

# South of the Garden

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

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## Summer

by Rebecca Welper

To make a prairie it takes a clover and one bee,  
One clover, and a bee.  
And reverie.  
The reverie alone will do,  
If bees are few.  
—E. Dickinson

Last summer I was a nervous wreck, getting ready for my kiddo to burst out of our family's Covid bubble to attend kindergarten. I was extra anxious because of her selective mutism. I couldn't imagine how she'd get through full-day kindergarten not being able to speak to anyone. How would she make friends? How would she tell her answers in class? What if she needed to go to the bathroom? What could I do to help her? Was my anxiety just making her more nervous?

I recently listened to an interview with Tracy Dennis-Tiwary, author of *Future Tense: Why Anxiety is Good for You, Even Though It Feels Bad*. She told a story about a time that anxiety was really helpful for her—when her baby needed heart surgery for a life-threatening condition. Dennis-Tiwary said that without the focus and drive that anxiety gave her in this situation, she wouldn't have been able to make important decisions and care for her child in this crisis, and instead would have fallen into despair.

Last summer my family's situation was much less dire, of course. But I think I put my mama bear anxiety to good use, setting up extra meetings and play dates before the school year started, working with my spouse to educate the staff, and staying in touch with our child's lovely teachers throughout the year. Long story short, our kiddo had an amazing year. I couldn't be more grateful for her school and proud of our rising first grader. She made it to summer vacation!

My rosy childhood memories of summer flood my mind: the pool, day camp, family reunions, endless hours of reading, cross-country trips, running around with neighbor kids, slip and slides, popsicles...I have to provide all of that for my child. Otherwise it won't be summer! This kid's been through a lot! She needs to chill! Her summer vacation should be perfect. I need to research and schedule all the things. Right now!

Then again, maybe this isn't the helpful kind of anxiety. Time to take a breath.

Reading Emily Dickinson's poem "To Make a Prairie" calms me down instantly. It conjures the perfect summer scene in nature: it's peaceful, simple, beautiful. Then she reminds us we don't have to rely on external factors at all. "Revery alone will do." My daughter—and I—will be perfectly content with a summer of reverie. Anything beyond that is a bonus. We have everything we need.



Richard Scalzo/Shutterstock.com

## Choice

by Jeanette Stokes

My father was arrested in 1972 for performing illegal abortions, in Oklahoma, where he was an ob-gyn and a surgeon. I was in college in Massachusetts at the time, and the news found its way to me through friends of friends. My parents were long divorced by then, and I'm not sure when my mother would have ever gotten around to mentioning that the arrest was reported in the Tulsa newspaper. At the time I was embarrassed. As far as I knew, no one in my family had ever been arrested.

As a young adult, I was uncomfortable with his whole line of work. I didn't like to think about what he did at his office any more than I wanted to think about my parents having sex, ever, with anyone. So I felt squeamish about his work and disconcerted about his arrest.

Later I assumed it was true, that he performed illegal abortions, even before I had corroboration. My mother also assumed it was true and said so whenever I asked. We both knew that he had never opposed abortion.

My father grew up in Savannah, Georgia, went to Duke University for two years, finished at Mercer College, and then went to medical school at the University of Georgia in Augusta. In the early 1940s, he did an internship at Charity Hospital in New Orleans and an obstetrical residency at Parkland Hospital in Dallas. While in Dallas, he published a medical journal article about D&C (dilation and curettage), the procedure used to clean out a woman's uterus in the case of excessive bleeding or other medical issues. It is also a procedure that can be used for abortions.

It seems that even though abortions had been illegal in the US since 1880 (except when necessary to save a woman's life), nearly every ob-gyn in America was trained in a procedure that could be used for an abortion. Of course my father had been trained in this procedure. He had been trained for deliveries, surgeries, and a host of other obstetrical and gynecological situations.

I don't know when my father started performing illegal abortions. I've been told that when he first set up his medical practice in Tulsa in the 1940s, there was an older doctor in town who would perform them. Whenever a patient got into medical distress after the procedure, the older doctor, who didn't have hospital admitting privileges, relied on my father to admit the patient and care for her. At some point the older doctor must have faded out of the picture.

I assume that my father started performing abortions for several reasons. He was concerned about the health of his patients and wanted to be sure they had good medical care. Sending a patient to someone he didn't trust must have seemed like a poor option. I also know

(Continued on back.)

# Calendar

\* = RCWMS events. More info: [rcwms.org/events](http://rcwms.org/events).

\*June 5, 2022, Sunday, 1:00–4:00 pm EDT  
FLASH OF SILVER: Writing Workshop with Laurel Ferejohn (via Zoom) SOLD OUT

\*June 9, 2022, Thursday, 12:00–1:15 pm EDT  
MINDFULNESS FOR HEALING FROM STRESS AND BURNOUT with Jen Johnson (via Zoom)  
Practicing mindfulness can promote mind-body healing from stress, anxiety, and burnout. Learn how to handle difficult times with greater ease and cultivate inner calm, compassion, and resilience. We welcome beginning and advanced meditators alike to join us for a session of guided meditation for healing.  
Leader: Jen Johnson is a mindfulness teacher, coach, and therapist who teaches meditation.  
Cost: \$30  
Register: [rcwms.org/events/](http://rcwms.org/events/)

\*June 9 & 10, 2022, Thurs. & Friday, 1:00–3:30 pm EDT  
A SOUNDER SLEEP SYSTEM® WORKSHOP with Betty Wolfe (via Zoom)  
Discover a sensible, even enjoyable, plan for regular, nourishing, satisfying sleep (without drugs). Gain specific skills to use to go to sleep faster, sleep more deeply, and easily return to sleep if you waken.  
Cost: \$80-95  
Leader: Betty Wolfe, MDiv, BCB, GCFPcm is an authorized Sounder Sleep System® teacher.  
Contact: [bettyswolfe@lessonswithease.com](mailto:bettyswolfe@lessonswithease.com), 919-794-4139.

\*June 10, 2022, Friday, 10:00–11:30 am EDT  
HISTORIC STAGVILLE EMANCIPATION TOUR  
Historic Stagville, 5828 Old Oxford Hwy, Durham, NC  
This guided tour will highlight how enslaved people claimed their freedom at Stagville in 1865. This special tour will focus on Emancipation as part of the site's commemoration of Juneteenth. Hear stories of how formerly enslaved families celebrated, defended themselves, and organized, while the plantation owners strategized to hold on to their power and wealth. Tour will be mostly outdoors, with two short stops at historic buildings.  
Route includes uneven ground.  
Cost: \$10/person. Donations to Stagville are welcome.  
Register: [rcwms.org/events/](http://rcwms.org/events/)

\*June 14, 2022, Tues., 11:30 am–1:30 pm EDT (via Zoom)  
ART OF CONSCIOUS AGING: A Group for Women  
Meets monthly on the 2nd Tuesday.  
Contact: [info@rcwms.org](mailto:info@rcwms.org)

\*June 15, 2022, (3rd Wednesdays), 7:00–8:30 pm EDT  
THE MINISTRY OF BLACK WOMEN'S SELF-CARE:  
A Series with Kim Gaubault (via Zoom)  
Allowing our bodies, minds, and spirits to break down in the course of doing our work puts ourselves and our work at risk. This series offers practical tools for everyday self-care to Black women-identified people in all forms of ministry, in church and community.  
Leader: Kimberly Gaubault (McCrae)  
Cost: \$10–\$40  
Register: [www.rcwms.org/events](http://www.rcwms.org/events)

June 18, 2022, Saturday, 10:00 am–2:00 pm EDT  
PAULI MURRAY CENTER: 10-Year Anniversary  
906 Carroll Street, Durham, NC  
Activities include dancing, art making, "meeting" the Fitzgerald ancestors, a preview of Education & Welcome Center design, and a special unveiling of a new gift to the Center: one of Pauli Murray's personal typewriters!  
Contact: [executivedirector@paulimurraycenter.org](mailto:executivedirector@paulimurraycenter.org)



\*JULY 9, 2022, 9:30 am–4:30 pm EDT  
ART AND MUSIC BY THE HAW  
Go with the flow! Bring your favorite art supplies to capture the beauty of the Haw River. We will learn from one another; some people may be willing to share art supplies. Alison Weiner will be our host and will also provide some music. Summer day with art, friends, and music!  
Cost: \$100 donation to RCWMS Sue Sneddon Art Fund  
Register: [rcwms.org/events/](http://rcwms.org/events/)

July 21–24, 2022 or August 25–28, 2022  
SUMMER INTERPLAY UNTENSIVES (in person)  
Trinity Center, near Morehead City, NC  
We need more PLAY these days! Come on down to the ocean for time to relax, hang out and enjoy nature.  
Leaders: Ginny Going and Tom Henderson  
Cost: \$315 double room & meals, \$375 single  
Contact: [ginny.going@gmail.com](mailto:ginny.going@gmail.com)

August 10–14, 2022, Wednesday–Sunday  
OUR ESSENTIAL THREAD: A Mindfulness Retreat with Therese Fitzgerald  
Well Being Retreat Center, Tazewell, TN  
Dwell in deep awareness of what connects us with our essential "thread," as poet William Stafford describes our life's purpose or calling. Program will include sitting and walking meditation, mindful meals, Dharma discussion, mindful movement, and personal interviews with the teacher. For beginners & experienced meditators.  
Leader: Therese Fitzgerald, a Dharma teacher ordained by Thich Nhat Hanh and hospice chaplain  
Cost: \$335–\$650, depending on accommodations  
Info: [www.wellbeingretreatcenter.org/therese-fitzgerald](http://www.wellbeingretreatcenter.org/therese-fitzgerald)

July 30, 2022, Saturday, 9:00 am–4:00 pm EDT  
MID-SUMMER MIX: Southbound  
The Stable, Durham, NC  
This retreat takes us through magnolias, mockingbirds, and moon pies as we affirm that the South is more than a location on the map but most certainly a way of life. Linger over iced tea and art projects inspired by Southern sayings, writers, and artists. No art or writing experience is required. Air conditioning and fans included! Claudia Fulshaw is a graphic designer, artist, long-time wanderer and leader of retreats  
Cost: \$150 includes lunch, snacks, all materials  
Contact: [www.artwanders.com](http://www.artwanders.com)

August 29–September 2, 2022, Monday–Friday  
TABLE ROCK WRITERS & SOLATIDO SONGWRITERS  
Wildacres Retreat Center, Little Switzerland, NC  
Intensive, small-group learning experience in a supportive and noncompetitive environment.  
Info: [www.tablerockwriters.com/](http://www.tablerockwriters.com/)  
Cost: \$750 for a single. \$200 deposit to hold your spot.

## ONGOING

MARINE DEBRIS IS OURS: Installation by Bryant Holsenbeck  
Nicholas School of the Environment, Duke, Durham, NC  
Open for viewing Monday–Friday, 8 am–6 pm EDT

Through June 25, 2022  
H2O: Recycled River & Water Installation  
GreenHill Center for NC Art, Greensboro, NC  
A waterfall installation by Bryant Holsenbeck and other exhibits aims to raise awareness and change behaviors in support of our environment.  
Artist: Bryant Holsenbeck is an internationally known environmental artist in Durham, NC.

(Continued on next page.)

# Love Song

by Tsharre Sanders

At the risk of oversimplifying her story, Sara Bareilles is a singer/songwriter who wrote this song as a \*middle finger\* to anyone who wanted her to sell out. After reading the longer version of the story about the meaning of the song, I get the idea that the song is an anthem of self-protection and self-assuredness in response to a woman in the music industry who suggested she needed to do a certain thing (write a love song) to be successful. The most recent time I listened to the song, I noticed just how sure she was of herself and her ability to tell this group of experienced people what she was (well, wasn't) willing to do. I consider her a successful artist and one of her songs, "Brave," was on my 2020 Daily playlist that I tried to listen to as I started my days that year. She has sold over a million records and has been nominated for eight Grammys, winning one. I'd say she proved herself right and attained success her way.

The song randomly came to mind recently, and I listened and sang along as I always do, but this time the lyrics hit me in a different way. The song starts off with Sara stating that she's drowning and being told to "breathe easy for a while" but that she and those guiding her know that's impossible. In retrospect, that's how I felt about my relationship with the church that raised me. We all knew that ridding oneself of same-sex attraction was a difficult, if not impossible task. It took me a little longer to get to that conclusion, but they believed it wholeheartedly. This was the way to live for God and no matter how impossible it was, it needed to be done.

I wish I had Sara's confidence in herself when this self-discovery initially started. I didn't. I wrote a metaphorical love song. I prayed the gay away because I thought it was necessary to rid myself of my gayness for my community (and God) to love me. While the psychological and mental impact of self-loathing for years is present, I feel more like Sara now than I did when the song was released. I'm no longer writing a love song just because that's what the church, my old church, wants me to do. I even wrote to them to let them know about my newfound confidence, and my newfound assurance of God's love for me and creating me the way I am.

At this point in my spiritual and mental growth and development, I know my home church, that still adamantly adheres to seeing my queerness as sinful and at odds with God, means well, but they made getting to the place where I do not see myself as at odds with my Creator very hard. I made it to a place where I see myself in alignment with the Divine though, and just like Sara, I won't, well will no longer, write love songs to make it and have their approval. They told me to make it as a Christian I had to hate my Creator's creation. I should ask God to change who I am and how I relate to others in order to be pleasing to God. I'm convinced that the only thing that needed changing was my mind. I'm grateful for the transformation. I'm grateful to be able to say that even if you leave/dump me (which you have), I'm confident enough in who I am and whose I am that it's okay. I found new communities of faith to belong to, I found people who believe in the God I was introduced to in your care and also love me as God's queer child.

(Continued next column.)



Rev. Dr. Pauli Murray in Service  
a UNC School of Government mural  
created by Colin Quashie

My story doesn't align perfectly with the story Sara told in "Love Song." The song ended up being a hit. Her label loved it, it's one of her most popular songs, and it became the single she needed. Even in the interview, she says she thought she would lose the support of some people close to her (a band she was touring with and her A&R guy), but she didn't. In my mind, I have lost the support of the people for whom I was writing the love song. It hurt to do what they asked and still not get the success they promised. I realized there was something bigger than them, something bigger than me that would, and is, bringing me my success now that I've said no more appeasing them. For that, I'm grateful. Who have you been writing love songs for? When will you believe in your worth, brilliance, intellect, etc. enough to let that be enough? Will you trust the Source (within and outside of you) will provide you with a path to the success you need / seek?

Tsharre Sanders (sharre/she) is an Anita McLeod intern at RCWMS and a student at Columbia Presbyterian Theological Seminary in Atlanta.

## Calendar...

Tuesdays, weekly, 11:30 am–12:30 pm EDT  
DEMOCRACY OUT LOUD: Weekly Protest Rally  
(Formerly Tuesday with Tillis)  
Nonviolent community of resistance meets via Zoom.  
Register: Email name to jmwheel52@gmail.com.

Wednesdays, weekly, 5:30–6:30 & 7:00–8:00 pm EDT  
MUSIC: takeOut jazz with mahaloJazz!  
Join Alison Weiner for jazz every Tuesday evening.  
Info: The Eddy, 336-535-2010.

3rd Thursday, monthly, 7:00 pm EDT  
TARA PRACTICE with Rachael Wooten (via Zoom)  
Leader: Rachael Wooten, PhD, Jungian analyst, writer, Tibetan Buddhist dharma teacher, and author of *Tara: The Liberating Power of the Female Buddha*.  
Cost: Free. Info: [www.bhumisparsa.org/events/](http://www.bhumisparsa.org/events/)

FINDING FREEDOM: White Women\* Taking on Our Own White Supremacy (via Zoom)  
This 5-part online workshop aims to deepen our understanding of how we as white women are complicit with white supremacy. \*All women, gender-nonconforming, trans, mixed-race and white-passing people of color welcome.  
Cost: \$50–300.  
Register: [wearefindingfreedom.org](http://wearefindingfreedom.org)

SOLO WANDERINGS! Creative Retreats  
The Stable, private retreat in Durham, NC  
Day or overnight options  
Self-guided offerings for one to four people.  
Leader: Claudia Fulshaw, artist & creative retreat leader.  
Cost: \$100 solo /\$65 additional person, plus overnight  
Contact: [artwanders.com](http://artwanders.com), [claudia@artwanders.com](mailto:claudia@artwanders.com)

\*RCWMS Weeks of QUIET & WRITING  
Led by Jeanette Stokes: September 18–25, 2022, January 2–9, 2023, May 14–21, 2023  
Led by Carol Henderson: May 8–14, 2023  
Info: contact Jeanette at [info@rcwms.org](mailto:info@rcwms.org).

# Choice...

that my dad was always looking for extra ways to make money. Doing abortions on the side would have generated some cash. At any rate, by the early 1970s he was part of an "underground" network in Tulsa that included volunteers and a college chaplain who helped women get from Tulsa to my dad's secluded medical facility in a house about an hour west of town. That's where he was arrested.

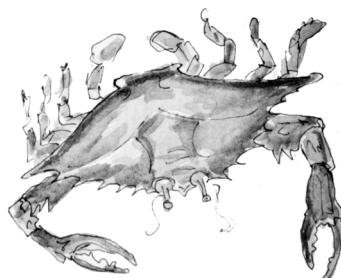
My father's case never went to trial, apparently because Roe v. Wade was working its way through the court system. Why try someone for something that could soon be declared legal? After the Roe v. Wade decision in January 1973, a Tulsa newspaper article mentioned his willingness to waive the \$200 fee for women who could not pay and quoted him saying that abortion "is no more murder than a woman using a diaphragm."

After college, I became involved in the women's movement and began to feel proud of my dad and the part he played in providing safe abortions before they were legal in Oklahoma. I was active in NARAL-NC (the National Abortion Rights Action League in North Carolina) and lobbied my local US legislator to change his position on funding for abortions.

Now, with the Supreme Court on the brink of overturning Roe v. Wade, I'm thinking about my father's courageous actions more frequently. He was a complicated man with more than his share of vices, but he was a trailblazer in the struggle for reproductive choice. His pro-choice stance and his risky actions provided safe medical care to countless women.

I do not want to go back to the days when people had to sneak around to get abortions, a safe ones or a not-so-safe ones. To keep abortion safe and legal, we can elect better politicians. We are in the current mess because anti-choice people got elected to state and national offices, appointed anti-choice Supreme court justices, and passed restrictive state laws. It is absolutely imperative that we vote, in this and every election. If we don't vote, someone else will make decisions we may not like about our lives and our bodies.

NOTE: A longer version of this article will appear in Jeanette's forthcoming memoir *Making the Road as We Go*, to be published this fall by RCWMS Press.



Drawing by Sue Sneddon

# Essay Contest

RCWMS is committed to supporting women as they find their voices and make them heard. In addition to writing classes, workshops, and retreats, we run an annual essay contest. Women 18 years of age and older may submit previously unpublished nonfiction essays of 1,200 words or less.

**THEME:** Essays should focus on the theme of bodily autonomy. Writers could focus on their own experience or on someone who spoke out for their personal rights or bodily integrity.

**DETAILS:** Women 18 years of age or older may submit up to 2 nonfiction essays, 1,200 words or less. Submit online only: [rcwms.submittable.com/submit](http://rcwms.submittable.com/submit). Previous first-place winners and current RCWMS Board members not eligible. No sermons, please. Do not put your name on your essay(s). Fill out the online cover letter form with the essay's title, your name, address, phone, and email. Submissions open June 15 and close July 31, 2022.

**PRIZES:** \$300 for first place, \$200 second, and \$100 third. The winning essay will be published in the RCWMS newsletter, *South of the Garden*, in September or December 2022. Winners will be notified by email.



RCWMS is an almost forty-five-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 contribute, contact RCWMS or visit [www.rcwms.org](http://www.rcwms.org). We are especially grateful for support from E. Rhodes & Leona B. Carpenter Foundation, Mike McLeod, Emerald Isle Realty, Inavale Foundation, and the Triangle Community Foundation.

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