

## How to be a Soil Keeper: Reparative Justice and Whole Systems Care

Kiley Arroyo

Cultural Strategies Council, United States



**Figure 1. Photograph by Jim Richardson. 2018. Deep perennial roots strengthen soil near Salina, Kansas.**

Have you ever sat in a forest and marveled at the beauty of its self-sufficiency? No one waters the trees or fertilizes a meadow, yet abundance is everywhere. Forests operate in harmony with the laws of nature, which enable diverse elements to find unity and shared purpose. Unlike the subjective truths that guide human behavior, these are the universal principles or simple rules that all living systems use to maintain fertile conditions in which life can flourish.<sup>i</sup>

Living systems are superb organizers that build and distribute power across flexible networks, united by a shared purpose—to ensure all life thrives. These diverse communities adapt dynamically in dialogue with place and time. Living systems sustain their vitality by working in solidarity across difference, enabling them to continually discover novel ways to circulate power, wealth, and wellbeing. Fertile soil demonstrates these characteristics exquisitely. Consequently, the principles and patterns found in healthy soil offer practical lessons in reparative justice and whole systems care and, as such, an elegant blueprint for a regenerative society.

One teaspoon of healthy soil contains more living organisms than there are people in the world. This dynamic society below our feet is the original mutual aid network and circular economy, woven together by long strands of hyphae, or subterranean fungi. Soil's power and regenerative capacity emerge from this vast web of interdependent relationships that collectively determine how best to sustain the whole's vitality.<sup>ii</sup> Diverse microorganisms are empowered to participate in the robust exchange of insights and capabilities, experiment, and discover limitless ways to care for the common good. The "solutions" found are inherently impermanent and continually evolve as resource availability changes. This perennial cycle of renewal represents emergence, which is how every living system, from the human body to forests, adapts over time to thrive.

Soil fertility, like justice, is a dynamic condition that enables life to thrive. Maintaining both requires diverse entities intentionally recalibrate their behaviors in step with shifting circumstances, led by those most impacted by these changes. Collaborative learning that is context sensitive enriches this adaptive capacity, supporting the equitable distribution of vital resources and enhancing the wellbeing of the whole—in healthy soil and just societies alike.

The practice of soil keeping provides individuals committed to realizing a regenerative global society with a compelling basis for imagining their work. The principles used to restore fertility to soil can be extended to heal communities harmed by the same underlying forces, supporting reparative justice and collective self-determination. More specifically, these principles hold potential to transform social investment and wealth building in ways that foster emergence. Furthermore, soil keeping teaches the craft of cooperation, trust, and the value of subsidiarity. Rather than imposing changes to the soil, investments focus on cultivating fertile conditions in which the diverse communities closest to the ground can determine how best to circulate resources and adapt over time. Adopting a soil keeping approach to social investment can democratize power, wealth, and wellbeing. Doing so generates conditions in which new relationships, ideas, and ways to maintain justice can continually emerge.

Entering into dialogue with nature, of which humanity is an intrinsic part, reveals insights that those committed to actualized justice seek. Many Indigenous cultures and wisdom traditions have embodied this knowledge since time immemorial, suggesting that a soil-keeping ethos can facilitate the deep cultural and social healing necessary for our collective liberation.<sup>iii</sup> By embracing a more expansive perspective that recognizes the power of diverse ways of knowing and being, the practice of soil keeping begins to decolonize the mindsets that hold injustice in place.

## **A Just Society Cannot Grow in Toxic Soil**

Transformational change begins deep beneath that which we can see. Our beliefs shape our identities, just as soil health shapes plant life, and paradigms shape societal systems and structures. If we don't like what we see, then we need to look below the surface of things and remediate the grounds from which it emerges. Realizing a regenerative global society requires us to address inequities embedded in our soils, societies, and selves—however, this work often stops short of including all of these nested domains.

A holistic approach to transforming unjust systems and addressing complex issues has gained momentum in recent years. From climate change to human rights, various issue areas believe that systemic change is essential to advancing a regenerative society. I appreciate the impetus of much of this work; however, I've observed a strange yet familiar pattern persisting as it evolves. It seems that many of those engaged in social transformation efforts continue to center a Western understanding of how change happens. As a result, interventions tend to feel mechanistic, and like byproducts of the same worldview they aim to upend. After witnessing this phenomenon with greater frequency, I became troubled by the paradox it seemed to represent.





**Figure 2. Photo by Kiley Arroyo. 2020. Fertile soil in the West Dry Creek Valley of Sonoma County, California, ancestral homelands of the Pomo peoples.**

All systems arise from paradigms that tell stories describing who and what belongs—is seen, protected, and empowered to thrive—othering all else.<sup>iv</sup> Many believe that an anthropocentric (or human-centered) paradigm that promotes a white, Western, patriarchal worldview sits at the base of oppressive systems, embedding this logic in the unspoken rules that govern the whole. A system that privileges a singular worldview fosters a culture of supremacy that enacts and extends colonial histories of extraction, exploitation, and accumulation. These patterns of harm generate disparities in power, wealth, and wellbeing. These dynamics are as evident in human systems as in nature, of which we are an inherent part. Monocultures, like white supremacy, rob their environments of the fertility generated when diverse entities enjoy shared prosperity.

These phenomena demonstrate the pervasive force of colonialism and the depths to which it permeates our inner and outer worlds. Colonization represents the hegemony Antonio Gramsci envisioned when he described how power filters through society, bending behavior by normalizing expectations in ways that reinforce inequitable social arrangements.<sup>v</sup> By influencing the shape and substance of policies, practices, places, and even our personal beliefs, the colonial story automatically reproduces cumulative and durable injustices. Therefore, decentering this



story in favor of a more expansive narrative that recognizes the intrinsic value and interdependence of all life is a prerequisite to realizing transformational change.

Why, then, are some transformation efforts, particularly those oriented towards advancing just and regenerative societies, continuing to center a Western paradigm? How can efforts to disrupt the harmful legacy of colonization succeed if they remain anchored by the very worldview in question? It seems these measures, well intentioned as they may be, fail to realize their liberatory potential to empower us to see the world, each other, and ourselves in profoundly different ways. Behavioral psychologists and spiritual leaders alike believe that individuals cannot support efforts that run counter to their worldviews; however, transformational learning can facilitate their reconstruction.<sup>vi</sup> Wanting to test this idea, I've set out to better understand the worldview I have historically operated within and explore whole systems care from a more expansive range of cultural perspectives. Like any inspiring voyage, this one is motivated by curiosity.

### **What Does Colonization Mean, *Literally*?**

Many trace the origins of myriad injustices back to colonization, not only in terms of the social production of wealth, but more insidiously, as an imposed worldview. I find solidarity with this perspective and believe a more literal interpretation of the word might deepen our understanding of degenerative practices and reveal new healing pathways. Viewing this term's etymology from other cultural perspectives has heightened my consciousness of this potential in ways I would have otherwise missed.

The anthropological term colonization comes from the Latin words *colere*, meaning “to till,” and *colonia*, “the soil.”<sup>vii</sup> The Western imagination tends to associate tilling by mechanical plows as the hallmark of industrial progress and evidence of cultural superiority. However, Indigenous land stewards and a growing movement of natural farming advocates know that tilling soil destroys the very source of its power and regenerative capacity.<sup>viii</sup>

Tilling soil severs the diverse web of relationships responsible for maintaining its fertility. By tearing soil's social fabric, tilling disrupts life-supporting processes causing vital resources to become concentrated, creating disparities of power, wealth, and wellbeing. As a result, a destructive spiral is set into motion. Degraded soils become compacted—unable to breathe, and vulnerable to disease, erosion, displacement, and desertification. Such soils become dependent

upon artificial inputs to sustain their capacity to support life in a perverse attempt to replicate the natural processes that tilling destroys.<sup>ix</sup>

**By tilling the soil of communities, colonization has had an equally damaging effect.**

Colonization severs sacred relationships between people and place, separating groups from how they produce and preserve cultural knowledge. Many believe that those with more intimate proximity to ecological cycles develop distinct place-based expertise, refined over time through observation, experimental learning, and the transmission of ancestral wisdom. The correlation between the loss of many Indigenous languages and global biodiversity demonstrates this relationship well.<sup>x</sup> The underlying cause of this biocultural trauma is the inequitable concentration of power colonization generates.

Colonization also restricts humanity's access to the source of its collective power and regenerative capacity, the world's diverse ecologies of culture. Humanity's capacity to address complex issues from racial injustice to climate change relies on our ability to envisage, assess, and realize alternative futures cooperatively. By separating people with varying worldviews, colonization limits groups from productive encounters with one another and discovering novel ways to care for the common good. This phenomenon is antithetical to everything that we know about the value of diversity in living systems. Ultimately, and somewhat ironically, the imposition of a Western worldview on others creates conditions that intensify the need to restore the diverse web of relationships, cooperation, and meaningful exchange it marginalizes. Therefore, to become a society in which all life can flourish, we must first heal the damages inflicted by colonization.

Many cultures know how to repair lands damaged by colonization, presenting a compelling opportunity to apply the same restorative practices to heal communities harmed by the same underlying paradigm.<sup>xi</sup> However, the colonial worldview has marginalized, if not erased, many of these groups. Therefore, deep cultural and social healing is necessary before this knowledge can be shared equitably. Recognizing the incompleteness of any of our truths and the life-sustaining value of other ways of being, knowing, and world-building begins to restore fertility to humanity and our relationships with all life, allowing access to new tools and techniques.

## **Reparative Justice—In Soil and Society—A Prerequisite for Regeneration**

A family of restorative principles is used to rebuild vibrant soil, rooted in the law of return, which means whatever is taken from the land must be replaced in equal measure.<sup>xii</sup> This expression of reparative justice ensures that vital resources, diverse relationships, and meaningful exchanges increase over time, enriching life.

### **Principle 1: End harmful disturbances**

Soil restoration involves deep observation, listening, and honest accounting of the “disturbance regime” or pattern of harm that has impacted a particular place. These shocks can be human-made or naturally occurring. Some disruptions such as controlled fires can rejuvenate soil fertility, while others, principally industrial agriculture, accelerate its degradation with extractive practices informed by the colonial worldview.<sup>xiii</sup> Observing these patterns from diverse perspectives allows us to organize a meaningful response.

Limiting harmful practices involves truth telling from the perspective of those most impacted, which begins to reconcile our relationship with the land and each other. Culturally safe responses are rooted in community voice, values, and vision to ensure restorative practices acknowledge past harms, shift power, and mitigate future damage through meaningful accountability mechanisms.<sup>xiv</sup> Identifying patterns we wish to amplify and dampen reveals what aspects of the systems need to change to support life and bring a new world into being.





**Figure 3. Photo by Kiley Arroyo. 2020. Example of no-till soil keeping, which protects the deep roots and diverse web of relationships responsible for maintaining its fertility, allowing power and wealth to build up over time.**

### **Principle 2: Rest**

Colonization permits extractive practices such as industrial agriculture that traumatize soil. Hyperproductivity depletes soil of nutrients and relationships, eventually exhausting its life force completely. For soil to heal, it must rest, disrupting these patterns of harm. Sleeping soil is blanketed in nutrient-rich plants, providing reparative nourishment, and enabling it to preserve power and prosperity for future generations.

Colonization produces norms and expectations about what constitutes appropriate behavior that often confuse labor with value. Some view habitual productivity as one such artifact of white supremacy culture. Tricia Hersey, Founder of the Nap Ministry, suggests, “Rest is a form of resistance because it disrupts and pushes back against capitalism and white supremacy.”<sup>xv</sup> Rest provides spaciousness for healing and dreaming of alternative futures. As such, ease provides a critical counternarrative essential to liberation movements, including efforts to advance regenerative societies. By modeling new forms of creativity and care that don’t sacrifice our

wellbeing, we can undo past harms and preserve the energy needed to realize our vision with pleasure and ease.

### **Principle 3: Protect**

Water is essential for life: slowing, sinking, and circulating, it equitably binds soil to the land, mitigating its displacement. Now in place, care is required to protect the diverse microorganisms being born. Cover crops blanket this community, maximizing sunlight capture (its primary energy source) and carbon sequestration, and enhancing soil's absorptive power. Their deep taproots decompact soil, creating space for air, water, and nutrients to flow, nourishing the budding web of relationships burgeoning underground. No-till techniques protect soil's mutual aid networks and crop roots, providing future plants with easy passage to more distant nutrients, strengthening soil's structure and fertility. As these crops decompose, they enhance the soil with organic matter, the revolving loan fund that enriches the web of life.

Just societies protect diverse communities, providing safe places to live, dream, grow, and realize their fullest potential through caring relationships and a culture of belonging. Grassroots organizing protects communities; builds power and capacity for local stewardship of diverse forms of wealth – including cultural capital. As with water, we can ensure the equitable distribution of financial investments through structures like credit unions that recirculate capital through cooperative governance. We can cultivate cover crops or entities and activities that intentionally protect vulnerable groups from oppressive systems, facilitate the robust flow of resources, ease mobility, and expand opportunities to enhance communities' regenerative capacity.

### **Principle 4: Reforest**

Trees are keystone species, nature's anchor institutions upon which the health and biodiversity of complex ecosystems depend. Trees play multiple roles and provide habitats for astonishing biodiversity, contributing to the ecosystem's health. Trees, working in unison, facilitate the equitable distribution of wealth, particularly to the most vulnerable elements of an ecosystem, empowering inclusive participation in whole's governance.<sup>xvi</sup> Trees fuel a circular economy by turning carbon into sugars that nourish soil's subterranean society that reciprocally feeds the trees. Tree roots reinforce soil's structure, preventing erosion and drawing in replenishing resources from far-off reserves. Tree canopies protect soil, creating islands of intensified fertility



in which seedlings can prosper. Many global cultures have practiced agroforestry, or the intentional integration of trees into agriculture to maintain soil fertility, for thousands of years.



**Figure 4. Photo by Kiley Arroyo. In Marin County, the California Oak tree is playing a critical role in ecological restoration efforts, including the rewilding of public land in San Geronimo.**

Efforts to advance regenerative societies invite institutions to act more like oak trees. Dissatisfaction with democratic institutions is shared globally.<sup>xvii</sup> Many societies express frustration with institutions that impose an idea of the future, leaving little room for citizen participation. We need new organizational structures that encourage widespread civic engagement and amplify society's most abundant source of ideas—its people.

Participatory processes that shift power and center subsidiarity enable inclusive governance and the emergence of imaginative interventions. Creating space for a more diverse range of worldviews to inform the shape and substance of public problem solving helps restore trust and revitalize modern democracies. Future-facing institutions' primary task would be to create fertile conditions that enable diverse entities to exchange ideas (seedlings), experiment, and continually



learn how best to distribute vital resources so entire ecosystems thrive. In short, to facilitate whole systems care.

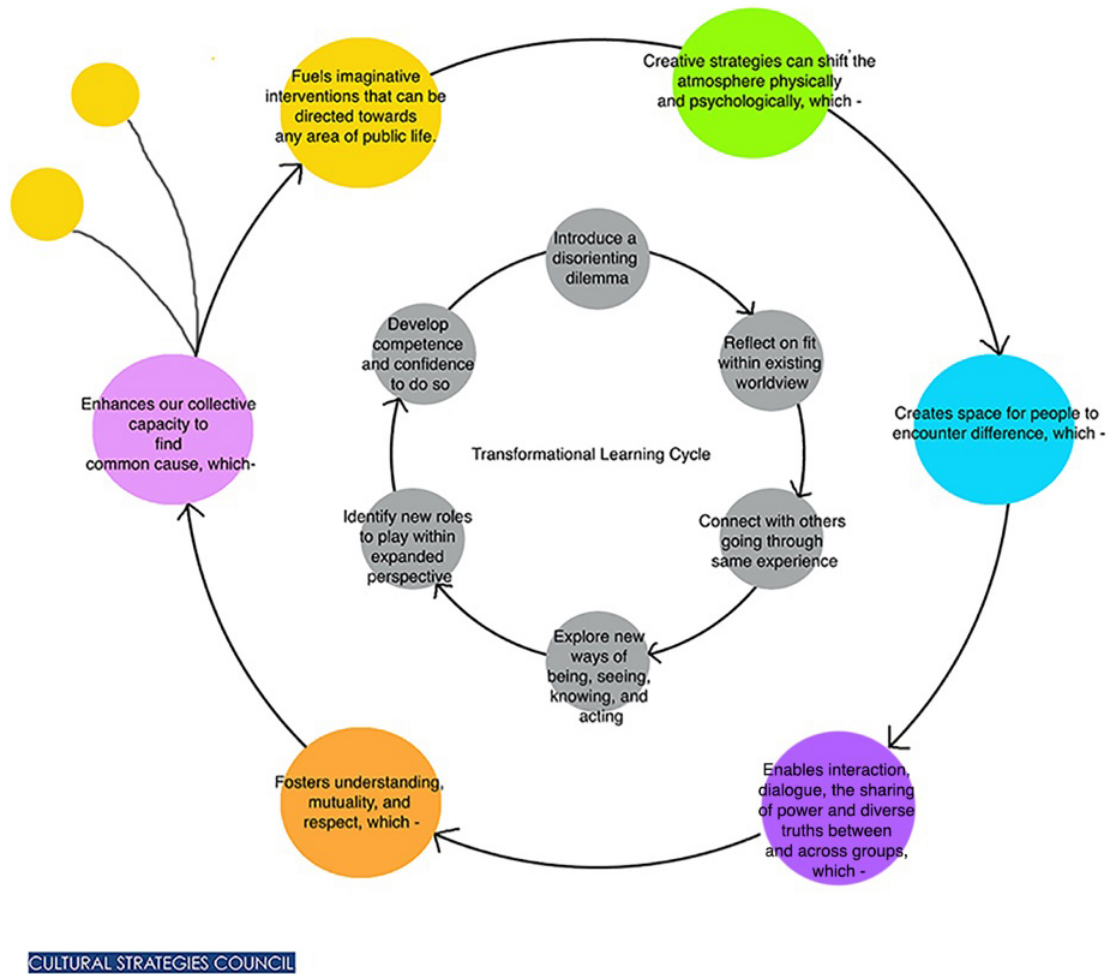
### **Principle 5: Foster polycultures**

Nature rebuilds soil fertility through awesome cooperation, enabling diverse elements to contribute to the whole's wellbeing. This diversity of resources and expertise provides soil, and living systems more broadly, with limitless ways to experiment, learn, and adapt in service of the whole. Restoring soil's fertility is fundamentally about weaving a diverse social fabric with empowered participation, particularly at the edges of systems, where dominant patterns are weakest and opportunities for experimentation greatest.

Restorative practices emphasize the cultivation of polycultures and symbiotic partnerships. In healthy soil, bacteria, fungi, plant roots, and other microorganisms exchange life-supporting resources across a web of mutuality. Above ground, intercropping species with companion plants, especially native varieties adapted to place, increases fertility and resilience.

In societies marked by division, efforts to advance regenerative cultures must include opportunities to develop meaningful relationships across all lines of difference. However, actualized justice does not end with the forging of new relationships. Rather, diverse relationships provide portals to accessing a more expansive array of worldviews, which can nourish radical visions of the liberated future to which we are working. Different ways of being and knowing offer limitless ways to frame, understand, and respond to the complex challenges that characterize 21<sup>st</sup>-century life.

Creative interventions that promote cultural rights support these processes by shifting the atmosphere, enabling individuals to encounter difference, engage in intercultural dialogue, develop critical consciousness, and find common cause—the foundation of collective action and whole-systems care.<sup>xviii</sup> In addition, cultural strategies and radical imagination can facilitate transformational learning, the means by which individuals can reconstruct their worldviews.<sup>xix</sup> Consequently, space, ideologically and physically, must be preserved for this virtuous cycle to occur.



**Figure 5.** This cycles demonstrates how creative strategies can foster emergence and facilitate transformational learning, which remediates the mindsets that hold injustice in place. This cycle mirrors the ways living systems operate.

### **Principle 6: Grow and nourish**

Building soil fertility involves transforming death into life through decomposition, fermentation, and digestion, making nutrients bioavailable. The diverse community you have been cultivating is responsible for this regenerative cycle.

Soils gain vitality from food and culture, which compost provides. Compost revitalizes soil by increasing its organic matter, strengthening its structure and absorptive capacity. Joy Harjo, an elder of the Muscogee Creek Nation, believes, “The land is a being that remembers everything.”<sup>xx</sup> Like cultural memory, compost enriches soil with place-based knowledge that supports learning, energizes adaptation, and nourishes future patterns of being. Inoculated compost embeds beneficial bacteria that facilitate healing and mitigate disease. In fertile soil, transformational

change does not result in loss, per se, but a repurposing of what was to energize what's to come. By digesting minerals and nutrients, these microorganisms make the benefits of compost accessible to other life forms, accelerating fertility.



**Figure 6. Photo by Kiley Arroyo. 2020. Inoculated compost enriches the vitality of soils in Sonoma County by transforming locally sourced elements into new life.**

Regenerative societies leverage the evolutionary power of cultural diversity. Seeing the world through an alternative lens can inspire the imagination and ignite the sense of agency necessary to transform one's beliefs. By shifting our perspectives, we develop the cognitive flexibility needed to accommodate others' truths and grow, individually and collectively. Embedded artists, designers, and culture bearers can facilitate these exchanges across groups, sectors, and disciplines—inoculating against attitudes and actions that enable patterns of harm to persist.

### **Principle 7: Impermanence**

Finally, restoring soil fertility requires we embrace impermanence and the fallacy of infinite growth in a finite world. All living systems transform to sustain conditions conducive to life. Planting a succession of species provides evolving opportunities for soil to receive different enrichments throughout its restoration. As diverse species decompose, they enrich what's



emerging. This perennial cycle prompts regular assessment of past arrangements and creates space for liberation from patterns that no longer support the whole's vitality. Fertility is the energy that enables this ongoing regeneration, and it can only be created through diverse cooperation.

Justice is not a static goal but a dynamic condition that requires radical imagination, diverse cooperation, and a willingness to evolve. What works today may not work tomorrow. What works in one place may not work in another. Centering community voice enables partners to continually learn how the world is changing and care for the common good. Embracing the possibility that genuinely responsive solutions can never be permanently relevant encourages curiosity, ongoing dialogue and co-creation across increasingly diverse lines of difference. Transcending fixed notions of what's possible invites us to reimagine our relationship with vulnerability—not as a weakness, but as a malleable space in which we can reconstruct how we want to show up in the world.

Embracing impermanence allows us to inhabit time more spaciously and move in sync with nature's rhythms. By slowing down, we can expand our consciousness of time and feel continuity with past and future generations. In seeing our impact on the earth and each other, we can begin to appreciate how our fates are intertwined. In recognizing life's fragility, we can develop the capacity to practice whole systems care in the present and in ways that resonate across time.

Impermanence illuminates what's been lost, but also what wants to be found. Humanity is on the cusp of recreating how we live in relationship with all life. This liminal space we're moving through invites us to embody the liberated future to which we aspire - this is the self-work of transformational change, and it's within reach to all of us.

Please join me in learning how you, too, can be a soil keeper.



**Figure 7.** Arroyo, Kiley. 2020. The long-term resilience of any living system can only be sustained through polycultural collaboration.

## Notes

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<sup>i</sup> The Human Systems Dynamics Institute defines simple rules as the agreed-upon guides that inform behavior and interactions among members of a Complex Adaptive System. These rules shape the conditions that characterize the dominant patterns of the system.

<sup>ii</sup> In Latin, the terms *potentia* and *potestas* both translate into power. In this context, “power” refers to *potentia*, or the inherent capacity of all living entities to adapt, create, and evolve organically, as opposed to *potestas*, which refers to exercising power over others. Source: Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy.

<sup>iii</sup> Vandana Shiva, an Indian activist and scholar, reminds us, “All sustainable cultures, in their diversity, have viewed the Earth as *terra mater* (mother earth). The colonial construct of a passive

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Earth and the subsequent creation of the colonial land designation of *terra nullius* (nobody's land), served two purposes: it denied the existence and prior rights of original inhabitants and negated the regenerative capacity and life processes of the Earth.”

<sup>iv</sup> John Powell, Director of the Othering and Belonging Institute at the University of California at Berkeley, defines “othering” as “a set of processes, structures, and dynamics that engender marginality and persistent inequality across any of the full range of human differences, from race and ethnicity to religion, gender, or ability.”

<sup>v</sup> In his *Prison Notebooks*, Antonio Gramsci, an Italian Marxist theorist, articulates his theory of cultural hegemony, which describes how the state and ruling capitalist class—the bourgeoisie—use culture and cultural institutions to maintain power in capitalist societies by controlling dominant ideologies, values, and beliefs.

<sup>vi</sup> In 1978, renowned adult learning scholar Jack Mezirow introduced his groundbreaking theory of transformational learning in the paper “Perspective Transformation,” which he elaborated on in the *Transformative Dimensions of Adult Learning* in 1991. Mezirow’s theory complements Buddhist philosophy, well demonstrated by angel Kyodo Williams, a Zen priest and activist: “For us to transform as a society, we have to allow ourselves to be transformed as individuals. And for us to be transformed as individuals, we have to allow for the incompleteness of any of our truths and a real forgiveness for the complexity of human beings.”

<sup>vii</sup> This etymology source came from the 1879 publication, *A Latin Dictionary*, and definitions included in the *Oxford English Dictionary Second Edition* and *Etymology Online*.

<sup>viii</sup> Around the world, traditional farmers would have been unable to retain the regenerative capacity of their land without understanding the functions of soil. The importance of soil fertility and structure to crop yield is fundamental to the complexity and sophistication of soil restoration and culturally informed land management systems globally.

<sup>ix</sup> A global consortium of scientists project that if current rates of degradation continue, the world’s topsoil will be gone within 60 years. The primary driver of this loss is industrial agriculture, which is a central element of colonialism globally. Maps of global inequality and soil degradation exhibit marked similarities, alongside the erosion of traditional cultures and knowledge. In 2020, the United Nation’s Global Biodiversity Outlook reported insufficient progress towards the 20 Aichi Targets.

<sup>x</sup> The United Nations reports that two indigenous languages are lost per month. Linguists anticipate humanity will lose 75% of the world’s 6,800 languages by the end of the century. The UN has designated 2022–2032 the International Decade of Indigenous Languages to draw important attention to and action on this critical issue.

<sup>xi</sup> Throughout this journey, I have compared restorative justice, transitional justice, and ecosystem restoration frameworks, including those centering Traditional Ecological Knowledge as well as Western approaches. Their natural complementarity is remarkable, further suggesting the relevance of a soil-keeping ethos in advancing transformative change and facilitating the deep social and cultural healing needed to enable effective regeneration efforts.

<sup>xii</sup> Liz Eglington, “Soil and the Law of Return,” *Green Times*, June 5, 2014, <http://thegreentimes.co.za/soil-the-law-of-return/>.

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<sup>xiii</sup> Extractive practices include tilling; monoculture crop cultivation; the use of petrochemicals; privatization of seeds; and associated destruction of diverse peoples, local cultures and livelihoods.

<sup>xiv</sup> The concept of cultural safety is gaining increasing resonance in public health, stemming mainly from work with Indigenous communities—though the idea is highly relevant to racial justice efforts more broadly. Culturally safe practices invite philanthropic professionals to act with self-awareness of how their worldviews and those of the institutions they sit within may cause harm. This process supports decolonization, the minimization of power differentials, trust building, and respect for cultural differences. Cultural safety facilitates ongoing self-reflection and a commitment to restorative interventions, as defined *by communities and* measured through progress towards equity.

<sup>xv</sup> Tricia Hersey, The Nap Ministry, <https://thenapministry.wordpress.com/>.

<sup>xvi</sup> Trees are the largest and oldest living organisms on the planet with fossils dating back 385 million years. Forests make up the vast majority of living matter found on Earth—humans only account for 0.01 percent. These ancient guardians enjoy memory capacities, communication skills, and symbiotic ability. Trees regulate the climate, clean the air and water, create soil structure and fertility, and in some cases, demonstrate the rejuvenating power of crisis—as can be seen in the ways some respond to wildfire. Trees provide food habitats to diverse creatures, including the building materials and substance enjoyed by humanity.

<sup>xvii</sup> Richard Wike and Shannon Schumacher, Pew Research Center, “Global Attitudes and Trends: Satisfaction with Democracy” (February 27, 2020), <https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2020/02/27/satisfaction-with-democracy/>.

<sup>xviii</sup> Article 27 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states: “Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits.” Cultural rights are, therefore, inseparable from human rights.

<sup>xix</sup> Adult learning experts demonstrate how individuals can reconstruct their worldviews through transformational learning. Their theory proposes that a worldview can change when an individual encounters a disorienting dilemma that does not fit within their existing mental model. This decentering encourages critical reflection about their assumed beliefs and exploration of new ways of seeing, and builds their confidence and competence in playing a new role. Seeing the world through an alternative lens can inspire the imagination and ignite the sense of agency necessary to transform one’s most deeply held beliefs and behaviors. Furthermore, by shifting our perspectives, we develop the cognitive flexibility needed to accommodate others’ truths.

<sup>xx</sup> Joy Harjo, *Conflict Resolution for Holy Beings* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 2015).

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