

THE GREAT SELF-CONNECT

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*Replace Hardship and Chaos
with
Purpose, Creativity, Fulfillment, and Prosperity*

Sarah Johnson

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The truth is only offensive to those who lie.

This book is dedicated to my mother, father and to all those who had their dreams stolen because of those lies!

*Out beyond ideas of wrongdoing and rightdoing,
there is a field. I'll meet you there.*

*When the soul lies down in that grass,
the world is too full to talk about.*

*Ideas, language, even the phrase "each other"
doesn't make any sense.*

The breeze at dawn has secrets to tell you.

Don't go back to sleep.

You must ask for what you really want.

Don't go back to sleep.

*People are going back and forth across the doorsill
where the two worlds touch.*

The door is round and open.

Don't go back to sleep.

—Rumi

When the brain grabs hold of an understanding that makes everything in life fall in place, there is no going back to a lesser logic, there is no retreat. It is within these moments that we learn to place trust in Self. —Author Unknown

I wish I could show you when you are lonely or in darkness,

The astonishing light of your own Being!

—Hafiz (as translated by Daniel Ladinsky)

Don't wait for the world to get back to what it was, since what it was wasn't that great to begin with!

—Author Unknown

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AUTHOR'S NOTE

I want to send out a special thanks to Silvia Federici. This book simply wouldn't exist if it weren't for the deep well of historical knowledge found in her book *Caliban and the Witch: Women, the Body and Primitive Accumulation*. It was exactly what I needed to find the inspiration, guts, and determination to keep researching and to keep writing. It was exactly what I needed to find my voice and to understand that I had nothing to lose for using it.

To my readers: This is not an academic book, but I do focus on the full picture:
It was six men of Indostan, to learning much inclined, who went to see the elephant (Though all of them were blind), that each by observation, might satisfy his mind.
The first approached the elephant, and, happening to fall, against his broad and sturdy side, at once began to bawl: "God bless me! but the elephant, is nothing but a wall!"
The second feeling of the tusk, cried: "Ho! what have we here, so very round and smooth and sharp? To me tis mighty clear, this wonder of an elephant, is very like a spear!"
The third approached the animal, and, happening to take, the squirming trunk within his hands, "I see," quoth he, the elephant is very like a snake!"
The fourth reached out his eager hand, and felt about the knee:
"What most this wondrous beast is like, is mighty plain," quoth he; "Tis clear enough the elephant is very like a tree."
The fifth, who chanced to touch the ear, Said; "E'en the blindest man can tell what this resembles most; Deny the fact who can, This marvel of an elephant, is very like a fan!"
The sixth no sooner had begun, about the beast to grope, than, seizing on the swinging tail, that fell within his scope, "I see," quoth he, "the elephant is very like a rope!"
And so these men of Indostan, disputed loud and long, each in his own opinion, exceeding stiff and strong, Though each was partly in the right, all were in the wrong!
So, oft in theologic wars, the disputants, I ween, tread on in utter ignorance, of what each other mean, and prate about the elephant, not one of them has seen!
—John Godfrey Saxe

I hope I've done justice to Federici and all the other authors I've referred to who've managed to keep our true history alive and in print. For they are the ones providing the necessary knowledge to view the entire elephant in the room. And if we want anything from life, anything at all, whether it be a path to move forward from abuse, confusion, chaos, a stronger connection with Self, or simply to live a more creative, robust, and fulfilling life, it is their collective history that provides us with the means to overcome the bullshit we constantly endure. It teaches us that since there's so little left to lose, why not get down to the business of reconnecting and being true to Self.

THE DIFFERENCE A FREE MIND MAKES

And this I believe: that the free, exploring mind of the individual human is the most valuable thing in the world.

And this I would fight for: the freedom of the mind to take any direction it wishes, undirected.

And this I must fight against: any idea, religion, or government which limits or destroys the individual.

—John Steinbeck

Steinbeck's quote presents us with a problem. Why would anyone in North America fight for something they think they already have? The assumption that we live in a free country that automatically provides us with a free mind is false. It's based on preconceived notions that can only be clarified by analyzing someone who actually explores their free mind and compare their life to our own.

Since Angelina Jordan is a prime example of one who uses her free mind, I'll use her life to make this comparison. But first, if you've not had the pleasure of hearing her sing yet, treat yourself to her astonishing voice. Note that words cannot describe her unique quality of warmth, range, depth, nor how she elicits more hair-raising spine-tingling emotion than any singer before her. This isn't my sole opinion, but that of the several million YouTube followers Jordan's had since she was seven; an age when most of us were learning how to read or use a pen for the first time, and Jordan was out winning Norway's Got Talent (NGT). Yes, she is that talented. But then, she did start singing jazz at the extraordinarily young age of just one-and-a-half. She also writes her own music and plays piano, violin, guitar, and flute. She paints and speaks several languages. She's the youngest Norwegian author ever. Her book? It's an extraordinary story that came directly from an encounter she engaged in. I won't tell you the story, but I will say that it has to do with why she always goes barefoot on stage.

As you enter into Jordan's world, note how grounded she is. Being steadfast in her understanding of Self has helped her develop a fearless approach to life. Fearless and focused. She knows exactly what she wants out of life and her focus is on achieving all of it. It's the reason both her presence and her song epitomize Berthold Auerbach's quote "*the world still contains spirits whose flights are as free and as bold as that of the eagle.*" Millions of comments written about her reflect this too. Except one. Someone on YouTube wrote these simple yet illuminating words instead, "*no one smothered her flame!*" The poignancy of this statement highlights how the immense joy arising from her sage-like ability for renewing old songs and Jordan-esquing new ones could not be felt at all had Jordan not been fully protected, supported, and allowed to do what she longed for

to begin with. Free mind! That this was the root of her strong connection to Self which then led to her fearlessness, and of course, the development of her awe-inspiring talents. So though Jordan's gained both experience and wealth over the last decade performing for the likes of Quincy Jones, Harry Belafonte, Alan Walker, the 2014 Nobel Peace Prize recipients plus countless benefit concerts, these commitments never stopped her family from ensuring she was given a normal childhood. They simply declined approximately 80 percent of offers to perform over the years and waited until 2021, when the *barefoot angel* turned fourteen, before signing one of the many recording contracts offered to her.

That Jordan was able to remain a child while developing her talents to such an incredible degree speaks volumes about her home life. Genius or not, Jordan would not have thrived like this had she not come from a compassionate and loving home that had the time, resources, and general wherewithal to expose her to what she loved early on in life and then given her the freedom to develop her own path from there. The path that she took not only allows her to fully connect and protect herself, but it provides her with the opportunity to substantially give back. Millions of people would be missing out on an immense source of joy after all if Jordan hadn't been raised in this manner. Conversely, how much joy are we missing out on because so few of us were raised the same way?

To clarify, let me ask you this: Did you receive that same level of protection and support? Were you given a chance to develop some fearlessness? Are you fully connected and free to explore your creative mind? And is this now helping you build a life that provides you with both options and joy?

The fact that so few of us can answer yes to any of these questions suggests that very few free minds float among us and that our flames have indeed been smothered. When people question the escalating anxiety in so many of today's youth, this is why. The lack of a free mind is also the reason this many aging adults need to keep working long grinding hours for low pay at despised menial jobs to eat and keep a roof over their head. If more of us had been protected, supported, and allowed to engage our free mind, unemployment and homelessness would not be this prevalent and the daily pressures of our poverty would not be causing such an overwhelming fear of the future. And this fear would not be driving up the rates of physical illnesses, mental health issues, eating disorders, addictions, suicides, scams, and violence; especially violence against women and children. The perpetual degradation to our society, to us, has only resulted in that many more of us being dropped, one after the other, into crushing levels of abuse, poverty, and despair with each passing generation, hasn't it?

The comparison of our lives to that of a person who engages their free mind illuminates the fact that most North Americans received *something else*. And that this *something else* not only reduces our options, but keeps us at a distance from Self which continues to stop us from engaging our free mind, especially as we age. Now that we've been left to hang over this precarious edge, prone, and simply waiting to see what our inept and scandalous government, banks, the growing medical crises, climate change,

and the recent hikes in the cost of living are going to do to us next, what can we do to help ourselves? Can we do more than engage in harmful retaliation or just stand by and hope for something like a better job, a change in government policy, a lottery, or a kind and successful spouse to drop in our laps and improve our lives for us?

You may not think it's possible to still build a life that overflows with the same confidence, inspiration, and growing promise of a fulfilling future that Jordan is currently experiencing but let me explain something: now that we've had a glimpse of what a utilized free mind actually looks like and all that it can provide, we can turn our thoughts to understanding the scope of what we did receive. This *something else* isn't the result of just one situation, one parent, or one cruel act towards us. Such a large number of us being forced onto the same downtrodden path indicates that many different actions and ideas across multiple generations worked together to circumscribe our free mind, reduce our potential, and force us into this life which is now filled with chaos and hardship. So instead of keeping our heads down like we've been taught or continuing to jump through the never-ending series of hoops that get us nowhere in life, we need to recognize that overcoming barriers to happiness and success automatically implies that barriers were placed in front of us to begin with. The key to improving our life then, is to understand the extent of these barriers.

One such barrier is the great void placed between us and our creative Self. Though our creative mind is part and parcel of our instincts and desires—all three are innate and can act in harmony with one another, if allowed—most of us no longer believe this because of the enormity of this barrier. Though it's inconceivably difficult right now, I will bring you to a place where you can start accepting the fact that underneath everything you've faced, you still have a creative Self; and that it yearns for you to take part in life, to shake off all your horrifying experiences enough to recognize and act on your creative potential, to courageously undertake meaningful challenges, and to feel intensely about something that matters to you. The bottom line is that your creative Self still wants you to do more than just eke out an existence on the head of a shrinking pin. It wants you to feel good about what you do in the everyday by living your life as intended.

Once we broaden our focus to understand the magnitude of *all* barriers placed in front of us, it will make it easier to pay closer attention to what's emanating from inside us rather than all the distractions closing in around us. This will help us get on with our lives and deal more effectively with the urgent situations most of us are currently facing. If we don't, our lives will get even more difficult. Only ours. Meaning that those who do manage to connect to Self and use their free and exploring mind to get off this path will do just fine. Because they engage their instincts, desires and develop their creative Self, they'll live happier and healthier lives, even in the face of chaos and devastation. Why? Because scripting their own future gives them something to focus on and look forward to. In turn, their eagerness for what awaits them reduces stress and protects against chaos. Their achievements will help them acquire the barest of essentials such as

warding off debt, accessing good quality foods, mobility: they can live where they want and with whom they want. They are the only ones who can also retire *if they want*.

Since the creation of a life this good is simply not an outcome of following the down-trodden path most of us are on, we really need to grasp onto the idea that underneath our hardships, we still are who we are. And if people who've endured severe childhood abuse such as bare-backed whippings and incest have managed to create phenomenal lives by digging down and connecting to themselves, then we can too. We do need to follow their lead however, by forgoing this *whatever we did get* so we stop altering Self further. This may sound counter-intuitive, but altering Self is another barrier that maintains our distance from Self. I'll even show you how this was done. Once known and understood, the task of re-connecting to Self, coming back to life, and lifting Self out of this perpetual fog that keeps heads down, opportunities dim, fears and anxieties alive becomes that much easier. In fact, once we understand all of the barriers, we can simply letting go of them.

I only learned of this recently. The possibility of *simply* letting go I mean. It was after a string of events caused such anger, confusion, and exhaustion in my life that I came to a full stop. Prior to this, I believed everything I was told in my youth which I then carried over into adulthood. Rather than helping me build a life, bit-by-bit these beliefs sapped my life's energy, made me ill, and put me in increasingly dangerous situations. As my fear of the future grew, I attempted to stop the momentous downward spiral by reading all the self-help books I could. I watched the seminars and went to group sessions. Unfortunately, the advice I picked up often made my life worse. Willing good stuff to happen just wasted my time. Years in fact. Saying yes to everything external to me incurred more debt and often left me strung out and in an even deeper haze. Forgiveness left me vulnerable by allowing what occurred to happen again, but, as in the case of all bad marriages, always a degree worse the next time. None of the advice provided me with the better life or the close connection to Self that I was yearning for. The opposite occurred instead. The more I tried to change, the more distant I became from Self. The deepened sense of separation only brought me to the brink of depression—which was right there, beckoning me to join in. Luckily, the full stop didn't allow me to go there.

What the full stop did instead was allow me time to start asking some burning questions. The questions were relevant to my own situation, but far surpassed it in terms of scale. Questions such as why so many women and children face violence and oppression to begin with, and the precise reasons *others* think it's okay to toy with our bodies, our minds, our lives, came to mind. I wanted to know where all this silence surrounding abuse came from too. Asking these particular questions was simply an attempt to alleviate my own anger and create some space in which to clear my head, so I wasn't expecting the knowledge I gathered to be very useful at first. Over time however, the research I delved into exceeded my expectations a thousand-fold. Just having concrete answers to these questions was enough to clear out all the clutter filling my

head. They allowed me to let go of old habits, past patterns of thinking and eventually, they even erased the sinister little voices discouraging me and telling me what I shouldn't or couldn't do. They completely freed me from the beliefs that would have kept causing me harm, had I let them. I didn't have to do much to achieve this either. I just absorbed what I learned about why we are so purposely put on this path, and it readily provided me with a stronger backbone, a little courage and most importantly, it cemented my belief in Self. Something I'd never *ever* felt before.

The best and most surprising part of this journey was that the lack of clutter allowed my desires to surface all on their own. This was unexpected given that I'd not been aware of any of them for forty-plus years. The desire to write was perhaps the most intriguing, since I'd never even kept a journal. When you have no knowledge of Self and been stripped of all your own thoughts, life becomes a dutiful dull shade of gray and there's nothing to write about. So why bother keeping a journal? But when this knowledge changed my life so quickly, it compelled me to write about my journey and expose what I learned about the barriers our not so free and not so equal society put in place. Yes, I do mean capitalism.

Diving into the bowels of capitalism is disturbing as you'll soon find out. It's also necessary. It explains why the "old and young are taught falsehoods in school. And the person that dares to tell the truth is called at once a lunatic and fool" as Plato observed so long ago. It illuminates why the rhetoric and platitudes handed to us at home, in school and by those we call leaders were designed to limit our thinking and therefore, our ability to act creatively and on our own behalf. More than that, it clarifies why so many women and children are oppressed and abused which, once the context is known, helps us to make sense of our nonsensical lives. Knowing the answers to such questions immediately frees the mind and tells us what needs to change. And as I said, it isn't us. It's our view of capitalism. We only need to change our view of capitalism to release the grasp it has on us to reconnect to Self and become whole once again.

It is that simple, but I should point out that the shock of discovering *how* and *why* capitalism was imposed on us is what makes it rather easy to engage in this release. This is important because, just as Kessler states "*we can't change our behaviours until we change our beliefs, and we can't change our beliefs until we experience something that changes how we think and feel.*" I'm hopeful that this book leads you to that exact experience; the one that changes how you think and feel and gets you to a point of understanding that you've got *nothing left to lose* and everything to gain by shelving capitalism and just being your Self. Rather than keeping up this insane struggle to survive within the cruel and limiting boundaries of capitalism then, I encourage you to follow my journey to release your Self from it and then use my steppingstones in the latter chapters to reconnect with Self. However you engage in this release, whether you put it in a dungeon—I explain my approach to this in the final chapter—a burn pile, or a freezer, leave capitalism behind. Give yourself permission to protect and be the creative Self you were always meant to be. Then,

breathe deep, expand your free and exploring mind, your life, and move forward towards that which has always beckoned and believed in you!

I can understand why a system...must try to destroy the free mind, for it is the one thing which can by inspection destroy such a system.

—*John Steinbeck*

DISSOLUTIONMENT & REALITY

Either you deal with what is the reality, or you can be sure the reality is going to deal with you. —Alex Haley

Breathing deep and moving forward towards the life that has always beckoned and believed in us is difficult when we can't separate out our nature from how we've been nurtured. This occurs most often when we think of our childhood environment as being *normal*.

My own belief that I'd had a good childhood and that everything was normal was not entirely unfounded. My father worked; my mother stayed home. My parents were not alcoholics nor drug addicts. I was never raped, beaten, burned, or locked up. I never went hungry, nor was I ever homeless. I was even labelled as spoiled by extended family members because I was never punished and allowed to do whatever I wanted. I just breezed through it and when I left at seventeen, I never looked back.

Though I lived with a deep uncertainty, unsure of every action I took and every word I spoke, I had no reason to think that my past caused this. I always understood it to be a problem within me. One that I alone created and then perpetuated. This view led me to keep changing myself, in the hopes that one day I would finally fit into society. It wasn't until I found myself fighting for my life—scratching and punching my husband to get his beer bottle out of my throat and the weight of him off me—then arrested for protecting myself, that I began to question my past and how all my efforts to do the best I could landed me *here*.

By the time the assault charges were dropped and I was allowed to walk home wearing only slippers in knee-high sub-zero snow, this husband of mine, my second, had left. I welcomed the empty space. It provided me with a chance to make sense of what happened and to ease the deepened catatonic state I found myself in. But when my head hit the pillow, neither the *incident* the arrest nor the husband was on my mind. They certainly affected me in that I was literally shaking and couldn't think straight or function at all, but what emerged from my thoughts was bits and pieces of my childhood instead.

I encountered random memories of how often I'd been afraid of my father's booming voice as it echoed around the house if someone disturbed him with the click of a closing door or a creaking footstep. I remembered the hole in the wall which was hidden by a ridiculously low hanging painting that I'd often sit on the floor and stare into, wishing it would disappear me. The day my father punched a big dent in the new fridge then stormed out of the house was another one. But when I saw my mother's angry face turn to me and spit out *well at least he didn't hit me this time*, it was if it was happening all over again rather than being just a memory; for my body and mind withdrew deeper, as if I was just now making up my mind that while dad was just being dad, mom was acting crazy.

The memory of me asking my mother why she never wore the large diamond solitaire ring set in a 24-karat gold came to the fore too. Bad question. Angry again, she blurted out that *he'd* given it to her when she came home from the hospital. Another withdrawal. I never liked my mother's tone when she referred to my father like that, nor did I like that she never wore the ring. I remembered simply walking back to my bedroom and quietly closing the door, as I had on so many other occasions, while shaking my head and thinking once again that my mom was crazy! It never struck me that she had good reason to hate the ring.

The hospitalization my mother referred to was another fuzzy scenario that surfaced. I was only six at the time, but I remembered my father stating what a hero he was. That if he hadn't been home on that particular weekday, my mother would not have made it to the hospital in time for them to save her life. I was told that my mother had suffered an aneurism or a stroke or both, that she'd had brain surgery—a metal plate was used to replace the missing part of my mom's skull—and that she was in a coma. It was two or three months before I saw her again. My father gave her that ring the day she came home.

As these random thoughts ran through my head, I began to question the story of her hospitalization. It occurred to me that physicians likely don't hammer a skull to bits when performing brain surgery for an aneurism or a stroke. So why the need for a metal plate in her head? Also, the most common sign of someone having a stroke is drooping facial muscles and slurred speech. My mother never once slurred her speech, and all her muscles, including those on her face, worked just fine right up until the day she died.

My memories then took me back to the day before my mother died. The day the doctors stopped administering all her regular medications in an attempt to isolate the illness that was killing her. Without the drugs, my mother became lucid. In that state and on that day, my mother and I had our one-and-only real conversation together. Ever. It was quiet, tentative, and eventually led to my mother confiding in me. She told me she'd been pregnant when she had her so-called stroke-aneurism decades earlier. Also, that the doctors aborted her baby and gave her a full hysterectomy. I remembered listening intently as my mother told me how crushed she was when she first woke from her coma and was told what they'd done. The importance of this conversation was not lost on me. Simply talking to her was so extraordinarily new that I didn't want to break up its flow by asking questions. But now, laying in bed in my catatonic state, all I could focus on was if the abortion was necessary and who approved the hysterectomy while my mother was in a comatose state. Both the metal plate in her head and the ring nagged at me too.

Then thoughts of my mother's funeral surfaced. I remember feeling confused by the number of people telling me how daring, adventurous, and full of life my mother was as a young woman. I heard stories that spoke of how smart she was, how she made a lot of money working for a financial firm, trading on the stock market, and that it was my mother who provided the down payment on my parent's first home. Apparently, prior to meeting my father, she also travelled extensively, taking trips overseas as a single

young gal and dancing all night on cruise ships with girlfriends. It sounded like she sought out adventure most of all and the stories lifted my spirits for a bit. Right up until a relative mentioned that *it was too bad that I didn't get to know her before her stroke*. Those words sunk me so low that I remembered them to be the reason why I cut ties with my entire family the day after her funeral. I couldn't bear to hear stories that told of the mother, mentor, and friend that I never got a chance to know because they only brought to light the woman I did grow up with. The one who was always negative, angry, fearful, and of course, crazy.

My mother was the woman who hummed faster and harder whenever my father was correcting, humiliating, or undermining her. She was the woman running around trying to fix everything, do everything perfectly and never allowed to take a moment for herself. She was never taken on a vacation. She never got to redecorate her house. She was the crazy woman that no one paid attention to except to belittle and laugh at. And this included me.

What I didn't understand was that my mother's mental capacity was severely limited after her head *injury*. The powerful drugs Phenobarbital and Dilantin prescribed to her for the rest of her life just added to her haze as well. My entire life consisted of watching my father take off on trips with his latest girlfriend, then come home to humiliate, berate, and shame my mother some more. This became as normal as watching my mother grow hate for everyone around her—the bus driver because he was tardy, the neighbor who trimmed the trees to close.

Then I watched my mother struggle to escape death a second time. Yes, my father was home this time too. He'd been in the bedroom with her when *something* caused my mother's brain to misfire and create another stroke, seizure or *whatever*. I remember my father yelling for me to come and lay on top of her so she wouldn't flail into the furniture while he left to call an ambulance. As the memories came flooding back, I could vividly recall sprawling across her and trying my best to hold her down but feeling overpowered by her strength. Frantic, I kept calling for my father to come back into the bedroom to help. Five minutes? Ten minutes? He came back only after the ambulance arrived. Half hour? Then he told me to stay home as he left to follow the ambulance in his own car. I didn't see or hear from him again that day. I'm not sure when I saw him again. I'm not sure when I saw my mother again, but she lived through that too—sort of. I believe I was thirteen at the time.

After laying for a long time and letting all these random memories and heartaches flow through me following the beer bottle *incident*, something finally clicked. Men don't give gifts like expensive rings when their wives become ill. They buy slippers and nighties. They make tea and provide comfort. Other than a marriage proposal, such expensive gifts are only given when trying to apologize or simply escape unscathed from something they've done. I felt ice creep through my veins when I did finally realize that it was likely my father who put my mother in the hospital. Both times. That it was he who drastically altered her from her original carefree fun-loving form. That he stole her

away when I was only six and left her in a drug-filled angry state for the rest of her years. My mother was not crazy. Instead, she'd been severely abused and silenced, and likely, I was her only witness.

It was heartbreaking to realize that I was raised in an environment which made me believe that my father was always correct. That there was something wrong with my mother. He made me believe in his reasoning behind his adultery, that it was necessary since my mother was incapable of fulfilling all his needs. He made me believe that his sarcastic and underhanded name-calling towards her was funny. Taught to be silent from the very beginning, I just knew that if something was spoken aloud, it had to align with my father's own thinking which meant any affront towards mom was okay. No wonder I was never punished. I was very well trained from an early age.

Had my father's abuse been pointed at me, I might have turned against him rather than my mother. Of course, I could have delved into violent, addictive, or suicidal behaviors like hundreds of thousands of other people raised within such environments too. I did none of these things however, since everything I saw and heard at the time was normal. So instead of a fight or flight response, I withdrew and froze. For decades. And like so many other women living in freeze mode, I didn't have a sliver of a chance to negotiate a good life, never mind a loving and respectful relationship for myself.

The toxicity of my childhood environment became much more apparent after reading Barbara Frum's biography written by her daughter Linda in 1996. Prior to this reading I hadn't a clue that marriage should exalt and dignify *both* partners. That it should be based on the loyalty of both wife *and* husband. That *each* should be supportive and thoughtful towards the other. I also learned that good men are themselves when they laugh and when they cry. That they are supportive, patient and know how to teach and be with children. And that they are honest, down to earth and the real deal in that *what you see is what you get* kind of way. The book also taught me that since these more thoughtful men are self-aware and often know exactly what they want out of their life and their work, they only choose wives who also know what they want and willing to forge their own paths. They don't choose needy wives who have no desires or goals of their own. Had I known this was the behavior I should have been mirroring more closely, I could have focused on figuring out a dream for myself much earlier in life and had a much better one as a result.

Instead, my misconceptions about love, relationships and marriage led me to twist myself in any direction necessary to find my prince charming and then follow along with his desires to please him, to obey him, to keep him. I thought that if I did this enough, I would finally hear the words *I love you*. And when I heard those words, I thought that I'd have my prince charming who'd then create a place for me to belong. I didn't realize that expecting another person to fulfill all my needs is actually narcissistic. Nor did I understand that I was putting myself in danger. This escaped me in part because of my father's conditioning—my mother was forced to live her life catering to his needs; in part because society still trains young girls to focus solely on the needs of men rather

than their own desires; and lastly, because I lacked the understanding that charm isn't a character trait.

Charm is simply a tactic used by sales representatives, politicians, and of course, predatory narcissists who focus on attracting women and children into their harmful web of deceit and lies. I had no idea that men—the same men that miss the mark on finding a way to be themselves but think they have to express *manliness* for society—use charm to groom the women and children they are about to abuse. Since this was the only personality type I was taught to attract, it contributed to the development of my passive-aggressive personality too. I was in a holding pattern where I would remain quiet, quiet, quiet while twisting myself around to be the best, most loving partner ever. Then, since I was losing parts of myself by not being true to my own needs and because my efforts were never reciprocated, I'd start making underhanded remarks. The danger came when I'd eventually explode after I'd had enough. My passive-aggressive personality complicated matters by creating guilt and remorse that would not have existed had I just been able to say what was on my mind to begin with. Better yet, if I'd known who I was and been more focused on building my own life, I could have used better judgement and not gotten involved with such *charming* men in the first place.

Eventually I realized that I'd grown up on the outer edge of my parent's turbulent relationship. That I too felt *not good enough* for the same unknown reasons my mother was. That instead of having a normal life where I'd felt safe and cherished enough to engage in self-discovery, I'd grown up virtually by myself without any emotional support to speak of. Thus, my lack of personal desires was a direct result of spending my early life hiding from my father's wrath, literally tiptoeing around the house for fear I would disturb him, forced to laugh at his cruel jokes.

Though my flow of thoughts that evening brought to the surface my numerous regrets, it also gave me some answers as to how I'd ended up with a beer bottle being shoved down my throat. The anger I felt brought on a bit of courage, but again I never used it to assess the husband, the incident, or the arrest. I didn't care about any of it. As my tongue toyed with the ragged edge of my broken front tooth, I just knew that I'd never find myself in that situation again. But I still wanted to know why my father treated my mother with such cruelty. And it was this that I kept digging at until I discovered what I thought to be a solid reason.

Since my father never talked about anything reasonable, like his childhood, I relied on a statement my mother made years earlier about him being a Pied Piper. The significance didn't pop until I read an article about Operation Pied Piper. When WWII broke out in 1939, 1.5 million children were shipped away from their families in London, England for the six-year duration of the war. Though Operation Pied Piper was meant to stop these children from being culled during the Blitz, in his book *Tribe* Junger explains how devastating a separation from parents has on children, especially during war. It isn't necessarily the separation that causes children to come undone, but the return to *normal* afterwards, when the child has no one to relate his experiences to

and is left with *no sense of belonging* that causes emotional stress and psychological issues. A six-year separation from his parents as a Pied Piper may indeed have been the cause of my father's wrath.

Then I discovered another article. This one stated that *forty years* after WWII ended, doctors in England were suddenly inundated with tens of thousands of Pied Pipers all seeking psychological counselling. It can take that long for repressed memories of abuse to surface apparently, because the counselling sessions revealed that all those people had been subjected to slave labour and sexual abuse during those six years. Though it could have been just the separation, this article made me believe that my father's rage was caused by whatever else was done to him during his time away from his parents as a Pied Piper. Then, upon returning to *normal* after the war, he was likely forced to repress his fears and anxieties which would have eaten away at him the rest of his life. So, in all likelihood, an innocent boy was transplanted into a perfect storm of isolation, abuse, and likely sexually abuse. And this is what changed my father into the narcissistic and abusive man I grew up with. He needed to find something he could control in his life, and that something turned out to be my mother.

Why my father didn't get help is not a mystery. He may have tried and been ignored or even reprimanded as a child. He may have carried with him the sad but realistic understanding that real men don't talk about feelings. *Big boys don't cry* is such a bullshit statement! All it is really stating is that big boys can't be real or true to themselves. And since such limited viewpoints have taken over our society, it really isn't surprising he was never allowed a conversation, never mind treatment, regarding what happened to him. After all, we only need to look at the backlash given to the thousands of women and men who had the courage to join the #metoo movement to know this. Look at what happened to the woman who tried to stop that misogynist from publicly minimizing the #metoo movement in one of his grand self-help seminars—sorry I was warned not to mention his name. Watch the movie *Unbelievable* to see what happened to Marie Adler or read about the outcome of two Canadian hockey players, Sheldon Kennedy and Theoren Fleury when they first came forward with allegations of sexual abuse. How many people have had their lives destroyed? First by the abuse, and again because they are silenced? After all, the only crime reported less than a girl being raped has to be the rape of a young boy.

In the end, like a lot of children, I desperately wished my father hadn't been abused. At the very least, I wished he was given help to deal with his past so we could have all had a happier and more fulfilling life. If our society deterred abuse in the first place, or responded properly to victims of abuse, it might have led to a much better life for my father and in turn, my mother, then me.

A beer bottle shoved down my throat and being arrested for protecting myself started me on this path. Discerning that my father abused my mother because he was also abused made me dig further. When I began noting abuse as being the most

common cause of all the social degradation around us, I dug deeper. That's when I discovered why widespread abuse was so purposefully instigated:

THE FIRST FALL

It ain't what you don't know that gets you into trouble. It's what you know for sure that just ain't so. —Mark Twain

Remember: The truth is only offensive to those who lie!

Did you know that the abuse women and children face has, without fail, been the largest reason capitalism succeeded? Too often we think that us being abused is our own *personal history*, that the hardships we face are *just part of life*, and that capitalism is separate from all of this since it is the inevitable economic system for a society based on freedom and equality. Yet, starting from the fall of the Roman Empire, Federici's thorough documentation of capitalism shows that this is utter bullshit. Capitalism has nothing to do with freedom and equality and everything to do with our abuse and hardship, especially since it first began as a formulated response *against* us. The back story starts with our ancestors almost winning the fight for freedom in a long-ago era. They were so close that if they had won, the ruling class would have lost both power and the leisurely lifestyle they'd grown accustomed to. Out of desperation, the ruling class—composed of feudal lords, patrician merchants, bishops, and popes—allied together to plan out a capitalistic campaign of oppression to tip the scales in their favour, to which they've done ever since.

Please bear with me on the boring stuff since it is completely relevant to us getting off of this path. The ruling class began their campaign by privatizing vast sections of land across Europe using enclosures. Barring our ancestors from obtaining their natural sources of food and water forced them into starvation. With the intent of controlling all peasants—98 percent of the global population—the peasantry was then given the limited option of working the privatized land for the rulers or continue to starve. The rulers also imposed a tax on the peasantry for *allowing* them to work these lands. Viewing both the land privatization and taxation as unethical and being forced to work it for the rulers as slave labour, many peasants revolted by choosing to be vagabonds, criminals, and whores instead.

In retribution, the ruling class created laws of heresy. These laws prohibited peasants from fighting against or deviating in any way from the rules set forth by the church. The first bibles were then constructed around 337AD and filled with scriptures that reinforced the church's legal power and right to impose heretic law and a punishment of death. As Federici points out, the heretic laws set the stage for the mass criminalization of non-obedient workers first. Also, that we can even consider the fall of the first labour union to have occurred when the first few peasants were executed for banding together to demand less taxation and better working conditions. In the end, some peasants did stay and succumb to hard labour in the fields with the hope that they'd be able to pay the taxes while also scrounging enough food to survive. Yet, the mass starvation,

criminalization, taxation, and executions over the next few centuries kept escalating the heretic's fears which prompted many more hundreds of thousands of European farmers, hunter-gatherers, and ancient North Eurasians to migrate to dismal areas outside of the annexed lands.

As various groups and tribes amassed on the harshest and poorest quality lands left out of the enclosures, their vulnerability to disease increased just as our unhealthy and over-crowded living conditions do to this day. Our poor standard of living has led to an increase in cancers, mental health disorders, heart & stroke diseases, influenzas, diabetes, and Alzheimers—to name just a few. All these diseases increase our chance of contracting any bacterium or virus, including COVID-19 (coronavirus, SARS-CoV-2) and its many variants. Back then, the rampant starvation, dire living conditions and exposure to the elements—including large groups of other displaced people and their diseases, caused the easy spread of smallpox, tuberculosis, malaria, leprosy, typhoid, and cholera. These diseases escalated the peasantry's vulnerability to the Black Death (Bubonic Plague or pestilence—caused by the bacterium *Yersinia pestis*). Though most of the current discourse regarding historical plagues is dominated by the smallpox (variola virus), it was in fact the Black Death that changed our lives forever. Almost half of the Eurasian and British populations—upwards to 200 million people, were killed by the Black Death between 1347 and 1351. Though the human loss was catastrophic and forced the building of catacombs and mass graves to rid European society of diseased bodies, bones and belongings, the ruling class only thought about these deaths in terms of the impact it had on their workforce. True to form, even today, their only concern was how the diminishing workforce affected their overall power and ability to live a leisurely lifestyle—an obsession that needed to be maintained at any cost. Rather than remove the enclosures or halt the death squads responsible for enforcing the taxation and heretic laws, all of which caused the Black Death to spread to such a great extent in the first place, the ruling class carried on with their capitalistic campaign by shipping in slaves. Though this horrific act compensated for some of the losses to their workforce, it wasn't enough to satisfy the ruler's escalating fears of losing their power and leisure. This is when they first began *targeting* women, and by default, children.

SILENT STOCK

For it is the fate of a woman

*Long to be patient and silent, to wait like a ghost who is speechless,
Till some questioning voice dissolves the spell of its silence...*

—Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

Prior to the Black Death, no one thought about a woman's body and childbirth was a woman's private affair. Women's autonomy over their own bodies and minds meant they could, and would, give themselves abortions during famines and periods of great illnesses. Federici states that, because women had the ability to further reduce the labour pool, *we were soon deemed a threat to the economic and social stability of the ruling class.*

To control this threat, the ruling class began deconstructing and redefining women as a distinct and lower-classed gender. Federici states that our minds were declared illogical, hysterical; our bodies were scrutinized, sexualized, and criminalized; our wombs and vaginas became the property of men. Then men were constructed as the dominant gender. Only men from the ruling class were given the dominant logical mind, however. Male peasants of all skin colours were viewed as dominant only to women and were otherwise perceived as working bodies—warrior or slave bodies, also without logical minds. Laws of patriarchy were then written and added to bibles which allowed for the brutal enforcement of these gendered differences. The seeds of misogyny (a word that lacks an antonym to this day) were planted when they included such lines as *any man not taking full control of his woman and child was deemed a weak man without honour—a damnable act!* Both women and men not conforming to the patriarchal laws were hunted then executed, just as heretics were. *Worth noting is that since persons within the LGBTQ2+ community don't typically increase the number of labour units being born, they too were thrown into this division of gendered differences, demonized, and criminalized under christian law also.*

Women initially stuck together, protected one another, and successfully rebelled against the ruling class, however. Still refusing to bring babies into such an inhospitable world, they continued to abort their babies and began poisoning the men who tried to control or rape them. For a short period of time, women had each other's backs. Their ability to act as a strong collective helped protect both themselves and their unborn children from a life of toil and hardship.

Federici states that when the ruling class realized the enforcement of patriarchal laws was not effective and that women were still able to protect themselves, they started declaring any meetings of just women to be a meeting of witches. Women who dared live alone were witches. Nighttime gatherings plus all ceremonial singing and dancing were soon deemed acts of witchcraft. The herbs and roots used as medicines, poisons and birth control were denounced as witch's brew. Witches and any acts of witchcraft were soon punishable under newly constructed witchcraft laws. These new laws were also added to the ever-thickening bibles.

If declared a witch, women no longer faced punishment under the *normal*/heretic and patriarchal laws when caught by authorities, however. Instead, they were dragged into the town square where everyone was to watch them be tortured first. Many of the torture devices that we gawk at in museums today such as iron bridles, the iron maiden, and the pear of anguish were fashioned to make women heed the scriptures during this devastating period of our foremother's lives. Then women were hung or burned at the stake. Federici also points out that if wood was not readily available for the burnings, church authorities would *simply* use black slaves as the stakes for their fires instead.

Detailed records of every man, woman, and child that showed up at the public tortures and burnings were meticulously kept by authorities since it was automatically assumed anyone not present was a witch. They also hunted for so-called witches by demanding men and women point them out. If a person was not pointing to someone else, it was assumed that they too were a witch.

The witch hunts caused irreversible damage to women that extends deep into our modern world. We can readily see the truth behind Federici's statement that the trust and strong bonds women once had for one another crumbled ever since the witch hunts broke down the women's collective. Rather than protect and support each other, we are much quicker to attack one another about every little thing now—clothes, weight, parenting, etc. You get my point. We've been turned against each other. And it's stuck worse than glue. Entire systems of knowledge women once held for centuries regarding the use of plants, herbs, roots etc., were also lost. Furthermore, the witch hunts marked the starting point of the general fear men now have for women and especially for women's sexuality. The seeds of misogyny simply grew.

Throughout our history, hundreds of thousands of women—though it's more likely millions now—have been tortured and then executed as a direct result of witch hunts. And though we only think of witches in terms of the Salem Witch Trials or even fantasize about them for Halloween, there are in fact current witch hunts being carried out in India, Papua New Guinea, Amazonia and Sub-Saharan Africa. The defining characteristics of the current witch hunts are just as devastating as the earlier ones too. For example, the Guardian explains that the current witch hunts in Nigeria, which started in 2007, are fraught with evangelical pastors abusing, raping, and murdering non-abiding children. It's likely that part of the reason they focus on children is because the women are already fully compliant, or dead. I'll get into the other reason for focusing on children in a moment. The extent of women's obedience and men's misogyny is also portrayed by Larry Charles in his Netflix special 'Dangerous World of Comedy'. In Season four, Charles captures a flash of a favoured Nigerian prime-time comedy TV show airing the rape of a young girl by the show's main character. Charles states that if any woman complained about the live airing of the rape, it is she who would be swiftly and categorically silenced by Nigerian authorities. We can easily assume this to mean "executed". In a nutshell, we can understand how horrifying these cultures are for all

women and children. By extension, we can also understand the effect the witch hunts had on women and children in Europe.

According to Federici, the devastation caused by the European witch hunts are the only reason our foremothers ever succumbed to the patriarchal laws. Then, once defeated, new images of obedience, thrift, and chaste arose as silent, fearful women became enslaved to procreation. Our bodies morbidly reduced to being less important than the number of labour units we are to give birth to. Once reduced to being silent and obedient breeders for men—our labour invisible and childbirth mandatory, we were soon rationalized as utility tools and proprietary objects too. This is how we ended up being viewed as non-persons under christian law.

Since women and children were no longer viewed as people, but as stock, we soon became obsolete in history books too. Federici states that the most prevalent records of women and children kept throughout our history are telling as they can only be found within church archives, alongside the trading records for livestock and seed. *As an aside, people are questioning the reasons behind the Vatican's unwillingness to hand over their records regarding all the indigenous children who died in their care in Canada. Keep in mind that if any records were kept at all, they would have to be rewritten because of the callous way in which they would have been recorded.*

Sorry. This isn't the end of the capitalist's obsession to control us. Hang in there though because knowing what comes next is so worthwhile! Tasked with increasing the number of labour units being born, and single-handedly taking care of everything within the patriarchal home meant women were kept busy and safely apart from one another. Uprisings were made impossible since the only congregating allowed was at church where the heretic, patriarchal, and witch hunt laws were continually reinforced. Isolating and controlling women to this degree was extremely beneficial to the ruling class since it allowed them to command more from the male peasantry too. And command they did, by extending the number and length of their workdays.

Spending increasingly longer days toiling for rulers raised the peasant men's ire however, and authorities soon grew concerned that the male peasants may once again organize themselves into a formal opposition. Thus, they guided the peasant's growing anger and aggression away from the church. Federici states that they added additional scriptures under patriarchy first, to establish the home as a microstate of the church and to make men king of that domain. Second, they promoted the idea that men could release their anger within their own home *using their tools* anyway they saw fit. Emotional and physical abuse—rape and incest included—became commonplace from this day forward as men learnt to vent their anger in the privacy of their own home, in the name of patriarchy, and in the name of god.

Then, at the end of the 15th century while still enforcing patriarchy, heresy and hunting so-called witches, authorities decided to introduce another distinct and vicious misogynistic cycle of sexual politics against women. As a means of co-opting the youngest and most rebellious male peasants into working for the ruling class, authorities

decriminalized rape outside the home also. Federici states that the unsung rule was if men were richer than the women being raped, it was legal. It worked too. Legally raping women was so appealing to the younger male peasantry that they too went to work for the ruling class, even for pauper's pay.

This act against our foremothers led to the common practice of gang rapes in the street, to which people just turned their heads and looked away. Though rape was declared illegal after a time—only because the wives of the ruling class were also being raped by much wealthier men—one only needs to read the daily news to see the interminable effect of this unwritten *law*.

A study was even carried out to understand why the thirty-eight New Yorkers, who watched 'Kitty' Genovese be brutally gang raped and stabbed in two separate instances on the night of March 13, 1964, never bothered to call the police. They just turned their heads and left her to die. After citing all kinds of other possibilities for the onlooker's inaction, the real reason—that rapists and murderers were given permission to carry out these acts, and onlookers were told to look on—escaped them. More recently, in October 2021, The Associated Press published an article entitled '*Horrific: Woman raped on Philadelphia train while bystanders did nothing, police say*'. As it turns out, those bystanders did do something. They videotaped the rape, likely to post on-line. Unfortunately, and with great disgust, we now have an answer as to why none of those people called 911 or stepped in to help either. We now have an answer as to why millions of women and children are still being raped and abused every day. Men know that for the most part they can get away with it and that there are little legal repercussions to those who've been told over the centuries, and in various ways, that it is allowed. Thanks be to god. Amen.

AN OVERWHELMING DELUSION

For me, it is far better to grasp the Universe as it really is than to persist in delusion, however satisfying and reassuring. —Carl Sagan

Sorry, but it continues. Please remember that the reason I chose to hammer away at this is to not only provide you with a clear picture of all that's been done to us, but to stop you from ever going back to the old and degrading patterns of thinking that reduce your potential. It's the best way to reconnect to Self and to find that clear path forward. Especially since one of the first steps every woman should take to protect herself is to avoid all those whose overall *mandate* is to control us and inflict harm.

A quote from Leacock states "The Jesuits were appalled that the Naskapi Natives had no concept of private property, of authority, of male superiority, and that they even refused to punish their children... The Jesuits' greatest victory was persuading the Naskapi to beat their children, believing that the 'savages' excessive fondness for their offspring was the major obstacle to their Christianization. Le Jeun's diary records the first instance in which a girl was publicly beaten." Teaching the natives to beat their children helped build the Jesuit's trust which was necessary for negotiating entry into *the great fur trade*. It also aided the continuous expansion of capitalism throughout North America within the so-called period of *great exploration*.

Capitalists in both the USA and Canada also devised a plan to force indigenous children to attend residential schools. The parents faced jail themselves if they didn't hand their children over, meaning that specific federal laws were created by persons such as George Washington and upheld by judicial entities such as the Supreme Court of Canada right up until the 1980's. Once inside the schools, christianity was brutally enforced on these children. The documentary *We Were Children* explains how these children were not allowed to speak their native tongue, wear their own comfortable clothing, talk to siblings placed in the same school, eat their normal *healthy* food, or leave until they were 18. These children were starved, beaten, confined and raped. Continuously. When one young girl heard boys crying in the infirmary and went to see why, she found three boys with their pants down around their ankles and a priest standing behind them. When the priest saw her, he chased her back to her room and proceeded to rape her too. No need to wonder why so few of these children survived or why christianity still haunts the indigenous to this day. Christians called it enlightenment. They didn't want indigenous people to act like savages living in the dirt. They wanted them to be respectable, dress like them, worship like them and especially, *work and produce proper labourers* like them. The survivors felt that what the priests really wanted was for them to be dead, and they weren't wrong.

At the time of this writing, Aboriginal Peoples Television Network (APTN) disclosed the finding of 751 children's bodies *so far*—some only three years old, buried at just one of these residential schools in British Columbia, Canada. There are hundreds of

these schools across Canada and the USA, and I suspect, every continent. If the indigenous are ever again allowed to look at these properties, I wonder how many more of their children will be found. Sadly, I suspect every single child that didn't return home.

Capitalists were also told to shoot and kill indigenous people on sight. This goes a long way towards falsifying Conrad Black's statement that *centuries of failed policy does not equal evil intent*. It also makes redundant the coalition of historian's effort to hit back against the Canadian Historical Associations publication for stating it was *abundantly clear that Canada is guilty of genocide*. If evil and genocide was not the intent, why did they also starve out the indigenous populations with the so-called *great buffalo (bison) hunts*? Bison meat was the main source of food for the indigenous. Clearly that's the reason for 5000 bison being herded over cliffs every day. It only stopped after they cleared the prairies of this magnificent beast which amounted to a total kill of over 500 million. If this senseless slaughter wasn't evil nor part of planned genocide, what was it then? What other meaning can be found in the historical online photos portraying both the godly piles of bison bones and the smiling pride on their killer's faces? This had a profound effect on us too by the way, which I also discuss a little later.

For now, I'll carry on with the documentary *Oranges and Sunshine* which details how capitalists also colluded with the British government to colonize Australia with Caucasian children in the mid-twentieth century. Fraudulent phone calls were made to children's services in London to provide them with false accusations of British children being mistreated. Thousands of children over many decades were then taken from unsuspecting parents and shipped to Australia. Though the parents laboured to get their children back, they were eventually told that their children had been adopted. The children were told that their parents had died.

When the children reached Australia, they ended up in places like Fairbridge Farm School and Bindoon Boys Town. In fact, the children were used as the labour to build the christian churches and residences in these horrific places. They were starved, barely clothed, and often went without shoes. They too were continually beaten, confined and raped. When one boy tried to run away, he was immediately held against a tree and sodomized by the priest that caught up with him. Another boy had been beaten and raped so often that he was left with physical deformities and severe neural deficits. Just like the indigenous children of Canada, many of these boys died in the clutches of these christian churches too. When the surviving boys turned eighteen, they could leave. However, they were without money, without family, in a country they knew nothing about, and a debt to repay for being *sheltered* at these christian schools.

A child welfare worker in London, England started getting calls and visits from some of the men who did manage to survive. Upon hearing the same disturbing story again and again—a big ship with lots of children, no adults to care for them and abundant stories of starvation, rape, and abuse—she started an investigation. She found out that

some of these men still had living parents in London and when she reunited them, she discovered the full horror story that I am relaying to you now.

In the 1990's, twenty years after the scandal ended, the British Government finally admitted its guilt and offered some monetary retribution to the few survivors. This of course was paid by taxpayers, not the church. Also, it appears that no one within the church was ever charged with abuse, never mind rape, child endangerment, abduction or trafficking just as no one in the church will ever face a penalty for all the indigenous children murdered in Canada, the USA, or globally. The documentary did not discuss what happened to any girls that were abducted, or if any survived. Yet we can't overlook the possibility that if girls were taken, they may have been forced into the sex trafficking *industry* that now swallows 6 million children *every year*.

Keep in mind that these are just examples of the many ways men have become adept at abusing our bodies and minds. On August 23, 2018 Global News posted this piece regarding the practice of polygamy: "...weaponize...rationalize... patriarchy and their ideas of what they are owed, or what they see the world as. Why are we going along with it at the cost of girls being safe, and women being safe, and boys being safe? The cost is too high." Yet mormons still base their entire religion on commandeering bodies early on by making young girls child brides. This *tradition*, which is still legal in both Canada and the United States, leads to extreme violence towards women and their children. Too often the women live in abject poverty as they are kept pregnant, uneducated, isolated—even from their own children, and are tortured and killed if their *god* desires it. Even the supposedly pure, non-modern religions, such as Mennonites, Hutterites, Quakers, and the Amish hold the men as iconic figures of god under strict patriarchal rule allowing men to utilize women's and children's bodies to excess—all the while keeping them uneducated, pregnant and fully circumscribed too. Global news also posted this statement, "It's horrifying to hear of children being sealed in marriage to some of these religious leaders. Who gets protected, and who doesn't, under the guise of protecting religious rights?" Allegations of sexual abuse against several leaders of Buddhist colonies—whose overall prayer focuses on being reborn as men, is also making recent headlines.

I was lucky in that I had no knowledge of what incest was, thankfully, until I met a young woman from a *devout* family of Dutch reformed. It wasn't long into our relationship that she disclosed how both she and her sister had endured incest for years. Also, that when her older brother stepped in to help them, he just disappeared. The girls were told never to talk about him again, so they didn't. She also told me that when she began fighting back and refusing to let her father touch her, it was her mother who stepped in and demanded she give her father back *whatever he wanted*. She still refused, so neither her mother nor father spoke to her for years.

At the time, I was young and naive enough to be confused by her circumstance because hers looked to be a perfect family unit. The father worked, the mother stayed home to raise the kids, and up until she said 'no' the family had gone to church every

Sunday and took part in community events together. Charges for incest, child abuse, and emotional abuse were never brought to court by the sisters. Threats were made but never followed up on. To my knowledge, the disappearance of the brother has never been investigated either. The confusion that arose from this woman's situation was likely the first time I started to question the outright ownership of women and children under patriarchy.

The same confusion arose from reading quotes from the Prophet Muhammad. Though I had been enjoying his work and found meaning in his quotes for many years, they must have been meant only for ruling class men. I base this conclusion on the distinct difference between his quotes and the Laws of Islam that he purportedly chiseled into stone. In the documentary *The Ascent of Woman*, Foreman points out that more than half of the 600 Islamic laws are focused on the allowable acts muslim men can inflict on women. The laws include rape, torture, disfigurement—thus the acid—and death. As an example, when a muslim man rapes a woman, the rape victim is sentenced to death because she has dishonoured the men in her family. The men in the rape victim's family can also *legally* rape and kill all the women in the rapist's family as retribution. How capitalistic is this? A rape victim is killed by the men in her own family because she can no longer be sold for an acceptable dowry? Why pay to feed livestock you can no longer sell? Can we assume that the retribution towards the rapist's family is to lower their prospects of future income from dowries also? *Money and power*. That's the reality. Murder is called *honour killing* and locking women up to either sell, labour, or produce more labourers is called *respectful protection*. It almost makes sense now, that when two muslim men in Toronto, Canada were charged with terrorism, one of them was also found to have violated his probation by using a smartphone with which, "he'd downloaded al-Qaeda literature, manuals on bombs and poisons, and a tract justifying the killing of women and children, according to allegations filed in court." All that is missing within these written laws is the silent tradition muslim men also have of taking young male *lovers*, as Bradley puts it. Do we really need to question why rapists and murderers gravitate towards, and are welcomed by all religions? One way or another, all religions do focus on inflicting harm towards women and children to elevate the status and power of men.

If you don't believe any of this concerns you, stop and reconsider all of it for a moment. First, if women and children were freely respected, considered, or cared for in our society from the beginning, the devastation caused by both rape and abuse—the largest social disease in existence, could not have spread across all continents and increased the level of violence we continually face with each passing generation. Second, people like North American settlers could have escaped christianity by joining tribes like they wanted to—which I discuss in further detail in a later chapter. Third, we would have many more people living their lives like Jordan instead of eighty percent of woman and children being made vulnerable after facing some sort of domestic violence in their life. What will future generations face when thirty-one thousand women and children

seek shelter from men *every day* in the USA alone? Note that this statistic has risen significantly since the advent of COVID-19 too.

Now think of how men also maintain their overall *right* to allow or deny women birth control and safe abortions through legislation, through scripture. That the pope called Melinda Gates a few years ago with the specific purpose of talking her out of giving women in developing countries contraceptives reinforces this position. Keep this in mind when asking how fast a supposedly *free and equal* society can go backwards by resorting to archaic biblical law. The USA just proved the answer to be *too quickly!* Though level-headed and sane Americans recently fought hard to remove bigoted misogynists from leading their country, they still hold too much power within most states and apparently, the Supreme Court. The outcome? A vote of three against two was all it took for the Supreme Court to pave the way for misogynists in Texas—and potentially many more states, to reinstate anti-abortion laws. These laws effectively stop all women and children from getting abortions once a fetus is over six weeks old. It proves that we remain morbidly less important to that of an unborn fetus. And, whether or not their plan is to simply stock up-and-coming adoption centers with unwanted children—which would make for easy prey after all—we can be sure that hundreds of thousands of women, and many more children, have had their autonomy utterly destroyed since they are being viewed as tools once again.

If you still don't think this affects you, try to assess whether this is a prelude to a ban on hysterectomies and birth control too. Does the ban include women needing abortions or hysterectomies due to health complications? Age? Socioeconomic circumstances? Apparently, the ban *is* imposed on the many victims of rape. Is a thirteen-year-old victim even capable of picking herself up and going straight to a doctor or pharmacy to get a pregnancy test so she can get an abortion within six weeks? And what if her father, brother, uncle, or priest is the rapist who got her pregnant? Will she say anything at all? Or will she be forced to blame her pregnancy on an innocent boy? And will that innocent boy be your son? Can you imagine your son being the one charged with rape because the police need to close a case quickly and efficiently, and you don't have the financial means to prove his innocence? The ripple effect of these decisions are devastating, aren't they?

Though men did allow the rape of a minor to be officially labelled as a capital offence, not only do they only charge the poorest offenders with rape since they are the easiest to close cases on, but they also keep the number of capital offences lower to maintain the false perception of safer cities for incoming investment dollars. *Money and power.* Thus, rape is almost always reduced to a non-capital offence such as assault, and since officials would rather not have this on the dockets either, they simply deter victims from filing charges by making them out to be *Unbelievable—watch the movie!* So unless a young girl is found dead in a bush somewhere, it's likely that no one—including the girl's own mother, will believe that she didn't *ask for it* and then tell her she must suck it up and raise the child born of rape. Can you imagine finding out that your mother was

raped, that this was the reason you were born? That this is the reason your own mother hates you? Can you imagine being raped, forced to keep the baby, and then having to share *parental rights* with your rapist? According to a news article, this is happening right now to a young woman in New York City.

This could happen in Canada too, by the way. Canadian women rely heavily on the continued outcome championed by Dr. Morgentaler. Morgentaler was a man who noticed how unjust the laws were against women and that *they cost too many women their lives*. He performed the first vasectomy in Canada and, after decades of fighting against the injustice system and the church's immorality, won the right to give women safe abortions and birth control. Thanks to his endurance against the legal system, the Canadian Constitution was changed to allow abortions in 1988. A little over three decades ago. Only. This isn't something that should be taken for granted then. If pro-life right-wing misogynistic bigots ever win a majority government in Canada it would mean that all women, children, all people belonging to the LGBTQ2+ community, and all people who aren't white will lose freedoms, just as they are in the USA. Thus, fighting for equality will fall off the map and potentially, our ability to vote, own property and obtain divorces, for these are their next conceivable steps to gaining full control over us once again.

If you *still* don't believe that any of this concerns you, then think of how the ultimate purpose for controlling us to this degree is still about increasing the size of the labour force. A larger workforce means joblessness and, of course, poverty for millions more people—men included. It's what makes it easier to pick and choose which lowest paid labourer capitalists want to use, and then discard. This stance is lethal to everyone, which is why feminists have been fighting against it for centuries. Profit and control, *money and power*. Leisure.

Though a difficult read, it does tell us that the very fabric of our capitalistic society is based upon bigotry and misogyny. It clarifies why men will rape a six-month-old baby as easily as an eighty-year-old woman and that these acts against all of us, from patriarchy to rape, are what cause our initial *separation from Self*. It tells us that we are certainly not alone and that none of what we face is our fault. Most importantly, it tells us that we can't keep wasting any more of our valuable time, energy, or money by cycling through Self-doubt routines, seeking acceptance from the wrong people, their institutions, nor abiding by their bullshit rules. Instead, we need to start looking out for Self.

A PARADOX SURROUNDS US

I'm sorry, but it was there when I moved in. I didn't know it was an elephant; I thought it was part of the furniture. There comes an aha-moment for some folks—the lucky ones—when they suddenly recognize the difference.

—Stephen King

A person on Twitter recently wrote *believing in the bible makes you a christian, but reading and understanding the bible from the first to the last page makes you an atheist*. This is precisely why reading the bible was deemed an act of heresy under Henry VIII. He knew that if people understood all that was written, they could too easily dispute it. He also knew that his religion is just a capitalistic entity that has managed to keep its place above us only through violence and fraud. Schopenhauer wrote that for thousands of years “...instead of being able to confess their allegorical nature, they have to conceal it; accordingly, they parade their doctrine in all seriousness as true *sensu proprio*... (when it is) continual fraud.” Even the ban imposed on clerical marriages within the catholic church was not based on the moral obligation of priests to marry their god as many of us believe. It was motivated by the fear of wives interfering in the affairs of the church and that it would lead to too many subdivisions of their precious church property holdings. Federici states that they “...not only banned clerical marriages, but declared those existent invalid, throwing out the priests’ families... into a state of terror and destitution.”

Since the first seeds of capitalism were planted, religions have ignored their own cruel viciousness while fraudulently enforcing the dogma that only worship, prayer, and religions are benevolent—that peace is the goal of religions and that religious leaders are the hands of god in all areas of life. Christians even changed the face of their god in recent years to make it look kinder so more people would believe in this false benevolence. Believing in such allegories not only removes us from what could be a dynamic and creative life, but it perpetuates both our abuse and inability to care for ourselves.

So let’s stop believing in their false allegory! Instead, remember that without the objectification of European women, capitalism could not have advanced throughout the rest of Europe, Africa, Asia, Australia, North and South America. Let’s also remember that the Tribunal of the Holy Office—known as the Spanish Inquisition—was initiated by Catholic monarchs to dominate these foreign lands which they achieved through the widespread terror they brought to each shore they touched. But they were only able to fill the holds of the Vatican fleets with enslaved men and set sail in 1478 to spread this terror *because* women were forcibly manning the home fronts in Europe.

From this point forward we should also never lose sight of how misogyny, racism, poverty, and the continued abuse and oppression of women and children has always been *promoted*. Alongside this is the condemnation of homosexuality. Yet, raping little

boys appears to be their favoured past time, as is their rejoicing each time one of their pedophiles gets to walk away a free and clear predator.

We should also remember how the Methodist and Baptist preachers actively revived the Ku Klux Klan after World War 1, then segregated African Americans to incite the white supremacy, race wars, and riots that continue to ravage North America. Initially, when various races of people were forced to come together in America's penal colonies, they got along. Friendships and marriages arose from these forced relations. They stood together and fought for one another *against christians* right up until the rulers took such offence to their bonding, that they disbanded the colonies and separated out the white men, women, and children from everyone else. This promotion of racism and bigotry should always be remembered alongside the knowledge that it was the holy inquisitions and crusades against muslims that steered their own hatred and terror towards all of us today, whether we associate with the damn religion or not.

In fact, we should dig deeper into the chaos they've caused on a global scale too. Frattini states that "Kings have been killed, diplomats poisoned, and one or another among feuding factions supported, all as a norm of Papal diplomacy." Though it may seem that the Vatican just turns a blind eye to many catastrophes and holocausts such as those that befell the Jews and Croatians, we should note that debt caused by war is a major source of income to the religion. Frattini states "The majority of the Bishops, the Holy See itself, the secretary of state, and even the Pope Pius XII took advantage of Yugoslavia's defeat by the Nazis to increase the power and reach of Catholicism in the Balkans." Their blind eye informs us that the Vatican is gaining something, just like the present. Thus, they are gaining followers by not stepping up and helping with COVID-19. Maybe you've noticed how we've been inundated with religious memes, publications, and products that are intent on converting those facing despair during these desperate and trying times instead? Rather than helping, the religion is simply broadening its reach to supplement their trillion-dollar industry. When they do finally step in, it is a sign they are gaining something else of the monetary kind. Given all of this, it isn't unreasonable for us to question if COVID-19 is a bioweapon concocted and released to purposely promote bank failures, recessions, and the bankruptcy of countries then. After all, Frattini does state that as the papacy cuts deals with arms dealers, the CIA, and the mafia, it gets richer, dominates more land and bodies, and causes the poor to get poorer. And this is exactly what's happened, hasn't it? Frattini also states that "The Holy Alliance has killed, robbed, conspired, and betrayed by command of the supreme pontiff in the name of God and the Catholic Faith." Adding to this is his statement that "Terrorists have been financed, as have South American dictators, while war criminals have been protected, Mafia money laundered, financial markets manipulated, bank failures provoked, and arms sold to combatants even as their wars have been condemned. All this in the name of God, with the Holy Alliance and the *Sodalitium Pianu* as His tools." Frattini even disclosed the Vatican's recent partnership with the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and National Security Agency (NSA) whereby they snuck into

the back door of Wikipedia and, using U.S. government spy technologies, reformatted all entries pertaining to catholicism. This, of course, helps to ensure their continued projection of false benevolence rather than their reality. There's no need to wonder why Simon Wiesenthal—a holocaust survivor and Nazis hunter—declared the Vatican's Holy Alliance to be the most effective espionage service in the world or why Martin Luther called the papacy an unnecessary human evil.

Clearly this religion is not just a capitalistic industry. Rather, it's an empire that maintains power and control over governments. As an example, the main objective of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB) is to economically cripple countries. They force countries into accepting loans for massive building projects with the empty promise that upon completion, it will help their country. The projects are purposely never completed. It is precisely when the country doesn't get what it is promised and can't enhance their own economy from the unfinished projects that the organizations demand repayment. When the country cannot pay, the IMF and WB swoop in like scavengers and take over the country's government, finances, natural resources, human resources and incorporate or expand taxation systems while also reducing the countries spending on health and infrastructure. The desire to take over other country's natural resources, armies and workforces is what's started every war and every conflict to-date. It's what forces the mass migration of fleeing people. Thus, the WB and IMF projects of domination are clearly capitalistic which is why preachers are sent in to control the indigenous populations. The end result? Witch hunts, child soldiers, rape, and murder. It's likely this will happen in Haiti now since the president was just assassinated by foreign...investors?

We also need to remember that when capitalists denounced worldly possessions, comforts, and profits for everyone but themselves, they also made the payment of taxes a duty for everyone but themselves. The first taxation systems were religious doctrines created for the sole purpose of allowing rulers to maintain their own wealth and leisure. And this first started with the enclosures that peasants were forced to work in, and then taxed to work in. In addition to the labour tax, every birth and every death was taxed. They still are. There was also a redemption tax (*remensas*) for peasants who left the annexed lands they could no longer afford to work, and the 5 evil customs tax (*los malos usos*)—the *just because we are sinners for being born* tax.

Though governments have taken over as tax collectors to allow the religion to back away and pretend to be benevolent, we are still immersed in everything they started back then. Look at the control the IRS (Internal Revenue Service) and the CRA (Canada Revenue Agency) have over us. The time it takes and the money it costs us just to pay accountants, bookkeepers, payroll specialists, lawyers and accounting software firms have all grown exponentially just to fulfill their taxation demands. And where do all these taxes go? Big business and banking bail-outs, of course!

Once we understand this, there is no need to remind ourselves of why a Canadian prime minister or American president cannot get voted in without being financially

backed by religion, or why voting stations are still being placed in churches or even, why our laws drip thickly of christian posturing. After all, it's why we see so many unjust political and judicial maneuvers every moment of every day.

As women and children continue to be sold, raped, and murdered, only a few of the poorest men will ever be charged for these crimes against us. A car thief gets seven years and *if convicted* a rapist gets only two. Why? Because a car still has a higher dollar value than we do. It's the reason police don't get a pin or move up the ranks for catching a rapist. They do, however, for catching a car thief. The sign behind the judge's bench, "In God We Trust" and the bibles used to *swear in* witnesses are telling signs as to why these injustices rampantly exist. Though there have been a few upsets to this just recently, for the most part, wealthy and powerful men are still given permission to do what they want to us, to carry on—business as usual. Yet the system isn't broken as many people may believe. In fact, it is still working to oppress us, exactly as intended.

Remembering all of this brings us to the ultimate paradox, which is, of course, how the masses turn to religion when faced with the *hard times* that religion has very much created. Wasting our time abiding by ridiculous rules, praying for change, and then handing over what little money we have to a trillion-dollar industry won't protect us nor help us live our lives, just as it never has in the past. Instead, it only limits, constrains, and compromises us. In some cases, it annihilates us. But if we can't just hope and pray for change what else is there? Well, we must act, but not act out. To riot is to focus on the harmfulness of the system. It's an external focus on society that will never allow us to make the desired changes to our life. Instead, we need to focus more on Self.

An exploration of two small towns in Saskatchewan, Canada provides an example of what I mean by this. I apologize for not remembering the names of the towns, the research paper depicting this or the authors, but it is still a worthwhile lesson. Two agricultural towns, both hit hard by economic losses due to changes in government policy which affected their ability to sell both produce and livestock. A nearby cannery was also forced to close due to new taxation laws. Town one protested the changes and then begged the government for economic assistance. Town two sought to expand on the social capital they already had in place. They gathered together and planned a way forward by building a mustard factory. They used an old family recipe and, with the expertise of two women, prepared mustard from all the mustard plants they'd quickly and quite purposefully planted in their area. This helped increase income to the area, but they didn't stop there. They kept planning, especially for the long term. Part of this planning included giving the town a facelift. All the downtown businesses took it upon themselves to paint and fix up their store fronts. But much of the labour and materials such as skids of flagstone, were donated by others so they could help the businesses achieve this goal. In the end everyone donated what they could and brought the town back to life, without the help of government. They then continued on this path by creating family-oriented events that brought even more of the town's people together. A large French population that traditionally kept to themselves, was extended a welcome

to join in their first go-kart racing event for children. The track travelled through the entire town with donated bales of hay ensuring the safety of everyone along the route. Together, the community created a thriving economic center instead of facing the prospect of becoming a ghost town. Even some of the children who were forced to move away to find gainful employment came back home bringing their expertise and community spirit with them.

Do you see the difference? It's likely that we can't even spot the first town on Google Maps anymore, but the second will never know failure if they keep focusing on what's important. Themselves. A new documentary *Rural Renaissance: How Canada's Oldest Town Reinvented Itself* explains how the residents of Annapolis Royal in Nova Scotia, Canada have done this as well. They too revived their entire town by building on the social capital they had in place. Through hard work and perseverance, they managed to *create* a thriving economic center out of their dilapidated ghost town that was soon to fall off the map. Again, do you see the difference? Rather than begging the government to look out for us or praying for something good to fall into our laps—neither of which will ever happen, we need to *wake up and act* in this same manner. We can start by learning to trust Self and then expand on this to focus on what our own needs and desires are rather than all the bullshit surrounding us.

THINKING & EDUCATION

Education is what remains after one has forgotten everything one learned in school. —Albert Einstein

Disgusting, isn't it? What we've gone through? What we still go through? There are very few of us who can move freely through life and just be who we are or do what we want without some asshole thinking they can take a piece of us whenever they want. It's as if we're being ripped apart while on a merry-go-round that won't let us off. No one seems to understand, or care, that bits of our flesh are falling to the ground. So it continues. Then, without catching a breath, we're forced to carry on as if nothing happened just so we can survive all the other aspects of capitalism. But now, whether it's our age, ill-health, poverty, or lack of trust in Self, it's time to stop spinning and step off. We need to stand on solid ground and reflect. Not only do we need to hold a higher regard for Self, but we're going to have to start trusting Self over and above *all* others if we are to heal and move forward with our lives. The question then becomes, why can't we trust Self to begin with? Also, why is it so difficult to separate Self from the abuses we face?

Well, the centuries-long ban on thinking—especially thinking of one's Self and one's future has much to do with this. This particular method of oppression maintains our already divided Self by forcing us to listen to others over and above our own needs and desires. It inhibits our ability to heal and trust Self while also keeping us in a state of chaos. All told, it stops us from engaging in the activities that can not only secure our own survival but provide us with a robust and fulfilling life. De bono clarifies this with his statement that: "When Greek thinking came into Europe at the Renaissance, schools, universities, and thinking in general were in the hands of the church. There was no need for creative thinking or design thinking. There was no need for perceptual thinking... Orthodoxy was what mattered - and this limits thinking." Schopenhauer adds to this by describing orthodoxy as a "language virus that dulls critical thinking and limits neuropathways." Tom Robbin's statement "it clouded their vision of the world, like a veil" and Karl Marx's "religion is the opium of the weak" also lend to an understanding of the negative effect orthodox thinking has had on us. But, if you're still uncertain of this negative effect, we can assess the damages imposed on us even more thoroughly with the following vignette found in Pierre Berton's *Smug Minority*. Though dated, it captures how easily controlled and manipulated we now are due to orthodox thinking:

"What was it like in the olden day, Pop? I mean around the 1960's... Was it like they show on the TV?"

Well, now, son – you know TV tends to glamourize history out of all recognition, sometimes. Things weren't all that good, you know, back then.

Gee, pop, when you look at shows like "Tycoon" or "Astronaut" or "Freeway Pirate," well, I mean it's pretty exciting.

Sure, it *looks* that exciting and even attractive. You see those campy, hand-operated “cars,” as they called them, meandering down the old freeways and those strange rows of telephone poles and the cute little “homes” with the old-fashioned patios and you get a big kick out of it. But the people themselves led pretty dreadful lives by our standards.

Then why do they always talk about “the good old days,” Pop?

People tend to view the past through a fog of nostalgia, son. You know – lovers spooning in the quaint drive-ins and whole families sitting around the bar-b-q. But don’t forget that for most people life was composed of equal parts of boredom and drudgery. It was, in essence, a serf society run by a smug minority of well-entrenched overseers.

Gee, Pop, that sounds like the Middle Ages. Were those people really like serfs?

They would have resisted the name; but in our terms they were. In spite of the old adventures they dredge up for “Freeway Pirate,” historical evidence makes it clear that the masses of the people who lived in Canada in the sixties were chained to tedious and degrading jobs which they despised; that between one-fifth and one-third of them were prisoners of a poverty so grinding we can scarcely contemplate it; and that only the wealthy had the freedom to enjoy a proper education.

And this smug minority you mention that ran things ... who were they, Pop?

A small, in-bred, establishment of business and political leaders who had vested interest in maintaining the *status quo*.

But gosh, Pop, why didn’t the people revolt if conditions were as bad as all that?

Because the minority convinced the majority that life was wonderful.

Oh, come on, Pop. That’s stupid.

Read your history books. You’ll find that’s what happened. Of course, the big establishment had the help of the minor establishments – religious, educational, journalistic, judiciary – in this brainwashing.

You mean they convinced people that serfdom was an okay thing?

Oh, quite easily. The most menial and wretched toil was held to be highly honourable. It conveyed a magical thing called “status.” People preferred it to happiness.

But all that poverty, Pop. Surely they didn’t prefer that? Wasn’t there any kind of public planning to prevent that?

No – quite the contrary, son. The minority convinced the majority that public planning was bad for them. They called it “government interference.” They said the people would lose their hard-won freedom if they had it.

But hold it, Pop. They didn’t have any freedom!

That’s right. But the minority boasted so loudly about this non-existent freedom that they convinced the majority they had more of it than any people in history.

Gosh, Pop. I mean those people must’ve been real dumb to swallow that line.

Well, of course, by our standards they were wretchedly educated. The majority didn’t even finish high school. The universities, such as they were, were reserved for the privileged classes. You see they didn’t pay you to get an education, son. *You* paid them! The minority saw to that.

Pop, I just don't understand why the people didn't complain.

Because the minority convinced them that it was better this way - that anything else would be foolishly extravagant besides being an invasion of privacy.

This minority you talk about, Pop: they must have been a real bunch of hypocrites to fool people that way.

Not at all, son. All available evidence shows that they honestly believe all those things themselves. You see that's what made the minority so smug."

Three aspects of this vignette need immediate clarification. The first is that nothing has changed. We still believe we live in a free society, but in reality, we are serfs. Prisoners of grinding poverty. Second, Berton down-played christianity's role in brutally circumscribing us even though it was the main force behind such wide-spread coercion and insanity to begin with. I suspect this was done to prevent personal backlash because in his book the *Comfortable Pen*, Berton does point to how proclamations such as *he who knows best, that is our priest* and *lean not on your own understanding* have made us much tamer and more controllable than when peasants first revolted against their savageness centuries ago.

The third important aspect of Berton's vignette is that he introduces us to the notion that the journalistic, judiciary and educational establishments helped with our brainwashing. Is it conjecture then to think that this is the *only* reason they exist? To oppress us? We already know that propaganda is easily spread while free speech is culled by judiciary establishments. That, throughout history, anyone who tried to live a more truthful and relevant life was always denounced, imprisoned, or executed for being unorthodox. Socrates, Galileo, Bruno, and Copernicus are a few men that first come to mind, but so do the Kent State students massacred by the National Guard. These, plus millions of women and indigenous peoples who have been silenced/slaughtered over the years are the kinds of people that could have taught more critical and creative ways to think and then handed this down through passing generations. Instead, all were crucified. Legally. It's left the reasonable and sane people silent and given the insane the strongest voice. A bit of a reversal on *the meek shall inherit the earth*, wouldn't you say?

It wasn't just people they sacrificed either. Money only came to those whose research defended the false morality of the church—which, not so incidentally, was one of only a few institutions that had money after centuries of oppressing everyone else. As a result, *pure* scientific thinking and knowledge—knowledge for the sake of knowledge—was severed by both the lack of funds and the banning and burning of any books and research that didn't preserve the church's false allegory. All other research was forced to fall by the wayside, one way or another.

If these limitations hadn't been imposed on humanity for so many centuries, scientific research could be more advanced than what it is today. Advanced in terms of being integrated with nature. Think of the difference it could have made to our food, our technologies, and our way of life in general had we grown up knowing we were integrated with nature—living healthily and sustainably from the start—rather than

orthodox men taking the stance that ravaging the earth for personal gain was okay since they were somehow superior and above it all. Sure, we likely wouldn't have some of the technologies currently available to us. But then, we wouldn't have needed airplanes to visit family members because they'd be with us. We wouldn't have needed cars to get to work, because we wouldn't have to work nor be in desperate need of a vacation from work. We wouldn't have needed electricity for heat, light or to connect to others because we'd be resting our bodies and minds around a fire and fully connecting to our loved ones already. How many of us now yearn to have a simpler life like this right now? Instead, as a direct result of both man's ego and limited orthodox thinking, we have this overwhelmingly toxic-for-profit environment to contend with. And still, even in the midst of the numerous hurricanes, floods, and fires of 2021 alone, men are arrogant enough to keep professing their position as being above that of Mother Nature.

We can't forget about COVID-19 either. If capitalists hadn't started so many wars and created the rising poverty and destruction of so many environments for their own gain, we wouldn't have the unsustainably high populations of immigrants migrating from continent to continent in search of jobs, food, and safety. Thus, we wouldn't have such an easy transmission of disease either. It's also possible that if scientists had been allowed to amass knowledge for the sake of knowledge, they may have also been allowed to come together much faster and with a global solution to COVID-19. Instead, even after being forewarned a decade earlier that a pandemic would be our biggest demise, world leaders [sic] still refused to think *of us*, refused to plan *for us*, and refused to let the best thinkers take the lead *to help us*. Now we have to pay for their ignorance, arrogance, and lack of planning once again. It's us that must pay higher taxes at the same time as businesses are forced to close and the cost-of-living skyrockets out of control – *how many hundreds of thousands of homeless Americans and Canadians are living in tent villages right now? And how many of those tent villages are also being razed by police, right now?* Homelessness and poverty are crimes after all. They certainly ensured that within biblical law. It's also us that are losing our loved ones—*never mind to COVID-19, how many are succumbing to other illnesses after being barred from getting treatment during lock down?* Yes, it is only us losing our minuscule freedoms, livelihoods, mental and physical health.

It makes people question if COVID-19 occurred naturally or if it was released as a bioweapon against us and that this was someone's plan—to create more chaos and poverty in our lives so as to gain wealth and power in theirs. The increase in the cost of living, regulatory laws, taxes, bank fees and privatizations alone make this a possibility. The fact that knowledge of the virus was hidden to begin with is also a capitalistic move that leads to more suspicions than answers. We will never know the truth, but what we do know is that while the factual deadliness of the virus cannot be disputed, the strongest believers and followers of capitalism focus on the irrelevant—not wearing a mask and attacking anyone who tells them to put one on. Of all the fights to fight, why this one? Especially when doctors and nurses have been wearing masks to protect both themselves and their patients for many years now. Instead, why not fight to give the

doctors and nurses we depend on a break? Why let such distractions stop us from seeing what we are truly losing? Like the loss of free public spaces or the loss of our second to largest rain forest. The lack of regard for what is truly important is just a sign of how skewed people's perceptions have become due to limited orthodox thinking. Orthodoxy forces people to ignore their brain's ability to engage in more in-depth types of thinking and perpetuates this limited, reactive, anxious, and fearful behavior we see all around us. Clearly there is no end to the chaos and hardship this creates.

We can't skip over the most obvious aspect of limited thinking either, which is the effect this still has on our educational systems. If leaders wanted us to thrive, all of our educational systems, not just the prestigious ones, would focus on expanding the different types of thinking we can engage in and invest in our creativity. Instead, thinking is still deterred while the creative arts is always the first to lose its funding. Of those schools that do still have a creative art department, students are handed specific, pre-approved tasks to complete. Even in kindergarten, students must colour within the lines and are banned from drawing purple and green cows. Though students are in school long enough, they just aren't given the opportunity to plant a seed of an idea to see the many ways creative, perceptual, and design thinking can take hold. Students will never be properly taught aspects of capitalism that can help traverse its dark waters, such as entrepreneurship or financial planning. Nor will they ever be taught that it isn't the grades, but the numbers in one's bank account and a good credit score that provides the necessary buffer to weather economic storms, allow down time, and to keep good health. Regardless, teachers can't teach what they don't know, and since they were educated by the same system... the focus on enforcing dress codes, conventionality, the obeying of orders and standardized testing continues. So does the use of booklets and videos to make students memorize the mandatory cookie-cutter curriculums that demonize relevant historical content, critical thinking, planning, and free speech. While teachers are forced to fail in line with these mandatory requirements, schools and schoolboards fail by focusing on increasing student grades and attendance—the formula used to keep their own funding in place, their doors open, and of course, their jobs secure.

For all the people who complain about the younger generation's lack of resourcefulness, it starts with this quest for non-thinking obedient labourers, followers, and believers. This quest is why only a small portion of today's students will learn how to read, write, and excel at math and science. Most will shut down from the assault on their senses just like we did. This will not only aid in the distortion of their reality, but it will stop them from knowing, trusting, and healing Self too. It fully aligns with Gottfredson's theory of circumscription and compromise—where we continue to accept the restrictions imposed on us, then limit ourselves further by conforming to societal and familial expectations. Thus, even after students graduate, they will continue to fall in line with the ways in which they were taught which is to wait for someone to tell them what to do, and they'll wait for permission no matter how harmful it is to their own life.

Our inability to obtain that elusive *American Dream* is an outcome of all of this. When we see recent immigrants doing well in our country at the same time as our bank accounts are being depleted and we are forced to work longer and harder—if we can find work at all, we get angry. We wonder why the *Dream* is so elusive for us but not *them*. Then racism escalates because we think they are taking something away from us. Yet, the only difference between us—immigrants from a different era, *just ask the indigenous*—and recent immigrants is that they know how they were oppressed, and when they come here and see opportunity, they act. Religious or not, they act, and we don't. Not only do we not understand the many ways we are oppressed, but we are too busy believing that our capitalistic country is still the hallmark of freedom. That it should somehow *magically* provide all our needs—the entitlement trap—and that we only need to get a job then *protect our way of life* to become successful. This is perhaps our largest mistake. First, we waste far too much time feeling victimized and rather than taking control of our own life we respond by following others in the fight to maintain the very system that cripples us. Second, when we get tired of the fight, we waste even more time seeking distractions—social media, drinking, drugs and other shenanigans. And finally, we are so busy being distracted or fighting the wrong battles that we overlook all the opportunities surrounding our strongest desires—the ones that could potentially fulfill our dreams.

While we still have a better chance of gaining our freedom than in most countries, it will never be handed to us. And if we keep following the wrong aggressors down the wrong paths, staying fixed within the limits of what we were taught, or even looking backwards at what's been done to us, then we simply end up being what our overseers want us to be—easily controlled, manipulated, unfulfilled, and impoverished labourers. Vulnerable. Whether a student, an adult, or an adult student, we need to clear our heads and get off this merry-go-round. We can't beat a system that has everything in place to maintain itself, so we need to bypass it by thinking differently instead. We need to start by enhancing our trust in Self while also thinking more critically of all that surrounds us.

Freedom means nothing if you don't have anything to eat.

—David Harvey

THE DUTY-BOUND WORKING BODY

Work is external to the worker.... It is not part of his nature; consequently he does not fulfill himself in his work but denies himself.... The worker therefore feels himself at home only during his leisure time, whereas at work he feels homeless. —Karl Marx

The valorization of labour (Verwertung) does not mean valor. Instead, it means applying a resource-labour-in such a way that it makes money, then increases in value to the point where a surplus is created for business. The resource is considered validated only when a surplus is gained, not the straight exchange of labour for income. Thus, for us to be of value to any employer, the cost of our labour must be kept to a minimum so a business can increase their surplus income. —Author Unknown

After centuries of being told that idleness and leisure are the devil's playground for an impoverished human spirit, and that creative pursuits are frivolous, a waste of time, energy and one of their many concocted roots to evil, it's now ingrained within us. We take no part in idleness. Instead, we keep busy for the sake of *appearing* busy because anyone who sits down solely to think is immediately judged, as if we are doing something wrong in the eyes of society. We no longer know how to achieve true leisure either. Nor do we understand that it is a state of mind. We also limit our creative pursuits to the home and body as we attend only to matters of hair styles, nail colours, tattoos, clothing, home decorating and crafts. While there is nothing wrong with engaging in these pursuits, both the joy and fulfilment we receive from such acts are fleeting at best. As with all external forms of creative expression, there is constant need for adjustment and one-upmanship since such acts are meant to either help us fit in or rebel against our excessively judgmental and ever-changing society. Rather than provide us with opportunity, this type of creativity hinders our ability to survive a capitalistic society by creating both debt and anxiety. But this is how our society has progressed. Rather than slowing down to understand our true creative potential and how it can lead to both fulfilment and leisure, we engage in costly behaviors which focus only on external validation by society. And that's just the beginning.

On top of being told that *idle hands are the devil's workshop*, their proselytizing also led us to believe that *the cure for idleness is to serve the lord* and that *only a working or warrior body serves god*. This nonsense continues to be taught generationally, forcing the idea that one must act in a certain manner to be seen as respectable in the eyes of god. And what drives respect? Work of course. But with the focus being on other's perception of us, we completely ignore our own body's need to rest or recover while performing the obligatory routines that both run and ruin our days. And all the while, we believe this to be normal—taking pride in working overtime, not taking breaks, and sacrificing important parts of ourselves and our families to rise to the top in our field of work.

Becoming machine-like labourers is not normal. Neither our bodies nor minds can withstand this. Yet that's how effective capitalism has become. Any attention to the needs of Self have been replaced by the needs of society or of god. It is so manipulative that it even stopped the feminist movement from moving forward.

After feminists won the right for women to be named as persons under the law, obtain divorces, vote, own property, and to open bank accounts in their own name, all progress stopped at *work*. Once entry to the workforce was “won” our creative Self became dominated by our working Self which stopped us from using our creative spirit to go beyond paid labour and reach our full potential.

Though men have detested labour since the beginning of time, we thought we had it made once we entered the workforce. We valued the respectability paid labour gave us and the opportunity for freedom. An independence from man. Little did we know that we would still be the primary homemaker, childcare, and eldercare providers unless we found an extremely liberal husband, wife, or Dobby of our own. It was unforeseen how necessary we'd remain—often becoming the primary breadwinners while maintaining our “wifely duties”, as capitalists made money the most fundamental aspect of survival by increasingly valorizing our labour. For decades feminists thought pay equity was the only concern left to fight for. Few understood that it wasn't just the glass ceiling of the “old boys club” keeping us paid so poorly, but that capital always moves from place to place and continent to continent to seek more exploitive surplus-building opportunities. In the end, with surplus income always moving away from us, what does our paid labour really get us?

How common is it that we end up in low paying jobs where we are browbeaten and micromanaged to death, with overseers creating obscene deadlines and point systems to track every minute of our day to make certain we fulfill our meaningless repetitive tasks? This ensures that overseers get their bonuses, but how many of us ever get a survivable raise, never mind a sense of accomplishment for all our efforts? How many of us also end up silenced by colleagues or endure bosses that still think of us as their property instead? And when doesn't this lead to personal violations of all kinds that make us even more anxious, numb, and angry? The fact that most of us would quit our jobs on the spot if we had a better method for earning income illustrates that our dependency on such jobs leaves us both miserable and vulnerable. Do we really want to find out how much smaller we can get?

It's okay to be thankful to have a career that we love, especially if it allows us to be part of team. We do miss our tribes after all and being part of a team can fulfil many social needs and desires. But honestly, if we still think that as long as we have a job we are doing all we need to do to be able to survive, we are gravely mistaken. Few of us gain what we want for our efforts and yet, here we are. Because feminists won the right to work, and because of all the proselytizing, we still believe that paid labour is our only option for survival. We still believe that it's enough just to get a job and that because we

are doing what *we are supposed to be doing*, all else will fall into place and eventually we will get everything we want out of life. Like the ability to retire.

If there was any truth to this, we wouldn't need to rationalize our low pay and poor working conditions through colloquialisms such as *be content with what you have, it's selfish to want more, true Self-respect is to not think of Self at all, money isn't everything, that's not how the world works* and *as long as I have a roof over your head, I'll be fine*. Rationalizing our situations is as effective as prayer. It won't get us what we want. It won't help us live our life. In fact, wishing and begging for good things to happen just detracts us from the realization that paid labour is simply another method for capitalists to take advantage of the power and wealth that's gained by controlling women. Thus, our poverty continues to grow as we keep forcing our already tense and exhausted bodies and minds to do that which is extremely unnatural to us. It isn't normal.

This daily grind inevitably leads to an outward focus on distractions—a release—from our painful day-to-day routines too. It makes us numb and diminishes our flame leaving us even less in the way of energy, hope and inspiration. I would say that this is what depletes the human spirit, not idleness, leisure and especially not creativity—quite the reverse of how they've all been positioned. Rather than living, there is only a shutting down of our senses as we *do what we must to survive*. Be aware that all we are really doing is what we must to survive *within* the confines of capitalism.

What if we want to live and live well, rather than just exist? What if we don't want to end up like many of our parents who are worried, angry, often crippled, and still working long hours just to survive? What if we don't want to be homeless, ill, or forced to face daily violence because we don't have the means to escape? What if we want to fly like Jordan's eagle instead? Remember when I stated that we still have a creative Self that yearns for us to take part in life? And how it yearns for us to shake off all our horrifying experiences enough to recognize and act on our creative potential, to courageously undertake meaningful challenges and to feel intensely about something that matters to us? Our creative Self doesn't care how others view us. It simply wants us to do more than just survive just as it wants us to feel good about what we do in the everyday.

It's imperative that we start thinking more critically of everything external to us and more warmly to that which radiates from within us. Since our work provides us with so little yet stresses our bodies and minimizes our minds and spirit to such a degree that it has the potential to make us ill, plus reduce our entire life to nothing before we ever gain access to the supposed comforts and freedoms of modern society, it makes more sense to focus on Self. And no, this isn't selfish. Making use of our own creativity, intuition, and anything else that comes from within is self-preservation, and it can never be wrong. How can it be? Especially when it will stop us from labouring into our eighties or scrounging to buy yet another lottery ticket. It can also help us help others. After all, those who've focused on their creative Self and done what they wanted with their lives from the beginning are the only ones who are free to do what they want *and help who they want* both today and tomorrow. Even flight attendants state that we need to put our own

oxygen mask on first in an emergency and then attend to those around us. Should we not consider our impoverished state-of-affairs and our overworked, overstressed, ill bodies an emergency? Shouldn't we stop letting the work *we've been forced to do* distract us from tuning in to our creative minds? Instead, why don't we start thinking of our work as temporary—the same way most employer's view us. That is, until we get our own desires and goals up and going and start doing something that is a full extension of our creative Self.

The thing about creative work is that it's multidimensional and adds to the dynamic of life. It's rarely called work for this very reason. For some it is called *play* and for others it is a *calling*. Whatever people name their vocation, they look forward to seeing what comes out of their creativity. They look forward to feeling the joy that arises from following their own path and the sense of accomplishment it provides. It's why some retirees wish they'd followed their dreams much earlier in life. They often make more money doing what they love but besides that, what they love also makes them feel accomplished and whole. Like children in a sandbox, creatives look forward to all their days, not just their days off. Always remember the truth behind Torrie T. Asai's statement, that "creativity is nothing more than a mind set free." The significance of Campbell's statement readily applies itself here too: "the demonic comes from the Greek, and it refers to the dynamic of life—your demon is the dynamic of life. In our tradition we are so against the dynamic of life that we've turned it into a devil. Demon has negative meaning in our tradition."

Remember that elusive *American Dream*? Creationists spend large amounts of their time crafting their own world to obtain that dream. So, if you have an idea or a flash of creativity do not let the normality of all the orthodox bullshit stop you from exploring and then acting on it. Instead, heed the advice of the self-help books and seminars that do attempt to teach us two powerful lessons—how to live a full life, and how to overcome our pasts to live a full life. The premise for each is *doing* what is innate. Besides, getting down to the business of dealing with fears and anxieties by removing that which has been drilled into our heads and creatively doing something for Self can take us right past survival mode and into our own world of play. It can even make us healthy once again.

Now, let's get back to idleness. Idleness allows creativity. When we slow down from daily routines—maybe even take a slow walk—and shed our anxieties, we allow the brain to engage in its active and dynamic imagination. As the body slows, we can begin to entertain all kinds of thoughts and possibilities that an unclenched and rested body can later follow through on. Idleness can lead to an idea, a working theory and even plans on paper. The key is to allow creativity when idle. We can't be consumed by financial worry, the to-do list and especially past or even current abuses and traumas. We can't always be angry or striking out at others. We can't always be stoned, drunk or consumed by social media and video games either. Also, our creativity can't just be about money. The people who chase after just money live the shallowest of lives and

often end up in jail or the morgue. Instead, we should look forward toward possibilities—the creation of what is not yet apparent. We might locate a desire or a goal by asking *what if I tried...?* And it must be something that can lift the creativity curve from its flattened or depressed state.

Take a lesson from Joanne Rowling who stated that she had only one thing, one tiny thing—an idea. The idea of Harry Potter came to her while sitting on a delayed train. Once the idea took hold, or ‘dropped into her head’ as she put it, she then stripped away all passing thoughts and activities to focus on developing her one essential idea. Idleness gave Rowling the opportunity to epitomize her own statement “Imagination is the uniquely human capacity to envision that which is not.” So start by being more attentive to Self and not discounting idleness just because you’ve been told to, for this is where it all starts. Just as Pasteur stated, chance favours the prepared mind.

Then there is leisure. That which capitalists don’t want us to partake in yet ruin our lives to dwell in themselves. Leisure is most often thought of in terms of our free time. Berton states however, that leisure is a *state of being* where we are free to make a choice that is unfettered by want, ignorance or the confinement of a job. I agree with Berton’s definition but would add to it a freedom from abuse and its after-effects as well.

Most of us cannot picture what a freedom from abuse feels like, never mind full-blown leisure. However, if you were lucky enough to have climbed a tree, played in a sandbox, or jumped in a wave as a child, try taking Self back there. Before deprecating worry, fear, anxiety, and the need for money became such a big part of life, try to remember what it was like to be left alone with your own thoughts and imaginations. Try to remember how relaxed your body and mind was when engrossed in the moment. How neither time nor hunger was a factor. To me, this is leisure. Too many women don’t have this nice of a childhood memory to recall unfortunately, and it’s a problem. It’s difficult to conjure up embodied feelings of being immersed in wholesome creative play and the magic of flow when you’ve never felt it. It’s part of the reason why leisure is much harder to achieve than idleness. Keep in mind that creationists like Jordan and Rowling instinctively work towards developing and maintaining their own world of play in which to wholeheartedly immerse themselves in. Without a doubt, even they weren’t born with it since this isn’t something you can get from another person. The proof of this lies in children of the very wealthy. Excess money causes them to ruin their lives more often than expand on their knowledge of Self and what they can accomplish with their life. In other words, their lives of leisure are empty and meaningless since it was given to them. With us however, the more we start relaxing our bodies and appreciating our minds by stealing moments through-out the day to focus on more creative thoughts and actions, the more fulfilled we will become. Steve Jobs stated that “we have to trust in something—our gut, destiny, life, karma to connect the dots in our life and to build confidence. We need to give Self permission to follow our own path, to find what we love, to never settle on something less than love with what we do.” He also stated that “since work fills such a large part of

life we have to love what we do, and the only way to be truly satisfied is to do what we believe is great work. And the only way to do great work is to love what you do. If you haven't found it yet, keep looking and don't settle. Remember that we'll all be dead soon, and that the most common regret people have on their death bed is that they did what others wanted, trapped by dogma, rather than having the courage to follow what was in their heart, their intuition, what they knew was deep inside them." Mathew McConaughey adds another element to this by stating "the sooner that we become less impressed with our life, with our accomplishments, with our career, the sooner we get a whole lot better at..." I'll leave the whatever you get better at up to you!

If you are losing your leisure, look out! It may be you are losing your soul.
—Virginia Woolf

When you do a thing from your soul, you feel a river moving in you, a joy.
—Rumi

HEALTH VS MEDICINE

Let nothing interfere with economic growth, even though that growth is castrating truth, poisoning beauty, turning a continent into a shit-heap and riving an entire civilization insane. —Tom Robbins

Let's stick to the earlier conversation on how we need to lean in, listen, and be kinder to both our minds and bodies. It's important that we find ways to relax and rejuvenate with everything we face. Besides, if we aren't taking care of Self no one else will either, and this will most certainly lead to ill health.

Simandan takes up the discussion of the path to ill health in terms of allostatic load theory: "The human body achieves systemwide stability in spite of fluctuations in its surroundings by an ongoing brain-coordinated process of generalized physiological adjustment called allostasis. Adaptation to a current stressor is referred to as allostatic accommodation, whereas the cumulative wear and tear accruing from the repeated use of the body's allostatic mechanisms over the lifespan is called allostatic load. As allostatic load accumulates, the body's capacity for effective allostatic accommodation decreases, leading to a downward spiral of increased vulnerability to new stressors, and ultimately to impaired mental and physical health...the timing of the environmental stressors matters because the presence of a stressful surrounding in childhood, when allostatic mechanisms are not yet fully developed, results in a uniquely debilitating carry-over of past environmental insults across time, into adulthood, by means of an excessive allostatic load."

The stressors Simandan discusses vary along four dimensions: "Intensity (mild stress vs trauma), chronicity (rape vs lifelong economic exploitation, discrimination or social exclusion based on sexual orientation or skin colour), the social/natural dimension (physical stress such as infections or injuries vs social stress, such as making ends meet through contingent employment or bearing the contempt of one's bigoted community) and lastly, developmental timing (childhood stress vs advanced age stress)."

Unfortunately, not only are beneficial models such as this not widely researched, they're also not integrated for practical use within the medical community. Federici states that, like our educational systems, financial support only came to those whose medical research defended the false morality of the church. So instead of a healthy approach to medicine, we are now stuck with the Mechanistic Method that Hobbes and Descartes promoted for the church during the 17th century.

This approach sees the body as an automated machine that can be altered or adjusted to provide more work. A quote by Rosenfield explains their position: "They administered beatings to the dogs with perfect indifference and made fun of those who pitied the creatures as if they felt pain. They said the animals were clocks; that the cries they emitted when struck were only the noise of a little spring which had been touched, but that the whole body was without feeling. They nailed poor animals on boards by

their four paws to vivisect them and see the circulation of the blood which was a great subject of conversation.”

The Mechanistic Method helped further many of the church’s goals. The first being the maintenance of the gender divide. Babies born with both male and female genitalia are still cut to ensure that only one gender remains. Assignment surgeries are often done quickly and without a parent’s knowledge, especially in rural areas. The confusion that many people have regarding their own bodies, that their gender isn’t who they feel they are, is likely a direct result of this.

Another goal of the church was to gain further control over women’s working and reproductive bodies. The installation of the Mechanistic Method helped achieve this by eradicating the view women once held of themselves. Thus, the knowledge that we are whole, organic, and living in harmony with the natural world was eliminated when any act of connecting breath and energy to the mind, body, and spirit was deemed an act of witchcraft. It ended our ability to understand and care for Self and forced us onto this path of placing our health and body parts in the hands of doctors *who know best*. Yet, as woman over the centuries have found out, the mechanistic method cares little about a woman’s body, and even less about her mind. It’s why it was only recently discovered that the onset of women’s heart attacks have different indicators than men’s. Though many of us now struggle to regain some of the valuable information lost to us during the witch hunts, our homeopathic and naturopathic research is typically a costly and sporadic form of care that we only try to understand after having pushed our minds and bodies too hard and for far too long.

The Mechanistic Method also helped the church achieve its ultimate and final goal too, which was to generate income. This is how early health care became a commodity. Being forced to disregard our own Self-care with this *doctor’s know best attitude* ensured a constant feed to their production lines. Francis Bacon’s statement that “magic kills industry” pertains directly to this. As it stands now, research on preventative whole-body approaches to our health will never be funded, easily accessible, or fully covered under health care. Instead, only the more costly and specialized programs and pharmaceuticals that treat illness and disease is relevant to the trillion-dollar capitalistic campaigns within the medical sciences, hospitals, and pharmaceutical industries.

Production lines are also fed by allowing the drugging of children who don’t fit into square holes and the banning of assisted euthanasia for the chronically ill. It is why addictive opioids are consistently being used to treat pain, but research on non-addictive lysergic acid diethylamide (LSD) and psilocybin mushroom (magic mushroom) will never be approved for funding. It’s the reason why Americans who can’t pay for medical attention are tossed out onto the street every day and why Canadians get some semblance of treatment only after their symptoms reach a specific severity. The doctors and nurses? They are often just cogs in this assembly line, timed for efficiency and increased production too. Their allowable contact time with patients is quite limited which is why this approach will never focus on understanding the person nor their

abused body and mind which, in the end, is what causes most health issues to begin with.

As I paint this picture, it should become clear that our physical and mental well-being falls to us. We are the ones who have to start asking if medicines and surgeries really help cure illnesses and diseases that derive from being abused, ingesting plastic sugary chemical food-stuffs, addictive narcotics, undergoing needless plastic surgeries, overworking our bodies, and living in unacceptable conditions with an unhealthy mind that is always tense, worried, and afraid. If none of these aspects of our lives change, wouldn't surgeries and medicine just add more stress to our bodies? If we weren't in such a paradoxical situation, whereby we crave a release from most of what surrounds us, but we provide it in ways that harm the body and mind further, we wouldn't need to depend on such a medical community to *fix us*. Instead, we would be more focused on eating healthier and finding ways to relax and unclench.

We would also focus on the lesser-known fact that to get healthy, we also need to rewire our brains. The amount of abuse we face physically changes us and part of this change includes a reduction in our brain's synaptic activity. Abuse effectively shuts down our hippocampus by reducing the number of active neuron pathways as well as the activities along these pathways. This often leaves victims of abuse with impaired judgments and memories and can cause the loss of one's self-identity in extremely deep and often non-repairable ways. It's the reason why an abused child can grow up to become either a violent sociopath or more vulnerable and prone to believing everything they are told.

Intense fear over long periods of time, such as an entire childhood, can also shut down our prefrontal cortex—our thinking brain. This is where our emotional intelligence derives from. As Sternberg & Grigorenko point out, emotional intelligence plays the greatest role in our ability to survive since it overrides all the standards, including genetics and IQ (intelligence quotient). It cues us to relevant stimuli and guides our thinking and behavior. A wild animal will engage this defense system only when faced with life-threatening danger. The rest of the animal's life is spent obtaining food, resting, or honing survival skills through play. De Becker states that since abuse activates this defense system far too often, it numbs our emotional intelligence and makes us incapable of distinguishing life-threatening danger from our anxieties and emotional fears. It not only keeps us in dangerous situations that we should have left long ago, but it allows our emotional fears and anxieties to block us from openly engaging in creative activities that could help us improve our lives.

The long-term activation of our defense system also causes an over production of fear chemicals such as adrenalin and cortisol. These can contribute to both our memory loss (psychogenic amnesia or dissociative amnesia) and further increase our levels of anger, fear, and anxiety. These chemicals cause the breath to become rapid and shallow and the heart to constrict and beat faster to increase oxygenated blood to the skeletal muscles for a pending fight or flight response. Consequently, they also reduce blood

flow to other parts of the body, including the skin and the gastrointestinal tract which inhibits digestion, reduces the purification of toxins through the skin, reduces bone and muscle development, and hinders the ability of the immune system to work effectively. It is the perfect warning system that tells us we are in danger. However, when on-going living conditions force the system to engage for prolonged periods of time, these physical changes can lead to diseases in the heart, brain, blood, nerves, and skin. Meanwhile, treatment under the Mechanistic Method has stopped most medical professionals from recognizing that prolonged fear and abuse is the likely cause of diseases such as nominal aphasia, fibromyalgia, Alzheimer's, cancers, arthritis, diabetes, heart disease, IBS, and multiple sclerosis. It makes a person wonder what a mother's constant state of fear does to a fetus too, does it not?

Though curing the mind will never replace the more profitable band aid attempts that focus on the body, we can attempt to rebuild neuropathways and improve our emotional intelligence ourselves. Making use of NLP (neuro-linguistic programming) or neuroplasticity is a good place for us to start learning how to create new neural pathways and on/off switches in our brain. An understanding of these methods can be found in books such as De Becker's *The Gift of Fear*, Bandler's *The Guide to Trance-formation*, and Siegel's *Brainstorm: The Power and Purpose of the Teenage Brain* and *Mindsight: The New Science of Personal Transformation*. A focus on unclenching our bodies and disengaging our natural defense systems would also be beneficial. This we could do by removing as much danger from our lives as possible while also engaging in gentle activities such as walking, swimming, tai chi, and yoga. Engaging in these practices can help us all unwind, and perhaps, help reduce the amount of anger and chaos floating in the world right now.

THE EVER-AFTER

The word 'heresy' not only means no longer being wrong; it practically means being clear headed and courageous. The word 'orthodoxy' not only no longer means being right; it practically means being wrong. —G.K. Chesterton

With our steadfast focus upwards, towards the promise of a heaven and an answer to our prayers, selfish men took away our Eden one tree at a time. We once had *free* access to clean air and water, healthy foods, and materials to build shelters. We didn't have to work forty to sixty hours every week just to pay for what was rightfully ours. People not only did what they wanted when they wanted, they also lived in a period that saw the land, oceans, and sky teeming with healthy animals, also doing their own thing. It's difficult to imagine all that's been taken from us until we hear stories of skies being darkened by passenger pigeons, the thunder of bison migrating across the plains, or that the oceans were filled with so much marine life that a person could almost walk to a different continent.

It's gut wrenching, having to fight to gain back a small slice of what we once had. Now, when women fight for the right to abortions and birth control, it's a battle directly against the backbone of capitalism that demands we produce more units of labour. When we fight for the right to be seen and heard, we are fighting against patriarchy. When we fight for the rights of children, we are battling against capitalist laws that made them property. When we fight for the rights, freedoms, and the inclusion of all *others*, we are fighting directly against those who posit themselves as being more worthy and righteous than the rest of us, plus their laws and scriptures that demand difference be a basis for exclusion. When we fight to preserve or gain access to real food, we are fighting against the dominant morality that working bodies have zero needs, including the need to be nourished. When we fight for lower taxes and fair pay, we are fighting against systems of feudalism, indentured servitude, slavery, and the valorization of labour. When we fight for protection against those who harm us, we are fighting against the same system of injustices that first told them to *go ahead*, harm us. When we fight to rid ourselves of alcohol and drug addictions or when we fight to straighten our lives out in any way, we are fighting against the abuse we've faced and the subsequent shameful feelings that religions planted within us by deeming us unworthy, un-pure, and non-virtuous sinners just for being born. When we fight *with* Self, we are fighting against the mindset that tells us we are selfish, wrong, and sinners for putting Self first. When we fight to save the last of our animal kingdom and natural environment...well, what can I say?

There's really no need to ponder the reasons why so little attention has been given to caring for our air, water, land, animals, and food, is there? The need for people to make money overrides everything else in our lives now. Even the Congo, a smaller rainforest only to the Amazon, is now open for logging thus proving that the need to make money

through commerce now wins. Every time. The global harm this causes just doesn't matter to those in power. Plus, according to capitalists the *hand of god* will fix whatever needs fixing, or that it is *god's will* that environments be destroyed, that war takes place, and that animals, women, and children die wicked deaths every day. All of this has been extremely beneficial to the advancement of capitalism, but far from providing anything worthwhile to any living creature. Since this is the force we are up against, maybe it is time we separate out religions from the idea of a god.

Keep the idea of a god if you wish. In fact, I find it comforting to think that there is still a little bit more to this world than what meets the eye. Energy and creativity are two of the most promising. So is that unknown quality we are to uncover about Self that is organic and keeps us connected to Mother Earth. But I've personally thrown out all notions of religions being anything more than capitalistic entities that have created the overwhelming hardships, chaos, and hopelessness in our lives—all to provide a life of power and leisure to the few. Besides, I believe it's better to simply focus on this life, the one we know for sure that we've been given. If we keep worshipping false icons in the sky or the men on the ground who profess to being the hands of a god, we will never get to use our creative energy and live this life as intended. Instead, we will remain in these perverse and subjugated roles that keep us pinned down in violence.

We need to be kept whole, not brutalized, constrained, and taught we are sinners from birth. Too often, people are treated like battering rams from their very beginning, meant to take whatever abuses their patriarch needs to dish out to get through their own day. Children who've been raised within these aggressive, arrogant, and ignorant environments are never given the time nor the space to learn about the possibilities surrounding them, nor are they allowed to get comfortable with their own bodies and minds to learn about themselves. Thus, they have no dreams to rely on when trying to navigate the dark capitalistic waters as adults, and the lack makes them angry. The rise in illnesses, diseases, homelessness, unemployment, and climate change catastrophes just adds to this anger since many more men have lost control over their surroundings, and their outlet for releasing their aggressions is still us. So even though men—especially white men, are the luckier ones since they have many more choices than women and children, they rarely see their choices. Their lack of self-identity caused by their brutal upbringings leads to too many of them gaining back some semblance of power by taking it away from the rest of us. The sad truth is that some men will always seek wanton power by controlling women and children using any form of abuse they can now. And what they can't control, they often kill. Consequently, the devastating surge in random acts of violence by narcissists and full-fledged sociopaths right now is actually a *predictable* response.

With this in mind, has anyone besides myself noticed that all terrorists, mass murderers, serial rapists and child killers (male or female) hail from brutal patriarchal upbringings, often known as *good or proper christian (insert any religion) homes*? Homes where they were first psychologically destroyed, and then possibly raped, beaten, drugged, what

have you...then let loose on society. Former commander of CFB Trenton Russell Williams (serial rapist, murderer), Ted Kaczynski (AKA-Unabomber), Ted Bundy (serial rapist, murderer) and Richard Kuklinski (AKA-The Iceman, murder for hire) are just some examples of men that had brutal patriarchal upbringings. Stephen Paddock (Las Vegas shooter) and Timothy McVeigh (Oklahoma City Bomber) were white supremacists—the basis of course for entire religions. Hitler. Taliban and ISIS—different religion, but same ignorance, arrogance, and killer aggression, especially against women and children.

Though not everyone raised under such heavy handedness creates such acts, all such acts are created by those raised amid the cruelty that religions relish and rely on. I certainly haven't heard of any such criminals that were raised in loving and protective homes that cared enough (and had the time and resources) to allow children to speak up, be creative and just be themselves! Have you?

So, to the people who posed the question *why crime occurs and how can it be reduced* within the news headline “COVID-19 has given rise to the largest criminology experiment in history,” you should most definitely research children raised within the confines of religious patriarchal environments compared to those allowed to express and be their creative selves. I would think this research will provide some insight for those who want to understand, reduce, or even prevent drug use and suicides. It may even explain the influx in mental illnesses such as schizophrenia, phobias and learning disorders today. These are all just symptoms, after all. An outcome since the advent of patriarchy and the witch hunts, of children being viewed as necessary, but tools that should mind their elders, remain unseen, unheard, and that require harsh upbringings to keep them in line or *make them tough*. It's not at all surprising that this social disease gets worse each time it spreads to a new generation since men were trained to act this way under religious rule and women and children are still being trained to submit to it. To accept it.

For what? Our minds exist elsewhere, our bodies are empty, beaten, forgotten and ill. Every day we struggle to survive within stark and decrepit environments that we work too hard to keep up just so we can call it a home. It might be beneficial to remember that the religious stories forced upon us have been told, retold, changed, and told again. So maybe we can rewrite our own story now. A story that no longer follows the rules of an allegory that views us as a commodity, prevents us from taking care of Self, and prohibits us from holding our children close. Maybe we can start by updating our moral compass. After all, why are we still obliged to attend to those that cause us harm? What has this ever gotten us? Why can't we just focus on Self and that which is important to us? It's a heavy statement, isn't it? Again, you may ask...isn't focusing on Self disrespectful to others? Isn't it the epitome of narcissism? Many people might agree with you, yet the answer is *still* no.

A narcissist exists entirely separate and apart from Self. They harm others to self-inflate and gain a sense of themselves. Power, respect, and identity, basically all the

things they weren't given or allowed to develop as the offspring of a patriarch, is their goal. Yet they haven't any true inclination as to who they really are or what their real needs are because slowing down and taking time heal Self is not allowed within the context of orthodox thinking.

Now, think about that wholesome refreshing feeling you get after engaging in any kind of meditation or gentle exercise—which focus on Self. This is what I'm getting at. That wholesome refreshing feeling is self-preservation, not selfishness. Protecting self by staying healthy and whole is not narcissistic. In fact, once we tune in to Self, we can forget about self altogether because it allows us to forget about what others are thinking or saying about us. When we're not trying to please others out of fear of loneliness or adverse reactions such as being called a bitch, cunt, or whore, life becomes much easier because we'll know when to just walk away. When we learn this, it helps our body relax. It knows when it is being protected and treated well—from proper food, to gentle exercise, to kind thoughts. It knows when we are in good company versus threatening company. Try taking a moment to heed the level of tension in your body when certain *others* are around, and you'll see that inviting danger to the dinner table every night is never a good idea. The bottom line is that caring and respecting Self is healthy, relaxing, invigorating, and necessary for survival. Whereas waiting, hoping, and praying for something good to happen to us allows just enough time for our life to be exterminated too.

TRIBES, CHILDREN, AND LGBTQ2+

How smooth must be the language of the white, when they can make right look like wrong, and wrong like right. —Black Hawk

Our complete lack of survival instincts is a relatively recent phenomenon. As Junger points out, it wasn't that long ago that thousands of North American settlers fled the destructive forces of christianity for indigenous tribes all the time. Though settlers were labelled as traitors who faced the possibility of being burned alive, hung, broken on the rack, sawed in half lengthwise, or slowly impaled on wooden stakes from the anus to the mouth, they still knew it was better to join the abuse-free egalitarian environments that indigenous tribes offered.

Perhaps it was like a homecoming to the settlers since these egalitarian environments were similar to what all people had in Europe, prior to the onslaught of the enclosures and taxes. They weren't taxed on their deaths, births, forced to labour and then taxed on it. Nor were they called *sinner*s so they could be taxed on that too. Another striking difference to christian culture is how everyone was accepted in tribes. Differences in gender, capabilities, and colour were never used as a basis for exclusion. Specific qualities may have been sought out for celebration, however. For example, gay men were often medicine men in North American tribes. A ceremony could not take place without their presence nor their good will. The Navajo used the term *nadle* for people with more than one gender, or two-spirited people, which is more common than we know or are allowed to accept within christian culture. Rather than controlling minds and bodies, the indigenous only dealt a harsh blow to anyone who caused harm to members of the tribe. Wouldn't that have been something? If we had the protection of tribes today, how many corrupt, violent, and sociopathic world *leaders (sic)*, businessmen, husbands, fathers, priests etc., would now be planted a few feet underground, exactly where we wish them to be? If christians hadn't brutally killed off these indigenous tribes, we could be living with these kinds of protective morals rather than all the bullshit we currently endure.

Accepting differences and providing protection are just two of the missing ingredients in our modern christian society that we once had in tribes. Another was the time to just be one's Self. Prior to the senseless mass slaughter of millions of bison by christians just to starve out North American tribes, and before that, the enclosures that caused European ancestors to starve then flee, people only had to exert a minimal amount of labour which was equally divided between men and women since there were no distinctions made between genders. A ten-to-fifteen-hour work week was all that was necessary for people to survive since land, shelter, water, and food was free. This allowed time for personal discovery and talent building, whether it was craftsmanship, marksmanship, understanding plants, animals, science, or any of Mother Earth's processes. It was during these earlier periods that most of the major discoveries about

the earth were made such as knowledge of how the earth rotates around the sun and that the moon rotates around earth.

The abundance of time allowed indigenous people to bond and build strong trusting relationships too. Junger states that infants developed a sense of security and belonging since they were held up to ninety percent of the time which, not so incidentally, is closer to the amount of time other primates hold their young. It wasn't just one exhausted mother caring for multiple children either. Children were cared for, cherished, and taught by everyone in the tribe. The phrase *It takes a village to raise a child* comes from these environments. In this atmosphere no one was over-worked, bodies did not break down and abuse was non-existent. Children always remained in the company of a group of people they knew which helped develop their sense of belonging. They knew they were valued and how to be themselves, as did the adults who cared for them. Never were they raised by strangers, left alone, or forced to sleep alone. They were never made vulnerable by being locked behind closed doors. Think of how abuse and incestual violations grew when suburbs and the single-family dwellings within them were designed to increase isolation. This was done purposefully to allow patriarch's their privacy in developing their role as king of their castle, and their destruction of children.

COME OUT! COME OUT! WHEREVER YOU ARE!

*Imagine there's no heaven
It's easy if you try
No hell below us
Above us only sky
Imagine all the people
Living for today...
—John Lennon*

In *The Comfortable Pew* Berton states that christians are aggressive, ignorant, and arrogant, and that he was confounded and bewildered as to how this religion became the North American standard for morality. And yet, here we are...submerged in all its cruelty and brainwashed to ensure its longevity. At least we now know that when *The Times* asks *Fining Norway for wearing shorts is tip of iceberg. When will men treat women as equals?*, the answer will always be never. Equality will not exist for any woman, or child for that matter, for as long as we let the bigoted and misogynistic rules of *any* religion rule over us. After all, the people that perpetuate our misery aren't going to willingly release their position above us and give up all the power, leisure, and wealth they can gain from our oppression. So why expect a change now?

We can't. That's a fact. We can stop supporting them, however. We can also change how we think to reduce their level of influence over us. As children we couldn't, but as adults we can stop allowing religions to position us as *below* and somehow less—sinners from birth, sinners for being women, silenced and obligated to obey. We can stop letting our minds and bodies be owned by them. Instead, we can start to think for ourselves and give our bodies a rest.

A good place to start is to question why there is still such an emphasis on the banning of safe abortions and pro-choice adds, billboards and protests blasting us at every turn with a clear-cut focus on just having children, when it's obvious so few are protected after being born. Do we need to remind these people that children are not their toys? That children are people in and of themselves and aren't born simply to help adults work through their anxieties, anger, and grotesque sexual proclivities?

Think about the women who end up having a dozen children because they believe it's the righteous thing to do. With so many children, it's impossible to watch out for all of them. Many depend on older siblings to raise the younger ones, and kids raising kids won't allow even a drastic change in one's demeanor to be noticed. A second question then becomes, is that the point? Is the banning of safe abortions and the abundance of pro-choice adds, billboards and protests blasting us at every turn meant to just produce a stack of mindless labourers? Or is it to also cause enough confusion and hardship in a woman's life that she'll mentally cut out and not notice *or care* how her children are being

violated by priests, police, coaches, teachers, fathers, uncles, brothers whenever, wherever, they want?

The documentary *The Keepers* provides some insight into this. It delves into the lives of a few girls who were drugged then raped by just one of the many rapist priests out there. It also details all the roadblocks used to hinder the investigation into the murder of the *one* nun who tried to help the girls. From district attorneys, to judges, to lawyers, to government bills passed and not passed, these people—all under the thumbscrews of the archdiocese, not only covered up the murder of the nun, but covered up an unknown number of abuses by the priest himself. Plus that of the doctor, the policeman and an unknown number of others that the priest brought in to rape these young women too. But we already know this happens all too often in christian society.

What stands out is the one survivor who recalled being told by the priest that his *come* was the blood of god, and that she was to drink it to absolve her of her initial sin, which was *allowing* her uncle to rape her. Over and over again, she was made to believe she was a sinner for first *inviting* her uncle to rape her and that being raped by the priest again, and again was her necessary *therapy*. The therapy not only included being raped by the priest, but as I said, by a policeman and others the priest brought in to *help* absolve her of her initial sin.

Why would a mother not recognize the changes in a child facing this, and why would a young girl believe this was okay rather than speak out? Well...the mother had ten children and her blind faith in christianity didn't let her see the realities of it. While she prayed and did what was required of her, she also taught her daughter only what she knew—which was to never think of herself, to always do as she was told, and to adhere to the rules of those speaking in the name of a god or professing to hold the power of a god. Not only did this block her daughter from openly approaching her mother regarding what was being done to her, but it caused her to be so detached from her own body, her own nature, that she felt guilty for being raped by her uncle. As if she'd done something wrong. With no one to turn to, she started feeling insignificant and unworthy. And in trying to rid herself of these feelings, she went to the priest for help, but couldn't recognize that what the priest was doing was also abusive. The daughter lost out on living her life not only because of what all these men did to her, but because she was taught not to protect herself and not to speak up about what she was going through. In essence, she was taught to allow it.

This is a common problem among children who are only taught to forgive, to please others, and to conform to the most obscene of constructed standards rather than be more critical of their surroundings. Children are too often taught to blindly follow the rules, to *respect their elders* and to give them whatever they want, no matter what. The automatic implication is that someone else is in charge of them which stops them from learning how to avoid danger by being discerning. Children are effectively tossed right into a pit, one child after another, and then silenced. This silencing ensures everyone, but children, remain safe. Enlightening, isn't it? To know that while all other animals

teach their young how to avoid danger and survive, christianity, like all religions that I know of, ensures children are purposely undermined, disadvantaged and harmed instead. All this so we become mindless worker drones.

I think we can easily understand that it's in our own best interest to understand how our feelings of insignificance, unworthiness, and of not belonging arise from such unprotected beginnings. The combination of what we are taught plus the lack of engagement in Self-discovery and understanding our own creativity makes us either vulnerable, and for some people, dangerous. While some of us react poorly and lash out, other of us crawl deep inside ourselves when in the thick of it. Both paths block us from exploring even our most basic self, our true abilities, our desires—all of which are essential to our own survival. Think about how many of us have spent our entire lives existing within the limits imposed on us, fighting against them, or looking backwards every time we are triggered by the demons they've put in our closets. We can't know ourselves when their harsh words repeatedly strike us down every time we try to care for Self or attempt to locate our own worth amidst the chaos and cruelty surrounding us. Too many of us let these harsh words keep our heads down and stop us from believing we deserve something good in our lives.

Even if we feel alone and ashamed of who we think we are, we need to start embracing the fact that there is nothing wrong with Self. That it is the systems of injustices we face rather than us that's the problem. We simply need to belong somewhere to start feeling whole again and if we need to create that place from scratch, so be it.

Remember that Canada and the United States represent two countries where dreams can still be fulfilled. But to achieve a dream, we need to free our mind. So try shelving all the nurturing you've endured—this includes every single grotesque societal expectation and norm that you've grown used to—and side with your nature instead. This makes it much harder for others to steer you wrong which is especially important when embarking on a new path to create place of belonging, a reason for being. A good place to start is by thinking about all the others who've already managed to climb out of the pit.

Amanda Hocking's life showcases what your own struggle between nature and nurture might look like. Hocking's stated that she was a sad and depressed child who had an active imagination which showed up through her constant story telling of make-believe worlds. When her parents took her to get help for her depression, it was her imagination that the counsellor zoomed in on. Her parents were told that Hocking's incessant storytelling was an aberration that had to stop. They were also likely told that she couldn't make friends or do well in school if she didn't stop. Thankfully, Hocking's parents didn't listen to the counsellor, nor did they take her back for any further sessions. Instead, they left her alone to create as was her nature.

At the age of twelve Hocking thought of herself as a writer. By the end of high school, she estimates she'd written over fifty short stories and started many novels. At

the age of seventeen Hocking started sending her drafts to publishers, but all were rejected. In 2010, with seventeen finished but unpublished novels, she decided to sell her paranormal fiction on-line. It's extraordinary that the only reason she found the confidence to self-publish her work was because she wanted to go to the Muppets exhibition in Chicago and didn't have the few hundred dollars it would take for hotel and travel expenses. Within six months of self-publishing, Hocking's *aberrant story telling* not only got her to the Muppet's exhibition, but it allowed her to quit her job and enter the free-market economy—as a millionaire. Hocking's amazing rags-to-riches story has the potential to happen all the time if people could pull themselves away from our societal structure that neither wants nor appreciates the creative mind and individual dynamics.

As a child, *Pulp Fiction* director Quentin Tarantino wasn't as lucky. He recalls how neither his mother nor his teachers supported him in his writing. Instead, they viewed his dream to be a script writer as a defiant act of rebellion. His mother even said—a little to sarcastically for the twelve-year old's liking—*Oh, and by the way, this little 'writing career' that you're doing... that shit is over!* Tarantino remembers the exact moment she spewed this attitude all over him and that she even added the finger quotes. He recognized the sarcasm enough to make a promise to himself to never share his wealth with her. I don't blame him for a second. Her stance forced him to fight an uphill battle out of the pit rather than help pave his way. Albeit, she was just following the rules and expectations of our society, blind and unquestioningly. Ignorantly, arrogantly, and aggressively. She thought she was doing what was best for her son by forcing him to stay on track with social norms—which equates to *finish school and get a job so you too can struggle the rest of your life*. Luckily, Tarantino trusted his nature enough to ignore her *nurturing*. He persevered and greatly succeeded at his calling and because of that, he commits murder onscreen only.

'Buck' Brannaman is another creative genius that made it out of the pit. Rather than be crushed by his abusive childhood, including the barebacked whippings and death threats both he and his brother received from their father, he used what he knew about fear to better understand horses and how their fear remains so close to the surface too. This allowed him to try different methods of working with the natural instincts of horses rather than brutally working against and *breaking* them as is the norm. He'd never claim to be a horse whisperer, but he has saved tens of thousands of horses from abuse and touched the hearts of their riders in the deepest possible way. His award-winning documentary *Buck*—which is an adaptation of the book he was told he couldn't write *The Faraway Horses*—shows that since his approach to training horses uses techniques learned and taught from an abused child's perspective, people who don't even own horses now show up at his riding clinics to seek child-rearing advice.

Dorsa Derakhshani, a young Iranian grandmaster chess champion was banned from competing for Iran because she refused to cover her head with a hijab. She did question why these men focused on her hair rather than the many more important things they

should be concerning themselves with, but mostly, she just kept playing chess. Only now, she plays for the USA.

Now think about Oprah Winfrey's life story for a moment. Along with being forced to endure an abundance of incest from various family members, she also had a brutal grandmother who was insistent that she learn how to launder clothes since that's what she would do for the rest of her life. To my understanding, the only person who actually cared for Oprah was her father, but her own mother saw to it that she wasn't allowed to live with him. Given all the abuse Oprah faced, she still didn't let her past crush her. Instead, she managed to get off that path by connecting to millions of other people also facing emotional turmoil.

Ranging from those left alone to make a choice and those that weren't given one at all, these people embraced their nature to create good lives for themselves rather than cave to all the bullshit that could have consumed them. Not only did they break through all childhood barriers by just focusing forward on the one thing they believed in the most, but they also created their own place of belonging. Then, they went ahead and created a better world for all of us to live in. How thankful are we to have people like this touch our lives? Their legacies will live on in the hearts of millions for generations to come now which, by the way, is the only recipe for eternal life that makes sense—leave something good and well-loved behind *in this life* so you can reach people's hearts and allow them to remember you for it.

THREE TYPES OF PEOPLE

Modern society has perfected the art of making people not feel necessary.
—Junger

Have you heard the saying that describes us as being one of three types of people: The first being the type that involves themselves in this parade called *life*, the second type watches as the parade passes them by, and the third doesn't even know the parade exists? Most of us who grew up in patriarchal environments are of the latter two types. We either watch this parade called life pass us by, wishing and wanting more but unable to see a clear path to getting it, or we hide from it altogether by delving into self-deprecating behaviour: drugs, alcohol, crime. I was the second type of person—hidden in the shadows, forever watching as others paraded by, enjoying life, and doing what they wanted.

Now take a moment to think of our beloved icon Oprah Winfrey again. She is the first type in that she has completely involved herself in this parade called life. For some time now, I've been questioning how Oprah broke the trajectory of the path she started on by forging ahead with her own desires. How did she understand and trust her desires so deeply that she could act on them to help others in such respectable ways when most of us can't look forward and find a way to live our lives at all? Instead of letting her past sink her, Oprah created a kingdom for herself. And since she appears to be living life exactly how she wants to now, but still looking for ways to improve it even more, what stops the rest of us from making this our goal? These questions are what brought me to the theory that the largest difference between Oprah and the rest of us is that she can trust herself when the rest of us can't. That she has found a place, a root of origin within herself, let's say, that cannot be shaken no matter what life throws at her. In other words, she can no longer be separated from Self. I believe this to be the key to how she created such an extraordinary life from her unspeakable childhood.

So let's think on this further. Oprah was likely questioned and criticized by naysayers on each step she ever took forward. She went forward anyway. Yet, when we are told we can't do something, we believe it. When we are told we *can* do something, we don't believe it. We end up following well-worn patterns of existing that too often include a reliance on others telling us who we are, and gaining their acceptance. It keeps the peace with parents and friends, but it limits our own existence, doesn't it? For no one is telling us what we can do to improve our own lives! And they can't, can they? First, if we don't know Self, no one else can. Second those around us are likely compromised and circumscribed too. So how can they open us up to opportunities or get us past our fears when they can't do it for themselves? It's best to just bypass what everyone else is thinking. The best way to do this is to remind ourselves that women

were not always teachers and homemakers. Women were the first doctors, the first computer programmers and before that, they were leaders and warriors. Now they are spies, pilots of planes, captains of ships, and own their own software, mechanical, and engineering firms. It's easier to ignore all the people who try to limit us if we focus on everything women have accomplished in the face of brutal adversity. Then it becomes a matter of finding ways to stop limiting ourselves.

To get the negative Self talk out of my head, I began by reminding myself that the people who create their own path trust themselves over the critical nay-sayers in their life. Always! That this is why so many people keep their endeavors a secret at first. Will we ever know the number of companies started in complete secrecy? What about authors? Budding authors often write on the quiet. I read about a grandmother who started investing in rental properties and didn't tell her sons what she was up to until long after she'd become successful at her retirement endeavor. She didn't want to hear what they had to say, and she especially didn't want them to talk her out of it. Another woman, much younger this time, flipped a commercial property and in one day netted a million dollars. She told no one until after the fact. Sara Blakely, founder of Spanx, told no one what she was up to until she was well on her way to becoming a successful entrepreneur. Not only did all these women have desires, but they protected their desires from the naysayers in their life until they saw the fruits of their labour. It's a smart move, so keep it in mind.

Once we give Self permission to push all of the bullshit out of our lives and start protecting Self, and that this often means keeping secrets, then we just need a bit of help on knowing where to begin. It starts with down time and dreaming, yes, but what else can help us? In the following two chapters I provide some techniques that can help us part ways with our past life and old patterns of thinking so we can move on to a better future. These methods already helped me with the staying power and focus I needed to write this book, so it's my hope they will do the same for you.

Never allow someone to be your priority while allowing yourself to be their option. —Mark Twain

METHODS FOR COLLECTING THOUGHTS

To invent your own life's meaning is not easy, but it is still allowed, and I think you will be happier for the trouble. —Bill Watterson

The desire to move forward, to invent new meaning, and to achieve a more fulfilling life was first realized by utilizing Granovetter's *Strength of Weak Ties*. Granovetter's theory, that our circle of friends and family cannot provide any new information we can work with, resonated deeply within me. It makes sense that people who are together all the time have all the same information. It also makes sense that if any of this information were useful, it would have already helped improve our life. If it hasn't already helped us, Granovetter suggests we start paying more attention to weak ties—those chance meetings, readings, and bits of knowledge that we wouldn't normally dwell on in the everyday. For it is the weak ties which allow the picking up of different ways to think and different ideas to think about—that this is where we will find the information we need to engage our imagination and locate opportunities.

With this theory in mind, I opened myself up to gaining insight from, well...everywhere, which led me to the bear that ultimately changed my life. First, he was the most beautiful black bear I'd ever seen. All he was doing was strolling down the side of a highway in Jasper National Park, but what a sight! To this day I can still remember how awestruck I was, not just by the beauty surrounding him or his stature, but by watching him be himself. Now picture this: we were one group among many that had pulled to the side of the road to enjoy his presence. He was massive, beautiful and could have, had he chosen to, attacked any one of us. And though he must have been acutely aware of the thirty or so people encroaching on his space, *he chose to ignore all of us*. He just strolled, nibbled, and relieved himself whenever and wherever he wanted to. He did it without guilt, without a second thought and without being in a hurry to do something else.

As I stood and watched him, I became deeply aware of how an animal who has never been captured, abused, starved, or otherwise influenced by man, can just be himself. How he would never develop self-deprecating habits nor be blocked from using his natural instincts. Can you imagine that? Just being yourself as if nothing had ever happened to you? As if your life had led you down a path of development and growth that only deepened the connection you have with your own instincts and desires rather than forcing you to always look backwards or do things that are in fact unnatural and against your very being? It was such an enticing thought that it made me realize how much I wanted to be more like the bear. He helped me to start thinking of ways to remove anxiety and fear from my life so I could free that which was deep within me and just be. He helped me understand how few choices I'd actually made in my life. That instead of making choices, I was always just reacting or moving through motions based on unseen habits that developed out of my past.

Let me describe how deceptive these unseen habits are through a story I'd read some years back. It's a true story about a lion that was confined to a small round cage for twelve very long years, and how he learned to pacify himself early on by pacing a circular path he'd created inside his enclosure. In all those years, his anxious steps never took leave of the path. He only changed the direction in which he moved along it. He even paced that circular path after his small cage was enlarged to give him access to the massive grassy area, complete with trees and a large pond, that previously stood adjacent and inaccessible to him. The zookeepers, amazed that he wouldn't take the opportunity to run more freely, didn't understand how deeply the habit of pacifying himself overrode even the strongest of his innate traits.

For the lion, his reality had grown so small that he no longer saw the possible expanse he now had access to, or how to move freely towards it. Sadly, he no longer knew how to be a lion. He only knew that walking the path was what he always did to get through the day. Since the lion lives without a logical brain, he continued letting his past fears and anxieties dictate his future through this well-developed habit. When a new lion, unencumbered by such limiting fears and habits and willing to stretch out under the trees and drink from the pond, was introduced into the pasture however, the first lion's curiosity got the better of him. The need to be pacified vanished as the desire to meet the new lion grew.

The sad truth of this story illustrates how mankind can suppress the strongest traits of any animal. It also illustrates how hard it is to overcome what we can't even see is an issue. Once a path has been set for us, typically at an incredibly young age or by a specific set of circumstances in our life, we rarely alter it. We focus only on what has been done to us or what is expected of us. Changing this should be our first goal. What helps the most is something to look forward to, a desire, that we know will be good for us in the deepest place of our soul. What doesn't help is when our curiosity is peaked by someone, or something, that is on the same path we are already on, thereby keeping us stuck in the circuitous route that blocks us from seeing the many ways we can leave.

Keep this in mind while I explain a Zen story that I also took hold of. This story provided great meaning to me, but not the one intended. The story is of a duck caught in the middle of the ocean during an intense storm with massive swells, high winds, and thunderous rain. The question being asked is *how does the duck save herself from such a horrific circumstance?* The answer is to wait out the storm. Apparently, the duck won't even try to fly away during such an event. She will simply rest by tucking her little beak under her wing and ride atop the huge waves until the storm subsides. When it does subside, she will then take flight.

This is construed as good advice which we often use to protect ourselves when trying to stay below the radar at school, at work, and at home. And it is good advice for all the circumstances in our lives that we can't change. Yet, it only works if calmer sunnier days are sure to come. What I immediately pondered was, what if the calm doesn't come? What if the turbulence in our lives continues or worsens and the sun only shines

elsewhere? Though we cannot do much more than keep our heads down as children, if we keep this up as we age it will only serve to immobilize us. And it has, hasn't it? Abusive marriages are just one example of how violence always escalates and never subsides.

If we want to live our life without violence and hardship, we need to start looking up more often and locate available pathways we can potentially take to move us past the storms in our lives. If there isn't a clear path to follow, we need to make one. It may not be easy going, but is it not better than staying in a storm that will only weaken us and drain our spirit over time? Too many of us think we deserve the storm, and it simply isn't true. Nobody deserves to be weakened and drained of their spirit over time. But if we choose to wait out the horrific circumstances in our life or just try to think about them in a positive light such as *this too will pass, it'll get better next year, or god only hands us what we can deal with*, even with a fake smile on our face and a forced positive attitude, we are in fact keeping the storm overhead. Just like the lion, many of us stay on our current path and in our current circumstance out of this habit of keeping our heads down. Especially when this habit is borne of fear and anxiety.

Luckily, we don't need to discern which habits *or paths* we cling to out of fear and anxiety. Good habits don't go unnoticed because they're earned. And if we haven't forced Self to create a good habit and to keep that habit in our life, then we are likely relying on old and unseen habits that won't help us build a future. All kinds of unknown habits arise from the fear of being harmed, of not belonging, of the unknown, of being judged, and of failing. These are only some of the most dominant fears that hold us back. There are other fears too, created by specific circumstance and acts against us that we've already lived through. Some acts against us are veiled and difficult to see, others are crisp and clear. The only consistency found here is that bad habits arise from all of them. And the worst outcome is how they train us to stay docile, abiding, and accepting of the place we've been told to stay in. They distance us from our own bodies to the point where we don't often feel, or care, how much harm we cause Self and others. They override any sense of our Self or our innate power which, in turn, stops us from doing what we need to be to doing to create a better life for Self. So, together, let's build some good habits.

A PALACE FOR THOSE THOUGHTS

What we achieve inwardly will change outer reality. —Plutarch

To build new habits with the simple goal of moving forward, I began using a memory palace. A memory palace is typically used to improve one's memory by storing information in specific imaginary rooms. The extra visualization of these imaginary rooms uses more of the brain's capacity which helps to recall the information stored. Oddly enough, when I first heard of using a memory palace the whole idea of it exhausted me because I have such a poor memory. I call it a porous memory. All words, not just nouns, escape me. It is truly frustrating to know there is a word for the exact meaning I need, but only the first letter of that word ever comes to me. If I struggle long enough the word will eventually surface but it is mentally taxing, especially when trying to write. Though memory issues are apparently a common result of abuse, I've always been intent on not listening to that tidbit of information because of how useless it makes me feel. Instead, I simply created my memory palace for ideas because those I could easily retain.

The first room I built in my memory palace was a dungeon. It's where I put all my *push* items—tasks, false obligations, demons, other people's desires and demands, and all the other useless, degrading, or angry thoughts that I wanted to keep away from since they cluttered my mind and wasted entire days. This included most thoughts of my childhood, my ex-husband, my current employer, my mistakes, and most of what was on social media. Boxing up all the crap and storing it in the unlit windowless dungeon gave it less importance and enabled the building of the rest of the palace. Directly above the dungeon I built the main floor which consisted only of my comfort area. All it contained was a lit fireplace, a big writer's desk, a comfortable easy chair, and a big white fluffy dog named Champ who laid at my feet. It was a welcoming place for me to rest and quiet my mind. A place where I could explore my creativity and allow ideas to take hold. Staying there just holding onto ideas would never improve my life however, so I continued adding floors to my palace.

The next floor overflowed with resources. The library walls were lined with bookcases bursting under the weight of texts and journals. A table placed in the center of the room housed multiple computers. I filled this room with all the knowledge, ideas, and seeds of information at my fingertips. For me to change my life, I not only had to stay away from the dungeon, but I had to leave my comfort zone too. I had to take my creative thoughts and ideas and walk up the grand staircase to my room of resources, gather what I could and head to the top floor which was my attic. I've always found attics fascinating, thankfully, so it was easy to fill my attic with skillsets.

I realize it isn't a royal palace. But what I did build was a heartfelt reminder that I needed to move up to at least the second floor to get started, and then the attic to create

a more fulfilling life. With Champ as my sole companion, I found it easy to keep the pictures of these rooms in my mind as impetus to not give up. The memory palace not only helped me visualize being at ease with myself, but it allowed me to believe that I could take at least one idea and develop it further. It allowed me to believe in myself. Knowing that I was on the brink of something exciting felt so good that I soon realized I needed to add turrets.

The turrets portrayed achievement. They were the only place I could grasp the feeling of being surrounded by the warmth of the sun, fresh air, water, trees, and an abundance of wildlife—all the things I yearned for the most. Then the idea of building several turrets came to me. One for each of my achievements. My memory palace elicited excitement now because, right out of Harry Potter, there were multiple staircases to these turrets, and they all began to move. I didn't know which resource led to the skillset I would need to reach a turret until I followed each to the very end. With everything fearful and mundane packed up in the dungeon, and several ideas in hand from the comfort room, the upper floors were now the most exciting places to be. Not only did this give me the feeling of protecting my deepest self, but it also gave me the perception of personal time and space. It added homegrown excitement to my life and separated me from the chaos of the outside world. It gave me choices.

How many of us want choices? How often do we say we want to be doing something that better suits or excites us? How often are we adamant that we *can no longer do this!* I was not different. I wanted that release. But I also wanted something that engaged both my brain and my body in much healthier ways than what I was currently wasting my time on. I wanted to achieve that one piece of advice that I did hang on to from all the Self-help literature I'd read, and that was to create flow and balance in my life to help me reduce stress and perhaps get healthier. I wanted to live like that bear, doing what I wanted, when I wanted, and to learn, finally, just to be myself. I wanted to have his ability to ignore those around me who continually commandeered too much of my time, energy, and thoughts. I also wanted to safeguard and keep separate what little I could feel inside of me to let that part of me grow.

The memory palace helped me visualize all of this. It also reminded me to stay on task. As soon as something cropped up that was unwanted, I would often state out loud... *dungeon!* And there it stayed. Useful information stayed in the resource room and the actions I took went to the skillset attic. The turrets housed all my hopes, desires and to fully realize them I had to start achieving. Then, when I discovered our collective history, these visualizations made all the difference. I was able to just pick a target and aim for it since I'd already removed everything that, at one time, would have held me back. This book is now located in one of those turrets.

I do believe, because it worked for me, that once you know what happened to you and especially the reason it happened, you can more readily move forward. After I found out that it was never about me not being enough, and that it wasn't something I'd specifically done, it was much easier to maintain hope for my future and look after my

own health. Knowing that it has been the weakness of fearful men all along who simply created religions to put into law what they wanted, and that this caused our hardships, abuse and kept our heads down all this time still makes me angry. Angry enough to never enter a church, pick up a bible or hand over my hard-earned wages ever again. It's also released me from the power they once had over me. I was able to separate myself from what I once believed to be myself and for the first time, I was able listen, understand, and act on my own behalf as I underwent a complete paradigm shift. Now I busy myself by searching for ways to increase my own power which provides me with a promising path forward. My wish is that this knowledge does the same for you. That it provides you with your entry point into the best bullshit free life that you can muster for yourself. That you go forward with your head held high and fill up on knowledge of yourself, your desires, and especially your own power, plans, and determination. I certainly don't need to wish you luck once you have all this and, as Rumi said "*Out beyond ideas of wrongdoing and rightdoing, there is a field. I'll meet you there.*"

Begin at once to live, and count each separate day as a separate life.
—Lucius Annaeus Seneca

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