

## **Redemption and Unity**

The Western culture has a long history of willingly harming others for self-benefit and ignoring the suffering it has caused. Western history opens with the theft of land from the Indigenous people by European colonialists and their subsequent efforts to destroy the Indigenous culture. The great crimes against life continued with the theft of labor from kidnapped Africans who the white colonialists enslaved to extract wealth from the land they stole. The abominations of Western culture continue today through its willingness to destroy all life and the Earth for profit.

The culture has come up with many wrong views to justify what it has done and does. The hierarchy of white exceptionalism puts white rich men on top and other life forms and the Earth at the bottom. Western capitalism only values the Earth and other life for their potential of wealth accumulation. The culture denies the sacredness of life and the Earth and believes that the power of human reasoning exceeds that of any god.

Through globalization of trade and ongoing colonialism, Western culture now plagues the world. Yet, those of us born in the United States live in the heart of the monster. Living its ways feels normal. Handfuls of people have resisted. Despite the best efforts of many, we have found no cure for Western culture. It adapts by coopting, monetizing, or trivializing resistance.

The monster has persisted through the centuries because one generation of white people pass on their beliefs and attitudes to the next. We grow up in families that teach us to accept the wrong views as reality and how to willingly harm others for self-benefit and ignore the suffering we cause. Learning how to live like monsters continues throughout our lives. Growing up, we get hooked on money and spend the rest of our lives getting our money fixes regardless of the harm it causes others. Upon entering the world as an adult, we find an alignment between what our families taught and how Western culture works.

Those who abhor what Western culture has done feel impelled to fix or overthrow it. We deserve applause for our good intentions, but we delude ourselves if we believe we can do either. We do not have the capacities or power to change what kills the Earth Interbeing. The monster would easily see us coming after it and swat us away. In the process, we will have become monsters ourselves in practicing hate, anger, violence, and ignoring the suffering we cause.

However, we do have the responsibility to undo the wrong-doings of our ancestors from which we have benefitted. We can view the Western culture as a generational karma formed by white colonizers practicing land theft, genocide, slavery, species extinction, and Earth destruction. We as a culture have never atoned for these past and ongoing wrong-doings. We may connect the wrong-doings of our ancestors with the current suffering their crimes caused, but we resist connecting ourselves to our ancestors' crimes and refrain from taking responsibility for the suffering caused by them.

Our ancestors' crimes live in us and through us. Their unredeemed wrong-doings continue as our wrong-doings. Individuals may die, but their crimes against life and the Earth, their beliefs and attitudes continue to live within us. To the extent that we still benefit from our ancestral crimes, we have the total responsibility for setting right what our ancestors have spoiled by giving the land back to the life already inhabiting it, paying for labor stolen, and giving back to the Earth Interbeing for what we have spoiled.

The profit-driven culture will never do this. We will have to grow our own culture for us to remedy the wrong-doings of our ancestors. That new culture begins with each of us making ourselves

responsible for the mistakes of our parents, our ancestors. We choose to live lives that correct the degeneracy of our forebearers.

We vow to further life on Earth by adhering to the sacred ways and values. We vow to compassionately respond to the suffering of others. We vow to remove from our lives the ways we harm others, life, and the Earth.

To support our vows we, we cultivate views opposite to those of Western culture. We know the sacred and the sacredness of all life and the Earth. We know the equality of all life because of our shared sacredness. We have the purpose to further life on Earth with the sacred ways and values. We know the limits of our knowledge and our need to learn from others, life, the Earth, and the sacred how to live on Earth with other beings in ways that benefit all.

Redemption comes from living our vows. Our task seems impossible and the obstacles impassable. Our resistance to giving up all the benefits and privileges derived from the crimes of our ancestor proves the most difficult to overcome. We require a great resolve to bite through our deep enmeshment with the benefits we get from harming others. But we can do it if we take one bite at a time. We self-discipline.

We have the power to say no, to distance ourselves from what harms, to learn how to live with other beings on Earth in ways that benefit all. Nothing stops us from not harming the Earth and others except ourselves.

Those who do not want to discipline themselves to stop harming others and the Earth do not have a sacred path and live their harmful lives accordingly, separate and apart from the sacred and Earth Interbeing. By remaining monsters, they shape their own downfall along with the collapse of the culture that parasitizes life and the Earth.

Those on the path of the sacred Earth Interbeing make the sacrifice of working hard to remove the ways we harm and align our lives with the sacred ways and values. By so doing, we further life on Earth as we have removed ourselves from the Western ways of harming.

At the beginning of the sacred path of the Earth Interbeing, the old rules we have learned no longer apply, but we do not know the ways of the Earth Interbeing. We open to instruction from our inner sacred and from those we oppressed. Through our receptivity to the sacred ways and values, we become one with the sacred and the Earth Interbeing. We learn how to interbe from other interbeings.

By entering the flow of the sacred path, we deliver ourselves from the domination of a dying culture. For life to continue on Earth, we learn to live in balance and harmony with the Earth Interbeing. By making amends for our ancestors' crimes, we move to overcome our separation from the people harmed by these crimes and enter solidarity with them. By having an inner unity with the Earth Interbeing, we redeem ourselves and our ancestors . \

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