

# South of the Garden

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

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March 2023

## Spring

by Jeanette Stokes

I had the pleasure of attending a Japanese tea gathering on February 3 in honor of the Japanese New Year and the beginning of Spring. Many cultures in the Northern hemisphere honor the returning light in early February, halfway between the winter solstice and the spring equinox, with festivals or traditions such as Groundhog's Day, Brigid's Day, and Chinese New Year. In Japan the early February festival is *Setsubun* ("seasonal division") and includes practices that banish evil spirits and welcome good fortune.

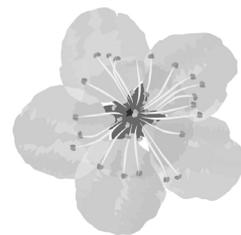
I've been interested in Japanese culture and traditions since visiting Japan as a child. More recently, I have been an eager participant in the tea gatherings at Duke Gardens, led by Chizuko Sueyoshi and the Japanese Tea Practitioners of Durham. The tea group studies and shares the Way of Tea as practiced by the 500-year-old Urasenke branch of the tea tradition.

While walking through the gardens to the teahouse on that cold February morning, I enjoyed seeing the blooming plum trees (*prunus mume*), their bright pink blossoms glowing in the wintery landscape. They startle me each year by blooming in late winter, but Grace, my landscape designer office mate, assures me that they are indeed winter blooming trees. Once inside the warm teahouse, I noticed that the incense container, tea bowls, and napkins were decorated with rabbits and plum blossoms, images that evoke spring.

I love watching the slow, almost choreographed process of making a bowl of tea. Seated on the floor beside me, the host put a scoop of bright green powdered tea (matcha) into a cup, dipped hot water from a heavy pot, and slowly poured the water over the tea. She then whipped the tea and water with a small bamboo whisk until it foamed. In turn, each of the six guests each was served a bowl of frothy green tea and a sweet. In contrast to what I was taught as a child, we were told to slurp the last sip of tea, to let the host know we enjoyed it.

Afterward, the organizers handed out small bags of roasted soy beans and told us that we could banish evil spirits by throwing beans at "the devil." So, while a volunteer stood in the teahouse garden, dressed in kimono and holding up a red devil mask, we tossed our beans toward her and yelled, "Devils, out!" Meanwhile, another volunteer wearing a happier mask stood nearby representing good fortune, and we welcomed her in.

I like the idea of throwing beans at the devil, representing evil in the world, and welcoming good fortune for the new year. I think it helps us let go of old habits, grudges, or shame and welcome in new life while honoring the turning of the season. May this year be one in which more of us work for justice and peace.



Setsubun masks and flower takamaru/Shutterstock.com

## Books/Films

by Jeanette Stokes

I am part of a small group that is participating in the 1619 Project's read-along program, which involves reading six of the chapters from *The 1619 Project* book and watching the Hulu series by the same name and other videos available at [www.1619books.com](http://www.1619books.com). (Hulu is free for a month, just remember to cancel if you don't want to pay.)

Recently we discussed the first chapter in the series, "Democracy." In it, 1619's creator, Nikole Hannah-Jones, offers one of the most chilling, succinct, and moving accounts of the history of slavery and racism I have read. She lays out the argument that, while our white Founding Fathers wrote beautifully moving words about freedom and democracy, they envisioned that those values applied only to white property-owning adult males. In addition, a primary goal of the founders and drafters of our nation's guiding documents was the protection of the rights of enslavers. Hannah-Jones argues that we owe whatever democracy we have in this country to the African Americans who have been fighting for four hundred years to be included in the rights and freedoms described in those founding documents. Their efforts to be included have made space not only for themselves, but for other people of color, working class people, women, queer people, and more. I highly recommend it. Get yourself a copy of the book and go to the website to read along: [www.1619books.com](http://www.1619books.com).

Also, if you have not watched *My Name Is Pauli Murray*, available on Netflix, do yourself a favor and watch it. The film divides Murray's life into chapters, giving viewers a taste of Murray's work and impact on US history, law, and religion. Murray, a Durham native, was a labor organizer, lawyer, preacher, poet, writer, and Episcopal priest. Due to the efforts of this remarkable person, we have the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC). In the 1940s, Murray was hired by the Women's Division of The Methodist Church to write a pamphlet on racist laws in the South. That book, *State Laws on Race and Color*, which is the size of a NYC phonebook, served as "the bible" for civil rights lawyers at the NAACP and elsewhere. Being associated with the Pauli Murray Project and the Pauli Murray Center for the last twenty years has been one of the great honors and pleasures of my life. Read about that center: [www.paulimurraycenter.com](http://www.paulimurraycenter.com).

Another good one: in 1974, eleven Episcopal women were ordained in Philadelphia. That event is commemorated in *The Philadelphia Eleven*, a new feature documentary film (currently in postproduction). According to director Margo Guernsey, "This is a story...of a call that is denied, and the determination it takes to overcome the barriers and live out the call with integrity. Each of us has a vocation. Like the women in this story, for many of us, society's expectations and institutions stand in the way." For more go to [www.philadelphiaelevenfilm.com](http://www.philadelphiaelevenfilm.com).

# Calendar

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

\*March 4, 2023, Saturday, 9:00 am–12:00 pm EST  
SELF-CARE AND THE NINE ENNEAGRAM TYPES:  
with Sandra Smith (via Zoom)  
Self-care seems to get bad publicity, especially for women. Yet, self-care is an act of kindness toward ourselves, an honoring of ourselves, a claiming of our worth. What are your barriers to caring for yourself? Each Enneagram type has particular inner narratives that resist attending to self. We'll explore our own particular challenges to self-care. Participants will need a working knowledge of their Enneagram type to receive the most from this workshop.  
Leader: Sandra Smith, MDiv, is an accredited enneagram professional & a Certified Narrative Enneagram teacher.  
Cost: \$35-65.  
Register: [www.rcwms.org/events](http://www.rcwms.org/events)

\*March 15, 2023, 7:00–8:30 pm EDT (3rd Wednesdays)  
THE MINISTRY OF BLACK WOMEN'S SELF-CARE:  
A Series with Kim McCrae (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)

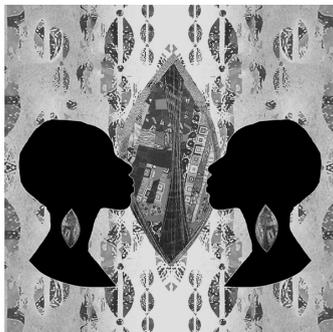
March 16, 2023, 7:00 pm EDT (3rd Thursdays)  
TARA PRACTICE: Practicing the Sadhanas of the Twenty-One Taras with Rachael Wooten (via Zoom)  
Drawing from her 2020 book, *Tara: The Liberating Power of the Female Buddha*, Wooten will offer teachings about Tara and lead a guided meditation.  
Leader: Rachael Wooten, PhD, Jungian analyst, writer, Tibetan Buddhist dharma teacher, and author of *Tara: The Liberating Power of the Female Buddha*.  
More on Rachael: [rachaelwootenauthor.com](http://rachaelwootenauthor.com)  
Cost: Free. More: [www.bhumisparsha.org/events/](http://www.bhumisparsha.org/events/)

March 18, 2023, Saturday, 11:00 am EDT  
FERRINGTON BARN, Ferrington Village, Pittsboro, NC  
INDIGO FIELD: Book Launch with Marjorie Hudson  
Join Marjorie Hudson for the launch of her new novel, *Indigo Field*. In this eagerly-anticipated novel of moral reckoning, the unjust outcome of a murder trial and the chance accident that follows result in a feud that raises the spirits of the dead, forcing enemies to become allies in order to survive.  
Book trailer & orders: [www.marjoriehudson.com](http://www.marjoriehudson.com)  
Cost: Free. All are welcome.

April 22, 2023, Saturday, 9:00 am–1:00 pm EDT  
PAULI MURRAY PILGRIMAGE: Walk & Reflect  
Walk through various sites in Durham and reflect on their importance to the Rev. Dr. Pauli Murray, using meditations, prayers, conversations, and a guidebook.  
More info coming: [www.paulimurraycenter.com](http://www.paulimurraycenter.com)

\*May 4, 2023, Thursday, 7:00 pm EDT (via Zoom)  
READING: *Someone Other Than a Mother* by Erin S. Lane  
Both memoir and manifesto, this book sets aside the shaming social scripts that are bad for moms and non-moms alike and invites readers to write a truer, kinder story about who we are when we are not who the world expects. (BONUS: RCWMS's own Jeanette Stokes is featured in the book!)  
Cost: Free. Registration is required.  
Register: [www.rcwms.org/events](http://www.rcwms.org/events)

(Continued next column.)



## Kindred Spirits

Illustration by Candace Thomas

\*June 15–17, 2023  
KINDRED SPIRITS: A Convergence of African American Quilters  
THE FRUIT, 305 S. Dillard St, Durham, NC  
Join us for a time of sisterhood, exploration and fun during Juneteenth weekend. Featuring a variety of workshops from some of the top quilting professionals in the country and a pop-up quilt show, this event is an opportunity to explore African American quilting, network and celebrate the legacy of Juneteenth.  
Leader: Kimberley Pierce Cartwright is an artist, painter and quilter. She is also the News and Public Affairs Director at NCCU.  
Contact: RCWMS, [info@rcwms.org](mailto:info@rcwms.org).

\*October 27–28, 2023, Thursday–Friday  
HOMEGROWN: NC Women's Preaching Festival  
Trinity Ave. Presbyterian Church, Durham, NC  
As we highlight excellent preaching, hone our homiletic skills, and build community, we will excavate our life stories, those of the Bible, and those of the world in which we live. There will be workshops, meals, sermons, and worship. We plan to meet in person with masks.  
Cost: TBA  
Register: [www.rcwms.org/events](http://www.rcwms.org/events)

\*RCWMS Weeks of QUIET & WRITING  
Weeks led by Jeanette Stokes: May 14–21, 2023, September 17–24, 2023, January 2–9, 2024  
Week led by Carol Henderson: May 8–14, 2023  
Info: contact Jeanette at [info@rcwms.org](mailto:info@rcwms.org)

### ONGOING

DEMOCRACY OUT LOUD: Weekly Protest Rally (Formerly Tuesdays with Tillis)  
Tuesdays, weekly, 11:30 am–12:30 pm EDT (via Zoom)  
Nonviolent community of resistance began its weekly street protests in January 2017 and continues on Zoom for education, support, and action. Weekly newsletter also available. All are welcome.  
To register, email name to [jmwheele52@gmail.com](mailto:jmwheele52@gmail.com).

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

FINDING FREEDOM: White Women\* Taking on Our Own White Supremacy (via Zoom)  
Dates available for 2023.  
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.  
Info and dates: [www.wearefindingfreedom.org](http://www.wearefindingfreedom.org)

SOLO WANDERINGS & SOCIAL WANDERINGS!  
Creative Retreats @The Stable, a retreat, Durham, NC  
Day or overnight options  
Sign up for a self-guided solo offering for one person, or bring a friend or five and enjoy a self-guided group art retreat. Abundant materials, detailed instructions, beverages and snacks included. Ages 12 and up.  
Leader: Claudia Fulshaw, artist & creative retreat leader.  
Cost: \$115 solo/\$75 extra person; overnight additional  
Contact: [artwanders.com](http://artwanders.com), [claudia@artwanders.com](mailto:claudia@artwanders.com)

# Art Supplies

by Jeanette Stokes

My elementary school in Tulsa, Oklahoma, devised a schedule that allowed the fourth, fifth, and sixth graders to spend half of each school day in “special classes” and the other half in homeroom with traditional subjects. We rotated among these specials: gym, library, music, speech, art, and science.

This story is about art class and the day the teacher, Mrs. Carruthers, yelled at us for wasting materials.

Each class in our school had around thirty students. The art room was furnished with long low tables, each with three or four wooden movable ladderback chairs. I loved that room. It promised so much more fun than the science room across the hall, where we had to do things like cut up worms. That was yucky, but the art room usually made me happy. Jars of tempera paint and brushes sat on a table at one end of the room. There were pencils for drawing, stacks of plain paper for painting, colored paper to cut up, and looms for weaving. Metal table looms lined one side of the room, perching on tables under the windows. Loom after loom, purchased, as I recall, by the PTA. One large wooden floor loom stood solemnly at the end of the line.

During sixth grade, each student was allowed to weave a throw rug on the large loom. I was excited when it was my turn and made a simple striped pattern, maybe in blue and beige or brown. Eventually, I gave that rug to my high school boyfriend. I broke up with him at the beginning of our sophomore year of college after he transferred from Johns Hopkins to Amherst to be closer to me. I didn't want him closer! When he said my breaking up with him was so upsetting that he was going to jump out of his dorm room window, I said, “Jump.” He only lived on the second floor. It wouldn't have injured him that much. Years later, he took up jumping out of airplanes and his email address was jumpdoctor@something.com.

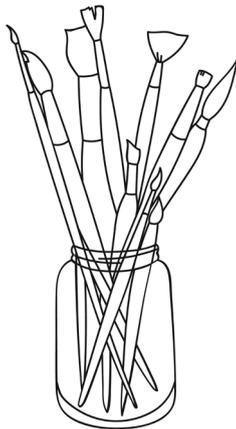
But back to the day the art teacher got upset. I was happily working away, painting or drawing on BIG sheets of paper. All of a sudden, Mrs. Carruthers started grabbing paper out of the oversized trash can near the door, announcing the name on each paper. (She always made us write our names on our papers before doing anything else.) She seemed disgusted and scolded us, saying something like, “You people are wasting all this paper.”

I hate being yelled at and felt humiliated, even though I had not been personally accused. I knew I was guilty, because I, too, had thrown a piece of paper away. Mrs. Carruthers just hadn't dug deep enough to find it.

At that point, most human beings might have kept their mouths shut, but not me. I marched my earnest self to the teacher's desk and turned myself in. I admitted that I, too, had thrown a piece of paper in the can and waited for the guillotine to fall. Mrs. Carruthers, having regained her composure, looked at me somewhat sympathetically, and said, “Thank you for telling me. Don't do it again.”

I know art supplies are expensive, but that day, Mrs. Carruthers taught me a counterproductive lesson: Not to use up the art supplies. But that is what they are for: to be USED. Being fussed at for using too much paper

(Continued next column.)



Panda Vector/Shutterstock.com

helped to make me more of the kind of kid I already was—too cautious and too chintzy. I already was the one who wanted to keep the colors inside the lines, the one who would not splash around and make a mess.

It took decades to overcome this lesson. Fortunately, a growing commitment to making art blossomed in me when I was about forty. I read Julia Cameron's *The Artist's Way*, started writing morning pages, and fell in love with watercolors. Eventually I signed up for a creativity class with Sue Anderson, a local potter who was good at reminding women that it can be fun to make things.

One day in Sue's class, maybe the day we were making collages, she advised, “Take too much! Please, take too much.” She was serious. I remember thinking, “Really? Take too much? Isn't that against the rules?” She encouraged us to use up supplies, make a mess, and experiment. What a revelation! Since then, I have tried to add taking too much and using up art supplies as part of my new religion. And that's why when I teach collage to groups of people, like I did on New Year's Eve, I call it grab art and love telling everyone to TAKE WAY TOO MUCH!!

From time to time, I still hear a small voice in my head saying, “I'm trying to do everything right.” In spite of my efforts in that direction, sometimes I get fussed at anyway. It happened with my first husband, whose temper was a big a problem for me.

In that small voice, I also hear my mother's very last words on this earth: “I'm trying to do everything right.” Bless her heart. She tried to do everything right her whole life. I think originally she was trying to please her exacting father. And then, even though she was the best wife and mother she knew how to be, my dad left her anyway. Following in her footsteps, I tried to be good, and they killed the president anyway. My father left, my first husband left, and, more recently, my artist friend Sue Sneddon died.

Bad things happen anyway. Even when we try to do everything right. So perhaps it's better to break a few rules and use up a little too much time, space, or art supplies.



## Quilts

We are so excited to announce KINDRED SPIRITS: A Convergence of African American Quilters, to be held at The Fruit in Durham, June 15–17, 2023.

Join us for a time of sisterhood, exploration, and fun during Juneteenth weekend. Featuring a variety of workshops from some of the top quilting professionals in the country and a pop-up quilt show, this event is an opportunity to explore African American quilting, network and celebrate the legacy of Juneteenth.

The convergence is the brainchild of Kimberley Pierce Cartwright, the current artist in residence at RCWMS. Kimberley Pierce Cartwright is an artist, painter, and quilter. In 2022, her work was exhibited at the Nasher Museum at Duke University and she was featured in the issue of *Quiltfolk* magazine that focused on North Carolina. She is the News and Public Affairs Director at WNCU, the jazz station at NC Central University.

# Off-Kilter

by Marcy Litle

## How to Get On-Kilter

The following emerged during a recent writing group session. The prompt was: "What do you do when you feel off-kilter?" Thanks to Jeanette Stokes and Rachael Wooten for the prompt.

Stop. Stop spinning your wheels. Take a few deep breaths. Let go of assumptions about how things are supposed to be, how you are supposed to be. More breaths. Once, recently, it meant lying in bed reading a mystery for a couple of hours instead of starting the morning routine that I had explicitly designed to keep me on kilter. Be ready for surprises. Pay attention. Breathe instead of judge.

Most days that daily routine does a pretty good job. But the minute it becomes rote, watch out. It helps to have a book or a few to engage the imagination, to spark curiosity. What else? Remember to move, sometimes a challenge, especially when it's hot. Breathe. You probably could just repeat that word over and over. And then remember to do it. Turns out there is not that much more to say. I could record that routine, the one that serves me well much of the time.

But, first, don't say yes, when you really mean no. And vice versa. Make sure you have chances to really engage with other humans. Sometimes this is the most important thing, meaning humans with whom you can relax into yourself. And of course there's beauty, like looking at mountains and sunsets and stars. But really, on a day-to-day basis it's that morning routine, and then noticing when you have to break it in order to find it again. This happens over and over, and over and over I tend to forget until the kilter is pretty far off.

But when I remember that you don't have to be good all the time, when I find myself again, the relief is delicious.

Here's a rough sketch of that morning routine:  
1. Meditate for about twenty minutes (sometimes less), mostly focused on the breath. 2. Read a little something that encourages pondering. I like a few pages from several different things. Right now it's Susan Griffin, *Out of Silence, Sound. Out of Nothing, Something*; Pádraig Ó Tuama, *Poetry Unbound*; and Daniel Goleman and Tsoknyi Rinpoche, *Why We Meditate*. 3. Write a bit in my journal. This works pretty well for me, but I imagine we each need to find our own path.



Rizka Arishandy / Shutterstock.com

# Books/Films...

If *The Da Vinci Code's* main character, Robert Langdon, was modeled on a particular person, it would be John Boswell. Boswell, a Yale professor by age thirty, read and translated fourteen ancient and modern languages. He was granted full access to the highly classified and restricted Vatican archives from which he researched four books, one of which (*Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality*) won the 1980 American Book Award for History, making him a world renowned expert in Medieval History and Linguistics. John Boswell was also openly gay without apology in an era that was neither tolerant nor accepting.

A new documentary film available on Amazon Prime, *Not a Tame Lion*, offers first-hand accounts from Boswell's closest friends, students, colleagues, and family members about his life, his works, and his final days during which he feverishly worked to complete *Same-Sex Unions in Premodern Europe*, a book that changed the trajectory of the marriage equality debate, all while privately battling the debilitating effects of AIDS which led to his death on December 24, 1994, at the age of forty-seven.



RCWMS is a 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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