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# Critical Embodied Praxis for Social Justice and Peace Educators: a story of personal transformation through analysis of my Jewish and settler identities

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CRITICAL EMBODIED PRAXIS FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE AND PEACE EDUCATORS:  
A STORY OF PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION THROUGH ANALYSIS OF  
MY JEWISH AND SETTLER IDENTITIES

Cara Michelle Silverberg

A Training Course-Linked Capstone submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a  
Master of Arts in Peacebuilding and Conflict Transformation  
at SIT Graduate Institute in Brattleboro, Vermont, USA

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# CRITICAL EMBODIED PRAXIS FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE AND PEACE EDUCATORS

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Student Name: Cara Michelle Silverberg

Date: May 6, 2019

**Dedication**

In recognition of the Abenaki, Nipmuc, and Pocumtuck peoples, within whose traditional territories I live, work, study, and write.

With gratitude for my teachers, ancestors, and the many beings who have taught me to trust the wisdom of my body.

To all those whose courage and resilience keeps alive the fires of cultural memory and embodied knowing from generation to generation.

## CRITICAL EMBODIED PRAXIS FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE AND PEACE EDUCATORS

*“History, as nearly no one seems to know, is not merely something to be read. And it does not refer merely, or even principally, to the past. On the contrary, the great force of history comes from the fact that we carry it within us, are unconsciously controlled by it in many ways, and history is literally present in all that we do. It could scarcely be otherwise, since it is to history that we owe our frames of reference, our identities, and our aspirations.” James Baldwin*

*“Education is about healing and wholeness. It is about empowerment, liberation, transcendence, about renewing the vitality of life. It is about finding and claiming ourselves and our place in the world...I want to explore what it might mean to reclaim the sacred at the heart of knowing, teaching, and learning - to reclaim it from an essentially depressive mode of knowing that honors only data, logic, analysis, and a systematic disconnection of self from the world, self from others.” Parker Palmer*

*“Put simply, I am both colonizer and colonized. These hybridities echo in many, as well as being thoroughly engendered in societal institutions. Coloniality, because of its pervasiveness implicates everyone through its ongoing structure of people, land, and well-being. These implications do not mean that anyone’s social location relative to colonization is fixed by virtue of birthplace or social identity, but rather at every juncture there is constant opportunity and responsibility to identify and counter the genealogies of coloniality that continue to require oppression.” Lisa (Leigh) Patel*

*“An image is a bridge between evoked emotion and conscious knowledge; words are the cables that hold up the bridge. Images are more direct, more immediate than words, and closer to the unconscious. Picture language precedes thinking in words; the metaphorical mind precedes thinking in words; the metaphorical mind precedes analytical consciousness.”  
Gloria E. Anzaldúa*

*“Liberation is based in something far bigger than me as an individual, or us as a coalition...It’s about that force that is defined differently by every spiritual belief system but which binds us by the vision that there can be a better world and we can help to create it.” Bobbie Harro*

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Abstract

In this paper, I examine definitions of and relationships between violence, oppression, peace, liberation, and embodiment in the context of critical pedagogy in order to construct a theory of *critical embodied praxis* for social justice and peace educators. Considering the body to be a tangible vessel through which narratives and mechanisms of violence are expressed and maintained, I explore the potential of the body to be a vessel through which liberatory narratives may be generated and shared. After constructing a theory of *critical embodied praxis*, I illustrate this framework in action through a personal narrative that explores the intersections of my diasporic Jewish and settler identities as they pertain to my work as a critical place-based educator. This analytic narrative tracks my holistic development over the course of several years, indicating the role of *critical embodied praxis* in my entwined personal and professional transformations. Bridging the fields of social justice education, peace education, conflict transformation, critical studies, trauma studies, and somatics in a cohesive pedagogical framework, I offer *critical embodied praxis* as a useful practice for anyone committed to critical pedagogy and/or interested in the healing and liberatory capacities of learning and education.

*Keywords:* critical pedagogy, embodiment, somatics, trauma healing, social justice education, peace education, Jewish identity, settler colonialism, place-based education

**Part One: Conceptual Background**

**Core Questions**

In my human consciousness and development, the tangible and the mythic are equally powerful and deeply entwined. Archetypal images appear to me every several years, becoming metaphors for the deep questions that guide various chapters of my life. Several images form the conceptual basis of this paper. The most recent of these images emerged during the time I was exploring graduate school programs. While walking my usual loop one day through my forest neighborhood, I saw something nestled in the erosion channel on the edge of the road. There was a woman with dark, tangled locks of long hair flowing down her back and around her grey-blue body. She was curled in a fetal position on her side. Her features were undefined except for a starkly clear umbilical cord that should have connected her navel to the earth, only it was loose. The emotions I felt in that moment were curiosity and desperation; hers or mine, I could not tell you. I felt a question emanating from my gut, from my belly button. The question was: *What does it mean for me to belong to a place, and what does it mean for me to be displaced? Can I be displaced and belong to a place at the same time?*

This question has guided my graduate studies (and indeed my life journey), carrying along with it a process of disintegration of long-held narratives. The answer to this question, forever evolving and far from complete, carries mythic, historical, and cultural exploration of Hebraic indigeneity. It carries an examination of settler colonialism and my complicity in upholding its structure. It carries an excavation of intergenerational trauma, internalized oppression, and internalized dominance. It carries an even more specific inquiry: *How do I, as an educator and a diasporic Jew engaged in the earth-based traditions of my ancestors, live as a settler on Turtle Island (North America) in a way that honors the existence, resistance, and resilience of indigenous peoples of the places where I live and work?*

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This paper is a Training Course Linked Capstone (CLC), which means its primary objective is to present a deep reflexive analysis that offers insights and openings to other trainers. In so doing, a Training CLC should offer something of value to the field of training as a whole. What I hope to offer is threefold. Firstly, this paper is about consciously bringing our bodies into conversations about leadership, learning, and social change. Secondly, it is about transforming wounds into sources of power. Thirdly, it is about being real with the narratives of oppression and resilience inside each of us, including owning the parts of ourselves that contribute to oppression and letting go of those parts that cling to victimhood. The story I tell here does not belong to me and yet, it is mine. I speak only for my own experience and yet, I wonder if you feel yourself in this story. I wonder what you resist, embrace, and question. I hope one day we get a chance to talk about it.

### **Bridging Disciplines**

During my on-campus phase at SIT, I pursued a degree in Peacebuilding and Conflict Transformation (PaCT) with a Training Specialization. I took courses in a number of different degree programs and was struck by the distinct lexicons in different courses for seemingly similar ideas. For example, in PaCT courses, we used the terms ‘violence’ and ‘peace’ to denote varying degrees of security and self-actualization; in Social Identities, we used terms like ‘oppression’ and ‘liberation’ to denote varying degrees of related states of being. In Dismantling Disability, we explored the difference between power over, power to, power with, and power within (VeneKlasen & Miller, 2002; see Appendix A) to examine who gets a say and who is essentially excludable from society; in PaCT, we made ‘conflict maps’ with circles of varying sizes and lines of varying thickness to denote relative power of parties in a conflict. In Training courses, we used terms like ‘co-creation’ and ‘participatory’ to denote multi-directional flow of authority in a learning space; in a leadership course, we used terms like ‘shared leadership’ and ‘servant leadership’ to denote

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collaboration in an organizational space and, in PaCT, we used terms like ‘multi-track diplomacy’ to denote multi-lateral engagement in peacebuilding processes.

I understood the utility of having specific language in different fields of study. However, I also found the bifurcation of language to be frustrating when it came to writing papers and giving presentations, as my capacity to bridge content across disciplines was inherently limited. There were perspectives in each field that added important nuance and enhanced other fields’ analyses, yet overall I felt a blockage that prevented interdisciplinary compatibility. I consider my experience to be a microcosm of what I deem to be a problem in academia and the world of practitioners: Overly specialized lexicons limit our conceptual capacities and stunt interdisciplinary collaboration. I present here some foundational concepts and terms from PaCT, social justice education, and a few other disciplines in an effort to bridge lexicons and provide an integrated conceptual basis for this paper.

This paper draws upon bodies of knowledge generated by numerous communities of people and practitioners:

- **Peacebuilding and Conflict Transformation (PaCT)** refers to a field of theory and practice concerned with reducing violence and increasing peace. PaCT considers cycles of intercommunal conflict as opportunities to create constructive processes of social change and human relation. With precursors in the mid-20th century, the field of PaCT has largely developed since the 1970s.
- **Critical Peace Education (CPE)** refers to a subfield of PaCT that critiques “liberal peacebuilding” on the basis that traditional approaches do not adequately analyze power structures when seeking to develop peacebuilding interventions. CPE addresses the question of how approaches to peacebuilding may shift when the starting point for conflict analysis is understanding systems of privilege, oppression, and marginalization.

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- **Social Justice Education (SJE)** refers to an evolving body of educational theory and praxis that includes but is not limited to: feminist, multicultural, experiential, and post-structuralist educational pedagogies. SJE addresses interlocking forms of oppression such as sexism, racism, classism, and ableism. Both process and product, SJE contributes to coalition building, leadership of People of Color, critical pedagogical innovation, and the redefining of power dynamics between learning/teaching and learner/teacher.
- **Critical theory** encompasses a range of multi-disciplinary theory and practice with a common goal of liberating humans from the conditions that oppress them. In addition to this common theme, my use of the term ‘critical’ connotes thoughtful, compassionate, and close examination of the parts of a whole not for the simple purpose of dissecting them but for the sake of reconstituting them in more just and inclusive ways.
- **Trauma Studies (or traumatology)** refers to diverse understandings of the nature of trauma and pathways towards healing trauma. Critical trauma healing practitioners understand oppression to be traumatic and therefore suggest that in order to heal oppression-derived trauma, not only must the trauma be transformed, so must the system of oppression.
- **Embodiment** and **Somatics** refer to fields of practice that center *soma* (‘the living body’ in Greek), in human experience. Somatics holds that one’s experience of oneself from the interior is categorically different from a third-person experience of the body. When we cultivate sensory awareness from the interior, we have access to body-based wisdom that is not available to us from outside of ourselves. This wisdom can provide information about the stories our bodies hold and the narratives we embody through physical shape, behavior and health - including trauma and social conditioning.

These fields often orbit each other peripherally without functionally integrating. In this paper, I am particularly concerned with how principles of somatics and embodiment are underrepresented in

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SJE, PaCT, and CPE, and how critical power analyses are woefully few in somatics and PaCT.

While somatics does not make a distinction between mind and body, it highlights embodied patterning as what needs to shift in order for a psychological and behavioral change to follow; merely thinking about changing something does not necessarily induce change - the reason we can, for example, recognize patterns of behavior that hurt us or others but feel we “can’t” stop. While SJE might invite a white person to develop awareness of their participation in white supremacy culture in order to “undo” their racism, only a handful of SJE educators substantially draw upon somatics to offer a pathway for literally repatterning supremacy behaviors in a white person.

Interestingly, while SJE generally excludes somatic frameworks in academically-oriented pedagogy and methodology, somatics is utilized more and more by grassroots social justice activists and community organizers. While SJE, PaCT, and CPE generally exclude somatics from their analyses and pedagogies, somatic and PaCT approaches to trauma-healing and social change generally omit critical analyses that situate trauma, leadership, and socio-political processes within a context of socially constructed power relations. In this paper, I aim to functionally integrate these fields through what I call *critical embodied praxis* for social justice and peace educators.

### **Defining Terms**

**SJE Vocabulary.** I believe it is important not to get too mired in all of this terminology, though I do find it valuable to be able to name social phenomena so that we can better understand nuanced social issues. As feminist and legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw (2016) reminds us, “When there’s no name for a problem, you can’t see a problem. And when you can’t see a problem, you pretty much can’t solve it.” And of course, when we mean different things with the words we say, it is hard to understand each other.

*Social identities* are understood to be aspects of who ‘we are’ in relation to ‘others’ based on identifiable characteristics such as race, religion, gender, class, nationality, ethnicity, or ability

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(Kirk & Okazawa-Rey, 2013). Beverly Tatum (2013) notes that the question of “Who am I?” entails dimensions of both who I think I am and who the world around me thinks I am. Drawing on psychoanalytic theorist Erik Erikson’s notion that “the social, cultural, and historical context is the ground in which individual identity is embedded” (p. 6), Tatum offers reflective questions that illustrate how social embeddedness influences our conceptions of self:

Who do my parents say I am? Who do my peers say I am? What message is reflected back to me in the faces and voices of my teachers, my neighbors, store clerks? What do I learn from the media about myself?...Was I surrounded by people like myself, or was I part of a minority in my community? Did I grow up speaking standard English at home or another language or dialect? Did I live in a rural county, an urban neighborhood, a sprawling suburb, or on a reservation? (p. 6)

Due to the privileges and disadvantages proffered to different social groups, power imbalance can be present in any relationship or interaction between people and groups. Social groups who are subject to disadvantage and domination in relation to a group with relative power and advantage can be called “target” or “subordinant” groups, while groups with relative power who tend to exercise power over and establish hegemonic norms can be called “agent” or “dominant” groups (Tatum, 2013). One person can simultaneously have a number of target and agent identities. They can also *internalize* their relative oppression or dominance in a myriad of ways that impact psychology, mental health, physiology, behavior, spirituality, and much more (see Appendix B).

The unique ways a person experiences the intersections of their identities and/or compounded disadvantage or privilege based upon these intersections is called *intersectionality*. Crenshaw (2016) coined this term in response to a legal judgement regarding a qualified Black woman who was denied employment at a manufacturing job. The judge deemed her denial of employment neither racial nor gender discrimination because the company had both Black

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employees and female employees. However, to Crenshaw, it was evident that all of the female employees held office positions and were white, and all of the male employees, including Black men, held technical positions. Thus, the plaintiff experienced a form of discrimination based upon the *intersection* of her Black and female identities. The node where a person's intersectional identity (along with all their privileges and disadvantages) relates to others' social identities is called *social location* (Kirk & Okazawa-Rey, 2013). Whereas intersectionality can be imagined as social and political forces operating on an individual from the outside in, social location can be imagined as a person's relation to and impact upon others emanating outward from their position in the social matrix.

**Violence and Oppression.** Johan Galtung (1969), the grandfather of contemporary peace and conflict studies, defines 'violence' as the cause of the difference between a person's potential physical and psychological state of being and their actual state of being. Both the cause of this difference and anything that prevents decreasing this distance can be considered violence. For example, he explains, "if a person died from tuberculosis in the eighteenth century it would be hard to conceive of this as violence since it might have been quite unavoidable, but if he died from it today, despite all the medical resources in the world, then violence is present..." (p. 168).

Galtung (1964, 1990) categorizes violence into three overarching forms: direct, structural, and cultural. Direct (also called personal) violence is directly perpetrated by one individual or group upon another individual or group. Direct violence includes not only enacting harm but the threat of enacting harm. Some examples of direct violence are verbal, physical, or sexual abuse; bombs and bomb threats; and vandalism. Structural violence consists of institutions and legal systems that disadvantage certain groups of people. Structural violence results in unmet needs, displacement, and premature death, illness, or disability. Cultural violence includes images, symbols, beliefs, and language that generate and perpetuate harmful tropes about groups of people. Cultural violence



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serves to legitimize direct and structural violence by normalizing and making “invisible” direct and structural forms of violence within the workings of a human system. Galtung (1990) offers an example of the relationship between these three types of violence in the context of anti-Black racism:

Africans are captured, forced across the Atlantic to work as slaves; millions are killed in the process...This massive direct violence over centuries seeps down and sediments as massive structural violence [e.g. mass incarceration, redlining in U.S. real estate] with whites as the master topdogs and blacks as the slave underdogs, producing and reproducing massive cultural violence with racist ideas everywhere. After some time direct violence is forgotten, slavery is forgotten, and only two labels show up, pale enough for college textbooks: ‘discrimination’ for massive structural violence and ‘prejudice’ for massive cultural violence. Sanitation of language: itself cultural violence. (p. 295)

Galtung perceives a general causal flow from cultural to structural to direct violence, though concedes that the flow of violence is not always linear and the point of access for identifying violence may be any of the three types.

Galtung (1990) defines *internalization* as “conscience deeply rooted in the person system” and *institutionalization* as “punishment/reward deeply rooted in the social system.” Both, he asserts, “serve to make the act come forth ‘naturally, normally, voluntarily’ ” (pp. 291-292, 303). In other words, when we live in a culturally violent society, the individual self begins to normalize their own personal (direct) role in the system of violence, and legitimize the impact of collectively executed violence through structural means. These psychological dimensions of violence are crucial, as they begin to suggest how violence shapes a person’s behavior and their complicity in systems of violence. While Galtung does theorize internal experiences of violence, he does not offer an analysis of how power dynamics related to social identity influence this internal experience; this

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gap is consistent with a general lack of critical analyses in the field of PaCT (Bajaj, 2015; Bajaj & Brantmeier, 2011; Soto, 2005; Christopher & Taylor, 2011). Galtung's typology of violence is not universally accepted within the field of PaCT, but it is widely regarded as a primary foundation for theorization and practice.

In her essay *Five Faces of Oppression*, Iris Marion Young (2014) discusses how usage of the term 'oppression' has shifted over the past several decades. Historically referring to "the exercise of tyranny of a ruling group" (p. 5), oppression is widely associated in political discourse with colonial domination and conquest, for example through apartheid in South Africa or through Communist control of masses of people. Contemporary social movements maintain this historical interpretation of oppression as well as use the term in additional ways. Young explains,

In its new usage oppression designates the disadvantage and injustice some people suffer not because a tyrannical power coerces them, but because of the everyday practices of a well-intentioned liberal society...Oppression in this sense is structural, rather than the result of a few people's choices or policies. Its causes are embedded in unquestioned norms, habits, and symbols, in the assumptions underlying institutional rules and the collective consequences of following those rules. (p. 5)

Just as Galtung creates a typology of violence in the field of PaCT, SJE educators and community organizers popularly refer to the "4 I's of Oppression" to delineate specific forms of oppression:

1. Ideological – A system of beliefs or ideas that establishes one group as better or more deserving than another;
2. Institutional – Using the laws, legal systems, education system, public policy, media, political power, etc. to maintain ideology;

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3. Interpersonal – Harassment, beatings, jokes, vandalism, etc. that accompany an ideological sense of dominance, as well as the psychological threat of such actions;
4. Internalized – When the oppressor does not have to exert any more pressure because people collude with their own and others’ oppression (Teachers Pay Teachers, n.d.; Williams, 2012).

I find it useful to examine Galtung’s typology of violence and SJE conceptions of oppression side by side, as they show us how similar concepts are linguistically represented in each field. Cultural violence approximates ideological oppression, structural violence approximates institutional oppression, direct violence approximates interpersonal oppression, and Galtung’s notions of institutionalization and internalization approximate internalized oppression and its flip side, internalized dominance. Because of these parallels, I go back and forth between these terms in this paper, depending upon what nuance or lineage of knowledge production I aim to emphasize.

**Peace and Liberation.** While a definition of *peace* in the field of PaCT is mutable and imprecise, a generally agreed upon starting point for understanding peace is that “peace is absence of violence” (Galtung, 1969, p. 167). From this vantage point, Galtung defines “a peaceful social order not as a point but as a region – as the vast region of social orders from which violence is absent” (p. 168). In other words, peace is when a person’s intersectionality results in no violence inflicted upon them and their social location inflicts no violence upon others. Bobbie Harro (2013) defines *liberation* as a process of transforming oppression both inside of ourselves (changing the core of what we believe about ourselves) and in society (changing systemic structures, assumptions, philosophies, rules, procedures, and roles). The quest to transform oppression is never “done,” even if we make considerable progress. However, this should not stop us from trying.

**Critical Pedagogy.** The overarching category of educational practice concerned with transforming violence and oppression is called *critical pedagogy*. Brazilian educator and philosopher Paulo Freire (1970, 1998) is best known for his application of critical theory to

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education. Working with Brazil's poor populations, Freire's approach to pedagogy centered around his belief that people should participate in the co-creation of both learning and learning spaces, and that education should teach people to critically analyze their social locations in society. Only through active, curious exploration could people change the oppressive circumstances of their lives. Freire called this process of critical human development *conscientizacao* (conscientization). Freire (1998) emphasizes joy and hope in his pedagogy, as he perceives the absence of hope to be a distortion of humanity. In his view, it is "an enormous contradiction that an open-minded person who does not fear what is new, who is upset by injustice...who struggles against impunity, and who refuses cynical and immobilizing fatalism should not be full of critical hope" (p. 70).

Freire's philosophy and legacy have impacted generations of educators, inspiring further pedagogical innovation in the field of critical pedagogy. For example, bell hooks (2003), an extremely influential Black feminist and educator, uses the term *engaged pedagogy* to encapsulate her application and further development of Freire's critical pedagogy. For hooks, not only is *conscientizacao* a pedagogical goal, the integration of mind, body, and spirit into one's process of human consciousness development is paramount to self-actualization. Not only should learning be a participatory and co-creative process, emergent learning (embracing the unexpected) should be elevated so that what occurs in a learning space is a truly synergistic event that goes beyond what any one individual could have brought into the learning space. hooks also holds that *eros* is essential to critical pedagogy. In contrast to a common understanding of *eros* that is limited to sexual potential, hooks contends that *eros* is the generative, passionate form of power that "enhances our overall effort to be self-actualizing...provides an epistemological grounding informing how we know what we know...[and] excites the critical imagination" (p. 195). *Eros* must therefore be embraced in a critical learning space or we risk remaining captive to old ways of knowing and corollary ways of being.

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A final important tenet of engaged pedagogy and contemporary critical feminist pedagogies is that educators must be willing to do the work of tending our own development and healing.

Without such attention, we can neither expect of ourselves nor be expected to adequately tend to others' development and healing. When we engage vulnerably in co-creative learning spaces, we foster a multi-directional exchange of power and knowledge production. This approach fundamentally changes the dynamic between learner and facilitator of learning; everyone is a learner, everyone is a facilitator of learning, and everyone helps to shape the trajectory of learning (hooks, 1994).

### **Who I Am and My Orientation to This Work**

Now that I have established some concepts and terminology, I can tell you a few things about myself that are contextually relevant to this work. I identify as a Jewish, cis-female, middle class, person of whiteness who is a U.S. citizen and settler and speaks English as my first language. I work predominantly (though not exclusively) with white and middle class youth and adults, both secular and Jewish, and with people who identify with a range of gender identities and sexual orientations. The majority of the people I work with are U.S. citizens with English as their first language. I also do some work with international groups of adults from numerous cultures and continents. In addition to all of these identities, I am a sister, a partner, a daughter, a friend, a niece, an herbalist, a dancer, a musician, and so much more that I have yet to discover about myself.

I am clear about my biases in this work. Firstly, I believe the personal is political. What I choose to address or *not* address in a learning space has political implications; there is no neutral. Secondly, I believe that social transformation requires individual transformation, as no collective can change if all its parts are staying the same. Thirdly, my body is a primary site of learning and knowledge construction. I question things through my body. I integrate ideas into my structure and

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movement in order to make sense of them. Because my body is the central source of my knowing, embodiment plays a central role in my identity development and professional development.

I recognize that trauma histories dramatically affect how people explore and process embodied information; every individual processes differently, and social groups carrying legacies of particular forms of historical trauma and oppression may process differently from other social groups. I recognize that some people may actively choose to *not* engage in somatic inquiry, or to not be explicit about it, for reasons related to their own personal histories, traumas, social identities, and safety. For these reasons, while I propose a centering of the body in praxis for critical educators, I do not purport a formulaic way that somatic inquiry should unfold. Relatedly, I place great value on trauma-informed practice.

Vocationally, the terms I most identify with are ‘educator’ and ‘facilitator of learning.’ Resonating with the Latin root *educare* (to lead out or bring forth), I resonate deeply with the work of supporting people to trust their own knowing and engage in a process of development based upon a combination of their own learning goals and the goals of a program. As a ‘facilitator,’ I consider my work to be that of nurturing personal and interpersonal understanding, whether for an individual or a group; facilitation is an implicit component of my work as an educator. As a mentor, I aim to support individuals in discovering their gifts and talents, and to develop ways of offering those gifts to the world. As a trainer, I engage the educator and facilitator in me with more of a focus on particular outcomes; I embrace emergent learning, though I also feel that my ‘trainer hat’ includes more specific objectives than other ‘hats.’ As a supervisor and camp director, I move between all of these roles as appropriate and/or as requested. I use the term ‘learning space’ to indicate any formal or informal context in which learning occurs throughout a person’s life.

Finally, a foundational tenet of Jewish tradition is the concept of *tikkun olam*, or repair of the world’s soul. Jewish mysticism teaches that when the world came into being, a vessel exploded

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and shattered into tiny fragments of light. As humans on earth, it is our duty to do *avodah* (service) towards the goal of *tikkun olam*. We can offer *avodah* of the heart through prayer and spiritual practice, and we can offer *avodah* of the body and mind through our vocational work in the world. My life work is in service of *tikkun*, of healing.

### **How To Read This Paper**

After laying conceptual foundations in Part One, I go on in Part Two to construct (the beginnings of) a theory of what I call *critical embodied praxis*. With a working definition of critical embodied praxis in place, Part Two concludes with a theoretical application of critical embodied praxis to one particular area of my professional work: place-based education. In Part Three, I offer a narrative account of my development as a trainer (both pre- and post-SIT on-campus study) in order to provide an example of critical embodied praxis in action. The focus of my narrative is the intersection of my European-heritage settler identity and my diasporic Jewish identity as they impact my work in two jobs: camp director of Farm and Garden Camp located on Pocumtuck land in what is colonially called Amherst, Massachusetts and as an educator, facilitator, and trainer in the Jewish environmental network I have been active in since 2005 across Turtle Island (North America).

This paper has multiple modes of access: written theory, written story, mythic imagery, and analytic representation. Illustrative images (made by me) are embedded within the body of the narrative portion of this paper to illustrate the mythopoetic anchors of different chapters of my life. The model included in the text of the narrative and the maps in Appendix C offer an analytical representation of the changing narratives held within and expressed by my body. For those who appreciate analytic frameworks, you may want to review the model and maps as you read the theory of Part Two or before reading the narrative of Part Three. People who think in images might appreciate contemplating the illustrations and maps before reading through the narrative.

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Throughout this paper, I refer to methods and techniques pertaining to somatic inquiry and embodied awareness. Resources for such inquiry are included in Appendix D, including personal practices for releasing tension and resetting the autonomic nervous system. Some readers may find it useful to incorporate some of these practices into the experience of reading this paper.

The intended audience of this work is diverse: peace educators, social justice educators, and place-based educators; somatic and embodied leadership practitioners; conflict transformation practitioners; and whomever else has been drawn to this work. If it is useful for you to hold onto a guiding thread in this paper, I invite you to notice where and how the following questions resonate in your body as you read: What are the impacts of oppression on both oppressor and oppressed? How do oppressor and oppressed identities live inside of you, what are they motivated by, and how do they express themselves? What are the implications of this on your life work as a human and professional?

Before reading Part Two, I invite you to take a few deep breaths. Close your eyes or let your gaze soften downward, feel your feet planted beneath you, and give your body time and space to let your exhale be a little longer than your inhale. Do the above questions resonate anywhere in particular in your body? What feelings and sensations do you notice in this moment? When you feel ready, open your eyes and continue reading.

### **Part Two: Towards A Theory of Critical Embodied Praxis**

#### **Foundational Embodiment Theories**

In order to understand the gravity of critical embodied analysis in praxis, it is important to understand what I (and other practitioners) mean by *embodiment*. In most historical and many contemporary cultures around the world, mind-body-spirit integration were foundational to worldviews and cosmologies. For example, various systems of health and medicine such as Taoism, Ayurveda, many indigenous healing practices, and some ancient Greek medicine all understand the



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body and mind to be relational aspects of a wholistic beingness that is integrated on an individual level as well as in a collective and/or cosmic dimension. Dualistic mind/body orientation began to be seeded by some of the ancient Greek philosophers but did not gain momentum and leverage until Rene Descartes' (1596-1650) mind/body split paired with an ethos of individualism became the official unofficial foundation of the Western intellectual tradition. In this paradigm, not only are the mind and body distinctly separate, the mind is definitively superior to the body because it produces objective and rational knowledge, which is (presumed to be) superior to subjective, bodily knowledge (Johnson, 2007).

While a thorough survey of embodiment theories is outside the scope of this paper, I offer here two foundational perspectives in the diverse lineage of embodiment studies that run counter to an individualist Cartesian paradigm: phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty's concept of *intercorporeality* and Thomas Hanna's concept of *somatics*. The fields of phenomenology and somatics have much in common. The former forms the basis for discourse among many philosophers and scientists; the latter is the epistemological basis for many body workers, trauma workers, and healers.

**Phenomenology of Maurice Merleau-Ponty.** The field of phenomenology (the study of things and events, or phenomena, from a first-person perspective) began in the early 20th century. Phenomenology elevates bodily knowledge, asserting that our subjective experience of the world not only informs how we interact in the world but also how the world interacts with us. It holds that “physical reality is not composed of the unchanging objects of the natural sciences, but is a correlate of our body and its sensory functions...The implication of this assertion is that one's own body is not merely a physical object, but a necessary condition of experience” (Johnson, 2007, pp. 34-35). Since phenomenology is concerned with subjective experience, by extension, it is also interested in the study of consciousness and how humans make meaning of experience.

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Merleau-Ponty, a key phenomenologist of the 20th century, introduced the idea of intercorporeality. This concept acknowledges that what occurs in the interior of the body is in direct relation with the body's exterior environment. The neurobiological discovery of mirror-neurons illustrates this concept; why is it that yawns are "contagious," or that when a person with testicles witnesses someone else experience testicular trauma that they themselves are likely to experience intense physical pain (Johnson, 2007)? Intercorporeality means that every body is in constant co-emergence with its environment, simultaneously influencing and being influenced by its surroundings.

**Clinical Somatics of Thomas Hanna.** The term "somatics" was coined by Thomas Hanna in the 1970s as another approach to understanding the body through first-person inquiry. Proprioception is a form of sensory perception that relates to stimuli produced and perceived within an organism, particularly in relation to body position and movement in space. The field of somatics holds that one's experience of oneself from the interior of the body is categorically different from a third-person experience of the body because of proprioceptive awareness: The way I experience disease *within* my body is inherently different from the way a doctor externally perceives, pathologizes, and diagnoses observable symptoms.

Somatics holds that there is a synergistic relationship between internal landscape and external landscape - between biology and awareness of the interior, and environment and stimuli of the exterior. This internal-external relationship is ongoing and iterative, meaning what is experienced interiorly influences the exterior, and vice versa; as Johnson (2007) describes, "Reality is an integrated process in which perceptions inform responses which inform environment which inform perceptions, and so on" (p. 57). Rather than delegitimizing bodily experience, somatics maintains that body knowledge as ascertained through sensory perception is "essential to any inquiry into the nature of reality, including social reality" (p. 56).

### **Patterns of Embodiment**

Somatics and phenomenology help us to understand that bodies exist in socio-spatial relation to one another. They also help us to understand the centrality of subjective knowledge in human endeavors to make meaning, make money, make love, or do and be anything in the world. Somatics and phenomenology answer the question of *how* we embody. Next, I explore *what* we embody.

**Trauma and Trauma Healing.** Trauma<sup>1</sup> is one component of embodiment. As contemporary traumatologists and neuroscientists have expanded their perspectives over the last several decades, trauma has begun to shift from being stigmatized and perceived as purely pathological to being understood as a neuro-physiological ordering of the entire body-brain. Such neural messaging and hormonal changes are the body-brain's responses to particular events and experiences (Van Der Kolk, 2014). From this perspective, when a person experiences trauma, the body takes a certain shape - a comportment of defensiveness, or of "armoring" as Wilhelm Reich (as cited in Young, 2008, p. 4) describes. Meanwhile, the brain releases hormones that cause fight, flight or freeze reactions. The physical energy that moves through the body during these moments can lodge and get trapped anywhere in the body – in musculature, in joints, in organs, in the brain. Later, when a person exhibits typical trauma responses such as physical pain, anxiety, terror, a need to control a situation, or any number of other emotional, physical, behavioral, and psychological responses, it is neither the original traumatic experience nor the present trigger that is producing these responses but rather the blocked trauma energy trying to move and having nowhere to go (Eastern Mennonite University, 2017; Levine, 1997; Young, 2008).

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<sup>1</sup> In this paper, I address certain elements of trauma-informed praxis for critical educators, focusing on the individual's relationship to self-modulating and transforming trauma. In addition to these approaches and frameworks, guidance from trained trauma therapists or other professionals might be important (indeed necessary) for some practitioners.

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Peter Levine's (1997, 2010) research explored why animals, as opposed to so many humans who store trauma in their bodies, do not seem to live traumatized lives. He imagined that, since prey animals in particular live an unending series of traumagenic experiences, they must have some sort of mechanism for releasing trauma energy. Levine discovered that animals "discharge" trauma energy through movements and sounds such as shaking, snorting, deep breathing, and jumping around. After a few minutes, off and away the animal goes, continuing its normal routines. Many humans do not do this, or have forgotten how to do this. Trauma energy thus remains in our bodies and often compounds over time. Trauma healing, then, necessarily involves moving this trauma through and out of our bodies.

While these neuro-biological-somatic conceptualizations of trauma have revolutionized approaches to trauma healing, one critique of these theories is that they do not acknowledge that trauma necessarily occurs in the space between an individual and the social relations that individual is embedded within. From a critical traumatology perspective, "trauma is not merely a psychological phenomenon but a political affect constituted in relation to others" (Zembylas, 2008, p. 7). The expression of trauma stories creates a social and political space in which victims "re-construct memory and may heal or perpetuate their pain depending on how others respond to their trauma" (Zembylas, 2008, p. 6). Thus, trauma is not simply an event or condition, but rather part of an ongoing relationship of wounding and wound tending between individual and collective bodies.

Another critique of clinical conceptualizations of trauma is that they can reinforce a " 'Western' bias...[that] remains locked in a one-dimensional 'event theory' of trauma," ignoring the "collective, spatial, and material" dimension of trauma (Rothberg, 2008, p. 228).

Transgenerational trauma transmission and epigenetics – psychobiological dimensions of trauma studies – serve as anchors for understanding how trauma is passed down and manifest through generations (Danieli, 1998; Kellermann, 2013). Eduardo Duran's concept of the "soul wound,"

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which he originally conceptualized in relation to the genocide of native peoples of Turtle Island, explains how trauma ruptures the fabric of entire identity groups, not on an individual level but on a collective or soul level (Duran, Duran & Brave Heart, 1999). Critical traumatologists are exploring the parallels between diagnostic criteria of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and internalized oppression (Johnson, 2007; Williams, 2012; see Appendix E). All of these threads serve to situate the individual experience of trauma as inseparable from the collective and cultural embodiment of trauma and oppression. Hozumi (2019) summarizes, “cultures are in fact bodies that emerge in networks in relationships. This means that we can approach the healing of cultures and the healing of individuals...through a trauma-based somatic lens.”

All of these points raise important questions for critical educators. On an individual level, how does trauma, oppression, and internalized oppression impact one’s ability to acknowledge relative power and advantage? What role does individual trauma healing play in trainer development? Jackson and Hardiman (1982) argue that:

Having moved through the liberation process for their own experience of oppression, it becomes easier for a person...to have empathy for members of other targeted groups in relation to whom they are agents (for example, a heterosexual Latino who can now acknowledge and explore Christian or heterosexual privilege). It is less likely that a target in [prior stages of] consciousness will be able to acknowledge coexistent agent identities. (n.p.)

If we follow Hozumi’s (2019) premise that cultures are bodies, we can extend these same questions to a collective level. For example, in the field of Jewish education (one area of my professional work), how does collective embodiment of Jewish trauma impact employee habits and organizational management? How do our collective patterns and behaviors intersect with those of other organizations we might work with? Where do power and oppression dynamics emerge in these networks of relation? As critical educators, when we understand our individual and group

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patterns of internalized oppression as trauma responses, we can learn through somatic inquiry to self-modulate these responses. Over time, instead of recapitulating violence and dominance dynamics in a learning space, we can make space to heal trauma and step into relationships of embodied empathy, solidarity, and co-creativity.

**Social Conditioning.** In addition to a trauma lens, we can also understand the question of what we embody through a critical social lens. Remember that by critical, I am referring to an examination of what serves to oppress and a re-centering in what serves to liberate. To this end, sociologist Pierre Bourdieu analyzes the role of class in embodiment. Johnson (2007) summarizes,

“Bourdieu describes the working class relationship to the body as essentially instrumental – the body is a means to an end, a machine to be used in work. In contrast, the upper class sees the body as a project, as an object to be developed for the perceptions of others. These differences...articulate with a “political mythology” and work to naturalize social inequalities. Because these social differences are inscribed on the body, they appear to be rooted in nature rather than imposed by society.” (p. 44)

This is not to say that a particular vocation is in and of itself an oppressed or privileged vocation; a ballet dancer has been conditioned to embody certain patterns and habits as much as a dentist, a farmer, or a teacher. The point is that the way a person’s vocation conditions them to perceive and inhabit their body - and to acquiesce to a particular social location based upon those habits of embodiment – is a function of oppressive societal conditioning. Feminist theorists such as Elizabeth Grosz, Iris Marion Young, and Gloria Anzaldúa center the gendered, racialized and/or classed body (among other social signifiers) as a social subject in a constant process of becoming; at the intersection of critical feminism and phenomenology lies the opportunity for boundary-defying self-reimagining, as the body is understood to be “neither universal nor static” (Johnson, 2007, p. 50).

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These perspectives offer several questions that are important for our construction of critical embodied praxis: How do different forms of violence influence one's physical comportment (e.g. postures and movement), physiological patterns (e.g. endocrine and cardiovascular system activity), and behavior (e.g. attitudes and actions)? How do these embodied patterns shape/reinforce one's sense of self, value, and place in the world? How does embodiment impact our vocational choices and, as educators, our pedagogical inclinations? What would it mean to upend all of this conditioning – or at least the parts that serve to keep us oppressed?

### **Shifting Embodied Narratives**

Critical pedagogy does not in and of itself create embodied awareness. If not explicitly articulated and approached as a skill to be practiced, somatic inquiry is easy to ignore. The goal of critical embodied praxis is not to deconstruct or criticize pedagogical praxis, but rather to re-shape, or re-embody it. In this section, I explore the meaning of praxis and the role of embodied practice in praxis in order to land on a working definition of critical embodied praxis.

**The Role of Praxis.** *Praxis* refers to the space between theory and practice and is defined differently in different fields. In the field of education and training, I interpret *praxis* to be a process of reflexive analysis through which a practitioner experiences changes in awareness that result in new knowledge, skills, attitudes, and pedagogical clarity. In SJE pedagogy, *praxis* functions to make sure that “*what* participants are learning and *how* they are learning are congruent” (Adams, Bell, Goodman, & Joshi, 2016, p. 27). As a process “informed by the interaction of theory, reflection, and action” (p. 28), *praxis* encompasses the stages of the experiential learning cycle as theorized by David Kolb.

**The Role of Practice.** When combined with embodied practice, praxis becomes a powerful vehicle for transmuting oppressive patterning. Generative Somatics (gs) is an organization that combines critical pedagogies with embodied practice. gs runs trainings across the U.S. with diverse

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groups of people working on environmental and climate justice, and freedom from political repression and state violence (Generative Somatics, 2018). Founder Staci Haines teaches that the body is located in “sites of shaping,” or in nested rings of individual, familial, communal, institutional, social/historical, and spiritual influence (Strozzi Institute, 2012).<sup>2</sup> Participants in gs trainings learn somatic practices that help them recognize their sites of shaping and develop consciousness around their patterns of embodiment in relation to that shaping. They also learn to leverage corresponding “sites of change” where fundamental shifts in embodied belief and behavior are accessible. These practices help people to embody more liberatory and peaceful narratives in their working lives and relationships.

At all levels of shaping, this type of transformational work emphasizes the idea that “you are what you practice” (Strozzi-Heckler, 2007, p. 55) - meaning we cultivate and promote certain beliefs, narratives, power relations, forms of violence, etc. through our physical comportment, actions, and behavior. If we want to cultivate freedom in a classroom or ease in a training space, we must be practicing freedom and ease in our own bodies or we will inevitably “be” oppressive and tense. According to Richard Strozzi-Heckler, “Embodiment is when your actions consistently reflect your values and your commitment, especially under pressure” (Strozzi Institute, 2019, Leadership Trainings section). The idea that we are what we practice aligns with the SJE perspective that praxis helps to ensure the *what* and *how* in a learning space match.

If I am what I practice and I seek to nurture liberation and healing in my work as a critical educator, then how do I practice liberation and healing? For that matter, what exactly is practice? Recall that, from a somatics perspective, embodied patterning is what needs to shift in order for a

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<sup>2</sup> Readers familiar with PaCT theory may notice parallels between Haines’ ‘sites of shaping’ and John Paul Lederach’s (as cited in Schirch, 2004) concentric rings of transformation: personal, relational, cultural, structural. Towards a theory of critical embodied praxis, any model of nested wholes that allows for an analysis of somatic shaping is useful and appropriate.



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psychological and behavioral shift to follow. In order to change a pattern, we must practice something different - over and over and over again. Strozzi-Heckler (2007) reminds us that:

Researchers say 300 repetitions produce body memory, which is the ability to enact the correct movement, technique, or conversation by memory. It's also been pointed out that 3,000 repetitions creates embodiment, which is not having to think about doing the activity - it's simply part of who we are. (p. 59)

Thus, if I know that hearing a certain phrase stimulates my sympathetic nervous system (fight, flight, freeze reactions), I can practice (over and over again) responding to that phrase by consciously stimulating my parasympathetic nervous system (rest and digest response) through breathing exercises and pressing on certain neuromuscular trigger points. Somewhere between 300 and 3000 repetitions later, this shift will start to become unconscious and automatic. As educators, practice can occur both within and outside the learning spaces we facilitate; indeed, integrating embodied practice into areas of our lives outside of those in which we are educators makes practice more rigorous and supports the process of shifting embodied narratives.

### **Critical Embodied Praxis (A Working Definition)**

We are not static and we are not isolated. Our bodies are repositories of all our experiences, intergenerational and cultural memory, and interactions with people and phenomena around us. We live in a world full of oppression and violence. We live in a world full of resilience and beauty. All of this lives inside us. Critical embodied praxis is a pathway that enables us to listen to the wisdom that our bodies hold and to embrace the possibility of embodying a narrative of resilience and joy instead of violence and suffering. Critical embodied praxis is a process of allowing somatic insight to guide our personal development and our pedagogical trajectories towards a vision of peace, of collective liberation, of healing.

### **Application of Critical Embodied Praxis to Place-Based Education**

While preceding sections of this paper explicate the concept of embodied praxis, this section applies the theory of critical embodied praxis to my particular field of work: place-based education. Place-based education has no single origin (Gruenewald, 2003; McInerny, Smyth, & Down, 2011) but can be understood as a body of educational approaches including but not limited to environmental, ecological, and outdoor education, community-based education, and experiential learning that “are concerned with context and the value of learning from and nurturing specific places, communities or regions” (Gruenewald, 2003, p. 3). Gaining particular traction since the early 1990s, place-based education aims to “center the relationship between the social and the ecological in response to the status quo of complicity to ecological degradation” (Seawright, 2014, p. 554). Place-based pedagogies generally focus on cultivating empathic and heartfelt individual relationships with the natural world through exploring one’s *place* as experienced through ever-expanding circles of socio-ecological relation - yard, schoolground, neighborhood, town, city, watershed, bioregion, and eventually other natural places and communities (Sobel, 2004). Place-based pedagogies have influenced not only environmental and ecological courses of study but also Western schooling systems in general, as they engage students with their communities in real-life ways (McInerny, Smyth, & Down, 2011) and can serve to interrupt exploitive ways of relating to places as mere resources and real estate opportunities (Seawright, 2014).

Until the late 1990s, systems of human oppression went unaddressed in place-based education. By the late 1990s and early 2000s, critical educators and activists called upon place-based educators to examine the ways that race, class, gender, and other forms of power-relations impact relationships to place (Gruenewald, 2003). For example, climate activism brought greater attention to the ways that toxic waste from industrial society disproportionately impacts communities of Color and the global South. Place-based educators began to call upon each other to

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address critical concerns; they began to be more explicit about how “human communities, or places, are politicized, social constructions that often marginalize individuals, groups, as well as ecosystems” (Gruenewald, 2003, p. 7). “Eco-justice” (Bowers, 2002) became a new key term in the field of place-based education.

While the literature shows a relative lull in pedagogical development for several years, from 2013 onward, a slew of literature on decolonizing place-based education and unsettling settler colonialism within the field emerges (Calderon, 2014; McLean, 2013; Paperson, 2013; Seawright, 2014; Tuck, McKenzie, & McCoy, 2014); this makes sense given the emergence of settler colonial studies as a more defined field in the late 1990s and early 2000s. Settler colonialism is a specific type of colonialism that, as opposed to having a goal of exporting resources to a mother country, pursues “the replacement of indigenous populations with an invasive settler society that, over time, develops a distinctive identity and sovereignty” (Barker & Lowman, 2018). Any person who is part of this project of replacing original inhabitants is considered a settler. Settler colonialism is defined as a structure, not a single event (Wolfe, 2006).

While the venture to critically assess place-based education is a necessary one, educators must carefully traverse the language of settler colonialism and decolonization. In their article *Decolonization Is Not A Metaphor*, Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang (2012) argue that metaphors of ‘decolonizing the mind’ or ‘decolonizing education’ dilute and distract from the essential decolonization goal of repatriating indigenous life and lands. They note the importance of “curricula, literature, and pedagogy [that] can be crafted to aid people in learning to see settler colonialism, to articulate critiques of settler epistemology, and set aside settler histories and values in search of ethics that reject domination and exploitation” (p. 19). However, they also wonder whether “the absorption of decolonization by settler social justice frameworks is one way the settler, disturbed by her own settler status, tries to escape or contain the unbearable searchlight of

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complicity, of having harmed others just by being one's self" (p. 9). Additionally, the metaphor of decolonization can quickly result in settlers attempting to "become indigenous to a place," for example the array of "Vermont Native" bumper stickers one can buy to demonstrate Vermont state pride. Dakota scholar Kim Tallbear (as cited in Tuck, 2017) resists this notion when she says, "I am not interested in a relationship in which people are trying to become indigenous...Our relationship needs to be mutual...and I do not consent to that being somebody's endgame." In a similar vein, Tuck (2017) argues that settler claims of everyone being "indigenous to someplace" erase the fact that some people are indigenous to *this* place (whatever *this* place may be).

One pathway towards mutual relation is represented by Robin Wall Kimmerer. In her book *Braiding Sweetgrass* (2015), Kimmerer concurs that immigrants (settlers) cannot become indigenous. In considering the place of immigrants on Turtle Island, she reflects:

Like my elders before me, I want to envision a way that an immigrant society could become indigenous to place, but I'm stumbling on the words. Immigrants cannot by definition be indigenous. *Indigenous* is a birthright word. No amount of time or caring changes history or substitutes for soul-deep fusion with the land...But if people do not feel "indigenous," can they nevertheless enter into the deep reciprocity that renews the world? Is this something that can be learned? Where are the teachers? (p. 213)

Kimmerer goes on to identify just such a teacher: *Plantago major*, common plantain, White Man's Footstep. Having originally arrived with white settlers, indigenous people of Turtle Island were curious and cautious about this plant. However, over time, it found its place in the system of relations in its new home; indigenous people learned about its many edible and medicinal uses, and it became "an honored member of the plant community" that has come to be thought of as "native." She goes on, "It's a foreigner, an immigrant, but after five hundred years of living as a good neighbor, people forget that kind of thing...Plantain is not indigenous, but 'naturalized' " (p. 214).

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The lesson offered by Plantain via Kimmerer provides an important framing for settlers to understand themselves: right relation can mean the difference between being a trespasser and being a welcome guest.

Another pathway towards mutual relation is represented by Lyla June Johnston (2016), a Dine and European-heritage singer and indigenous activist. In an essay about how she came to embrace her indigenous European ancestors, she reflects:

They estimate that 8-9 million European women were burned alive, drowned alive, dismembered alive, beaten, raped and otherwise tortured as so-called, “witches.” It is obvious to me now that these women were not witches, but were the Medicine People of Old Europe. They were the women who understood the herbal medicines, the ones who prayed with stones, the ones who passed on sacred chants, the ones who whispered to me that night in the hoghan. This all-out warfare on Indigenous European women, not only harmed them, but had a profound effect on the men who loved them...Nothing makes a man go mad like watching the women of his family get burned alive.

...I cannot help but ask myself, when and how did this egalitarian, earth-loving, woman-honoring culture, become the colonial, genocidal conquerors that washed upon American shores? Could it be that our beloved Indigenous European ancestors were raped and tortured for so many thousands of years that they forgot who they were? Could it be they lived in a pressure cooker of oppression for so long that conquer-or-be-conquered is all they knew? Yes, I believe so. (paragraphs 11, 20)

Lyla June’s approach is one of intercultural and intergenerational healing. From this perspective, in order to “naturalize” one’s settler self without appropriating cultural elements of indigenous peoples, one must be able to draw upon one’s own cultures of origin that have their roots in earth-based wisdom and pre-colonial worldviews. This sentiment is echoed by Anishinaabe elder

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Chickadee Richard in a panel conversation on the topic of decolonization (Monkman, 2018). Given the torturous histories of most earth-based peoples, this process of renaturalizing likely then also includes trauma healing.

With all of this in mind, in the post-2010 phase of critical place-based pedagogical development, the question of how settler ontologies (beliefs about what is real) can be interrupted through place-based education has become paramount to some educators. Some critical place-based educators have begun to explicitly address how settler epistemologies (ways of knowing) are rooted in notions of domination, ownership, white supremacist superiority, and private property. In practice, this raises two core questions: How can place-based education cultivate empathic and heartfelt connections to place while simultaneously deconstructing the nature of settler place-making and addressing the dispossession of indigenous lands and peoples that underlies most place-based pedagogies? How can place-based educators engage in praxis such that they discover their own embodiment of colonized and colonizer selves (as applicable to their social identities), in order to effectively lead by example and facilitate learning that upends settler colonial structures? The story that follows reflects my journey of beginning to answer these questions for myself.

Before reading Part Three, I invite you, once again, to take a few deep breaths. Close your eyes or let your gaze soften downward, feel your feet planted beneath you, and give your body time and space to let your exhale be a little longer than your inhale. What do you notice? How has what you have read so far landed in your body? Is your body holding tension anywhere? Refer to Appendix D for methods of releasing tension, if useful.

### **Part Three: Personal Narrative**

#### **The Role of Embodied Narrative Inquiry in Critical Embodied Praxis**

Storytelling provides an important way to construct meaning from human experience and the body provides an important site for storytelling. Weiss (as cited in Johnson, 2007) postulates,

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The body provides an unconscious, tacit organization to the stories we tell ourselves (and others) about who we are. Through the embodied activity of imagination, the body contributes to narrative coherence and intelligibility. At the same time, the body resists and transgresses our attempts to make those narratives fixed, stable, and fully intelligible. (p. 92)

In other words, our bodies seek to make cumulative sense of disjointed experiences while simultaneously engaging in a continual process of reshaping. Embodied narrative inquiry, then, helps to reveal how the body holds and expresses individual stories and the overarching narratives those stories constitute. The sharing of embodied narratives can reveal new information to a person about their own embodied patterns as well as offer valuable insights to others (Johnson, 2007).

### **A Mapping Tool For Embodied Narrative Inquiry**

Because my body is the primary site of my learning and integrating information, my exploration of my development as a trainer for this paper inherently involved deep embodied narrative inquiry. As I engaged in this inquiry process, an image emerged that I immediately began to sketch out on paper (see Figure 1, following page). In response to Galtung's triangle of violence, which felt to me to represent outward expressions of violence, I began to see a downward facing triangle that represented inward expressions of violence. The image that formed was a hexagram with correlated axes showing a link between Galtung's forms of violence and what I perceived to be my internal experience of each of those forms of violence. At the center, where all of the stories and narratives of each node and axis intersected, was my body. I remembered how Ta-Nehisi Coates (2015) writes that the body is ultimately where violence lands. I wondered what an exploration of how violence lands in my body might reveal about my own body as a site for transforming violence.

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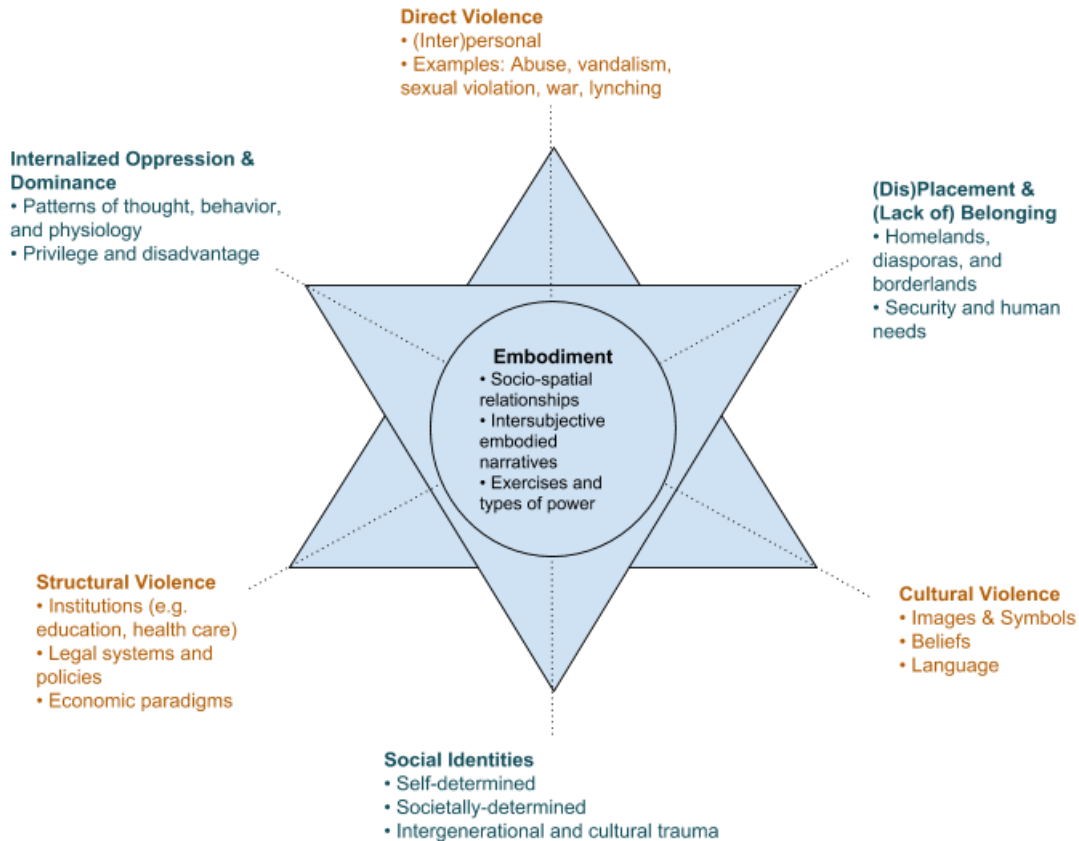


Figure 1: Inversion of Galtung's Violence Triangle

Using this image as a map, I decided to analyze my settler (agent) identity and my Jewish (target) identity. The map of Jewish identity was easy; I had been thinking about, theorizing about, and somatically exploring both external forms of anti-Jewish oppression and my internal experience of and response to that violence for years. Mapping my settler identity was harder. I struggled at first to come up with clear ideas, so I used somatic techniques to access information that was hiding inside my body (see Appendix D for resources on somatic inquiry). I clarified some things I already knew about myself, and I also learned some new things about my internalized dominance as a settler. The following questions helped to guide me in this process (see Figure 2, following page):



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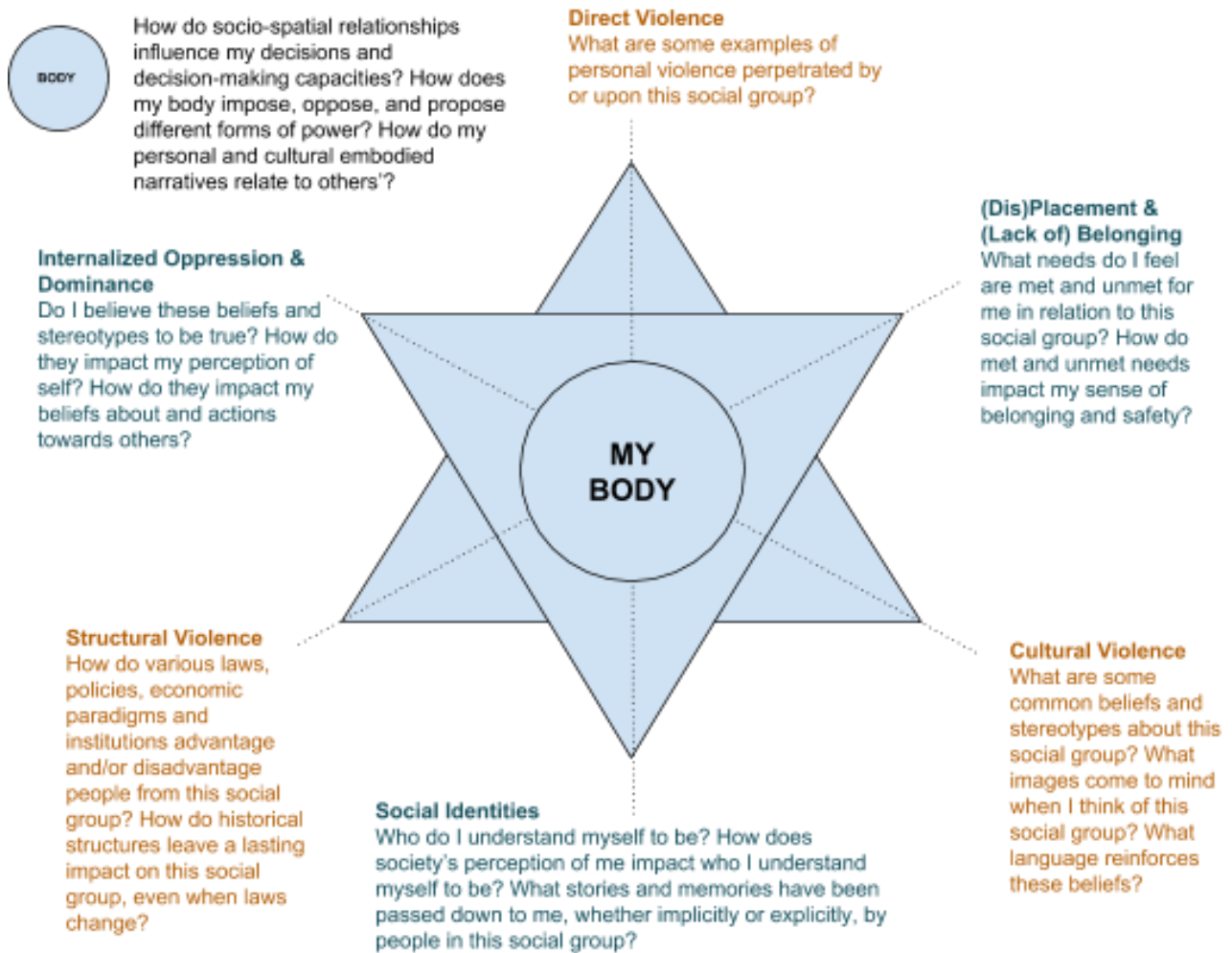


Figure 2: Mapping Questions for Self-Analysis

At some point, I realized that the maps I was creating included both patterns that I have exhibited in the past and no longer embody, as well as patterns that I continue to express. In order to more clearly see how I have changed over time, I created “then” (when I started at SIT) and “now” maps of my Jewish and settler identities (see Appendix C). While I do not refer explicitly to these maps in the story that follows, the themes and patterns they reveal are interwoven throughout. If I make these maps again the future, I expect they will look very different.

### Shape of the Story

I have organized the following narrative around themes of roots, rupture, and recovery. The reader familiar with various models of social identity development (Constantine, Richardson, Benjamin, & Wilson, 1998; Howard, 2016) may recognize stages of, for example, Acceptance,

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Resistance, Redefinition, and Integration (Jackson & Hardiman, 1982) in this telling. I find that these models leave mythopoetic forms of self-understanding out of the journey of human development. I therefore shape my narrative here with an awareness of identity development models and an expression of development that feels truer to my own experience. It is also important to note that this narrative is limited to exploration of two of my social identities: Jew and settler. Other identities, such as my experience as a woman, play an important role in my development and embodied patterns. For the sake of scope, I have set aside further explorations of intersectionality.

**Roots.** Throughout my childhood and early adolescence, my relationship to place was largely shaped by experiences of exploration in the natural world. When I attended a four-day, residential, experiential and environmental education program with my fifth grade class, I saw a



*Figure 1 – “Shaping in Childhood.” Oil pastel by Cara Michelle Silverberg*

beaver pond for the first time. I remember crouching on a boggy platform, gazing out at the new and abandoned lodges peeking out of the water. I was mesmerized. For many years after, I went to summer camp at this same site. I was confounded that, throughout all of my exploring camp’s 540 acres of wildness, I could not find that spot again. The mystery of the beaver pond evaded me until nearly ten years later. I was a counselor and was out in the forest exploring with a group of campers when we stumbled upon it. For an infinite moment, I was not a counselor but a younger version of myself. The golden afternoon sunlight held me in a magical moment, while excited squeals of campers finding their own magical moments breezed in the background. This memory exemplifies

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an important aspect of my ‘sense of place’ growing up: the natural world was a place of magical adventures, exploration, wonder, gratitude, and community. It was a place of belonging.

Hand in hand with this appreciation and respect for place, my settler consciousness was also conditioned and reinforced throughout my childhood and early adolescence. While I sewed buttons on a blanket in first grade to learn about “Native Americans of the Pacific Northwest,” I never heard (or at least never retained) the name of the indigenous groups whose territory my elementary school was actually situated on. When I took campers paddling on the Farmington River, I never wondered what the indigenous name of the river was. I never even knew where the term “Connecticut” came from. I grew up amidst purely colonial geography. I never questioned it because I never knew to question it. I just knew that this was my home. This was my place. As a teenager, I enjoyed rock climbing, canoeing, and kayaking. In the programs that facilitated these activities as well as when I independently recreated with friends, a few assumptions seemed to be built into my outdoor adventures: I had a right to access green spaces and wild places, and I had a right to be wherever I was, whenever I was. After all, this was *my* place.

I also learned a number of implicit lessons about being a Jew when I was young. A few memories illustrate some of these lessons. I remember being at the movies with my ninth grade boyfriend and his best friend. The friend dropped a few coins on the floor and said, “Whoops, I guess we’ll find out who’s Jewish.” My boyfriend uncomfortably said, “Uh, she’s Jewish.” His friend seemed mortified. I remained silent. The lesson here was that Jews were supposed to have money. This cultural belief was a product of the trope that Jews own global wealth and conspiratorially control the world; this trope was rarely explicitly presented to me, but the power of cultural violence is that beliefs do not need explicit articulation to do their job of subjugating. I internalized this belief by feeling shame about money, whether I had it or not. I would hide the fact of where I lived from some people because the working class neighborhood I grew up in was called “the ghetto” and

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was looked down upon by more affluent kids. (Ironically, the term “ghetto” comes from poor villages where Jews were restricted to living across areas of Europe.) Around Jews, I always felt like I should have a lot of money; around non-Jews, I felt afraid of having too much money.

In elementary school, I had a teacher from whom I often received messages that I was too smart and needed to be kept in my place. While this teacher never made antisemitic comments to me, I was one of two Jewish kids in my class and I distinctly remember how conscious I was of this fact when my intellect and abilities were on display. I felt pressure to both achieve and hide my smartness. Aptitude to the extent that I performed well was the goal; aptitude that threatened others was the thing to avoid. This psychological stance was a product of the historical pattern that so long as Jews were useful in the places they lived, Christian powers would keep them around. However, once they were deemed no longer useful, or once a scapegoat was needed to appease a popular uprising, Jews would be persecuted or exiled. This dimension of Jewish history was never explicitly explained to me, but the power of structural violence is that it operates regardless of one’s awareness of it. I internalized this structural reality by grasping to perfectionism and avoiding failing at all costs. For years going forward (and still sometimes today), I would hide mistakes from teachers and supervisors by telling small lies, or shifting blame onto others. The true stakes in a given situation were rarely high, but an underlying feeling of terror compelled me to act as *if* the stakes were high.

In high school, a friend one day playfully pointed out that my last name (Silverberg) is “as Jewish as it gets.” I had never thought about “how Jewish” my name was, but from then on, I hid my last name if I did not want someone to immediately know I was Jewish; I continue to do this today. Also, since high school, I have disliked being in pictures because I thought/think I look bad in them. Approximately one year ago, I realized that part of my decades-old aversion to being in pictures was actually an aversion to how I thought my nose looked in pictures (a big nose being a

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sure sign of my Jewishness). While I did not experience much direct antisemitic violence in my youth, I certainly internalized the terror of the tremendous direct violence that Jews around me, especially older generations of Jews, felt. From this historical and intergenerational trauma, I learned to hide my Jewishness. Part of the power of direct violence is how it impacts communities across generations, regardless of the specific individual(s) who initially experienced the violence.

Culturally and religiously speaking, I grew up in a not-very-observant-but-socially-engaged Jewish household. We ate cheeseburgers and pork chops, and my dad and I bonded over ribs. We celebrated all the major holidays, but not the minor ones. We lit candles and attended synagogue on Friday nights often enough that I have memories of candle flames and dresses. My parents were both involved communally; my dad would usher during services and my mom sang in the choir. My first paid job was working as a helper in the religious school. I attended a one-night-per-week Hebrew high school for Jewish teenagers from surrounding towns, which provided me a social network that fed my sense of belonging. With all of this positive Jewish identity development, my spirituality was separate from Judaism. I sought spirituality on forest trails, atop mountains, on rivers, and through dancing. I found my sense of the sacred not in the walls of synagogue but in the openness of the natural world and at live shows. I was inspired not by the details of prayer rituals, but by the details of animal tracks, tree bark, and bass lines. I tended my emotional angst not through praying to a father-like god in the sky, but by hiking and dancing. Judaism provided me a sense of religious and cultural community, but this was distinctly separate from my sense of spirituality and embodiment.

Somatically, I began to develop a contemplative relationship with my body around age 15. I learned form and technique through athletics and martial arts, and I learned about self-exploration through improvisational dancing. I was profoundly interested in massage therapy and healing arts and learning about anatomy and physiology became a (lifelong) hobby. When my father was

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diagnosed with cancer, I found solace in dancing, hiking, and healing modalities. At Grinnell College, I founded a Meditative Movement student group. While I did not conceptualize it this way then, sites of shaping (family, school, camp, Jewish community, wider culture and society) were generating narratives in my body. These narratives contained elements of both oppression and resilience. They shaped my posture and athleticism, my modes of participation in school, my habits of studying and performing, how I chose to socialize, and so much more. As I entered college and my early professional life, some of these narratives came into guiding focus - and some into question.

**Rupture.** In 2005, I took a leave of absence from Grinnell College. My impetus for leaving was that my father had recently died, and an Alternative Spring Break trip to an intentional community in rural Georgia had convinced me that growing food and feeling my toes in muddy streams was the healthiest thing I could be doing. I spent over a year living in a community anchored in earth-based Jewish practice. First, I participated in a farming fellowship called *Adamah* ('earth' in Hebrew). Then, I taught in a Jewish environmental education program called *Teva* ('nature' in Hebrew). I developed confidence in myself as an educator. I gained tremendous knowledge and skills pertaining to organic agriculture, natural history, and ecology. I felt a sense of belonging in the woodlands and farm fields of the northeast.

Beneath the surface of this knowledge and skills-based development, something soul deep inside of me was waking up. I discovered a new lens through which to study Torah and other sacred Jewish texts; approached as a book of sacred ecology, these texts and the *midrashim* (stories) that explained the texts revealed instructions for living in balance with all of creation and learning to hear the song of every earthly and celestial being as an expression of the divine. I learned to tell time by the sun and stars and began to feel my body meld into the body of the moon, the night light that for thousands of years had guided my people in their calendars, festivals, plantings,

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celebrations, and female rites of passage. On the one-year anniversary of my father's death, standing in a forest clearing around a fire, I called out the *Mourner's Kaddish* (a prayer for people who have passed) upward, beyond the clearing, letting my prayers rise in the flames and the smoke of the fire. People usually chant this prayer in a soft monotone; I gave it to the diamond-strewn sky with my unleashed voice echoing through the forest night, and I knew my father heard. I began to listen to plants and make medicine from them, intuitively praying in Hebrew and asking for permission to harvest. I felt myself unfolding, unfurling, finding expression of the unity of my body and earth body in a distinctly Jewish way. I was remembering how to pray. I was remembering the meaning of reciprocity. I was discovering an essence of Jewish indigeneity that had been stifled by millennia of patriarchy and displacement.

Somatically, I also unfurled over the year and a half that I spent in this community. My body had felt inhibited since my father's death, but at Teva, I exploded into rhythm, song, and movement. When my flute came out in an improvisational jam (the first time I had played since my father's memorial service), someone said, "Where has *that* been hiding?!" I replied, "Under my bed..." My fascia and muscles had been clenched since the trauma of my father's death and I began to release deepening layers of tissue through breath, song, and movement. I wrote songs and prayers, some of which are still today part of the prayer corpus of this community. The deeper I breathed as I danced, fluted, and sang, the more space I made in my chest for my heart to heal and literally, physically expand. This chapter of reshaping my narratives around Jewishness was joyful, empowering, and healing.

Professionally, I developed a love for environmental and place-based education. In addition to Jewish environmental education during the school year, I facilitated outdoor programs in the summertime. In the summer of 2006, I had the opportunity to design a program called Wildlife Explorers for campers entering 4th-6th grades. I spent hours during the pre-season compiling

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curriculum and creating field trip schedules. I selected a theme for each of the four two-week sessions. For the fourth session, I chose the theme “Native Americans and Primitive Skills.” The curriculum included skills such as fire building and shelter building, bird and plant observation and identification, and learning about “Native American culture.” In creating this curriculum, I was motivated by a sense that understanding the native people of the area and the ways they lived and inhabited the land was important. However, even then, I felt voyeuristic. I felt there was something wrong with the way I was trying to learn about Native American culture. In retrospect, I can identify a number of problematic elements in my pedagogy, such as my generalizing of all “Native Americans” into one homogeneous cultural group, the settler dominance inherent in my “learn about” educational approach, my representation of indigenous people of the area as having been part of the story of this place only in the past, and my designation of sophisticated cultural technologies and traditional ecological knowledge as “primitive.” At the time though, I had no language, frameworks, or mentors to help me articulate what felt dissonant. I knew something was wrong, but I was not yet able to identify what.

At the end of 2007, after teaching for one more season at Teva, I transferred to Prescott College in Prescott, Arizona where I self-designed a B.A. in Bioregional Studies with an emphasis in Environmental Education. Spiritually, I was amazed at how quickly I felt at home in the high desert of central and northern Arizona. The crunch of desert soil beneath my shoes, the prick of conifer needles against my bare feet, the aromatic resin of juniper berries and the butterscotch of the Ponderosa pines, the smoothness of manzanita’s bark against the rough landscapes it inhabited, the curvature of sandstone, the palette of purples and browns in layers of stone plateau, the juiciness of fresh prickly pear fruit...all whispered ancient songs to me. I had spent the past year and a half engaging in earth-based Jewish practice in the woodlands of the northeast. Suddenly, here in the desert, earth-based Jewish practice was not simply an adaptation of a text and body of teachings



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from another time and place, but rather a re-engaging of the living and indigenous culture of my Hebraic ancestors. No wonder the desert became home to me so quickly. The landscape was familiar to my Jewish soul. The landscape reminded me of ancestral home.

As I felt this deep connection to my own earth-based ancestral roots, the seed of dissonance that had stirred in me during Wildlife Explorers exploded. Everywhere around me, impossible to ignore, were indigenous rights struggles. In the town of Prescott, the Yavapai people were engaged in watershed issues. A little further north, the Snow Bowl was blasting snow made from sewage water onto two mountains that were sacred to 13 regional indigenous groups. On the Dine Reservation, elders and families were fighting Peabody Energy Corporation's mining for uranium and contamination of pristine groundwater.

I heard about the Thanksgiving Run, an annual effort that included raising funds and acquiring goods such as dog food, cordwood, house supplies, and tools. Participants would distribute goods to families and elders who were resisting relocation by the U.S. government in an area of the Dine Reservation called Black Mesa. "Land supporters" would also do various projects such as chopping wood, fixing corrals, herding sheep, and repairing *hogans* (traditional homes). I participated in the Thanksgiving Run in the fall of 2007, during which time I met people from an organization called Black Mesa Indigenous Support (BMIS). This organization consisted of just a few people. They spoke Dine and had deep, decades-long relationships with many of the elders and families on Black Mesa. I wondered what they did in their "off time," since it seemed to me that their lives were dedicated to being in solidarity with these families.

Staying in communication with BMIS, I organized additional groups from Prescott over the next two years; BMIS would communicate with folks on the reservation to learn who needed help with what projects, and I would gather the necessary humans and tools to provide support. I felt intensely self-conscious about my lack of practical skills with tools and building projects. Indeed, a

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group of mostly non-native 20-somethings with middle class urban/suburban backgrounds and varying degrees of manual intelligence was probably not the most efficient workforce. However, we showed up and we got it done.

After one of these land support trips, I returned to Prescott just in time to arrive at my college dance class. I remember sinking into a puddle on the studio floor, weeping. While living at Teva and Adamah, something healing and wholing had been awakened in me in relation to my Jewish soul and my resistance to the forces that wanted to annihilate that ancient, earth-borne part of me. Now, something wrenching and soul wounding was being awakened. On that dance floor, for the first time, I wept for the wounds of colonization. I wept angry tears for the astounding brutality of Peabody Energy Corporation and everything it represented. I wept tears of grief for the centuries of violation that left scars on old women's bodies. I wept as I grasped the tragedy of ongoing, systemic, colonial violence. I wept for the Dine. I wept for myself and for the wound of dislocation from my homeland – the place where my foremothers bled and gave birth and where my ancestors' bones lay buried.

As part of my senior project in early 2009, I went to Israel and Palestine for two and a half months. My initial intention was to learn about environmental peacebuilding initiatives. The reality was that I really just had a lot to learn about the land, the peoples who inhabited the land, my identity, and my relationship to the place (certainly much more than could be learned in two and a half months). It was a complicated trip during which I felt simultaneously at home in a way I had never imagined possible, and appalled at such widespread disregard for Palestinian lives, sovereignty, and dignity. I was struck by the similarities between the Naqab region of Israel and Palestine and what I had witnessed in the U.S. American Southwest: U.S. policies of removal, containment, and termination seemed to be effectively replicated in the Naqab; instead of reservations, Naqab Bedouin who had been removed from their ancestral homes were contained in

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“villages,” many of which were and presently continue to be literally bulldozed and barred from government resources. I thought of Dine grandmas chaining themselves to their kitchen tables as their homes and sheep were impounded. I thought of how Dine elder Pauline Whitesinger said that there is no word for relocation in the Dine language because to be displaced means to cease to exist. I wondered what this meant for Palestinians. I wondered what this meant for Jews.

One morning, a week after I returned home from Israel and Palestine, I woke up with searing pain extending from my navel down through my thighs. Moaning in pain in my bed, confused about where this physical pain was coming from, I suddenly felt an image emerge inside my body, a remnant from a dream I had had during the night. In the dream, a deep taproot was growing from my tailbone down into the earth. The taproot was shaped like a triangular wedge, thick, wide, dark brown, soily, with tiny root hairs growing in all directions. With my feet firmly planted into the earth, I tried with all my



Figure 2 – “Painful Truths.” Oil pastel by Cara Michelle Silverberg

strength to dislodge the taproot, to free myself from its hold on me. The harder I tried to uproot myself, the deeper and more firmly the root extended. My nocturnal efforts to dislodge this root had left me with burning pain throbbing throughout much of my body. I understood this dream to be a somatic reflection of the seemingly contradictory truths my U.S. American Jewish body was holding: I had roots in my homeland, and occupation of Palestinian life and lands was abhorrent.

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I returned to Prescott to present my senior project. Although the day before my presentation I still felt unclear about exactly what I was presenting, for the first time in my life, the fear of failure had no grip on me. It was like I had come home from my journey to Israel and Palestine with a renewed sense of who I was and no need to prove anything otherwise. I approached dialogue about these complicated issues from a place of certainty within myself that I actually did not need to be perfect, that I would not be persecuted if I made a mistake. This was a tremendous shift for me. My presentation received mixed reviews – partly due to my lack of clarity of precisely what I was presenting, and partly (I believe) due to a certain kind of non-receptivity that I would continue to find in progressive and radical circles.

Over time, I tried to talk about the complexity of who I understood myself to be in relation to my homeland. With non-Jews, I often found myself anywhere between tacitly rejected and explicitly ostracized. I felt I could not talk about Israel in leftist circles unless I was willing to leave part of myself at the door, as alluding to my ancestral relationship with my own homeland brought on attacks of my being a “Zionist colonizer” and supporting “anti-Palestinian apartheid.” Within Jewish communities, I often could not talk about Israel because the subject was taboo. Most Jewish communities I was part of (personally as well as organizationally) attempted to talk about Israel in “non-political” ways so as to not “divide constituents” or alienate funders who might deem any critique of Israeli policy as grounds for severing ties.

This rejection of something that felt so core to me set my body on high alert, with an underlying sense of terror surging to the surface and coming to animate much of my behavior and many of my choices. I began to self-isolate within Jewish communities. I learned to hide my Jewishness when I did function in secular spaces, especially radical ones. I did not talk about Israel. I did not say “Palestine.” I read about settler colonialism at home and kept my mouth shut at work. I continued to read indigenous activists’ writings, attend local indigenous events, and educate myself

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about AIM (American Indian Movement) and the BIA (Bureau of Indian Affairs), but I did not seek out local indigenous leaders myself or take steps to be in active solidarity. I coasted on settler privilege. By 2015, most of the people in my personal life were Jews and 100% of my paid professional work was in the Jewish world.

I do not want to give the impression that this chapter of my life was all tenuous. To the contrary, I felt valued, appreciated, and able to offer many of my gifts through my work as a Jewish educator. A generation of young people repeatedly brought me to tears and laughter, and my memories of them will *always* bring me joy. I learned that I could make mistakes and people would still love me. There was powerful healing in being with other Jews and I gained family through the Jewish community. In addition to all that hid in the background, there was tremendous beauty in this time of my life. I believe that the beauty, strength, and resilience I encountered in Jewish life was a contributing factor to my being able to begin to consciously excavate and heal Jewish trauma.

This excavation started in earnest when I began accessing images of the cultural and intergenerational Jewish trauma I was carrying inside my body. These graphic and grotesque images, the influx of which were sometimes re-traumatizing, emerged and resided in very specific places in my body. Along with these images came intense physical issues. By the age of 29, I had seriously injured my back numerous times. Eventually, a doctor told me that I was at risk for an annular tear and that I *must* do something to manage my structural spinal issues. I started on a regimen of orthotics, physical therapy, and numerous other modalities to heal and repattern my body. Allopathic medicine educated me about musculo-skeletal sources of my back pain and somatics educated me about trauma-related sources. Over time, the combination of structural support (custom orthotics), direct personal support (physical therapy and bodywork), and cultural support (community and allies) offered me a transformative container in which I began to undergo a massive shifting of narratives.

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**Recovery.** My movement practices – a mixture of martial arts, capoeira, dancing, yoga, and hiking – as well as therapeutic practices such as drama therapy and Shadow Work (see Appendix D) supported my embodied exploration of these changing narratives. I became restless with the structure of life and work I had set up for myself. I began to have conversations with Jewish people I trusted about what internalized antisemitism means. I began to question whether patterns of thought and behavior that had been present for all of my life were simply “me” or were aspects of myself that revealed internalized anti-Jewish oppression. I questioned my sense of urgency and my need for perfection. I questioned the way I isolated myself in Jewish spaces. I questioned why my politics seemed so separate from my professional work. I began to notice how these patterns that were present in me as an individual were also present in the Jewish organizations I worked with.

At the time, I was serving as the coordinator of youth and teen programs at a synagogue. I began to address Israel and Palestine in teen programs. With parents, I had conversations about the potential of Jewish trauma being passed on intergenerationally and pedagogical implications of this in our religious school. I began to run training sessions on trauma-informed facilitation for the religious school teachers and summer camp counselors. I started focusing my curriculum development efforts on meaningful social action with youth and inclusion trainings for staff. In my work in the Jewish environmental world, I began facilitating workshops on the importance of understanding colonization contexts in the places where we practiced earth-based Judaism. I began developing relationships with local indigenous people. I was breaking out of the narratives that had been defining my work for years and my burgeoning professional interests reflected that.

So, I decided to go to graduate school. In the fall of 2016, I enrolled in SIT’s Peacebuilding and Conflict Transformation program part-time while continuing to work. I also pursued a Training Specialization, which meant that I took courses in training design, training ethics, intercultural communication, and disability and inclusion. After my first semester, major life changes caused me

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to abruptly leave my job and continue my education full-time. The details of those changes are not important. What is significant is that, while I did not perceive it this way then, my departure from my job signified my being ready to leave the safety of Jewish isolationism. I felt like I was engaging with the world and with concepts of community and justice in a narrow way, and I was ready to embody a story that felt more integrative and more inclusive.

My SIT coursework in training instilled in me a sense that risk-taking was an important learning and growing edge. A course in training ethics raised the question: At what point am I ready and qualified to teach and train about something? And who determines my readiness and qualification? For example, facilitating learning about racism in Jewish education could be questionable given my limited awareness of how I am impacted by whiteness. At the same time, if no one else was raising the issue and I held awareness that there was indeed an issue, would it be appropriate for me to take a risk and try to address the issue? Such ethical questions raised the corollary questions of: What is actually at risk? What do I have to lose, and what do I have to gain? What do you have to lose and gain? We do we have to lose and gain? How does my social location inform the risks I am willing to take and the mistakes I am willing to make?

In May and June of 2017, I attended two trainings: Strategies for Trauma Awareness and Resilience (STAR) for restorative justice and conflict transformation practitioners at Eastern Mennonite University's Summer Peacebuilding Institute, and Intersections of Racism and Antisemitism for Jewish activists and organizers in Washington D.C. with Cherie Brown, Dove Kent, and Helen Bennett. My goals in attending these trainings were to bolster my awareness, knowledge, and skills so that I might feel more ready and qualified to address related topics in my work as an educator. STAR affirmed my intuitive and somatic understanding of intergenerational trauma and trauma healing, and provided me tools and resources for self-management of trauma responses - applicable to both me and groups I might facilitate in the future (see Appendix D). The

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training in D.C. enhanced my understanding of and ability to articulate structural antisemitism<sup>3</sup> and its relationship to anti-Black racism and xenophobia. Together, these trainings catapulted me into deep personal transformation.

While I may have understood cognitively going into these trainings that I was entering serious somatic-psychological terrain, I did not viscerally understand that healing intergenerational Jewish trauma would mean detoxing it from my body. Often, in order for something to get better, it has to get worse first. A wound must ooze infectious goo in order to expel the toxins causing the infection. Similarly, the process of detoxification of intergenerational Jewish trauma produced an array of patterns including but not limited to: tightness in my chest, rapid heartbeat, sobbing, shaking, self-doubt, self-blame, difficulty making decisions, adrenal fatigue, chronic contraction of my right psoas, and lumbar pain. Over the past two years (and still at this time of writing), I have experienced all of these symptoms in varying degrees. I have good days, but most days are defined by some combination of these trauma responses. Interestingly, as these patterns have intensified, I have been able to discern which of them have *always* been present in my embodied patterns of thought, physiology, and behavior; I am currently in the process of redefining “baseline” for myself, as I no longer accept the old definition of “me,” replete with perfectionism and control issues, as the “me” I want to embody in the world.

My journey of recovery has also involved a deep analysis of the social location of Jews as both colonizer and colonized. The tactics of displacement, genocide and enslavement enacted upon

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<sup>3</sup> The “middle agent” analysis of structural antisemitism asserts that Jews have been placed throughout history in a middle agent role specifically designed to carry out the “dirty work” of owning classes. Banned from most occupations and geographically isolated from their non-Jewish neighbors in Christian Europe (Jews in Islamic empires generally had a different experience), Jews were often pigeonholed into money-oriented occupations that positioned them as the financial face of ruling elites. In the middle agent analysis, the cyclical nature of direct anti-Jewish violence is key. During calm periods, Jews’ social location between owning classes and poor people enables them to accrue resources and assimilate to surrounding cultures; indeed, in order for Jews to be able to be blamed for the economic ails of others, they must have at least *some* privilege, resources, and societal value. When economies crash and people begin to starve, Jews become an easy face of blame. See *Jews for Racial & Economic Justice*, 2017; Morales, 2012; and Rosenblum, 2007 for a deeper analysis and contemporary applications of the middle-agent analysis.



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African and indigenous bodies in the “New World” were already well developed by the time European colonization of the Americas began. (Dunbar-Ortiz, 2014). European imperialism and colonialism had originally designated the Semite (Arab, Jewish, Muslim, and North African people who shared Semitic language and culture) as the ‘Other’ (Abbas, 2017). The Christian Crusades of



Figure 3 – “Diasporic Malnourishment.” Oil pastel by Cara Michelle Silverberg

the 11<sup>th</sup> through 13<sup>th</sup> centuries, which targeted Semitic peoples, followed by the subjugation of indigenous peoples of Europe such as the Celts and the Irish, enabled Europe to perfect the art of subjugating foreign ‘others’ and their land well before 1492. Because of how Jews have been racialized and assimilated over time, this history of Semitic colonization is often lost in analyses of coloniality. Yet it is precisely this social location that made my discovery of earth-based Judaism and the indigenous roots of my Hebraic ancestors so radical and healing.

At the same time, whether in relation to particular aspects of statist Zionism or the complex social locations of Jews in decolonizing states such as Tunisia and Algeria in the mid-20th century, Jews have also held the role of colonizer (Memmi, 1965). Reflecting on this quagmire, Ben Steinhardt Case (2018) summarizes:

...from Fanon we learn that: (1) Jews are an oppressed people; (2) they are oppressed by the same colonial forces that dominate other oppressed peoples; (3) Jews as a group are in many

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ways closer to the colonizer than other oppressed peoples are; (4) that proximity is itself used by the oppressor to maintain the colonial situation...Ultimately, Fanon constructs a dichotomous world – colonizer and colonized – in which it is unclear where the complexities he discusses around the Jewish position fit in. If Jews are sometimes in one category and sometimes in the other, or if Jews simultaneously experience elements of both, then how can Jews pursue decolonization? (para. 11)

By the logics of colonization and decolonization, I am both displaced and an occupier wherever I go. I pray for a way in which I can be a diasporic Jew living in the earth-based ways of my ancestors *and* not be displacing indigenous people in my diasporic place of belonging. I pray that Jews whose sense of place is thoroughly embedded in physical homeland can also find a way to belong to place without displacing others. As a diasporic Jew who is both colonized and colonizer, my present work centers the question of how to belong to a place while relinquishing entitlement to it. I have not yet figured out how to gracefully dance this line, but I am trying.

Anticolonial pedagogy is a step in this direction. My professional work has come to center the exposition and critique of settler colonialism and its accompanying ontologies of white supremacy, domination, and ownership in program development and organizational culture. For example, I recently initiated a Jewish community of practice to examine our environmental work in relation to settler colonialism. This group explores questions such as: How do we relate to land? How do we understand our earth-based ancestry in the tapestry of a global world (of migration, diaspora, exile, and settler colonialism)? What does it mean to us to live with land that our ancestors are not from? We connect monthly on two-hour web calls, during which we rotationally facilitate exploration of articles, media, and resources we have all viewed/read/listened to in advance. This community of practice has provided us a safe space to develop knowledge and awareness that leads to actionable behavior. For example, several of us direct or work at summer camps. We are focusing

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an upcoming call on workshopping camper programming, staff training curriculum, community partnerships, and more in an effort to disrupt settler colonial structures in the programs we work for. We have a guest scholar joining us for this call and we are working on funding that will, in the future, enable us to bring indigenous voices into this conversation. Are we doing all of this effectively and without offense to indigenous people? Likely not. However, we are in the practice of healing anti-Jewish oppression and so, when that underlying sense of terror peeks out through urgency and perfectionism, we remind each other that making a mistake in this case is not going to result in persecution.

At a recent Jewish environmental conference, someone mused, “I wonder who the indigenous groups are here.” I replied, “This is Meskwaki, Potawatomi, Odawa, and Haudenosaunee territory.” Someone else asked, “You just know that?” I replied, “Sure. When I travel, I want to know what territory I’m entering.” This awareness has become a reflex. While knowing where I am is a far cry from decolonization, the more of a reflex this becomes for me, the more I realize it is far from a reflex for the vast majority of settlers. While a tiny step, I do believe that such changes in embodied awareness and behavior can constitute significant change over time. After all, the personal is political and collective transformation requires personal transformation.

### **Themes of Trainer Growth**

In addition to these big picture ways that critical embodied praxis has propelled my development as a human and professional, I can pinpoint four areas of trainer development that have emerged since I started at SIT: somatic assessment, how I seek safety, racial identity development, and my training style.

**Somatic Assessment.** While I have long been cultivating somatic awareness, my learning about social identities and social location while at SIT has added a dimension of somatic assessment to my embodied practice. I have learned that the embodied patterns involved in my dominance

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impulses are neurologically and physiologically different than those of my trauma responses. For example, my hip flexor/lower back flare-ups generally occur when my Jewish trauma responses are activated. When I notice that my hip flexor is cringing, I can take note that a Jewish trauma response is being triggered and make a conscious choice about whether it will animate my next words and moves. An example of a dominance behavior is the awkward sense of exaggerated humility I sometimes get around indigenous people. In direct response to culturally violent romanticization of native people and narratives that they no longer exist, I sometimes experience a fluttery, anxious feeling (rapid heartbeat, loss of words), as if to say, “Wow! A real live native person!” Somatic assessment enables me to notice this and to actively choose different behavior.

Given my awareness of my own trauma and dominance responses through active embodied practice, I have grown much more attuned to people I work with: Did their face just go pale? Are they suddenly sweating? What was just said, and by whom? How have vocal patterns and body positioning changed? I have slowed down my own pace as a camp director so that I can observe, be present, and regularly check in with people about how they are doing. I am making changes in the program schedule that allow more spaciousness and time for people to breathe and take a minute between activities. I am integrating somatic self-care practices into staff training and inviting conversations about when and why such self-care might be necessary. Facilitating somatic inquiry and somatic assessment is an area of development as an educator that I am excited to venture more deeply into; I aim to develop my skills in facilitating somatic inquiry and to continue to find ways to integrate embodiment practice into programs and organizational culture.

**Seeking Safety.** When I enrolled at SIT full time, I left the safety of Jewish isolationism. I immersed in an academic community where there was a small handful of Jews; little mention *ever* of antisemitism in all the -isms we discussed in class and in all the surveys and workshops offered by the Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Office; antisemitic rhetoric spoken regularly, particularly by

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international students; and the constant challenge of having classes (re)scheduled on my holy days and feeling varyingly supported and penalized by professors for missing class. I eventually responded to these challenges by making myself really visibly Jewish. I introduced myself through my work in Jewish communities. In one class where we did a "story of your name" icebreaker, I talked about my Hebrew name. I talked more readily about Judaism, Jewish identity, and even Israel and Palestine. The result was that I had more people ask me questions about Judaism and offer traditional greetings on Jewish holidays, and I felt support from professors. Being Jewish felt safer.

Being a Jew is no less core to my identity than it was before, but my orientation to Jewishness is much more outward-facing than it was before. Whereas in the previous chapter of my life I sought safety in Jewish institutions and Jewish communities, in this stage of my development, I find myself seeking safety through cultivating relationships across difference. I do this by working in the secular world, being honest and open about my Jewishness in non-Jewish spaces, and being vocal about structural and cultural antisemitism when it arises. This orientation of outward-facing Jewishness opens pathways for collaborative projects, community building, and deeper relationships with diverse people. Three years ago, this felt scary; now, it feels essential.

In my work as a trainer, I have experienced a shift from working *with* Jews to working *as* a Jew. I do continue to work (part-time) with Jews on the topics of embodiment, antisemitism, internalized antisemitism, and settler colonialism in the context of identity and place-based work. However, this is dramatically different from my previous full-time work solely with Jews that focused on family programs, ritual life, and outdoor education. Two brief stories illustrate this shift. Last summer, rather than seeking out Jews with whom to blow *shofar* (ritual ram's horn) during the month of *Elul* (a spiritually preparatory month before the holiest days of the Jewish festival calendar), I brought my shofar to camp. During morning circle, when we sang our daily greeting

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song to the animals and land, I pulled out my shofar and made it a part of our camp ritual. I felt positive sharing this part of my Jewish self at a secular camp, and I think the four Jewish campers (out of 50) in the circle felt excited and empowered to be able to share something about their Jewishness, too. Also last summer, a colleague asked me to mentor her in designing curriculum for a Jewish agricultural teen program. She wanted to facilitate learning about colonialism and indigenous people, given her own awareness of doing Jewish agricultural work on local indigenous land. She contacted me because she had attended a training I led on related topics. Along with two interns she had hired, we attended a work day at a local garden site managed by an indigenous organization I volunteer with. Working in the gardens enabled all of us to build deeper awareness of the settler colonial context in which we live while serving the indigenous community. Continuing to explore meaningful avenues for outward-facing Jewishness is another priority area in my development as a trainer.

**Racial Identity Development.** A third area where I have changed tremendously during my time at SIT is in my racial identity development. Whereas other areas of growth have, as social scientist Kurt Lewin calls it, “refrozen” in a new frame of reference, this area of growth is still very much in movement and change. In April of 2018, a group of SIT students and staff facilitated a race symposium on campus. Over the course of three days, we dialogued, caucused, watched films, and grappled with racial realities at SIT. Near the end of the symposium, I had an AHA moment: I realized that my wounding around Jewish trauma was getting in the way of examining my whiteness.

Fittingly, approximately one month later, I was down South attending the previously mentioned Strategies for Trauma Awareness and Resilience (STAR) and Intersections of Racism and Antisemitism trainings. On the first night of the Racism and Antisemitism training, one of the trainers - a self-identified white woman of Eastern European Jewish heritage - was sharing her story.

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When she got to the part about how she would go to anti-racism trainings, start to cry, and get the impulse to leave the room because she felt something about her Jewish experience was completely unwelcome, everyone began to snap in agreement. I looked around and saw a room full of people, some “white” and some not, nodding and giving audible indications of mutual experience. What was going on? Was this room of people committed to anti-racism simply a hotpot of white fragility? “White fragility” is a term coined by Robin DiAngelo (2018) to explain many white peoples’ disproportionate and skewed senses of hurt and defensiveness when they encounter even a small degree of racial tension and/or have their racial dominance pointed out to them.

I absolutely need to unpack and remedy my white fragility. At the same time, as a Jew, I frequently encounter the term “white fragility” used in a way that I find to be inaccurate. While a full discussion of racialization of Jews is beyond the scope of this paper, I will say that my relationship to my whiteness at this point is this: I have tremendous white privilege and I perpetuate white supremacy through some of my behaviors and beliefs. I am also quite clear that to modern-day white nationalists (and to Nazis and neo-Nazis, perpetrators of pogroms, drivers of Inquisitions, and Crusaders of the 1000s-1200s), I am not white. I am Jew. I am Other. This is not a religious distinction but a racial one (Ward, 2017). I am coded as white, for now, because that is what serves people in power. However, part of how structural antisemitism works is that Jews are socially located as a buffer group between those in power and the masses, able to be scapegoated when circumstances call for it (Jews for Racial and Economic Justice, 2018; Memmi, 1965). As a Jew, my whiteness can be revoked at any moment. Thus, I feel that to simply call myself white without naming complexity is akin to colluding in anti-Jewish oppression.

At the same time, I am concerned that my use of the terms “white-passing” or “socially coded as white” minimizes and even erases the racism that Jews of Color experience *within* Jewish communities and that People of Color in general experience. At this point in my racial identity

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development, when in direct dialogue with most People of Color, I call myself white because I am concerned about the negative potential of my choice to speak otherwise; there are some People of Color in my life with whom I have deep enough relationships that I do speak or think I could speak honestly with. That said, I do not accept the premise that because I have white privilege and perpetuate white supremacy through some of my embodied patterning that I am necessarily white. Is this simply white fragility? I do not think so, but I will keep somatically assessing myself.

In my work as an educator, I have yet to land in a clear place with regard to what all of this means in practice. In monthly camp meetings, our (multiracial, all female) leadership team reads and reflects on readings such as characteristics of white supremacy culture in organizations (Okun, n.d.). Together, we analyze what camp culturally and structurally reinforces and we self-assess in order to make conscious choices about what we want to cultivate. So far, we have made several changes to camp policies, promotional language, staff management, and programming. We are questioning how our program normalizes and elevates European-heritage agricultural practices. We have added a land acknowledgment of local indigenous peoples to our website. We have revamped our campership aid system and are looking at options for an after-camp option so that working families can access camp. In staff training, we address behavior management through the lens of power, questioning how social identities and power dynamics impact camper interactions, camper-counselor interactions, and conflict interventions. These are just a handful of examples of ways we are examining how white supremacy and its corollary issues of class and colonialism underlie many of our policies and practices. I believe all of these steps are important. However, the fact remains that we are, at present, a predominantly white camp directed by white/white-passing people that primarily serves a financially privileged population. We have a far way to go towards becoming an anti-racist and inclusive organization. I have a far way to go towards becoming an anti-racist person.



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**Training and Leadership Style.** As I have understood more about my internalized anti-Jewish oppression patterns (e.g. needing to feel in control and therefore micromanaging schedules and communications), I have become a much less directive camp director and more of a listener. For example, the way I give feedback to people I supervise has changed. I used to be extremely detailed and explicit, as I was giving feedback that was largely shaped around my expectations and my underlying need to feel in control. I would coach people towards growth, but the trajectory for that growth had at least as much to do with me as it did with them. Now, I have stepped so much into a style of facilitating people learning from each other and giving them space to define growth for themselves that I have to push myself to give detailed feedback when it is appropriate. The way I conduct staff meetings has also changed. While I have always sought feedback and input from staff members, my voice is now generally the last to speak when someone raises a question or issue; I am more interested in collective wisdom than I am in my own engrained ways of thinking about things. Instead of feeling like everything is my responsibility and thus making decisions on my own, I almost always make decisions in consultation with staff. I used to have trouble delegating because I needed for everything to go “right.” Now, not only do I delegate, I often help others learn to delegate. While my values as a trainer and leader have not actually shifted very much, my ability to embody and promote those values has shifted dramatically. Because internalized anti-Jewish oppression and white supremacy have some similar characteristics (e.g. a desire to be in control, perfectionism, sense of urgency; Okun, n.d.), I think that my development has to do with the work I have done to repattern both internalized oppression and internalized dominance. As I continue to develop as a trainer, I am interested in (re)exploring all trainer and supervisory styles, as I am realizing that my “innate” or “predominant” styles are as much functions of my strengths as they are functions of my embodied patterning.

### Conclusions

Often when I talk about embodiment, the concept strikes people as very abstract. This is curious to me because my body is the most concrete thing I know. It took me years to understand what people meant by praxis because the idea of learning without reflecting, integrating, and re-emerging into a new, embodied form of self was foreign to me. A significant shift in my development as a human and educator since I began at SIT is that my orientation to healing is grounded not only in self-care and embodied transformation, but also in social analysis. Before I matriculated at SIT, I did not consider myself to be a social justice educator or a peace educator. Now, I consider myself to be both. Furthermore, my commitment to embodiment and healing has an articulated place in my work.

To you, reader, I would pose these questions: What if the givens that we assume about ourselves (“This is my innate training style. This is who I am. I just prefer this.”) are not actually givens at all, but somatically patterned ways of being and doing? What if that patterning can change? What happens when we approach development as a process of conscious embodied evolution? How might the healing capacity of learning, the possibility of self-actualization through learning, and the knowing that all our oppressions (and liberations!) are entwined, be invigorated through critical education? Whether you consider yourself to be a social justice educator, place-based educator, peace educator, somatic educator, or trainer, or if some semblance of healing, peace, cultural transformation, and/or liberation is the impetus for your work in the world, then I invite you to turn inward towards your own embodied wisdom – towards critical embodied praxis.

As for my mapping tool, I am curious to “field test” it to discover if and how it is relevant and applicable for other people. This model took a certain shape for me given my worldview and life experiences; how will the question of what we embody as educators take shape for others? How will others perceive relationships between violence, oppression, peace, liberation, and embodiment?

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How will such a model (in any of its potential future iterations) be received by Jews? by secular groups? by intercultural and international groups? It will be exciting and enlightening to find out.

A guiding image for the next chapter of my life has yet to clearly reveal itself and I wonder what this next chapter will bring. I think it will involve further exploration of my proximate ancestors from Italy and Poland. I think it will have to do with resilience, with remembering that my people are *strong*, with embodying strength in new ways. I think it will involve more joy. While I will continue to embrace what is hard, as ultimately I believe that spaces of wounding teach me about becoming more fully human, I also commit to embracing what feels good. After all, as facilitator and healer adrienne maree brown (2019) affirms, “Pleasure is a measure of freedom” (p. 3). I follow Freire’s (1998) path when I say, “I have never ceased to try to create a pedagogical space in which joy has its privileged role” (p. 69). The work of experiencing joy is the work of liberation - mine, yours, ours.



Figure 4 – “Diasporic Wholeness.” Oil pastel by Cara Michelle Silverberg

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**Appendix A: Four Types of Power**

The ways in which I conceive of power and power dynamics use such terms in this paper are based upon the following chart, which summarizes different forms of power as expressed by VeneKlasen and Miller (2002, p. 39).

<p><b>Power over...</b>is seen as a win-lose kind of relationship. Having power involves taking it from someone else, and then, using it to dominate and prevent others from gaining it. In the absence of alternative models and relationships, people repeat the power over pattern in their personal relationships, communities, and institutions. New forms of leadership and decision making must be explicitly defined, taught, and rewarded in order to promote more democratic forms of power.</p>
<p><b>Power with</b> has to do with finding common ground among different interests and building collective strength. Based on mutual support, solidarity, and collaboration, power with can help build bridges across different interests to transform or reduce social conflict and promote equitable relations.</p>
<p><b>Power to</b> refers to the unique potential of every person to shape his or her life and world. When based on mutual support, it opens up the possibilities of joint action, or power with.</p>
<p><b>Power within</b> has to do with a person's sense of self-worth and self-knowledge. It includes an ability to recognise individual differences while respecting others. Power within is the capacity to imagine and have hope; it affirms the common human search for dignity and fulfillment.</p>

**Appendix B: Commonly Identified Patterns of Internalized Oppression**

(Reproduced from Williams, 2012, pp. 161-166)

Pattern (individual & group)	Variation	Source
Adequacy and competency		C. Brown (1995); Love (2002)
Alienation		Bartky (1990); B. Duran & E. Duran (1995); Freire (1995); Hershel (1995); Love (2002)
Anger, rage, hostility		J. Bell (2006); B. Duran & E. Duran (1995); Miller (1986); Moane (1999); Pharr (1996, 1997); Tigert (1999, 2001)
Apathy, ambivalence, fatalism		Comas-Diaz, 1994; Freire, 1970; Moane, 1999; Morris, 1987
Arrogance		Moane, 1999
Attacking group leaders		B. Duran & E. Duran (1995); Pharr (1997)
Attribution of superiority of the dominant group	Competence; credibility, belief in invincibility, infallibility and/or magic of dominant group; mistrusting our thinking; love/hate paradox, envy/desire paradox	Freire (1970); Hershel (1995); Lipsky (2006); Love (2002) Miller (1986); Tappan (2003)
Attraction to and repulsion to dominant group		Fanon (1967, 1968); Freire (1970)
Belief in victimization status or sense of victimhood/suffering		Brown (1995); Freire (1970) Love (2002)

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Care-taking/focus on needs and desires of dominant group	Mammification, placing dominant group's needs & Interests above your own	Artz (1996); Love (2002) Miller (1986); Moane (1999); Morris (1987)
Collusion		B. Duran & E. Duran (1995); Morris (1987); Kirk & Okazawa-Rey (2007)
Contempt		Pharr (1996, 1997)
Criticism and invalidation		Dominick & Ebrahimi(2010)
Deference to the dominant group	Submissiveness, passivity, docility	Miller (1986)
Desire to emulate dominant group		Freire (1970); Memmi (1965)
Dissimulation		hooks (2005) Miller (1986); Moane (1999)
Duality	Individual, cultural, consciousness	Du Bois (1995); B. Duran & E. Duran (1995); Fanon (1964, 1968); Freire (1970); Miller (1986); Moane 1999); Morris (1987); Young, 1990)
Failure to rebel, docility, compliance		Freire (1970); Love (2002); Morris ((1987); Pharr (1996,1997); Kasl (1992)
Fear and terror	Fear of freedom, fear of own power and self-determination, fear of violence, fear of action against oppression	Ahluwalia & Zegeye (2001); Brown (1995); Freire (1970); Love (2002); Miller (1986); Moane (1999); Morris (1987); Pharr (1996,1997) Tigert (1999)

CRITICAL EMBODIED PRAXIS FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE AND PEACE EDUCATORS

Feelings of inferiority (self and group) and failure		Ahluwalia & Zegeye (2001); Comas-Diaz (1994); Love (2002); Miller (1986); Moane (1999); Pharr (1996); Tigert (1999, 2001)
Feeling of failure		B. Duran & E. Duran (1995) Miller (1986)
Feelings of insecurity		J. Bell (2006); Moane (1999)
Feeling ugly, evil, bad, unloved, or unwanted		J. Bell (2006); Comas-Diaz (1994); Miller (1986)
Feelings of being Unsafe		C. Brown (1995); Love (2002)
Grief		B. Duran & E. Duran (1995); Moane (1999)
Guilt		B. Duran & E. Duran (1995); Moane (1999)
Helplessness		Ahluwalia & Zegeye (2001); B. Duran & E. Duran (1995) Love (2002); Moane (1999)
Hopelessness, Despair		J. Bell (2006); B. Duran & E. Duran (1995); Moane (1999); Woolley (1993)
Humiliation		Moane (1999)
Identify with those in power/dominant group		B. Duran & E. Duran (1995); Fanon (1967, 1968); Love (2002); Morris (1987); Pharr (1996); Tappan (2003)
Isolation		C. Brown (1995); Love (2002); Pheterson (1986)
Focus on individual empowerment/ individualism/ no group attachment		Love (2002); Pharr (1996, 1997)
Inappropriate sexual behavior		L. Brown (1986); Moane (1999)

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Inter-generational transmission of patterns, historical trauma		Brave Heart (1995, 1998, 2003); Braveheart-Jordan & Debruyne (1995, 1996, 1998), C. Brown (1995); Comas-Diaz (1994); B. Duran & E. Duran (1995) Love (2002); Pharr, (1996)
Internalization of negative group identities/oppressors' view of group	** See other definitions of IO	Fanon (1967, 1968); Freire (1970); Memmi (1965); Morris (1987); Sonn & Fisher, (1998, 2000) Young (1990)
Isolation and loneliness		C. Brown (1995); Love (2002) Moane (1999); Pheterson (1986); Tigert (1999)
Lack of agency, and personal sense of no power, powerlessness		Ahluwalia & Zegeye (2001); J. Bell (2006); Comas-Diaz (1994); Joffe & Albee; Love (2002) Miller (1986); Moane (1999); Tigert (1999) Woolley (1993); Young (1990)
Lack of self-knowledge, distortion of self-knowledge		B. Duran & E. Duran (1995) Miller (1986); Moane (1999)
Lack of control		Love (2002); Tigert (1999)
Learned helplessness		Comas-Diaz (1994); B. Duran & E. Duran (1995); Miller (1986); Morris (1987)
Loss and restriction of identity, history, culture, deculturalization, cultural estrangement		Moane (1999); Sonn & Fisher (1998, 2000),

CRITICAL EMBODIED PRAXIS FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE AND PEACE EDUCATORS

Low self-esteem, self-respect, self-worth and self-confidence, negative self-concept, self-doubt, self-blame, self-deprecation		Comas-Diaz (1994); Freire (1970); Hershel (1995); Joffe & Albee (1988); Miller (1986); Moane (1999); Morris (1987); Pharr (1996); Sonn & Fisher (1998, 2000); Tappan (2003); Woolley(1993)
Mental Illness and vulnerability to mental illness	Depression, PTSD, anxiety	J. Bell (2006); Comas-Diaz (1994); B. Duran & E. Duran (1995); Moane (1999)
Mutual distrust among group		Moane (1999)
Panic, worry, urgency, hyper-criticalness,		C. Brown (1995); L. Brown (1986); Moane (1999)
Physical symptoms of oppression	Physical ailments, suicide, substance abuse, destructive sexual behaviors,	J. Bell (2006); L. Brown (1986); B. Duran & E. Duran (1995); Brave Heart (2003)
Practice exclusion of other groups or members of own group		Dominick & Ebrahimi (2010); Love (2002)
Preference for dominant group and things associated with it	Aesthetics (skin color, hair texture, Physical features), knowledge constructions	Comas-Diaz (1994); Golden (2004); Love (2002); Russell, Midge, & Hall (1992)
Psychological and emotional dependence, lack of autonomy		Ahluwalia & Zegeye (2001); Freire (1970); Miller (1986); Moane (1999)
Restriction/modification of action		Moane (1999); Pharr (1997)
Restriction	Of identity, no vision for alternate realities	Moane (1999); Pharr (1997)
Self-hatred	Individual and group	B. Duran & E. Duran (1995); Moane (1999); Pharr (1996); Sonn & Fisher (2000)



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Self-medicating and destructive or addictive behaviors	Alcohol, drugs, sex	L. Brown (1986); B. Duran & E. Duran (1995); Moane (1999); Poupart (2003)
Shame		Comas-Diaz (1994); B. Duran & E. Duran (1995); hooks (1995, 2001, 2002, 2004, 2005); Kaufman (1992); Bradshaw, (1988); Kaufman & Raphael (1996) Tigert, (1999, 2001)
Unconscious application of internalized beliefs		B. Duran & E. Duran (1995); Jackins (1999); Love (2002); Morris (1987)
Unwillingness to admit weakness or vulnerability		Miller (1986); Moane (1999)
Violence and abuse		Dominick & Ebrahimi (2010); B. Duran & E. Duran (1995)
Violence and destructiveness-- physical, emotional, verbal	Horizontal hostility, inter-group violence	Artz (1996); B. Duran & E. Duran (1995) Bobbe (2002); Freire (1970); Moane (1999); Pharr (1996); Tappan (2003); Tigert (1999, 2001); Young (1990)
Worthlessness, self-degradation		J. Bell (2006); L. Brown (1986); Freire (1970)

Appendix C: Map Models of My Development Over Time

Map #1: Jewish identity upon beginning at SIT

**Internalized Oppression**

- hiding Jewishness (i.e. withholding my last name, distancing from religious and cultural expressions of certain types of Jewishness, self-consciousness about my nose)
- anxiety and mental health issues in family history
- a feeling of needing to be in control (logistics, details)
- perfectionism, fear of failing
- an underlying sense of terror day-to-day
- shame about money
- self-isolation and seeking safety only among other Jews

**Structural Violence**

- In Christian Europe: Jew as scapegoats and middle agents for ruling elites
- Jews banned from most occupations, except those related to moneylending and tax collection
- Jews geographically isolated in shtetls, ghettos, and other areas outside of main villages
- Racialization and assimilation
- Repeated expulsion

**Direct Violence**

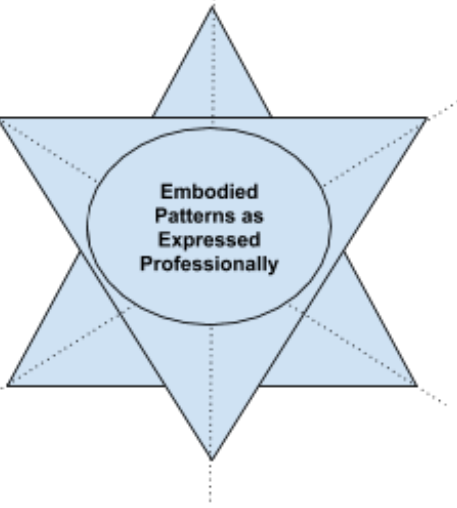
- Repeated pogroms
- Holocaust
- Swastikas and defacing of sacred spaces
- "Jew jokes"

**Displacement & Lack of Belonging**

- Feeling unwanted
- Feeling of being in between, on the outside
- Never feeling at home
- Frustration about public calendars being based on Christian holidays; fear of penalty for missing work/school for my holy days

**Cultural Violence**

- Images: Horns, big noses, devilish faces
- Beliefs: Jews have supernatural powers because of a pact with the Devil / Jews have all global wealth and control governments, media and entertainment / Jews are controlling and neurotic



Embodied Patterns as Expressed Professionally

**Social Identities**

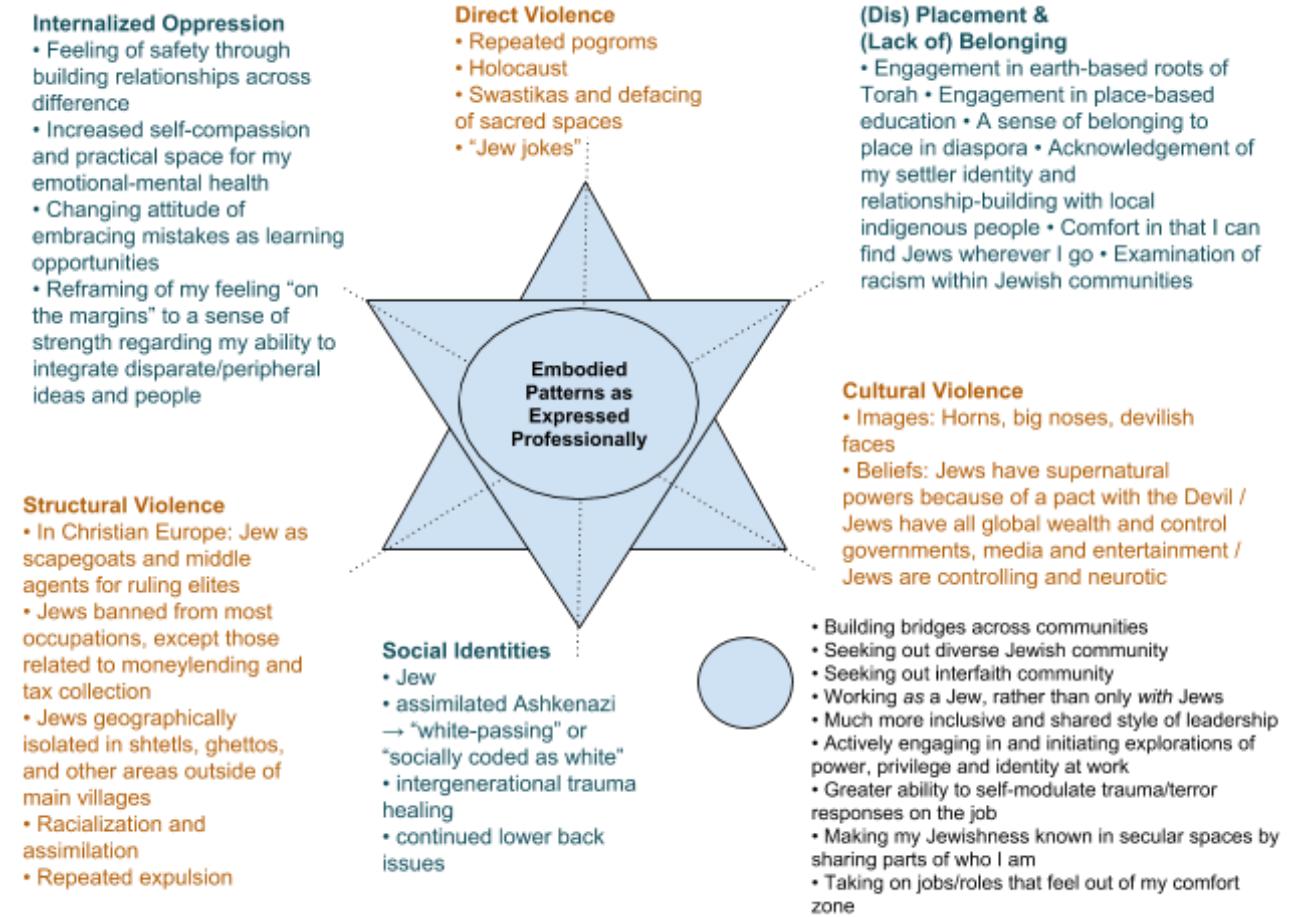
- Jew (always in the minority unless in explicitly Jewish spaces)
- white
- intergenerational trauma → right hip flexor, lower back injuries



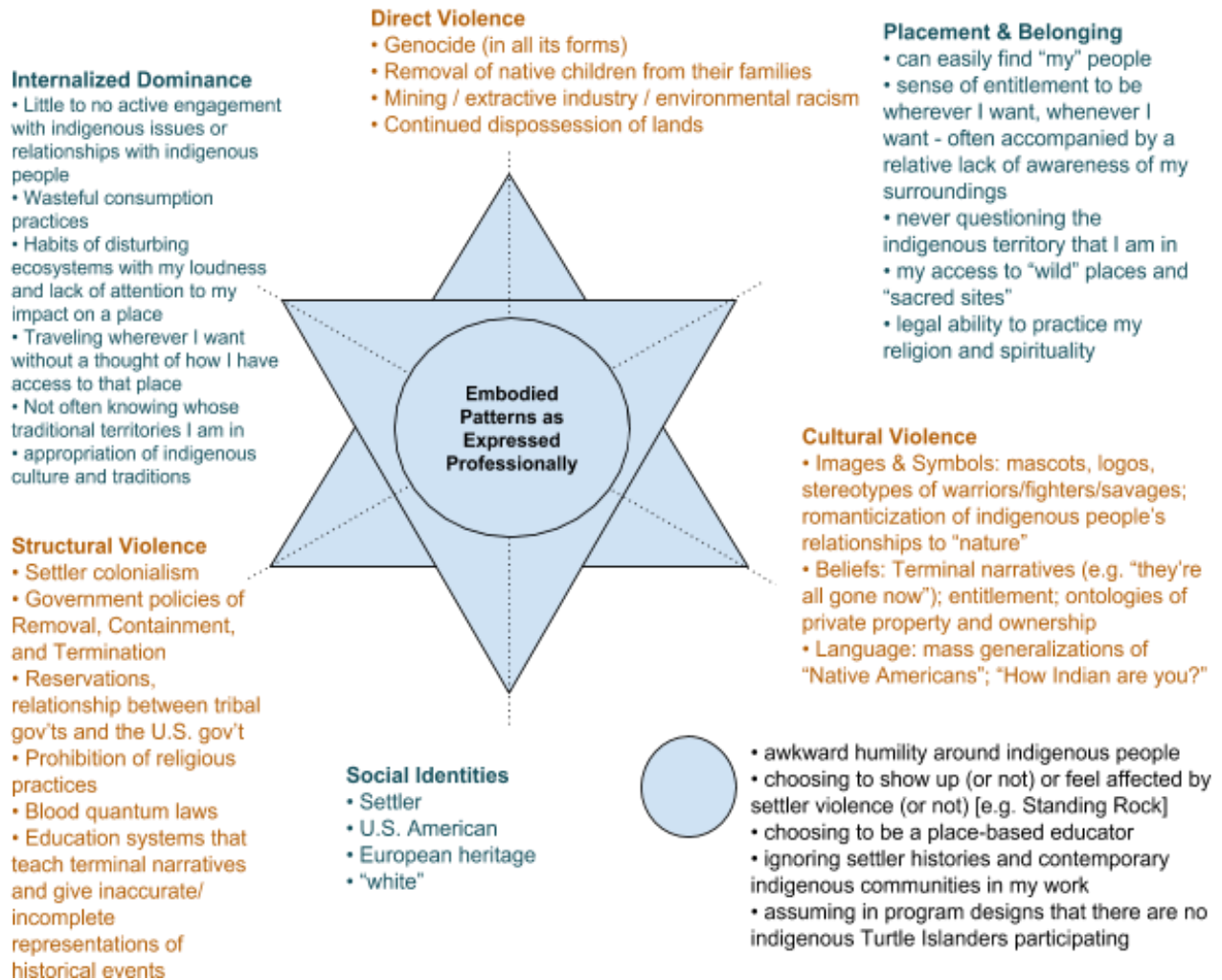
- Self-isolation within Jewish organizations; little to no secular work
- Self-isolation in Jewish communities that racially look like me
- Community comprised mostly of Jews (personally and professionally)
- Curricular focus on insular Jewish programming (for Jews, about Jews)
- High degree of perfectionism, including hiding mistakes and being extremely hard on myself

**Map #2: Jewish identity upon graduating from SIT**

Some of the patterns from Map #1 still exist inside of me, though to lesser degrees. This map shows new patterns that have emerged over the past few years.

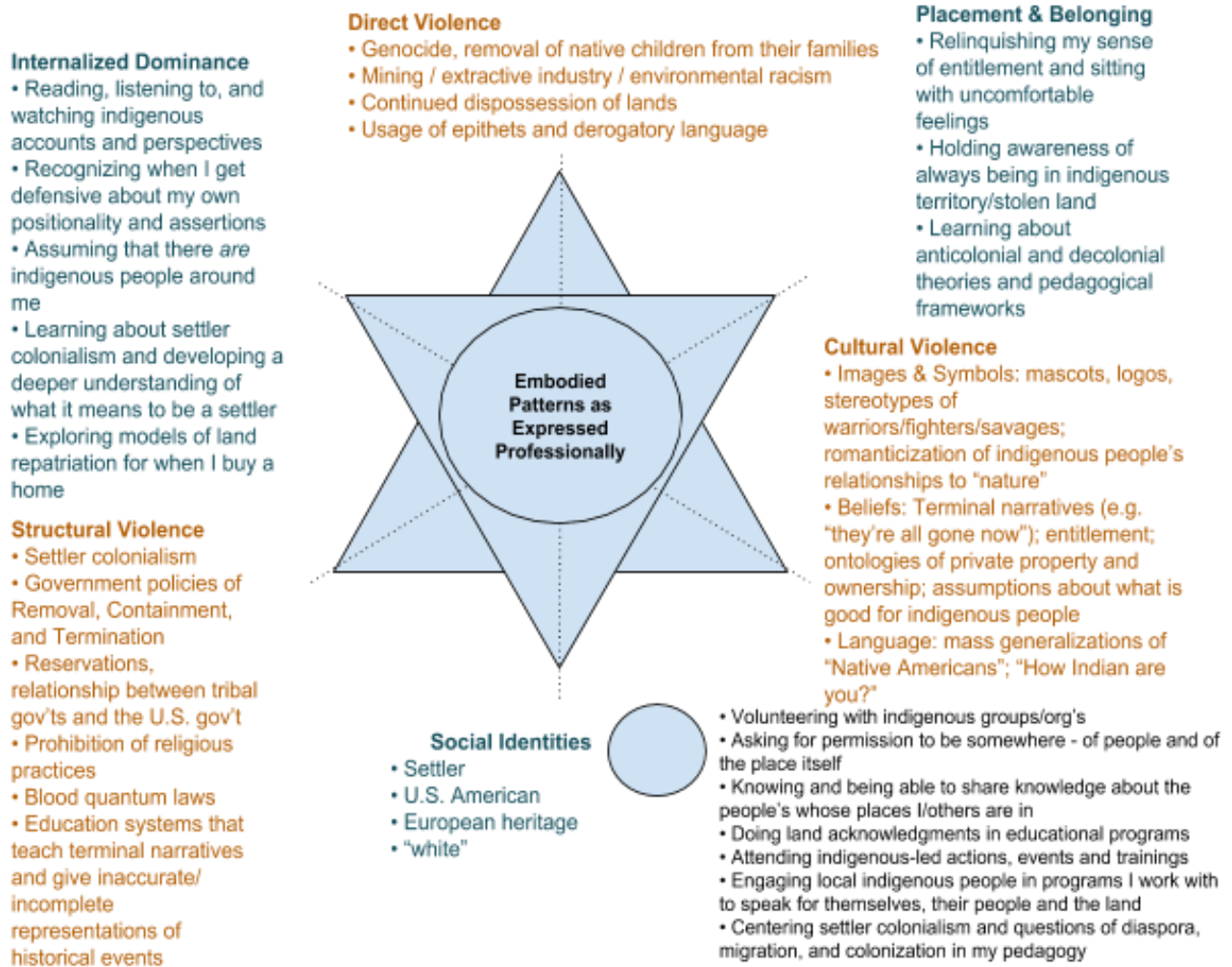


**Map #3: Settler identity upon beginning at SIT**



**Map #4: Settler identity upon graduating from SIT**

Some of the patterns from Map #3 still exist inside of me, though to lesser degrees. This map shows new patterns that have emerged over the past few years.



## Appendix D: Resources for Somatic Inquiry & Developing Embodied Awareness

### Clinical & Neuroscience Perspectives & Modalities

- ❖ Polyvagal Theory – Developed by Dr. Stephen Porges. Explores how different parts of our autonomic nervous systems operate in response to cues of safety, danger, and life threat. A brief primer by Deb Dana: <https://www.rhythmofregulation.com/resources/Beginner's%20Guide.pdf>.
- ❖ *Waking The Tiger: Healing Trauma* and *In an Unspoken Voice: How the Body Releases Trauma and Restores Goodness* by Peter Levine – Foundational works on the relationship between trauma and somatics from a body-brain perspective. Lays the framework for Somatic Experiencing – a modality he developed to reset the autonomic nervous system; widely adapted in trauma-informed healing work.
- ❖ *The Body Keeps The Score* by Bessel Van der Kolk – Thorough exploration of how trauma literally rearranges the brain's wiring - specifically areas dedicated to pleasure, engagement, control, and trust. Explores how these areas can be reactivated through innovative modalities.
- ❖ Emotional Freedom Technique (Tapping) – A trauma-healing modality that involves tapping lightly on particular points of the body along energy lines based in Traditional Chinese Medicine.
  - For an overview of the modality from a popular culture perspective: <https://thechalkboardmag.com/eft-tapping-therapy>.
  - For some science behind EFT: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5499602/>.
- ❖ Drama Therapy – An active and experiential form of clinical therapy for groups or individuals that utilizes drama and/or theater processes to achieve therapeutic goals. Depending on the practitioner, may blend well with somatic inquiry. See <http://www.nadta.org>.
- ❖ Shadow Work – A form of non-clinical therapeutic practice based in Jungian psychology that allows the client to externalize “parts” of their psyche and somatically and psychologically transform one’s relationship to these parts. See <https://shadowwork.com>.

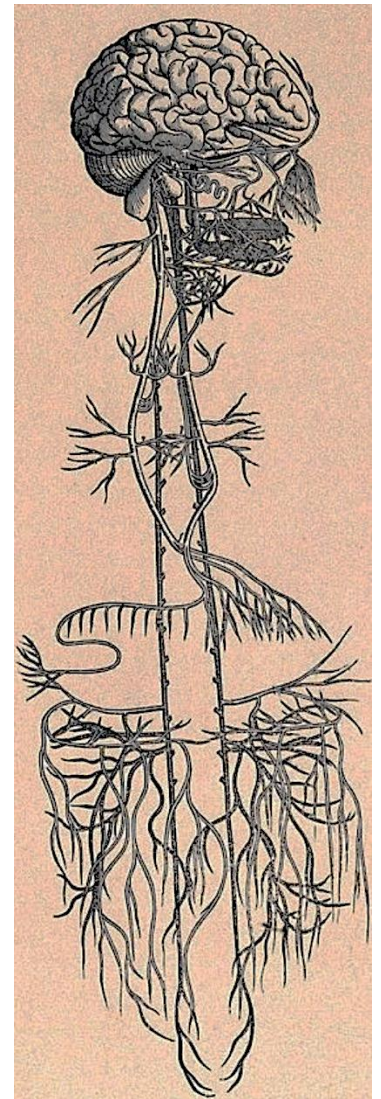


Image reproduced from Deb Dana's *Rhythm of Regulation Resources*

### Movement Practices

Whether guided or solo, movement practices\* (dance, martial arts, hiking, yoga, etc.) are great ways to cultivate embodied awareness. There are infinite ways to move, but here are a few of my favorites:

- ❖ Improvisational movement – It's not about looking “good” or doing something the “right” way. It's about doing what feels resonant, surrendering the impulse to move in a certain way and instead allowing your body to be moved, paying attention to the sensations, messages, and information available to us when we follow intuitive movement and experimentation with body shaping.
- ❖ Trauma Release Exercises (TRE) – A physiological approach to discharging trauma energy through activating certain muscle groups. Developed by Dr. David Berceli in response to Peter Levine's work on how trauma energy gets trapped in the body.
  - For a thorough conceptual framework, see <https://youtu.be/hTPFbd-5xmE>.

## CRITICAL EMBODIED PRACTIS FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE AND PEACE EDUCATORS

- For a thorough how-to, see <https://www.acesconnection.com/blog/what-is-trauma-release-exercises-tre>.
- ❖ Embodyoga – A form of yoga developed by Patty Townsend, who is greatly influenced by Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen (founder of Body-Mind Centering). Embody yoga brings awareness inside the body to the structures and systems that support all bodily movement and function: muscle and bone, organ, fascia, glands, and more. See <https://embodyyogablog.com>.
- ❖ Trauma-Sensitive Yoga – Developed by David Emerson. An evidence-based program and practice for the treatment of psychological trauma including complex trauma and complex PTSD. See <https://www.traumasensitiveyoga.com/about-us.html>.

\*Many movement practices can be considered culturally appropriate. I personally have profound relationships with many different movement forms and often find myself in conscious navigation of the line between authentic personal practice and cultural appropriation. We all need to make choices about what we practice, who we learn from, and how we follow and attribute lineage.

### Politicized Somatics

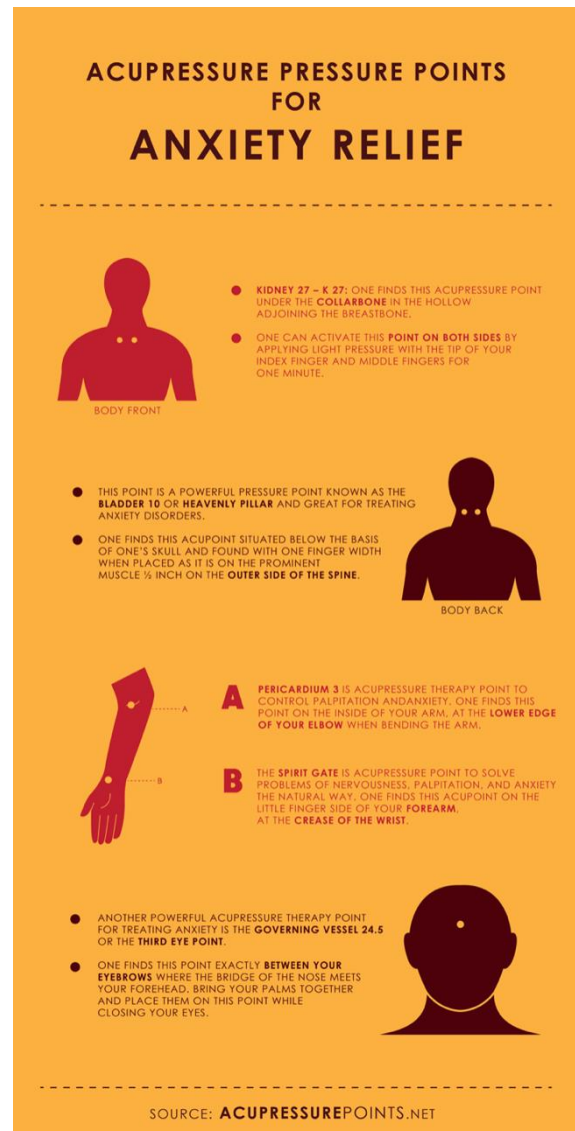
- ❖ Generative Somatics – An organization that bridges somatics with social change work on a profound systemic level. I recommend any video by Staci Haines on somatics and/or trauma. See <http://www.generativesomatics.org> and check out this podcast with Staci Haines, adrienne maree brown, Spenta Kandawalla and Prentis Hemphill: <https://soundcloud.com/generativesomatics/trauma-healing-collective-power>
- ❖ Cultural Somatics – A term used by Tada Hozumi to denote cultures as bodies with somatic experience of their collective own. See Eric Garza’s podcast Healing Culture, #47: Healing Bodies and Healing Cultures with Tada Hozumi: <https://www.iheart.com/podcast/269-healing-culture-pod-30055116/episode/47-healing-bodies-and-healing-cultures-30750891/>.
- ❖ *Trauma-Sensitive Mindfulness* by David Treleaven – Engaged social analysis that explores how to cultivate mindfulness practices safely without re-traumatizing the body-mind.
- ❖ *My Grandmother’s Hands* by Resmaa Menakem: An introduction to Somatic Experiencing for lay-people. Emphasizes experiences of white bodies, black bodies, and policed bodies, and how to use SE for healing ancestral racialized trauma.
- ❖ *Emergent Strategy: Shaping Change, Changing Worlds* and *Pleasure Activism: The Politics of Feeling Good* by adrienne maree brown, facilitator, healer and author at the intersections of Black liberation, embodiment, and pleasure activism.
- ❖ *Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power* by Audre Lorde – A linchpin in the shaping of Black feminism, pleasure activism, and the idea that liberation is bound up in our bodies and our expressions of generative and creative power. Listen to Audre’s voice read this essay here: <https://youtu.be/xFHwg6aNKy0> or read the essay for yourself here: [http://mamagenas.com/wp3/wp-content/uploads/2016/M16/Uses\\_of\\_the\\_Erotic.pdf](http://mamagenas.com/wp3/wp-content/uploads/2016/M16/Uses_of_the_Erotic.pdf).
- ❖ *Healing Justice* – An audio project to democratize access to stories, leaders, and practices to support liberation. Not solely devoted to somatics but integrates themes of embodiment into its explorations of social change. Check out <https://www.healingjustice.org>.
- ❖ Resonance and Storytelling - A narrative and somatic practice aiming to confront the dominant culture of isolation and dissociation by reclaiming the shared resource of connection. This practice intentionally interrupts invisible forms of violence and oppression that are internalized in all our bodies. See <http://relationaluprising.org/relationalculture>.



Logo of Relational Uprising

**Personal Practices for Self-Modulating Trauma Responses and the Autonomic Nervous System:**

- ❖ Conscious breathing – Inhaling stimulates the sympathetic nervous system (fight, flight, freeze), while exhaling stimulates the parasympathetic nervous system (rest, digest). When I feel tension or the hyperactivity and hyper-vigilance I associate with my fight/flight/freeze reactions, taking several breaths in which my exhale is longer than my inhale helps to reset my autonomic nervous system.
- ❖ Clenching and releasing muscles – Intentionally contracting a tight muscle can actually help to release it. Intentionally clenching parts of the body and then releasing them can help to initiate the release of entire muscle groups, which can have relaxing systemic effects on the body. For example, I might clench my fists tight tight tight...clench my forearms tight tight tight...clench my upper arms and shoulders tight tight tight...clench my core tight tight tight...and then release. After doing this a few times, I feel a greater sense of relaxation throughout my entire upper body and core.
- ❖ Neuromuscular trigger points – Informed by Traditional Chinese Medicine and myofascial understandings of the body, I will press on certain points of my body with varying degrees of pressure to produce certain results. For example, when I am anxious, there are points on the wrist, head and neck that help to ease anxiety. When I have back pain, there are points along the mid-thigh along the iliotibial band that help to relieve that pain.
- ❖ Crossing limbs – Crossing arms and legs has been found to stimulate cross-hemisphere brain function, which contributes to a decrease in physiological stress responses in the body and an increase in cognitive functioning. When by myself and experiencing nervous system tension, I like to do arm-leg exercises across my body (starting position of arms out to the sides, then bring my right knee to my left hand, left knee to my right hand, back and forth) until I feel my nervous system relax a bit (two or three minutes). When in a public place or in a tense conversation with someone, I might cross my feet in front of me or interlace my fingers in my lap. Crossed arms and legs in some cultures are considered rude and/or combative, so I also try to stay aware of how my body language might be perceived and received by those I am trying to communicate with.
- ❖ Weighted objects – I like to place weighted objects like small sandbags or rice packs on my chest, eyes, abdomen, or wherever else feels soothing. A heated weighted object often produces even more of a relaxing result on my autonomic nervous system.





**An Exercise: Experiments in Shaping**

This exercise can be done by yourself or with a group of people, in private or in public.



Find something living – a tree, an animal, a weed growing out of a crack of concrete, anything. (I consider stones to be living – their life cycle is just on a way different timeline than mine.) Be with that living thing for a moment. Take some deep breaths, allowing your exhale to be longer than your inhale. Notice that living thing. How does it move, breathe, exist? What thoughts does it bring up for you? Does it bring up any emotions? Does its shape, its movement, its behavior, its way of being, stimulate any sensations in your body? As you feel ready, find the shape of that living thing with your own body.

Allow any and all feelings and sensations to inform that shape. Close your eyes if that helps, or keep looking at the living thing if that helps. Give yourself as completely as you can to that shape.

Find another living thing and repeat.

After making as many shapes as you'd like, pause. Notice what you are feeling and sensing in your own body. How did it feel to make those shapes? Were those shapes familiar to you? Unfamiliar? Desirable? Uncomfortable? Do you notice anything different about your own body's shape now? What does this tell you about your somatic patterning? Is there anything from this experiment you want to take with you and remember in your body for later? If so, symbolically hold what you want to remember in your hands, give it some love, and then put your hands somewhere on your body where you want to store that feeling, that knowing, that re-membering. Breathe.

**Appendix E: Common Responses to High Stress and/or Trauma**

(Reproduced from Eastern Mennonite University, 2017, p. 94)

After experiencing a traumatic event, or in response to cumulative stressors, it is common -- and normal -- to experience a wide range of emotional, cognitive, physical, and spiritual reactions. These responses may appear immediately after the event(s) or some time later. **These are normal reactions to abnormal situations.** The following are some of the most common responses:

Emotional	Cognitive (Thinking)	Behavioral (doing)	Physical	Spiritual	Societal Effects
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fear</li> <li>• Terror</li> <li>• Anxiety</li> <li>• Panic / Paranoia</li> <li>• Anger / Rage</li> <li>• Apprehension</li> <li>• Depression</li> <li>• Vengefulness</li> <li>• Shame</li> <li>• Guilt</li> <li>• Sadness</li> <li>• Grief</li> <li>• Emotional shock</li> <li>• Emotional outbursts</li> <li>• Loss of emotional control</li> <li>• Feelings of hopelessness or helplessness</li> <li>• Feeling numb</li> <li>• Irritability</li> <li>• COURAGE</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Confusion</li> <li>• Nightmares</li> <li>• Hyper-vigilance</li> <li>• Suspiciousness</li> <li>• Flashbacks</li> <li>• Overly sensitive</li> <li>• Difficulty making decisions, spacey</li> <li>• Poor concentration</li> <li>• Memory problems</li> <li>• Shortened attention span</li> <li>• Critical, blaming</li> <li>• Poor problem solving and abstract thinking</li> <li>• Preoccupied with the event(s): inability to recall all or parts of the event</li> <li>• Disoriented to person, place or time</li> <li>• Heightened or lowered awareness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Withdrawal</li> <li>• Self harm</li> <li>• Overwork</li> <li>• Antisocial acts</li> <li>• Inability to rest, pacing</li> <li>• Hyper-alertness</li> <li>• Erratic movement</li> <li>• Suspiciousness</li> <li>• Emotional outbursts</li> <li>• Change in speech patterns</li> <li>• Increased alcohol/drug use</li> <li>• Avoiding places related to the event</li> <li>• Difficulty writing or talking</li> <li>• Impaired sexual functioning</li> <li>• Loss or increase of appetite</li> <li>• Feeling clumsy</li> <li>• Domestic Violence</li> <li>• CARING FOR OTHERS</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thirst/dry mouth</li> <li>• Twitches</li> <li>• Vomiting</li> <li>• Weakness</li> <li>• Chest pain</li> <li>• High BP</li> <li>• Rapid heart rate</li> <li>• Muscle tremors</li> <li>• Visual difficulties</li> <li>• Nausea/diarrhea</li> <li>• Shallow breathing</li> <li>• Dizziness or faintness</li> <li>• Chills or sweating</li> <li>• Easily startled</li> <li>• Fatigue</li> <li>• Changes in appetite</li> <li>• Sleep disturbances</li> <li>• Headaches</li> <li>• Grinding teeth</li> <li>• Inability to rest</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emptiness</li> <li>• Loss of meaning</li> <li>• Doubt</li> <li>• Feeling unforgiven</li> <li>• Martyrdom, feeling punished</li> <li>• Looking for magic</li> <li>• Loss of direction</li> <li>• Cynicism</li> <li>• Apathy</li> <li>• Needing to "prove" self</li> <li>• Alienated</li> <li>• Mistrust</li> <li>• Crisis of faith</li> <li>• GROWTH</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Apathy</li> <li>• Silence/impaired communication</li> <li>• Aggressive behavior</li> <li>• Isolation</li> <li>• Lack of empathy</li> <li>• Denial</li> <li>• Low energy/low productivity</li> <li>• Inflexibility</li> <li>• High rates of alcoholism, drug abuse</li> <li>• High rates of (untreated) mental health issues (depression, sexual dysfunction, etc)</li> <li>• High rates of stress-related health issues (and medication use)</li> <li>• Intergenerational transmission of pain</li> <li>• SPIRITUAL GROWTH, WISDOM</li> </ul>

Adapted from the work of Jim Norman, M.ED, C.T.S Oklahoma City, OK  
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