



REFLECTIONS & NEW DIRECTIONS

in Wakeful Society, Culture, and Politics

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THE ARROW

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THE ARROW

A JOURNAL OF WAKEFUL SOCIETY, CULTURE & POLITICS

THE ARROW JOURNAL explores the relationship among contemplative practice, politics, and activism. Inspired in its founding by the teaching and social vision of meditation master Chögyam Trungpa, *THE ARROW* welcomes the insights of multiple contemplative lineages for achieving a kinder, healthier, and more compassionate world. We encourage dialogue on wisdom and knowledge arising from methods of contemplative inquiry, ways of embodied knowing, and intellectual disciplines. In doing so, *THE ARROW* provides a critical and much needed space for investigating the meeting point of contemplative wisdom and pressing social, political, and environmental challenges.

Cover art by Rae Minji Lee

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Editor's Introduction

GABRIEL DAYLEY



The *Arrow Journal* emerged at the start of 2014 to ask: how can contemplative wisdom help us transform the challenges of our world?

In the past decade, we have published well over a hundred articles by leading scholars, meditation teachers, and activists, providing a symphony of answers to this question. We have curated inquiry into healing social and ecological rifts, Black Buddhist experiences, Buddhism and feminism, engaged Buddhism, dharma and climate change, and embodiment in racial justice work.

Underpinning our publishing has been a key premise: the path of spiritual warriorship and the work of transforming systemic suffering are inseparable. In this issue—which marks ten years since our founding—we reflect on aspects and applications of this view as it has manifested in our pages.

In the issue's feature article, I consider the personal and political context from which *The Arrow* arose, review key contributions across themes we emphasized, and suggest future avenues of exploration. Elements of the article—written this past

summer—are strikingly pertinent to the warfare that erupted this fall and to the international climate talks that verged on the absurd.¹ The themes of *The Arrow's* publishing could not be more relevant.

Arisika Razak shares the profound impact on her of one of our past issues (to which she also contributed), examining two essays in particular that resonated deeply. Central to her reflection is the power of the body as a vehicle for insight and awareness: "we are born into a human body, and our consciousness is shaped by its physicality, its senses, and its changing abilities and disabilities. Socially, our bodies are racialized, gendered, and culturally defined." Recognizing this conditioning illuminates the ground from which both confusion and wisdom can arise.

James Rowe, one of *The Arrow's* most prolific authors, imparts the tale of Mahāprajāpatī, the Buddha's aunt and stepmother, as an allegory both for social justice struggles and for the critical importance of extending spiritual insight throughout all aspects of experience—personal and social. Rowe observes, "this story is a reminder that despite their transformative power, contemplative practices alone are not enough to bring forth just societies." As our editorial team has often described it, doing so requires both dharmic *prajña* and worldly *prajña*—spiritual and practical insight.

La Dawn Haglund invites us to consider what it means to be wakeful—to be enlightened—in a cultural moment when waking up to the existence of certain people's pain or certain types of suffering is seen as elitist, undesirable, and, among some Buddhists, anti-dharmic. "The current backlash against wakefulness," Haglund observes, makes little sense "for those of us striving to be more centered and aware, to be bolder in dealing with

the reality of life, to be more contemplative and potentially wise.” To awaken means that insight, curiosity, and compassion extend everywhere and to everyone—not just to people who look, live, or love like oneself. Most of us need periodic reminders to overcome impulsive resistance to this view; ignorance is part of being human. That some Buddhists and other contemplative practitioners categorically reject this contention as radical or progressive, however, is a deep irony of today’s world.

Rachel DeMotts explores the space that *The Arrow* has provided for creative and unconventional scholarship, especially compared to constricting notions of what is deemed legitimate research in the social sciences. As the social sciences, and even the humanities, seek to emulate the physical sciences by quantifying everything, DeMotts notes the importance of venues—publications and classrooms—that allow for outside-the-box, interdisciplinary inquiry that blends the personal and political, the reflective and scientific. She reflects:

I went back to school because I wanted to learn how to solve real problems. But I was most consistently judged by my ability to parrot what had already been argued and by whom, rather than by the possibilities of new ideas and undertakings. In *The Arrow*, I have read and reviewed much syncretic, surprising work that refuses the confines of traditional disciplines and modes of expression while seeking a fuller engagement with what a more just world might look like.

Naya Jones echoes and builds on the notion of space in relation to *The Arrow*. She makes a key observation that “creating intentional space... inspires intentional spaces.” In a time when societal pain and confusion beget more of the same, and multiple forms of media strip us of intentionality in how we spend our time, Jones’s reflection reminds us that virtue can also engender positive feedback cycles. “Often,” she writes, “these are

spaces of remembering: remembering community, remembering our bodies, remembering our lineages, remembering our commitments.” Jones devotes considerable space in her short essay to considering future directions for this journal. “As *The Arrow* moves forward,” she writes, “we can use as many examples and stories of reimagining spaces as possible. We need these because they inspire dreaming.” And we need to be able to dream—or envision—wakeful societies, cultures, and politics.

Throughout the issue, in addition to several new illustrations, we reprint a selection of past art and issue covers to offer a visual reminder of the articles discussed and as an homage to the artistic contributions that have helped make this publication so engaging and unique.

After a decade as Chief Editor, I will step down from my role at the end of this year. It has been an honor and privilege to read, edit, and publish so much astute and impactful writing. I’m thrilled that *The Arrow* will continue into its next decade in partnership with Courage of Care, an organization that aligns with and manifests the journal’s mission in embodied practice, providing workshops and training in facilitation, spiritual activism, and compassionate changemaking.² I’m excited for what will emerge from the collaboration between our editors, Shah Noor Hussein and Ashley Wilson, and the Courage of Care executive directors, Brooke Lavelle and Maha El-Sheikh. There is tremendous possibility in the joining of two organizations whose work, to paraphrase one of *The Arrow*’s first articles, synthesizes the sacred and secular.³

The Arrow Journal is the result of work by many hands. As I depart, I would like to express gratitude to people who helped make this publication possible.

Thank you first and foremost to my co-founder, initial thought partner, and lifelong friend, Kai Beavers. Thank you as well to our early advisors who helped launch the journal and supported it in its first few years: Adam Lobel, Holly Gayley,

Judith Simmer-Brown, Rachel DeMotts, Gaylon Ferguson, Michael Ferguson, David Kahane, and Sara Lewis, as well as to early enthusiasts Mark Kelleher and Shelly Webb.

We owe a huge debt of gratitude to our founding Creative Director, Alicia Brown, whose artistic vision manifests in our logo and in illustrations throughout our first six years of publication. We owe equal thanks to our first copyeditor, designer of our print layout, and frequent aesthetic advisor, Jessica Stern, who, as my wife, also patiently put up with many nights and weekends of work on the journal. To Jacob Richey, thank you for your enthusiastic copyediting early in our publishing. Thank you to Corey Adkins, our website developer who has professionalized our online presence and responded to numerous urgent requests for help, and to Fred Meyer, who built our first website. Deep gratitude to my father, Daniel Dayley, for translating articles from our first years of publication into Spanish, helping us reach a broader audience.

Many thanks to the members of our Board of Directors over the years, especially those who have helped our transition to find an institutional home: Sheryl Petty, Ciprian Iancu, Sharon Owyang, Rosalyn Stagg, and Martina Bouey, as well as Laurie Amodeo, Aarti Tejuja, Michael Gayner, and Gregory Lubkin. Thank you as well to Nick Marsellas, our first treasurer and an enthusiastic supporter.

I am grateful to our Managing Editor, shah noor hussein, whose creativity and fresh ideas have broadened *The Arrow's* horizons and made

new connections with authors, editors, and readers. To our Associate Editor, Ashley Wilson, thank you for your enthusiasm, inspiration, and commitment to shepherd manuscripts to completion and for your skillful communication with authors. To both shah and Ashley, thank you for engaging in the journal's transition to a new chapter with open hearts, creative thinking, critical questions, and tremendous patience.

I have immense gratitude for the artists who have contributed stunning illustrations in recent years: Star Barker, Rae Minji Lee, and Chetna Mehta. Thank you to our social media manager, Destenie Fafard, for enhancing our presence online. Thank you to our copyeditors from recent years, Francie Reed, Tyler Lehrer, Vickie Masseus, Jacqueline Ruvalcaba, and Myra Chappius. Thank you as well to Kelsey Blackwell, who helped envision, design, and implement *The Arrow's* first online event series.

Thank you to the team at Courage of Care, especially Brooke Lavelle and Maha El-Sheikh, for seeing *The Arrow's* value and for your enthusiasm to partner with us.

Deep gratitude to every author who has published in our journal and to the readers, subscribers, and donors who have supported our publishing over this past decade.

Last, but certainly not least, thank you to Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche and to the ocean of siddhas of the practice lineage, without whom *The Arrow Journal* would not have arisen.

NOTES

1. A record number of fossil fuel industry lobbyists attended this year's climate talks, COP28, hosted by the United Arab Emirates and presided over by the head of the country's state oil company. David Gelles, Lisa Friedman and Vivian Nereim, "It's Big Oil vs. Science at the U.N. Climate Summit," *New York Times*, December 5, 2023, <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/12/05/climate/cop28-fossil-fuels.html>.
2. For more information, see Courage of Care's website at <https://courageofcare.org/>.
3. Holly Gayley, "Society as Possibility: On the Semantic Range of the Tibetan Term *Sipa*," *The Arrow: A Journal of Wakeful Society, Culture, and Politics*, 1 (2014), <https://arrow-journal.org/society-as-possibility/>.



Releasing the Bowstring Towards Wakeful Society, Culture, and Politics

GABRIEL DAYLEY

I REMEMBER CLEARLY the fateful conversation that led to founding *The Arrow: A Journal of Wakeful Society, Culture, and Politics*. I had moved to Boulder, Colorado after graduating from college—I wanted to live near my parents in my adopted hometown for a few years before starting graduate school and moving on to my next adventure far from home. My partner and I were renting our first apartment together, and we had invited my childhood best friend, Kai, over for dinner in our newly furnished household—#adulting.

Kai and I grew up in the same Western Buddhist community, our parents having been students of its founder, Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche. Our mothers had been best friends since meeting at sleep-away camp in New York as teenagers, and they became Buddhist practitioners and students of Trungpa in the early 1970s. They met our fathers through that sangha, known first as Vajradhatu and later as Shambhala. Trungpa Rinpoche—a brilliant and controversial teacher, artist, social visionary, and meditation master—had fled Tibet during the 1959 Chinese invasion, leading a party of refugees through the Himalayas to India. After studying at Oxford, he settled in North America, where he spent the remainder of his life teaching Vajrayana Buddhism to a community of Western (largely white) students.

One of Trungpa's unique contributions was a body of teachings inspired by the mythical Kingdom of Shambhala in central Asia, which is said to have embodied the dharma at the level of an entire society. In his telling, "stories say that all of the people of Shambhala began to practice meditation and to follow the Buddhist path of loving kindness and concern for all beings."¹ Trungpa coined the term *enlightened society* to evoke the image of Shambhala as "a place of peace and prosperity, governed by wise and compassionate rulers," in which

“the citizens were equally kind and learned.”² He felt that these teachings on the application of human wisdom to suffering at the societal level were sorely needed. Trungpa exhorted his students, “We must try to think beyond our homes, beyond the fire burning in the fireplace, beyond sending our children to school or getting to work in the morning. We must try to think how we can help this world.”³

Growing up, Kai and I resonated with this view that contemplative wisdom and good citizenship are inextricable. As teenagers, we participated in meditation workshops, first developing a foundation of mindfulness and awareness in the present moment. We later learned practices to cultivate love and compassion, and we studied how to use fear as a stepping stone to fearlessness. Eventually, we studied and practiced dialogue, leadership skills, and several contemplative art forms. We also learned from an early age about the magic and power of the elemental world—of rocks and rivers—that Western science and philosophy presume to be dead matter.

When we went to college, these perspectives came with us. Kai studied sociology, and I majored in international relations. The dominant international relations theories always seemed self-limiting and self-fulfilling. (For example, realism says it’s a dog-eat-dog world, so we’d best behave that way; in behaving as such, we create that very world.) Applying Buddhist philosophy prescriptively to international relations, I thought, would be game-changing—imagine a foreign policy approach rooted in the motivation to reduce suffering in the world! Needless to say, my college musings lacked a certain maturity, but a core question underpinned them: how could teachings on emptiness, compassion, skillful means, and enlightened society be applied to our society’s broken institutions and stale ideologies?

Over dinner, I shared with Kai how I wanted to explore this question. Part of my motivation was the bifurcated way that the term “enlightened society” was used in the Shambhala community. On the one hand, the phrase signified a vast, inspired, global vision—the possibility of creating a good human society on Earth. On the other hand, enlightened society was interpersonal and immediate: teachers of the weekend meditation retreats in which we participated urged students to reflect on how we could use what we had learned to show up on Monday at work or school and treat others with greater kindness, patience, and magnanimity. These two characterizations of enlightened society were each compelling, but they also seemed separated by a vast chasm. How could our interpersonal interactions at work or school after a meditation retreat lead to enlightened society on the entire planet? In a world of looming climate crisis, politics post-Citizens United, and unending wars, the idea that “if enough of us meditate and practice kindness at work, we’ll achieve world peace” seemed

over-simplified and hokey—hardly a robust theory of change. What if you meditate and practice kindness while working at Haliburton or British Petroleum?

Observers of “McMindfulness” were just beginning to make this critique in 2012, but commentaries of this sort usually only managed to critique what was problematic about corporate mindfulness or capitalist Buddhism. They had no constructive program, to borrow Gandhi’s term.

What lay within the chasm was largely unexplored territory for Buddhists: systems, institutions, communities, socio-political structures. Couldn’t the basic insights of Buddhism and the Shambhala teachings on society be applied at the level of institutions? What would an economy, healthcare system, or collective relationship with the more-than-human world look like? How could the Vajrayāna notion of transmuting neurosis be applied to the passion, aggression, and ignorance that are embedded and ritualized in organizations? How could people’s basic sanity, dignity health, and wealth be nurtured in whole communities, not just in the meditation retreats that a few of us were fortunate to be able to attend?

“Wouldn’t it be cool,” I asked Kai, “if there was a journal that explored these questions, with scholars and meditators and activists talking about how to apply contemplative wisdom to social issues?” There were several Buddhist publications at the time: *Lion’s Roar*, *Buddhadharma*, and *Tricycle* largely focused on the experience of individual practitioners. Occasional essays broached the meeting point of dharma and politics, though treatments tended to lack sufficient depth of analysis to inform real changemaking. A few scholarly journals focused on highly specific applications of meditation to neuroscience, medicine, or pedagogy. The 2006 anthology *Mindful Politics* offered meaningful, substantive discourse in this space,⁴ but no ongoing periodical that we knew of was dedicated to exploring the applications of contemplative teachings and practices to systemic change.

My question hung in the air for a minute: “Wouldn’t it be cool if there was a journal...” I could feel a sense of playful, imaginative energy in the room, the jitters that arise from a stimulating conversation with good friends. Kai looked at me across the table. “Let’s do it.”

• • •

We published our first collection of essays in March 2014. Over the preceding 18 months we had developed a vision and mission, set up a website, solicited manuscripts from authors, and conducted multiple rounds of edits. But one

of the most challenging tasks was deciding on a name for the journal. What would be simultaneously unique, evocative, and descriptive? Recently I stumbled into the now decade-old document where we first brainstormed. *Shambhala Journal*—too generic and opaque to anyone outside the Shambhala community. *Journal of Enlightened Society*—too pretentious for a name, even if the phrase had inspired us. Further down the lengthy list, I laughed aloud: *Cloud of Wisdom*—a lovely-sounding but oxymoronic hybridization of the phrases “sun of wisdom” and “cloud of blessings” that often appear in Buddhist texts.

Somewhere along the way the image of an arrow emerged. Growing up, Kai and I had been introduced to Kyudo, Japanese contemplative archery. The arrow is a potent symbol: sharp, unwavering, precise. It moves in a clear direction. In the Shambhala teachings, the arrow symbolizes bravery. We wanted the journal to reflect this in the writing we would publish—tackling challenging subjects with bravery and precision.

The Arrow has evolved over the years, reaching additional contemplative communities, as well as readers and authors across disciplines. Through the hard work of our editors, the journal has made a clear, committed movement to publish work by racially diverse authors. *The Arrow* began this work before it was hip to do so among Buddhist-inspired publications and practice communities, and we have deepened this development under the dedication of our Managing Editor, Shah Noor Hussein.

One constant throughout *The Arrow*’s history has been our prioritization of a visually compelling design and aesthetic. I cannot overstate the importance of the artwork that we have featured. Many times, as I was bogged down in copy-edits and text formatting in the final days before issue publication, exhausted and wondering if it would all come together, there would come a moment when I would receive an email from one of our artists. I’d click to open the image. Upon seeing it, I would be filled with a rush of excitement, my whole being elevated by the colors dancing before me.

Alicia Brown, our first artist who helped define *The Arrow*’s aesthetic, displays a remarkable breadth of stylistic talent, from playful and whimsical at times to stark and intense at others. She could capture the feeling of an image in an essay better than an author realized was possible.

In recent years we worked with more artists, each talented and dazzling in unique ways. Works by Rae Minji Lee are intricate, subtle, and fluid, often gesturing toward a subject, intimating a scene from the author’s work. Chetna Mehta paints bold, powerful images, weaving together archetypes that capture an article’s theme. Star Barker’s drawings are deeply moving; in their artwork for our issue “Between Amitabha and Tubman,” I can feel viscerally the hands reaching, the self-possessed power of the meditator.





Artwork by Rae Minji Lee, featured in Volume 8, Issue 1 (2021)



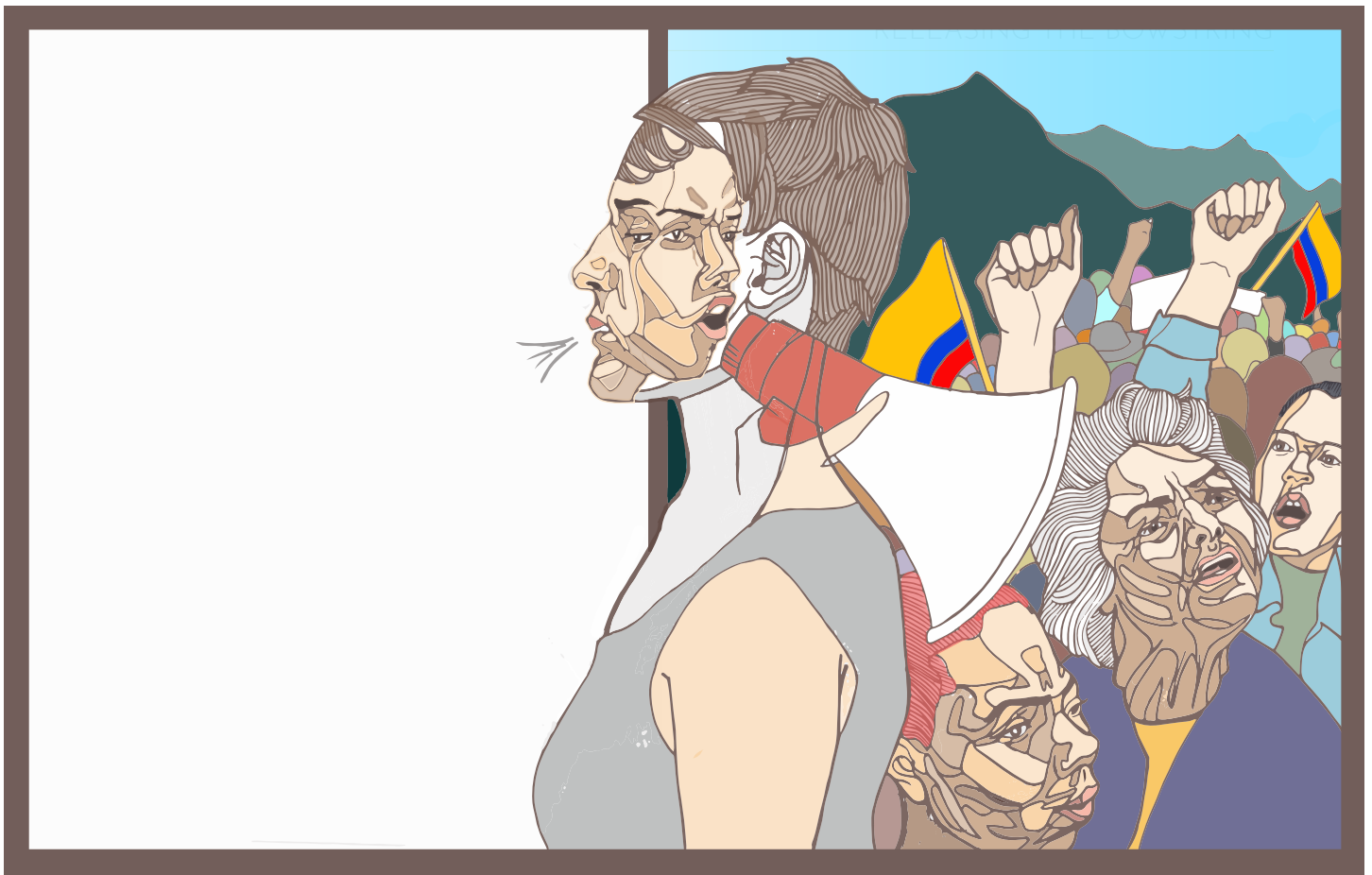
Artwork by Chetna Mehta, featured in Volume 8, Issue 1 (2021)



Artwork by Star Barker, featured in Volume 9, Issue 2 (2022)



Artwork by Star Barker, featured in Volume 9, Issue 2 (2022)



Artwork by Alicia Brown, featured
with “The Practice of No Success”
by Liza Smith (2016)

...

Underpinning all our work at *The Arrow* is a key assumption: the path of spiritual warriorship and the work of transforming systemic suffering are inseparable. In the past decade, we published on a wide range of issues, paying special attention to three intersecting themes: racial justice, feminism, and ecological healing. As I approach my departure from *The Arrow* after ten years of serving as Chief Editor and prepare to pass the torch, I have found myself reflecting on the journal’s important contributions across these themes, as well as where more exploration is needed.

The Dharma of Racial Justice

Kelsey Blackwell launched *The Arrow*’s treatment of racism and racial justice, illuminating the racism in my own Shambhala sangha through incisive observation and heartfelt storytelling. Her first two articles, “Rising to the Challenge: Race and Inclusivity in the Sangha” and “Expanding Awareness: How Patterns of Interaction Support White Supremacy,” revealed the rumblings of



Artwork by Alicia Brown, featured with “Rising to the Challenge” by Kelsey Blackwell (2016)

an awakening to the neuroses of predominantly white Buddhist communities and the uphill battle fought by many people of color to practice the dharma in the West. She offered skillful means for addressing these challenges, such as examining and disrupting unhelpful patterns of communal conversations and intentionally shifting power within institutions.⁵

Blackwell’s third essay, “Why People of Color Need Spaces Without White People,” went viral and put *The Arrow* on the map of broader social justice movements. She wrote it in the wake of a retreat that the two of us attended, in which many white participants couldn’t fathom the request from participants of color to break into racial affinity groups after the plenary group dynamic had become increasingly unhealthy. In the essay, Blackwell exhorts readers to understand the importance of racial affinity groups in workshops and communities seeking to address racism. Crucial to this work are spaces for people of color:

We need places in which we can gather and be free from the mainstream stereotypes and marginalization that permeate every other societal space we occupy. We need spaces where we can be our authentic selves without white people’s judgment and insecurity muzzling that expression. We need spaces where we can simply be—where we can get off the treadmill of making white people comfortable and finally realize just how tired we are.⁶

Her writing in this essay is patient and generous, and it struck a powerful chord with many readers. It pissed off a few, too—a sign that it was both timely and ego-puncturing.

Alex Vlasic's essay, "Going to the Root: How White Caucuses Contribute to Racial Justice," offers an important complement to Blackwell's. Vlasic explains the parallel utility of racial affinity groups for white people, which provide "a space for white people to examine their own thoughts, feelings, and experiences of race," accumulated through living in countries responsible for settler colonialism, chattel slavery, and imperialism.⁷ Vlasic's and Blackwell's essays echo author and dharma teacher Ruth King's summation: when we create "intentional spaces with people of our same race... we can be safe enough to be vulnerable, challenged, and unedited."⁸

Blackwell's guest edited issue, "The Necessity of Including Embodiment and Lineage in Racial Justice Work," deepened the journal's discourse on this theme. Essayists in this collection offer personal histories and contemplations that carry profound insights about how better understanding ourselves, where we come from, and our basic nature can aid collective liberation. The focus on embodiment through much of the issue's prose and poetry provides a fresh and vibrant approach to contemplative racial justice.

In 2020, Shah Noor Hussein joined *The Arrow's* editorial staff, eventually becoming our Managing Editor.⁹ Shah managed the publication of three issues on racial justice and dharma. The first, curated in the wake of police officer Derek Chauvin's brutal murder of George Floyd, invited authors to reflect on strategies for self-care and survival amidst institutional abuse of Black bodies in the United States and elsewhere. The issue creates space for considering how survival in our society for many people is itself a political act. In the introduction, Shah eloquently describes the inseparability of the personal, political, and spiritual:

Amidst the ongoing pandemic, the growing awareness of carceral violence, and the wave of demands for abolition, it is important to remember that we trained under the hands of our ancestors who passed on... divinity through their teachings and contemplative wisdom. While the accelerated pace of disaster and crisis of these times can often make it feel as if we must react quickly to the pressing needs of our time, a well-developed spiritual practice urges practitioners not only to think about how to respond in a timely manner, but also how to move with intention and wholeness.¹⁰

In "Between Amitabha and Tubman," guest editor Shanté Paradigm Smalls and Shah worked closely to produce an issue that joins deep reflection and scholarly insight on multifaceted aspects of Blackness and Buddhism. In the

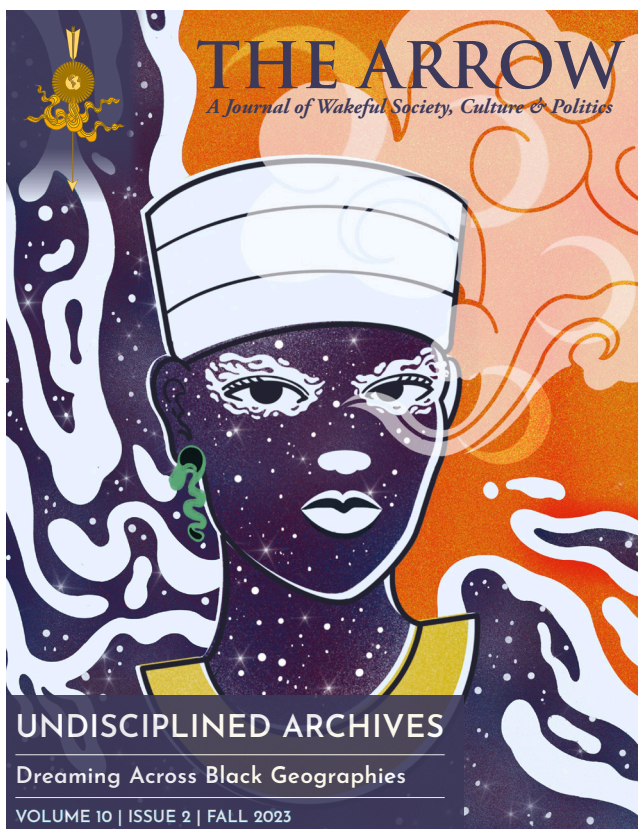
issue's opening roundtable, I especially appreciate Sheryl Petty's observation that "Tantric methodology led by equity-minded BIPOC teachers can be incredibly powerful in supporting Black and brown communities to free ourselves of stuck, conscious and unconscious patterning that obscures our natural goodness and joy."¹¹ Rima Vesely-Flad's piece, "Honoring Ancestors in Black Buddhist Practice: Rituals of Devotion and Resilience," identifies a theme that appears in many of the issue's articles—the power of "ancestor veneration for Black Buddhist practitioners who embrace indigenous rituals even as they claim the worldview and teachings of Buddhism."¹² This turn toward ancestor veneration among Black Buddhists might be seen as at once innovative and deeply traditional, practiced throughout much of the Buddhist world. It is only among predominantly white, largely secularized sanghas that ancestors are seen as cultural baggage. Though many of the articles speak principally to readers who identify as Black, Indigenous, and people of color, all readers of *The Arrow* should engage this issue for the multiplicity of lessons it offers.

One of this year's issues, "Undisciplined Archives: Dreaming Across Black Geographies," is "inspired by the transformative possibilities of Black dreaming in many senses of the word." In the issue's call for submissions, guest editor

Naya Jones writes, "Dreaming emerges again and again in Black expressive culture and social movements. Dreams surface in the biographies and testimonies of Black artists, medicine-makers, and visionaries."¹³

"At its heart," Jones continues, the issue "is about how dreaming has been integral to Black thriving." Conceiving of the notion of "*dream* [as] synonymous with *imagination* or *aspiration*," the issue resonates with themes from previous issues—survival, lineage, ancestry, embodiment, and liberation—while offering fresh and unique perspectives.

The Arrow's publishing on racial justice has made two key contributions: first, we have featured incisive critiques of the ways in which predominantly white Buddhist communities unknowingly replicate the habits of white su-



Cover for Volume 10, Issue 2 (2023) | Artwork by Star Barker

premacy within their organizations. Second, we have featured exploration of how meditators who are Black, Indigenous, and people of color draw on embodied and ancestral wisdom to empower their own Buddhist practice.

Building on this work, additional inquiry in the journal could investigate how to leverage specific dharma teachings and practices to help shift power within institutions and communities in society at large, beyond Buddhist organizations, and to help white people serve as better “accomplices,” as Kelsey Blackwell put it. For example, through facilitating workshops to examine whiteness and racism, I’ve found Trungpa’s teachings on the *four dignities* to be especially efficacious. The four dignities—embodied in the Himalayan symbols of the tiger, snow lion, garuda, and dragon—represent a “developmental process for deepening and furthering” a sane, authentic, and compassionate way of being in the world.¹⁴ Broadly applicable to spiritual development, these teachings also offer a powerful heuristic for engaging the socio-cultural ego of whiteness. And yet, even my experience using this framework in workshops has largely focused on personal contemplative skill-building; how the four dignities might inform leadership and policymaking in institutions warrants further exploration.

Buddhism and Feminism

A painful irony during *The Arrow*’s first decade of publishing was the implosion of the global Shambhala community in the wake of revelations in 2018 of clergy sexual misconduct and abuse of power by its spiritual leader and the founder’s son, Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche. We had founded a journal to examine how the Shambhala teachings could inform transformation of oppressive systems like patriarchy, and here at our feet lay the shattered expectations of our own teacher’s capacity to embody these teachings at the most basic level of decency.

In our issue “Buddhism and Feminism,” published two years before, Alexis Shotwell begins her essay with a claim by Buddhist feminist Rita Gross that “merging [the two traditions] is like pouring ‘water into water.’” Moreover, “holding to any of the core principles of Buddhism commits us also to core principles of feminism.”¹⁵ Clearly, this is easier said than done. In her response essay in the same issue, Holly Gayley observes that there is plenty of misogyny in Buddhist history and texts alongside teachings that ostensibly resonate with feminist principles. Mirroring Shotwell’s opening question, “what sort of feminism” aligns with Buddhism, Gayley asks, “what sort of Buddhism” aligns with feminism? Certainly not the depictions of immaculate birth that Arisika Razak describes in another issue, with their implications about women’s bodies (*since*



childbirth couldn't possibly be sacred or beautiful, how could the Buddha have been born that way?).¹⁶

In another essay in “Buddhism and Feminism,” Judith Simmer-Brown builds on Gayley’s critique, noting further that “the essentials of Buddhism cannot be found or generalized. To attempt to do so asserts a privilege from the perspective of white, middle-class, western Buddhism that disrespects and disempowers the Buddhisms of the world.”¹⁷

That said, all authors in the issue agree that if a spiritual practice cultivates wisdom and compassion, then it should lead to decency and concern about violence and injustice in the world, including gender-based violence and patriarchy. As Simmer-Brown observes, “Proceeding from the ground of the teachings of emptiness, basic goodness, and compassion, it is natural to become concerned about the harmful effects of gender discrimination and violence.”¹⁸ This contention resonates with *The Arrow*’s broader premise as a publication.

Artwork by Alicia Brown,
featured in Volume 3,
Issue 1 (2016)

All authors who contributed to “Buddhism and Feminism” hailed from Shambhala, and the issue was published prior to many of the most infamous revelations of sexual misconduct in western Buddhist sanghas during the #MeToo movement: in addition to Shambhala’s Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche, Rigpa’s Sogyal Rinpoche, Against the Stream’s Noah Levine, and Longquan Temple’s Shi Xuecheng, among others. Where are we left in the aftermath?

In part, the #MeToo movement’s toppling of major Buddhist teachers revealed a chasm between the dharma and its application—in more general terms, between theory and practice. A more recent issue builds on *The Arrow*’s earlier exploration of Buddhism and feminism, attempting to build one of many needed bridges across this chasm. Whereas our 2016 issue largely focuses on philosophical concordance or dissonance between Buddhist and feminist tenets, our 2022 issue, “Contemplative Superpowers for Social Change,” explores the application of Buddhist feminism to challenge patriarchal and other oppressive structures within Buddhist institutions and in society at large. Structured as a forum of reviews on three books, the issue’s discussion of feminism centers a recently published book by Sokthan Yeng, *Buddhist Feminism: Transforming Anger against Patriarchy*.

In their introductory article, guest editors James K. Rowe, Farah Godrej, and Shannon Mariotti observe how Yeng “develops a nuanced analysis that attends to the gender-based oppression within Buddhism, and resistances to that oppression, while also exploring how Buddhism and feminism—both projects committed to liberation—can better support each other.”¹⁹ Fittingly, *Buddhist Feminism* speaks to the heart of the tragic irony of communities like Shambhala: “A key paradox that Yeng explores in her book is how at the level of theory, Buddhism provides ample support for gender equality, and yet in practice the tradition has been shaped by patriarchal oppression and exclu-

Artwork by
Rae Minji Lee,
featured in
Volume 9,
Issue 3 (2022)



sion.”²⁰ The reviews highlight the book’s focus on transforming anger into skillful action against injustice, harnessing the raw energy and wisdom that underlies anger in the face of harm to generate wrathful, compassionate agency.

Both issues emphasize the importance of intersectional feminism, and their insights should be read in the context of other writings on Buddhism, racial justice, and ecological action. Rowe, Godrej, and Mariotti also highlight what the dharma brings to the table for enhancing intersectional feminist movements—even despite historical Buddhist institutions. “Buddhism can support feminist praxis, particularly by offering a non-dual outlook on anger,” they observe.

Indeed, many Buddhist traditions encourage the acknowledgement of realities that are regularly obscured in Euro-American thinking (whether anger, impermanence, suffering or death). From a Buddhist perspective, turning away from these realities and trying to buffer ourselves against them through defensive ego-formation is a primary cause of both existential and political suffering.²¹

Here, Rowe, Godrej, and Mariotti echo a theme from several essays by Rowe published across multiple years in *The Arrow*: death denial in Euro-American society lies at the root of numerous systems of domination, including patriarchy, white supremacy, and capitalism’s ravaging of the planet.²²

The authors featured in “Buddhism and Feminism” and “Contemplative Superpowers for Social Change” communicate two messages: first, the history of patriarchy in Buddhist institutions is too widespread to be dismissed as an aberration, and the union of Buddhism and feminism may not be as simple as pouring water into water. Second, however, if the dharma is in part about cultivating decency and kindness, then our individual behaviors and institutional practices in sanghas should reflect that cultivation.

But how to do it? One answer lies in how thoroughly we as practitioners apply the teachings to our lives. When dharma teachers offer instruction on how to work with emotions—for example, feeling emotions without suppressing them or acting out—how can we integrate more real and challenging examples? I recall teachers in the workshops I grew up participating in frequently referencing cliché examples like being cut off in traffic during one’s morning commute as a great opportunity to practice working with emotion. Rarely have I heard a meditation teacher encourage students to practice noticing bodily sensations—neither suppressing nor acting out—when overcome with lust or desire for power, for example. In future writing in *The Arrow*, I want to see how practitioners might apply bodies of teaching like *Lojong* (mind training) to ethical behavior and institutional practices.

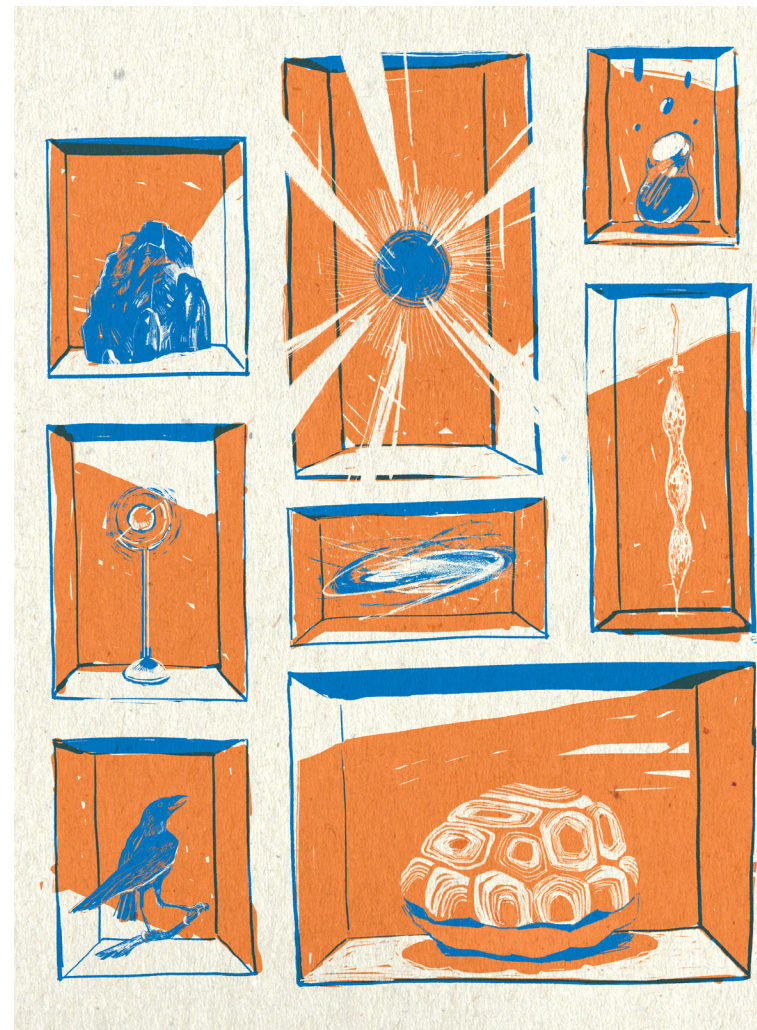
On Behalf of the Biosphere

In the decade since founding *The Arrow*, the climate emergency has shifted definitively from something that might have been still lingering on the horizon to fully here and now. In the same period, I transitioned my career to working full-time on local climate policy and action. Numerous authors in the journal's issues—not to mention other publications—have written about the deep systemic transformation that must occur for us to preserve a livable planet for humanity and countless other beings.²³ Such work is often slow and arduous, and much of it should have begun long ago. Yet many folks—even people genuinely concerned about climate change—seem to think we can solve the issue with incremental, proverbial trimming around the edges of the extractive, global capitalist economy.

Sometime ago I attended part of a decarbonization summit at a university's business school. The event brought together influential leaders in business, energy utilities, federal agencies, industry, agriculture, and research to innovate solutions to the climate crisis. People working on local climate policy in the university's surrounding community were invited to observe a fishbowl-style conversation in which a moderator from the business school and the summit participants discussed approaches to decarbonizing the global economy.

As the discussion unfolded, it quickly became clear that the summit was not about transforming the global economy, much less transforming humanity's relationship with the Earth or with one another. Rather, the summit's purpose was to ascertain how to maintain capitalism at its current pace and scale with a simple fuel switch—replace fossil fuels with non-fossil energy (though not necessarily clean energy, as one speaker

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featured in
Volume 8,
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spent half his allotted time on so-called sustainable aviation fuel, whose life-cycle emissions compared to traditional jet fuel are questionable²⁴). Everything else would be left unchanged. At times, this reductionist focus on fuel switching became farcical; at one point, a former UPS executive excitedly shared about cutting-edge research to use drones for last-mile delivery to save on truck fuel—never mind the heretical idea that we shop less.

Perhaps it is naive to expect much else at events like this. If leaders of major national and multinational companies were more visionary, we would have seen meaningful climate action years ago. And this is precisely why *The Arrow's* publishing on behalf of the biosphere is important: we need to elevate the understanding of three truths that have repeatedly surfaced in our issues “Teaching Contemplative Environments,” “Dharma, Degrowth, and Climate Change,” and “Healing Social and Ecological Rifts” (Parts 1 and 2), among other essays.

First, violence against people and violence against the Earth share a common root: white supremacist capitalist patriarchy, colonialism, and imperialism. In her introduction to Part 1 of the double issue “Healing Social and Ecological Rifts,” guest editor LaDawn Haglund captures this idea: “a shared foundational logic of domination and exploitation... drives both ecological crisis and societal conflicts.”²⁵ In a July 2020 essay preceding this issue, Natalie Avalos makes a similar observation: “The environmental dispossession of Indigenous peoples is directly produced by specific but overlapping histories of colonialism. The dispossession that founded the Americas is born out of the same set of ethics that bore unmanaged resource extraction.”²⁶

Haglund explains these ideas further in her introduction:

This logic permeates historically exploitative systems such as colonialism and imperialism, with their logic of supremacy over land and peoples framed as “other”; capitalism, with its logic of materialism, self-interest, class superiority, commodification, and boundless exploitation of material and human resources; racism, with its logic of white supremacy; patriarchy, with its logic of male superiority; and speciesism, with its anthropocentric logic of human superiority.

Each system introduces unique structures—institutions, laws, and rules—that perpetuate injustice. Living in the shadow of these systems, we are encouraged to adopt narrow cultural perspectives that foreground a sense of entitlement to take what is not offered, take more than one's fair share, take more than can be replenished, and take until it causes hurt. These “takings” accrue disproportionately to dominant actors, creating vast inequities and threatening our

collective capacity for robust, empathetic, and interdependent flourishing.²⁷

Underpinning the common origin of these forms of violence lies a second, subtler truth: the apparent separation of humans and nature is a false dichotomy. In Part 2 of the same double issue, Adam Lobel traces the misguided belief in an imagined dualism to the logic of supremacy that Avalos and Haglund describe:

“Whether deriving from Biblical notions of Man given dominion over other creatures, or ancient Greek devaluations of natural bodies in favor of rational ideas, there are various origin stories of the split between Human and Nature. Inheriting this split—the story goes—modern humanity conceived of itself as not just separate, but as the highest form of life on earth, justified in dominating all.”²⁸

From a Buddhist perspective, these notions of “Human” and “Nature” are merely concepts that solidify an interdependent reality. There is not, nor ever was, a division between humans and nature. Nevertheless, Lobel notes, even those of us working on behalf of the biosphere reinforce this illusory dichotomy in unhelpful ways, such as when we speak of “reconnecting with nature” or when conservationists seek to protect sensitive habitats by excluding all human activity, even by skilled stewards.

A third truth illuminated by authors in *The Arrow* points toward a way forward: ecological healing requires being in service of all earthly beings as



Artwork by Alicia Brown, featured in Volume 5, Issue 1 (2018)

subjects with whom to relate, rather than as objects to manipulate. In the issue “Dharma, Degrowth, and Climate Change,” Rachel DeMott explains how clarifying the second truth of nonseparation leads to the third:

...we are not, at any essential level, separate... from the energy of the places in which we reside. This expansive inclusiveness shifts entirely our presumption that the world is made up of things that we can collect and experience. It also reminds us that our own well-being depends consistently on that of others, and not just of other humans but of water, of air, of plants.²⁹

Authentic relationship with place means more than appreciating beauty; it also means grappling with contamination and listening to what is needed for specific places to heal and thrive. As Lobel puts it, this is an “invitation to fall in love with this earth *as it is* and stay in relationship with this earth *as it changes*.”³⁰

When we combine these three truths, key implications for action emerge. Avalos exhorts readers, “If settlers want to understand how to effectively address environmental crises, then they have to interrogate the logics of settler colonialism—racialization, white supremacy, and myths of development—as structural dimensions of modern life.” Here emerges an assumption behind the white affinity group work that Alex Vlasic describes in her essay: if we understand that racism, patriarchy, and extractive capitalism underpin the crises of our biosphere, then we see that interrogating the logic of these systems and how they work is a key step to charting a different course. Buddhists who bristle at the idea of such inquiry may as well get upset over the Buddha having taught the First and Second Noble Truths before the Third and Fourth.

Understanding the causes of suffering reveals pathways toward freedom. “If we... want to fight climate crises,” Avalos writes, “then we need to reclaim land-based ethics—ethical relationships to the land and the other-than-human. These ethics are earth-centered, meaning they are driven by the immediate needs of the land, not peoples.” What might such ethics look like in practice in a community? Avalos provides one example:

Land-based ethics in an Indigenous context can be understood through the stand-off at Standing Rock itself, particularly through the discourse of “protector, not protester.” Here, Native peoples are citing a sacred responsibility to care for the land—to act as its stewards, responsible for protecting and nurturing the life force within it. In short, the needs of the people are met through the land, so the needs of the land must be met by the people.³¹

In the context of organizations and institutions, this also requires reprioritizing how we allocate time, money, and attention. Despite the rhetorical proc-





Artwork by Alicia Brown,
featured in Volume 5,
Issue 1 (2018)

lamentations of executives and elected leaders about acting on behalf of the climate or biodiversity, stewarding our shared planet remains peripheral in most organizations—something that would be “nice” to do (if it doesn’t harm the bottom line), rather than foundational. Budgetary processes illuminate this: sustainability features of a new building, for example, are usually the last to be added in design and the first to be cut for lack of funds. Avalos’ description of land-based ethics illustrates that if we want a habitable world, the reverse ought to be the case—the “sustainability” features (e.g., solar panels) of a new public building should be central to the design, last to be cut, and prioritized above other functions (e.g., adding “smart technology” to classrooms or conference rooms).

Authors in *The Arrow* have provided shrewd analyses of the origins of the ecological crises we face and moving descriptions of the shifts in worldview required to live in balance with our many relatives on this blue orb hurtling through space. Looking ahead, we need additional discussion of the practical applications of this view at multiple levels in society. We also need contemplative practitioners to be tangibly active in healing social and ecological rifts. A good many meditators would like to think that if we just teach enough nature-based contemplative exercises and reflect on what non-western wisdom traditions say about the Earth, then we’ll mobilize the kind of action necessary. Not so. Mobilizing mass movements toward transformation in livelihoods, the economy, agriculture, and land management will require skillful translation of

these truths into messages that people with different social and political views can hear. In other words, meet people where they are. It is said that the Buddha taught the dharma in a thousand ways, depending on his audience. Let us apply such skillful means toward collective listening to the Earth's cries, releasing our stranglehold on living ecosystems, and promoting life and biodiversity wherever we can.

With Bravery and Compassion

In 2019, I co-taught a workshop with dharma teacher, climate activist, and founder of One Earth Sangha, Kristin Barker, on responding to the global climate emergency. We called it “Together at the Edge: A Buddhist Response to the Climate Crisis.” The day included a discussion of how human civilization has arrived at this point from a dharmic perspective—revisited in an interview published in *The Arrow*'s spring 2022 issue—and an inquiry into what is alive and what is dying in our world. We concluded with a conversation about how to use teachings and practices of spiritual warriorship to aid us in meaningfully addressing climate disruption in our lives and communities.

At the end of the discussion, an older white gentleman gruffly proclaimed that humanity is headed toward near-term extinction by 2030. “Do you agree with that assessment,” he asked, looking at Kristin, “and if so, what's the point of all this rubbish about responding to the crisis? We should practice the Buddhist teaching of impermanence and begin to say our goodbyes.”

Kristin replied, “I don't know what will happen in the next ten years, or thirty or fifty. The science isn't conclusive either.” However, she continued, we are presented with a profound opportunity to practice bravery and compassion in the face of great uncertainty and tremendous suffering.

Kristin's reply—direct, kind, cutting—encapsulates *The Arrow*'s view. We are indeed in a moment of uncertainty and calamitous suffering that is almost certain to grow. It's hard to know whether we're still at the edge of the precipice of climate disaster and mass extinction or whether we're already tumbling into the abyss.³² Meanwhile, fascist, white supremacist movements and gender-based violence continue to gain traction. Perhaps it's tempting to adopt a cynical or nihilistic perspective. Fundamentally, however, there's no difference between this doomsday fixation (“let's begin to say our goodbyes”) and blissful spiritual bypassing (“we're all one, so let's ignore difference and not discuss divisive topics like racism”). Both perspectives are underpinned by the relative privilege of not experiencing the immediate suffering of racism, patriarchy, or climate disruption. Both perspectives also lack compassion—the motivation to help the people and beings who are suffering at the hands of these systems of

violence. And both perspectives lack bravery—the willingness to work toward healing social and ecological rifts with no guarantee of success.

The Arrow's purpose has been to gather insight that supports our readers in practicing such bravery and compassion. As editors and authors, we have collectively asked the questions, *How do we practice the dharma to its fullest extent, without finding places to hide and without turning away from suffering? And how do we apply the dharma and spiritual warriorship—bravery and compassion—to address suffering at a systemic scale?*

We've offered some answers to these questions in our ten years of publishing, and yet there remains so much to explore. As I exit my role as Chief Editor, I marvel at what we've accomplished on a shoestring budget. As *The Arrow* flies, I'm pondering what may yet come from this inquiry. I'm grateful to have been part of this endeavor and to have learned so much from the scholars and wisdom-holders who have worked with us. May their insights continue to inspire and equip readers to act skillfully in service of creating enlightened society. May we partake in healing this Earth, nurturing life, working toward justice, and bringing the elements into balance. May we infuse our collective systems and institutions with wisdom and compassion. May all beings enjoy happiness and freedom from suffering.

Acknowledgments

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Embracing Our Wholeness: The Importance of Embodiment, Lineage, Spirituality, and Social Justice

ARISKA RAZAK

You are part of the human family. You come from a line of bodies who are of this place, who walked the earth, who planted and harvested, who birthed and celebrated who lost and wept, who dreamed and prepared for you.¹

—Kelsey Blackwell

AS A WOMAN who has given birth, who is also a healer, dancer, and spiritual practitioner, I know that nothing is more basic than the fact of our existence: we are born into a human body, and our consciousness is shaped by its physicality, its senses, and its changing abilities and disabilities. Socially, our bodies are racialized, gendered, and culturally defined. It is on the basis of perceived or imagined differences in our bodies—which include our minds, psyches, and emotions—that we are privileged or targeted based on social and political norms that shape our lives and govern our existence.

As someone who came of age when racism, sexism, classism, and homophobic oppression were culturally normalized and socially enforced, my involvement in social justice work has never been optional. My embodiment as a dark, Black, cis-gendered woman has all too often served as the embattled terrain for the liberation struggles of the past century.

My resistance against interlocking social oppression was *embodied, creative, spiritual, and pluralistic*: waves of fear, joy, trauma, and power swept through my body as I slept in communal vigils on courthouse steps; sang Black repurposed spirituals inside and outside of churches; learned white leftist pro-union and anti-war songs; and put my body at risk in numerous demonstrations, protest meetings, and sit-ins. My adolescent and college friends were ethnically diverse, bi-racial, and progressive, and I grew up between the fierce nationalism

of Malcolm X and the beloved community of Martin Luther King Jr., earnestly debating conflicting theoretical frameworks and liberatory strategies.

Although I am not *mestiza*, I deeply resonate with Gloria Anzaldua's description of those who traverse the Borderlands where different worldviews collide, sometimes clash, and ultimately enrich the traveler:

The new *mestiza* copes by developing a tolerance for contradictions, a tolerance for ambiguity. She learns to be an Indian in Mexican culture, to be Mexican from an Anglo point of view. She learns to juggle cultures. She has a plural personality, she operates in a pluralistic mode – nothing is thrust out, the good the bad and the ugly, nothing rejected, nothing abandoned. Not only does she sustain contradictions, she turns the ambivalence into something else.²

The personal was and is political for me; it has taken me decades to feel comfortable in my many identities, to find spaces which did not demand that I prioritize, excise, or demonize selected aspects of my ever-evolving persona. For years I yearned for spaces that would validate my wholeness— that would embrace my diverse roles as artist, activist, healer, mother, lover, grandmother, earth-based spiritual practitioner, birth worker, and academic. For years I sought spaces where I could live authentically, openly naming the abuse I received within *and* outside of my community, partnering with men or women as I chose, loving within and across racial lines, or being a spiritual practitioner without formal affiliation, certification, or supervision.

I never thought I would find a journal that not only honored all my diversities, but normalized and celebrated them, until I encountered *The Arrow Journal*. I especially want to applaud the writers and editors of *The Arrow's* 2019 issue, "The Necessity of Including Embodiment and Lineage in Racial Justice Work."³ This issue offers a compelling immersion into some of the cutting-edge themes found not only in today's social justice movements, but in many historic and contemporary religious and spiritual traditions. In this issue, the intersecting identities I claim were mirrored by the intersectional identities of the contributors.

Rather than following social scripts which reinforce hierarchical binaries separating the intellectual from the embodied, the spiritual from the earthy, the contemplative from the activist, the issue successfully integrates the concepts of *embodiment*, *lineage*, *social justice*, and *spirituality*. It includes essays and articles by spiritual teachers, educators, artists, and activists, all of whom reflect embodied understandings of the intersectional relationships between social justice, embodiment, creativity, and spirituality.

The issue's authors discuss, analyze, and poetically present the Black male body, the female birthing body, the *mestiza* body, the white body, and the mul-

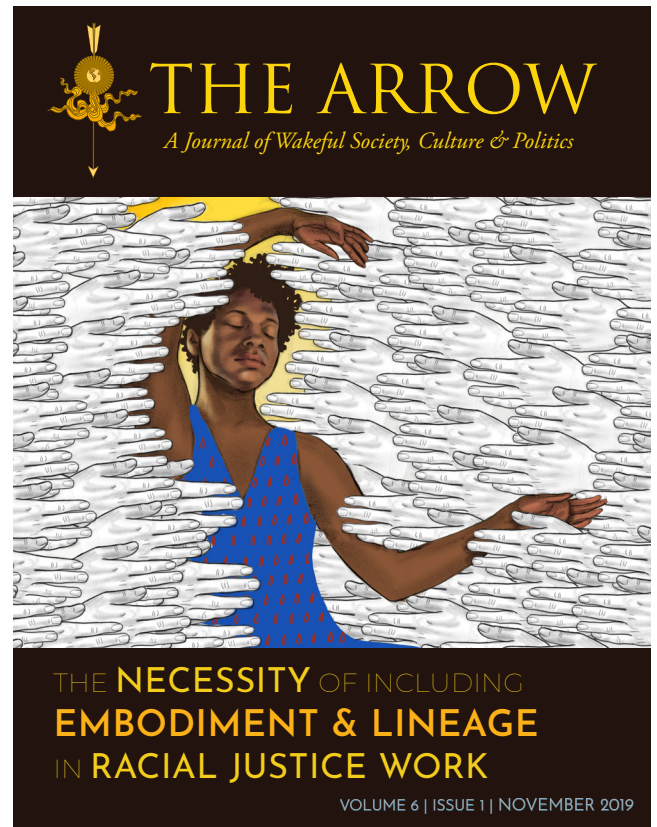
tiethnic bodies of dancers as more than the foundation of earthly existence, but as a living expression of liberation, culture, resilience, and spirituality. The visual art by Alicia Brown enhances and deepens the prose and poetry, literally bringing embodiment to the page. The writers note the importance of lineage in diverse and multifaceted forms, including discussions of spiritual lineages, genetic lineages, lost and retained cultural lineages, and lineages of resistance.

Patricia Mushim Ikeda's article, "May I Also Be the Source of Life': Embodied Resistance, Existence, and Liberation in Bodymind as It Is," creatively integrates spirituality, embodiment, and social justice thought and praxis. In her essay, Ikeda, a third generation Japanese American, argues that human embodiment—particularly female human embodiment—can be viewed as a living dharma that rejects patriarchal norms, doctrines, and spiritual practices.

Ikeda begins her essay with a personal story grounded in her experience of motherhood, explicitly noting that stories like this are not found in the spiritual teachings of "...patriarchal Dharma lineages." She continues,

Thus, in their existence and telling, they are... expressive forms of resistance and renewal. They might point toward additional ways to think about the fulfillment of the impossible Bodhisattva vow... including in and through the female human body, rather than through some theoretical transcendence of the breathing flesh that we are.⁴

In her story, Ikeda reflects on the toast and apple butter she's eating in a house in California. She recalls that the tree that provided the apple butter was nourished by her own placenta after giving birth to her son. Rather than viewing her pregnancy, birth, and placental burial as acts devoid of spiritual meaning, Ikeda suggests that they are a living manifestation of the Bodhisattva vow, helping her to become, "...the source of life / for all the realms of varied beings."⁵ Further, she observes that "the soil of the garden, the tree, its



Cover for Volume 6, Issue 1 (2019) | Artwork by Alicia Brown

fruit, my body and blood, my child, the meal which now nourishes me—'all beings, one body,' as we used to chant daily in the Zen temple.”⁶

Her reflections on being a Mahayana Zen Buddhist practitioner in Korea and the United States illustrate the ways in which ordinary acts of daily living provide an embodied rebuke to hierarchical systems that devalue the body and exalt the mind. For example, while the Buddhism of Western, Theravāda meditation-based converts may emphasize silent, stationary practice in quiet meditation halls, Ikeda's reflections on living in a Korean monastery suggest that the quotidian, *embodied* activities of daily monastic life, which include strenuous periods of gardening, cooking, and cleaning—as well as physically demanding meditation postures and prostrations—were originally used to evoke mindfulness:

My Buddhist training in North America and in Asia emphasized the elimination of a lot of discursive thinking, not through an act of will and repression... but through physical activities that are repetitive in nature... and that require enough awareness and concentration to prevent the practitioner from going on autopilot. Because of these experiences, my guess is that Buddhist meditation was never meant to be a cerebral, pleasurable, floating-feeling, disembodied experience, as it has sometimes been taught and practiced in the West.⁷

In her concluding discussion on the integration of embodiment and racial justice, Ikeda calls attention to the fact that “transformative racial justice is experienced through the body and through embodied processes.”⁸ She reminds us that embodiment *also* means that socially targeted and marginalized folks to see themselves reflected in all the spaces they occupy— racially, culturally, and physically:

Our embodied lives, what we do with our bodies in living, loving, working, and playing, in grieving, rage, pleasure, birthing, and dying, is more important than intellectual discourse, no matter how politically astute in analysis or how visionary in scope.⁹

This viewpoint of the body as the living foundation for racial justice work is echoed in the essay, “The Movement Within the Movement,” a collaborative piece that includes writing and poetry by choreographer Nicole Klaymoon, photos of dance performances by David Wilson, and masks created for the dancers by Tigre Bailando. This piece highlights the work of the Embodiment Project, founded by Klaymoon to “energize and celebrate contemporary liberation movements such as Black Lives Matter, Restorative Justice, and Me Too...”¹⁰

The choreographic vocabulary of the Embodiment Project is based on street dance created by Black, LatinX, and LGBT+ communities to resist, celebrate, and empower themselves. Now global, these dances emerged from the self-generated work of marginalized inner city youth in the United States, who drew “inspiration from the elements of deejaying, MCing, graffiti and b-boying,”¹¹ which are each individual efforts and communal practices alike. The dance forms—which include waacking, voguing, popping, breaking, krumping and other forms commonly grouped under the label “hip-hop”¹²—offer an embodied spiritual homage to artists whose explosive creativity changed the contemporary dance landscape. Despite racism, AIDS, homophobia, transphobia, gang violence, poverty, and incarceration, these artists have created a lineage of movement that flows from their living and dead originators to new generations of dancers who recreate, re-voice, and re-imagine their work.

Street dance also presents embodied healing methodologies that help to release and transform the socially inflicted and vicarious traumas experienced by its performers. In freestyle battling and other communal performances, fierce verbiage and kinesthetic movement have the potential to transform the destructive rage engendered by social oppression into self-love, resilience, and community appreciation.

Rather than appropriating and commercializing this art, Klaymoon openly acknowledges its origins, declaring that she is “committed to choreography as a tool to reclaim the healing capacity of street dance traditions, to initiate individuals into their power, and to connect with ancestral lines.”¹³ She also notes that:

Movement has the capacity to unearth repressed memories and ancestral traumas that shape the way that our DNA is read and transcribed. Our stories are literally encoded in the way we move through the world... Movement and its symbology are the language of the subconscious. I became conscious about the repressed trauma that my body was carrying through the narrative I was expressing in my freestyle dance movement.¹⁴

The inclusion of an article discussing the role of popular dance as a spiritual and healing methodology in the quest for racial justice highlights *The Arrow*’s role in presenting cutting edge discussions at the intersection of racial healing, activism, art, and spirituality. It highlights the current turn in social justice struggles towards healing, rest, and embodied transformation. As the noted political activist and scholar Angela Davis states:

Self-care and healing and attention to the body and the spiritual dimension – all of this is now a part of radical social justice struggles.

That wasn't the case before. And I think that now we're thinking deeply about the connection between interior life and what happens in the social world.¹⁵

In times of proliferating divisions and divides both within and outside of progressive communities, it is both appropriate and necessary to highlight the voices that embody a plurality of ideas, frameworks, and methodologies, replacing the tired binaries of “either/or” with the dynamic paradigm of “both/and.” Our intertwined lives as part of a shared humanity may well depend on our ability to integrate old and new knowledges and to heal the schisms caused by the wounds of social and cultural oppression, with particular attention to the racism, colonialism, misogyny, homophobia, and transphobia that are pervasive today. In its attention to embodiment, spirituality, social justice, creativity and healing, this issue of *The Arrow* gives us a framework for the analysis of the many pressing problems that must be solved if humanity is to survive. Every mind, body, psyche, and heart are part of the problem and are necessary for the solution!

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Mahāprajāpatī: An Arrow Ancestor

JAMES K. ROWE

WHEN I SIT DOWN TO MEDITATE, I take time to honour the lineage of teachers who make it possible for me to feel past egoic grasping toward a sensation of grounded freedom. Since learning the story of the Buddha's aunt Mahāprajāpatī—who raised him since his mother died shortly after giving birth—I've found myself dwelling in additional appreciation for her legacy.

As the story goes, Mahāprajāpatī approached the Buddha five years after he attained enlightenment and requested that women be granted entry to the monastic order. Mahāprajāpatī's petition was made on behalf of a large group of women, many of whom had lost their husbands to the monastic life. How did the awakened one respond? He denied their request.

After delivering his verdict, the Buddha hit the road for a teaching trip. Mahāprajāpatī and the large gathering of women she spoke for shaved their heads and donned monastic robes. They followed the Buddha on his journey. It would be anachronistic to read Mahāprajāpatī's march as a feminist protest, but the tactics she and her cohort deployed were meant to challenge power and achieve inclusion. It is noteworthy that Mahāprajāpatī's name means "leader of a large assembly."¹

At one point in the journey, Mahāprajāpatī stood outside of the monastery hall where the Buddha was staying. She was miserable and depressed. The Buddha's attendant Ananda encountered her and learned the reason for her afflicted state. He promised to take up her cause. Ananda then petitioned the Buddha by first asking, rhetorically, whether women can attain enlightenment. The Buddha said yes. Ananda then reminded the Buddha of Mahāprajāpatī's mothering labor towards him. At this point, the Buddha accedes and offers

Mahāprajāpatī ordination if she is willing to abide by eight conditions. She accepts, and the first order of Buddhist nuns was born.²

Enlightened, But Still So Much to Learn

Much can be made of this story. A primary takeaway is that the Buddha was unwilling to allow women into the monastic order without orchestrated pressure from his aunt and the large assembly of women she represented. This is to say that social forces from outside Buddhism were the primary catalyst for the ultimate inclusion of women. According to Rita Gross, “it took persistent women, fueled by their own experiences of suffering caused by patriarchy, to challenge him to do something unconventional and out of the ordinary regarding gender arrangements.”³

The Buddha’s taming of existential anxiety and pursuit of egolessness were insufficient on their own to induce him to admit women into the sangha. Such inclusion required collective action that could challenge the Buddha’s social conditioning. Why? Because the Buddha had been shaped by social forces that his journey through life did not explicitly address, thus leading him to rehearse his patriarchal conditioning despite his deconstructive training.

For me, this story is a reminder that despite their transformative power, contemplative practices alone are not enough to bring forth just societies. Even enlightened beings can reproduce unjust power relations if injustice is not explicitly targeted.

Enlightened Society?

The lineage I honor at the beginning of my meditation sessions is a bit messy. It includes the Buddha who messed up post-enlightenment. It also includes Chögyam Trungpa, who founded the Shambhala Buddhist community where I took refuge in 2014, and whose vision of “enlightened society” was a central inspiration for this journal which explores how contemplative practice and social justice politics inform one another. As Gabriel Dayley notes in his introduction to this issue, “a painful irony during *The Arrow’s* first decade of publishing was the implosion of the global Shambhala community in the wake of revelations of clergy sexual misconduct and abuse of power by its spiritual leader and the founder’s son, Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche.”⁴

This implosion did not leave Chögyam Trungpa’s legacy unscathed. As a result of survivors bravely coming forward and sharing their abuse at the hands of Mipham, some of Trungpa’s sexual conduct has been revisited. He regularly slept with students, and in multiple U.S. states, sexual relations between clergy

and congregants are now illegal because of power imbalances like this.⁵ Likewise, some former students have reported physically abusive behavior at the hands of Trungpa.⁶ Despite being an advanced meditation teacher, Trungpa lacked the wisdom to foresee the damage he wrought by pursuing sexual relations with students. Likewise, the fact that stories of physical abuse come primarily from women suggest deep patriarchal conditioning that he was unable or unwilling to undo.

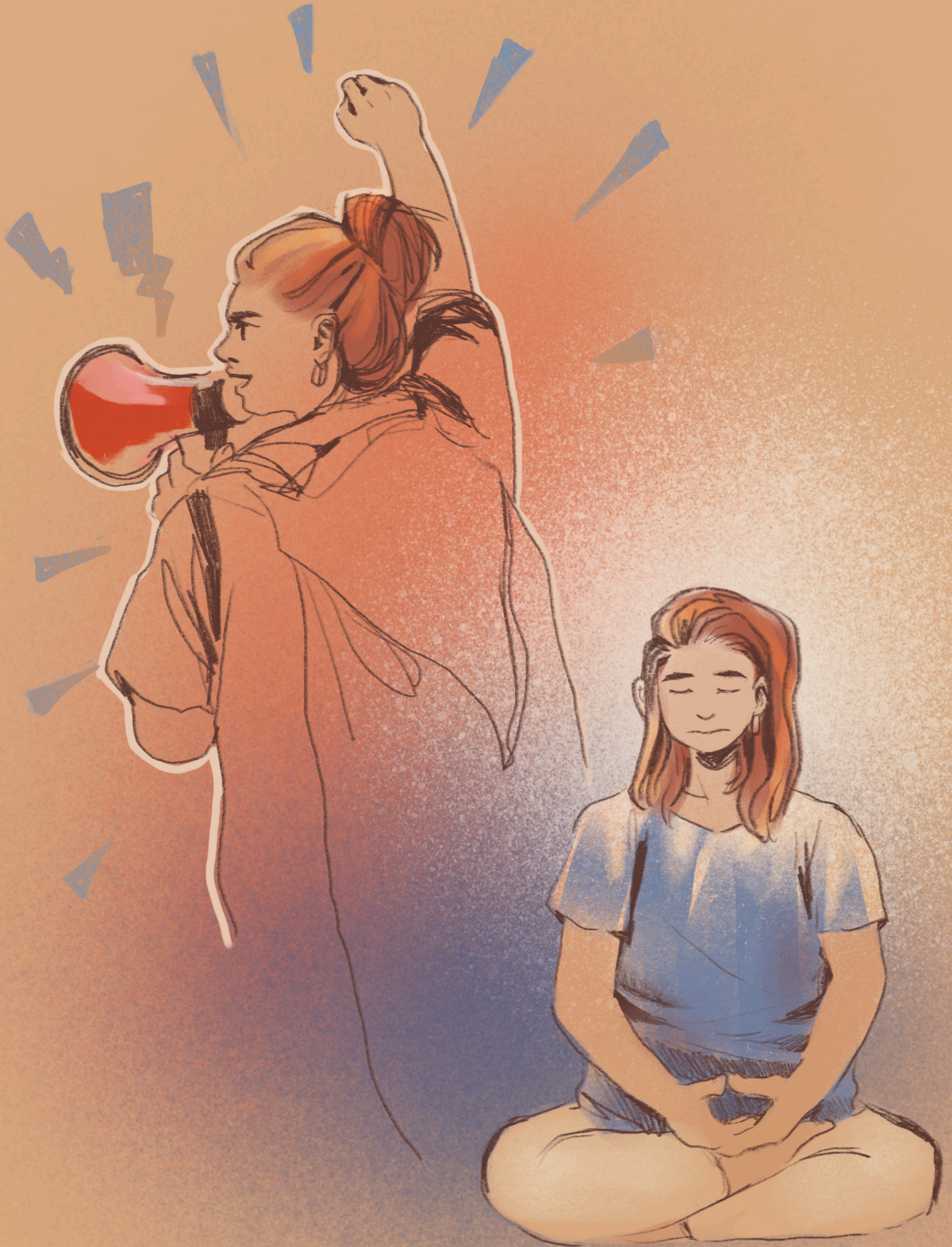
Trungpa had a social vision and was worried about “the threat of nuclear war, widespread poverty and economic instability, social and political chaos, and psychological upheavals of many kinds.”⁷ But this vision neglected to internalize a key lesson of Mahāprajāpatī’s story: power needs to be challenged directly if it is to be fundamentally transformed. As Matthew Moore has argued, much of Buddhist philosophy assumes that “change ultimately comes additively, from the many personal transformations of individual citizens.”⁸ What is missing from Trungpa’s view—from the Buddha’s, too—is a robust accounting of how social structures bear down on individuals, shaping behavior and frustrating change.

Trungpa’s inattention to structure is one possible reason for his inability to adequately confront his own patriarchal conditioning. He was raised in a Tibetan culture that he acknowledged was male dominated.⁹ In *Buddhism After Patriarchy*, Rita Gross shares a story of Trungpa introducing an element of Tibetan Buddhism, typically undertaken by men, to his American students. He assumed that the precedent should continue in the United States. “When women objected,” Gross recounts, “he acceded quite readily, but it had not occurred to him to include women from the beginning.”¹⁰

The Power of Contemplative Practice

Mahāprajāpatī’s march continues. I see *The Arrow* very much in her lineage, seeking to join social justice with contemplative practice. Mahāprajāpatī challenged the Buddha, but she did so because she wanted access to what she thought were profound teachings about how to work with existential fears and the compensatory desires for control they can fuel (desires for control that lead to frustration and pain more than true liberation).

It is noteworthy that in her story, the Buddha changed his mind. According to Gross, “he changed his mind despite misgivings, practical difficulties, and negative anti-women public opinion.”¹¹ And so it is possible to argue that the Buddha’s meditative training softened his defenses, making him more open to an inclusive community. While Gross does not make this point, it is important to note that the story of Mahāprajāpatī is included in the Pāli Canon,



the earliest corpus of Buddhist teachings available in written form. Although her “protest” was organized before she was Buddhist, that collective action is now told as part of the tradition. It is internal to it. This is to say that there are precedents for collective action targeting structural injustices within the earliest Buddhist texts.

Mahāprajāpatī’s legacy has had uneven uptake in the tradition, but is alive today in formations like intersectional Buddhist feminism, Engaged Buddhism, Black Buddhism, Buddhist socialism, radical dharma, and what I call radical mindfulness in a recent book.¹² Contemplative communities need structural analysis and collective action to avoid reproducing social inequities.

But more than this, the broader social justice world needs contemplative practices that help soothe existential fears and the compensatory cravings for power they fuel. The articles in this journal are like arrows, firing in both directions, and like Mahāprajāpatī, encouraging contemplative communities to embody deep and abiding liberation. And like the Buddha, encouraging all humans to look inward, transform existential fear, and learn to love a life, body, and earth that ends.

How Making Friends with Death Can Kill Supremacy Thinking and Behavior

Most of my articles in *The Arrow* have been about death. This is not due to some morbid fascination. Instead, I’ve been convinced by powerful thinkers such as the Buddha, James Baldwin, Ernest Becker, and Simone de Beauvoir that death denial plays a formative role in shaping a will to supremacy along the axes of race, class, gender, and species.

Because we feel small and anxious in the face of finitude, people regularly impose their will on human and non-human others to pursue compensatory power and aggrandizement. There is a growing body of social psychology research—Terror Management Theory—which supports this link between fear of death and dominative behaviour with robust experimental evidence, however, this reality is not yet reflected in our politics.¹³

Finding ways to collectively face and metabolize the reality of death—through meditation, ritual, psychedelics, or other mind-body practices—is not only paramount for our personal wellbeing; it is politically vital. I am deeply grateful that *The Arrow* exists as a venue to hone and volley this argument in what is largely a death-denying culture.

As I argue in *Radical Mindfulness*, the culmination of the writing I’ve done for *The Arrow* to date, the interlocking systems of white supremacy, capitalism,

human supremacy, and patriarchy continue to be shaped by aggregations of existential fear. But these systems have developed institutional logics that need to be addressed specifically through direct action, union organizing, community organizing, and state action. Employee mindfulness programs will not result in a pay raise when wage suppression is institutionally incentivized because it helps powerful companies fulfill their fiduciary duty to maximize shareholder value. As Mahāprajāpatī reminds us, these institutional logics need to be directly targeted.

While Mahāprajāpatī shadowed and challenged the Buddha, she also walked towards him with respect for the profundity of his teachings. I hope *The Arrow* continues its tradition of firing in both these directions, challenging contemplative communities to embody deep and abiding justice, and encouraging us all (including social justice activists) to look inward and see how our often-unconscious fears might be fuelling a will to supremacy that keeps pushing liberation off target.



Artwork by Chetna Mehta, featured in Volume 8, Issue 1 (2021)

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What Does it Mean to be Wakeful?

LADAWN HAGLUND

AS *THE ARROW: A Journal of Wakeful Society, Culture, and Politics* turns 10 years old, I would like to reflect on the idea of “wakefulness” at this moment in history. This one word encompasses both vision and contradiction. In a traditional Buddhist sense, wakefulness is the essence of the entire path: a Buddha is literally “one who has awakened,” and Buddhist practice is a continual process of eschewing the sleep of ignorance. Human suffering is believed to arise from one source: not seeing the world “just as it is.” The tools of practice, far from being just techniques for stress reduction (as in consumptive Western narratives), actually build our capacity to bravely open our hearts to this challenge. Scientists have documented how meditation practice can heighten awareness,¹ shift perceptions, and even transform “one’s vision of reality.”²

I expect that many *Arrow* readers would agree that opening up to all the richness, complexity, joy, and anguish of reality takes effort. And like everything hard, we humans resist. This is so well known in some Buddhist traditions that entire teachings are devoted to working with resistance. However, at this moment in history, we are seeing a kind of resistance to wakefulness that goes much further than this: to reject even the idea of “waking up” as a kind of political ideology or agenda. The origins of this “anti-woke” crusade are complex and beyond the scope of this article.³ But it can be identified as a reactionary response to increasing pressure to wake up to racial, gender, and other systemic injustices—the root causes of so much suffering in our world.

What does it mean to be wakeful in an “anti-woke” political moment? The current backlash against wakefulness is, at the very least, *paradoxical* for those of us striving to be more centered and aware, to be bolder in dealing with the reality of life, to be more contemplative and potentially wise. Being awake

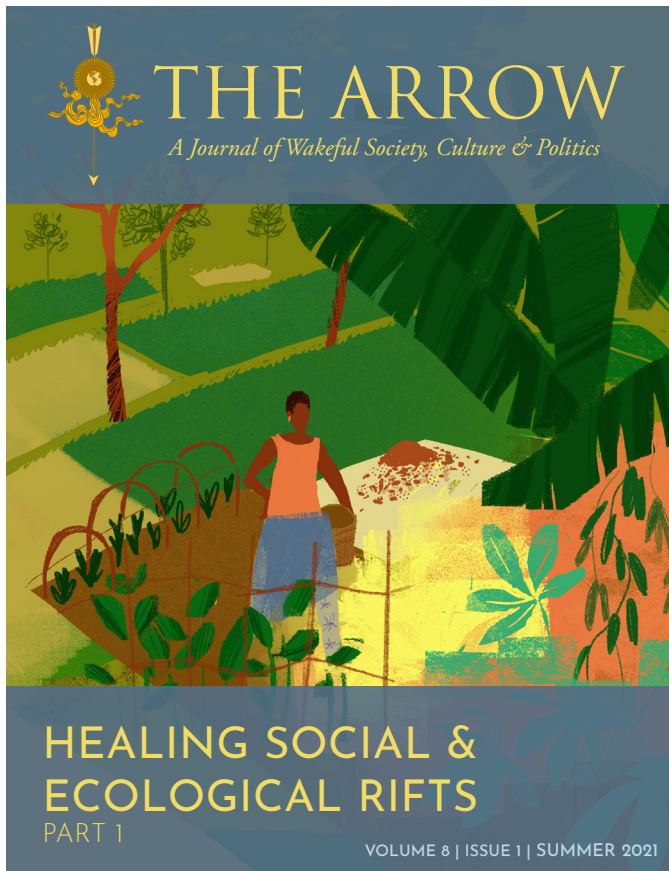
and aware is a survival skill! When did paying attention to what is happening become negative? My surprise, while mitigated somewhat by sociological training, is due in part to my privilege as a white, cis-gendered person whose experience is not ignored, questioned, or rejected on a daily basis. Yet, the anti-woke crusade is jarring in its deliberate ignorance and the political action it spawns.⁴

There is a history of anti-intellectualism in U.S. politics, of course; but this is different. It is not simply that education is delegitimized as a means to deepen our understanding beyond what the mythical “common man” believes. I say mythical because wide access to public education has made it a *choice* to be ignorant, one that too many people make in this age of angry, largely white men disseminating a long litany of falsehoods and prejudices across the radio and TV, and in political speeches.

No. This goes beyond denying our rational minds a chance to better understand the world and our history. This is an attempt to shut down our *hearts* as well. Being “woke” is used in disdainful ways in politics and right-wing media to convince people that it is *unjust* to force people to empathize with “the other.” White, heteronormative, able-bodied, male people with money have not historically had to empathize with the unique experiences of non-white, indigenous, female, queer, economically marginalized, or other-abled people. Those who propagate resentment scream from their stages about the injustice of having to awaken to the reality of these experiences, of having to *care*.

But pushback does not come only from the right, as my own Shambhala community has experienced. Calls to address patriarchal, racist, exclusionary, and abusive dynamics in religious communities around the world have evoked similar “anti-woke” responses. As the “Me Too,” Black Lives Matter, LGBTQIA+, and other movements continue to insist that we acknowledge their unique experiences and do better, many communities doubled down in response, closing ranks around leaders and members who deny the need for change. Beneath these responses is a similar historical privilege of *not having to see* the harm, of staying asleep in the face of it. If practitioners of wakefulness cannot recognize misogyny and racism in the sheltered confines of their own sangha, how can we even imagine “enlightened society”?

Academia is often the scapegoat of the “anti-woke” crowd due to its willingness to engage with the structural and cultural violence of patriarchy, racism, capitalism, and other harmful social systems. Ironically, however, it is *also* structured to discourage wakeful, caring, compassionate engagement. I was dismayed to read a review of my own promotion dossier that criticized me for taking credit for editing two issues of *The Arrow* on healing social and ecological rifts.⁵ Apparently, a “Journal of Wakeful Society” was irrelevant to that reviewer’s understanding of academic excellence. They did not consider



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Cover for Volume 8, Issue 2 (2021) | Artwork by Chetna Mehta

whether external peer review, a crucial part of academic rigor, was employed in such a journal (spoiler alert: it is). They simply rejected the idea of wakefulness altogether.

For those of us who want to bring together spirituality, care, and rigorous scholarship, there are few outlets for our work. This is a niche that *The Arrow* has skillfully filled. Contributors to this edition such as Rachel DeMotts, Naya Jones, Arisika Razak, and James K. Rowe, as well as many others over the years, have expressed their appreciation for being welcomed into an awakened space for spiritual contemplation, artistic imagination, intellectual excitement, and honest engagement with injustice. Recognizing the terrible things that are happening to the earth and its beings is *necessary* if we are to transform the patterns that threaten us. *The Arrow's* unique and crucial contribution is in providing space to wake up and giving us an opportunity to be brave.

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Data, Practice, Sandwiches, Possibilities

RACHEL DEMOTTS

IT FEELS WONDERFULLY CONTRARY to sit in my ivory tower office and write this, but it was never quite my intention to be an academic. I pursued a PhD after several years of working on educational and environmental issues in the public sector. I had been seeking the wisdom of practical experience from working on political campaigns and with young people in unstable housing, pondering how I wanted to spend my future work life. I had spent some of this time working for the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in Washington, DC, and wasn't sure I liked what I saw. While the agency benefited from many passionate, smart individuals, the issues on which they worked were regularly siloed, and the resulting policies often felt disconnected from each other. Perhaps in the arrogance of my twenties I thought I could do better. When I returned to my home state of Wisconsin for graduate school, I did so with a deep desire to contribute to environmental problem solving with a view of humans as part of nature, not aspiring to dominate it. I took courses across disciplinary boundaries, looking beyond political science and public policy to history and geography and languages. I wondered if I might weave together different ways of thinking that would go beyond managing the workings of our current political system to imagining something new and more holistic.

Like many others, I quickly ran up against those disciplinary boundaries. While the field of political science was increasingly arguing that qualitative data, through which you can't cram a statistical line, is not "real" data, I was beginning to explore contemplative practice and learn from Buddhist teachings that reached radically different conclusions about what it means to know the "real" world. When I did fieldwork in Africa, I saw suffering of a kind that my insular life to that point could not reconcile, and when I returned to the

United States, I felt lost. I remember speaking with a colleague at a conference who described the sketchy statistical analysis he had done in an attempt to quantify patterns across a series of judicial court decisions in several African countries. He told me that hadn't performed this data analysis because he believed it would be particularly revealing, or even because he wanted to, but rather because doing so "is what my department chair says I have to do to get tenure." This falls into the category of what one of my classmates from Wisconsin sarcastically termed "research which we should not encourage." Generating data for its own sake seemed to me to be a dangerous endeavor, and I could not escape the feeling that the numbers masked more than they were revealing. Nevertheless, the relentless drive to produce quantitative data for its own sake rolled on.

My early experience navigating academia points to the incredible importance of creating spaces like *The Arrow*, which make room for more creative, open dialogue about politics, contemplative practice, and engagement with the world. I went back to school because I wanted to learn how to solve real problems. But I was most consistently judged by my ability to parrot what had already been argued and by whom, rather than by the possibilities of new ideas and undertakings. In *The Arrow*, I have read and reviewed much syncretic, surprising work that refuses the confines of traditional disciplines and modes of expression while seeking a fuller engagement with what a more just world might look like. I have felt provoked by the ways that my colleagues have, in these pages both paper and virtual, opened themselves up and brought creative heart to this work. I appreciate how they have thrown philosophical arguments into conversation with radical engagements as part of their own contemplative paths.

My students have also been heartened by the kinds of creative engagements found in *The Arrow*, from experiential practices to try to philosophical ideas to ponder. They are figuring out how to navigate a world that feels like it is in perpetual crisis, in which they have spent semesters tied to Zoom and unable to freely hang out with friends, where their college tuition is wildly out of control and leaves them with massive debt as a parting gift. The system in which we live is untenable, and my students know it. Reading and talking about how to question, change, or break this system gives them a kind of refuge, a window into unexpected ways of rethinking the world.

When I consider how I was formally trained, I realize that the informal lessons offered along the way are the ones that resonate most with how I now try to create educational spaces. My advisor's fieldwork advice—not the rules of observation in my methods class—encouraged me to simply act professionally, take interest in everything, and be myself. For someone who grew up in

a family full of teachers, the idea that school isn't the place where we learn everything we need to know was liberating. The narrowness of the ways in which academics are generally expected to produce knowledge often felt constrictive to me. *The Arrow* provided me with a space early in my career that not just allowed, but encouraged, the questioning of structural academic notions of successful publication. The journal broadened the notion of expertise in important ways.

The conversations that we have held within *The Arrow* have also brought unexpected gifts: for example, the confidence to begin disassembling another boundary—the one between my practice life and my teaching life. I edited one of the journal's first issues, whose essays considered the use of contemplative pedagogy in teaching about environmental issues.¹ I wrote somewhat tentatively about a reflection I had adapted for class, and my subsequent discussions with colleagues encouraged me to expand and try other practices in class as well. My students have shown deep appreciation for the integration of contemplations into our courses. We meditate; we take aimless walks; we write haiku in courses that have little to do with poetry; we learn to observe differently and more deeply than our research texts prescribe.

Sometimes, my students' simple astonishment of feeling a moment of presence—of fully being here and now—changes their view in profound ways. During the pandemic, as we sat in class on Zoom, one young woman, drawing in a deep breath, said, “so *that's* what my chest feels like,” as if she had recovered some lost sense of her physical self. Of course, it's not always sunshine and enlightenment. A student once said to me, “sometimes there is so much going on that I didn't expect in this class that I feel kind of lost, but I'm pretty sure that means I'm getting a really great education.” This exploration and confusion, too, is part of who we are—learning not just what works easily for us, but what it means when the material asks more of us than immediate comprehension.



Cover for Volume 4, Issue 1 (2017) | Artwork by Alicia Brown

In pondering the path ahead, the particulars of my view are fuzzy. Perhaps this is in part because I think about the future more spaciouly than I have in the past. I wonder about how *The Arrow* and the conversations it has nurtured may lead to new methods, new engagements, or new formats beyond journals and websites. I hope the work we have done together will help keep the uncertain questions of relating academic, contemplative, and political practices to each other open, to make room for engaging with them in unfettered and creative ways. I think some of the way ahead may be diffuse and less arrow-like in form, more like scattered seeds that bring leaves and flowers into the world.

Take, for example, a class exercise I recently tried for the first time. To learn about fundamental Buddhist views of nature, my students and I worked with a few koans. A *koan* is a pithy puzzle in the form of a short story that invites the reader to contemplate spiritual teachings by making an experiential relationship with them rather than trying to figure them out logically. As Roshi John Tarrant writes, “Koans don’t really explain things. Instead, they show you something by opening a gate. You walk through, and you take the ride.”² Central to being welcomed into the puzzle is that the reader becomes part of a larger search for understanding, joining those who have contemplated the koan before and those who will contemplate it in the future. One well-known koan, in which the teaching is attributed to Hui-neng (the sixth patriarch of the Zen tradition in the seventh century),³ finds two monks arguing about a waving temple flag. One argues that the wind moves; the other argues the flag moves. Hui-neng stops the argument when he informs them that it is in fact their minds that move, and the monks are struck with awe.

After working with one koan together in class, I gave each student a slip of paper with a different koan printed on it. I asked them to read their koans, and then to take twenty minutes to go outside, walk, and contemplate what arose for them among the words. Upon returning to class, my students shared the experience. Several of them were positively radiant, and one said with delight that the exercise was one of his favorite activities he’d ever been asked to try in a class. Another shared his experience in the following way (paraphrased by me after the fact):

I was thinking about sandwiches. I love sandwiches, I ate them all the time as a kid; I still do. My family used to hike a lot, and we would always make sandwiches to take along. But once a sandwich has been in your backpack for a while it gets soggy. If you had a choice, you might not want to eat it at all. So, my koan was about a guy who goes to the butcher and asks for the best cut of meat he has. When the butcher tells him that all the pieces of meat are the best, he becomes enlightened. This is what made me think about soggy

sandwiches. That thing I would never eat if I was at home makes for one of the best things I've ever tasted when I'm out on the trail after five hours of walking.

Perhaps the way *The Arrow* has fostered such an expansive set of ideas has already created space for discussions, engagements, and lessons that reach far beyond what we might anticipate. It's my guess that my student will think about sandwiches many times in the future, and probably never in quite the same way again. Thinking of *The Arrow*, it is the same for me, that I now have a different standard, a different notion of possibility, for how to weave together writing as an academic and as a human being.

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Space to Dream: Reflections on Teaching, Writing, and Living with *The Arrow*

NAYA JONES

The moment is January 2021. Because of the pandemic, our school year begins online at UC Santa Cruz. Teaching is always a craft, and it requires care and structure and flexibility. Now that craft is taking place amid a global pandemic. As educators we're dreaming of classes and assignments and ways of (un)learning, while being responsive to the moment. I have questions. As I teach courses on food justice and healing justice, how will our virtual classroom involve our bodies as well as our minds? How will students and I take care of our whole selves—however we define that wholeness—as we gather in virtual space? How will we put justice into practice as we (un)learn together?

IN EARLY 2021 these questions brought me to *The Arrow Journal*. While searching for resources on embodied teaching and learning, I found the issue on “The Necessity of Including Embodiment and Lineage in Social Justice Work,” guest edited by Kelsey Blackwell.¹ The authors in this issue explored what it means to embody social and racial justice from wide-ranging social locations. They troubled abstract notions of “intersectionality” as they grappled with how race, gender, class, and other identities are lived. Definitions of intersectionality often emphasize the way social identities such as race, gender, class, and sexual orientation (among others) are lived simultaneously, with everyday implications for privilege and oppression. In this issue such intersections are deeply *felt*. The contributors bring to mind the Black feminist roots of intersectionality. Remembering: Kimberlé Crenshaw coined the term *intersectionality* not as an abstract idea but from bearing witness to Black womens’ lived experiences with the legal system in the United States.²

This—*this*—was what I wanted to practice with students: reflection on embodying intersections, embodying (in)justice, and embodying possibility. Doing so felt all the more vital in the context of the pandemic and virtual learning. Ever since that Winter 2021 quarter, I assign this issue on embodiment and lineage in every undergraduate and graduate class I teach. Gathering around the collection has become a classroom ritual, along with the transformative deep listening practices offered by AnaLouise Keating.³ Together, these writings support intentional discussion. They spark critical thinking (and feeling) together. They inspire an awareness of how we embody privilege and oppression in the classroom. They help students and me enter conversations about injustice with a sense of collective care for ourselves and for the broader world. To be clear, this contemplative and healing-centered approach is not about *feeling good* or *promoting relaxation*. These have become buzzwords for marketing contemplative practices in the West. The invitation is to practice awareness. Who knows which inner “guests” will show up?⁴ Remembering this from Shawn Ginwright: a healing-centered approach to teaching and learning acknowledges trauma and injustice while exploring how “healing [is] experienced collectively.”⁵ A healing-centered way of teaching is deep collective work.

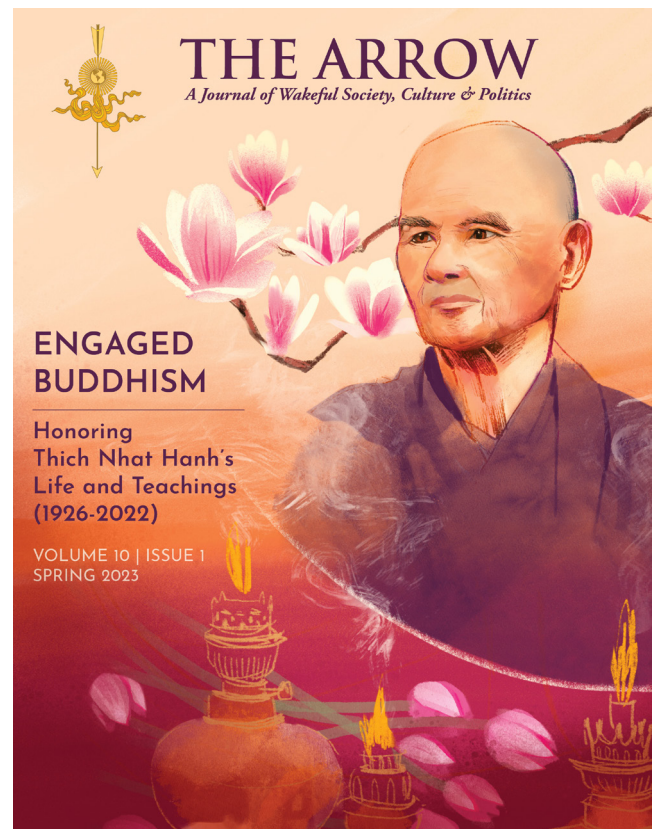
Which brings me to *The Arrow Journal's* work in the world. When Chief Editor Gabe Dayley invited us to reflect on one key contribution of *The Arrow*, the concept of *space* immediately came to mind. By creating a space that bridges contemplative practice and activism, *The Arrow* inspires intentional gathering, learning, and community-building. By creating intentional space, *The Arrow* inspires intentional spaces. Often these are spaces of remembering: remembering community, remembering our bodies, remembering our lineages, remembering our commitments. I have experienced this in the classroom as an educator who assigns articles from the journal regularly (ritually). I again experienced the transformative possibilities of *The Arrow* as a guest editor for the Fall 2023 issue “Undisciplined Archives: Dreaming Across Black Geographies.”⁶

In my introduction to the Black dreaming issue, I describe how our conversation about Black dreaming needed “a capacious home,” one “those of us who bridge ways of moving in the world as spiritual activists, artist-scholars, and practitioner-teachers could create without dismissing aspects of our work and ourselves.”⁷ The journal welcomes hyphenated authors who disrupt all manner of binaries. Many of us know how challenging it can be to find homes for our writing or art when we defy binaries or disrupt disciplinary boundaries. For those of us who require peer review for promotion and tenure purposes, publishing can feel like choosing between our commitments, our communities, and our careers. This has certainly been my journey as a Black and Blaxicana

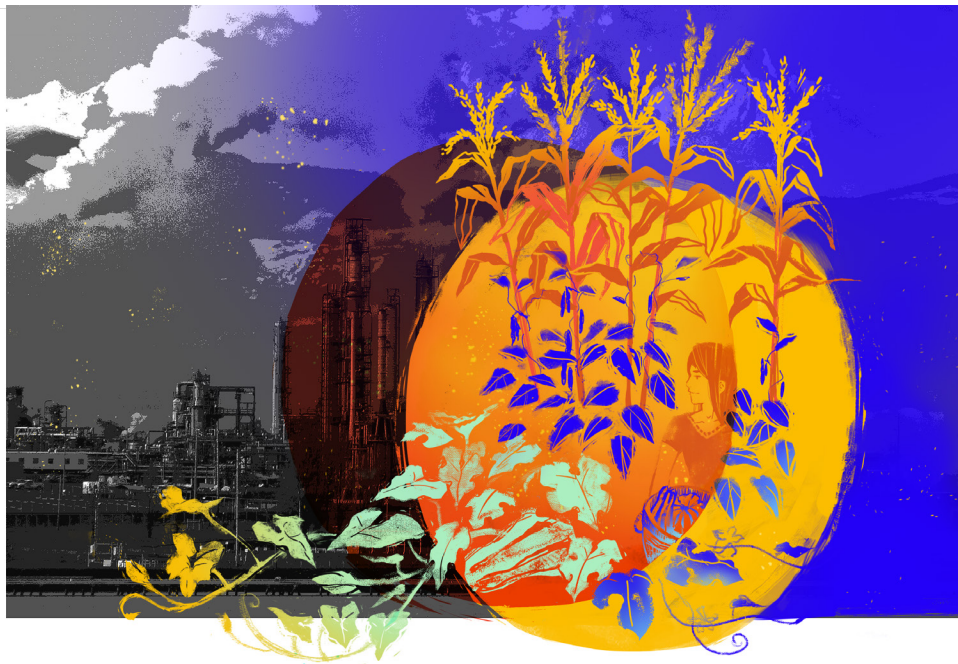
cultural worker and geographer. One of the reasons I was excited for the Black dreaming edition to appear in *The Arrow* was due to my desire to co-create un-apologetic space for work that crosses thresholds, including the emotional and metaphysical ones. Remembering: black studies and other fields committed to liberation have never measured themselves by the status quo.⁸

The Arrow reveals what can emerge when authors and readers bring their whole selves to justice work. In her reflection, Arisika Razak beautifully refers to this wholeness as the “multiplicity of identities that we carry,” including our spiritual selves.⁹ Critical conversations emerge. Legacies emerge. In *The Arrow* issue dedicated to Black Buddhism, guest editor Shanté Paradigm Smalls powerfully refers to the collection as an archive that captures the experiences and knowledge of Black Buddhists.¹⁰ The issue dedicated to engaged Buddhism and Thich Nhat Hanh’s life, curated by Associate Editor Ashley Wilson, archives his teachings and their profound impact for future generations.¹¹ Much of justice work—from learning about social and environmental justice, to direct action and protest, to everyday mutual aid and the reclamation of ancestral wisdom—is about creating space, taking up space, and holding space. *The Arrow* does all of these.

What will emerge moving forward? What should emerge? When I turn to the future of discussions at the intersection of contemplative wisdom and politics, I’m again pulled to *space*. This time, from a more geographic perspective. As a geographer I’ve learned to think critically about space and power. I’ve learned that legacies of oppression and privilege play out in spaces such as classrooms and neighborhoods and sanghas. I’ve learned that if we don’t address such legacies, these spaces will perpetuate injustice. I’ve also learned how spaces can be reclaimed or reimagined or remixed, and they are. We find this in *The Arrow* over the years. Remembering: in spaces of learning, educators can and do practice contemplative racial justice.¹² Neighbors can and do practice mutual aid during the pandemic and beyond.¹³ Sanghas can and (sometimes) do prac-



Cover for Volume 10, Issue 1 (2023) | Artwork by Rae Minji Lee



Artwork by Rae Minji Lee, featured with “Land-Based Ethics and Settler Solidarity in a Time of Corona and Revolution” by Natalie Avalos (2020)

tice anti-racism and unlearning white supremacy. Of course, doing so isn’t always easy, especially amidst the “backlash against wakefulness” that LaDawn Haglund describes in this issue.¹⁴

As *The Arrow* moves forward, and as we all move forward, we can use as many examples and stories of reimagining spaces as possible. We need these because they inspire dreaming. As *The Arrow* has started to do already, the world requires more discussions that place social and ecological justice in conversation with one another. In the realm of food sovereignty, Black and Indigenous (and Black Indigenous) farmers are mobilizing and tending mutual political ground.¹⁵ More of these relational approaches to the pressing global issues of our times are necessary. We can deepen solidarity when we address movements led by Black, Indigenous, Latinx, and other historically oppressed communities in relationship. We can learn how our histories and movements are (actually) interconnected, though white supremacy and capitalism may tell us otherwise.

I also wonder how conversations at the intersection of contemplative practice and activism can further center Indigenous and ancestral knowledge. How can more of this knowledge fill the pages of *The Arrow* and inform where the contemplative and the political meet? Indigenous and ancestral knowledge are already recurring themes in *The Arrow*, and we need the journal’s ongoing attention to the ancient and contemporary lineages of Buddhism. We need more attention to how Indigenous and diasporic paths involve contemplative practice or encompass Buddhism. And this call to (re)center Indigenous and an-

cestral knowledges extends beyond intellectual arguments alone. Such knowledges are often considered wisdom for the world in an extractive sense; I am thinking of how Indigenous communities and lands are tapped for solutions to the world's problems, from finding medicines to climate change. In *The Arrow*, Natalie Avalos reflects on how Indigenous peoples refuse to “give up their lifeways and claims to their lands in the face of ongoing settler colonialism” through religious action.¹⁶ Her emphasis on how Indigenous peoples sustain and mobilize their lifeways and claims, centers the communities themselves. She invites readers to move against extraction by addressing the material, everyday impacts of settler-colonialism and by centering land-based ethics. These ethics emphasize, among other commitments, what the land and non-human life require.

With the uncertainty of COVID-19 and future pandemics, with climate injustice and more erratic weather, the planet faces even more extraction: extraction of Indigenous knowledges; of resources from the Amazon and other biodiverse regions of the world; of labor from those who work, teach, and build on the front lines. We need more spaces—writings, gatherings, activism—that center Indigenous and ancestral knowledge for their own sake. We also need these as BIPOC as we archive ways of knowing, pass them on, and dream up new ones. Remembering; this is one way of challenging the extractive status quo.

Inhale, exhale.

As I close this reflection, I feel both hope and heaviness. Oh the (inner) work before us. Since *The Arrow* is an expansive space, I am able to be with both of these. I'm able to remember Gabe's words about the vibrant artwork in *The Arrow*. When he describes how the journal emerged through conversations with dear friends, I remember heart-centered conversations with Managing Editor shah noor hussein as we co-created the Black dreaming issue. I'm leaning into the virtual launch event for the issue, which brought together authors from around the world. These moments make justice work sustainable. Thank you, Gabe and *The Arrow Team*, for the spaces you've created.



Artwork by Chetna Mehta, featured in Volume 8, Issue 2 (2021)

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The *Arrow Journal* fosters thoughtful, nuanced, and scholarly investigation of the applications of contemplative wisdom traditions to addressing global challenges. We aim to be a tool of compassionate disruption of habitual cultural, political, and economic norms that wreak havoc on people and planet. In this way, we encourage contemplative practitioners to sharpen their understanding of how dharma calls on them to show up for suffering and injustice in the world. Simultaneously, we invite policymakers, scholars, and activists to consider alternative ways of knowing that fall outside the western mainstream as necessary and useful perspectives for meaningfully confronting the challenges we face as a global community.

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In many cultures, the arrow is a traditional image of bravery and precision. Within the speed and chaos of our present world, the arrow symbolizes the courage to define a clear direction for how we might benefit others and society.

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