

South of the Garden

The Newsletter for the Resource Center for Women and Ministry in the South

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September 2011

Water

by Jeanette Stokes

We've had a really dry summer here in central North Carolina. My garden looks pretty sad—a few scraggly tomato plants, a couple of gasping basil plants, and some dried up Echinacea. But I also have a dozen large pots of brightly blooming flowers. The flowers in the pots are happy, because I water them almost every day.

Watering is pleasant if I do it early in the day and also because I have turned it into a game. I try to see if I can water the pots in front of the house and in the backyard without turning on the hose. I get water from three barrels that collect rain water that pours off the garage when it rains, and I get water from the bucket underneath the condensate drain at the back of the house.

I think everyone knows about rain barrels by now. I'm here to tell you that if you live where it actually rains, you don't have to hook up any fancy downspouts to collect water in a barrel. You can be a lazy gardener like me. Just stick the thing under the eaves where water pours off, and there you have it—water in a container to use on your garden.

Not everyone has discovered air conditioning as a source of water. You may not even have thought of catching the drips that hit the ground somewhere outside your house or apartment. You might be suspicious, as I am, of anything liquid that comes out of a machine, but I checked it out and it is basically just sweat. It's water that is in the air and turns into liquid in the cooling process. I don't completely understand how it works, but I can see the water dripping out of the black rubber hose. On a typical summer day, that slow dripping fills a five-gallon bucket twice a day. Though I'm still skittish about putting that water on things I'm going to eat, I'm very happy to use it on the flowers.

My neighbors across the street dug up their driveway this summer and installed an underground water storage tank to collect rain water and air conditioning condensate. The experts told them that they could collect up to forty gallons of water a day from the air conditioning system in their big old house. That's 1,200 gallons a month. I was stunned. They have a substantial vegetable garden that has been taking thousands of gallons of water a month. It's not just the cost, it's that there is water around if we catch it.

One warning: there are places in the country where catching rainwater is illegal, mostly in perpetually dry areas. If you live in one of these, you already know about this caveat, because the rainwater laws have been in place for over 100 years. If you don't live in a dry state, you can just let your mouth gape open as you consider the fact that someone could legislate against your catching water that falls on your house from the sky. But there you have it. Water is a precious resource and if lots of people in Denver caught the water that fell on their property, the city wouldn't have enough to go around for the everyone else. (Colorado has recently made it legal to catch rainwater in some places.)

Meanwhile, do yourself and everyone else a favor and put a rain barrel or at least a bucket out in the yard. Since rain falls on the good and evil alike, you might as well enjoy this freely-given gift.



Detail of drawing by Dipika Kohli

Strength

by Candace Jordan

During my internship with the Resource Center this summer, working with the Pauli Murray Project called me to grapple with some difficult issues. I arrived at RDU Airport on June 27 from studying abroad in England, spent a few days visiting with family and friends, and then jumped into learning about RCWMS and Pauli Murray's work. Since my internship began, I've edited facilitation guides for a discussion group series; edited a grant proposal requesting support for events that will bring Pauli Murray's centennial celebration to a close; and read about Murray's childhood and family, her social justice work, how her faith influenced her views on democracy, and vice versa.

Among her callings as scholar, poet, feminist, activist, and lawyer, one of Murray's most inspiring traits is her acceptance of her whole self despite the obstacles brought on by discriminatory beliefs about her identity. Her embrace of both her slave roots and slave-owning roots is astounding. Murray writes, in her family saga *Proud Shoes*, "True emancipation lies in the acceptance of the whole past, in deriving strength from all my roots, in facing up to the degradation as well as the dignity of my ancestors." Raised by her maternal grandparents, Murray's grandfather, Robert Fitzgerald, was a mixed race educator and Union veteran of the Civil War. Her grandmother, Cornelia Fitzgerald, was the daughter of a slave woman, Harriet, and Harriet's owner, Sydney Smith. Simultaneously embodying privilege and oppression, Murray journeyed to reject the pain and shame shrouding her black and African ancestors and to question the glorification of her English and Irish roots.

Pauli Murray's own search has inspired me to navigate the difficulty of simultaneously inhabiting spaces of privilege and disadvantage, to explore how each of those might resemble the other in different circumstances, and to imagine how the "emancipation" she speaks of might feel. While studying at Oxford, I was proud of the work I did to get there and grateful that I could seize the opportunity when it arose. I prepared a grueling application, researched during the school year in the religion department, and researched for my thesis during the summer of my junior year. I wanted the academic challenge, but I also dreaded being one of a few brown faces and discovering what racial dynamics were like in England. At both Haverford College and the University of Oxford, I studied philosophy, religion, and theology. While they are some of the oldest disciplines in academia (disciplines close to Pauli Murray's own heart), I find that they are also subjects that students are increasingly uninterested in studying.

While it was a luxury to have the time and space to explore my academic interests independently and one-on-one with a professor, it was also difficult to feel isolated in a community of learners. It was especially hard to be one of only a few people of color in my dorm and my college, and equally hard to feel overwhelmingly the class difference among students and the division it caused. Hearing hip-hop called "ghetto music," being called upon to speak to the "black experience" instead of to my personal experience, and feeling the pressure to travel during the long breaks when money was tight were just a few experiences

(Continued on back.)

Calendar

* = RCWMS events. See more at: www.rcwms.org.

September 8–11, 2011

AWAKEN TO YOUR DREAMS

Trinity Center, near Morehead City, NC

Dreams are very personal guidance from the soul, the True Self, the Divine sent every night to give direction and meaning to our lives. This dream retreat will teach you creative ways to tap into this special guidance. No experience required.

Leader: Nancy Powell, Certified Dream Work Facilitator

Cost: \$350, includes lodging and meals. \$100 deposit.

Contact: Nancy Powell, nancy.powell1@frontier.com, 919-484-8289

*September 10–11, 2011, Saturday, 10 am–5 pm and Sunday, noon–6 pm

FULL BODY PRESENCE: Skills to Energize Your Life

Camp New Hope, Chapel Hill, NC

We all need full access to our inner and outer resources in order to survive and thrive in today's demanding world. This course teaches the process of allowing the deep wisdom of the body to inform and help us navigate in our living, working, healing, and relating in the world. Learning to respect and listen to this body wisdom helps us rediscover our innate spirituality and to develop our emotional intelligence. Discover tools for re-charging your system, calming physical tension, and quieting the mind.

Leader: Joanna Haymore, OTR/L, is an occupational therapist, somatic movement and licensed bodywork therapist. Her compassion, warmth, and ease assist others to feel safe to explore new boundaries and develop life-enhancing skills.

Cost: \$250 (1.20 CEU)

Questions: Joanna Haymore, 919-612-6686,

www.bodymapskills.com/healingfromthecore

Contact: RCWMS, 919-683-1236, rcwmsnc@aol.com

*September 17, 2011, 7:00–9:00 pm

JOANNA MACY LECTURE

United Church of Chapel Hill, Chapel Hill, NC

In her lecture on "The Great Turning," Macy will explore the urgent call to Earth Community, drawing on spiritual traditions and living systems theory to provide fresh vision, courage, and creativity in this momentous time of accelerating planetary crises.

Leader: Joanna Macy, PhD, author and founder of The Work That Reconnects, is known for training activists.

Cost: \$10

Contact: ecozoic@mindspring.com, 919-942-4359

*September 25–October 2, 2011

WEEK OF QUIET & WRITING FOR WOMEN

Trinity Center, near Morehead City, NC

An unstructured week of writing for women

Cost: \$700, includes lodging and meals.

Contact: RCWMS, 919-683-1236, rcwmsnc@aol.com

September 27, 2011, 7:00 pm

READING by Jehanne Gheith

Regulator Bookshop, Durham, NC

Reading from *Gulag Voices: Oral Histories of Soviet Incarceration and Exile*, by Jehanne Gheith and

Katherine R. Jolluck. The powerful voices of Gulag survivors are accessible to English-speaking audiences for the first time through oral histories.

September 30, 2011

PRAYING WITH BODY & SOUL

Pullen Baptist, 1801 Hillsborough St., Raleigh, NC

Come discover the wisdom of the body in movement as prayer through practices and ideas from InterPlay.

Leader: Phil Porter, an InterPlay founder

Cost: \$30 in advance, \$40 at the door.

Contact: interplay.tikkl.com/campaigns/raleigh2011



October 1, 2011, 10:00 am

WOMEN-CHURCH CONVERGENCE

Carondelet Center, St. Paul, MN

A coalition of twenty-six organizations working for the empowerment of women in church and society invites you to join in creating a bold new future. Explore a new global vision of interconnection and sustainability. Look again at our ancestors and the gifts women have given to Earth. Learn strategies for working for justice and finding the energy and support we need.

RSVP: Women-Church, ckellogg2000@yahoo.com

October 13–16, 2011

MINDFULNESS RETREAT with Therese Fitzgerald

The Stone House, Mebane, NC (just west of Chapel Hill)

This mindfulness retreat is for experienced and beginning meditators. Focusing on "Profound Present-Centered Living," it will be conducted mostly in silence.

Leader: Therese Fitzgerald, Buddhist teacher

Cost: \$260–335, sliding scale, less for camping

Contact: Mary Beth Blackwell-Chapman,

maryblackwellchapman@gmail.com

*October 18–November 22, 2011, six Tuesdays, 7–9 pm

SHARING OUR VOICES: An Autumn Writing Circle

RCWMS office, 1202 Watts Street, Durham, NC

Inspired by a variety of prompts, we will write in a safe, confidential and supportive setting in which we can explore our feelings and memories, play with images and the rhythm of writing, and form a community of writers. Through writing together and listening to each other, we will have time to discern our truths and insights and seek to make sense of our lives—past, present, and future. Join us as we come together to listen more deeply to our inner voices and gain new wisdom and perspectives.

Leader: Liz Dowling-Sendor, RCWMS Writer in Residence, is a journalist and Episcopal priest who leads writing and spiritual formation groups at Duke Divinity School and in congregations. She contributed to *Wide Open Spaces: Women Exploring Call through Stories and Reflections*, recently published by Circle Books.

Cost: \$90

Contact: RCWMS, 919-683-1236, rcwmsnc@aol.com

November 18–20, 2011

WRITING AS A SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE: A Weekend Retreat

Blowing Rock Conference Center, Blowing Rock, NC

Leader: Lynne Hinton, author and United Church of Christ minister

Cost: \$200, includes room and meals

Contact: Conference center at www.brccenter.org or

Lynne at lynnehintonnm@aol.com

*January 1–8, 2012

WEEK OF QUIET & WRITING FOR WOMEN

Trinity Center, near Morehead City, NC

An unstructured week of writing for women with quiet days and conversation in the evenings.

Cost: \$750, includes lodging and meals. \$100 deposit will hold your spot.

Contact: RCWMS, 919-683-1236, rcwmsnc@aol.com

January 4–15, 2012

THE WORD MADE FLESH: Biblical Storytelling in the

Land of the Matriarchs, Patriarchs, and Jesus

Israel/Palestine and Jordan

This pilgrimage through Israel/Palestine and Jordan will immerse us physically into the geography, intellectually into the history, and whole-heartedly into the stories of our spiritual ancestors.

Leader: Tracy Radosevic, Biblical Storyteller

Cost: \$2799 from New York

Contact: Tracy Radosevic, Tracy@tracyrad.com or

Alphatours@gmail.com

Repetition

by Meghan Florian

Every morning, before getting dressed, I make myself a cup of strong coffee and check the weather forecast for the day. I ride my bicycle everywhere, so this morning ritual is important for my comfort during the day. Do I need a warm jacket? Rain gear? Extra water because of the record-breaking heat? At least once a week I also need to allow extra time in my morning to perform basic maintenance tasks like checking the air in my tires. The most important ritual begins when I step outside the door and start pedaling.

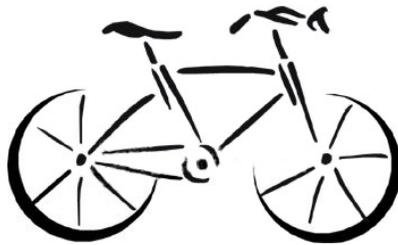
I tend to think of myself as “an ideas person.” Riding around this August, while the temperatures regularly soared near or over 100, I realized that this is not entirely true. Yes, I have an active mind that rarely slows down; I am a scholar through and through. But the morning routine of getting on my bicycle is where my ideas about green transportation and sustainability bear fruit. I believe in this way of being in the world, and so I get up every day, rain or shine, and I do it.

I've talked to environmental artist Bryant Holsenbeck about my cycling practice on several occasions. Bryant is the former RCWMS Artist in Residence and a friend whom I trust to help out when it's dangerously hot or if I get stranded in a thunderstorm. Her contribution to my efforts helps me keep living this way safely.

These conversations about cycling have gotten me thinking about similarities between my cycling habit and Bryant's efforts to stop using disposable plastic. (More on her blog, *The Last Straw*, www.bryantholsenbeck.com/blog/.) It's one thing to talk about the problems caused by single-use plastic, such as the toxic fumes released when it's burned, but altering your entire lifestyle in order to give it up is another matter altogether. The changes Bryant has made have challenged me to pay attention to my own reliance on disposable plastic. I've started making some significant changes to my own buying habits, and I'm trying to change the plastic-reliant rituals of my daily life.

Bryant recently wrote on her blog: “In a way, life is a string of small seemingly unimportant tasks. Ritual. Continuity. Repetition. Continuity again. We must have faith that our small actions count. We must believe in them. And if we are fortunate, we discover ways to find joy in these day-to-day tasks. The small acts of our lives are as important to us as leaves are to a tree. And all of them, whether we are carrying firewood, caring for loved ones or sorting our socks, add up to the tree that is our life. Bit by bit we become who we are. Everything we do counts. All of it.”

Giving up disposable plastic is harder than you might realize at first. It's everywhere, it's a basic habitual part of our daily lives. No one knows this better than Bryant. From fun indulgences like chocolate chips to practical products used regularly such as toothpaste and shampoo, throughout her year without plastic Bryant confronted new challenges at every turn—and often was able to come up with solutions. While I am not going to such great lengths as Bryant has, she's taught me to notice that plastic is everywhere, and in so doing I've made a few changes of my own. The changes are small; often they don't look like much. But then, sometimes getting on my bicycle in the morning doesn't feel like much, either. And, as Bryant rightly notes, these small acts are what make up our lives and, ultimately, can be a source of joy. In the same way, the small ways we use plastic each and every day are slowly filling up our landfills, clogging up our rivers and lakes, choking the environment in which we live and breathe together. The small stuff matters.



Since Bryant began her journey away from disposable plastic a year and a half ago, I have started avoiding beverages in plastic bottles. I've switched to Scott toilet paper, because it's wrapped in paper. (Why does your TP need to be wrapped in plastic, anyway?) I make my own granola instead of buying the excessively packaged stuff at the grocery store. I use the bulk bins (and my own reusable containers) when I shop at Whole Foods. I make my own brown sugar by adding molasses to paper-wrapped white sugar instead of buying the plastic wrapped stuff. I keep a reusable shopping bag in my bike bag in case I make spontaneous stops at the grocery store. I wash out ziplock bags and reuse them, over and over again. I've even started trying to remember to ask for a real glass in restaurants when they try to hand me a plastic to-go cup. This last one provokes weird looks sometimes, unfortunately. I only hope that my request makes it back to their managers, and that demand for green options will gradually change these restaurants' practices.

All of these are simple things, but they take extra thought. They're counter intuitive in a plastic saturated world. In my life as a cyclist, I am not as naïve as people sometimes think; I am well aware that my small efforts are probably not going to make a noticeable difference. Yet, as Bryant reminds us, it's the little things that add up to something bigger. Her efforts have inspired and changed not only my practices, but those of many of her friends. Maybe it's the beginning of a plastic revolution. In the same way that I hope my devotion to bicycling inspires people to drive less, Bryant encourages me to do what I can to lessen my plastic addiction.

That's what we are, you know—addicts. Maybe we can't all quit cold turkey. But we've got to start somewhere. For me, that means single-ply toilet paper.

Meghan Florian is a writer and a scholar, who serves on the RCWMS board of trustees. She writes a blog, which you can read at www.bikingthebullcity.com.

Resources

More about environmental artist Bryant Holsenbeck:
www.bryantholsenbeck.com

Read Bryant's bog:
www.bryantholsenbeck.com/blog/

Order a film about Bryant, *Blackbirds, Bottle Caps & Broken Records: Environmental Artist Bryant Holsenbeck at Work*. The film was made by Margaret Morales and produced by RCWMS. \$15.
www.rcwms.org/publications/cddvd.html

In Durham, NC visit our center for creative reuse, the Scrap Exchange: www.scrapexchange.org

Learn about the enormous plastic gyro swirling around in the middle of the ocean and the problem: “most of what we eat, drink, or use in any way comes packaged in petroleum plastic—a material designed to last forever, yet used for products that we then throw away.”
www.5gyres.org/

Waste Land is an amazing film about an artist's journey to the world's largest garbage dump in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. More at: www.wastelandmovie.com

Strength...

that I felt separate from a group that was so culturally homogenous.

It was even harder to come home and be called snooty when I'd tried to value my experiences both in college and at home, to affirm things that have always felt so separate (public school and private school, traveling around Europe for study abroad and working a retail job to pay college tuition, feeling power and pride in being a woman of color while feeling like those very same things can make me invisible to others). After having the opportunity to travel this past year, I came to terms with the fact that I didn't have to love each place I went just because I was lucky enough to visit. It felt bad to be afforded an opportunity that my friends and family didn't have. But when I said I didn't enjoy Paris, it was hard for my sister to hear, as she feels stuck in a retail job she hates and does not have the time or money to travel. It took us a while to get past that, as I got reacquainted with my adult sister, and as I tried to keep my feet planted securely in both worlds.

Perhaps the freedom that Murray speaks of will come when those worlds don't feel so separate. It is easier to ignore these inner tensions and the resentment, pain, and frustration they cause, something that Murray was sympathetic to, but for which she had little tolerance. Her courage and perseverance are at once inspiring and intimidating. She powerfully illustrates the danger of complacency in the midst of turmoil, the cultural richness we stand to lose when suppressing lesser-known stories, and the great joy that accompanies the embrace of oneself and one's community. Pauli Murray has encouraged me to work toward acceptance of myself and others and "deriving strength from all my roots." The inevitable reward is too great to turn down.

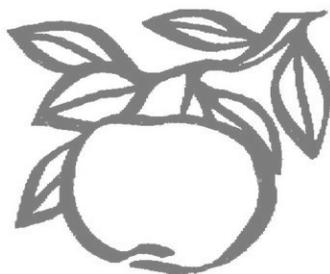
Candace Jordan is a Durham, NC native and a senior at Haverford College. She was an RCWMS intern this summer.

Thank You!

Many thanks to all of you who so generously responded to our appeal to make a contribution to RCWMS in honor of Jeanette's 60th birthday. We had hoped to raise \$2,600 online and that much again from our paper mailing. Much to our surprise and delight, friends like you donated over \$10,300. We are all so thrilled. You made this hot dry summer very fertile.

The RCWMS Board had so much fun celebrating Jeanette's birthday, with tributes and gifts. One friend rewrote the words to the song "People Will Say We're in Love" from the musical *Okahoma!* and sang to her; the title was changed to, "People Will Say You Are Young." Thank you for helping us to celebrate Jeanette.

Courtney Reid-Eaton, RCWMS Board Chair



Contest

ESSAY CONTEST

RCWMS is committed to supporting women as they find their voices and make them heard. Our 2012 Essay Contest is now open for submissions. Women eighteen years of age and older may submit previously unpublished nonfiction essays of 1400 words or less.

Essays this year should focus on grandmothers or elder women in the writer's life. We welcome writing about being a grandmother, having a grandmother, or having been influenced by an elder woman.

Prizes will be \$300 for first place, \$200 for second place, and \$100 for third place. The winning essay will be published in the RCWMS newsletter, *South of the Garden*, in March 2012. Winners will be notified by mail.

The limit is two essays per person. Submit four double-spaced copies of each essay. Previous first place winners and RCWMS Board members are not eligible. No sermons, please. No e-mail submissions. Manuscripts will not be returned. Do not put your name on your essay(s). Attach a cover letter with essay's title, your name, address, phone number, and e-mail. Submissions must be postmarked by January 15, 2012. Mail submissions: RCWMS Essay Contest, 1202 Watts St., Durham, NC 27701.

RCWMS

The Resource Center for Women and Ministry in the South is a thirty-three-year-old nonprofit dedicated to weaving feminism and spirituality into a vision of justice for the world. RCWMS sponsors workshops, conferences, and retreats on women, religion, creativity, spirituality, and social justice. The organization mentors and encourages young women, religious leaders, writers, and activists.

RCWMS appreciates contributions of time, energy, money, and stock. To make a financial contribution or to volunteer, contact RCWMS or visit www.rcwms.org.

We are grateful for support from the Mary Duke Biddle Foundation, the Triangle Community Foundation, The Community Foundation of Western North Carolina, the Foundation for the Carolinas, and The Dallas Foundation.

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