

Awakening the Heart in Agriculture

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This article is edited from my notes for the keynote speech, "Awakening the Heart in Agriculture", which I gave on February 8, 2020 at the 2020 Annual International Conference of the Biodynamic Movement, "Finding the Spirit in Agriculture" at the Goetheanum in Dornach, Switzerland. Conference proceedings and a video recording of the keynote will be posted at <https://www.sektion-landwirtschaft.org/en/lwt/2020>. Much has changed in the world since early February, and there are many differences between the audience to whom the speech was addressed and those who will read this issue of the journal. In the spirit of sharing how the Biodynamic Association has been showing up within the international community, I have chosen to keep this text largely the same as what I spoke in Dornach. However, I will offer some further reflections on what has shifted for me and for the BDA since February, and where we might go from here, at the end of the article.

What does it mean to find the spirit in agriculture?

Where do we find spirit?

How do we embody our spiritual ideals in our agricultural work?

In our current times, we see so many outward expressions of the dominance of materialism. Industrial agriculture is one example of this: it is a model based only in the material plane, focused on inputs, outputs, and yields. It is focused on quantity over quality, on simplifying and standardizing processes, on diminishing the human involvement in the system to the bare minimum necessary for production.

Biodynamics invites us to approach agriculture very differently. Although it is also grounded in the material plane, biodynamics invites us to recognize and work with the intrinsic relationship between spirit and matter. Biodynamics invites us to see the spirit in our soils, plants, and animals, and develop living and respectful relationships with each of them. Yet at times we can forget to bring this same approach to our fellow human beings, especially those whose backgrounds, cultures, and life experiences are different from ours. I believe that our human relationships are integral to finding the spirit in agriculture.

At the end of his fourth lecture on agriculture in 1924, Rudolf Steiner stated:

"In spiritual science, human beings are our standard and our starting point. All our practical suggestions serve the purpose of sustaining the whole human being in the best way possible. That is what distinguishes this kind of study and research from what is customary today."¹

¹ Rudolf Steiner, *Spiritual Foundations for the Renewal of Agriculture* (Junction City, OR: Bio-Dynamic Farming and Gardening Association, Inc. 1993).

As we continually return to the insights of Steiner that are the basis of biodynamic agriculture and seek to understand how we can best integrate that wisdom into our work today, we have an important opportunity to awaken and expand our hearts to deepen the human dimension of our work as we continue to deepen and grow our work with the land.

My entry into agriculture was through the social realm. When I was seventeen years old, just finishing high school, I was walking down the main street of downtown Santa Cruz and encountered a young man about my age who asked if I cared about the wellbeing of workers. He was a volunteer with the Western Service Workers Association, and invited me to join him in volunteering to support and help organize agricultural workers to improve their working and living conditions. Visiting farm labor camps and small apartments crowded with multiple families, I saw firsthand that the people who are the labor force for California's abundant agricultural fields, mostly immigrants from Mexico and other countries in Latin America, are being treated very poorly. They are often paid much less than the legal minimum wage, struggle to buy enough food to feed their families, live in unsafe and overcrowded housing, and are exposed to toxic chemicals through their agricultural work, leading many to develop severe health problems. The months I spent volunteering before I went off to college probably had more of an impact on me than it did on those workers, yet when I decided a few years later to pursue agriculture as a vocation, taking an apprenticeship on a biodynamic farm in Northern California, I forgot about that human dimension of agriculture, and focused only on how I could care for the soil, and the plants, and the animals.

There was so much that I was not awake to that first summer of farming and for many years after, as I continued my path in developing school and community gardens, teaching about composting and beekeeping, working on other organic and biodynamic farms, and finally coming to work with the Biodynamic Association (BDA). It was only through my work with the BDA in biodynamic education, reaching out to invite new people into biodynamics, and having meaningful interactions with some of those people, that I began to wake up. My heart awakened to a whole different dimension of agriculture which I believe is deeply important for all of us to see. I would like to share with you three stories of how my heart has been awakening, through my relationships with three specific people.

The first encounter that helped me to awaken was with Jim Embry, a participant in our 2014 North American Biodynamic Conference in Louisville, Kentucky, which had the theme of *Farming for Health*. Although I did not know who he was, I remember noticing him at the beginning of the conference both because of his radiant presence, and because his dark brown skin contrasted with the paler skin of almost everyone else at the conference. At the end of the conference, we held a plenary session where participants talked about their learnings and questions from the conference with each other, and then we invited a few people to share reflections with the whole group. Jim came to the microphone and said, "In this conference, we have been talking about the importance of biodiversity in our soils and in our farms. But let's look around this room. Where is the human biodiversity? How is the biodynamic movement going to move forward if human diversity is not present?"

I looked around the room as he spoke, and recognized consciously what I had already unconsciously known since the beginning of the conference: that probably 595 of the 600 people attending the conference were white. The man at the microphone was one of a tiny handful of people of color at the conference. I felt a sharp pain of recognition that as a white person in a country that privileges people who look like me in every possible way, I had the privilege of not even thinking about race as I organized the conference. And by not even

thinking about race, I had created a conference space that was primarily a space for white people. I had created a space of exclusion, robbing both the people who had been included and the people who had been excluded of the richness that could have emerged from them coming together in the exploration and deepening of biodynamics.

For many months after the conference, I thought about what Jim had said, yet felt powerless to take any meaningful action. I felt deeply in my heart that I had a responsibility to do something different for our next biodynamic conference, but I had no idea what to do. Eventually, I realized that I could not figure it out by myself, and that this man who had helped me see the problem might also have some ideas about how to move forward. I searched to find out who that man was, and learned that Jim Embry is a leader and eco-activist who cultivates collaborative efforts at the local, national, and international levels, and has worked to connect social justice, food justice, and environmental justice within other social movements for the past fifty years. I worked up the nerve to call him, thank him for his comment, and ask for his advice. And Jim told me that the Biodynamic Association needed to do three things:

1. We needed to ask people of color to be keynote speakers and workshop leaders in the conference.
2. We needed to find funds for scholarships and prioritize giving those scholarships to people of color.
3. We needed to build relationships with other organizations whose constituents were people of color to broaden outreach to those communities about the conference.

These were clear action steps, but weren't easy for me to embrace at first. Although I had always wanted the conference to be diverse, because of my socialization as a white person it seemed strange to me to become so focused on the color of people's skin. I grew up believing that our physical characteristics are not the defining element of who we are, and that the ideas and experiences that someone can bring are much more important than what they look like. And like many well-meaning, progressive white Americans of my generation, I was raised to be "colorblind", based on the idea that if we ignore race, racism will go away.

Unfortunately, it's not that easy. Because racism is not just an individual belief. Racism and white supremacy live in the systems of our society. For generations those systems and institutions have been intentionally allocating resources of every sort—from money to land to education to leadership—so that people who are classified as "white" get a lot more, just because of the color of their skin, at the expense of people who are classified as black, brown, or any other color. Systemic racism set it up so that even though as individuals we had no conscious intentions to exclude anyone from the Biodynamic Conference because of the color of their skin, we excluded people of color by default because we did nothing to compensate for the larger system of oppression and exclusion in which our work takes place.

Racism is an expression of the dominance of materialistic forces, just like industrial agriculture. We can't overcome it with a solely material focus, but neither can we succeed by focusing only on a spiritual view of a universal human being that transcends the social construct of race. This would be akin to imagining we can improve agriculture by only thinking about the cosmos and never working with the practical realities of the day to day work in our farm or garden. Similarly, through my conversation with Jim and others along the way, I came to recognize that I needed to become conscious of race and color and recognize and work to address the ways that systemic racism makes it harder for people of color to participate in order to create a conference

that was inclusive of the many dimensions of diversity that cannot be seen on the outside of a human being.

Our next North American Biodynamic Conference was set to take place in Santa Fe, New Mexico. As we began planning the conference, and seeking to identify a more diverse array of speakers and workshop leaders, one of the names that kept coming up was Emigdio Ballon and the farm he manages at the Pueblo of Tesuque near Santa Fe. Emigdio is originally from Bolivia, and has been living in the United States for many years. Early in his time in the USA, he trained in biodynamics at the Josephine Porter Institute. At the Pueblo of Tesuque, Emigdio and a team of members of the Pueblo had been building a farm for several years, incorporating Tesuque traditional agriculture practices, traditions from Emigdio's indigenous roots in Bolivia, permaculture, and biodynamics.

When I went to visit the Pueblo Tesuque and meet Emigdio, I had another awakening. Again, it was something that on some level I knew, but of which I was not fully conscious. As I set foot for the very first time on a farm in a Native American community, the deep history of human connection to land in this place and all across the United States suddenly struck me. The arrival of biodynamics to the Pueblo of Tesuque was very recent, but growing food in sacred relationship with the land had been happening here for thousands of years.

Before European contact, the United States was home to many hundreds of distinct Indigenous peoples, each deeply connected to the land where they lived. Cherokee, Chickasaw, Choctaw, Muskogee Creek, Seminole, Seneca, Cayuga, Onandaga, Oneida, Mohawk, Anishanaabe, Cree, Dakota, Lakota, Lakota Sioux, Chayenne, Arapaho, Ponca, Pawnee, Osage, Kiowa, Shoshone, Bannok, Paiute, Ute, Tlingit, Salish, Maka, Hoopa, Pomo, Miwok, Karok, Yurok, Onasatis. These Indigenous peoples and hundreds of others who I have not named have had deeply spiritual and co-creative relationships with the land for at least 15,000 years.

Native Americans developed and cultivated sacred food plants including corn, beans, and squash—food crops that eventually spread all around the world. Native Americans partnered with buffalo on the great plains to create incredibly diverse and healthy grasslands and rich, meters-deep soil—soil that has enabled generations of European Americans to farm grain crops year after year without returning anything back to the Earth. Native Americans tended wildlands through fire, pruning, and selective planting, stewarding oak trees for acorns, nurturing edible grasses and bulbs, and creating habitat for deer and other animals that they hunted for food. For thousands of years, Native Americans have actively partnered with spirit in the soil, the plants, the animals. They have understood the relationships between the Earth and the cosmos and how those relationships affect work with the land. They created an amazing diversity of ways to care for people, for the health of all beings, for this planet Earth we all live on.

And the deeply tragic history of North America, and so many other places in the world, is that these vibrant and wise Indigenous ways of life and caring for the land have been deeply disrupted and sometimes obliterated by European colonialism starting about 500 years ago.

The wave of European colonialism that eventually created the United States of America was guided by the Doctrine of Discovery, initiated by Pope Alexander VI in 1493. The Doctrine of Discovery established a spiritual, political, and legal justification for Christian colonizers from Spain, Portugal, France, the Kingdom of England (later Great Britain), the Netherlands, and the Kingdom of Prussia (now Germany) to colonize land and people across the Americas, Africa, Asia, and Oceania.

With the blessing of the Pope, European settlers believed that they had a divine right to kill, enslave, and displace the Indigenous people and steal their land. The vast majority of Indigenous people in the United States were massacred or killed by diseases within a few years of the arrival of Europeans to their area. Those who survived endured horrendous atrocities, and they and their descendants were deliberately stripped of their languages, their Indigenous ways of life, and their ways of tending and connecting with the land.

One of the few areas of the United States where some of the Native Americans were able to survive the attacks of colonialism and continue to live on their ancestral land is the Southwest, including New Mexico. Visiting the farm at the Pueblo of Tesuque, I could see still-living strands of the sacred relationship to land and food that the Tesuque people had held for so many thousands of years. And I also saw that they had still suffered tremendous losses from centuries of mistreatment, first by colonizers from Europe and then by the American government. In talking with Emigdio about the development of the farm, I understood that very few people in the Pueblo still had access to the traditional agricultural practices and wisdom of their ancestors, and that it was a difficult path to rekindle the sacred relationship of the people to their land after so many generations of trauma and oppression.

The farm was definitely not a typical biodynamic farm. It was still in development, as much vision for the future as present reality. But I knew that it was deeply important to invite Emigdio and members of the Pueblo of Tesuque to participate meaningfully in the Biodynamic Conference and to bring conference participants out of Santa Fe to visit this farm. Although many conference participants would be coming from other areas of the United States or other countries in the world, connecting with the Indigenous people to this place and experiencing a small window into their relationship to the land would be important learning for everyone.

Our 2016 Biodynamic Conference in Santa Fe, "*Tierra Viva: Farming the Living Earth*," was considerably more inclusive and diverse than our 2014 conference in Kentucky. Our keynote speakers included Karen Washington, a black farmer and food leader who started many community gardens and food sovereignty projects in New York City before moving to rural New York to start a collective farm, and Larry Littlebird, a strong Laguna/ Santo Domingo Pueblo Native voice with multi-faceted work as a master storyteller, filmmaker, artist, author, and social activist, who leads experiential land-based programs, including oral tradition story camps and contemplative spiritual retreats for inspiring transformative leadership and social action.

We found generous donors to create the Devon Strong Scholarship Fund and Estevan Arrellano Scholarship Fund to help make the conference more accessible for Latin Americans and Indigenous peoples of the Americas. We connected with local groups to increase outreach to these communities and enabled 124 people in total to participate in the conference through these scholarships. We also offered simultaneous interpretation into Spanish for keynotes and workshops to further increase accessibility. I invited the Governor of the Pueblo of Tesuque to open the conference in the traditional way of his people, and publicly acknowledged that the conference center where we were meeting was on Pueblo of Tesuque traditional land. A group of sixty people visited the Pueblo of Tesuque on a field day and collectively made and applied biodynamic tree paste to many of the trees in the farm's orchard. These actions were deeply meaningful. And yet, even at the 2016 conference there was still more for me to learn about human relationships and how they relate to biodynamic agriculture. Still more awakening that needed to happen in my heart.

The third person to invite me into awakening was Dr. Claudia J Ford, a university professor in Women's Studies, Environmental Literature, Environmental and Business Ethics, and Global Business Economics, and a researcher in the areas of traditional ecological knowledge, agroecology, historical ethnobotany, gender, and medicinal plants. Claudia was one of the very small handful of people of color who participated in our 2014 conference, and she returned as a presenter in 2016, giving a workshop on the spirit of healing plants. I connected with Claudia toward the end of the Santa Fe conference, and she described to me how unwelcome many of the white conference participants had made her feel, with seemingly small comments and gestures that I now know are called microaggressions. Over the course of the five days of the conference, all those microaggressions added up to a tremendously challenging conference experience for her, and likely most of all of the other people of color participating as well.

Claudia awakened me to the reality that it is not enough to just invite people to the table. That we also need to consider what their experience will be. That we also need to understand and account for the incredibly pervasive context of domination and oppression that permeates our culture, which, despite our ignorance or even best intentions, filters into every interaction, even at a Biodynamic Conference.

Our conference in Santa Fe took place just one week after the 2016 presidential election, following months of public discourse riddled with blatant racism, sexism, homophobia, and xenophobia. That election and its aftermath brought social injustices more sharply into the consciousness of many white Americans like me who had been asleep to the depth and breadth of the suffering of our fellow human beings. Many people and organizations who had previously believed that these issues were outside of their scope of work began to more actively explore social justice and diversity, equity, and inclusion in the years that followed that election. The Biodynamic Association was one such organization.

We began to ask, as an organization dedicated to biodynamic agriculture, what is our responsibility in this human realm? How does social justice relate to our mission? These were not easy questions to ask, and not everyone believed we should be asking them. But members of the Biodynamic Association kept approaching us, saying, "This is important. What are we going to do as a biodynamic movement?"

As we explored these questions, one clear path forward was recognizing the wisdom and sacred agricultural and land stewardship practices of Indigenous peoples of the Americas. Building on the connections with the Pueblo of Tesuque and other Indigenous land stewards that began at our 2016 conference, we developed an ongoing project to bridge biodynamics with Indigenous and traditional agriculture across the Americas that has enabled many more such connections to be initiated and nurtured.

But that was not sufficient. Because it was not only Native Americans who had been excluded from the Biodynamic Association. And the theft of land from Indigenous people in order to grow food is not the only tragedy that has left a living legacy in the soil and the people of the United States. To engage in work to heal the human of dimension of agriculture, we also needed to recognize the tragic history of agricultural slavery and the ongoing mistreatment of black and brown people in American agriculture.

At the time of colonization, a primary purpose of the American colonies was to supply the colonizing European countries with agricultural crops including cocoa, coffee, cotton, rice, tobacco, and sugar. In order to grow these crops on a massive scale, the colonialists needed

labor. Although some of this labor was provided by indentured servants from Europe, in a drive to generate the most profit possible, the chosen strategy shifted quickly to slavery. And so was birthed the triangle of trade. Ships that carried raw materials from the American colonies to Europe were then sent to Africa. There, the colonialists abducted Indigenous people from West Africa who had incredible knowledge and practices for growing food and building soil in their subtropical climate. Those human beings were piled as cargo into the ships that sailed back to the Americas, where they were sold into slavery to grow more crops for the colonizing countries, further fueling that tragic triangle. This unconscionable practice, driven by materialistic economic greed, was justified by the invention and amplification of racist ideas and beliefs placing people of European descent, newly categorized as "white", as inherently superior to people of African descent, newly categorized as "black", and asserting that white domination, control, and ownership of black people was the natural order of things.

Over the course of 400 years, the transatlantic slave trade violently ripped 25-30 million people from their homelands where they had lived and grown food in sacred relationship with the land for countless generations. Not only were those people separated from their families. Not only did many die in the course of the journey across the Atlantic Ocean. Those who survived were then forced into a deeply troubled relationship with the land through generations of slavery. The legacy of that deeply troubled relationship still lives in our soil, and still lives in the souls of human beings. In the United States, agricultural slavery continued for hundreds of years and was only made illegal in 1865 after a four-year bloody war between the North and South of the United States, where thousands of confederate soldiers fought to the death to maintain this abhorrent practice. Immediately after slavery was abolished, new laws and practices were put in place to deny African Americans freedom and access to land, and the systemic racism that was put into place in the days of slavery continues into the present. Today less than 1% of the land in the United States is owned by black people, even though they make up 13% of the population, while 98% of land is owned by white Americans. And African Americans are imprisoned at five times the rate of White Americans.

Human atrocities connected to agriculture, almost entirely based on race, have continued to occur to the present day. Chinese farmers were encouraged to immigrate to the United States in the mid-1800s to work on farms and railroads, and they made up 90% of California's agricultural labor force in 1870. Then they were denied their rights to live in the US, own property, and travel through the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. During World War II, 120,000 Japanese Americans, many of whom were landowning farmers, were incarcerated and their land was stolen. And as I saw firsthand when I was seventeen years old, millions of workers, many who have immigrated from Latin America, continue to be exploited, mistreated, and abused throughout the United States food system from farm fields to slaughterhouses to restaurants.

It is hard for anyone to hold all these tragedies in their heart. For years, I pushed my knowledge of them away, because I thought it was too hard. My privilege as a white person allowed me to go on ignoring them, while people of color are forced to face these realities every day. I thought that I was powerless to do anything about these tragedies, and so I continued to be part of the problem rather than part of the solution. I also did not realize the spiritual cost to my own humanity of ignoring these realities. I am deeply grateful to Jim Embry and Emigdio Ballon and Claudia Ford—and many others, primarily people of color—for their generosity in helping me wake up to see that recognizing, talking about, and working with the present-day legacies of all that has happened in the interwoven histories of people and land is an essential part of how we fulfill our mission to transform the practice and culture of agriculture.

This is not about guilt or blame. This is not about labeling people as good or evil. This is about recognizing injustice and the deep wounds that are still alive in the soil and in the souls of human beings. This is about understanding that we all have a part to play in bringing healing and liberation to all of humanity and to the Earth.

The Biodynamic Association board and staff have co-created a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Statement that encompasses our current collective understanding of why this is all relevant to our work, and what we hope to do about it. Our current statement, revised in Summer 2019, is available at www.biodynamics.com/content/biodynamic-association-diversity-equity-and-inclusion-statement

If we are to truly find and work with the spirit in agriculture, we must seek to understand the human dynamics and history that have shaped the land and the culture in which we work. I invite you to explore how this is relevant to you. What is the history of your land? Who was there before you? How did they relate to the land? How are the people working in agriculture treated the area where you live? How is land ownership distributed? Are there injustices you have some awareness of but have not yet awakened to face?

I am still learning the stories of the people and the land in the United States. There is more to learn than I could in a lifetime, and probably more history that has been lost than can still be found. And while the history is deeply important, the present and the future are too. Because we know biodynamics comes from a deeply healing impulse. We know it has potential to transform and heal our relationships with land, with our communities, with ourselves. We know that this form of agriculture that we practice has so much potential to address the challenges faced by humanity and the planet Earth.

But in order to realize that potential, we must awaken our hearts. We must awaken into understanding and we must awaken into action. For 500 years we have been living in the paradigm of globalization in which Europe is the center of the world, and everywhere else is secondary. Where people of European descent are the intellectual and moral authorities, and everyone else is meant to listen to and learn from them.

Biodynamics was born in Europe, in the same geographic region where the colonialism that created the United States of America and brutalized people all over the world was born. If we are not awake, we can unintentionally replicate the patterns of colonialism in our efforts to share biodynamics with the world. In a lecture on Anthroposophical Ethics in 1912, Rudolf Steiner stated:

"Progress is not gained by the mere preaching of universal love, but by the extension of our interests further and further, so that we interest ourselves more and more in souls with widely different characters, racial and national peculiarities, with widely different temperaments, and holding widely differing religious and philosophical views, and approach them with understanding. Right interest, right understanding, calls forth from the soul the right moral actions."²

In our agricultural work, we need to not only interest ourselves in the soil, the plants, and the animals. We must, as Steiner encourages, "interest ourselves more and more in souls with

² Rudolf Steiner, "Anthroposophical Ethics ... St. Francis, Lecture III" (Rudolf Steiner Archive & e.Lib), accessed https://wn.rsarchive.org/Lectures/AE2602_index.html April 30, 2020.

widely different characters," including the people we already regularly encounter in our daily work, and the people who we have been prevented from encountering due to the systems of oppression and domination that still persist around the world today.

And in those encounters, some of the qualities I am currently seeking to cultivate in myself and in the biodynamic community are humility, patience, and listening. One of our opening keynote speakers at last year's conference was Stephanie Morningstar, who is a member of the Turtle Clan of the Oneida people and Co-Director of the Northeast Farmers of Color Land Trust. She and her Co-Director Çaca Yvaire spoke about "Illuminating the Constellations of Reciprocal Relationship with Land, Self, and Stars".

At the bottom of every email I have received from Stephanie are these words from Lilla Watson, an Aboriginal elder, activist, and educator from Queensland, Australia: "If you have come to help me, you are wasting your time. If you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together." If we believe that we know best, that we already have all the answers, and that we just need to bring other people in so we can show them how to think and how to farm, we have already failed.

Anthroposophy and biodynamics offer an amazing window into the spirit in agriculture, and they are not the only path to understanding and working with spirit. Each human being has a relationship with the Earth, and none of us is qualified to judge how spiritual that relationship is. Although many tragic events have severed so many sacred relationships between so many Indigenous peoples and their lands, there are innumerable seeds of those sacred relationships that have survived. If these beautiful seeds are brought into mutually respectful relationship with biodynamics, the potential for healing and transformation will be incredible.

The glaring fact is that the Earth and humanity are in trouble. In the face of crushing materialism, industrial agriculture, widespread injustice, and catastrophic climate change, it is imperative that all of us who see the possibility and absolute necessity of sacred agriculture and land stewardship cultivate relationships with each other.

At our recent biodynamic conferences we have continued to invite black, Indigenous, and people of color to be keynote speakers and workshop leaders in the conference, raise funds for scholarships and prioritize giving those scholarships to increase diversity at the conference, and build relationships with other organizations whose constituents are people that the Biodynamic Association has not historically reached. Our 2018 Biodynamic Conference in Portland, Oregon, had the theme "Transforming the Heart of Agriculture: Soil. Justice. Regeneration." Jim Embry and Claudia Ford, along with Orland Bishop, were keynote speakers, sharing their wisdom about "Biodynamics, Indigeneity, and Social Justice." There were a number of people who felt this theme was a departure from the core of what the Biodynamic Association is about. But there were also many people who came toward biodynamics for the first time because they were drawn to a conference that included conversations about both sacred agriculture and sacred human relationships.

The 2018 conference engendered many difficult conversations in the biodynamic community about whether and how biodynamics, social justice, and anthroposophy are related, and whether and how they can be brought into healthy relationship. To do this work, difficult conversations and difficult interactions are necessary. If we stay in our comfort zones, we cannot learn and grow.

Our most recent conference, a few months ago in New York, had the theme of "Cultivating Relationships: Earth, Cosmos, Community". Many who attended that conference reflected that there is an integration now just beginning to take place between biodynamics and social justice, which, while still challenging, feels that it is becoming increasingly fruitful. And we also recognize that there is so much more work to do, within and beyond the BDA.

As we have these difficult conversations, and endeavor to create relationships across difference, we have found that it is helpful to have some guidelines. Our Biodynamic Conference Community Guidelines were initiated by Claudia Ford, who is now on the BDA Board of Directors, and inspired by the work of several other organizations working at the intersection of agriculture and social justice, such as Soul Fire Farm in New York. You can find them online at www.biodynamics.com/conference/2019/community-guidelines.

At the beginning of the Biodynamic Conference in New York, I invited everyone to reflect on these guidelines and identify the qualities and capacities that they will seek to cultivate in themselves. Wherever you are as you read this, I would like to invite you to do the same.

How will you awaken your heart as you further your work in biodynamic agriculture? Where might you extend your interests further, beyond the borders that perhaps you didn't even realize were there?

There is a verse that Rudolf Steiner gave to Ralph Courtney in 1923 that is commonly known as the Verse for America, which I feel has a strong connection to what I have shared with you in this piece:

"May our feeling penetrate into the center of our heart, and seek, in love, to unite itself with the human beings seeking the same goal, with the spirit beings who—bearing grace, strengthening us from realms of light, and illuminating our love—are gazing down upon our earnest, heartfelt striving."³

As you go forward in your work, may your feeling penetrate into the center of your heart, and may your earnest, heartfelt striving result in deep healing for the Earth and humanity.

In the months since the International Biodynamic Conference in Switzerland, the COVID-19 pandemic and its disproportionate impact on communities of color; the tragic deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and so many others before them; and the national uprisings in defense of Black lives have been important and urgent awakening calls. They point even more starkly to the deeply entrenched inequities and the culture of white supremacy, systemic racism, and widespread oppression that have continued from the past right into the present moment. I am on a constant and steep learning curve to continue deepening my understanding of how I contribute to the perpetuation of these inequities, and how I can contribute to creating healing and justice through my words and actions as an individual and as a leader of the Biodynamic Association. The BDA staff, our Board of Directors, and many of our members are engaging in learning and conversation about what each of us can do individually, and what we can do together, to weave the cultivation of justice into our work with biodynamics

³ See R. Steiner. *Mantric Sayings: Meditations 1903–1925*. Great Barrington: SteinerBooks, 2015. Ralph Courtney later became one of the founding members of the Biodynamic Association in the United States in 1938.

so that we are ever more aligned with our mission and with what the world is asking of us in this moment. We invite you to join us in this journey.

Visit <https://www.biodynamics.com/biodynamics-social-justice> for resources and opportunities to engage.

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