

ANCESTRALLY LINKED “MUNDANE SACRED DAILYNESS”
by Risé D. Jones, sermon, Pacific School of Religion, 11/02/21

My Confession

I have a confession

Sometimes I take refuge in mundane tasks

No, not in the – everything we do is a spiritual act,

So, we are called to mindfully attend to the beauty of each sacred moment

No, rather: a “shhhhhh” let me hide out here

Among the piles and files, the stacks and checklists

Because it’s safe here, I feel safe here, I know “this.”

Now, this is contrary to the pop psychology that runs through my daily feed
and says that each morning I should wake up energized and alive with intentions towards that
which I love, towards that which I am committed, towards that to which I am called

And all too often, as I take this morning scroll,

the only thing that gets me moving is that urgent/ASAP email requesting that one thing that I
most certainly overpromised and for which I quite predictably am underdelivering

But there are greater things in my heart

Greater calls towards justice and liberation

And yet, the greater things in my heart

The greater calls towards justice and liberation

That urge and pull

Are, well, just too big – just too, too big

And hard

And while compelling, complicated

Far too insurmountable

And after all, there were already Harriets and Fannies and Idas and Sojourners, great justice
ancestors

“Greatness” personified – fighting great fights, struggling in the noble struggle

How can I – is this line of legacy, strength and power even hope to be an iteration

with the smallness of my reach and of my voice

The Urge

But sometimes,

I feel just like the prolific poet of the Black Renaissance, Georgia Douglas Johnson, as she writes of her wishes,

“I'm tired of pacing the petty round of the ring of the thing I know--

I want to stand on the daylight's edge and see where the sunsets go.

I want to sail on a swallow's tail and peep through the sky's blue glass.

I want to see if the dreams in me shall perish or come to pass.

I want to look through the moon's pale crook and gaze on the moon-man's face.

I want to keep all the tears I weep and sail to some unknown place.”

The Inspiration

And so, with this urge embedded in my heart, I turn to adrienne maree brown and how she draws on nature to develop my own emergent strategy.

In her book, *Emergent Strategy*, brown shares her definitions and observations of iteration.

Iteration or iterative processes involve repetition

Oxford Languages furthers that - iteration through strategic repetition allows one to “obtain[ing] suc/ces/sive/ly closer approximations to the solution of a problem.”

As Adrienne continues, “Nothing is wasted, or a failure. Emergence is a system that makes use of everything in the iterative process....” (14)

Is there a way to understand and move in concert in, through, and with our divine creative connection and with the fullest expressions of iteration in our march and movement towards liberation?

adrienne maree brown notes that “transformation doesn’t happen in a [humanly perceptibly]¹ way” but rather through “iterative cycles” – cycles, convergences, explosions (105) through circles and spirals and arcs

drawing our own attention to **our** place in the iterative cycle (105)

drawing our attention to the Creator’s arcs found in nature

The Arcs and Iterations in Social Justice Work

With this understanding of the natural iteration of things, the nature arc of things,

I too can reach back and seek my ancestors’ strength, wisdom, and courage in understanding and actualizing the beautiful and mystical convergence long acknowledged in the liberative pursuit.

As Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. reminds us, “We shall overcome because the arc of the moral universe is long but it bends toward justice.” (National Cathedral, 1968)

Our moral universe, like nature, bends and it bends towards justice.

The Reflection

And so, during this time of consideration of our connection to our ancestral roots as expressed through various faiths, religions and cultural practices:

What may I, may we all seek from our ancestors in our social justice efforts?

I don’t think I have the courage of the Harriets and Fannies and the Idas and Sojourners.

And I so easily retreat to my fortress of the mundane, the insignificant, the small.

Even in writing this offering, feelings of anguish and angst arise in my body

And when I reach for my ancestors I feel **their** anguish, pain, and trauma – perhaps, speaking to the things, the patterns, that I should leave behind in my own justice iterations.

For help, I turn to My Grandmother’s Hands by Res/maa Meh/na/kem who offers as a mending pathway, practices that attend to the body as much as to the spirit. I cling to the braiding of hair which can sooth pain and evoke healing remembrances.

¹ *My words*

And so, in my imaginative mind and in my open heart:
I sit at my mother's feet as she braids my hair,
As she sits at her mother's feet and she braids her hair,
As she sits at her mother's feet and she braids her hair,
As she, as they weave beautiful iterative arcs
Over and under and over and under
Gathering the parts, crossing strands
Holding on to what was created before, continuing to move forward
Nothing is wasted (ref.14), everything is taken up
Making straighter ways
Pulling at the roots, gathering from the sides, making adaptations along the way for curves and
thickness and even tender headed vulnerabilities
Realized and fortified by re/pe/ti/tions of over and under, over and under
Soothed and comforted in the chain of creation

We are made readied and are ready with a crown of braids

Maya Angelou in her poem "Still I Rise" concludes: "Bringing the gifts that my ancestors gave. I
am the dream and the hope of the slave...."

Over and under waters
Over and under fields
Over and under roads
Over and under promise
Over and under

The Throughline

And what is the through line to this arc?

What is repeated for each step, each generation, each triumph, each sacrifice?

Psalm 136: The merciful lovingkindness of the Lord has no end.

There are no limits to the Love of God.

The steadfast love of the Divine endures forever.

Over and under, over and under, over and under....

My mother's mother's mother

Over and under, over and under

My mother's mother

Over and under, over and under

My mother

Over and under, over and under

And me

Over and under, over and under

The Creator's steadfast love endures forever.

And when I reach for the ones that sit at my feet and continue the patterns of over and under
I realize that / like all of nature

We are expansive in our divine connection

In our co-creation with the Creator

In our ancestral links and legacy promise

The Invitation

brown asks, "How can we, future ancestors, align ourselves with the most resilient practices of emergence as a species?" (14)

We can use this question as an invitation as we seek to shape change.

We are timeless, we are boundless, we are connected

We are not bound by individual time, reach, and activity

In and through our ancestral and divine connections **we can** reap and sow and
rest and repair and, in our iterations, **we can** decide what to retain and what to
discard

With and through love

Brown offers, "We would see that there's no such thing as a blank canvas, an empty land or a
new idea – but everywhere there is complex, ancient, fertile ground of potential." (10)

We can "harvest[ing] lessons and apply[ing] them to future iterations of the work." (246)

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In response to Sufi poet Hafiz's probe, "How do I listen to others? As if everyone were my Teacher, speaking to me (Her) cherished last words" Adrienne Maree Brown says that she listens with all of her senses "as if the whole of the universe might exist just to teach me more about love."

And as she meditates on love, she remarks that she is connected "to the part of herself that is divine, aligned with the universe, and the place within herself where she can be a conduit for spiritual truth....."

She continues, "Imagine then, the power when I align with the universe. Nothing is required of me more than being, and reacting...creating who we must become, and within that who I must become." (10,11)

How do you locate your connection to these iterative and ancestral arcs towards justice?

You may through words

You may through works

Some may through walks

Some may through stands

Some may through every day, creative acts of love that turn into beautiful and glorious crowns

During these times of ancestral remembrance,

We are invited to be released from our smallness to join in the grand iterative cycle towards liberation

Which is complicated and shaped

by triumph and failure

Sacrifice and abundance

Lament and joy

But always propelled forward by an enduring, undying, unending, forever love

Adrienne Maree Brown writes, "Our generation must walk the spiritual path that is available to us only in this time, with its own unique combination of wisdom and creation." (12)

Writing in her book of essays, *In Search of Our Mother's Gardens*, Alice Walker writes of her own process of “gathering up the historical and psychological threads of the life [her] ancestors lived” and feeling “ancient spirits, all very happy to see me consulting and acknowledging them, and eager to let me know, through the joy of their presence, that, indeed, **I am not alone.**”

Let us gain renewed focus as inspired by Hebrews 12:1:

“Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles.

And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.”

My own works which may be temporally small and seemingly insignificant are connected in an unbroken circle through divine, beautiful non-linear iterations –

And although, we may still occasionally shrink ---

when we are ready and made ready with beautiful crown of braids

Bound by love

May we may step out and into the liberative processional

with just a little more courage, hope, perseverance, and promise

Putting aside the mundane and striving for the momentous and grandeur in the small,

in the iterations

moving towards justice, moving towards freedom, moving toward the work for which we are called.

Amen.