise. And still, we navigate the identities and systems of power that give each of us more or less access to resources, power, and feelings of belonging. We are mostly

white adults (in our 30s-60s), though we also represent multiple races, religions, abilities, and class backgrounds.

We are opting in to radical inclusion; the sense of inherently belonging to this community, to place, to planet, to this Gaia network. We are a living laboratory. We are remembering how it truly is: The truth of radical inclusion exists whether or not we opt in. We get to choose how and whether we want to spread it. 🌱

*Riana Good writes snail mail, sleeps out under the stars, dances, and works on community projects at her homes in Arizona (at TerraSante Village), California, Oregon, and Massachusetts. She taught Spanish in the Boston Public Schools for 12 years. You can write to her at [rianagood@gmail.com](mailto:rianagood@gmail.com) with anything that this article has sparked for you.*

## What Does It Mean to Belong?

We all belong because we are here. Belonging is our inherent birthright, by virtue of existing in the sacred and delicate balance of life. We can distinguish belonging, which is inherent to our existence, from feelings of being welcome, which are based on conditions that we interpret. There is nothing that we can do to belong or not belong. We just do. No one belongs more or less. No one is more or less important; we are all sacred and essential, no matter our role.

Every day I make the decision to remember that I belong, acting from that knowledge and conviction, and to remember that others belong, whether they act that way or not, and to treat them as if they belong. I remember that my presence is welcome, unless I am explicitly told otherwise, and even then—it's generally not about me. And, if it is, I take accountability to realign my words and actions. Using my words and beliefs, I help others to remember that their presence is welcome, as well. If I treat myself and others as fully belonging, and understand that any apparent slights or feelings of exclusion are circumstantial, based on others' states of mind/heart/the world, then I don't take them personally because it's not about something that's inherently true about any of the individuals involved.

May we all choose to uphold the belief that everyone belongs, to resist any beliefs to the contrary, and to act accordingly. May we all find a sense of belonging so that we may engage in community for the long haul.

—RG



Photos courtesy of Riana Good

# Loving Is a Political Task

By Achim Ecker

*Adapted from an article published in Tattva Viveka; Focus: Community, 1.6.2022.*



*ZEGG main building after refurbishing in 2019.*



*Community meeting, Summercamp 2010.*



*Covered clothes lines at ZEGG.*

When Dieter Duhm founded the “Bauhütte” in 1978, it was about developing a culture without violence and destruction. Since then we have come a long way, from an in-depth self-exploration (the “Social Experiment” and intensive community-building in the Black Forest) to a well-respected and well-known seminar center in Bad Belzig: the ZEGG (German acronym for Center for Experimental Social Design).

I was thrilled when I found the Bauhütte in 1984. At that time, at the age of 24, I followed the motto: I will stay as long as I do not find anything more relevant for peace among people and between people and nature. I lived and learned in community, traveled the world, advised countless communities with my partner Ina Meyer-Stoll, and we spread our form of communication, the Forum<sup>1</sup>, in many countries and continents. For 38 years I was in the right place to live and work.

Now things have changed, so that I think I have to move on from the place that I have built up and made flourish ecologically and socially with all my efforts over three decades. Today the seminar business has outstripped the community that sustains the place, and taken away the importance it was supposed to have. The community has, in my perception, lost its strength and its core. For now we have taken a sabbatical to rethink our lives in the ZEGG community. In the following I will describe the process of change as best as I can. I see similar processes in many communities and groups.

## How it began

In order to create a peaceful world, it is important to find out why it is not yet peaceful. So we looked profoundly to find out why people betray their love and act cruelly. If it is not just some “evil” people who have conspired against the good, the true, and the beautiful, we inevitably have to look at ourselves. What do we carry within us that enables and produces hatred, hostility,

and exclusion of dissenters to this day? Can we prevent the inner monster from breaking out again as it did in German fascism?

For us, community life meant an education in which one trains in practicing a constructive attitude. We wanted to do something to counteract the increasing individualization in our society; for example, by putting the idea of “I want” second, following “it wants.” We were interested in reintegrating people into a social space where individuals experience that not everything revolves around themselves. Instead, we took on social responsibility.

Ultimately, having a fixed self-image always gets in the way of the One, of love. Thomas Hübl later put it this way: “What we call personality is the sum of our no’s to life.” We create a personality, a “someone,” out of a deficiency within us. There we are not enough and create an image of ourselves as being enough.

Today, this narcissism is a characteristic of the larger culture. Community, on the other hand, means social feedback that enables me to align myself ever more finely so that my actions serve the whole (and thus also me). What am I willing to invest in the newness that is to come?

## What was important about the community before ZEGG?

Dieter Duhm is still a great visionary and lover. His vision, his spirit, and his big heart for people and all life carried us over many years, through some of the shoals of our lives towards connecting communal experiences. Time flew and at the same time stretched into infinity. He was the experimenter in this experimental laboratory and we learned a lot from him. He shaped a protected and held space where we could shed social, familial, and personal patterns, enabling us to have new experiences. At the entrance gate of the Bauhütte of Gut Rosenhof in Schwand a handwritten plaque welcomed visitors and guests: “Dear visitor, you are entering the interior of a cultural crystal. Put down all

mental plates and ideas as you enter.” We trained our alignment to another world, another existence, to a life of peace and connectedness. We learned to love and stand up for each other.

Political thought was extremely important for me during this time, when I was able to expand many of the views of myself and the world that I had brought with me. Dieter Duhm always had the world in his heart in his frequent speeches and lectures. As an inner-German refugee, he himself had experienced exclusion and violence and a broken society. These experiences sharpened his view and his compassion for the situation of so many people worldwide. From this he developed his strong impulse to love and heal.

Just for myself personally, I would find it difficult to mobilize the strength to look at all the shadows within me, to release the pent-up and repressed pain in them and to go through them. However, if my going through this might conceivably bring about a positive change in the world, then this idea alone was a strong motive.

We explored our individual patterns, conflicts, and changes as examples of the patterns, conflicts, and changes necessary in the world. When I change something in my patterns, not only do I have a direct impact on my immediate environment, but even

more, I affect the deeply interconnected living world around me, and thus I affect the whole fabric of life of which I am a part.

As a result, I am no longer so identified with my individual problems, because I see that they are collective issues with which I am not alone. Recognizing this was helpful: we learned to see and understand ourselves as individual manifestations of the whole.

## Founding of ZEGG

In 1991 we bought the ZEGG site. The community, which was spread over Germany and Switzerland, had a center again. We called it “Center for Experimental Social Design” after a design by Dieter Duhm from 1978. To our surprise, he did not move to Bad Belzig with us. That caused a lot of uncertainty. Who should be able to take on this role and how do we make the transition from a community with a clear leader to a grassroots democratic community (what Spiral Dynamics<sup>2</sup> calls a “green meme”)? It took four years until the founding of Tamera in 1995 to make this transition. At that time it was an important step to embrace our responsibility completely.

Several times a week we had big plenary meetings with about 60 people where we discussed all decisions and made them by



*Natural building at ZEGG.*



*Preparing new construction site, 1992.*



*The author speaks at Summercamp 2019.*



*The author explains methods of building the soil.*

Photos courtesy of Achim Ecker

consensus. These long community meetings became increasingly annoying for many. For me personally, they were an opportunity to see everyone and make appointments. Almost everything was communicated orally. There were no minutes at that time.

Life took place all over the site, everywhere and with everyone. It was a dense life where one year was like five. I was enthusiastic and learned a lot, especially as a human being, but also as a craftsman. Every house was also mine. I felt welcome everywhere. We visited each other often and almost always without an appointment. No door was closed. We mostly were happy to help each other when someone needed something. We were simply there for each other. No one was annoyed by the visits and wanted to be “undisturbed”—at least in my experience. If it didn’t fit, you said so.

Of course, we had to take out loans to buy the 14 hectare site. In the beginning we needed about 4 million DM for the purchase and necessary investments. In the following years the sum grew and is now 3 million Euros, the estimated value of the site. We have a big loan from a Swiss foundation, from the residents, from friends, and only a little from banks.

In the beginning we had little money and only built with what we had. The carpenters’ workshop dismantled the press-board cupboards from the German Democratic Republic and built shelves, window frames, etc. out of them. New wood was rare because it was expensive. We lived in the houses as they were, changed wallpaper, repainted, put cheap carpets on old floors and mattresses on top; that was enough for us. We used the resources we had and brought with us. Everyone contributed everything.

When we needed money, there were community activities like selling pretzels in pubs to earn it—also work in massage parlors and other jobs. Not much time was spent on that because we didn’t need much money yet; our needs were small.

Guests were community guests. The business structure (Ltd) existed only on paper and few were aware of it or its manager in everyday life. For us, the community was far above everything else in importance. We always knew: if it goes wrong, we sell; hopefully we can pay back the money we borrowed and move through Europe as a nomadic tribe.

In the beginning, the community came first; we were committed to addressing anything disturbing our experience of being together. Only further down the line came the private: “my” room, “my” retreat, “my” kitchen, etc. Whether the social (and fulfilling) density first became thinner and less sustainable, and therefore private needs emerged, or whether the private needs wanted to come back on stage after a long absence, and thus dissolved the social density, is like the question of hen and egg.

### Growth—the hamster wheel begins to turn

Gradually the seminars became more necessary for the financing of ZEGG and also for the individuals. Up to now, the seminars had mainly served to convey our own experiences and insights from the intensive community life. There were not many seminars beyond the big “conferences,” as we called them then. Now we started to establish ourselves as a seminar center. Our guests no longer came to a community but to a seminar house. They expected an orderly, clean operation with more comfort and, for example, no mixed-sex bathrooms. The demands on the kitchen increased. All this meant more work, more expenses, and more effort. In return, we had to earn more money, i.e., have more guests, etc. As a result, we worked more and spent less time on community life and resolving conflicts. At the same time, individuals had an increased need for money for holidays, training, etc. This is actually logical, because more need for money creates more need to work and more everyday life, from which one then also has to recover. In the early years, there was little or no such desire. Everything that I found exciting, attractive, and interesting at that time took place within the community. Thus a life with little money was fulfilling.

One cannot explain ZEGG without the time in the Bauhütte. The community of love that was built up at that time carried us for long and created a commitment and friendship that were essential for the existence of ZEGG. That was the early period from 1978 until about 1998. Even today we still live from the social credit we created when we lived intensively in community. Continuously the “social density” and also the orientation toward



*Photovoltaics on ZEGG rooftop amidst permaculture landscape, 2010.*







the cultural change work decreased. We live off the interest, so to speak, and use up the “capital.”

There were also external circumstances that contributed to the change—e.g., continuous attacks by the press and autonomous leftists, which had a wearing effect in the long run. They made us overcautious in what we thought, did, and said. It was exhausting to dare new things in living together, in love, relationships, and sex, and to be constantly fought as a result. There was a creeping process of inner and then outer adjustment so that finally there was peace and we could just live. It was easier to row back, to step closer to society, and to give in to our own inner inertia. New people only got to know this housing project ZEGG, where people left each other alone more. That was a lot better than what they knew. The orientation increasingly gave way to arbitrariness. Some noticed this, but it didn't lead to changing course; instead, those who called for a change were ignored or fought against. That is what happened to me.

### The pattern becomes visible—the evolution of communities

We slowly but surely slid into privatization and reintegration into mainstream society. Today, houses and their surroundings are “private.” My living space has shrunk and so have my opportunities. But we have become more professional. We began to see work not as a contribution to a lived vision, but as something you more or less like and do because you have to earn money or because you are recognized for it. People wanted to “secure” themselves more and more individually. We no longer trust being carried by each other. We preferred to be alone with a few people in our free time, wanted a fuller bank account, sickness benefits, pension, insurance, etc. This did not make us more sustainable or ecological.

We continued with necessary and long-delayed investments in running the seminar business. Finally, the nonprofit status with its manifold requirements was granted. Whether this was a blessing or a curse, I don't know. More people were employed. The

hamster wheel turned faster.

As a community and a business, we conformed to legislation, sometimes because we were forced to, sometimes in anticipatory obedience. We questioned it much less than in our early days, but felt that—especially since nonprofit status—we no longer had a choice. In the Corona times, this unquestioned conformity became extreme and put a strain on the community. We slid into crisis—despite our knowledge of communication, projection<sup>3</sup>, and blame shifting.

Unacknowledged fear patterns that are no longer worked on communally play a role in this. Fear is used to govern, which could be observed well before the Corona period. In a 2002 lecture I said, “Wherever unconscious fear is involved, we are governable. That is why the question of overcoming fear is so important. Fear creates confinement and thus violence and restricts communication possibilities. Rumors spread and produce further fear. Avoiding fear and conflict does not produce freedom from violence or a better world, but only looking away. To be capable of peace, fear must be positively worked through.”

All in all, there seems to be a powerful pull in that direction away from close community. The ICSA<sup>4</sup> studies on historical community projects and the kibbutzim in Israel also attest to this. I attended the 1998 conference in Amsterdam and spoke about ZEGG there. In 2001, the ICSA was held at ZEGG, which was a highlight in our community history. Kibbutzim have been around for about 100 years—and they evolved towards more and more privatization and alignment with society. After the conference at ZEGG I termed this pattern<sup>5</sup> “community entropy” and have been working to counteract it ever since. Ina and I gave all we had for the past 15 years to reinspire and revitalize the community. At all times we invited teachers, thinkers, and emotional workers to ZEGG who seemed compatible with the cultural idea. In this way, we always succeeded in igniting sparks of new inspiration and thus counteracting communal entropy. Today I have to recognize that it was not sufficient.



*Work party preceding Summercamp 2020.*



*Living roof protects drying towels.*

So the question is: How do we shape the development of community so that it does not follow this pattern? Is it possible? What kind of attitude do we need to overcome this pull? What kind of fulfilling togetherness do we need? For me, it used to be free love, a positive and carefree attitude towards sex together with being uplifted in an authentic community of people. It was also the participation in an avant-garde project with the goal of peace and the end of all violence.

In 2016, I asked my community, “Are we not naïve today if we think that the path we have taken, which leads ever closer to society, ... makes us happy? Do we really want to go this way or should we again scale everything down to a level where we need less? Is that even possible? Aren’t we already RACING far too much in our lives like the HAMSTER on its wheel? We are becoming more visible ‘above the radar,’ but are we becoming more effective? Are we still an alternative or has the logic of capitalism already taken us over? We are invited more to conferences, but we have less to say. Where is our (r)evolutionary impulse? What is right?”

### **Responsibility for the world**

The wave of refugees in 2015 reminded me that as we enter the hamster wheel, as our turnover increases and as the ecological footprint of our lifestyle increases, we are also more involved in the destruction. Thus we are partly responsible for the fact that more and more people cannot live in their exploited countries.

We are so happy about our luxury, which we have “earned” and which seems modest compared to society. But we forget that it can only be maintained with the exploitation and suffering of people some of whom are compelled to go, in times of crisis, to where their resources are taken: to us! Our lifestyle has already destroyed their livelihoods.

By not acknowledging that we are exploiting others with our lifestyles, we are helping them to have the illusion that they could also live like this. They then want to and inevitably become co-exploiters, co-perpetrators of the destruction of the foundations of life on this once so beautiful planet. We are caught in the middle.

We now live in the existing paradigm of the capitalist logic

of exploitation and war, of anesthesia through consumption and distraction through exaggerated sensitivities<sup>6</sup>. We no longer question this culture. We live in it a little less destructively, a little happier, and are smaller accomplices by a degree. We can still point to those who are bigger accomplices.

Withdrawal into the private sphere is the path taken when we are in a tight spot. Everything else, the path into contact, into connectedness, feels like a risk—especially now after two years of prescribed distance, mistrust, and mask-wearing. Corona has torn us out of normality. Just now Corona is subsiding—and already we have a new war in Europe because of Western and Eastern power fantasies. There will be no more normality. Maybe that’s good, because it was based on exploitation and social inequality. It requires skillfulness and strength to go a new way, beyond the usual. But the survival of humanity demands that we find and walk this path.

When I have time to listen, I hear inner alarm bells. We in ZEGG are becoming more and more a cohousing project. I never wanted to live like this and still don’t. I fear for our diminishing commitment to cultivating a more humane world.

### **My vision of ZEGG**

I laid out my hopes in a letter to the community in 2012: “In my vision, ZEGG is a beacon for love in the world, enlivened by people who consciously and curiously walk towards their own development and see personal boundaries not as limits but as exciting challenges. The true adventure lies within. We all agree on that. We need ourselves and the mirrors and perspectives of others to illuminate our shadows and our blind spots with the greatest possible awareness. We also know that every step we take on this level is a step for the world.”

I want to live in a community that puts community living back at the center: where we work on ourselves, become more transparent with each other, challenge each other, share with each other what we love about each other and what separates us. I want to live in a place where we learn from and with each other again, experience ourselves as an intentional community again,

experience things that connect us and can bring themes into our festivals that come from a lived experiment. We have learned many tools, but we also need to use them.

I want to live with people who melt away their conditioning and act from their heart. To do this, we have to want to heal our shadows and traumas. Gabor Maté wrote about this: “Trauma distorts our perception so that we no longer see the world as it is.” This is a dangerous condition from which wars arise. We have the ability to love again the part of us that has closed itself off in hurt. This is often uncomfortable, but it is the only way I know of to our greatest potential. We can learn to love each other at these points of pain. Love means wanting to feel everything—not just feeling good. According to Dami Charf, a trauma therapist, there are choices that feel good AND are good for us and for the world. But very few of them are. Most of them do not feel good, but are good for us and for the world. In other words, abandon the postmodern dogma of “It must feel good.”

“We as a community,” I continued in my letter 10 years ago, “are at a point right now where we would need two months of intensive time together! To feel ourselves as a whole community again, to experience, to wrestle for values and human contact. That would be so important, to take time for each other. We could build up the big whole of us again. That is something that remains indescribable if you have never experienced it. There is a magic in the big group that a small group does not contain. The experience of being in the big group with myself and my issues. Without that, we spend an incredible amount of time in and with small and smaller groups, clarifications, conversations, and individual counseling for many things that—if we were to reanimate the big vessel—would perhaps dissolve! It is like a second, alternative stage that we could enter. But we would have to enter it with full commitment; otherwise it would not reveal its magic. This stage is certainly the more uncomfortable one!”

## The alternative

Laurence Heller, the founder of NARM, said that trauma is a subjective, physically experienced overload and a natural process. Trauma leads to loss of attachment and separation from aliveness. We no longer address things anymore for fear of restimulation

or even retraumatization. This is what he calls “overprotection.”

Wilhelm Reich coined the term “Christ-murder”<sup>7</sup> for a situation in which people, out of their shadow, cannot bear others in their aliveness and love, and therefore attack them. It is unbearable for them to see love, which is at the same time their greatest longing and greatest fear. The loss of paradise stands for the loss of aliveness in us. If people follow their fear, they fight love and light as much as the person who offers it. Or they overdraw the person who offers it. This does not lead to love either. It is the sad normality of the murder of Christ in our day-to-day society.

The alternative is simple and difficult at the same time: I recognize that my deeply buried longing is addressed and I let myself be touched. Then I begin to love myself where I thought I was unlovable. Life together on this planet could be a paradise again.

I now would like to refine the title of this essay: **Loving and Accepting Love Is a Political Task.** 🌸

*Achim Ecker has lived, loved, and worked in ZEGG for three decades as a human and spiritual inspirer and trainer, planner, craftsman, and permaculturist. He has helped cultivate the social soil for a lively and innovative community and the humus-building process for a fertile flowering and edible landscape on sandy soil. He travels internationally with his partner Ina Meyer-Stoll in many communities and networks as a consultant and friend. He is the author of various articles on interior work and ecological issues—most recently, “Gemeinschaft als Haltung” (published at [sein.del?s=Achim+Ecker](http://sein.del?s=Achim+Ecker)).*



1. The Forum was developed by Dieter Duhm after his stay at the Friedrichshof by integrating and modifying the form of “self-expression” there. It has been transformed and constantly expanded over many phases. In its essence, however, it has remained the same: a trust-building tool for transparency and social feedback in groups. (See also [zegg-forum.org/en](http://zegg-forum.org/en).)

2. Spiral Dynamics is a theory of human development that was introduced in 1996 in the book *Spiral Dynamics* by Don Beck and Chris Cowan. The book is based on the theory from the 1950s by psychology professor Clare W. Graves. The term vMeme refers to a value system that acts as an organizing principle and expresses itself through memes (self-propagating ideas, habits, or cultural practices). The preceding letter v(=value) indicates that value systems are involved. The colors remind us of the living conditions and capacities of consciousness of the individual systems.

3. What moves you emotionally, upsets you, annoys you, or occupies you always reveals your own concern. The stronger the emotional energy, the more likely it is your own problem that has been projected outwards. We then fight our own projected contents in others. We accept hurting them in order not to have to accept our responsibility. Freedom from shadows on a certain topic is therefore a good thing if you can look at it from different sides without being very concerned (but with empathy). At the same time, sometimes the clarity of sacred rage is needed.

4. The International Communal Studies Association holds triennial academic conference of international communal researchers. In 2001 the conference was held for the first time at ZEGG—in a community. See [icsacommunity.org](http://icsacommunity.org).

5. Australian researcher Bill Metcalf describes striking trends in communities: from more radical to less radical; getting older as a community; from disorganized to professional; and the trend from more intimate community to cohousing.

6. “Why were people suddenly fighting only for recognition? And not for equality? ... Could it not be that this question was only invented to distract from the question of having or not having? ... Almost all neoliberal projects provide for some kind of consideration for the vulnerable, because it is precisely this that enables enrichment and privatization by destroying the spaces of equality. ... A considerable part of neoliberal pseudo-policies and the sensitivities they stir up is based on attention to the issues of (cultural, ethnic, religious, sexual, etc.) identity. If you are no longer able to give people a perspective for the future, you simply divert their gaze to their past, their origins or to the point at which they stand.” (Robert Pfaller, *Adult Language*, Fischer, 2017)

7. Wilhelm Reich: “Those who have lived too long in the dark cellar will hate the sunshine. And perhaps his eyes can no longer tolerate any light at all. That is where the hatred of sunshine comes from. ... Man, who has spent millennia in emotional crippling, has accepted life in neurosis as normality. ... The emotional plague, the ‘Thou shalt not feel!’, then expresses itself in hostility to life.”

# NETWORK FOR NEW CULTURE MEETS HOLISTIC RESISTANCE: A Potential Partnership towards Liberation from White Supremacy

*By Melanie Rios*

---

Imagine the breakthroughs that could happen if people could yell and wail about racism in a context where both they and the folks they are angry towards know they'll be held in love by a community who is compassionately listening.

---

In 1999 I first attended Network for New Culture Summer Camp West (NFNC-SCW), a gathering for adults exploring personal growth and relationships that meets for 10 days each summer in Oregon. Four years ago I attended an anti-racism workshop led by Aaron Johnson, an African Heritage man who cofounded a group called Holistic Resistance (HR) with his cousin, Porsha. I, a Jewish heritage white woman, was struck by how much what Aaron was teaching reminded me of Network for New Culture, and I was curious what would happen if Holistic Resistance folks connected with NFNC. My sense was that NFNC folks have learned a lot about supporting community creation and growth through three decades of experimentation that could be helpful to the six-year-old Holistic Resistance community. At the same time, Holistic Resistance folks have a wealth of life experiences, practices, and perspectives that could help NFNC to become more inclusive. (Note: throughout this article, when mentioning NFNC, I am referring specifically to my experience with the Summer Camp West group.)

Would the NFNC community try to shed white supremacy as enthusiastically as they've tried to shed patriarchy? When I learned that NFNC-SCW was seeking to become more racially diverse in early 2022, it seemed the moment had arrived to find out. Aaron and I offered to co-facilitate a summer camp workshop called "Trauma Tracking" to help people think about how NFNC might adapt in order to successfully welcome racially and culturally diverse participants.

This article explores some of the challenges the community will need to address if they want to become more inclusive (see sidebar), some commonalities Holistic Resistance shares with NFNC despite their founders coming from radically different backgrounds, and how insights and practices NFNC and Holistic Resistance have developed will be helpful should NFNC and/or other predominantly white spaces choose to walk a more inclusive path.

The NFNC community is mostly white, and that slows progress toward cultural and racial diversity. People learn of the camp through word of mouth, and the friendship network of current participants likely mirrors the segregation designed initially by law into our neighborhoods, schools, and other institutions. Or, if they do have a diverse friendship network, they don't feel it would be comfortable enough for their People of the Global Majority (PGM, aka BIPOC) friends. Part of the beauty of NFNC is that people come back year after year, deepening friendships and forming some year-round communities. And there's a downside: the NFNC-SCW community is insular and aging (the average age is 60), which hampers community building with new, younger attendees who could take over leadership as the elders retire. The Holistic Resistance network was founded by two African Heritage cousins who grew up as part of a close-knit Black church in the high desert of California. The community is culturally and

racially diverse, and much younger.

Despite their different origins, here's what I see the two communities share:

### They invite folks to grow through love-based inquiry and experimentation

One of the first workshops I participated in at NFNC summer camp was called *Undefended Love*, led by Jett Psaris and Marlena Lyons. They coached us in inquiring what is underneath our feelings that arise when we're emotionally triggered. "What does this feeling remind me of from childhood? What 'cracked identities' did I receive as a young person, such as 'I am not enough,' and how might this belief be feeding these triggered feelings? Beyond all the messages of who I am and am not supposed to be, what is my essence? Who do I want to be now, in this present time and situation? Can I relate to family, friends, and others from a place of essential love, without blaming them or trying to fix them?"

In addition to promoting self-inquiry, Jett and Marlena coached us to experiment with acting in ways that are different from our normal behaviors. If we're typically shy, they recommended that we try speaking up, while if we're typically talkative, that we try listening more. Though this kind of work has become more known and practiced over the past couple of decades since I participated in this workshop, it still isn't easy, and it's a lifetime endeavor. People return to camp bringing what they've integrated into themselves from previous years' workshops as a gift to new campers, helping the level of emotional maturity rise in the camp field.

Holistic Resistance, too, is founded on love-based inquiry and experimentation. At the first Holistic Resistance workshop I attended, Aaron invited us to consider the following scenario: "Imagine you are a white woman and your good friend, who is an African Heritage man, is sitting with you on a park bench crying while laying his head on your shoulder after one of his friends has died. A bystander feels anxious watching you two and calls the police, and when they arrive, the police ask you to step away from the bench. What would you do?" A group conversa-

tion ensued about what might happen if the African Heritage man is left sitting on the bench to face the police alone.

Aaron loves collecting questions that facilitate understanding of self and others, and he crafted dozens of them to ask women while he was seeking his wife. For his 40th birthday he requested his friends offer him good questions in lieu of other kinds of gifts. My love for Aaron has grown through asking and answering questions during weekly peer counseling sessions with him over the last three years, and at this point I would do a lot to try to protect him from harm from police or anyone else. After George Floyd was murdered, two African Heritage men were lynched 40 miles from Aaron's home, and his neighbors began coming onto his family's property to threaten them. I felt fear for Aaron's safety, and along with others from the Holistic Resistance community, helped his family purchase a tall fence. Generosity motivated by love rather than guilt or obligation is happening throughout the Holistic Resistance friendship network as needs arise and people respond to those needs through offering time, skills, dollars, and presence. This grace in giving and receiving gifts within a network of personal relationships was learned by Aaron and Porsha early in their lives through participating in the church where Aaron's parents were pastors and where the two cousins still live.

Many folks associated with Holistic Resistance believe liberation from white supremacy will happen slowly as generations of people with different skin tones and cultures reach for each other's hearts. They are in this for the long haul with patience and perseverance, and yet, with tragedy happening daily, I pray we humans can evolve more quickly. I feel hopeful because I'm more aware, trusting, at ease as I build more relationships with People of the Global Majority. The more we get to know and love others, the more we'll connect with even more people who previously seemed different from ourselves, but who now seem to have much in common with us as fellow humans sharing this planet.

### Both groups are skilled at supporting people through intense feelings

Covid policies were a hot topic that divided the NFNC community during the pandemic. In 2021, for the first time in 28 years, the summer camp in Oregon organized two separate camps to accommodate differing perspectives on illness susceptibility, vaccines, mask-wearing, and social distancing. We all pre-agreed upon a Covid policy before arriving at Summer Camp West 2022. Among other things, it called for going home if we or anyone in our carpool tested positive. A team of five camp organizers volunteered to make decisions about situations outside the parameters of the written agreement.



*Holistic Resistance Forum.*

Photos courtesy of Melanie Rios

A controversy arose when a person who tested negative on an antigen test upon arrival later received a text notice of a positive test result from a pre-arrival PCR test. She and the Covid decision-makers came to the conclusion that she and the group of five other young people she had been cuddling with the night before needed to go home. The community exploded with feelings that had been brewing for a couple of years, and at that morning's whole camp gathering, people's emotions began to erupt, with some shouting at each other. People who walked out of the circle in anger were each followed by members of the "Compassion Cadre" who were trained to listen deeply, and then returned to the circle when they felt calmer. A person who was skilled at nonviolent communication stepped in to facilitate the whole group while some of the camp organizers made a plan for responding to the conflict.

The organizers invited the camp into a group process called ZEGG Forum, a community circle structure with which the camp is familiar (see zegg-forum.org), to help inform the Covid decision-making team. They asked three volunteer "anchors" in the circle to focus on grounding themselves and the group emotionally, and to ask us all to take a breath together when needed. Community members were invited to speak in two-minute shares about their feelings and opinions using the container of ZEGG Forum. This included the six young people, masked and distanced. After an hour of shares, the Covid decision-making team held a meeting in the center of the circle, fishbowl style, leaving one chair empty, as we listened. They took into consideration all that was shared in the prior group process, and in the ZEGG Forum shares, and decided they would indeed send the group of six young people home.

People raised their hands to take a seat in the empty chair, where community members could participate in the conversation of the team one at a time. One person sat there and said, "CDC guidelines allow people to quarantine in the same house. We have 400 acres here." Someone else said, "I'll pay for them all to get rapid PCR tests in the nearest town." The upshot in the Covid decision-making team was that the group of six camped separately a mile away that night, received negative PCR and antigen

tests in the morning, and rejoined the group the next day. I was impressed by how gracefully and quickly this situation was resolved given how intensely split on Covid issues the community had been upon arrival. And I imagine this toolkit of responses to conflict might come in handy while working on hot topics that touch on race.

Holistic Resistance is also skilled at creating what they call "sacred containers" for holding people who are experiencing strong feelings. They have built a "Grief to Action Camp" on their church land that includes an earthen dome to shelter them from wind and sun, and which allows them to shout and cry without disturbing neighbors. They offer mentorship to young African Heritage men from Los Angeles and workshops for people who come from afar to develop skills to calm their nervous systems through meditation, building with clay earth, and peer-to-peer counseling. They are also making a film about how, currently, many African Heritage people are chronically under-touched by nurturing energy and over-touched with violent energy. Healing from these patterns can happen through acknowledging painful history and reality while slowly introducing nurturing consensual touch in the form of deep listening, earth-building, hugging, and holding hands. Holistic Resistance also trains people to become "touch specialists" to travel to support People of the Global Majority in places where violent racially-based tragedy occurs.



*Earthen dome under construction at Grief to Action Camp.*



*The author and Aaron Johnson.*

## What it will take to walk a more inclusive path

Neither NFNC summer camp nor any other place on earth will ever be a completely safe place for people with any skin tone. People's feelings will get hurt, they'll feel uncomfortable at times, and they'll do things that cause discomfort in others. What makes Network for New Culture special to my mind is that it includes a wealth of folks who are skilled at compassionate listening even in high intensity situations. People are encouraged to express their strong feelings within a whole community gathering while still following communication guidelines, such as not yelling directly at someone with whom one is angry. If I feel angry towards someone also present, for example, someone else might step into the circle to role-play that person while I yell, while the person I am angry at listens from the sidelines, with a support person at their side. The person yelling usually gains emotional relief once they're heard by loving witnesses who don't take sides; those listening gain understanding about what it's like to be the person who was yelling, while not being alone. Imagine the breakthroughs that could happen if people could yell and wail about racism in a context where both they and the folks they are angry towards know they'll be held in love by a community who is compassionately listening.

Most NFNC folks also understand that being clueless at first and making mistakes is an inevitable part of the learning process. When people are informed they've made a mistake at NFNC, they often curtsy and say "tada!" the way clowns in a circus will do after they trip, and everyone else celebrates their mistake by saying "tada!" back to them. Or if the mistake is serious, the people who bring their concern to someone's attention might be furious while also clarifying that they still love the person who caused harm.

This kind of attention and support from participants and witnesses would be helpful when there's been a racist blunder or microaggression. It makes it easier for transgressed-upon people to speak up, and easier for a transgressor to really hear what's being said. Listening with love and

## Challenges to be Addressed

Many of the challenges People of the Global Majority experience as participants in predominantly white spaces such as summer camp have to do with not being seen for who they really are and/or being unappreciated for who they are. Concerns I have heard them express include:

- White folks not being tuned into them as individuals, and mistaking them for a different participant who has similar skin tone.
- Being referred to as minorities, marginalized people, or some other term that emphasizes being "less than." Many Holistic Resistance folks use the term People of the Global Majority to acknowledge that 82 percent of people globally have darker shades of skin tone than white folks and that white folks also have skin pigment.
- Being asked to be their authentic selves, but believing that if they really showed the depths of their grief and/or rage, they would overwhelm those around them.
- A sense that white people respond to them with activated nervous systems either in an overly friendly manner or through avoidance.
- Some PGM sense that they are seen as exotic or fetishized sex objects, while others believe they are seen as unattractive because they don't match conventional ideas of beauty.
- White folks stating that they "don't see color" and that "we're all one," which feels dismissive of an important part of who they are, and also makes it difficult to talk about and respond to the existence of racially-based oppression.
- White folks asking them to speak as a representative of their race, rather than asking them questions that show they care who they are as individuals.
- White people responding to concerns being raised about racial harm they have participated in with accusations, defensiveness, or guilt that is so intense that the focus of the conversation goes to how the white folks are feeling, rather than the person who initiated the conversation.
- White folks copying from cultures that aren't their own without understanding or valuing the history and significance of the tradition they are copying, nor showing care for the people who come from the culture that birthed the tradition.
- White folks being unwilling to adapt their ways, preferring to continue on as before for the sake of their convenience and comfort at the expense of comfort and safety of others.
- Camps and events costing more money than many PGM can afford due to an unfair economic legacy that is embedded in cultural structures that are unseen by white people.
- Optional nudity being uncomfortable for African Heritage men because of the history of white people falsely accusing them of rape as a way to control them through lynching, and for the same reason, camping in a forest with a lot of trees is frightening for some.

—MR

forgiving mistakes can go a long way toward creating a culture in which all concerns, including those listed in the sidebar to this article, can be heard and addressed. 🌱

*Melanie Rios has brought insights, skills, and practices for community transformation, many of which she learned at NFNC summer camp, to intentional communities, activist groups, nonprofits, social enterprises, and national television. This journey has been documented by COMMUNITIES articles she written over the decades, including one focused on NFNC summer camp that she co-authored in 2009 (see [www.nfnc.org/home/articles/communities-mag-article-2009.03.pdf](http://www.nfnc.org/home/articles/communities-mag-article-2009.03.pdf)). She lives in Portland, Oregon with her wife and pandemic pup, and close by to three generations of 17 family members.*

# FARMING FOR THE LONG HAUL: Leisure, Work, and Community

By Michael Foley

*The following excerpt is adapted from Michael Foley's book [Farming for the Long Haul: Resilience and the Lost Art of Agricultural Inventiveness](#) (Chelsea Green Publishing, February 2019), pages 143-153, and is reprinted with permission from the publisher.*

Anthropologists are in accord that traditional agriculturalists, pastoral peoples, and hunter-gatherer societies had time on their hands. These so-called primitives, savages, peoples without a State for the most part managed a comfortable living on a few hours a day of work or very sporadic work. Even peasants, forced by lord or market to produce for more than themselves, often had ample leisure time. The anthropological and historical evidence is overwhelming: It was once possible to get a living with a minimum expenditure of time. As anthropologist Marshall Sahlins put it, summarizing the evidence for hunter-gatherer cultures, this was “the original affluent society.”<sup>1</sup>

Traditional societies were organized around a principle of sufficiency. Once subsistence was assured, there were no particular incentives to acquire more. Technology was matched to need, and traditional societies were as adept at managing their environment relative to their needs as are we, maybe more so. “The astonishing thing about the Eskimo, or the Australians,” says French anthropologist Pierre Clastres, “is precisely the diversity, imagination, and fine quality of their technical activity, the power of invention and efficiency evident in the tools used by those peoples.”<sup>2</sup> Adapted tools and well-honed subsistence strategies meant ample leisure time. And leisure time was highly valued. As Clastres writes, even “when the Indians discovered the productive superiority of the white men’s axes, they wanted them not in order to produce more in the same amount of time, but to produce as much in a period of time ten times shorter.”<sup>3</sup>

Hunter-gatherer societies could get a living in two to four hours of leisurely “work,” which they scarcely distinguished from play. But even traditional agriculturalists did not slave in their gardens days on end—not, that is, unless compelled to do so. Rising clan leaders, headmen, chiefs, and kings could call upon farmers to provide for their leaders’ households or retinues or for ritual consumption; but too great a strain often provoked rebellion or murder of the offending individual. Even in medieval Europe, where peasants were obliged to produce for the lord’s table and trade, there was an astonishing amount of leisure. Sociologist Juliet Schor estimates that between the big vacations surrounding Christmas, Easter, and Midsummer’s Eve, numerous saints’ days, prescribed rest days, and minor feasts, English peasants occupied a third of the year in holiday. In France and Spain rest may have added up to some five months of the year.<sup>4</sup>

Barbara Ehrenreich tracks the suppression of such widespread human enjoyment through Western history in her exploration of what sociologist Emile Durkheim called “collective effervescence”—ritual and festivity marked by music, dance, and sometimes ecstatic or even riotous episodes. Viewed askance but long tolerated by churchmen, raucous festivity was gradually moved out of churches into the streets by the 16th century. About this time, too, the aristocracy and local authorities of Europe began to abandon popular festivities as they adopted new mores of civility appropriate to the touchy life of the royal court. Popular celebrations that featured role reversals and parody of the authorities no longer had the authorities on hand to torment. By the 18th century an upstart bourgeoisie had assumed aristocratic

---

Traditional societies were organized around a principle of sufficiency. Once subsistence was assured, there were no particular incentives to acquire more.

---



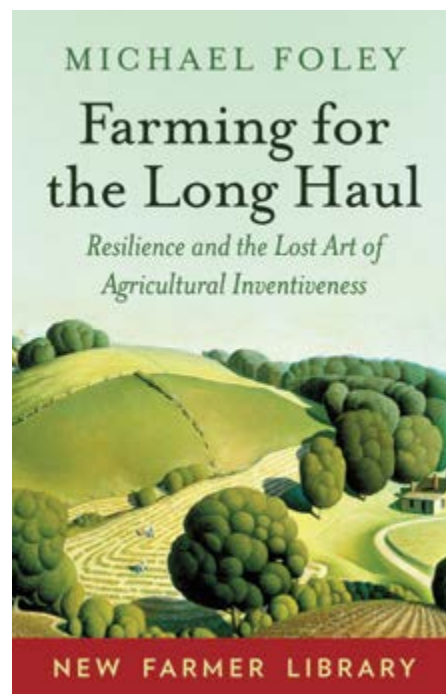
attitudes but, even more, insisted on the sober pursuit of profit (for themselves) and work (for the masses) over sociability. “In late-seventeenth-century England, an economist put forth the alarming estimate that each holiday cost the nation fifty thousand pounds, largely in lost labor time.”<sup>5</sup> Historians report that “literally thousands of acts of legislation” were introduced over the next three centuries designed to eliminate or curtail carnival and other popular festivities throughout Europe. It was time, European elites felt, for the European populace to take life seriously, an attitude they quickly extended to the natives of the newly colonized lands.

Early capitalists found it hard to compel the incipient working class to accept the discipline they demanded. Max Weber famously argued that a particular strain of Protestantism was enlisted to drive the work ethic required by the demands of capitalism. And it is certainly true that religion played a role in the development of modern attitudes toward work. John Muir’s fundamentalist Scots Calvinist father supervised his sons’ long days pulling stumps from newly settled Wisconsin forest while reading his Bible. (He may have been a Calvinist but, like Dickens’s Gradgrind, he apparently considered supervision the most strenuous form of work to which he was called.)<sup>6</sup> In

England the simultaneous enclosure of the commons also had a great deal to do with changing habits of work. Once rural livelihoods were destroyed, desperation made workers of many a peasant. The factory system received the newly landless gladly, and the repeal of England’s Poor Laws in 1834 made certain they hired themselves out at whatever rate was offered.<sup>7</sup>

The means for curbing the “laziness” of peasants and natives were various. In 18th-century England the new wave of enclosures put thousands off the land. The desperate poor were faced with severe penalties for the slightest crimes. Over 200 offenses carried the death penalty. It is revealing that many of these were crimes against property, like breaking into buildings to steal or destroy linen or the tools to make it—clearly aimed at the rebellious displaced craftspeople later called Luddites.<sup>8</sup> In the 19th and early 20th centuries, it was common in Central and South America, as in the American South after Reconstruction, to require that Indians, or blacks in the South, prove they were in the employ of some landowner. In Guatemala such vagrancy laws persisted into the 1940s. Precolonial paddy states in Southeast Asia and European colonial authorities around the globe devised endless means to secure the labor of hitherto independent peoples, from outright slavery to the hut tax, which drove Africans under British and French rule to work for white settlers in order to meet their obligations to the colonial authorities.

All these examples suggest just how difficult it was to secure consistent labor from previously free peoples. Our own sense that we just don’t have time to do all we need to do stems from multiple complications, not the least of which is the relentless message that we are born for work. French and Portuguese explorers, who rarely applied this message to themselves, were appalled at the “laziness” of the natives of Brazil, who spent large portions of their days lounging or in ceremony. Pierre Clastres comments, “That is what made an unambiguously unfavorable impression on the first European observers of the Indians of Brazil. Great was their disapproval on seeing that these strapping men glowing with health preferred to deck themselves out like women with paint and feathers instead of perspiring away in their gardens. Obviously, these people were deliberately ignorant of the fact that one must earn his daily bread by the sweat of his brow. It wouldn’t do, and it didn’t last: the Indians were soon put to work, and they died of it.”<sup>9</sup> Obviously, an aristocratic version of the later “Protestant ethic” had already extended itself to the privileged adventurers of Catholic France and Portugal as early as the 16th century.



---

## The means for curbing the “laziness” of peasants and natives were various.

---

### Why We Work So Hard, Earn So Little

Most of us today, Protestant or not, share some such work ethic. Most of us, myself included, insist on being busy, whether it's making ourselves useful around the house or the community or pursuing some meaningful work like writing a book or building up a farming enterprise. And there is certainly a lot that needs doing. But that preoccupation with work can distract from the equally important tasks of “grooming, gossip, and chatter,” not to mention festivity, that sustains our social world.<sup>10</sup> Few of us strike a balance that can please both family and boss, friends and fellow workers. But that has as much to do with an economic system that is designed to extract all it can from our work as with the attitudes and mores of late Western civilization.

In the post-Civil War South, the means of extraction were quite crude. Landlords or local merchants (who were often one and the same) were the primary source of consumer goods, seeds, and farm implements. Tenant farmers and freeholders alike were forced to rely upon them for credit at the beginning of the season, and at the end of the season, they generally found that the crop they had mortgaged for credit was not worth their debt. They were bound to the putting-out merchant or landlord for another year, and every year brought deeper debt. When these farmers, white and black, fled indebtedness for the relative frontier of East Texas, they found they faced more distant sources of exploitation. Railroad monopolies and a credit system controlled by eastern banks severely limited the prospects for even cooperatively



Chris Roth

organized farmers. The Populist revolt of the 1880s and '90s grew out of that clash.<sup>11</sup>

With the defeat of Populism, the reforms of Progressivism and the New Deal promised a partial response to the grievances of American farmers; but banking reforms and new farm policy left the basic structures of our economic system in place, and Populism's political defeat left rural America discouraged and divided. Today the structures of our financial system, especially after the banking reforms of the late 1970s, see to it that the wealth created by the many drifts inexorably into the hands of the few. When I started college in 1963, some of my instructors were reading a little pamphlet called *The Triple Revolution*.<sup>12</sup> It was the product of a conference assembled by Robert Maynard Hutchins, former president of the University of Chicago and one of the founders of the great books movement, at his Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions. One of these revolutions was automation and its implications for the economy, work, and the culture. The prediction was that technological advance was raising levels of productivity (product per working hour) so rapidly that the American economy would soon see massive unemployment. What would these workers do? Rising productivity could provide them with a guaranteed income—an idea that the subsequent Nixon administration actually brought to Congress. But how would they occupy their leisure time? The humanists in the crowd were worried; the social activists demanded action.

They needn't have worried. American corporations soon found ways to weaken unions and accrue most of the benefits of rising output per worker to themselves and their shareholders; for the financial sector took the bulk of the wealth created by rising levels of productivity.<sup>13</sup> There followed a famous stagnation in American wages, which still have not budged much above their 1976 levels, and the replacement of the one-wage-earner family by the two-wage-earner family. We have no time, in other words, because we have to work full-time (and increasingly more than full-time) just to maintain the lifestyle of the 1950s—or rather, just to sustain the increasingly fabulous lifestyles of the rich and famous.

The situation has been worse for American farmers, whose incomes relative to the standard of living have been falling since about 1917. One major response has been the parity movement that sought to reestablish the purchasing power of farmers that had prevailed during what some saw as the golden age of American agriculture, from 1909 to 1914. New Deal farm legislation attempted to do just that, and innovations like the Burley Tobacco Growers Cooperative Association, established through the efforts of Wendell Berry's father, John M. Berry Sr., were based on the same aspiration. Charles Walters, late founder of *Acres USA* magazine, was a longtime advocate of parity. The Berry Center ([berrycenter.org](http://berrycenter.org)) continues to promote the legacy of ideas

around public policy in favor of parity; but it has little political support in the world that agribusiness and, even more powerfully, big finance have wrought.

One key element of the loss in purchasing power for farmers is the rising cost of production. Relative to the income generated, a late-1940s tractor was a lot cheaper than its 2017 counterpart. The same goes for the petroleum that fuels it, the fertilizers and pesticides, the hand tools, and all those building permits you now need to erect a hoop-house or a cow shed. Add to that odd twist of inflation the exponential growth in what John Michael Greer calls “intermediation,” the insertion of nonfarmers between farmers and the dollars spent on food and the food system, and you have a big and rising gap between the farmer’s share of the food dollar and everyone else’s.<sup>14</sup> From packinghouses to wholesale brokers to supermarkets, from the agricultural extension agents to the university researchers to the bureaucrats who administer “fair marketing agreements” and food safety programs, not to mention the nonprofits that help farmers navigate the rules and regulations and bureaucracies we face—all of them have a claim on the agricultural economy. Factoring in all the intermediaries just to move food from farm to consumer, and including the food processors, the contemporary American farmer gets, on average, just 11 cents on the food dollar.

But another element is farm prices themselves, whose relative decline was mentioned above. US farm “support” policies since the early 1970s have relentlessly promoted overproduction, driving down prices and increasing the burden on taxpayers of paying the difference between production costs of major commodities and market prices. The surplus goes to export, where cheap American commodities have succeeded in wrecking peasant and small farm economies around the world. The policies have kept many farmers in this country afloat, but the depression in commodity prices has made every distortion from cheap processed food to confined animal feeding operations (CAFOs) more profitable than farming. It has also ensured that American farmers “feed the world,” that the US market share worldwide stays big enough to subvert the farming sector of countries wherever American commodities are welcome. With such responsibilities, and low and unstable profit margins, it’s no wonder we farmers have no time!

## Gaining Time, Growing Community

Leisure is not just an amenity that we can enjoy more or less of depending upon our personal propensity toward compulsive work or self-sacrifice. Leisure is an economic asset. Farming for the long haul requires personal resilience, and resilience means first of all gaining time for ourselves: time to breathe, relax, and reflect. Without such time, farming wears farmers out. Just look at the grim expressions in the old photos! Eliot Coleman remarks somewhere that old-time farmers worked too hard and couldn’t sustain a healthy lifetime at it; his goal through a lifetime of farming, teaching, and

writing has been to show how it can be done otherwise. Certainly the record of farm abandonment during the heyday of homesteading attests to the hardships of old-fashioned styles of farming in the face of new climates, conditions, and an unforgiving market. And despite the good advice of Coleman and others, the dropout rate for new farmers under 30 in the United States is depressingly high at a time when we need millions of new farmers.

Beyond advice on *how to farm*, we need to take seriously the advice implicit in older cultures about *how to live*. We need to consider the “culture of agriculture,” as Wendell Berry has put it.

And a large part of that culture comes from surrounding ourselves with a community that supports our efforts, whether it be fellow farmers and local food advocates who provide fellowship, advice, and concrete support to struggling farmers, or a larger community of eaters who make up an enthusiastic market and source of financial and moral support. And an even larger community is necessary for the sociability, community services and businesses, and collective problem solving that all of us need.

Religious celebrations once helped fill these needs at a time when most people in a given village or region shared roughly the same religious beliefs. Religious festivals, year’s end celebrations, and potlaches often served to redistribute wealth within a population, level the social ground between elites and commoners, and build solidarity among members of a community. And carnival—unfettered festivals, ritual disruptions, and plain old merrymaking—served as another unifying source.

---

**Giving and reciprocity form the core of traditional economic relations.**

---



Chris Roth

Traditional societies also came together around work. The iconic barn raising is the illustration we all know best. Barn raisings are community celebrations, but they are also about reciprocity, the key economic relation in traditional societies. A lot of farmwork even in the United States was once a matter for reciprocal exchanges of labor, usually accompanied by a meal prepared together by the women of the various households. Tobacco farmers gathered to harvest and sort tobacco, sometimes using one farmer's curing house for tobacco from multiple farms. Annual pig slaughters were also sometimes carried out communally, an occasion in some communities for male bonding and a lot of drinking, if Wendell Berry's story "The Regulators" is taken for a guide. And as late as the 1950s, fruit harvesting was often a communal affair, with women, children let off from school for the occasion, and college students on holiday all participating. Before the advent of grain harvesting equipment, such tasks as scything and gathering the grain crop, threshing, and cleaning it were all occasions for group effort, as was bringing in the hay, and farm families went from field to field contributing their labor to their neighbor's crop. Even with mechanization, American farmers in the Midwest and Plains persisted for a time in gang-harvesting their fields, and they still rely on neighbors and friends to bring in the hay in many parts of the country.

Participation in these events, especially in 19th- and 20th-century America, was understood to be voluntary, but nearly everyone volunteered. Not to do so was to signal your social isolation. In many cultures, participation in communal work is mandatory. In traditional rural Spain the term *faena*, and in Latin America *tequio*, describes a communal workday, when members of a community labor together to repair communal infrastructure, build a new *casa comunal*, or provide for those without a breadwinner. Even today members of Mexican indigenous communities who have migrated to the United States return yearly for tequio in order to retain their membership in the community and thus their rights, from voting or serving in office to access to land. In alpine villages and traditional irrigation societies still managing common pastures and water flows

in parts of the world today, the same sort of obligation obtains.

At their core these practices teach the importance of giving and of reciprocity, the essence of traditional economic relations, while guarding against impulses to take advantage of one's neighbors. Western economic theory has obscured these relations, suggesting that traditional peoples met the necessities they could not manage individually through barter, and that when this cumbersome system broke down, they invented money. The market has reigned ever since. Nothing could be further from the truth, as David Graeber shows, summarizing the findings and views of anthropologists, and a few economists, since the 19th century. In traditional societies money was just another way of recognizing mutual obligation and relationship, not a medium of exchange for most purposes. And people met their needs through one or another variant on an economy of sharing, often hedged with taboos that forbade equal exchange and underlined the freedom of the gift, and the friendship or mutual obligation that lay behind it.<sup>15</sup> 🌱

---

*The above excerpt is adapted from Michael Foley's book [Farming for the Long Haul: Resilience and the Lost Art of Agricultural Inventiveness](#) (Chelsea Green Publishing, February 2019), pages 143-153, and is reprinted with permission from the publisher.*

*After 20 years in academia, Michael Foley began farming first in southern Maryland, and then in Willits, California, where he, his wife, and oldest daughter currently operate the small, diversified Green Uprising Farm. Foley is cofounder of the School of Adaptive Agriculture and currently manages his local farmers' market. He has also served as vice president of the Mendocino County Farmers' Market Association and president of Little Lake Grange. He is author of [Farming for the Long Haul](#) (Chelsea Green Publishing, February 2019).*

## Notes

1. Marshall Sahlins, *Stone Age Economics* (Chicago: Aldine, 1972), chapter 1.
2. Pierre Clastres, *Society Against the State: Essays in Political Anthropology* (New York: Zone Books, 1987), 191.
3. Clastres, *Society Against the State*, 196.
4. Juliet B. Schor, *The Overworked American: The Unexpected Decline of Leisure* (New York: Basic Books, 1993), 46–47.
5. Barbara Ehrenreich, *Dancing in the Streets: A History of Collective Joy* (New York: Henry Holt, 2006), 101.
6. Frederick W. Turner, *Rediscovering America: John Muir in His Time and Ours* (New York: Viking, 1985).
7. Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origins of Our Time* (Boston: Beacon, 2001), 81–107.
8. Douglas Hay et al., *Albion's Fatal Tree: Crime and Society in Eighteenth-Century England* (New York: Random House, 1976).
9. Clastres, *Society Against the State*, 193.
10. Ehrenreich, *Dancing in the Streets*, 23–24, referring to the work of Robin Dunbar, *Grooming, Gossip, and the Evolution of Language* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996).
11. Lawrence Goodwyn, *The Populist Moment: A Short History of the Agrarian Revolt in America* (Oxford, London, New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), 20–35.
12. Linus Pauling et al., *The Triple Revolution* (Santa Barbara, CA: Ad Hoc Committee on the Triple Revolution, 1964).
13. Les Leopold, *Runaway Inequality: An Activist's Guide to Economic Justice*, 2nd edition (New York: Labor Institute Press, 2015).
14. John Michael Greer, *Dark Age America: Climate Change, Cultural Collapse, and the Hard Future Ahead* (Gabriola Island, BC: New Society, 2016), 106–9.
15. David Graeber, *Debt: The First 5,000 Years* (Brooklyn, NY, and London: Melville House, 2011). On the myth of barter, see chapter 2.

# Eating for the Long Haul

By Dena Smith Ellis



Many years ago, when I first became a health and wellness coach, I was asked to speak at a “health fair” in Western Pennsylvania, near where I was living at the time. I prepared a simple speech about the importance of eating whole foods and—whenever possible—selecting organic, local, and non-GMO produce. I threw in a few other popular buzzwords, such as “sustainability” and “raw foods.” I envisioned my audience to be of similar age as myself (mid-30s at that time), informed yet likely mainstream Standard American Diet (SAD) adherents. It appeared to be the perfect demographic in which to plant seeds of holistic nutrition and wellness awareness.

Imagine my surprise when I pulled into the parking lot of the address of the “community” given to me by the health fair organizer, only to find myself at a rural assisted-living center. My apprehension grew as I entered the exhibit room to find a small gathering of a dozen “health care providers”: several insurance companies, an ambulance service, and hospice care, among other geriatric services, each with a bowl of hard candies on the display tables. I tried to conceal the shocked look on my face with a strained smile when the facility director eagerly greeted me and ushered me over to the room where my audience awaited.

As I entered the room and glanced around at the rows of the wheelchair-bound congregation, I knew this was going to be a tough crowd. I hoped that the sound of my hard swal-

low wasn’t noticeable. While the director introduced me, she walked around with one of the bowls of candy, gifting each onlooker with a treat. Reluctantly, I smiled and began my spiel.

As I mentioned the importance of eating local and organic foods, I was met by a roomful of blank stares, other than the enthusiastically approving nod and thumbs up from the director. At first, I wasn’t sure if the glazed looks from the audience were due to confusion, medication, or a mild sugar coma. I decided it was probably a mixture of all three, so I quickly scrapped my speech and tried a different approach.

Spontaneously, I took a poll of how many people present grew up on a farm. Suddenly, I saw eyes light up like someone had literally turned on a switch. Two thirds of the room raised their hands. When I asked how many had at least a garden when they were children, the only hands that weren’t raised were a few of the younger staff members. I quickly realized that I wasn’t preaching to the choir: these wise sages were the preachers themselves. My trendy, holistic lexicon meant nothing to this generation because those words weren’t even in their vocabulary.

I began to ask them to share stories of their childhoods, particularly the food they ate and where it came from. I heard tales of fruit orchards, vegetable gardens, chicken coops, and fishing trips. The only packaged, processed foods mentioned were the

## Holistic Nutrition Glossary

**Health Foods:** Natural food that is thought to have health-giving qualities.

**Natural Foods:** Food that has undergone a minimum of processing or treatment with preservatives.

**Whole Foods:** Food that has been refined or processed as little as possible and is eaten in its natural state.

**Raw Foods:** Natural, whole food that is either uncooked or has not been heated above 115 degrees Fahrenheit, in order to preserve the food's natural enzymes.

**Local Foods:** Locally based, self-reliant food economies in which sustainable food production, processing, distribution, and consumption are integrated to enhance the economic, environmental, and social health of a particular place.

**Organic Foods:** Foods that have been produced and processed without the use of commercial chemicals, such as fertilizers or pesticides or synthetic substances that enhance color or flavor. Organic foods must meet legally regulated production standards in order to use the term organic.

**Non-GMO Foods:** Foods that have been grown or produced without using genetically modified organisms. GMOs are plants or animals created through the gene-splicing techniques of biotechnology (also called genetic engineering, or GE). This experimental technology merges DNA from different species, creating unstable combinations of plant, animal, bacterial, and viral genes that cannot occur in nature or in traditional crossbreeding.

—DSE

ones their mothers had canned themselves. In their day, “fast food” was a potluck at their church or a rare, special meal eaten out at a local restaurant in the closest town.

This crowd became the teachers, and I was their student. Their eyes sparkled with passion and nostalgia as they described their youth, a time when their food had no labels, both literally and figuratively. Their recall of a sense of place and expression of community was ubiquitous.

I left that day feeling humbled, yet exhilarated. I felt gratitude for that unexpected experience. Rather than focusing on the ridiculous ironies of the situation, I embraced the valuable lessons learned. To me, it was a glimpse back to our future—one in which our food supply is simple, fresh, local, and unadulterated.

I look forward to a future in which trendy nutritional buzzwords become obsolete and extinct, and we reclaim our heritage of a truly holistic and sustainable food supply. 🌱

---

*Besides living in two different ecovillages in Hawaii for a combined five years, Dena Smith Ellis is the mother of six and a dual board-certified international health and wellness coach. She has been passionate about nutrition and holistic health since she was a child and has been working in the field for the last 30+ years, including for organisations such as La Leche League International, Blue Zones Project, and the Institute for Integrative Nutrition. Dena has a private coaching and mentoring practice and currently resides with her husband and two cats in the UK, although she frequently travels back to her “o’hana” (community/family) on the Big Island of Hawaii. She can be reached at [veganmom@gmail.com](mailto:veganmom@gmail.com).*



Photos of Dena Smith Ellis and friends by Pearl Lockett Photography

# Why Community Was the Best Time of My Life

*By Hugh Perry*



Originally when my friends and I met up, we had no idea that someday we would be living the community life. It was during an era of conflict, similar to what we are experiencing today. The Vietnam War was ongoing, racial aggression was in full swing in the US and South Africa, and our heroes were being jailed and killed. A wave of social activism was sweeping North America and our limited resources for confronting such nonsense consisted of marching, letter writing, and screaming, which we did a lot of.

Eventually the culture of global citizen action began to understand that the primary cause of the conflicts had always been self-interest and greed. Confronting it would take more than activism to shut it down. The introduction of Eastern philosophy to America taught us that we couldn't change the external world without first changing the internal world and from there, the external world would benefit. It was then that social activism turned inward and became a journey of transformation.

## Common Focus

During this period our small group often met on weekends at a rural retreat center on Algonquin territory in Ontario, Canada. We chose a metaphysical approach to unravel the internal mysteries of our being. Each Sunday evening, as we readied for our departure to our homes, we would ask, "Why are we leaving? There is so much love in the air and if we stayed we could accomplish so much." Going back to work meant another five days of investing in a system that showed no sign of evolving.

Finally, one couple announced that they were liquidating all their assets and putting it toward creating a 5000 s.f. building on this retreat property we would visit. It would be two stories, have nine bedrooms down two sides, with the center space left open to future development. That single move by one couple opened the emotional floodgates of enthusiasm and within a few months four families including 11 children had joined in. By the following year we had grown to 18 families, 30 children,

a total of 200 people.

We could not build fast enough, so existing buildings made more sense. Many of the group moved into an old Christian convent on 10 acres with barns, a hardwood forest, and a sand beach on a small lake. Other properties followed, also on lands part of the Algonquin First Nations.

## Learning from Mistakes

For many of us, we were living the good life with much laughter, aliveness, insights, hope, connections, freedom, opportunity, sharing, challenges, work, and play. We learned from each other and from our many mistakes.

As an example, we had bought seven Black Angus cows and a bull as part of our dream to achieve sustainability. We built new fences and a barn thinking nature would take care of the rest, but in the following spring there were no calves being born. We humbled ourselves enough to share our problem with a local farmer. He laughed asking, "Where do you keep your bull?" "With the cows of course,"



we said. “Well now, that was your first mistake! Your bull has forgotten who he is. He thinks he’s a cow.” So we followed his instructions and moved the bull into a separate pen, but he was not happy and he made our lives miserable. Eventually we said, “OK Mr. Bull. You can go back with the ladies.” And for the next five years, they grazed happily until we sold them to a hobby farmer, who probably did the same as us. There were many failed efforts and each is more humorous in retrospect than at the time.

### Experimenting

Our creativity led to building 11 wooden yurts in the forest, along a hardwood ridge, that were suitable for winter use. A few of us worked with Les Brown, the guru on pyramid gardens. Together we built one and experimented with finding the optimum energy points for accelerated growth and also for preserving. There were many other questionable experimentations being conducted, like a massive root cellar, thermal solar, creating lime for cement, and a zero energy machine.

### Wild Foraging

Besides our plentiful gardens, we foraged in the forest, identifying more than a 150 kinds of foods growing wild, from fruit trees and berries to roots and mushrooms. Nature treated us exceptionally well, and we felt connected to the planet. We constantly drew on her bounty, with sumac wine being the winter drink of choice. We were in Nature’s Garden of Eden.

I recall how I loved honey mushrooms and each year, I scouted the large property for their locations until one year they were proliferated throughout the white pine forests. One afternoon four of us gathered two large garbage bags of honey mushrooms. On our way out, we got lost and had to keep taking turns carrying the bags, because of their heavy weight. They were processed into soup, enough to feed 35 of us for the winter, and it was so good.

### Alternative School

The children went to a regular school in the beginning. However they were laughed at by the other students, primarily because of their lunches. Apparently a sandwich with thick homemade bread, alfalfa sprouts sticking out the sides, along with homemade unsweetened desserts and drinks was worth a good laugh. To avoid being made fun of, and to negotiate sweeter foods, one of the boys kept throwing his lunch in the garbage as he went into the school, giving the impression he was starving at home. The teacher would have the children share their food with him, followed by accusations to us that we were not taking care of our children. So we opted out of the system, in favor of creating our alternative school system.

The school was called Jardin des Enfants (Garden of the Children). The area school inspector graded us as the best system he had seen in his long career. It had two main attributes: we chose to nourish what a child gravitated to, and for those less interested in a topic, we would let that child share their enthusiasm for their topic of choice with the others. So in that way, the older kids and enthusiastic kids taught the others. Much of their learning was hands-on in the forest. We had an indigenous elder from Western Canada who knew where to look for plants and when to look. The kids loved their time with Al and still talk of their adventures into the forest. In many ways the children learned more about the plants than the adults did, as I am often reminded.

### Social Contributions

During this time, we continued our passion for global citizenship by drawing attention to world problems and providing alternative solutions with a quarterly full-color magazine and a biweekly newspaper in both French and English, called *Atlantean Era*, a similar concept to today’s focus on the New Earth. We were ahead of our time, for many of the subjects are still discussed today. Our live-in workshops grew in popularity and spread to many parts of the world.

As ideal as our experience was, it lasted only eight or nine years and ended as quickly as it began. Part of the reason for our departure from community related to



our transition from the world of conflict to the loving existence we were experiencing. But we had abandoned too much of our previous life, including a need for down-to-earth family connections. We had to rejoin the greater world and share our unconditional love in interactive ways by being open-minded in a dysfunctional world.

Our group was not alone. Communities throughout America dispersed for similar reasons at similar times. Much of the evolved thinking of today grew from seeds sown after the dispersing of communities like ours. Times were similar to today where youth recognize the need for change and are willingly taking the necessary steps to make a difference. Community is a breeding ground for new ideas on how to survive collectively.

The INTENTIONAL part of community has two levels to it. Each of us has a physical intention. Some want security, freedom, companionship, quality foods, or experimental housing and energy. These provide emotional wealth, yet are physical intentions. There is also a deeper intentional reason for community, one that each of us seeks. That is: to be the Best Version of Our Self, to be heard by others even though not agreed with, and to know we are making a difference. This deep emotional intention creates a Common Focus, which successful communities have mastered.

COMMUNITY is less about living together and all about creating together. What we are creating is an environment where the inner beauty of our being, our Soul, will continue to shine brighter. As we interact together, the rough spots on our inner diamond get knocked off, as ego lets go of its control. It happens organically when the person who is helping you today with your project might be the person you eat dinner with tomorrow and maybe it was their child who made you laugh yesterday. It's this natural flow of give-and-take interactions in Love that allows the Soul to shine brighter than one ever imagined. That glow radiates and will attract others, as does the glow of the community also attract. That's why we named our centres Domed Cities of Light.

For example: One relaxing day, everyone was down at the river swimming and sun-tanning. As I lay on the grass, I sensed that someone new had just stepped onto the property. I walked up the hill past the buildings toward the parking lot, where I met a young 16-year-old girl from New York. She said, "What is this place? I was on the bus headed to Toronto and knew I had to get off. I argued with the driver to let me out and now I don't know why I'm here." I asked if she wanted to go for a swim and then waited outside a building until she changed. As we walked over the crest of the hill and she saw the others, she stopped in awe. Waves of emotion began flowing up from her solar plexus and tears kept pouring from her as she grabbed my arm. She said, "I knew this could exist." She never left. 🌸

---

*Hugh Perry has a love for community living and has actively promoted its values via workshops, articles, surveys, websites, presentations, and by assisting forming groups. Please see [LivingBehindYourBreath.com](http://LivingBehindYourBreath.com).*



# Cultivating Peace for the Long Haul

By Kim Goodwin



Photos courtesy of Kim Goodwin

One day last year during a meditation I was shown something that surprised me. I was reminded of when I was a teen in the 1990s, and the cultural call to action was the phrase, “If you aren’t outraged, you aren’t paying attention.”

Now all the world is outraged. I was shown how outrage is a constant state of being for many people. I know the feeling. It’s easy to think you “need” to be outraged to show you care, to feel like you are making a difference, to facilitate change. And yet it hasn’t changed things for the positive. People today seem less happy, on more drugs than ever before, and in a state of fear—many near panic—much of their lives.

Then I was shown a statement with deeper truth:

“If you aren’t at peace, *you aren’t paying attention.*”

I was reminded of reading an account of when Thich Nhat Hahn put this concept very concisely. After a talk he gave about his country and the problems they face, a reporter stood up and asked him, “What can we, as Americans, do to help?” Hahn replied that *we can learn to cultivate peace within ourselves*. The reporter then said “Yes, but what can we *do?*”

Hahn had given the answer. Our world will change only once we change. So within, so without. Rage within, rage without. Peace within, peace without.

I was ready for the message this time. After years of being outraged at all the seemingly right and wrong things I had finally learned, to quote the permaculturist Paul Wheaton, that I wanted to spend the rest of my time “making a better world through learning good things rather than being angry at bad guys.” In learning to cultivate peace step-by-stumbling-step, moment-by-easily-distracted-moment I think I finally reached enough inner peace to hear the message meditation granted me.

“If you aren’t at peace, you aren’t paying attention.”

Ah. You aren’t paying attention to your energy, thoughts, and actions if you are not at peace. Peace is an action of attention in itself.

This concept was core to the teachings of the spiritual disciplines I’ve encountered and practiced. From religions around the world, teachings of Jesus, to the Buddha, from indigenous daily life practices to western ascetics like Peace Pilgrim, I’ve been shown the connection between inner and outer peace. They exist only together.

It took me a great deal of time and observation, but I’ve come to see that meeting rage with rage is a form of violence. If we wish to continue to live in a violent society, as a culture, we’re doing a

wonderful job of it without realizing it. What we cultivate is what we grow. What have I cultivated the past few years?

I had to look more closely at how easy it is for me to assign blame to the “other,” name names and make targets, see others as undereducated or oversensitive, immoral or uncouth, selfish or uncaring when they have views I don’t understand. It is so hard to acknowledge that all of our violence is what has created the present moment and situation. All of our violent thoughts, behaviors, and energy, not just the violence of *other* people. That I contribute to the chaos of this world was a painful thing to acknowledge.

Thich Nhat Hahn’s comment had to take years to really sink in to the point I finally “got it.” Other teachings and teachers came along and helped open doors to the path to understanding I was seeking. Doing the work of making peace takes commitment, and I fail and succeed over and over.

Changes have become patterns. Now I find that I see the world and its many events in a very different way than most. I have to work consciously every day—literally every thought, sentence, and action—to be peaceful and catch the violence in my responses both energetically and in more obvious communication. I’m certainly not perfect at it. I am getting better with practice. It’s a journey that’s taken me further and further away from mainstream ways of thinking and being, while deeper into a very different perception of existence.

The shamanism teacher Sandra Ingerman explains the importance of maintaining inner peace in another way in her article about healing toxic thoughts: [sandraingerman.com/healing-toxic-thoughts](http://sandraingerman.com/healing-toxic-thoughts). She gives tips to overcome unhealthy energy, learn to recognize it, stop putting it out into the world, and stop manifesting it in our lives. This is how to cultivate peace.

In the long haul, cultivating peace has applications so broad I think they can’t be fully conceived of by us, particularly since we have not known them as a culture. Intentional culture has a chance to learn from and cultivate peace in ways that I believe have worldwide effects.

As Peace Pilgrim put it, “One little person, giving all of her time to peace, makes news. Many people, giving some of their time, can make history.” 🐦

---

*Kim Goodwin practices permaculture, healing from biotoxin illness, and making peace in the desert southwest.*

# When Short and Long Hauls Collide: A Cohousing Case Study

*By Anonymous*

**M**y first taste of intentional community was bittersweet. Now, it's being cut short before I can fully digest, yet I feel compelled to share some of my experiences in navigating the complex economics and conflicting interests that can come with living as a renter in a non-income sharing community.

I'll start at the beginning. My partner and I had spent more than a year looking at potential homes in our metropolitan area and been consistently disappointed, because we weren't as willing as our competitors to pounce on a property without taking the time to process such a major decision. Then, through a listserv I had signed up for years earlier, I got an email about a unit going up for sale at a cohousing complex across the city.

Our first glimpse of the community appeared almost too good to be true, and in many ways that first impression turned out to be correct. The townhouse-style unit was as modest as the hospitality around it was impressive, greeting us with hot coffee and pastries in the courtyard and personalized tours of the immaculate grounds, followed up by an online community meeting filled with emotional

sharing of joys and concerns such as we had never before witnessed. Ultimately, the price was still too high and the competition too stiff for us to buy at this time.

Instead, we jumped at the chance to rent a different unit in the same community. Even this was under highly pressured circumstances, however, with the homeowner who was moving out holding off for us to submit an application, despite anti-discrimination laws stating residence must be granted to whoever first applied and cleared process. Still new to the process herself, our future landlord, who's since described herself as "essentially a rule follower," verbally agreed to wait for our verdict as the first ones to tour the rental, but then later called to rush our decision along, now with a better grasp of her legal obligations. Already the landlord-tenant relationship was getting tricky.

On the one hand, I'm grateful she held out for us, but on the other, I can see how her contradictory senses of accountability reinforced our experience of scarcity in looking for housing—scarcity of time to decide, and scarcity of opportunity to learn what it's like living in community. To complicate matters further, she and her partner too felt rushed—to move out of the unit we were moving into to secure their own rental on the opposite side of the city, closer to their children's private school. Scarcity gets around.

• • •

**O**ver the next year, we settled into our new place little by little, sacrificing some desired amenities and plenty of free time for the joys and labors of living and sharing resources in proximity with others. The transition was not always smooth, with all the meaningful connections balanced by awkward, seemingly obligatory exchanges that could inflame our social anxieties just at the thought of stepping out our front door. We were surrounded by people claiming to support us, yet who hardly knew anything about us, who had all come from different places with different cultural backgrounds and expectations of what community meant, and who were gener-

---

The other major taboo topic was money, specifically when it came to setting aside an affordable housing unit.

---



Chris Roth



Join the conversation for an inside look at the **beautiful & messy** realities of creating and sustaining community.

Enjoy conversations with:

- Dave Henson
- Lee Warren
- Yana Ludwig
- Clifford Paulin
- Jonah Mesritz
- Diana Leafe Christian
- Sky Blue
- Laird Schaub
- Alyson Ewald



[ic.org/podcast](https://ic.org/podcast)

 @insidecommunitypodcast

WITH REBECCA MESRITZ



---

## Non-income-sharing communities come with a shadowy undercurrent.

---

ally much older and financially rooted here than us.

After the initial walkthrough, we didn't see or hear much from the homeowner now living offsite, except when some appliance needed repair, which required considerably more coordination than our past rentals under professional landlords or property management companies. Such is life in community, full of unclear distinctions of who's responsible for what and collaborative frustrations one can turn into personal learning experiences—provided of course you have the time, energy, and interest.

Perhaps most frustrating for me was the sense of complacency I observed in living here—being so repetitiously grateful for what had already been done that we failed to question and make meaningful progress on what hadn't. For example, there was no organized orientation into the community for new residents—of which there were many following us—and the community's stated values had not been updated for two decades, with little interest displayed in revisiting and integrating them into everyday practices. Without a shared background or agreed-upon set of values, there didn't seem to be much bonding us together except residency on this piece of land, making it not that distinct from your standard condo or homeowners' association.

I spent a lot of energy as a member of a task force trying to plan a retreat laying some of the foundations for the shared intent, trust, and collaborative potential I felt was lacking, but after more than a year of planning, what was conceived as a multi-day offsite event wound up reduced to a four-hour skills-building workshop on Zoom. The biggest hurdle was navigating the varying levels of concern around Covid exposure. In my view, our community fell into the same fallacy so much of America had, waiting for that magical day when the pandemic would be no more and everything could return to "normal," rather than navigating the hard conversations to figure out where we were at as a collective and establish new modes of operation going forward. Political awareness and immune sensitivity around this issue often felt like a taboo subject, where people weren't comfortable responding to the information available and owning their perceptions in group discussions.

The other major taboo topic was money, specifically when it came to setting aside an affordable housing unit onsite to welcome more low-income residents. What seemed like an obvious choice, in line with our progressive values and recognized need for greater diversity, got stalled repeatedly in group discussions before we could reach consensus, while a donation towards this cause from a deceased community member steadily waned in value.

Most of the hesitation came from having to give up the right of first offer, by which current residents got the first chance to buy a unit before it went out to the open market. It became clear that even residents who owned their homes and had lived there upwards of a decade felt insecure letting go of that privilege for even one unit, and justified in watching out for their friends and family already with a connection to the community. This was dispiriting for us as renters, who theoretically stood to lose the most by sacrificing the right of first offer. Suddenly we weren't the only ones uncertain of how long we'd get to stay here.

• • •

**W**e were still operating under the assumption we'd have a couple years here, when our landlord gave us notice they were looking at buying another unit that had come up for sale. A bit confused, I asked to confirm if we could keep living here once our initial one-year lease term ran up. When she requested to discuss over the phone,

I panicked—it was the “we need to talk” thing.

Though she seemed oblivious to how such a response could arouse our stress and sense of insecurity, the fact was that our future was now dependent upon theirs. Our plans for how much we could settle in here, or how far ahead we had to plan to find a place elsewhere, got thrown up in the air as soon as we knew they might be moving back sooner than anticipated. Since our housing situation became at least as opaque as theirs, this bred a resentment that made it difficult to communicate with them or feel rooted in the community.

We breathed a few sighs of relief when they extended our rental on a monthly basis, but this was short-lived. In May, just after the lease ended, they gave us notice that they were moving back and we would need to vacate by October.

The rest of the community expressed their sadness at our departure and tried to soften the blow with offers of hosting us for a transitional period. But after all this, we felt about as ready to move on as the homeowners were ready to return. For all the individual relationships and amenities we appreciated here, we still felt burnt out by having to leave the security of our lodging situation up to the discretion of so many near-strangers. We didn't need consolation, but clarity, which can be in short supply around supposedly nonhierarchical intentional communities. To be perfectly clear for ourselves, we wanted our own dwelling to call home, not to be guests in someone else's any longer.

Our landlords offered us and other neighbors little to no explanation of their reasoning for moving back in, except what I explicitly took the initiative to find out for myself—mostly in the interest of writing this article. It felt good to swap perspectives and see how in many ways we were in the same boat—though they always had a definite life raft as homeowners. She even hedged on the terms of our moveout date, perhaps to ease her conscience, offering a couple extra weeks of flexibility if we needed it.

When I followed up asking for just that, however, she withdrew the offer, saying they needed access to start moving their possessions back in and making updates to the home. Yet again the inequity in our situation became quite evident. While we were holding our breath hoping to find a place to live, they were counting on making renovations, and we couldn't help feeling envious of the housing security they took for granted. It would have been better just to have stuck with the hard date and not gotten our hopes up.

It felt like a microcosm of our relationship from beginning to end, somewhere between neighbors and landlords. This erosion of boundaries added to our stresses by making it harder to know what to expect, how much we could advocate for our own needs, and how much awareness we had to have of theirs. Sometimes it would have been better not to know, or at least for them to volunteer the information without us having to initiate. I begin to feel exhausted being the only one pushing for greater transparency within our relationship or the larger community during these shifts.

Traditionally, human communities would operate on a gift economy structure, whereas intentional communities that don't incorporate income sharing come with a shadowy undercurrent of exchange that can subtly undermine sincere closeness, because every household is in some ways on their own when it comes to securing their own shelter and healthcare within the larger capitalist system. The benefits may still outweigh the costs, but it's a caveat that's worth making clear at the outset, so newcomers to these kinds of arrangements can check their expectations and know they're not arriving into some kind of post-scarcity utopia.

In comparison to the broader norms of nuclear family isolation and commuter capitalism, intentional communities can appear downright utopian in their readiness of resource sharing and open communication, but look a little closer, and the trained eye can perceive a culture still very much beholden to these same trends, reticent to confront our shortcomings and collective complicity in the alienating systems we may claim to oppose. That's not to condemn the movement, but to note that it still has a long, long, *long* way to go, and that true progress is dependent upon willingness to admit those shortcomings and confront our inequities as they arise. 🐾

## Back Issue Sets Now Available at 40% Discount (US addresses)

To celebrate COMMUNITIES' 50th anniversary, we've compiled sets of all of our in-print back issues for which we have at least a dozen copies in stock. We are offering three entirely distinct sets. Two of them are available in very limited quantity because of low issue inventory, so if you're interested, please act soon.

**Back Issue Set A:** COMMUNITIES #s 143, 147, 148, 150, 152, 154, 155, 156, 157, 159, 160, 162, 163, 167, 168, 171, 172, 174, 175, 176, 177, 178, 179, 180, 181, 182, 183, 184, 185, 186, 187, 188, 189, 190, 191, 192, 193 (37 issues total, from the years 2009-2021) - 17 sets available.

**Back Issue Set B:** *Communitas 1*, *Communitas 2*, COMMUNITIES #s 3, 8, 26, 28, 39, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 57, 66, 67, 70, 71/72, 82, 83, 105, 117, 138, 139, 140, 142, 144, 145, 146, 148, 151, 161, 164 (32 issues total, from the years 1972-2014) - only 4 sets available.

**Back Issue Set C:** COMMUNITIES #s 79, 80/81, 83, 84, 85, 86, 90, 92, 93, 94, 96, 97, 100, 101, 102, 110, 112, 115, 118, 124, 125, 126, 136, 137, 141 (25 issues total, from the years 1993-2008) - only 4 sets available.

Individual sets, packaged in medium flat rate priority mail boxes, are available for \$100 apiece ~~\$60~~ apiece (limited time only) (for A, B, or C) postpaid to US addresses, \$120-140 postpaid to Canadian addresses, \$150-170 postpaid to other international addresses where available. All three sets together (A, B, and C) are available for ~~\$250~~ postpaid **\$150** postpaid (limited time only) to US addresses, \$320-\$370 postpaid to Canadian addresses, \$410-\$460 to other international addresses where available.

Please order at [gen-us.net/back-issue-sets](https://gen-us.net/back-issue-sets) (or via postal mail to Oberlin address).



# Working Effectively with Especially Challenging Behaviors, Part Four

By Diana Leafe Christian



*Challenging behaviors, whether displaying arrogance on the outside but feeling victimized on the inside (overt version), or acting victimized on the outside but being arrogant inside (covert version), can wreak havoc in a community's well-being.*

Guernica, Pablo Picasso

After years of interacting with Olive in my community, I finally realized I was *afraid* of her. At first I didn't identify this as fear, even though I tended to cringe when she spoke in meetings or tensed up whenever we'd interact. And after she'd treat me with contempt I often felt weak and shaky. Yep, this was fear all right!

## Olive's Challenging Behaviors

Olive (not her real name, and she passed away a few years ago) was a member of my community I described in the first article in this series. She was often hostile and demanding in our meetings. At the same time she often presented herself as being perpetually offended, harmed, or attacked by others. She was often controlling, and as noted in the first article, demanded "obedience" from her work exchangers. She appeared to exhibit the "covert," "fragile," "vulnerable" version of these behaviors, which mental health professionals call "narcissistic behaviors," associated with people whose outward persona appears insecure and victimized, yet quietly resentful and menacing, and who seem to harbor grandiosity, superiority, entitlement on the inside. (See chart, "'Especially Challenging' Attitudes and Behaviors," p. 49.)

Olive tended to target certain other community members, just as Eldred targeted Joseph, described in the third article in the series (Fall 2022 issue), and Dwight targeted Charlie, in the first article (Winter 2021 issue). The people Olive went after were usually young men who were smart, impatient, "go getters," and sometimes older men and women with special expertise, such as in legal-financial matters, or those who made proposals to help our community achieve its goals. Olive targeted me too, but the reason, I later learned, was because I once pointed out her behaviors and their effects on others directly *to* her, and in front of other people. It turns out this is one of the most counter-productive things we can say to a person with these behaviors—especially *publicly*.

However, Olive didn't act in these ways all the time. She had skills and qualities many in our community appreciated. She was a respected teacher of environmental sustainability, and so effective that she was beloved by her students, many of whom were younger community members. She was especially fond of young women whom she mentored: the more they appreciated and revered her expertise, the more nurturing she was. She became one of our best meeting facilitators; when she facilitated meetings she was professional and neutral even about topics she had strong opinions about. There was much to admire about Olive and many people did, although they were also aware of her other side.

Previous articles described especially challenging behaviors of these types, and also several ways to set limits and boundaries. (See [gen-us.net/DLC](http://gen-us.net/DLC) for past installments.) This article suggests setting boundaries in another way, making all communications with the person public, and engaging outside healing help—for

ourselves—in order to grow inner strength and emotional resilience to better understand and withstand these behaviors.

## “Don’t Engage”—Removing Ourselves from the Person’s Presence

We can protect ourselves by no longer engaging much with the person acting in these ways, thus removing ourselves from their direct line of fire. This can seem like an anti-community attitude, but can be a life-saver in restoring emotional safety and peace of mind.

Dr. Ramani Durvasula, in her book on narcissistic behaviors, *Don’t You Know Who I Am?*, suggests that we not engage with the person whenever possible. She calls this “creating a psychological distance that feels safe. . . . Through distance and stepping back and setting boundaries and taking care of yourself,” she writes, “you can move forward.” And as Dr. Durvasula and Adelyn Birch, author of *Boundaries*, both advise, it is best for the person setting the boundaries to *tell* the other person they are doing this.

## The Quiet (or “Chicken”) Way to Set Boundaries

I knew nothing about these behaviors back in the days when I was one of Olive’s targets, and certainly didn’t know anything about setting boundaries. But after years of feeling scared and yet feeling obligated to interact regularly with Olive as my fellow community member, I finally woke up.

“*Wait* a minute, I realized. “*This* isn’t right.”

It occurred to me that I could choose to *stop* setting myself up for this, after a particularly painful series of interactions in a committee. Although I loved our committee and had worked in it for years, after Olive joined it our meetings became painful—with me feeling weak and shaky after each committee email and after our meetings. I certainly should have resigned from the committee and retained my dignity. But I soldiered on until the meeting where Olive booted me out of the group, backed up by bringing a mutual friend to help her do it (whom I thought of as my close friend and ally too—*Ouch!*). The other two committee members—older, quiet, non-assertive people—didn’t agree with Olive or back her up, but, sitting there in stunned silence, didn’t help me either. Fuming impotently, I stumbled out of the room, bumping into things, a most ungraceful, undignified exit. My ultimate “learning moment,” you might say.

At this point I finally realized I needed to limit my interactions with Olive, and stop engaging with her altogether. I could do this rather easily because ours is a large, village-scale community and she and I lived in different neighborhoods. But the “Quiet Way” to set boundaries I came up with didn’t involve sending a courteous but clear email to tell Olive what behaviors I would no longer allow in my presence, and what I’d do if she did them. I would have shown higher integrity if I’d communicated those things! But I was way too scared to say anything to Olive directly, even on email. So I just quietly got out of her way. I made sure we didn’t meet often anymore and didn’t see each other directly either.

I no longer participated in the smaller work parties or small social gatherings when Olive would be present. I sat at a different table during meals, in a location where she wouldn’t see me. I never sat directly across from her in business meetings, but sat a few seats away with three or four people between us so we’d have no eye contact. If we’d happen to meet in passing, I’d acknowledge her by nodding and saying hello, but didn’t engage in conversation. If we needed to talk about any community business on email I was polite, brief, and to the point. I deleted her emailed implications or provocations; if she did this in person I responded mildly and innocuously and moved on. I called this “having a two-percent relationship” with Olive.

I was like the Starship Enterprise with shields up, or a Klingon Bird of Prey in “cloaked” mode.

I didn’t use the Inner Ninja because I’d forgotten I learned it decades earlier. (Described in Part Two, this is a simple physical practice for self-protection. For a handout

on the Inner Ninja technique, email me at [diana@ic.org](mailto:diana@ic.org).) The practice only came rushing back later when I was verbally accosted by someone in another community, a story I’ll tell in the next article.

Of course the Quiet Way is the easiest way to set boundaries with someone. It doesn’t require the courage and assertiveness to tell the person which behaviors you don’t want to experience and what you’ll do if the person keeps doing them. My two-percent relationship with Olive was taking the easy way out—the “Chicken” Way, you could say.

Nevertheless, distancing myself like this was the best I could do at the time, and I felt *much* better, safe again in my own community. I was no longer cringing or bracing myself. My solar plexus didn’t shake anymore.

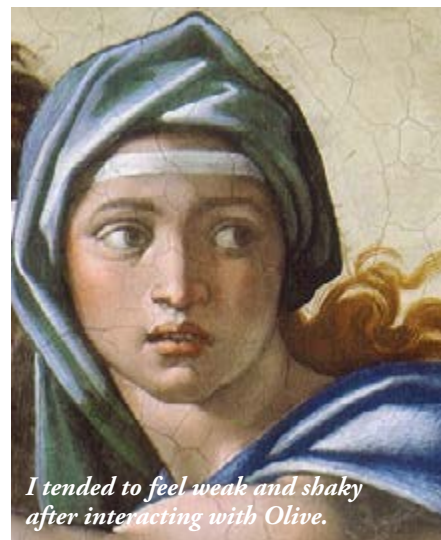
## But Why Should I Leave?

Well, with Dr. Durvasula and other psychologists and mental health experts advising us to distance ourselves and not engage with those who exhibit these behaviors, it’s natural to ask why should *we*, not the person who behaves this way, leave a committee we love, or not participate in work parties or attend the small gatherings when they’ll be there?

---

Yep.  
This was fear  
all right!

---



The Delphic Sibyl, Michaelangelo, Sistine Chapel

---

## I copied all our emails to people Herman liked.

---



Austin Distel

*“Make it public” means making sure your communications with the person are also seen, heard, or read by others.*

While we can feel significantly more peace of mind in our own community if we avoid people with these behavior patterns, doing this certainly goes against the grain for most of us. Staying out of the person’s way or leaving a committee we love can feel as if we’re not only out of integrity and “running away” but it’s also unfair. *They* should leave the committee; we shouldn’t have to!

I agree. Damned if you do, damned if you don’t. Yet we need to ask ourselves which is the less painful choice: continuing to be targeted with hurtful and even abusive behaviors or not participating in some community activities. My advice: leave the committee or team and don’t attend small work parties or social gatherings when the person will be present, and bide your time. Continue participating in larger community meetings and bigger social events and larger work parties where you won’t be in close contact with them, and perhaps even create a “two-percent relationship” of your own. People join and leave committees all the time in community; when the person leaves a committee or team, consider joining it again and continue the good work of helping your community.

### What About a *Small* Community?

How can we avoid someone if we’re a group with just a few members, or just a few households, or if we live in one shared group household? This is a considerably more difficult situation, of course, because how can we gracefully not engage with or avoid someone if we share the same kitchen, participate in a work day in the garden, or pass each other in the hall? And what about sharing a meal with the person when we’re all at the same table?

I believe we have the same choices in a small community, although it’s *much* more difficult. To the degree we can, and if possible, in ways that are not rude or obvious—not “shunning” the person or giving the silent treatment—we can try to find graceful ways to not be in the same space, and create our own version of a “two-percent relationship.” And if possible, consider using the Inner Ninja technique to protect ourselves from the effects of the person’s hurtful comments, or resentful or hostile energy directed at us.

But even doing all this may not work if we’re in a small enough group, and/or if the person’s behaviors and energies seem more powerful and penetrating than our own inner strength and emotional resilience. To be blunt, this situation, especially in a small community, can make our life a living hell. In a small community *especially* we need to ask ourselves which is less painful: continuing to experience hurtful, even abusive behaviors on a daily basis, or leaving the group altogether. I’ve known decent, good-hearted, emotionally well people who choose to leave their community because someone like this was targeting them.

Sometimes the *only* thing we can do when this happens is to get the hell out of Dodge.

### Making Abuse Public

Another step we can take is to make “public” all our communications and interactions with people behaving in these ways. Abuse and bullying are often done in secret. Doing these things when no one can witness them helps an abuser get away with it. Making abuse public means meeting with the person only in the presence of others; putting their phone calls on speaker phone so others in the room can hear; sharing any email exchanges with them with friends in the community, and always letting the person know we’re doing this.

Dr. Durvasula recommends this in dealing with bosses or co-workers with these behaviors, and it applies to fellow community members as well. “Avoid meeting with (them) alone,” she cautions. These people “often prefer phone conversations and one-on-one meetings, because they work better for bullying,” she writes. “Ask to have someone else present at meetings whenever possible.”

I did this with a fellow community member I’ll call Herman who would send me what became known in our community as “Herman’s nasty emails.” This happened when we were trying to create a new community business. Herman was delayed in finishing the technical aspects of the business, and by then I had to go out of town. I was still managing the project by email while I was away, but Herman assumed I’d abandoned it and left him holding the ball. So he started sending abusive emails maligning my character. I didn’t know much about these challenging behaviors then. I stumbled onto the idea to make his emails public by chance. I picked the three women Herman most admired in our community, and after getting their permission, told him from then on I would always copy these friends in all our email correspondence.

Herman continued sending nasty emails for a while, but after he finally realized people he admired were also reading his emails, he sent only neutral, businesslike ones from then on.

A member of a cohousing community I met recently had a similar experience. He told me that when a woman in his community started sending him critical, abusive emails, he told her he would share her emails with the whole community, and he did. The woman stopped the critical emails! An unexpected benefit was when they later worked together on a community project, the woman behaved much more courteously toward him than she ever had before. Apparently “outing” her abuse to the whole group not only stopped the woman’s mean-spirited emails but induced her to behave more cooperatively in person as well.

This really works!



## “Get Therapy!”

EEK! I’d just geared up all the courage I had one morning on the deck of our house to ask one of the scariest, most intimidating housemates I ever had to please not speak to me in such an angry, demeaning way. It was hard to stammer out. I’d practically whispered it; I was so scared my throat had choked up. It wasn’t exactly setting limits and boundaries, but it was the best I could do.

“Get therapy!” she hissed!

I’d never stood up to her before. This tall imposing woman with jet black hair—whom I’ll call Andraste, the ancient British raven goddess of war and blood—was imperious and anxious. She, my mother, and I were trying to start a small community on a nine-acre property in North Carolina. She scared us, and was off-putting to our new friends and neighbors.

I immediately knew what “Get therapy!” meant. If I was too weak to deal with her righteous anger at, as she saw it, my always making mistakes, I should get therapy, become more competent, and develop a spine! Instead of feeling insulted by this as you’d imagine, I thought, “Oh. Right. I *forgot* about therapy. I could get some help.”

How could I forget therapy? I had benefited from various therapies most of my adult life, especially the unusual metaphysical/spiritual methods. In all the months Andraste and I’d been locked into what felt like a death-grip power struggle, I’d forgotten all about it. So rather than being insulted I was jolted out of feeling stuck and remembered that outside healing help still existed and I could get some.

## The Trauma Bond, Up Close and Personal

Andraste exhibited many of the behaviors described in these articles: self-centeredness, a sense of superiority, an ever-present irritation that burst easily into rage, a willingness to insult and berate others, and an apparent lack of interest in other people’s well-being. She often didn’t speak in a normal voice, but screeched. We were a forming community of only three, so her abuse was a daily, in-my-face occurrence. Why she was so furious at me so often, and could barely contain her rage, was because well...everything about me. My very existence seemed to provoke her.

We’d started out as friends who liked each other immediately, as if we’d known each other all our lives. We went on a cross-country tour to visit communities and look for a small property where we could create a community. We had a great time, simpatico comrades. But things soon changed. Our relationship was very much like a love relationship with a partner that starts out great and quickly goes sour, but without the sex and romance. And all the typical dynamics of a love relationship with a narcissistic partner were there. There are books and dozens of videos about when someone in a relationship with a narcissist slowly loses their confidence and sense of self. In working with Andraste in our small community project I rather quickly became an irritatingly incompetent and irresponsible easily cowed child; she was the responsible, hyper-competent, easily annoyed, clearly superior adult.

Two odd things happened. First, everything she said about me became true, even if it was exaggerated or hadn’t seemed true originally. Her opinions of me pierced like a laser; I became what she thought of me. Second, I inexplicably *turned into her*. She screeched; I screeched back. She was insulting and abusive; I was insulting and abusive. What was happening?

After studying these behaviors years later I learned this is *exactly* what happens in what’s called a “trauma-bond” relationship with a narcissistic partner. The two start out well, but soon the person with these behaviors begins turning the screws, while their target slowly loses their confidence, their sense of well-being, then their ability to function normally. They often *mirror the same behaviors* as their abuser. They lose their emotional resilience; their life force drains away. They become a shell of their former selves. Their health crumbles. They can’t sleep. Their old friends barely recognize them.

That morning on the deck Andraste’s angry rebuke changed my life. One of our neighbors, a therapist named Diane, specialized in EFT therapy (Emotional Freedom Technique), also known as the “tapping” method. I made an appointment with her

for that afternoon.

EFT is known for being unusually fast therapy, as it doesn’t take many sessions to make a difference. I walked into her therapy office that afternoon a shell of my former self, and walked out feeling slightly better and standing a bit taller.

After the third session about a week later I felt so much better I could suddenly see that, obviously, we needed to stop trying to create a new community; we should finish construction, sell the property, and move on.

After a few more sessions, I had the courage to tell Andraste I thought we should do this. She was shocked at first, but soon also saw this is what we should do.

And with more EFT sessions I felt empowered enough to start finishing construction. Before that I’d felt so paralyzed I didn’t have the energy or confidence to do anything but my day job—too emotionally stuck to pick up a hammer or a spatula. But now, with a caulking gun and grim determination I finished caulking the bathroom sink. We had many small construction jobs to complete in our project and I was on it. While Andraste worked on getting the project’s finances ready for the property sale, I caulked, spread sheet-

---

## She was the scariest woman I’d ever met!

---



*One of the best things we can do, in my experience, is get outside healing help to build emotional resilience and safety.*

Youssef Naddam

rock mud, stained widow trim, and painted room after room.

I got outside healing help. The worm had turned.

## Getting Outside Healing Help (for Ourselves)

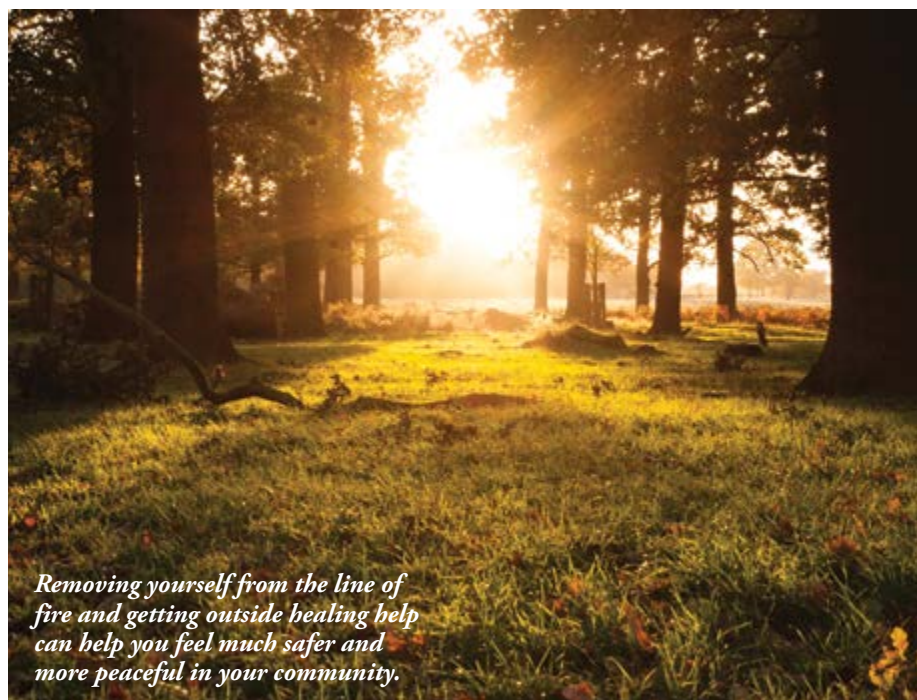
Mental health professionals and others who work with people affected by narcissists, like those cited in these articles—Dr. Ramani Durvasula, author of *Don't You Know Who I Am?*, Dr. Craig Malkin, author of *Rethinking Narcissism*, and Adelyn Birch, author of *Boundaries*—all recommend that people affected by these behaviors get therapy to generate inner strength and emotional resilience in order to better withstand the effects of these behaviors. We can't change the people who do them, but we can certainly strengthen ourselves! (See “Book Reviews and Suggested Resources,” [gen-us.net/DLC](http://gen-us.net/DLC).)

I call this “getting outside healing help” because psychotherapists point out that when early trauma occurs in childhood it comes from the behaviors of other people—their trauma comes from *outside* the child. So as an adult they cannot heal the trauma by themselves, on their own. It came into them from the outside, psychotherapists say, and responds well to help that also comes in from the outside, hence “outside” healing help.

Thanks to Andraste, and thanks to Diane (and to The Universe for setting it up!), I realized I needed a lot more spiritual-emotional healing work if I wanted to live a fulfilled, effective life. Diane's EFT therapy helped me become at least emotionally well enough to continue living there, finish the construction, and help get our property sold. And it got me at least emotionally well enough to be accepted a few years later as a Provisional Member in my community.

I've found the following methods to be especially helpful in helping people change their difficult inner patterns and their outside circumstances:

- Psychotherapists specializing in helping people in relationships with narcissistic partners, parents, bosses, or coworkers
- Psychotherapists specializing in trauma-healing methods
- David Berceci's Trauma Healing Exercises (TRE)
- Nonviolent Communication trainers who specialize in NVC's empathy processes for specific traumas
- Psychotherapists who offer Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR)—the “back and forth eye-movement” technique
- Psychotherapists who offer Emotional Freedom Technique (EFT)
- Homeopaths



*Removing yourself from the line of fire and getting outside healing help can help you feel much safer and more peaceful in your community.*

Benjamin Davies

• Shamans and shamanic counselors and what's called “soul retrieval” (entering altered states themselves to remove traumas directly from their clients' psyche)

• Clairvoyant healers who specialize in this work

Because I've experienced all these methods I feel confident recommending them. For me, the typical “talk therapy” I tried first didn't change anything except thinning my wallet. I didn't want to wait months or years for results; I wanted clearly observable improvement in my inner world and my life circumstances—the best Bang for my Transformation Buck! And these rather unusual methods seemed to do that.

I continued getting outside healing help after I joined my community, including with a fellow community member, a retired psychiatrist who worked with homeopathic remedies. In recent years I've benefited by working with a clairvoyant healer who works like a shaman; she seems to be able to remove old, stuck traumas right out of a person's psyche. Several of my community friends have worked with her too, with good results. (Email [diana@ic.org](mailto:diana@ic.org) for her contact information.) I've really needed all this outside healing help. Instead of trudging through life in a gray fog of wretchedness and misery and consistently attracting abuse, I now attract warm, supportive friends and most of the time feel cheerful, upbeat, and grateful.

## Why Should I Get Therapy? They Should Get It!

Certainly, they should. But of course they won't. And even if they did, it wouldn't change much, or change anything, according to Dr. Durvasula, Dr. Malkin, and other psychologists who specialize in working with people negatively affected by people with these challenging behaviors. And when someone who exhibits them is forced to get therapy, as when a couple contemplating divorce seeks therapy as a last resort, or when a narcissist law-breaker is ordered by a Court to get therapy, they cannot usually seem to change. Sometimes, Dr. Durvasula says, with long and exceptionally patient therapy, the person can learn to simulate—not genuinely feel but *simulate*—more empathetic, thoughtful,

respectful behaviors with others. But as soon as they feel threatened again (and they feel threatened often, and by simple things like someone not agreeing with them or not obeying them), they tend to immediately revert to their old ways. They can't keep up what for them is the arduous work of pretending empathy and behaving thoughtfully. They were too traumatized at too early an age, so their attempts to simulate what seems like normal behavior are too exhausting to keep up.

### And Olive?

As I limited my interactions with Olive, over the months and then years, I felt safer and more peaceful, which allowed me to gain a new perspective. When she made hostile comments in meetings, I no longer felt dread and aversion, but experienced an inner sense of understanding. I thought I knew what she was feeling and why she was behaving that way; I knew I'd sometimes felt the same way and had behaved the same way myself. My shaky anxiety became empathy and compassion. One reason I could now feel this way was that I kept getting outside healing help. The other reason was my space away from Olive. Because of this psychic space I now saw Olive's behaviors as her attempts to feel safe enough to keep going in life, to keep fear and misery at bay. I understood this so well! I could now feel kindness and compassion for Olive. I wished her well.

Several years later she was dying from a painful illness and of course my community rallied around her to offer every kind of help. I wanted to help too, if I could do this and still keep my distance. I knew Olive read novels to distract herself from pain, so I asked if she liked historical fiction by women authors, and she did. So I loaned her stack after stack of books. Her friends would pick them up from my mudroom and take them down the road to her house. Olive would read the books and send them back with her friends, who'd drop them off in my mudroom and pick up a new stack. I was able to help Olive in her last weeks with this small act of caring and support. I was grateful I now had the emotional space to be capable of this, even in this small book-sharing way.

## "Especially Challenging" Attitudes and Behaviors

### More Obvious, Overt, Extroverted Narcissistic Behaviors:

*(Grandiosity on the outside, insecurity on the inside)*

Delusions of superiority; self-centeredness  
 Entitlement  
 Impaired empathy  
 Lying; exaggerating accomplishments  
 Rapidly escalating anger; sudden angry outbursts  
 Grandiosity  
 Craving attention  
 Criticizing others  
 Mocking or jeering at others  
 Invalidating, demeaning, or belittling others  
 Bullying others

### Less Obvious, Covert, Introverted Narcissistic Behaviors:

*(Insecurity on the outside, grandiosity on the inside)*

Delusions of superiority; self-centeredness  
 Relishing vengeance  
 Manipulating others; using people  
 Hypersensitivity to criticism  
 Projecting their behaviors and attitudes onto others  
 "Gaslighting" others (telling someone what they directly observed didn't actually happen)  
 Envy others; resenting others  
 Limited self-awareness  
 "Grooming" newer or less confident members to be their allies and support their version of reality

-DLC

## Recognizing Challenging Behaviors

Mental health professionals call people who do these behaviors *narcissists* and *narcissistic*, but I suggest we don't use those terms, and instead just focus on the behaviors themselves. But recognizing them can be complex. Most people with these behaviors exhibit only some but not all of them—their particular cluster of the behaviors. Each person's cluster of behaviors differs from the cluster of behaviors in others. Moreover, the behaviors of any one person can be different at different times. And the behaviors can come and go. And these folks can target some people but not others.

So our task is not to recognize various negative attitudes and behaviors that many of us fall into sometimes, but to recognize certain *patterns of behavior* that are consistent though perhaps intermittent, may be aimed at some but not others, and which persist over time.

-DLC

### Coming Up

The next article will focus on several ways small groups of community friends can help each other feel supported and empowered, and perhaps also induce the person to have less negative impact in meetings and stop targeting them, as well as the unusual advice of Dr. Craig Malkin on inducing more cooperation from people with these behaviors. The last article will focus on what the community as a whole can do. Please stay tuned! 🐦

*Diana Leaf Christian, author of Creating a Life Together and Finding Community, speaks at conferences, offers consultations, and leads workshops and online trainings on creating successful new communities, and on Sociocracy, an especially effective self-governance and decision-making method. She lives at Earthaven Ecovillage in North Carolina. See [www.DianaLeafChristian.org](http://www.DianaLeafChristian.org).*



# The Early Years of COMMUNITIES Magazine

By A. Allen Butcher

Walden Three community in Providence, Rhode Island. Tim Miller explains that Walden Three was started in 1970 in Rhode Island, and that it “had a second base, a dairy farm where some members worked,” which was Herman Patt’s farm in West Brookfield, Massachusetts, now called Coy Brook Farm, where East Wind Community had previously lived. Walden Three had a typesetting business, producing the first volume of *Journal of a Walden Two Commune: The Collected Leaves of Twin Oaks*. In that book is a short profile of the Walden Three community, in which they state their plan for their journal *Communitarian*<sup>1</sup>.

Alternatives journal was produced by the Alternatives Foundation or Alternatives Northwest at Limesaddle Community in northern California. It may have been related to Richard Fairfield’s *Modern Utopian* newsletter, since COMMUNITIES issues 1 through 3 mention that its publisher, Community Publications Cooperative (CPC) was a member of the Underground Press Syndicate through affiliation with *The Modern Utopian*, and because the journal *Alternatives* is evidently the same *Alternatives Newsmagazine* that Timothy Miller states was the “short-lived successor” to Richard Fairfield’s *Modern Utopian* newsletter<sup>2</sup>.

A nationwide collective formed, meeting annually at the Twin Oaks conferences, involving people from California to Virginia and Rhode Island, for maintaining the magazine as a voice of the new wave communities movement. However, after several years Twin Oaks stopped hosting communities conferences, while gradually the community took on more and more work for and financing of the magazine, as the other COMMUNITIES magazine production collectives gave it up. From 1976 through 1982, Paul Freundlich served as the main Editor. (Four decades later, he is once again an ac-

tive writer/supporter. See his own reflections on the magazine’s history, “COMMUNITIES’ Place on the Planet, Five Decades On,” on p. 68 of COMMUNITIES #195.)

By the early 1980s Twin Oaks community wanted to give up the role of publisher, finally transferring the journal to Charles Betterton at Stelle Community in Illinois in 1984. Eight years later, the 2nd FIC became the COMMUNITIES publisher, hosted by Sandhill Farm in Missouri, as reported by Laird Schaub in COMMUNITIES #79, Fall 1992<sup>3</sup>.

For the 12 years that COMMUNITIES was at Twin Oaks, the community was at the center of the intentional communities movement in North America, and the annual directory issue was the best listing of communities available. Other communities directories of the time include: *The New Age Community Guidebook* produced in 1985 by Bobbi Corcoran of Community Referral Service in Eugene, Oregon (it is said that much of her material was simply copied from other directories); the regional *New England Network of Light Directory* produced by Corinne McLaughlin and Gordon Davidson of Sirius Community near Amherst, Massachusetts from the research for their 1985 book *Builders of the Dawn*; and intentional community listings were included in issues of the *Community Service Newsletter*<sup>4</sup>. 🐦

*A. Allen Butcher lived 12 years in communal society, four years in collectives, and is now building an urban, class-harmony community, Dry Gulch Ecovillage, in Denver, Colorado. Allen founded The School of Intentioneering and has self-published Culture Magic and The Intentioneers’ Bible, both available on the internet (see [culturemagic.org](http://culturemagic.org) and [intentioneers.net](http://intentioneers.net); contact [AllenInUtopia@consultant.com](mailto:AllenInUtopia@consultant.com)).*

Twin Oaks began holding annual Communities Conferences in 1968, a year after its founding in Louisa, Virginia. A number of other communities were formed by conference participants, including Shannon Farm, Springtree, and North Mountain. At the 1972 conference three different community journals—*Communitas*, *Communitarian*, and *Alternatives*—merged to form COMMUNITIES magazine.

*Communitas* was produced by the New Community Project, arising in 1972 from a Community Builders’ weekend in Yellow Springs, Ohio, and influenced by the work of Community Service, Inc., founded three decades earlier in that same town. Community Service was also the organization that hosted the founding of the first Fellowship of Intentional Communities (1st FIC) in 1949, with the second Fellowship for Intentional Community (2nd FIC) publishing COMMUNITIES magazine from 1992 to 2019. (Find *Communitas* #1 and #2 at [simplecirc.com/shop/communities/back-issues](http://simplecirc.com/shop/communities/back-issues) or via your online account if you’re a subscriber.)

*Communitarian* was a project of the

1. Kinkade, Kathleen, *Journal of a Walden Two Commune: The Collected Leaves of Twin Oaks, Vol 1, Issues 1-15*, Louisa, VA: Twin Oaks Community, June 1972, pp. 101-2. And: Miller, Timothy, *The Encyclopedic Guide to American Intentional Communities*, Rochester, NY: Richard W. Couper Press, 2015, pp. 467-8.  
2. Miller, Timothy, “Foreword,” in Fairfield, R., *The Modern Utopian: Alternative Communities of the ‘60s and ‘70s*, Port Townsend, WA: Process Media, 2010, p. 18.  
3. Schaub, Laird, “We’re back!” COMMUNITIES, Fall 1992, #79, pp. 2-3.  
4. McLaughlin, C. & Davidson, G., *Builders of the Dawn: Community Lifestyles in a Changing World*, Shutesbury, Massachusetts: Sirius Publishing, 1985.

# Cmag and Me

By Laird Schaub

I was first exposed to community living when I chanced across the February 1973 edition of *Psychology Today* in the Memphis, Tennessee Public Library. It featured an excerpt from Kat Kinkade's forthcoming book, *A Walden Two Experiment*, chronicling the first five years of Twin Oaks in Louisa, Virginia. I was enthralled.

Shortly afterwards (I was living in Washington DC at the time), I tagged along with a Unitarian Church group that had planned a field trip to visit Twin Oaks (a couple hours away) to explore the ways in which their congregation was a community. While not affiliated with the church, I was interested in experiencing Kat's intentional community up close and personal.

Though it amounted to no more than several hours on campus (an organized Saturday tour), this taste left me even more intrigued. Maybe this would be the way I could recapture the unique blend of stimulation and support I had discovered and cherished about my undergraduate experience—I just didn't want to keep going to school to find it again.

As it happened, Twin Oaks was one of seven cooperative groups that midwived the birth of COMMUNITIES magazine in December 1972, melding three publications into one. On the spur of the moment, I bought the first two issues of this nascent publication on my visit—not having a clue that it would be the start of a long relationship.

## Sandhill Days (1974-2014)

About a year later, I was part of the group that started Sandhill Farm, an income-sharing experiment in northeast Missouri. Among the many things we did that first year, we bought a subscription to COMMUNITIES.

In the early days of the magazine, it would include an annual directory of communities in the US and Canada. We were keen to let the world know about Sandhill (once it became clear that relying solely on friends to expand the membership was not a winning strategy). In particular, we had

big hopes for the 1979 *Guide to Cooperative Alternatives*, a perfect-bound book that appeared as a double issue.

Unfortunately, someone in the editorial group misinterpreted the postal code "MO," and we were listed as being in Rutledge, Montana (which doesn't exist) instead of Rutledge, Missouri. Oh boy. We painstakingly disabused a number of inquirers who were excited to learn more about our community in the High Plains, and we'll never know who didn't give us a second look because Montana was too dry or too cowboy. I guess we weren't quite ready for prime time.

## FEC Days (1980-2001)

My first foray into community networking came when I attended a communities conference hosted by Dandelion Community near Kingston, Ontario in the summer of 1979. The event coincided with the semi-annual meeting of the Federation of Egalitarian Communities (FEC), an organization comprised of income-sharing communities. Sandhill joined the next year and I became a regular delegate. Among other things, FEC guest-edited COMMUNITIES issue #73 in 1987 to which I contributed my first article for publication.

OK, so my byline read "Laird Schraub." They *almost* got it right.

## FIC Days (1987-2015)

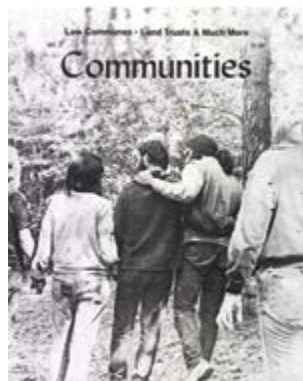
During my tenure with FEC, I discovered that there was only a small audience interested in the high-octane life of income-sharing, and that I'd need to broaden my horizons if I wanted to have more impact as a social change agent. Springboarding off my platform with the FEC, I was on hand when the Fellowship for Intentional Community got relaunched at Stelle, Illinois in the spring of 1987.

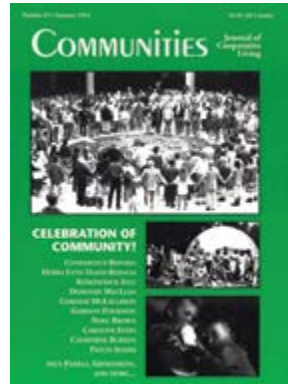
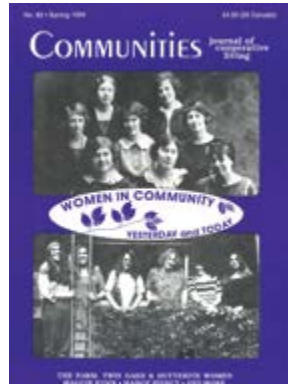
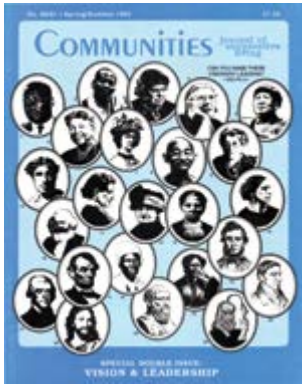
I say "relaunched" because there was a prior version—styled the Fellowship of Intentional Communities—created by Arthur Morgan in 1949. At that time it was largely energized by pacifists who did jail time during World War II as conscientious objectors, and were living in intentional communities in the Mid-Atlantic States and the Ohio Valley regions. They got together annually to enjoy fellowship (just as it says in the name) and to discuss how they might make common cause to eliminate the need for war. This original incarnation lost steam in the '60s, and was largely dormant by 1987. The new configuration had

---

OK, so my byline read "Laird Schraub." They *almost* got it right.

---





---

## Eschewing the sexist “he” as default pronoun, the magazine first adopted the term “co.”

---

no carryover from the old, yet represented a younger aggregation of community veterans from all over the US and Canada.

Meanwhile, Twin Oaks had grown weary of publishing the magazine, and passed it along to Charles Betterton at Stelle, Illinois in 1984. Unfortunately, it languished there when Stelle, his community, withdrew its financial backing in response to not being allowed to use it as a house organ. Charles, to his credit, insisted that the magazine had an editorial obligation to be ecumenical. As the main administrator, I stepped in and negotiated for FIC to become the publisher of COMMUNITIES in 1992.

Blowing on the coals, we scrambled to publish two issues in 1993, and then hired Diana Christian to become the first Editor under our flag (shoehorning a job interview with her into a spare moment—there weren’t many—during the six-day Celebration of Community in Olympia, Washington in August of that year).

We got the magazine up and running on a regular basis by 1994, and it’s been in steady quarterly production ever since. It was early in FIC’s tenure as publisher (1992-2019) that we adopted the internal moniker “Cmag” to refer to the magazine. “Communities” was just too ambiguous a term in our world.

One of the arcane jobs I undertook was gathering up the scattered repositories of the magazine’s back issues. It was quite the treasure hunt. In addition to what was disgorged from Charles Betterton’s attic in Illinois, there was a dusty stash of several boxes in an obscure corner of Morningstar (one of the residences at Twin Oaks, where Cmag was published before Stelle), plus another four or five boxes of the earliest issues that were ferreted out by Don Hollister in Yellow Springs, Ohio (where the first several issues of the magazine were printed).

In 2005 FIC expanded its mission to encompass Creating Community Where You Are, recognizing that there are only about 100,000 people in the US living in some form of self-identified intentional community, but there may be 100 million in the US who would like a greater sense of community in their lives. Shouldn’t we be serving that audience as well?

In 2006 we decided to update the Cmag subtitle from “A Journal of Cooperative Living” to “Life in Cooperative Culture,” to reinforce this enlargement of mission, and to shed the stuffiness associated with being a “journal.” More substantively, we established the editorial intention to publish at least one article every issue that highlighted efforts to develop a

sense of community independent of commonly held property.

In 2008 Diana Christian stepped down as Editor after a run of 15 years, and, after a two-issue stint by Interim Editor Alyson Ewald, was replaced by Chris Roth, who is still in the saddle today. It’s hard to overestimate the value of that kind of dedication and stability.

## Being the Publisher of Cmag

It was a secret pleasure of mine to be in the role of publisher of a serious (if small circulation) periodical. Although as an undergraduate I did everything I could to avoid writing (talking professors into allowing me to make oral presentations in lieu of turning in papers), as an adult I gradually embraced the identity of writer. In that capacity I authored a Publisher’s Note for nearly every issue during the span 1993-2015.

As is true for many skills, you have to work at writing to get better. With my roles expanding to include author, dedicated blogger, community consultant, group dynamics instructor, and administrator, it got to the point where I’d write something substantive every day. It became both a discipline and a joy.

Here is a smattering of my Cmag highlights from that time:

- Guest editing Issue #97 (in winter of ’97—an alignment of numbers), the Silver Anniversary issue, marking 25 years in service to the movement.

- Being a market maker, in our modest way, in ideas and language. Cmag was among the first publications to wrestle with the challenge of the third person singular pronoun when the gender was unknown. Eschewing the sexist “he,” the magazine first adopted the term “co.” When that didn’t catch on, we switched to “they,” giving up information about number in exchange for gender neutrality (just as we do with second person pronouns).

- There were any number of conversations with authors who were staunch advocates for idiosyncratic punctuation or capitalization. Others plumped for a freer hand with profanity. While we were willing to allow authors some latitude in this regard *with their pieces*, we tried to be consistent with our style rules otherwise. Language needs to be adaptable, yet not *too* flexible. I loved working with that edge.

- There were plenty of times when we had to patiently explain to people that we would not kill an article because it raised critical questions about something they or their group did or supported. So long as we had credible evidence that a thing happened and it was germane to community living, our policy was to let in the light, and readers could decide for themselves what to make of it. Our policy was to give the group a heads up about what we'd be printing, and the opportunity to craft a rebuttal.

## Our Golden Years

After a long run (28 years before the masthead), I stepped down as FIC's main administrator at the end of 2015, and retired from active involvement in the organization—excepting work on the Award Committee (which oversees the nomination and selection of recipients of the Kozeny Communitarian Award, honoring lifetime achievements in promoting community). Geoph Kozeny was a dear friend—we were the same age, both from the Midwest, and we each had fire in the belly for community. For many years he authored a column we featured on the back page of every issue, styled “The Peripatetic Communitarian,” until he reached his final deadline in 2007, succumbing to pancreatic cancer.

While the magazine was never a reliable money-maker (we only experienced a few years in the black), we continued to support its publication as part of the mix of services that FIC aspired to provide. We liked having a magazine to chronicle the development of the Communities Movement, and we liked making the case for the relevancy of intentional community as R&D centers for creating and sustaining cooperative culture. It was an integral part of a three-pronged approach to engaging with the world, through: a) *Communities Directory* and our website ([www.ic.org](http://www.ic.org)), b) a variety of community-focused events; and c) the magazine. While none of these made us rich, we could reach our audience in a variety of ways, and the magazine was an integral part of keeping the light shining.

I grew up in a different era. I listen to baseball games on the radio, and I still read books I can hold in my hand. While I have been blogging since 2007, I largely don't participate in the alternate universes of social media, which I find to be too quick and

too shallow. My work is rooted in more nuanced communication.

Under new leadership, FIC rebranded itself as the Foundation for Intentional Community in 2018. The next year FIC decided to let go of Cmag—both to save money, and because there is a plethora of other channels today for getting the word out. FIC now focuses more on what it can accomplish via electronic and social media.

But Cmag readers and staff saw unique qualities and benefits in the quarterly print/digital magazine not available in other media formats. Following a fundraising campaign to cover the costs of the transition to a new nonprofit (on a tight deadline in late 2019, 100 people contributed a combined \$30K), Cmag is now published by Global Ecovillage Network—United States (GEN-US). With the current issue, GEN-US embarks on its fourth year as publisher; and thanks especially to reader donations, which supplement income from subscriptions, ads, and back issue sales, finances remain steady.

Earlier this year I worked with Rebecca Mesritz to produce an FIC-sponsored podcast about community (episode #9 of *Inside Community*, released in May). As she and I were new to each other—the focus of our conversation was facilitation—she innocently asked if I had ever written anything for Cmag, as it occurred to her that she might cross-promote the podcast and the magazine. I had to laugh.

I casually told her that I had written perhaps 50 articles for Cmag, and she should check with Editor Chris Roth for what she might choose from. It turned out I was wrong. As of last spring I had had 129 articles published in Cmag, and counting<sup>1</sup>. Just a little short of four percent of the total number of articles ever published. Sheesh.

It's simultaneously amazing and humbling to realize that this latest piece will appear in COMMUNITIES #197, the Golden Anniversary issue. We've both lasted longer than I thought we would. 🐦

---

*Laird Schaub relinquished his membership at Sandhill Farm in 2014. After brief stints at Dancing Rabbit (also in Rutledge, Missouri) and living with close friends in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, he moved to Duluth, Minnesota in 2016, where he lives today in an older residential neighborhood with his partner, Susan, and continues his work as a cooperative group consultant and teacher. Find his blog at [communityandconsensus.blogspot.com](http://communityandconsensus.blogspot.com).*

---

1. Editor's Note: This issue brings the total to 134, all listed in the magazine's online index at [gen-us.net/communities-index](http://gen-us.net/communities-index).

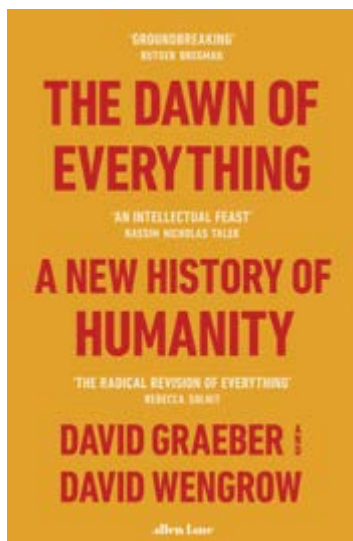


Our policy at Cmag was to let in the light.



Subscribe to COMMUNITIES at [gen-us.net/subscribe](http://gen-us.net/subscribe)

**BASIC, SUPPORTER, SUSTAINER SUBSCRIPTIONS:**  
**PRINT + DIGITAL, US: \$30, \$40, \$50**  
**PRINT + DIGITAL, OUTSIDE US: \$40, \$50, \$60**  
**DIGITAL-ONLY, WORLDWIDE: \$20, \$30, \$40**  
**TO SUBSCRIBE BY MAIL/CHECK, SEE P. 4**



# Coming Home to History

## The Dawn of Everything: A New History of Humanity

*David Graeber and David Wengrow*

Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York, 2021, 704 pages.

This is a long, difficult, fascinating book. I took several months to get through it, reading it in fits and starts, alternately feeling resistant for superficial reasons (its blocky orange cover, its intimidating heft, or elements of its writing style) and deeply intrigued by the fact that it upends the understandings of human social evolution that virtually all of us have grown up with and/or that we may have adopted upon questioning the original narratives we absorbed. Written by an anthropologist and an archaeologist, and benefiting from recent archaeological discoveries as well as anthropological reassessments, *The Dawn of Everything* challenges what almost all of us think we know, whether we have bought into one of the conventional narratives that civilization immerses us in, or whether we have embraced a different version of history.

Most who've been drawn to the worlds of intentional community and cooperative culture may already question the "history as written by the winners" by which our present social order is presented as the best one possible. We may have explored other views, helping us to see the world through a much less culture-centric lens and perhaps leading us to reject the interpretations of history that celebrate our "ascension" to our current precipice while ignoring its pitfalls and the viability of alternatives to it. Over the past several decades, books like *The Great Cosmic Mother* (Monica Sjöo and Barbara Mor), *In the Absence of the Sacred* (Jerry Mander), and *Guns, Germs, and Steel* (Jared Diamond) helped me see the evolution of humanity and our social arrangements differently, suggesting that we are not living in the best of all possible worlds, or the *only* currently possible world, and that we would all do better to return to some of the ancestral and indigenous ways that Western patriarchal culture has done its best to suppress or stamp out. *The Dawn of Everything* does not challenge this aspect of those works.

What it does challenge is the sense of inevitability to the downfall we all may be experiencing, and the idea that better lifeways practiced by people in the past were the result of innocence and mere circumstance rather than of actual choice. It particularly brings to task *Guns, Germs, and Steel*, for, among other things, implying that "guns, germs, and steel" are predestined to win the day. The authors reject linear views of history, and simple stories. Some assertions and assumptions about history are so common in our society (in fact, accepted as "common sense") that we may have never examined them; yet they prove to be seriously flawed when assessed in the light of recent archaeological finds.

Do urbanization, growth of population, and a larger scale necessitate more centralized power and bureaucracy, or can power still remain dispersed? Does a shift from hunting-gathering to agriculture, or the embrace of any new technology, need to be

permanent, and is it an inevitable choice? Does agriculture need to be accompanied by permanent settlement, hoarding of resources, the development of a money economy, war, gross inequality, and restrictions on freedom? Can those things arise independent of agriculture, and also be rejected after being tried out? Is "means of subsistence" the most important way to categorize people and their cultures? Is "trade" the only explanation for the distribution of goods throughout indigenous North America? Are forms of social organization fixed, or a lot more malleable than we are used to imagining (such that a people's wintertime and summertime arrangements may be entirely different, flipping back and forth between "stages" in a supposedly straight-line human developmental history)? And will "schismogenesis" soon become a household word?

Most important of all: Is self-conscious reflection and choice about the direction of society something we've only recently become capable of, if we are even now, or is it possible that the kinds of discussions highlighted in this book have been going on among all peoples since the dawn of time, and sometimes in much more sophisticated ways than they are today? Are we trapped in any of our current choices, and were people ever so trapped as we may think they were in the past?

Through numerous examples the authors illustrate that people have frequently made choices to reject what our cur-



rent narratives imply are inevitable “next steps” in linear social evolution. The authors suggest that those narratives serve to disempower us, whether they are telling us that life is continuously getting better (a clear fallacy, in their opinion and that of anyone whose head is not buried deep in the rapidly-warming sand) or that it’s doomed to always get worse (a “fall from grace” that they also see as not inevitable, and a particularly unfortunate fallacy whose fatalism serves to reinforce the status quo).

People in the past, they suggest, have made choices and followed many alternative pathways. They’ve experimented, changed their minds, changed the direction of their societies, self-corrected in their courses, and engaged in seasonal fluctuations in power relations, social organization, and means of subsistence. By so doing, they’ve flown in the face of our inherited ideas of history and often reversed what we’ve been told are inevitable linear trends—whether those trends are couched in terms of continuous improvement from an original state of life’s being “nasty, brutish, and short,” as per Thomas Hobbes, or as a tragic downfall from an ideal original state, as per Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Both of those overarching stories, the authors assert, are wild oversimplifications; Rousseau has more of their sympathies, but they take a considerably more optimistic view, presenting many examples of people defying this supposed “direction of history,” contradicting the formulae that, whether of Hobbesian or Rousseauan persuasion, most of us have come to accept as truth.

This book is full of extremely valuable information and insight, is amazingly wide in its scope, and contains so many eye-opening moments that they’re almost too much for one book. I read about settlements, societies, and practices, including right here on the North American continent, that I had been wholly ignorant of—and I suspect this will be true for most readers.

At the same time, I found myself longing for a different version of this book, one that does not seem so much like an argumentative “polemic” (in the words of one reviewer), one that is less self-conscious, one that omits speculation that does not add to its “case” (or else more honestly treats it as speculation), one that avoids the weeds entered by putting so much focus on disputing the particulars of previous interpretations of history, and instead simply presents a new one.

There may have been no other way to present this material initially—and the untimely death of David Graeber three weeks after this book’s completion precluded any further revisions anyway, as well as interrupting plans to produce at least three follow-up volumes. But I hope this book will be the basis of other versions—perhaps a Young Adult edition that eliminates some of the academic arguments in favor of the core insights and examples explored, or a graphic narrative version, or a movie—and that it will inspire others to explore this material more and present it in different ways that may be more accessible to a wider range of people.

Currently, however, it’s the best single source available for this information, viewpoint, and set of insights. You will not regret borrowing it from the library—nor renewing it, as I did for nearly three months.

• • •

**H**ow do we know if what we read is true? Footnotes can go only so far. Judging this book by its cover would be ill-advised—but can we find some other way to assess its basic insights, without first becoming expert anthropologists and archaeologists ourselves?

What if, in order to get a perspective on the nature of history and of the power of human choice within it, we mine not archaeological evidence or anthropological studies of past or distant peoples, but instead our own experiences?

Would we find that our lives as individuals and/or as groups start out being “nasty and brutish” in our early years, but then, through increasing control exerted upon us from centralized authority and unstoppable, ever-more-advanced material innovation, become ever-better or at least more secure? Would we find instead that our

happiest times as individuals or as communities were our earliest ones, and that everything in our development since then has been a tragic fall from grace, a tale of increasing misery? Or would we find something much more complex and ultimately hopeful than either of those two scenarios?

Even just considering the first two possibilities raises some questions: How often may we have applied a familiar view of history (whether tending toward Hobbes or Rousseau) to our own lives, and allowed that to limit how we perceive and even how we act in the world? How many people have rejected the idealism of community out-of-hand, having absorbed the pessimistic view of human nature inherent in the Hobbesian narrative? Even among communitarians, how many have imposed that limiting view upon what they see as possible, replicating the same trust-averse paradigms in their groups that are common in the wider society? And at the other end of the spectrum, how many Rousseauan idealists, once hoping to re-enact Eden, have “thrown the baby out with the bathwater” after a negative community experience upon which they have placed the tragic interpretation? Indeed, how many idealists have become cynics through community experiences, simply because the dominant versions of human history have been so one-sided, in one direction or the other, and we are not prepared for the complex, rich, and ultimately empowering reality in between and beyond them?

---

**We have agency  
and our forbears  
did too, though  
we are just  
overcoming our  
ignorance about  
their stories.**

---

A sober assessment of what we've each actually experienced, especially if we've been involved in cooperative culture for a while, will most likely lead us to a different, much more nuanced conclusion about the possibilities of human social organization—and ultimately, of what has been happening throughout human history, although until now most of our narratives have not told us this.

I saw countless parallels between my own experience of community and the insights into history offered in *The Dawn of Everything*. The dominant views of history are deterministic and linear, with large forces at work in the face of which individuals, groups, and even whole societies are seen as powerless. An alternative, much less discussed, more mythic view of history, and indeed of time itself, is purely cyclical (but also, as Graeber and Wengrow point out, not ultimately amenable to change). None of these approaches to history match my own lived experience, although among them, the cyclical view seems more plausible—though also not clearly true, nor verifiable, because we each can live through only a snapshot of time.

Do we actually have choice, as the authors suggest? Perhaps we *are* puppets upon a stage, guided by Fate, but if that is the case, our stories clearly do not go in just one direction, and we at least *appear* to have some choice in the matter of how we live, how we govern ourselves, what modes of living we embrace and what we reject, what we value, how we interact, and numerous other areas about which we make decisions in community. In my own experience, at least within the microcosm of human society that is intentional community, if something is going poorly, that is not the end of the story—we can make different decisions and change direction. We operate within some constraints imposed by the broader society and by physical circumstance, but within those constraints, an almost unimaginably wide range of possibilities exist for how we live together and organize ourselves.

The life story of the group I've been part of longer than any other is anything but a straight line, and neither starts nor

ends “in the pits.” Periods of energy, idealism, and innovation have been followed by periods of disillusionment, near-collapse, and reassessment. Periods of greater community connection and intimacy have been followed by periods of greater interpersonal distance and less community cohesion. Egalitarian governance systems have given way to greater concentrations of authority. The group has come together over shared missions, then entered a period in which our purposes were not as clear. Various forms of technology have been embraced, then sidelined. And after each move in one direction in any of these areas, we've usually moved back in the other direction, sometimes in new ways to match the changing times.

Community living is a matter of continuous readjustment, the result of ongoing discussion and new decisions made each time something seems “out of whack.” New possibilities are always available; no problem needs to remain unaddressed. We experiment a lot, and learn from both “successes” and “failures.” A particular approach to decision-making may work for a while, then fall out of favor. It may come back around several years down the road, perhaps with a new twist. Even particular garden vegetables (kale comes to mind) have waves of popularity followed by periods of disinterest and even disdain.

Not only do things change from year to year, with varying degrees of focus on interpersonal intimacy, outer mission, dispersed or concentrated decision-making, etc., but we go through seasonal cycles and frequent role-shifts. Those who are “in charge” in one area or at one time are in “follower” roles in other areas or at other times. This nearly exactly mirrors the authors' descriptions of societies whose seasonal cycles give the lie to the idea that people progress from one state of “development” and corresponding set of power relations to another in any kind of predetermined, one-directional way. In fact, if our experience is any indicator, choice is always involved, and no social relations or in fact any aspects of our lives about which we can decide are actually set in stone.

Has something led us to believe that people in the past were somehow radically different from us, and were not involved in this process of perpetual discussion, adjustment, change, and learning? If so, the skewed views we've received of history are likely to blame. Graeber's and Wengrow's most important message is that, despite the messages that would tell us otherwise, **we have agency** and our forbears did too, even if we are just overcoming our ignorance about their stories.

*The Dawn of Everything* makes clear that history does not in fact fit into the neat patterns we've been taught about. As new discoveries continue to upend our understandings and contradict much of what we thought we knew, we may come to recognize that people throughout time and throughout the world have made *different* choices, including ones we've been told were impossible. It's a significantly more hopeful view of humans' capacities to self-organize in ways that can serve the common good, and it applies to the present day, in which, as the authors acknowledge, we as a species seem to be “stuck” in huge problems of our own making.

Some of the power of community lies in its suggestion that we are not actually stuck—that together, we can find viable ways forward. Many communitarians know this intuitively, viscerally, and on a practical level, through shared experience in responding to daunting problems confronting their own groups. None of the versions of history we've been taught may seem to correlate with this lived experience, creating the potential for cognitive dissonance and even a devaluing of what we know to be true in our own lives. New histories like *The Dawn of Everything* can help us appreciate that our efforts have more precedent, more relevance, and more potential than we may have recognized, and that we do indeed have agency. In confronting the admittedly unprecedented scale of current challenges to humanity, our hope lies, according to Graeber and Wengrow, in *asserting* that agency, which is not a newfangled invention but a genetic birthright, embedded in our DNA and in the history we are just starting to uncover. 🐦

---

Chris Roth edits COMMUNITIES.



BEACON HILL FRIENDS HOUSE



A **Quaker center** for peace, justice, and community in downtown Boston.

**Online programs** that cultivate community, nurture personal and spiritual deepening, and empower collective action.

Opportunities to live in our **intentional community**.

Connect with us at [bhfh.org](http://bhfh.org)

# ARE YOU READY TO CREATE COOPERATIVE CULTURE?



**THIS IS THE HANDBOOK FOR GROUPS AND TEAMS WHO WANT TO ACHIEVE THEIR MISSION AND BUILD REAL COOPERATION.**

**GET YOUR COPY!**

[ic.org/handbook](http://ic.org/handbook)

**PLUS!** Get \$5 off with the discount code **SHANDBOOK**

## 500 COMMUNITIES PROGRAM

Training the next wave of cohousing professionals



### *Does this sound like you?*

- You possess an entrepreneurial spirit
- You can lead and work collaboratively
- You want to help create many communities

### *Our Program might be for you*

Learn what it takes to develop cohousing with 1:1 guidance from an expert, Katie McCamant.



530-478-1970



[info@cohousing-solutions.com](mailto:info@cohousing-solutions.com)



[www.cohousing-solutions.com](http://www.cohousing-solutions.com)

**REGISTER FOR AN INTRO WEBINAR!**





Caddis PC has been designing cohousing, cooperatives, and eco-village communities, both nationally and internationally, for more than a decade. We take a highly adaptive approach to strategy and design: catering our services to your needs.



We can help you with:

- Site selection
- Site planning & development
- Financial modeling
- Sustainability
- Cohousing workshops
- Community engagement
- Consulting
- Graphic design & marketing
- Conceptual design services
- Building great communities

1521 Easy Rider Lane #102 Boulder, CO 80304  
hello@caddispc.com • 303.443.3629  
www.caddispc.com



# REACH

REACH is our column for all your Classified needs: ads intended to match people looking for communities with communities looking for people, plus ads for events, land, internships, services, books, personals, and more. To place an ad, contact our Advertising Manager, Joyce Bressler, at [ads@gen-us.net](mailto:ads@gen-us.net) or 845-558-4492, or go to [gen-us.net/communities](http://gen-us.net/communities) for more information.

THE REACH DEADLINE FOR ISSUE #198 - Spring 2023 (out in March) is Jan. 31, 2023. Rates: ≤50 words: \$25/issue; ≤100 words: \$50/issue; ≤250 words: \$75/issue. You may pay using a credit or debit card, bank transfer (contact the Advertising Manager), or via check or money order payable to Communities (include all ad info) mailed to Communities, 330 Morgan St., Oberlin, OH 44074.

## COMMUNITIES WITH OPENINGS

COWEETA HERITAGE CENTER AND TALKING ROCK FARM are located in the mountains of Western North Carolina in a beautiful and diverse temperate rainforest. CHC is looking for others who would like to join together to form an Intentional Community embracing the principles of Voluntary Simplicity and Healing the Earth and Each Other. Simply put, we wish "to live simply so that others may simply live." It is a recognition that nature provides us with valuable services and resources that we can use to enrich our lives. Utilizing local resources, appropriate technology, and working cooperatively, we can discover creative ways to meet our needs as "directly and simply as possible." Come join Coweeta and learn how to live lightly on the land and enjoy the Earth's bounty! Contact Coweeta for more info or to schedule a visit!! Contact Paul at [coweeta@gmail.com](mailto:coweeta@gmail.com). Visit Coweeta on the web at [www.coweetaheritagecenter.com](http://www.coweetaheritagecenter.com)

HELP CREATE A NEW ENGLAND COMMUNE. Looking for passionate folks with community living experience to start an income sharing community somewhere with a relatively easy bus/train ride to Boston. I am experienced starting communities and have years of communal living. Interested? Contact me at [moonraven222@gmail.com](mailto:moonraven222@gmail.com)

## SERVICES/OPPORTUNITIES/PRODUCTS

FITCH ARCHITECTURE & COMMUNITY DESIGN is internationally recognized as one of the most experienced firms in cohousing programming and design. Working with over two dozen communities across North America, we have evolved an effective and enjoyable participatory process. Laura Fitch is a resident of Pioneer Valley Cohousing in Amherst, Massachusetts. Her experience as a member helps her to understand the issues facing other cohousing groups and

gives her unique insight into the group dynamics that affect the design process. Laura served on the Cohousing Association of the US board for five years and regularly leads workshops at their conferences. Contact her at 413-549-5799 or [www.facdarchitects.com](http://www.facdarchitects.com).

MEET YOUR ECO-CONSCIOUS, GREEN MATCH ON GREENSINGLES.COM. No superficial swiping. In-Depth Profiles and Amazing Members! Compatibility Percentages, Video Chatting and More. We provide our Members with Fabulous Tools to Meet their Ideal Match. Join the Oldest, Largest, Dating Site for "Green" Singles. Your Success is our Joy and Passion! [www.GreenSingles.com](http://www.GreenSingles.com)

WHY PAY RENT/MORTGAGE PAYMENTS when you can live rent free? We publish 1,000+ property caretaking and house-sitting opportunities, worldwide, each year. We cover all 50 states and overseas. Online subscription: \$29.95/year. Postal subscription: \$34.95/year. Published since 1983. The Caretaker Gazette, 1205 E 31st Street, Austin TX 78722. (206) 462-1818. To learn more, please visit [www.caretaker.org](http://www.caretaker.org).

## PUBLICATIONS, BOOKS, WEBSITES, WORKSHOPS

SAGEWOMAN magazine, celebrating the Goddess in Every Woman, is still going strong after 30 years. WITCHES & PAGANS magazine covers Pagan, Wiccan, Heathen, and Polytheist people, places, and practice. 88 pages, print or digital (PDF). Mention this Communities ad for a free sample. 503-430-8817, PO Box 687, Forest Grove OR 97116. [www.bbimedia.com](http://www.bbimedia.com).

NEW BOOK: TOGETHER WE DECIDE, AN ESSENTIAL GUIDE FOR GOOD GROUP DECISIONS, by Craig Freshley. I'm a professional meeting facilitator and I've lived in a cohousing community for 25 years. Please check out my book. If you are reading this magazine, I wrote it to help you and your group.

To place your ad: [gen-us.net/ads](http://gen-us.net/ads)



**FITCH  
ARCHITECTURE  
&  
COMMUNITY DESIGN**

110 Pulpit Hill Road  
Amherst, MA 01002, USA  
413-549-5799  
[www.facdarchitects.com](http://www.facdarchitects.com)



photo credit: Terri Paul

**ESTABLISHED COHOUSING &  
SUSTAINABLE DESIGN PIONEERS**  
WITH A PROVEN PARTICIPATORY PROCESS



**An enduring presence of  
Peace and Oneness**

Non-residential intentional, multi-generational community offering monastic training for lay persons. Sharing values, promoting physical, mental and spiritual health through meditation, study, ceremony, and service.

*Come and visit one of Southern California's original spiritual communities. Founded in 1973.*

- Permaculture Gardens
- Retreats and Dharma Talks
- Comprehensive Metaphysical Libraries
  - Yoga and Bhagavad Gita Study
  - Spiritual Astrology
- Tara Visualization and Chanting
- Creative Expression through the Arts


Contact Ona at [pranava242@gmail.com](mailto:pranava242@gmail.com) for more information or to schedule a visit.



Learn more at: [ic.org/directory/morningland-monastery/](http://ic.org/directory/morningland-monastery/)

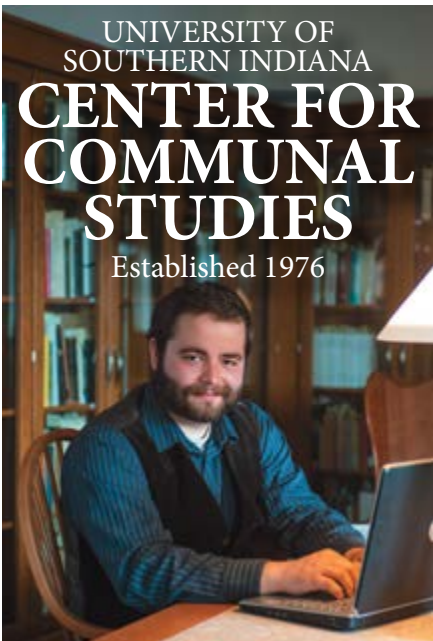
# JOIN FORMING INTENTIONAL COMMUNITY

embracing the principles  
of Voluntary Simplicity



**Coweeta Heritage Center  
and Talking Rock Farm**  
Located in the mountains  
of Western North Carolina

Contact Paul at [coweeta@gmail.com](mailto:coweeta@gmail.com)  
for more information or to schedule a visit  
[www.coweetaheritagecenter.com](http://www.coweetaheritagecenter.com)



UNIVERSITY OF  
SOUTHERN INDIANA  
**CENTER FOR  
COMMUNAL  
STUDIES**  
Established 1976

The Center for Communal Studies (CCS) is a clearinghouse for information and research on communal groups worldwide, past and present. Located on the campus of the University of Southern Indiana in Evansville.

**ARCHIVAL RESEARCH COLLECTION**

We invite researchers to use the Center's Collection of primary and secondary materials on more than 600 historic and contemporary communes. The Collection includes over 10,000 images and a reading room.

Visit: [www.usi.edu/library/university-archives-and-special-collections](http://www.usi.edu/library/university-archives-and-special-collections).  
Email the archivist: [jagreene@usi.edu](mailto:jagreene@usi.edu).

**REGIONAL RESEARCH**

The Center is part of a rich array of historic communal resources within a 30-mile radius of Evansville that includes the Harmonist and Owenite village of New Harmony, Indiana. The Center sponsors lectures, conferences and exhibits, and has an abundance of programming resources.

Visit: [www.usi.edu/liberal-arts/communal.center](http://www.usi.edu/liberal-arts/communal.center)

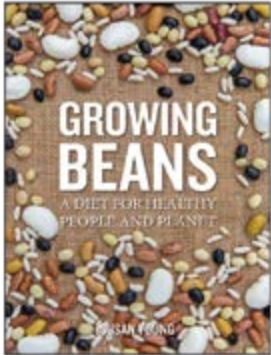
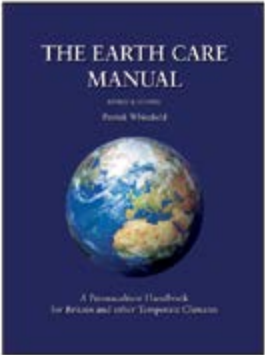
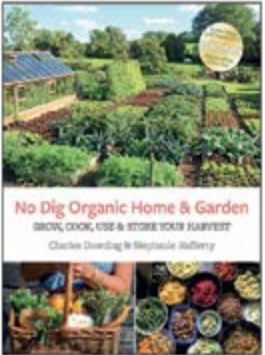
**CENTER PRIZES AND RESEARCH TRAVEL GRANT**

The Center annually awards cash prizes for the best student papers on historic or contemporary communal groups, intentional communities, and utopias. Deadline for submission is 1 March. The Center also annually awards a Research Travel Grant to fund research in our Collection. Applications are due by 1 May.

**For information contact:**  
**812-465-1656**  
or Silvia Rode at [sarode@usi.edu](mailto:sarode@usi.edu)

# Communities Readers' Offer

**30% OFF** the RRP of all books from our friends  
at the award winning Permanent Publications

Quote **PP30** at the checkout

[www.chelseagreen.com/publisher/permanent-publications/](http://www.chelseagreen.com/publisher/permanent-publications/)



## LOS ANGELES ECOVILLAGE INSTITUTE\*

Re-inventing how we live in the city since 1993

We are an intensely urban sustainable neighborhood-in-process demonstrating higher quality living at lower environmental impacts

- education • training • research
- workshops • public talks
- tours • guest stays
- revolving loan fund



[www.laecovillage.org](http://www.laecovillage.org) • [lois@ic.org](mailto:lois@ic.org)

\*a project of CRSP, a 501.c.3 nonprofit organization & developer of the Los Angeles Ecovillage

## QUAKER CURIOUS?

Learn more about modern Friends at [Quaker.org](http://Quaker.org)

### QUAKER.ORG

#### What Quakers Believe

Quakers believe in a God who is not a person, but a power that is present in all things. We believe in the inner light, the ability of each person to connect with God and to live a life of peace and justice. We believe in the importance of the individual and the power of the community. We believe in the importance of the individual and the power of the community. We believe in the importance of the individual and the power of the community.



Watch short video interviews at [QuakerSpeak.com](http://QuakerSpeak.com)



Or dive deep into Friends Publishing with daily, weekly, and monthly *Friends Journal* articles in print and online at [Friendsjournal.org](http://Friendsjournal.org)



Are you looking for a community...



- ...that's about connecting people to each other and our natural environment?
- ...that's on a university campus?
- ...that's multi-generational and inclusive?
- ...that respects everyone's voice and time?

### Join us at Rachel Carson EcoVillage!

A half-hour from downtown Pittsburgh in beautiful western Pennsylvania.

We're moving in next year - some units are available.

[www.rachelcarsonecovillage.org](http://www.rachelcarsonecovillage.org) - 412-441-2948



Do you know that there are nearly one thousand intentional communities just in the United States?

## Check out the online hub for intentional communities!

Explore our online directory, download free resources, join virtual workshops and more.



Come visit us at

[ic.org/cmag](http://ic.org/cmag)



A Legacy of Justice and Peace



This Historic Moment



Fellowship of Reconciliation USA  
[forusa.org](http://forusa.org)

## ARE YOU READY FOR A NEW LIFESTYLE?

In our active adult cohousing community you:

- Know your neighbors
- Live in an eco friendly environment
- Often eat together and share resources
- Enjoy easy access to shops and trails
- Thrive in a self-managed community



Join us in our next adventure  
**WOLF CREEK LODGE**  
 in Grass Valley, CA  
[www.wolfcreeklodge.org](http://www.wolfcreeklodge.org)  
 800.558.3775



- Own a rental cabin on a beautiful NH lake near Dartmouth College
- Join The Pinnacle Project community
- Swimming, Boating, Fishing, Gardens, Trails, Weddings, Retreats, Family Reunions
- LochLymeLodge.com, a partner of Pinnacle Cohousing

**LOCH LYME LODGE** 



**10 years and many dreams later...**

River Song Cohousing in Eugene OR goes live in November with 28 units built, 28 sold! Come visit when you get a chance and see if you'd like to join our waitlist for future available units.

[riversongcohousing.org](http://riversongcohousing.org)



*Looking for inspiration, skills, connection and community?  
 Learning Adventures with Earthaven Ecovillage!*

- In-person or virtual **tours**
- Online **workshops**
- In-person **classes**



*See and experience:*  
 Food production in action  
 Regenerative systems in practice  
 Community living on a personal level

Earthaven Ecovillage's  
**SOIL** 

[School of Integrated Living.org](http://SchoolofIntegratedLiving.org)

## REMEMBERING LINA

(continued from p. 64)



Alpha member), the two comprised Alpha Institute, a subsidiary of the community that offered consensus training and professional facilitation. In addition to steady work among cooperative groups in Ecotopia, for a number of years they were the consensus trainers of choice for Waldorf schools across the breadth of North America.

The occasion of Caroline's passing weaves together a number of threads for me. Lysbeth was the person who broke the news to me, and I have a fond memory of my first gig as an outside facilitator in December 1987, when Lysbeth and I partnered to assist Appletree, a fledgling income-sharing community in Cottage Grove, Oregon. Caroline helped us plan the engagement—even pulling out a packet of precious frozen blueberries from Alpha's larder, so that we could offer Appletree members a memorable dessert as part of our work together. For Caroline, good food and good dynamics went hand in hand, and it was a signature element of her penchant for interweaving engagement and conviviality.

### Caroline as Mentor

Caroline was both a friend and a Friend, who was able to retain the spirit of Quaker consensus without necessarily defining it as a pathway to knowing the Divine. Under her deft touch, it was also developed as a pathway to divine what was best for the group, which was the field in which she and I walked together.

Among the lessons I absorbed from Caroline was the preciousness of facilitator neutrality, without lapsing into passivity. It is an art knowing when you've heard enough from the group to be able to float a proposal that might balance the whole, and facilitators need to be brave as well as disinterested.

Caroline taught me how to read a meeting—which is a subtle combination of listening deeply to statements, while at the same time tracking the energies that lie beneath and around the words. (Neither of which, BTW, is enhanced by today's increasing reliance on social media, which has significantly degraded both attention spans and the ability of people to hear accurately. Impatience and consensus don't play well together.)

As a master facilitator she was a rock. When managing large groups (100+), which she did on a number of occasions in the height of her career, she had legendary stamina (and erect posture), and was able to redirect obstreperous behavior simply through her presence, the judicious use of silence, and a raised eyebrow. When the number of participants exceeded her capacity to track each person, she learned to scan sections of the audience for discordant energy, following that up with individual scrutiny as needed.

She taught me how to toggle one's attention when facilitating, alternating lightly between what was being said (and how that applied to the topic at hand), and where the energy was trending—two things that are not always aligned, yet need to be to reach the promised land.

Based on her genteel upbringing, it was hard for Caroline to express or to work directly with strong emotions—especially negative ones—which is something I've come to view as an essential skill as a consultant/facilitator working with cooperative groups. To be sure, she understood fully when feelings were in play, but considered it unpleasant, invasive, or ill-bred to expose them in group. Thus, she was never comfortable sailing close to the winds of distress.

Caroline's gifts were overwhelmingly offered orally and in person. She left behind a paucity of written material—very few articles or reports. If she wanted to communicate, she would dictate an email, pick up the phone, or write a letter (remember when people used to do that?). To my knowledge she didn't participate in social media at all, which, as you might imagine, contributed significantly to her disappearing from the radar of folks in need of what she had to offer the last couple decades.

While it's my sense that there is every bit as much need today as there ever was for what Caroline could teach, in the 21st century she had essentially outlived the ability to attract clients, given the limitations on how she functioned. Contemporary marketing had left her behind—making it all the more important for me to honor my professional debt to her in this eulogy.

For two decades (1988-2008) Caroline was a regular participant in FIC, which met semi-annually for three-to-four days at a time to discuss strategy and reset the gyroscope. Caroline was at the center of the wheel and a significant voice in how the organization evolved. For many years the two of us made a point of carving out one evening at each gathering to go out to a local restaurant for dinner. For three hours it would just be the two of us—catching up, musing, and strategizing about the road ahead.

### Caroline as Communitarian

I consider Alpha to be one of the most beautifully sited communities I have ever seen, nestled into a finger valley of Oregon's Coast Range. Bordered on two sides by



BLM land and Forest Service property, it even features a babbling stream that feeds into Deadwood Creek and is home to spawning salmon.

Many years before the community landed there, Alpha was the site of an early post office, when European settlers first populated the Willamette Valley. Interestingly, operating a rural mail route has been a mainstay of Alpha's balance sheet, offering dependable income in an otherwise uncertain backwater economy. (While Alpha-Bit was a solid success when it came to local relations, it was never a profit center.)

Caroline was devoted to Jim, her husband of many years. He grew up in Mississippi and shared her sharp intellect, political savvy, progressive outlook, love of language, and the discipline of speaking with a civil tongue (a diminishing art these days). He worked as a newspaperman, and would recreationally edit menus while awaiting service at restaurants. When possible, they'd attend live theater and symphony concerts, especially the annual Oregon Bach Festival in Eugene. He predeceased her by nine years.

In 2008, while Jim was still with us, I took the train to Oregon following my niece's wedding in San Antonio to attend Lina's 80th birthday bash at Alpha Farm. It was a joy to witness firsthand the appreciation of so many people whose lives she had touched—both in the community and among the Deadwood neighborhood. (I don't believe I've ever cooked so much fresh asparagus in my life.)

Caroline was also stubborn—especially when it came to Alpha. She cared deeply about her vision that the community be a sanctuary of sanity and a beacon of light in times of darkness. She was loath to delegate significant authority without her oversight. She insisted on a complex olio of social justice, hospitality, environmental consciousness, and graciousness—all of which was both inspiring and exasperating for those who sometimes wanted to balance things differently...especially the budget.

Impressively, Caroline lived to celebrate Alpha's golden anniversary. She was there for every one of the past 50 years, and it's a monumental testament to dedication and service that very few can claim.

Goodbye Lina, my mentor and friend. Please know that I will continue my grieving by baking a cherry pie, with Montmorencies harvested from a neighbor's backyard, topped with locally churned vanilla ice cream (nothing low fat about it)—all of which I know would make you smile. 🐦

---

*Former Executive Secretary of the Foundation for Intentional Community, and a member for four decades of Sandhill Farm (Rutledge, Missouri), which he cofounded in 1974, Laird Schaub moved to Duluth, Minnesota in 2016, where he lives today with his partner, Susan, and continues his work as a cooperative group consultant and teacher. Find his many past articles in COMMUNITIES listed at [gen-us.net/communities-index](http://gen-us.net/communities-index), and his regular blog posts at [communityandconsensus.blogspot.com](http://communityandconsensus.blogspot.com) (where a version of this eulogy appeared on August 17, 2022 at [communityandconsensus.blogspot.com/2022/08/remembering-lina.html](http://communityandconsensus.blogspot.com/2022/08/remembering-lina.html)).*



## Diana Leafe Christian 10-Week Sociocracy Training

Next online training, Sundays, midday

**Jan 8 – Mar 19, 2023**

• Pacific 10am-12:30pm • Mountain 11am - 1:30pm  
• Central 12 - 2:30pm • Eastern, 1-3:30 pm

**“I love this course. Who knew governance could be so fun!”**

—Jeff Conklin, Riversong Cohousing,  
Eugene, Oregon

**“I love how Diana presents her Sociocracy Course! She's super-clear, organized, has incredibly thorough preparation, and she's so down to earth, fun, engaging, and easy to connect with.”**

—Phoenix Robbins, Aptos Beloved  
Community, California

**“I highly recommend this course for effective, transparent, non-hierarchical governance and decision-making. In learning and using Sociocracy our group got a huge payoff — better decisions, a high level of engagement, and meetings that are both more productive AND fun!”**

—S. Denise Henrikson, ecoTHRIVE  
Housing, Seattle, Washington

**“Our group felt really inspired by your informative, empowering, and inspiring Sociocracy course.**

**Much appreciation and gratitude to you and your wonderful Assistant Teachers.**

—Angela Faneuf, Blue Hill  
Cooperative EcoVillage, Maine

\$275-\$475 Regular Price  
DISCOUNTS: Early Bird, Second-Person,  
& Five-Person Discounts 'til Dec 15

More Info:

[www.DianaLeafeChristian.org](http://www.DianaLeafeChristian.org)  
To Register: [diana@ic.org](mailto:diana@ic.org)

# Remembering Lina

By Laird Schaub



Photos by Kate Harnedy, katephoto.com @katephoto

**M**y friend and mentor, Caroline Estes, died July 13, 2022, passing peacefully after four months in hospice. She was 94 and had lived a full and impactful life that touched me deeply.

We first met in the spring of 1987. I had taken Amtrak's Empire Builder from Chicago to Oregon, fresh from the first board meeting of the newly reconstituted Fellowship for Intentional Community (FIC) at Stelle, Illinois. I caught up with Caroline for a cup of coffee at Alpha-Bit, the magical bookstore/cafe/art gallery that her community, Alpha Farm, operated in Mapleton—a wide spot in the road between Eugene and Florence, on the sinuous banks of the Siuslaw River (of *Once a Great Notion* fame).

I had set up the rendezvous both to put a face to the name, and to fill her in on what had happened at the seminal FIC gathering. She had a reputation as a tour de force as a community networker in the Pacific Northwest, and I aspired to strengthen connections with communities on the West Coast. As an added incentive, Alpha Farm was an income-sharing community—just like my community, Sandhill Farm—and there weren't many of us around with whom to talk shop.

We clicked immediately, nattering nonstop for a couple hours, pausing only to inhale and refill our coffee cups. (I knew

right away I was in the right place because Alpha-Bit served half-and-half in a small pitcher.)

She spent her early childhood in a privileged family in Texas, before moving to California at the age of 10. As an adult she became a Quaker, which was the grounding for her understanding of consensus. Her nickname as a child was Lina, and I am invoking that term of endearment in this remembrance.

## Caroline as Grandmother of Secular Consensus

We didn't meet face-to-face until she was 57 and already well established at Alpha (15 years after she helped found the community in 1972). By then she had already worked to adapt consensus from its distinctive use as a form of worship in Quaker Meetings into a practice designed to meet the needs of decision-making in community settings, whether the group was spiritually focused or not. In response to requests to share her methods, Caroline had developed a five-day consensus and facilitation training, and I eagerly signed up for the next round. It came at just the right time for me. I knew enough about cooperative group dynamics to have a slew of questions, but wasn't so settled in my ways that I couldn't shift my thinking or practice.

Together with her protégé, Lysbeth Borie (also a long-time  
(continued on p. 62)

Creating a More Regenerative Future



FIND OUT MORE!

# LOST VALLEY

EDUCATION CENTER

DEXTER, OREGON

## INTERNSHIPS



EXPERIENCE  
LIVING IN A  
COMMUNITY

—

Lost Valley's internship is a 3-month immersive learning experience where participants have the opportunity to learn and work alongside some of the Pacific Northwest's finest systems thinkers. This is a great option for you if you are in a transitional or learning period and are looking to make like-minded friends, develop marketable skills and experience living in community. Food and lodging included.

## PERMACULTURE EDUCATION



HELP CREATE A  
REGENERATIVE  
FUTURE

—

We educate youth and adults in the practical application of sustainable living. We take a holistic approach to sustainability. Our Permaculture Design Certificate, immersive Holistic Sustainability Semester, Social Forestry Camp, youth learning adventures, and visitor education program offer participants a unique learning experience within our aspiring Ecovillage.

## RESIDENCY



EXPLORE A  
HOLISTIC LIFE  
PATH

—

Community can teach us to care for and respect one another, communicate compassionately, make decisions together, and to see our individual needs in the context of the whole, while also reducing resource use through sharing. Staff and students live in community in apartments, cabins, yurts, and tiny homes. Sociocratic decision-making, shared meals, and activities are a regular part of life at Lost Valley!

Contact: [admissions@lostvalley.org](mailto:admissions@lostvalley.org)



## VISION #2:

# One Major Benefactor (or a Team of Several) Could Make COMMUNITIES Free to the World

(See [page 4](#) for background to this vision, and [page 1](#) for vision #1.)

**F**inding one major benefactor (or a team of them) able and willing to donate a total of **\$30,000 per year** would make it possible to make **all back and current issues of COMMUNITIES available for free viewing and download to everyone in the world with an internet connection**—in just a few clicks, directly from our site. Digital subscriptions via SimpleCirc (including reminder emails each time a new issue is available) would also become free to everyone who wanted one. This would expand our potential readership beyond the several thousand who currently have easy instant access to COMMUNITIES to the billions of people who would have that under this arrangement. Our reach would expand dramatically, far beyond how that amount of money compares to our current yearly budget.

Could you help make this vision a reality? And/or do you know others who might be able to? Can you help us find them? We are convinced this vision is a viable possibility. We know how much money is out there waiting to find good use (although most of it is not held by those currently living in the ways depicted in COMMUNITIES).

All benefits would flow to these new readers—while staff would also be assured stability in their current very modest compensation levels, and satisfaction in knowing that the potential effects of their efforts in creating the magazine were being magnified hundreds-fold, thousands-fold, or even millions-fold. In an age when \$30,000 is often spent without thinking on a private nonessential luxury, we know that it could equally eas-

ily be spent on a project that would bring essential resources for cooperative change within easy reach of the two-thirds (and growing) of the world's population that currently has internet access.

We believe the skills, tools, and insights shared in COMMUNITIES deserve to be shared with everyone, and that those with means to make this happen would have greater impact by supporting this project than by almost any other way that money could be spent. A \$30,000 donation per year would assure that we have a sustainable annual budget without the need to charge for digital subscriptions at all, and would make us less reliant on print subscriptions and extra donations to exist. We would still offer print subscriptions, and print subscribers would still cover those costs. That option would continue to be available to new readers (who might discover us through reading us digitally for free online) as well. But COMMUNITIES could travel far beyond the print readers, and independent of income from them. The generosity of a benefactor or benefactor team at this level would be able to flow outwards to everyone who can benefit from it.

**If you want to contribute to this project in any way—if you are potentially *the* benefactor who can make it happen, if you'd like to be part of a group of them, or if you have connections to people who would be happy to make it possible—please let us know.** You can email Chris at [editor@gen-us.net](mailto:editor@gen-us.net), or text or call 541-335-1566, or write COMMUNITIES, c/o 330 Morgan St., Oberlin, OH 44074. **We hope to hear from you!**

