



Bcollective.org

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Please read "Dance For Your Life: A Mini Memoir" below, and click on the links for a photo tour through "evidence of prior learning."

Enjoy.....and Vaya Con Gaia!

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**Gaia University**  
**Career Review**  
**Nala Walla**  
**15 November 2008**

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## **DANCE FOR YOUR LIFE: A Mini-Memoir**

I have been a dancer for as long as I can remember. My mom tells me that I was dancing around the house as soon as the doctors removed the casts from my legs. I was born with my feet and legs rotated severely inward, and at the time, it was common medical practice to put such pigeon-toes in casts in a misguided attempt to “fix” them. So, doctors completely immobilized my legs for the first six months or so of my life, a practice which is still unfortunately common. As I look back, I can now see clearly that my path as a dancer was shaped by the need to heal from this early trauma of my legs frozen in casts.

As I know from my studies in developmental movement, conditions like pigeon-toes or club feet (and many others) are only made worse by confinement such as casting. Babies progress through important developmental stages during the first six months of by moving, wiggling, putting toes in mouth, bending, flexing, developing muscle tone. I was denied this early opportunity to develop, an opportunity which should be the birthright of every human child. The physical problems named above can *only* be healed through movement—it is quite bizarre that the belief persists that immobilization can do anything but worsen the problem. This explains why I have been dancing and clowning and playing as much as I can ever since my casts were removed. I dance to save my life.



Nala Walla, age 3, with Mama Jayne—Even back then, I was a clown!

### **PAIN AS OPPORTUNITY**

On the bright side, this physical trauma has been one of my greatest gifts, as it has guided me towards the rich worlds of art and ritual that I may have missed otherwise. Great limitations, traumas, or wounds are characteristic of many great healers and teachers. For example, the somatic pioneer Moshe Feldenkrais developed his work in order to cope with severe dysfunction in his knee. At this time in my life, I am learning to view my pain as an opportunity and a gift, instead of a disability or scar. This pain puts me in community with countless “wounded healers,” with whom I am honored to share company. As I begin the following retrospective on my life, I will try my best to view it through the lens of opportunity and unique expression of my life path.

### **THE FORMAL SCHOOL YEARS—DARTMOUTH COLLEGE**

Throughout my childhood, I was lucky enough to have parents who recognized my artistic tendencies (necessities!?), and who enrolled me in plenty of physical activity, including dance classes. All through my school years, I was involved with athletics, dance and theater in addition to my academics.



Nala Walla (then Kimberly Walla), age 18, at Dartmouth College

The voice of the dominant society was pretty loud within me by the time I got to the Ivy League. I was convinced that I had to give up all that “childish” dancing and performance when I got to Dartmouth College, and focus on a “real career” in academia. Immediately, my body went into revolt, and I became confused and depressed. After a couple semesters of this, I came to my senses, and began to enroll again in dance classes. Around this same time, I was introduced for the first time to the joys of hiking and skiing. I had grown up in Queens, New York City, and had never actually seen a real forest. Now I was 19 years old and falling in absolute love with rivers! I was hooked, and began studying history and environmental sciences at Dartmouth.

#### THE GRADUATE SCHOOL YEARS—UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON

Overall, my extracurricular experiences in the New Hampshire wilderness turned out to be significantly more valuable to me in shaping my passions and my future than was any of the curriculum at Dartmouth. I didn’t realize it at that time, but I was on my way to becoming an action learner. After graduation, I moved to Seattle to attend the University of Washington (UW) and continue my studies in ecology. I graduated Magna Cum Laude from Dartmouth, and because of this high status, I was fortunate to be admitted to the UW without the usual restrictions. I became one of the few students at the UW who were permitted to take any graduate class in the University without formally declaring a focus.

So, I began creating my own program in ecology. I took as many classes as I could find related to water, in many different departments, from forestry to fisheries, to wildlife sciences and oceanography, landscape architecture and wetlands. At the same time, I was studying intensively in the dance department and performing dance and music around Seattle—all together, this self-guided education comprised a thorough investigation of flow.



Nala Walla, 1995, in the Hoh Rainforest, studying river ecology

After a couple of years at the UW, I was informed that the University would not grant me an interdisciplinary degree. I would be required to box myself into a single department and fulfill all

the requisites there. FISH 500 501 502 503.....I wrote them a letter emphasizing the importance of interdisciplinary education, especially considering the increasing rate of change in natural systems, and the need for well-rounded students to accommodate this change. I appealed to them that this was, after all, the *ecology* department, and ecologic systems are characterised by flexible and permeable boundaries, and diverse individuals, not cookie cutter students.

A couple of years ago, they did create an interdisciplinary? studies program at the UW, but it applies only to the humanities, and still to this day does not include the science departments, whose boundaries are still as rigidly defended as when my appeals fell on deaf ears over 12 years ago.

#### THE POST—UW YEARS IN SEATTLE

Disillusioned, I decided to leave the UW (and all those graduate credits) behind, and seek my own education. I worked for awhile with a local streamkeepers alliance, and for an environmental consulting firm, where they put me to work entering data and analyzing soil and water samples in a fluorescent-lit, basement laboratory.

I began to realize that I was having the same reaction as I had at the UW: I could not shake the feeling that none of this work had much to do with ecology as I conceived of it. I was in crisis. I wanted to really feel my daily actions having a direct effect on creating an ecologically sane society. I wanted to develop behaviors that would serve as a model for sustainable living (though the word “sustainable” would not come into common usage for another eight years or so.) I also longed to feel more creativity and artistry in the ecology movement, more of a union between the two worlds that I loved so dearly.

This was 1996/7, so I was also catching a wave of concern about “Y2K”—the year 2000. If there were any computer glitches, I wondered, would the trucks still make it to the supermarkets? I was becoming keenly aware of a convoluted food system? that I had almost no part in except as an utterly dependent consumer. I decided that I needed a break from the University to concentrate on art, and I found an opportunity to go to Sevilla, Spain to study Flamenco Dance.

Just before I was to leave for Spain, I met my partner-to-be, Glenn, a self-made, adventurous man who had never been to college, yet who had been all over the world, climbed enormous mountains, dived beneath the sea, and paddled to Alaska in a boat he fashioned himself from saplings collected from the forest. Glenn’s profound experiences in the “school of life” reinforced for me the notion that, other than being a good excuse to finally fly from the New York nest in which I had been hatched, college had been little more than a distraction from my real callings in life. Glenn flew to Spain to meet me, and after travelling together through Portugal and Morocco, a new plan was born: Passionate about water? Why not go to the source and live on the sea?

#### TOLFEA: “ISLAND OF SPIRIT”

Glenn and I decided to get married, and we lived for a honeymoon year in a small waterfront cabin on Bainbridge Island. There, we made our plans to buy a small sailboat to voyage upon to Alaska. We sold everything we owned which did not fit on the boat, hauled her out of the water, and set to work repairing and outfitting the 34-foot Wharram Catamaran *Tolfea*. It was in the boatyard in Port Townsend that I had my first experience of real community. People generously offered to lend us? their tools, gifted us 50lb. sacks of dried food for our galley, helped us sand and paint the hull. I had never seen such an outpouring of support. Before long, we were ready (about as ready as two folks who had never sailed before could be, that is!) to set out into the Straits of Juan De Fuca, headed North along the inside passage to Alaska.



Glenn Reed, 1997, aboard S/V Tolfea, outfitted for Alaska cruising...note surboards.

For this journey, I had several aims: to learn how to sustain myself by gathering wild foods; to learn how to live without money; to find a self-sufficient community to teach me these things; to find land on which I could actually live my ecological values. All of these aims, and many more, were fulfilled during this incredible two year journey from Port Townsend, Washington, to Sitka, Alaska and back again.

I taught myself about the edible and medicinal creatures I could gather from the beach and the sea. I learned navigation and sailing skills. I learned respect for the Mother Sea. I learned how to repair and run the daily business of a voyaging sailboat. I learned to cook. I learned to rely on myself and my partner in very remote and difficult circumstances. And, by dancing and meditating and generally communing with the powerful wilderness of Alaska, I learned one of my most lasting and important lessons: that dance, passion, and inspiration actually rose up into my body from the Earth—they were NOT spontaneously borne of my mind.



Nala aboard S/V Tolfea, Queen Charlotte City, Haida Gwaii, B.C., 1998

In more recent times, among the noise and haste of different big cities, I have been able to draw upon this last lesson to help to keep me on track through many-a-time of artistic and spiritual confusion. But I digress. Back to the boat.

There are too many details about this journey to share here, but suffice it to say that many triumphs and travails later—including a shipwreck off the coast of the Queen Charlotte Islands—this Ivy-League-educated girl from Queens became an utterly changed woman. I emerged with a far deeper understanding of ecology and the nature of water than any textbook and classroom could have ever taught. And, Glenn and I did indeed end our journey by purchasing a five-acre parcel of raw land on Marrowstone—a tiny island near Port Townsend, Washington. The very spot where we started had turned out to be our favorite place of the entire journey, so we decided to return there after two years at sea.



s/v Tolfea in silhouette, SE Alaska, 1999



s/v "Tolfea" and her dinghy "Po" in the San Juan Islands, 1998

#### A SEA CHANGE: LAND!

Glenn and I had worked together quite smoothly when we had the common goal of running *Tolfea*, but when we arrived on land, the road became rocky and our visions diverged radically. Glenn really wanted to keep moving and travelling around the globe, using our land as an investment and perhaps a base camp, while I wanted to really sink down my roots and build ecologic community. I dreamed of a group of artists all together creating organic gardens, rainwater catchment, greywater remediation, and solar energy.

It took us a long time, but finally Glenn and I realized that we would better fulfill our vows to support each other by parting ways, allowing both of our dreams to flower independently. We created a separation ceremony for ourselves, and we reminisced and shed tears together as we burned some of our memorabilia in the fire. This ceremony served us well, and we were able to end our marriage amicably, and mutually. It was a fruitful few years that we had shared, and we both learned tremendous amounts about ourselves through the mirror of our relationship.

I had believed previously that dedication to our marriage required us to stay together at all costs. This was an enormous UNlearning for me, one that took years to fully understand. The breakup of our relationship consumed much of my energy for a long time, but today, neither of us has regretted our decision to split up. Glenn continues his travels around the globe, and I still live here on the Isle of Marrowstone, working daily on living my dream of an ecologically sane life.



2006, Gardens on Marrowstone Island Homestead, WA



Nala Walla, 2005, in front of our newly built house



Garden gate on Marrowstone Island Homestead, 2007

#### LASQUETI ISLAND TRANSITION

During the time of transition out of my marriage, I immersed myself in a performance residency

and training with Onionoak Dancetheater on Lasqueti Island, BC. Along with an international cast of twelve dancers under the direction of Karl Frost and Jez Parus (now known as, Elanne Kresser) we lived, cooked, ate, worked, played, and performed together everyday for three winter months on this off-grid Island in Georgia Strait. This was to be a life-changing experience for me, one in which I gave myself permission to profoundly explore my own psyche through movement, story, voice, improvisation, and nature.

There on Lasqueti, I gained hands-on experience in merging an ecologically-oriented, off-grid life with daily artistic process. This was an important time for me to rediscover who I was outside of relationship with Glenn, and affirm my commitment both to the arts and ecology in a meaningful and direct way. I made lifelong friends on Lasqueti Island, and continue to return there regularly to visit and recharge in this truly magical place.



Dance intensive in action, Lasqueti Island Community Hall, 2000

#### HOW PLANS CAN CHANGE INSTANTLY

When I returned to Port Townsend from Lasqueti, I began teaching contact improvisation right away to share my passions with others and to keep dancing. I met several other artists, and began working with a talented tabla drum player, and making plans to go to India to study more. I worked at a local Japanese restaurant (developed quite a taste for sushi), and was able to save \$5000 that summer in order to spend a year in India. I purchased a plane ticket to depart September 21<sup>st</sup>, 2001. Needless to say, the events of September 11<sup>th</sup>, changed my plans radically, as the airlines were openly voicing concerns about bankruptcy. After sailing for years, I did not want to risk getting to India and then having to sail across an ocean to get home!



poster created by Nala Walla upon return from Lasqueti Island, 2001

I decided that even if it was not the right time to go to India, then I still wanted instead to earmark the funds that I had saved for studying dance and music. I began to travel regularly to Seattle to do this. Soon after I made this decision, I met my current partner Keeth around a campfire in Port Townsend, playing music together. At the time, Keeth was living not even two blocks away from the improvisation workshop where I had just enrolled in Seattle. I stayed with him there, and we fell in love. I began to spend more and more time in Seattle, returning to Port Townsend only to work. Many who live in Port Townsend commute to Seattle to work. However, I think I may have been the only person in history to live in Seattle, and commute to Port Townsend for work!



BACK AGAIN IN SEATTLE

For about eight months, I travelled regularly to Seattle to visit Keeth and to keep investii?ng in my studies of improvisation and performance. Keeth was studying songwriting at the time, and recording an album. We took a trip together to Mexico where I studied for a month with a contact improvisation group led by Carolyn Stuart, and our relationship deepened. When we returned to Seattle, about a year after we had met, we decided to move in together, and both of us continued our studies of art and music there. I joined a full-time theater for social change project, and then a professional dance company called *Birlibirloque*, which later was renamed *BQ Dance* (pronounced Bekoo Dance).



Nala Walla(2<sup>nd</sup> from left), 2004, site-specific performance with BQ dance



promotional postcard for BQ "Bekoo" Dance, 2005



promotional postcard for International Dance Festival, Quito, 2004



US propaganda materials during WWII—part of the Conciliation Project's theater-for-social-justice 2003 stage production "Yellow Fever"

Our company BQdance was going on tour to South America, and Keeth came on board doing music and lights for the company. He and I had been planning to travel in South America, immersing ourselves once again in the Spanish Language, so we made plans to stay on for four months after our performances and travel through Peru and Ecuador. We knew six months ahead of time about this trip, and to prepare, we decided it would make more sense to build a storage space on Marrowstone Island rather than keep our apartment or rent a storage unit while we were out of the country.



"Saco de Gallinas" (sack of hens) —photo from 2004 travels in Ecuador

#### A STORAGE SPACE BECOMES A HOUSE

Neither of us had ever built anything before, but we decided to spend a month on Marrowstone and see what we could whip up. We knew that we would be returning from South America in the beginning of summer, so as we designed this "storage space," we figured it might be also nice to have a small section which we could use for kitchen, and a small loft that we could sleep in if necessary. We hired our friend Ed to lead the project, I sold my car to buy the building materials, and the three of us worked incessantly for the month of September. Voilà! Without realizing it at the time, we ended up building the cute little house that we are still living in five years later.

The experience of building our home was intense, but extremely rewarding. It is an amazing opportunity to apprentice with a builder, and it is especially rewarding when the house you are building is your own! When I looked back on this experience, it struck me just how many hats we were wearing at once. To be living outdoors, cooking over the open fire, cleaning, and creating shelter in the woods is a full time job in itself. Yet, as we were doing this, we were concurrently learning how to dig a foundation, frame a house, and simultaneously performing all the roles of the general contractor, too—designing the house, coordinating deliveries, finding materials, sizing doors and windows, keeping workers occupied so the daylight hours are fully utilized, etc.

Many people might go camping for a month, but not while they are working two other jobs!

This was a highly unusual situation, one in which I am still not sure where we summoned the energy to make it happen. When I reflect now on this project, it seems like a miracle. Had we not been immersed completely in the process at the time, I'm sure we would have dismissed it as an impossibility. But I am thankful that we managed somehow to build the little house, for it has significantly shaped my life, most notably by freeing me from having a huge rent bill each month. After all, nothing nips more art projects in the bud than that pesky rent!



Building a shed, Marrowstone Island Homestead

When Glenn and I had split up, I feared that my dreams for the land would never come to pass. Glenn's building experience had been such an integral part of the original vision for me. I could not have imagined that, Keeth, an artist from the city with absolutely no rural skills whatsoever would be the one who would end up cocreating this dream with me. But, the healthy communication in our relationship, and the dedication to a common vision of art and simple living have turned out to be essential ingredients to a successful partnership on the land. These are things that Glenn and I did not have together. It was not sufficient simply to be married and to own land in common. During the seven years we have been together, Keeth and I have seen that we are capable of learning any skill that we need, as we go along. Our ability to improvise has turned out to be more valuable than anything else.

#### PERMACULTURE AS IMPROVISATION

Around summer solstice, 2004, Keeth and I moved in to our little house on Marrowstone, and I began to encounter hands-on experiences with whole systems theory and permaculture. I began to study more, and some bulbs of recognition began to light up in my head. The basic rules and principles behind permaculture and living systems were the very same as the guiding principles that I had been studying in improvisation! It made perfect sense, that since all of these disciplines refer to organic systems, the rules of organic systems would apply. I began to research these synchronicities, to write about them, and teach about them. I was beginning to create classes and workshops with my own signature blend of arts and ecology. This was the dissolution of boundaries between these disciplines that I had been seeking since I left the University so many years previous.

#### PERMACULTURE CERTIFICATION

I wanted to learn more about permaculture so that I could apply it to the still largely blank canvas of our homestead. I got together with a few other women in Port Townsend and we raised the money we needed for our permaculture design course. For the fundraiser, we held auctions, rummage sales, created performances, and I taught my first workshop connecting my work in movement and theater with permaculture. It was called "The Ecology of the Body" and has been presented in many festivals, schools and courses since this inception. See fotos below of our fundraiser brochure, workshop flier, and Halloween "Mud" performance.



fundraising brochure for Permaculture Design Course, 2004



poster, created by Nala and Keeth, from first "bodyecology" workshop, 2004



from left, Dava Hester, Jenny Grout and Nala Walla in Mud Ritual and photo shoot, 2004

Because our house was then little more than a drafty shell, I was fortunate that our course took

place in Hawaii in December, and I spent the coldest part of that first winter in the tropics. I returned with inspiration to spare, both for the homestead, and for the movement classes I was teaching.

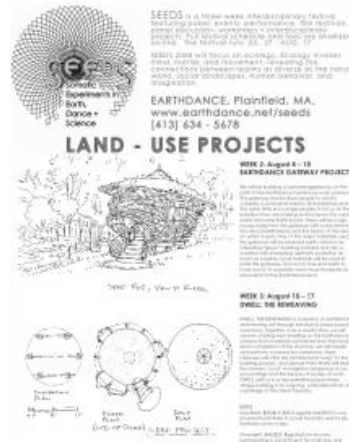
CONNECTING DANCE WITH PERMACULTURE AND ECOLOGY

Through my interest in permaculture, I began meeting all sorts of interesting people and future collaborators. At a workshop with Aussie Robina McCurdy, I met Chris Mare of the Village Design Institute, who hired me to teach a "Bodyecology" module at a Village Design Course in Bellingham, WA. I met several good friends at that course who I continue to keep in touch with today. I was so inspired, that I began to develop further my *Bodyecology* and *Bodyversity* curriculums. Not long afterwards, I met Mark Lakeman, director of Portland's *City Repair* and the annual *Village Building Convergence (VBC)*. He has hired me each year since to present lectures/slideshows, performances, and workshops.

I have met many amazing people through this experience, as well as had the opportunity to refine my pedagogies and writings. Students in the PIIIECL Program at Portland State University (Portland International Initiative in Ecology, Culture and Learning) who attended my workshops at the VBC suggested that they bring me in to teach at PSU, and the following year, I got a job teaching a weekend workshop there. Soon after, I presented a similar workshop at Washington State University.



Flyer for City Repair's VBC8 Festival, 2008



Flyer for "DWELL: The Reweaving" project, collaboration between Mark Lakeman and Nala Walla at SEEDS festival, August 2008



poster from first residential workshop at Bcollective Homestead, 2006

I recently had the opportunity to host the first weekend residential workshop at oi?ur homestead. It was such a positive experience that we hope that this is the first of many more such events here. We are planning to building a large barn to accommodate year-round educational workshops and performances.

**BCOLLECTIVE.ORG IS LAUNCHED**

Soon I realized that it was time to put up a website so that interested people could access my teaching schedule and my writings. I was surprised at how many people somehow had Googled their way over to my site, downloaded my writings and were sharing them all over the place—even abroad. It still seems a miracle that, even from such a rural place deep in the Woods of the Isle of Marrowstone, I can connect with people all the way across the globe.

Originally I considered "nalawalla.com" as a domain name (which is catchy, I'll admit,) but this name was too limiting. It was very important to me to create an umbrella big enough to shelter all the cross-disciplinary projects in my life, and to emphasize their collaborative instead of individual nature. So I settled upon the name, Bcollective.org to emphasize the collaborative nature.



homepage of the Bcollective.org website, created 2005

For me the letter B symbolii?zes many things, first of which is the Bee. I envisioned groups of artists, ecologists, permaculturists all merrily crosspollinating, sharing the buzz of new ideas, harvesting the nectar of new ideas a in a flowering of strategies for a sane, just and sustainable planet. B also stands for "Be collective" referring to a strategy of collaboration and interdependence to counter a world overloaded with competition and hyper-individualism.

The letter “B” itself refers to creating an alternative strategy, a “Plan B,” as an alternative to the mainstream Plan A based on consumerism, perpetual war, and isolation of the people from themselves and from each other. Our Plan B is to reintroduce and rehearse the relational skills which have atrophied during the Patrix’ Plan A strategy of rule by fearmongering and separation. The arts and permaculture are both part of this alternative Plan B, offering vision and empowerment to the people after being estranged from peacetime experience of trust and support from fellow citizens and community members.

Many gigs, connections, and publication opportunities have followed the launching of the website, which is in itself an ongoing learning process that required about a year under construction, and continues to need regular updating and maintenance. To fulfill the many roles required of me as a independent and self-produced artist, I have had to become conversant in several computer skills, including photoshop to create fliers for events, Dreamweaver, for updating my website, and email management and marketing for publicizing events and performances.

There have been far too many performances, event produced, and articles published by the Bcollective to list here. Please see the HAPPENINGS and MORSELS pages on the Bcollective.org website for a more complete event history and writing we have been involved in since the launch of the website in 2004.

#### CHILDREN’S PERFORMANCE AS RURAL EMPLOYMENT

It is an unfortunate worldwide geographical pattern that rural areas tend to lose their young people to the cities. It has become extremely difficult to survive as a small farmer, and there is not much other work available for young people in small towns. Here in Jefferson County, where both Marrowstone Island and nearby Port Townsend are located, this pattern is evident. Most of the residents here are over the age of 55, having made their fortunes elsewhere, and come to the area to retire. Thus, virtually the only work available here is service to the retirees, waiting upon them at local eateries, landscaping their yards, or building and maintaining their houses. To survive as a young artist in a rural community is even more difficult, due to lack of venues, of funding and of colleagues and collaborators.

However difficult it may be, for many years I have been working towards the goal of living *and earning a living* as an ecologically-oriented artist in a rural community. As part of this retrospective, “career-review” essay on my life, I have been reading over old journals (being a avid journaler for almost 15 years, I have multiple crates-full of journals) and have found evidence of conscious focus on this goal since at least 2000.



Nala Walla, Nov 2008, at home with stack of journals (and, yes, that is my feline familiar Tania in back)

When Keeth and I moved into our house in 2004, we consciously made the decision that we would drop all of our “odd jobs” in order to focus completely on teaching, performing and homesteading. This was a giant leap of faith. Certainly we were not expecting to be rolling in money as artists, but it was difficult to live with so little, even after years of experience living simply, and cultivating a very low “overhead.”

As I write, Keeth and I are about to leave for a ten-day, eighteen-show performance tour with our eco-oriented children’s show “*The Harmonica Pocket*.” We’ve come a long way since our first gig a few years ago at a preschool where Keeth was teaching music. We have been slowly building our local show repertoire and digital music portfolio, including CDs and downloadable mp3’s. Today, we are finally getting to a place where we are making a decent living through these educational

performances and sales of music and merchandise. And *The Harmonica Pocket* is an excellent way to communicate our values to kids. Coupled with the workshops and performances we offer to adults, we can now say that we have achieved the goal of earning a living as performing artists in a rural county. For more info on this project, please visit [www.harmonicapocket.com/kids](http://www.harmonicapocket.com/kids). It's really a nice site. Have fun!



The Harmonica Pocket (Keeth Apgar and Nala Walla) at Skyway Library, 2008



Cover of Harmonica Pocket's 2008 children's music album "Ladybug One"

#### AND ON TO THE FUTURE

At this point in my life, I have decided to finish the masters degree which I started back in 1994. After investigating different programs for many years, I have decided upon the Gaia University "Capstone Masters" program. The Action Learning model under which Gaia U operates suits the "school-of-life" philosophy that I have working with for most of the last 15 years. I will be using this degree to focus on building the skills I need to facilitate my long term goals and visions.

Just one short example of my commitment to self-education. After feeling dissatisfied with what theater and movement programs were offering, about three years ago, I created my own "masters" curriculum in dancetheater improvisation. I outlined a syllabus, sought out relevant teachers and workshops, and began writing papers and performing what I learned—all for a minimal cash investment in classes and reading materials. This secured me a wonderful education. The only thing missing is the legitimization of an accreditation service, which Gaia University will ideally provide me.

#### LONG TERM GOALS AND VISIONS

I envision living in a lush, abundant community based on mutual respect for, and cooperation with each other as aspects of ourselves; for all the animals and plants that are our sustenance; for Gaia and the Universal Laws which govern all of us, macro and micro. This community will be both complete unto itself, and inextricably linked with sister communities—a loose confederation of interdependent holons, nesting within and overlapping each other.

In this community, each of us will seek passionately to know ourselves, and, with the support of our brothers and sisters, to bring our unique expression into form. Naturally, when each of us does this, we will inherit the intrinsic abundance of Gaia.

For those in our regional community who are on a journey to discover our fullest and healthiest expression, my role is facilitator of this process: by offering techniques whereby each of us can relate more deeply and more thoroughly to our own bodies—which are microcosms of larger Gaiaic processes—we relate more deeply to Earth.



In order to develop a mature tree of facilitator's skills, I will nurture the growth of four branches to offer me further training. As these branches spread, the body of the work will be rooted in a coherent and financially sustainable lifestyle.

#### Branch 1-“The Bcollective Homestead”

The best lessons come from practicing a life consistent with my ideals. Living with hands in the soil, participating with the turning of the seasons allows Earth to be my teacher. I gain experience in: living collectively/growing high quality food/preservation of pre-industrial skill sets/community building and communication process/traditional food activism/growth of a homestead-based educational center.

#### Branch 2- “Performance & Education”

I am cultivating a pedagogy of how to use embodied and expressive arts practices to strengthen and develop ecosocial activism (actionism!) This education methodology—which includes interactive and participatory performance—can then be applied in service of conflict resolution/mediation, trauma-healing, ceremony, activist recharge, community building. One important objective of this is the training of teams of creative mediators/healers who can consult with communities and organizations in times of conflict, crisis or social upheaval, or simply to build, bond and strengthen a community. Another objective is the creation of forum and performances for them to communicate important messages that are typically censored by mainstream media.

#### Branch 3-“Consulting Practice”

I am approaching the establishment of a practice in Embodiment and Repatterning Counseling/Consulting. Towards this goal, I am currently collecting tools in four areas: a- Somatic Movement Education and Therapy (SMT). b- Expressive & Embodied Arts Counseling (EAC) and c-Wholistic Nutrition (pHD) d-Conflict Resolution/Certified Mediator. With a host of tools at my disposal, I will be able to consult with individuals and groups, to create custom-tailored health programs for my clients, all of them rooted in the direct experience of the body.

#### Branch 4-“Writing and Publishing”

Throughout the learning process in the above areas, I will continue to sharpen my pencil and to chronicle my experience on paper (including digital “paper”) so others can share in them, even across the globe and across the generations.

All four of these branches have already begun to grow, and some are flowering already (early bloomers!)

#### MY NEXT STEPS

The following is a list of my next steps, both for the short and medium term.

\*Continuing Coursework in Somatics and Movement Repatterning—I am currently seeking and studying different somatic techniques, both through local practitioners and larger schools such as Moving On Center (MOC)--School of Participatory Arts and Somatii?c Research in Oakland, CA. This includes work in Alexander, Feldenkrais, and Skinner Releasing Techniques, Body Mind Centering and other embodied practices. As of August 2008, I have already completed about two hundred hours of training at Moving On Center, and am thus part of the way towards receiving me Somatic Movement Therapist (SMT) certification training.

\*Musical Theater with Activist Messages—The Harmonica Pocket Children’s Show—for which I am a performer and producer—is already booked in 2008 at dozens of venues (schools, festivals and public libraries.)

\*BODYVERSITY workshops at festivals, schools, institutes, design courses and at the Bcollective Homestead. I have already taught at many such venues, and will continue to seek out more, to round out my portfolio. Places I have already taught include: SFDI-Seattle Festival of Dance Improvisation, SEEDS Festival (Somatic Experiments in Earth, Dance and Science), Portland State University, and Madrona Mindbody Institute. I will teach several workshops in my regional community, which will link dance and theater improvisation to the world outside the studio, helping the dance community to embody its role in activism. In the next few years, I also aim to help produce a local international dance festival to take place at the Fort Worden Lifelong Learning Center in Port Townsend, WA.

\*Wholistic Health Activism—I am doing research and experimentation in this area, including a 50-mile diet

and writing for our local Food Coop newsletter.

\*Homestead Building & Garden Projects—This year, we succeeded at our goal to build a deer fence, a storage shed, and phase one of our bathhouse bathhouse as well as plant about 20 different fruit-bearing perennials. Future plans include a flexi-use community barn (for performance, workshops, etc.), residency housing, pond/wetland restoration, animal systems (i.e. dogs, poultry) and permaculture gardens.

\*Publishing Articles—I have already published several essays in respected progressive journals (i.e. Permaculture Activist Magazine, Contact Quarterly Magazine) and am planning on submitting more articles for publication in local and international journals, ezines, weblogs and books.

\*Gaia University-I hope to complete my Master's Degree within a year's time, through Gaia University. This will allow me to use the letter MS after my name, and gain credibility and earning power with students, clients and employers. Some possible titles for this degree are

- Movement Repatterning
- Sociocultural Technology
- Embodied Ecoteracy
- Ecosomatics
- Embodied Arts Therapy
- Embodiment Technologies
- Sustainability Education

\*Raising Children—If we are successful in drawing abundant support to the above projects, I am intending that Keeth and I will have enough resources to begin having children in the next few years.

END NOTES

Much has happened in my 36 years of life, and we have covered lots of ground in this retrospective. Though, since more detail is beyond the scope of this essay, there is still much that has been left unturned. In the outputs soon to follow will be a more thorough treatment of some of the projects and experiences I touched upon here.

Judging by the immense changes that our society is experiencing, and the goals that I have outlined for myself in the next few years, the future may likely be even more interesting than the past. Thank you for reading, and I hope I have not gotten too nostalgic for you.

During this time of pause and reflection, I can see that the abilities and disabilities that I was born with have shaped a unique path for me, making effectively impossible for me NOT to pursue a healing path. My limitations and my pain, though not always easy, have become also my greatest gift. I walk this path for my own sake, and my own sanity. And because this paths simultaneously serves the sake and sanity of Gaia, I know I am on the right track.

[POSTSCRIPT: SUPPLEMENTAL EVIDENCE

Right now, you're at the Bcollective.org site. Please have a look around. There is evidence everywhere about what I've been up to since the launch of this site in 2006. Noteworthy are the essays on the "IDEOLOGICAL MORSELS" page, several of which have already been published, or are pending publication. Please also link over to the [Harmonica Pocket website](#), where you can view more evidence of our Children's Performances, including our current "Singing Thanksgiving Tour"]

[top](#)

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