

REIMAGINING LAWYERING: SUPPORTING WELL-BEING AND LIBERATION

*Susan L. Brooks***

We shall be known by the company we keep
By the ones who circle round to tend these fires
We shall be known by the ones who sow and reap
The seeds of change, alive from deep within the earth

It is time now, it is time now that we thrive
It is time we lead ourselves into the well
It is time now, and what a time to be alive
In this Great Turning we shall learn to lead in love
In this Great Turning we shall learn to lead in love¹

I. PROLOGUE/GROUNDING

I would like to begin with what is known as “grounding.”² I want to invite us all to take a moment, to allow ourselves to slow down and take

* Professor of Law, Drexel University Kline School of Law. I offered an earlier version of the first part of this talk as part of my final assignment in the Warrior One Mindfulness in Law Teaching Training Course in 2020. See generally WARRIOR ONE, <https://warriorone.com/mindfulness-in-law-teacher-training> [<https://perma.cc/W46R-LKNE>] (last visited Dec. 2, 2023). I want to thank all the participants and teachers in that program, especially Judi Cohen and Alisa Gray, for their support and encouragement to continue pursuing my own path, and leading in love.

* These written remarks were delivered at the Howard Lichtenstein Distinguished Professorship in Legal Ethics Lecture at the Maurice A. Deane School of Law at Hofstra University on March 23, 2023, and have been expanded for purposes of this article.

1. Karisha Longaker, *We Shall Be Known*, SONGS FOR THE GREAT TURNING, <https://songsforthegreatturning.net/going-forth/we-shall-be-known-by-the-company-we-keep> [<https://perma.cc/7C4X-3FVJ>] (last visited Dec. 2, 2023). For more information and music videos of the song being performed by the author, as a member of the group MaMuse, and by the Thrive Choir, see *id.* The “Great Turning” mentioned in this song refers to the inspiring work of Joanna Macy, which she calls the “Work That Reconnects.” See *infra* Part V.B. Macy’s work and the contributions of similar thought leaders and activists who believe we need to “lead in love” have deeply inspired and informed my own work and this article.

2. The term “grounding” is often attributed to Alexander Lowen, who became well known for his psychotherapeutic approach emphasizing the mind and body connection. It was first

a few conscious breaths. By taking a little time to ground, we can allow ourselves to arrive more fully in this moment and in this place. We can also take another moment literally to notice how we are grounded and feel into how we are rooted and connected to the earth.

Now I would like to invite you to stand if possible, or feel free to sit if you prefer. I want to take another moment to invite a very simple yoga practice. Whether you are seated or standing, please bring yourself into an upright posture with your arms by your side or placed comfortably on your lap. Notice if your shoulders may be hunching forward slightly—as I know I tend to do—and see if you can gently straighten them and reach the crown of your head toward the sky. Notice how the bottoms of your feet are rooted to the ground. We are all held and supported by forces we cannot see, including gravity.

When we slow down and take a moment to bring ourselves into this upright posture, we create a clearer channel to allow our breath to flow freely and find some realignment. This short and simple practice of adjusting the way we stand or sit is available to us at any time. By slowing down and giving ourselves a moment to pause, breathe, and realign, we can make more intentional choices that can shift our present experience in ways that can open us up to new possibilities.

I want to offer one more piece of grounding as we begin, which is to situate myself and ourselves in this particular place and time. This would be a moment when I could offer a land acknowledgement, which some or many of you may be familiar with by now. As I understand it, the purpose of a land acknowledgment is to speak to our relationship with the land on which we are situated and honor its original inhabitants. In looking up the history of this particular land, the land where Hofstra University is situated, my understanding is that it was at one time the

mentioned in his book, *BIOENERGETICS*. See ALEXANDER LOWEN, *BIOENERGETICS* 39-40, 193 (Penguin Books 1976) (1975) (describing grounding as feeling contact between the feet and ground, and in a broader sense, representing an individual's contact with the basic realities of his existence). Another much earlier psychologist who wrote about mind-body unity and who has also been credited with this idea is Wilhelm Reich. See *id.* at 38-40; WILHELM REICH, *THE MASS PSYCHOLOGY OF FASCISM* 147-48 (Vincent R. Carfagno trans., 3d ed. 1971) (1933). However, the idea of grounding likely precedes both of these authors and can probably be traced to ancient practices, such as the Chinese practices of qigong and tai chi, as well as other wisdom traditions. See Michael Samsel, *Grounding, FINDING FEELING AND PURPOSE*, <https://reichandlowentherapy.org/Content/Goals/grounding.html> [https://perma.cc/3XFT-FWLY] (last visited Dec. 2, 2023); see also Lisa Bliss et al., *Creating Online Education Spaces to Support Equity, Inclusion, Belonging, and Wellbeing*, J. MARSHALL L.J., Spring 2021, at 1, 17-19 (discussing the idea of grounding and linking it to trauma-informed teaching as well as ways to support equity, inclusion, and belonging in legal education); Julie Nguyen, *15 Grounding Techniques to Soothe Anxiety, from Therapists*, MIND BODY GREEN (Jan. 27, 2023), <https://www.mindbodygreen.com/articles/grounding-techniques> [https://perma.cc/289M-RN4X] (offering an array of different grounding techniques).

home and continues to be sacred territory to a large number of indigenous tribes that co-existed peacefully here. I also found this statement by Joseph Pierce, a citizen of the Cherokee Nation and a professor at Stony Brook University.³ In a speech he gave (at Hofstra University) in the fall of 2021, Pierce said, “[t]he land does not need acknowledgement. It needs to be listened to as our most important teacher, as the stuff of stars and poetry, memory, and futurity.”⁴ I will come back to these ideas of what the land can teach us and how nature can be an important source of our well-being.

Right now, I want to take one more moment to allow all of you to acknowledge and name silently whatever feels like it needs to be acknowledged in this moment, including the people and circumstances that are supporting you presently in your life. Maybe you would like to offer them some gratitude.⁵ I also want to invite you to take a moment silently to acknowledge and name whatever you would like to let go of, at least for the rest of the time we have together. Maybe you can briefly let go of your “to do” list or whatever else might be distracting you.

I also want to offer gratitude in honor of the memory of Professor Howard Lichtenstein, who made this presentation possible, and heartfelt thanks to Professor Ellen Yaroshefsky and Dean Gail Prudenti for inviting me, and to Judith Black for all your help and support. Additionally, I want to thank the *Hofstra Law Review* for being interested and willing to publish my remarks. And I want to offer my deep gratitude and appreciation to all of you for being here.

Finally, I want to acknowledge and offer gratitude to my family and friends and the many teachers and mentors from whom I have learned so much and whose wisdom flows through me when I am at my best. I heard this idea recently that generally we are always simply “re-present[ing]” everything we have learned and done over the course of our lives.⁶ I will not be able expressly to name every one of those teachers and mentors today, though I am very aware that pretty much everything I talk and write about, I have learned from others.

3. For additional information about Joseph Pierce, see JOSEPH M. PIERCE, <https://www.josephpierce.com> [<https://perma.cc/Z5MC-TJWE>] (last visited Dec. 2, 2023).

4. Hofstra University, *Indigenous Peoples' Day 2021 Keynote: Kinship with Stars: Cherokee Stories of Celestial Relation*, YOUTUBE, at 34:19 (Oct. 21, 2021), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IfHrwt8AW0g> [<https://perma.cc/2M6G-8GV8>].

5. We begin with gratitude, and we will come back to gratitude as an essential practice of the Work That Reconnects. See *infra* text accompanying notes 139-46.

6. On Being with Krista Tippett, *Rick Rubin—Magic, Everyday Mystery, and Getting Creative*, ON BEING, at 59:42 (Mar. 16, 2023), <https://onbeing.org/programs/rick-rubin-magic-everyday-mystery-and-getting-creative> [<https://perma.cc/B2YP-NZ6C>].

In terms of my family, in addition to thanking my parents and siblings and other immediate relatives, I want to acknowledge my ancestors, who were Jewish immigrants from the places we now know as Russia, Ukraine, Poland, and Latvia.⁷ My ancestors on both sides came to this country in one sense as refugees fleeing persecution. At the same time, once they were here, surely without realizing it, they also became settlers. To me that story, my story, is an example of the complexity and nuance that are inevitably always present, sometimes just beneath the surface of many stories and situations we tend to see in simplistic and often dualistic ways. One theme of this talk is about embracing complexity and the multiple truths that are present in nearly everything, everywhere—and, yes, sometimes all at once.⁸

II. A STORY ABOUT REPAIRING THE WORLD

Acknowledging the omnipresence of complexity and multiple truths brings me to a story. The context for the story—as I believe that appreciating context is an essential element of embracing complexity—is that in my professional life I have devoted considerable time to participating in workshops, retreats, and similar offerings where I can continue to learn and grow and build new connections. More recently, I have attended a number of workshops and courses specifically focused on anti-racism and how to incorporate an anti-racist, or what I prefer to think of as a liberationist,⁹ lens and practices into our teaching and other

7. For a visual art exploration of a few of the women who helped shape my family history, see Robin Brooks, *The Foremothers Project*, ROBIN BROOKS ART, <https://robinbrooksart.com/the-foremothers-project> [<https://perma.cc/Q2TX-WJPK>] (last visited Dec. 2, 2023); Robin Brooks, *About the Artist*, ROBIN BROOKS ART, <https://robinbrooksart.com/about-the-artist> [<https://perma.cc/VQ6Q-2NA8>] (last visited Dec. 2, 2023). (Robin is my sister.)

8. I gave this talk having recently seen the film, *Everything Everywhere All at Once*, which won the Academy Award for Best Picture of 2022. *Everything Everywhere All at Once*, IMDB, <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt6710474> [<https://perma.cc/62FK-WZMK>] (last visited Dec. 2, 2023). The film portrays vividly many of the themes in this talk, including embracing life's complexity, impermanence, and multiple truths, along with our interconnectedness, and the overarching importance of acting with kindness, empathy, and compassion toward ourselves and others.

9. The shift in language from “anti-racist” to using the term “liberation” is a significant pivot that reflects my own orientation toward positivity and the idea that “[w]hat we pay attention to grows.” Susan L. Brooks, *Fostering Wholehearted Lawyers Through Clinical Legal Education*, BEST PRACTICES FOR LEGAL EDUC. BLOG (Apr. 26, 2021), <https://bestpracticeslegaled.com/2021/04/26/fostering-wholehearted-lawyers-through-clinical-legal-education> [<https://perma.cc/FB7S-9FE6>] (citing ADRIENNE MAREE BROWN, EMERGENT STRATEGY: SHAPING CHANGE, CHANGING WORLDS 34 (2017) [hereinafter BROWN, EMERGENT STRATEGY]). The term “liberationist” also connects with the work of Paulo Freire, who coined the term “liberationist pedagogy” in his famous work *PEDAGOGY OF THE OPPRESSED* (1968). Felicitas Fischer, *Leading Liberated: Why Liberation Pedagogy Is the Heart and Foundation of TAF’s Network for Edwork*, TECH. ACCESS FOUND. (Nov. 2, 2020), <https://techaccess.org/leadingliberated>

professional and personal interactions. One of these workshops expressly sought participants who were “people who hold healing space,”¹⁰ which admittedly might seem like a stretch for a law teacher, though I think it is fair to say that for a while now I have defined the main focus of my work as being “healing-centered.”¹¹

Toward the beginning of the opening session, one of the workshop leaders asked us to introduce ourselves in part by sharing a healing practice of our ancestors. When I heard this prompt, I froze instantly. It was a question I had never really considered, even with my many years of study and having taken many workshops focused on understanding ourselves and our histories, among many things. This question about my ancestral healing practices led me down a particular path that I now think of as a lifelong exploration of deeper self-inquiry, accompanied by people I would call my spiritual teachers. To be clear, when I use the term *spirituality* I am not referring to any particular faith or religious practices. To me, spirituality means the pursuit of something meaningful in our lives that is larger than ourselves. It could be a connection to a greater sense of purpose, including a passion for social justice and a commitment to acting in alignment with our core values, that is, the values that reflect our best selves.¹²

My journey to learn about the healing practices of my ancestors eventually led me to a deeper exploration of the idea of *Tikkun Olam*, a Hebrew language phrase that was already somewhat familiar to me, and is often translated as “healing the world.”¹³ The story I want to share is

[<https://perma.cc/ZA3L-9HS7>]; see also SHAWN A. GINWRIGHT, THE FOUR PIVOTS: REIMAGINING JUSTICE, REIMAGINING OURSELVES 18 (2022) [hereinafter GINWRIGHT, FOUR PIVOTS] (describing one of the pivots as “vision[ing]” and encouraging moving from “problem fixing” to “possibility creating”). In Ginwright’s words, “I’m cautious about the term *anti-racist*. We should be mindful and avoid defining the world we want by articulating what we don’t want.” *Id.* at 177. Instead, Ginwright advocates for choosing terms that reflect our human potential “to dream and imagine beyond oppression.” *Id.*

10. Michelle C. Johnson, Skill in Action: Yoga + Social Justice, *Remembering, Responsibility, Reverence & Reconciliation: Anti-Racism Training for People Who Hold Healing Space*, FACEBOOK (June 17, 2020) <https://m.facebook.com/skillinaction/photos/a.572240009554043/2883554791755875/?type=3> [<https://perma.cc/P9Z4-PNLS>].

11. See Susan L. Brooks, *Creating a Beloved Community by Teaching Relational Lawyering*, in MARJORIE A. SILVER, TRANSFORMING JUSTICE, LAWYERS, AND THE PRACTICE OF LAW 299, 300, 310, 334-35 (2017) [hereinafter Brooks, *Creating a Beloved Community*]; *infra* text accompanying note 85.

12. See Susan L. Brooks, *Mindful Engagement and Relational Lawyering*, 48 SW. L. REV. 267, 275-79 (2019) [hereinafter Brooks, *Mindful Engagement*] (defining spirituality broadly in this manner and linking it to social justice, and then describing how both are core elements of mindful engagement).

13. *Id.* at 277 (mentioning the idea of *Tikkun Olam* as a part of the Jewish tradition and connecting it with ideas of spirituality and social justice).

essentially a creation story connected to the origins and meaning of *Tikkun Olam*.¹⁴ My understanding is that *Tikkun Olam* can be traced back to the work of a rabbi named Isaac Luria, known as the *Ari*, who lived in the sixteenth century and engaged in a set of beliefs and practices now known as Jewish mysticism or *Kabbalah*.¹⁵ Here is the story.

In the beginning, there was a singular life force in the universe that was radiant and all powerful, the source of everything we know now to be a part of our existence. Eventually, though, that singular life force found itself wanting to be in relationship. So, it harnessed a part of its life force to create ten perfect vessels, and then poured its tremendous life force and radiant sparks of light and energy into the vessels. And, the story goes, the strength and intensity of that energy and radiant light was so powerful, it could not be contained within the vessels, and they began to crack, and eventually they all shattered. When they shattered, the life force—all those tremendous radiant sparks of light, along with the myriad of shards from the shattered pottery—lodged in all of creation. And according to the story, “that was the whole point. The world was created out of brokenness. . . . Creation came out of this brokenness and divine light.”¹⁶

According to the story, then, it is because of the shattering of the vessels that each of us contains both the radiant sparks of light and energy, our beauty, along with what can be described as our brokenness, the rough edges or pain or suffering within us. *Tikkun Olam* calls us to the work that allows us, first, to recognize the sparks of light within ourselves and each other and everything we encounter, and in doing so, to gather in those sparks of light and uplift them. At the same time, this repair work, which is truly the work of healing, means honoring and

14. I heard this story on separate occasions from two inspiring and influential spiritual teachers in my life. I first heard a version of it from my yoga teacher, Erica Taxin Bleznak, who is also a master's-level social worker and Jungian coach. SOULDIVE JUNGIAN COACHING, <https://souldivecoaching.com> [<https://perma.cc/FK8G-5RML>] (last visited Dec. 2, 2023). Some months later, I heard a similar version from my rabbi, Rabbi Yael Levy, who leads her own non-profit organization focused on “directing the heart through Jewish Mindfulness,” called A Way In. A WAY IN, <https://www.awayin.org> [<https://perma.cc/8T3N-MVFJ>] (last visited Dec. 2, 2023). I then realized that my yoga teacher may well have heard the story from Rabbi Yael (as I know her), either directly or indirectly through other mutual connections. Regardless, the power and meaning of this story for me has been amplified by the fact that I have heard versions of it from these two tremendously important people in my life.

15. For more information on Rabbi Isaac Luria and this story, see Howard Schwartz, *How the Ari Created a Myth and Transformed Judaism*, TIKKUN (Mar. 28, 2011), <https://www.tikkun.org/how-the-ari-created-a-myth-and-transformed-judaism> [<https://perma.cc/986P-TGZR>].

16. This is a direct quote from Rabbi Yael from one of her retellings of this story when I was able to take notes. Rabbi Yael Levy, Weekly Torah Study Lecture: Bereshit/In the Beginning (Oct. 12, 2020) (unpublished notes on file with author).

recognizing in others the rough and imperfect or even broken parts we can see in ourselves.¹⁷ The more we can hold the hurt or hurting parts of ourselves with self-compassion, the more compassion we can find toward others and all the ways they may be hurt or hurting.¹⁸ The story also speaks to the idea that we all are interconnected and we are called to act from that place of relationship, or *Relational Consciousness*.¹⁹ Our interconnectedness also supports our mutuality and shared interests at a fundamental level. So, repairing the world is truly about repairing ourselves as well as each other at the personal, interpersonal, and systemic levels.²⁰

This story and the idea of *Tikkun Olam* are very similar to and resonate with ideas of many other cultures and wisdom traditions, such as the idea of *ubuntu*—which is derived from the Nguni and Bantu languages and translates as something like “*I am because you are, you are because I am*,”²¹ and the term *namaste*, which is an ancient Sanskrit word with many possible translations, including the idea, *I honor the place of love, light, and peace in you as I honor that place in myself*.²² *Tikkun Olam* also resonates with the work of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and his focus on creating the Beloved Community. As Dr. King wrote in his *Letter from Birmingham Jail*:

Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly affects all indirectly.²³

For me the story of *Tikkun Olam* and these related ideas encapsulate my own aspirations for the healing work I want to do in the world

17. See BRYAN STEVENSON, *JUST MERCY: A STORY OF JUSTICE AND REDEMPTION* 289 (2014) (“[O]ur brokenness is also the source of our common humanity, the basis for our shared search for comfort, meaning, and healing. Our shared vulnerability and imperfection nurtures and sustains our capacity for compassion.”)

18. See *id.* at 289-90.

19. See Levy, *supra* note 16; see also MARK NEPO, *MORE TOGETHER THAN ALONE: DISCOVERING THE POWER AND SPIRIT OF COMMUNITY IN OUR LIVES AND IN THE WORLD* 40 (2018) (“[W]e’re not separate from those we try to help or outside of whatever we try to repair. We are changed by all that we encounter . . .”).

20. See NEPO, *supra* note 19, at 37 (“Since we are the world, we are here to repair ourselves, the way a cloth is made whole when its threads are repaired.”).

21. *Id.* at 18; see also FANIA E. DAVIS, *THE LITTLE BOOK OF RACE AND RESTORATIVE JUSTICE: BLACK LIVES, HEALING, AND US SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION* 17-29 (2019) (discussing the ethos of *ubuntu*).

22. Karson McGinley, *The Meaning of Namaste*, CHOPRA (Aug. 25, 2019, 9:00 AM), <https://chopra.com/articles/learn-the-meaning-of-namaste> [<https://perma.cc/FHB7-VYS3>].

23. Martin Luther King, Jr., *Letter from Birmingham Jail*, CAL. ST. UNIV. CHICO 1 (Aug. 1963), https://www.csuchico.edu/iege/_assets/documents/susi-letter-from-birmingham-jail.pdf [<https://perma.cc/Q7BG-LJ82>].

and how I want to show up in all aspects of my life and work, including how I practice and teach law. I want to be able to accept and embrace myself as a whole person, including my broken shards, my flaws, my awkwardness, and all the ways in which I am aware that I am a work-in-progress, along with whatever light or knowledge or wisdom may also be present or reside somewhere within me. I have noticed that the more I can engage in self-acceptance and some form of self-love or unconditional friendliness toward myself, the more I am able to accept others and meet them where they are and continue with my own efforts to heal the world.

III. FOUR RS: RELATIONAL CONSCIOUSNESS, RADICAL ACCEPTANCE, REALIGNMENT, AND REPAIR

To develop this idea of *Tikkun Olam* further and connect it with the practice of law, I want to offer four “Rs”²⁴ inspired by this story and its lessons. I view these ideas and the practices that embody them as key ingredients for reimagining lawyering in ways that can transform us and our profession in ways that promote healing and belonging, and further the goals of well-being and liberation for all.²⁵

The first R represents the idea I just mentioned of Relational Consciousness, our interconnectedness and interdependence with all beings.²⁶ For over a decade now, I have been writing and speaking about

24. My Four Rs are informed and inspired by many sources, including the anti-racism workshop mentioned at the outset, which incorporated ideas around some of these same themes. Primarily, though, this work draws upon the teachings and weekly Torah study lectures of Rabbi Yael Levy. See Levy, *supra* note 16. I have also come across other references to four Rs that use different terms and have different purposes. See, e.g., *The Four Rs*, in JAM FACILITATION MANUAL (2014), <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1zgCqNSTJkU5UCOL9aHe7t7np0hW10uDYoxCGINJor0w/edit> [<https://perma.cc/G3QB-5A67>] (comparing and contrasting different approaches and strategies for social change efforts); Claire Bradshaw, *The 4 Rs: Exploring Trauma-Responsivity and Self-Care*, ARTS HUB (Feb. 15, 2021), <https://www.artshub.com.au/news/career-advice/the-4-rs-exploring-trauma-responsivity-and-self-care-261907-2369965> [<https://perma.cc/33SV-N2KF>] (drawing on and offering guidance for trauma-informed practice).

25. One way of conceptualizing and framing the approach I am proposing here is to call it “prefigurative.” The term prefiguration has been used to refer to politics and social movements that build their cultures to align with the model of the world they are seeking to create, which have also been called “small utopias.” See Sameer M. Ashar, *Pedagogy of Prefiguration*, 132 YALE L.J.F. 869, 871 n.8, 877 (2023). In his recent article, Ashar discusses how a prefigurative approach can reshape the law and clinical legal education in ways that “turn our resources toward pro-social, radical visions of a future life buoyed by solidarity and love[.]” *Id.* at 886. I believe the ideas presented here can contribute to that radical reimagining, alongside and in support of the three pedagogical methods he proposes, which are: (1) deriving a common social analysis, (2) exercising radical imagination, and (3) engaging dialogically with client groups. *Id.*

26. I first encountered this term in one of Rabbi Yael’s weekly Torah study lectures. See Rabbi Yael Levy, *Weekly Torah Study Lectures (2020-2022)* (unpublished notes on file with author).

“relational lawyering,” which I have described as an interdisciplinary framework consisting of “habits of mind and tools all of us can cultivate to help us engage in meaningful conversations across differences with the end result of creating new possibilities.”²⁷ We can bring relational lawyering into our work as legal professionals by engaging with others and pursuing our roles in ways that affirm our mutuality and connection, rather than acting in ways that contribute to greater separation and disconnection. Using the term relational consciousness simply acknowledges that being relational in our professional lives can only happen if we live into those practices in every interaction and every aspect of our daily lives.

The second R is Radical Acceptance, a term I believe was coined by Tara Brach.²⁸ According to Brach, radical acceptance means “[c]learly recognizing what is happening inside us, and regarding what we see with an open, kind and loving heart[.]”²⁹ The two components of radical acceptance are awareness, the ability to see clearly what is happening, and compassion, embracing whatever is happening, including our pain and our desires.³⁰ Radical acceptance includes the ideas encouraged by the story I shared of approaching ourselves and others with unconditional friendliness and accepting that everyone carries with them elements of brokenness along with their beauty. That combination is

27. Brooks, *Mindful Engagement*, *supra* note 12, at 271; *see also* Susan L. Brooks & Robert G. Madden, *Epistemology and Ethics in Relationship-Centered Legal Education and Practice*, 56 N.Y.L. SCH. L. REV. 331, 333, 341-48 (2011-12); Susan L. Brooks, *Meeting the Professional Identity Challenge in Legal Education Through a Relationship-Centered Experiential Curriculum*, 41 U. BALT. L. REV. 395, 405-10 (2012); Susan L. Brooks, *Cultivating Students’ Relational Skills*, in BUILDING ON BEST PRACTICES: TRANSFORMING LEGAL EDUCATION IN A CHANGING WORLD 324, 324-25 (Deborah Maranville et al. eds., 2015); Susan L. Brooks, *Using a Communication Perspective to Teach Relational Lawyering*, 15 NEV. L.J. 477, 480-82 (2014) [hereinafter Brooks, *Communication Perspective*]; Brooks, *Creating a Beloved Community*, *supra* note 11, at 300, 304; Susan L. Brooks, *Fostering Wholehearted Lawyers: Practical Guidance for Supporting Law Students’ Professional Identity Formation*, 14 U. ST. THOMAS L.J. 412, 419-20 (2018) [hereinafter Brooks, *Fostering Wholehearted Lawyers*]; Susan L. Brooks, *Listening and Relational Lawyering*, in THE HANDBOOK OF LISTENING 361, 368-69 (Debra L. Worthington & Graham D. Bodie eds., 2020) [hereinafter Brooks, *Listening and Relational Lawyering*]. *See generally* Susan L. Brooks & Robert G. Madden, *Relationship-Centered Lawyering: The Emerging ‘Science’ of Professionalism*, in Relationship-Centered Lawyering: Social Science Theory for Transforming Legal Practice 3 (Susan L. Brooks & Robert G. Madden eds., 2010).

28. *See* TARA BRACH, RADICAL ACCEPTANCE: EMBRACING YOUR LIFE WITH THE HEART OF A BUDDHA 21, 26 (2003) [hereinafter BRACH, RADICAL ACCEPTANCE]; *see also* STEVENSON, *supra* note 17, at 289.

29. BRACH, RADICAL ACCEPTANCE, *supra* note 28, at 26. Brach points out that the word “radical” comes from the Latin word meaning “going to the root or origin,” so radical acceptance “enables us to return to . . . the source of our being.” *Id.* at 41-42.

30. *See id.* at 27-28. Brach describes awareness and compassion as two inseparable wings of a great bird, which, taken together, allow us to take flight and find freedom. *See id.*

what makes us whole and is an intrinsic part of our shared humanity.³¹ “In holding ourselves with compassion, we become free to love this living world.”³²

The third R stands for Realignment, which we can also think of as a kind of Return, as I spoke about at the outset. The premise here is that we all have a great amount of innate wisdom, including all the knowledge we have accumulated from our lived experience. Many challenging aspects of our society and culture create separation within and among us that can lead us to distrust ourselves and the wisdom we carry. When we forget our interconnectedness, our path, and our inner voice, often we become distrustful toward others, which leads to further disconnection, pain, and even cruelty. The good news is that we can always “re-turn” or turn again toward our core values and aspirations of how we want to behave toward others and how we want to be in the world.³³ We can mend ourselves and our relationships and return to relational consciousness, regardless of how far we may have strayed from acting in alignment with those ways of being. If and when we can accept and allow this process of forgetting as a part of the human condition, we are engaging in radical acceptance, which in turn helps us come back into realignment.

The fourth and final R emphasizes the importance of the work of Repair. Concrete steps toward repairing past and ongoing harms are an essential part of building and sustaining relationships and are necessary for our own sake and the sake of our society and our world. The idea of repair brings to mind the work of Isabel Wilkerson, who uses a number of metaphors to help shed light on our deeply entrenched schemes of white supremacy and systemic injustice in the United States.³⁴ One metaphor she uses that resonates strongly with me is to compare the current unjust conditions we are facing in this country to an old home we have purchased.³⁵ When we buy an old home, of course we are not responsible for creating all the difficult and often vexing issues that come along

31. *See id.* at 42 (discussing the work of psychologist Carl Jung, who “describes the spiritual path as an unfolding into *wholeness*” and “discovering the freedom of becoming authentically and fully alive”); *see also* BRENÉ BROWN, *THE GIFTS OF IMPERFECTION: LET GO OF WHO YOU THINK YOU’RE SUPPOSED TO BE AND EMBRACE WHO YOU ARE*, at xi (2010) [hereinafter BROWN, *GIFTS OF IMPERFECTION*] (connecting wholehearted living to overall well-being and defining wholeheartedness as a willingness to accept ourselves and others fully as flawed yet entirely worthy human beings).

32. BRACH, *RADICAL ACCEPTANCE*, *supra* note 28, at 4.

33. The idea of re-turning also comes from Rabbi Yael’s weekly Torah study lectures. *See* Levy, *supra* note 26.

34. *See, e.g.*, ISABEL WILKERSON, *CASTE: THE ORIGINS OF OUR DISCONTENTS* 15-20 (2020).

35. *See id.*

with that purchase, and yet, it is our responsibility to address each and every one of them. If we fail to fix what is broken, we are the ones who suffer as much if not more than anyone else. Similarly, we who are alive today did not create all the challenges we currently face in our society connected to our history of injustice and oppression of certain individuals and groups, and yet we need to accept responsibility to take whatever steps are within our power and control here and now. This notion of repair, whether we analogize it to an old home or otherwise, can serve to remind us that we need to embrace the work of *Tikkun Olam* as an active pursuit in our everyday lives. Even if we do not experience ourselves as being immediately impacted by injustice and oppression, the foundation of our house, and, indeed, our precious democracy, is faulty and in danger of collapse unless we take an active role in the work of repair.

This discussion of the Four Rs reminds us of the importance of continuing to work toward repairing the world. To that end, I want to offer this quote taken from the poem and song called “Anthem” by Leonard Cohen. It speaks to the role each of us can play in working toward *Tikkun Olam* and how that work connects what it means to embrace our wholeness:

Ring the bells that still can ring
Forget your perfect offering
There is a crack, a crack in everything
That’s how the light gets in

– Leonard Cohen, “Anthem”³⁶

These lines bring us back to the ideas of fully accepting ourselves as we are and letting go of perfectionism.³⁷ Fully accepting ourselves includes the ability to see ourselves and others as works in progress, and reframing our challenging moments as opportunities that can lead to growth and can deepen our sense of connection. In a recent blog post, Shilpa Jain describes *kintsugi*, the Japanese art of repairing broken pottery by illuminating the cracks with gold lacquer, as a metaphor for “a way forward to meet the fractures and expand belonging for all.”³⁸ The pottery’s history is treated with loving care and acceptance, embraced as

36. “Anthem,” AZ LYRICS, <https://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/leonardcohen/anthem.html> [<https://perma.cc/SYNK-8JW8>] (last visited Dec. 2, 2023).

37. See BROWN, GIFTS OF IMPERFECTION, *supra* note 31, at xii-xv, 56-58.

38. Shilpa Jain, *From Cancellling to Belonging: Healing the Fractures, Inside and Out*, SHILPA’S SUBSTACK (May 29, 2023), https://shilpajain.substack.com/p/from-cancellling-to-belonging?utm_source=substack&utm_medium=email [<https://perma.cc/MH7H-6Q3W>].

part of its life journey and its beauty.³⁹ In a similar way, as individuals and at a group level, we can allow our brokenness to be seen, as a way of finding what is needed to fill in the fractures, working toward repair and coming to wholeness again.

A. Acknowledging Individual and Systemic Trauma and Oppression

I want to pause here for a moment and note that even if any or all of us might agree *in principle* with pursuing *Tikkun Olam*, given the tremendous amount of injustice and suffering in our world it might well seem unwarranted or even problematic to act with unconditional friendliness toward everyone. Historical and ongoing forms of systemic harm and oppression have impacted and continue to impact each of us differently, and often unjustly and inequitably.⁴⁰ In the words of Prentis Hemphill, “[i]t’s important to name that this task of healing sits against a political backdrop, and that backdrop doesn’t allow us to simply individualize healing or imagine that it could ever be an apolitical endeavor.”⁴¹ Namely, some of our experiences of ignorance, discrimination, hurt, and trauma,⁴² understandably and perhaps justifiably create barriers that make it difficult, if not impossible, for us to see and hear one another as fully human.⁴³ My words of encouragement for all of us to seek to connect at a relational level across our differences in this fundamentally inequitable world may be challenging, to say the least. And yet, I fully believe that our willingness to commit to working toward this form of meaningful relationship building and solidarity may be the only way we

39. Shilpa Jain, *I Am Broken, I Am Whole: Filling Our Cracks with Community Gold*, SHILPA’S SUBSTACK (Mar. 21, 2023), <https://shilpajain.substack.com/p/i-am-broken-i-am-whole> [<https://perma.cc/SMA5-34DW>].

40. See, e.g., STEVENSON, *supra* note 17, at 39-46; WILKERSON, *supra* note 34, at 17-20, 29-32; DAVIS, *supra* note 21, at 21, 25, 27-28.

41. Prentis Hemphill, *The Wisdom of Process*, in *YOU ARE YOUR BEST THING: VULNERABILITY, SHAME RESILIENCE, AND THE BLACK EXPERIENCE* 43, 47 (Tarana Burke & Brené Brown eds., 2021).

42. For these purposes I am defining trauma to include collective, historical, and systemic experiences as well as more individualized experiences that contribute to a bodily response or adaptation. See Shawn Ginwright, *The Future of Healing: Shifting from Trauma Informed Care to Healing Centered Engagement*, MEDIUM (May 31, 2018) [hereinafter Ginwright, *Future of Healing*], <https://ginwright.medium.com/the-future-of-healing-shifting-from-trauma-informed-care-to-healing-centered-engagement-634f557ce69c> [<https://perma.cc/87PA-A7DD>] (advocating for a similar approach to defining trauma). See generally Susan L. Brooks, *From Trauma Informed to Healing-Centered Restorative Justice* (2023) (work-in-progress on file with author) [hereinafter Brooks, *Healing-Centered Restorative Justice*].

43. This language is borrowed from materials I co-authored with Jeff Carolin, an attorney/mediator/restorative justice practitioner/law teacher from Toronto, Canada. See Susan Brooks & Jeff Carolin, *Lawyering for Social Change*, Univ. Toronto (Jan. 2023) (original course materials on file with author).

can actually start to glimpse and, maybe more importantly, to feel a true sense of our collective liberation.⁴⁴ As Shawn Ginwright states: “The process of healing is often counter to our common sense. More loving when we are hated, more generous in times of scarcity, more inclusive when we want to close ranks. This is the greatest challenge in our journey toward justice.”⁴⁵

B. Acknowledging the Role of Socialization and Dominant Culture

It is also important to recognize that some amount of our sense of separateness and even our resistance to seeing ourselves in a more relational way result from cultural and social messages and often invisible forces that undermine and pull us away from our sense of interconnect- edness and shared interests.⁴⁶ Take, for example, legal education. While I want to avoid singling out any particular institution, it is fair to say that law schools generally tend to promote a culture of competition, scarcity, and separation.⁴⁷ These environmental characteristics are supported by other deep structures and institutional markers, such as mandatory grad- ing curves, student rankings, “OCI”—On-Campus Interviewing—which is generally the exclusive province of elite law firms, and the existence of “select” journals such as the Law Review.⁴⁸ These elements of separa- tion within law schools are echoed and perhaps even amplified in the adversarial culture of the legal profession itself, in many if not most

44. *See id.*

45. GINWRIGHT, FOUR PIVOTS, *supra* note 9, at 16; *see also* Natsu Taylor Saito, *A Pedagogy of Liberatory Belonging: Learning from Charles R Lawrence III*, 44 U. HAW. L. REV. (forthcom- ing), available at https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=4403490 [<https://perma.cc/L94M-PBQX>] (promoting Lawrence’s vision of legal education as a process that goes beyond eliminating racial bias and aims toward a future vision guided by love and belonging). Saito’s work also contemplates a definition of liberatory that is infused with “poetic knowledge” and imagination and nurtures our dreams. *See id.*

46. *See* BRACH, RADICAL ACCEPTANCE, *supra* note 28, at 11, 17, 41-42.

47. *See, e.g.*, Bennett Capers, *The Law School as a White Space*, 106 MINN. L. REV. 7, 25-41 (2021) (detailing the ways in which law schools are white spaces “in what they teach, in how they teach, and even in their architecture”); Swethaa S. Ballakrishnen, *Law School as Straight Space*, 91 FORDHAM L. REV. 1113, 1118, 1124-32 (2023) (focusing on the experience of genderqueer persons to clarify the ways law schools reinforce hierarchies of identity and performance and the gender binary); Sheila I. Vélez Martínez, *Towards an Outcrit Pedagogy of Anti-Subordination in the Class- room*, 90 CHI.-KENT L. REV. 585, 586, 596 (2015) (critiquing the law school classroom as “a space of privilege and power that mirrors society” and further, how law professors teach in ways that con- tinue to preserve “euroheteropatriarchal paradigms”); *see also* Brooks, *Fostering Wholehearted Lawyers*, *supra* note 27, at 418-19 (critiquing many aspects of the “hidden curriculum” of law schools).

48. *See* Brooks, *Fostering Wholehearted Lawyers*, *supra* note 27, at 418.

places.⁴⁹ Our combative legal culture can be viewed as a product of our liberal tradition with its emphasis on individual rights, which was built on the premises of fear of anything or anyone who is different and the accompanying need to protect ourselves against each other.⁵⁰ Especially when taken together, these factors contribute to a fixed mindset⁵¹ that urges law students and all of us who are part of the legal culture to act in a self-protective and distrustful manner. This fixed or scarcity mindset generally breeds competition and encourages us to watch our backs and “hustle for worthiness.”⁵² Acting in ways we may think are necessary to take care of ourselves nevertheless tends to increase our sense of disconnection and isolation.⁵³ In the words of the late Peter Gabel, “[T]he liberal framework, the framework of separation, is not only inadequate but harmful. It is harmful because it mischaracterizes a hopeful, potentially loving, potentially mutually confirming and anchoring collective destiny as a destiny of solitudes.”⁵⁴

At the same time, I recognize that living into the Four Rs and specifically, Relational Consciousness, takes tremendous courage and the willingness to show up with some level of vulnerability. Research supports the idea that showing up with courage and vulnerability and living our lives in ways that are freer and more wholehearted and self-aware can open up new worlds for us, “including better decision making and critical thinking, and the powerful experiences of empathy, self-compassion, and resilience.”⁵⁵ And yet, I appreciate that what it means for someone in this white, middle-aged, relatively privileged, cis-gender female body to show up and be vulnerable is obviously not the same as it would be for many of you. These concerns bring to mind a blog post by Tara Brach called *You Are Not Your Space Suit Self*. In the post Brach presents the idea that we are born with a pure kind of innocent and free energy. As we become socialized from a very early age,

49. See, e.g., Patrick J. Schiltz, *On Being a Happy, Healthy, and Ethical Member of an Unhappy, Unhealthy, and Unethical Profession*, 52 VAND. L. REV. 871, 888-89 (1999); Brooks, *Mindful Engagement*, *supra* note 12, at 271-72.

50. See PETER GABEL, *A New Vision of Justice: From Individual Rights to the Beloved Community*, in ANOTHER WAY OF SEEING: ESSAYS ON TRANSFORMING LAW, POLITICS AND CULTURE 61, 61 (2013).

51. See Brooks, *Mindful Engagement*, *supra* note 12, at 284; CAROL S. DWECK, MINDSET: THE NEW PSYCHOLOGY OF SUCCESS 6, 11 (2016).

52. See BRENÉ BROWN, DARE TO LEAD: BRAVE WORK. TOUGH CONVERSATIONS. WHOLE HEARTS. 74 (2018) (describing this dynamic in terms of our “ego” becoming our “inner hustler” whose sole focus is self-protection and external acceptance, approval, and admiration) [hereinafter BROWN, DARE TO LEAD].

53. GABEL, *supra* note 50, at 63-64.

54. *Id.* at 64.

55. BROWN, DARE TO LEAD, *supra* note 52, at 74.

however, we create extra layers of protection that become a kind of space suit.⁵⁶ According to Brach, “[o]ur space suit is essential for survival, and some of its strategies do help us become productive, stable, and responsible adults. And yet the same space suit that protects us can also prevent us from moving spontaneously, joyfully, and freely through our lives.”⁵⁷ So, my invitation to show up with the courage and vulnerability to be our authentic, wholehearted selves comes along with deep respect for all our space suits. My encouragement is for you and all of us to see if it might be possible to create even a small opening in that armor, to allow our sparks of light to shine out into the world and also let in more of the sparks of light we can receive from others.

C. Attending to Boundaries

I also want to add that being relational and living into radical acceptance still requires attention to boundaries. In fact, boundaries are absolutely necessary to support these practices of *Tikkun Olam*. Prentis Hemphill defines boundaries as the distance at which I can love myself and also extend that same unconditional friendliness to another person simultaneously.⁵⁸ “Boundaries are evidence of our interconnection, not a denial. They are an important skill for just relationships because both trauma and oppression obscure and mistake the true capacity of ourselves and the other.”⁵⁹ Brené Brown, who shares a similar view, emphasizes that in order to cultivate greater empathy, we need to practice healthy boundaries, which demonstrate self-compassion as well as compassion for others.⁶⁰ She also states often that “[c]lear is kind. Unclear is unkind.”⁶¹

Here is a simple gesture I have learned that can remind us of how we can exercise boundaries in a way that is loving and compassionate. Consider these three postures. The first posture is where I outstretch my

56. *You Are Not Your Space Suit Self*, TARA BRACH (Sept. 13, 2012), <https://www.tarabrach.com/you-are-not-your-space-suit-self> [<https://perma.cc/9HST-4FEX>].

57. *Id.*; see also BRENÉ BROWN, *DARING GREATLY: HOW THE COURAGE TO BE VULNERABLE TRANSFORMS THE WAY WE LIVE, LOVE, PARENT, AND LEAD* 2, 7-9 (2012) (describing the armor we develop as children to protect ourselves from vulnerability, hurt, and disappointment, and how as adults we need to take off the armor and let ourselves be seen in order to be the person we long to be).

58. See Prentis Hemphill, *Collected Works*, <https://prentishemphill.com/collectedworks> [<https://perma.cc/R3LR-UL2L>] (last visited Dec. 2, 2023); see also BRENÉ BROWN, *ATLAS OF THE HEART: MAPPING MEANINGFUL CONNECTION AND THE LANGUAGE OF HUMAN EXPERIENCE* 129 (2021) [hereinafter, BROWN, *ATLAS OF THE HEART*] (quoting Hemphill).

59. Hemphill, *supra* note 58.

60. See BROWN, *ATLAS OF THE HEART*, *supra* note 58, at 128.

61. *Id.* at 130.

arms with both palms wide open, which embodies the idea of totally open and permeable boundaries. This posture suggests that I am likely to take on and absorb into my body and spirit all the stress and reactivity I encounter. Being completely open and virtually boundaryless in this way is not healthy for me or ultimately anyone else with whom I interact. It means I will be more likely to end up experiencing conditions such as secondary traumatic stress, vicarious trauma, compassion fatigue, or burnout, and the accompanying risks to my health and well-being.⁶²

The second posture is where I hold out both hands with my wrists bent and palms facing out, in the “halt” or stop position.⁶³ If I maintain this posture, I will perhaps protect myself from absorbing other people’s stress, though I will also potentially isolate myself, or numb myself, in such a way that I inhibit my own ability to connect with others in joyful and positive ways. As Brené Brown points out, selective numbing does not work.⁶⁴ “If we take the edge off pain and discomfort, we are, by default, taking the edge off joy, love, belonging, and the other emotions that give meaning to our lives.”⁶⁵ So, ultimately this posture will keep us locked inside our space suits and will only lead to further separation and isolation.

Finally, the third posture, which I would suggest is what we are aiming for, is where one arm and hand are outstretched with an open palm, while the other maintains the “halt” position described above. This posture suggests the dynamic balance inherent in boundary-setting that reflects loving myself and others simultaneously and is clear and kind. This posture may be familiar to some of you, as it is commonly seen in images of the Buddha.⁶⁶ Whether or not the reference to Buddhism resonates for you, if we are able to practice boundaries in this way in real time, we can create the space for feeling and connection with others, while still attending to our own needs and well-being.

62. For clinical definitions and comparisons of these conditions, see Jason M. Newell & Gordon A. MacNeil, *Professional Burnout, Vicarious Trauma, Secondary Traumatic Stress, and Compassion Fatigue: A Review of Theoretical Terms, Risk Factors, and Preventive Methods for Clinicians and Researchers*, BEST PRACTICES. MENTAL HEALTH, July 2010, at 57, 58-62.

63. I first learned these postures from my yoga teacher, Erica Taxin Bleznak, in a class where the themes included boundaries. Around that same time, coincidentally, my colleague Jeff Carolin showed me these same postures which he had learned elsewhere.

64. See BROWN, DARE TO LEAD, *supra* note 52, at 84-85. Brown states, “We cannot selectively numb emotion. If we numb the dark, we numb the light.” *Id.* at 85.

65. *Id.*

66. For images of the Buddha in this posture, see McKenzie Perkins, *Buddha Statues: Meaning of Postures and Poses*, LEARN RELIGIONS (Jan. 13, 2020), <https://www.learnreligions.com/buddha-statues-meaning-of-postures-and-poses-4781351> [<https://perma.cc/M8PE-A2ME>].

IV. SUPPORTING THE FOUR RS THROUGH RELATIONAL AND WHOLEHEARTED PRINCIPLES, PRACTICES, AND TOOLS

I want to turn now to offering a few other practices and tools that can support creating these openings, and can help us reimagine lawyering through relationship, radical acceptance, realignment, and repair.⁶⁷ Up until now, I have begun painting a picture of how we might approach each other and our work differently from a relational perspective. In my previous work I have discussed many facets of how we can incorporate a relational consciousness into legal education and practice, which I have referred to as “relational lawyering” and “wholehearted lawyering.” I have also described a set of principles and practices that comprise a relational approach, including: embracing complexities of context and culture, being kind and curious, appreciating that everyone matters, focusing on strengths, showing empathy and compassion, engendering trust and vulnerability, and applying an ethic of care.⁶⁸

As I gain more knowledge and lived experience, I keep re-turning to these ideas and distilling them further, so today I am re-presenting them to you in a way that reflects my current way of thinking about them, which surely will continue to evolve.

A. Connecting Personal, Interpersonal, and Systemic Dimensions

The foundation of all these practices is to connect the personal work—the work we need to do on ourselves as a continuous lifelong endeavor—with the work of interpersonal and systemic change. This idea of the interconnections between personal, interpersonal, and systemic dimensions is often depicted as a Venn diagram, though I think the main point is that these spheres themselves are overlapping and interdependent, such that how I am with myself affects how I interact with others at an interpersonal level, and those one-on-one interactions have ripple effects that eventually lead to broader social change. The more I engage in habits of mind and practices that can increase my self-awareness, the more I can make intentional choices in my interactions with others, and those patterns will continue to repeat themselves to affect the larger systems in which I and we are situated.

Another way of understanding these ripple effects or repeating patterns is through what adrienne maree brown describes as “fractals.”⁶⁹ Fractals are patterns in nature that replicate themselves continuously

67. See *supra* note 25.

68. See Brooks, *Mindful Engagement*, *supra* note 12, at 271-73; Brooks, *Fostering Wholehearted Lawyers*, *supra* note 27, at 423-26.

69. See BROWN, *EMERGENT STRATEGY*, *supra* note 9, at 51-53.

such that they create invisible webs of interconnectedness that continue to ripple across much larger systems and the planet itself.⁷⁰ Brown states importantly that “what we practice at the small scale sets the patterns for the whole system.”⁷¹ Understanding how fractals work in nature can support us in recognizing the manner in which the personal and interpersonal dimensions of our work create ripple effects over time and space to bring about systemic transformation, even if those broader impacts are so incremental as to be nearly imperceptible and their full effects will only be felt after we are long gone. On a practical level, fractals can help us to see how even a small gesture, such as providing legal information or pro bono legal assistance to one individual, which helps them to resolve their legal issue and improve their life even in some small way, has continuous ripple effects that ultimately can lead to broader social change.

B. Zones of [Self-]Awareness

To be able to engage effectively at the fractal level, we need to start by becoming more self-aware. I am convinced that improving our self-awareness is the necessary foundation for supporting well-being and liberation, for ourselves and all beings. I also believe becoming more self-aware is a lifelong practice. To support this constant effort, I want to share a simple tool called the Zones of Awareness,⁷² that has literally changed my life. This tool offers us a common language to notice and name what is happening for us in our moment-to-moment experiences in an embodied manner.⁷³ If we are able to slow down enough to become aware of what we are experiencing in real time, we may be able to make more intentional choices, which can then lead to those positive ripple effects I just described.⁷⁴

The Zones are depicted as three concentric circles.⁷⁵ It is important to note up front that this is a descriptive tool rather than an evaluative one, so identifying that I may be in a particular zone is not about something being “good” or “bad” or judging myself in any way. The purpose

70. *See id.* at 51-52.

71. *Id.* at 53.

72. *See Comfort, Stretch, and Panic*, CONNECTING, INSPIRING, & COLLABORATING WITH CHANGEMAKERS: YES! FACILITATION MANUAL, <https://docs.google.com/document/d/14G0cqv8kD9Tw3pDXGRjWDWIsWct7RaVIL-3tnFBZSgQ> [<https://perma.cc/GG2P-L2J2>] (last visited Dec. 2, 2023).

73. *See id.*

74. *See id.*

75. *See Activity 1.3: Comfort, Stretch, Panic*, YES COURSE, <https://yesconsent.eu/course/the-yes-course/lessons/activity-1-3-comfort-stretch-panic> [<https://perma.cc/P4LL-AH23>] (last visited Dec. 2, 2023).

is to notice if I am in a particular Zone, or maybe how my experience may have shifted, so I can be more mindful and deliberate in my actions.

The center of the three circles is the Comfort Zone,⁷⁶ which is where things are familiar and where I generally can feel relaxed and calm in my body. We all need our Comfort Zone at times, and yet, if I always remain in that zone, I limit my opportunities to grow and learn.

The middle circle is the Stretch Zone.⁷⁷ When I am stretching, by definition I am uncomfortable, which may include some physical tension or stress. At the same time, importantly, I am still able to listen and learn. The Stretch Zone, then, is the place where growth happens and, by definition, stretching is uncomfortable. As we develop the practices and tools that allow us to stay in our Stretch Zone, that zone grows, which in turn increases our Comfort Zone. The hard work that contributes to *Tikkun Olam* requires us to become more comfortable with being uncomfortable.⁷⁸ In the words of Rainer Maria Rilke, “that something is difficult must be one more reason for us to do it.”⁷⁹

The outer circle is the Panic Zone.⁸⁰ Panic or overwhelm is the state of being in which my physiology crosses over from discomfort to a reactive state, such that I am no longer able to listen or learn. Another way of understanding the panic zone is that it is when my survival mode or my “reptile brain” literally gets activated, meaning that I will tend to resort to my evolutionary defenses, such as fight or flight. I might lash out at someone, or blame myself, or I might have more of a flight response where I withdraw emotionally or physically or both, or try to avoid the feeling with distractions or substances.

To take a simple example, I might be going about my routine in a comfortable mode, when suddenly I reach for my phone, and it is not where I thought it would be. Instantly, I can shift from comfort to panic, in which case, my heart generally starts beating faster, my chest tightens, and my mind generally launches into self-blame about everything that is wrong with me, including how disorganized I am, or much worse. Then,

76. *See id.*

77. *See id.*

78. *See* Brooks, *Mindful Engagement*, *supra* note 12, at 277-78 (discussing the importance of “getting comfortable with being uncomfortable” as a core element of what we can do to bring about a more just society and citing the work of Bryan Stevenson and Parker Palmer); STEVENSON, *supra* note 17, at 289-90; PARKER J. PALMER, *HEALING THE HEART OF DEMOCRACY: THE COURAGE TO CREATE A POLITICS WORTHY OF THE HUMAN SPIRIT* 13-15 (2011).

79. RAINER MARIA RILKE, *LETTERS TO A YOUNG POET* 68 (Stephen Mitchell trans., Random House 1984) (1929).

80. *See* Hugh Asher, *The Comfort Zone, Stretch Zone, and Panic Zone: Understanding the Importance of Stepping Outside Your Comfort Zone*, AN DARACH (May 6, 2023), <https://silvotherapy.co.uk/articles/comfort-zone-stretch-zone-and-panic-zone> [<https://perma.cc/3CHZ-7WFL>].

in the next moment, when my phone reappears, I can quickly and almost imperceptibly revert back into comfort, with the calming of my nervous system and accompanying shifts physically and emotionally.

As illustrated by my phone example, the Zones are easily changeable, day by day and even minute by minute. The changes may be more internal, or at times may be attributable to external factors and events beyond our control, including actions by individuals and larger situations or incidents. Further, what is comfortable for one person may be a stretch for another or may even create a situation of panic in someone else. These differences reflect each of our different contexts and life experiences, including personal traumas as well as collective, historical, and systemic traumas. Microaggressions can also be viewed through this lens. A statement or question or action can land very differently based on distinctions such as those connected to individual and collective histories of oppression and injustice. The point here is not to compare, or to judge oneself or others; rather, the purpose is to increase self-awareness and choice.

The Zones can be highly useful for us in all aspects of our lives, including in our workspaces and in our roles as attorneys. This tool can also be useful for considering how whole institutions or communities or systems may be operating in a kind of panic mode, such that they are constantly in a state of fight or flight.

C. Healing-Centered Engagement

With this information in mind, we can begin to ask ourselves how we can show up and do the work of lawyering in ways that allow us to stay in our stretch zones as much as possible and even be able to grow our stretch zones, so that something that previously was a big stretch becomes more comfortable. Further, we can seek ways to be able to remain in our stretch zones even when we are in conflict, or when the people we are interacting with may be demonstrating some form of panic. Through these kinds of efforts, we can live into the idea that “conflict is the spirit of the relationship asking itself to deepen,”⁸¹ rather than fearing or seeking to avoid conflict. To approach conflict in this creative and generative way, we need to practice staying present and being able to “hold

81. This quote has been attributed to Malidoma Patrice Somé. See Finding Our Way Podcast, *Navigating Conflict with Kazu Haga*, FINDING OUR WAY, at 08:29 (May 31, 2021), <https://www.findingourwaypodcast.com/individual-episodes/s2e7> [<https://perma.cc/E43D-DU3E>] (stating that Haga believes the quote is from Somé, and adding that “at its best conflict is an opportunity for us to really deepen in our own understanding of how our own trauma manifests, how we deepen in relationship with ourselves [and] with each other”).

space”⁸² for whatever another person is expressing without trying to “JIF” it—judge, interpret, or fix it.⁸³ If we can meet conflict situations in our stretch zones rather than in panic, our actions can lead to breakthroughs instead of contributing to breakdowns.⁸⁴

Toward these goals and aspirations, I have been developing a Healing-Centered approach to lawyering, which draws from the same collective sources of wisdom as everything I have said about *Tikkun Olam* and relational lawyering.⁸⁵ This approach also represents a framework and a set of guidelines for how we can reimagine lawyering.

The six ingredients of the framework reflect a combination of perspectives, principles, and practices that can help support well-being and ultimately contribute to a culture of belonging and liberation among law students as emerging legal professionals. I am sharing them in no particular order, as they are all overlapping and interconnected. These six ingredients are as follows: (1) contextualized, multi-dimensional lens; (2) relational worldview; (3) strengths orientation; (4) agency; (5) transparency and trustworthiness; and (6) safer/braver spaces.

1. Contextualized, Multi-Dimensional Lens

In order to gain a better understanding of ourselves and others, we need to appreciate our various contexts, which include our individual and collective histories, our many different and perhaps intersectional identities, and our immediate circumstances, among other considerations. We also need to appreciate this richness of our contexts from a complex, multi-dimensional, and multi-disciplinary lens that can incorporate a whole range of bio-psycho-social-spiritual perspectives.⁸⁶ In short, as Walt Whitman once said, each and all of us “contain

82. See Bliss et al., *supra* note 2, at 18 n.53 (quoting adrienne maree brown’s definition of “holding space” as “to hold both the people in, and the dynamic energy of, a room, a space, a meeting, an organization, a movement”) (quoting ADRIENNE MAREE BROWN, *HOLDING CHANGE: THE WAY OF EMERGENT STRATEGY FACILITATION AND MEDITATION* 7 (2021)).

83. See Shilpa Jain, *Step Off the Tightrope, Dance in the Ocean: The Beautiful Balance Between Enoughness and Belonging*, SHILPA’S SUBSTACK (Apr. 12, 2023), <https://shilpajain.substack.com/p/step-off-the-tightrope-dance-in-the> [https://perma.cc/4B2W-NLSP].

84. This is a statement I have heard many times from Shilpa Jain, former Executive Director of the organization called YES. I worked extensively with Shilpa as part of a co-facilitation team that has supported an annual retreat called the Law and Social Change Jam. For more information on what a Jam is, see *Jam Principles, YES!*, <https://yesworld.org/jam-principles> [https://perma.cc/LVJ8-VBTT] (last visited Dec. 2, 2023).

85. See generally Brooks, *Healing-Centered Restorative Justice*, *supra* note 42; Ginwright, *Future of Healing*, *supra* note 42.

86. See Brooks, *Healing-Centered Restorative Justice*, *supra* note 42, at 10.

multitudes.”⁸⁷ When we interact with others as lawyers, especially with clients, we need to keep in mind that each of us brings those contexts into every interaction. To do our work most effectively, we need to take the time to appreciate our clients’ contexts as fully as possible, and practice self-awareness around how our own contexts influence how we interpret our clients’ stories and, ideally, all the choices we make as legal professionals.⁸⁸

2. Relational Worldview

Relational lawyering is the name I have often given to the framework I have described here in my previous writings.⁸⁹ I am choosing to broaden the lens on this occasion to talk about a relational worldview or relational consciousness, which is a way of centering our interconnectedness and mutuality when considering *all* our day-to-day experiences, including our work as legal professionals. A relational perspective embraces the idea that how I am with myself affects how I am with other people on an interpersonal level, and that all those interpersonal interactions have the broader ripple effects I spoke of earlier, which operate in similar ways to fractals in nature. Importantly, this relational and collectivist orientation is shared by many cultures, particularly indigenous and First Nations cultures and communities, whose wisdom can help us connect to many of the clients and communities we work with in the United States that share a similar worldview. This relational consciousness can also help us to uncover and touch into our own ancestral wisdom.⁹⁰ By incorporating relational lawyering in our work, we invite deeper connections with our clients, which in turn can help us connect more deeply with ourselves and our sense of purpose in the world. The more we can

87. WALT WHITMAN, *Song of Myself*, in LEAVES OF GRASS 29, 78 (David McKay 1891-92) (1855) (“I am large, I contain multitudes.”) (parens omitted).

88. See Brooks, *Communication Perspective*, *supra* note 27, at 485-89 (discussing the role of context in effective communication related to the practice of law and offering several visual tools); see also Susan L. Brooks & Inga N. Laurent, *Effective Communication and Professional Relationships*, in LEARNING FROM PRACTICE: A TEXT FOR EXPERIENTIAL LEGAL EDUCATION 83, 87-90 (Leah Wortham et al. eds., 3d ed. 2016) (discussing context as one of six ingredients of an interaction, along with intention, perception, interpretation, feeling, and action).

89. For a list of many of those publications, see *supra* note 27. I have also used the term “wholehearted lawyering,” which draws upon and takes inspiration from the work of Brené Brown and speaks to the idea that effective lawyering requires us to bring our whole and imperfect selves into our work, and to engage in the continuous and lifelong practices of *Tikkun Olam* and the Four Rs.

90. See RENEE LINKLATER, *DECOLONIZING TRAUMA WORK: INDIGENOUS STORIES AND STRATEGIES* 27 (2014) (“Indigenous worldviews evolve out of a direct wholistic relationship that encompasses our spirit and the universe.”).

live into this interconnectedness, the more we can embody the idea of “Beloved Community,” best known through Dr. King’s teachings.⁹¹

3. Strengths Orientation

In order to shift to a more relational way of being, we need to see each other as whole people, which includes embracing our own as well as each other’s strengths and assets. This emphasis on strengths is especially important for legal professionals, as so much of our legal training and even the design of the law itself is built on skepticism and risk aversion, so it tends to problematize everyone and everything.⁹² Orienting ourselves and our work in this more positive way connects with the field of Appreciative Inquiry,⁹³ which generally invites exploration of what is working and how we can do more of it, rather than focusing solely on what is broken and how we fix it, as is our tendency in the legal profession. This shift in orientation toward strengths can contribute significantly to the creative reimagining of our work as lawyers. In the words of adrienne maree brown, “[w]hat we pay attention to grows.”⁹⁴

4. Agency

The notion of agency represents a fundamental belief in oneself, and the ability to act on the qualities of choice, voice, and empowerment, all of which have been identified as core elements of trauma-informed practice.⁹⁵ To bring about healing, each of us needs to

91. See generally Susan L. Brooks & Rachel E. López, *Designing a Clinic Model for a Restorative Community Justice Partnership*, 48 WASH. U. J.L. & POL’Y 139 (2015) (identifying the notion of Beloved Community as one of two foundational pillars of what is now the Stern Community Lawyering Clinic at Drexel University’s Kline School of Law in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and describing how this pillar reflects the reality that we are all connected, live our lives in relationship to one another, and experience a communal sense of longing for connection and mutual recognition); Rachel E. López & Susan L. Brooks, *Teaching in Community*, in CONTEMPORARY CHALLENGES IN CLINICAL LEGAL EDUCATION: ROLE, FUNCTION AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS 146 (Matthew Atkinson & Ben Livings eds., forthcoming 2024) [hereinafter López & Brooks, *Teaching in Community*] (affirming the continued importance of the idea of Beloved Community in every aspect of the clinic’s work).

92. Brooks, *Communication Perspective*, *supra* note 27, at 493, 505, 507 (noting the ways in which law and lawyering, as well as legal education, emphasize what is broken and the role of lawyers as “fixers” of other people’s problems, and how this orientation contributes more broadly to a scarcity mindset among law graduates).

93. See SUE ANNIS HAMMOND, *THE THIN BOOK OF APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY* 5-6 (3d ed. 2013); see also Brooks, *Communication Perspective*, *supra* note 27, at 493-95 (describing Appreciative Inquiry and Appreciative Interviewing approaches and applying these approaches using a classroom exercise).

94. BROWN, *EMERGENT STRATEGY*, *supra* note 9, at 34.

95. See, e.g., *Infographic: 6 Guiding Principles to a Trauma-Informed Approach*, CTRS. FOR DISEASE CONTROL & PREVENTION: OFF. OF READINESS AND RESPONSE,

experience ourselves as being able to exercise the choice to speak or stay silent, and, if we choose to speak, to be able to express ourselves authentically in a manner that feels aligned and truthful for us. As a law teacher I seek to interact with my students in ways that will allow them to exercise as much choice as possible.⁹⁶ In the context of lawyering, we need to be mindful that the way the law and legal processes tend to operate often leave clients feeling disempowered and stripped of their dignity as well as their sense of agency. It is therefore critically important to approach our clients in ways that allow them to affirm their own core sense of self, so that at every decision point they can experience themselves as having as much agency and choice as possible.

5. Transparency and Trustworthiness

Transparency and trustworthiness have also been identified as essential aspects of trauma-informed and healing-centered practice. As a legal professional, I can support the agency of my clients and other people I interact with in my work through being transparent with them about all aspects of our relationship, which in turn will enhance their trust in me. For instance, at times a client interview or a conversation with co-counsel or a witness can take an unexpected turn, and I am not able to respond in real time in a way that feels complete or fully in alignment with my values. Acting with transparency can mean initiating a

https://www.cdc.gov/orr/infographics/6_principles_trauma_info.htm [https://perma.cc/5QPZ-NRE2] (Sept. 17, 2020, 11:20 AM) (identifying the six principles as: (1) safety; (2) trustworthiness and transparency; (3) peer support; (4) collaboration and mutuality; (5) empowerment and choice; and (6) cultural, historical, and gender issues); Christopher Menschner & Alexandra Maul, *Key Ingredients for Successful Trauma-Informed Care Implementation*, CTR. FOR HEALTH CARE STRATEGIES 3, 6 (Apr. 2016), https://www.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/programs_campaigns/childrens_mental_health/atc-whitepaper-040616.pdf [https://perma.cc/TL7K-WMSR] (focusing on how to transform health care settings using the principles of patient empowerment, choice, collaboration, safety, and trustworthiness). See generally DAVID A. TRELEAVEN, *TRAUMA-SENSITIVE MINDFULNESS: PRACTICES FOR SAFE AND TRANSFORMATIVE HEALING* (2018) (advocating for mindfulness teachers to incorporate trauma-informed understandings and practices and emphasizing the importance of maximizing choice, voice, and empowerment).

96. One simple way to support other people's agency is to use invitational language. "Invitational language" means premising instructions with language demonstrating that everything is optional and reminding participants that they have choice and agency at all times. I have used and referenced invitational language throughout this discussion, beginning with the *Prologue*, where I prefaced my instructions with the words "*I . . . invite you.*" See *supra* text accompanying notes 2-6. Using invitational language is often discussed in connection with trauma-informed approaches. See *Using Invitational Language to Create Safety in Trauma Treatment*, TRAUMA TREATMENT COLLECTIVE (Nov. 14, 2022), <https://traumatreatmentcollective.com/using-invitational-language-to-create-safety-in-trauma-treatment> [https://perma.cc/N65D-VYH7]; see also Bliss et al., *supra* note 2, at 29-30 (discussing the importance of invitational language and how it supports trauma-informed teaching and practice).

follow-up conversation, acknowledging and accepting responsibility for my role in what took place, creating space to slow down, and inviting my client, or whoever may have been impacted by my communication, to share their feedback and reflections around what happened.⁹⁷ My experience with offering this level of openness and transparency, which also requires humility, is that clients and others generally respond with appreciation and share in ways that reflect back the same relational qualities, including kindness, empathy, and compassion. This example illustrates how transparency and trustworthiness can contribute to an increased sense of agency in myself and in others, which can lead to more authentic communication and the possibility for deepening our connections, even in situations of tension or conflict.

6. Safer/Braver Spaces

In order to achieve the goals of relational and wholehearted lawyering and to live into the Four Rs of *Tikkun Olam* in our work as legal professionals, we need to appreciate the challenges of supporting our clients and others we work with to be able to show up as fully and authentically as possible. In safer/braver spaces, we foster the conditions in which everyone can be their authentic selves,⁹⁸ speak from the heart, and engage in generous and whole body listening.⁹⁹ As a law teacher, I am committed to creating these conditions in the classroom, with the hope and intention that my students will transfer these lessons into their legal work through “cultivating an ability to hold space for uncertainty while remaining open, caring, and compassionate toward clients and their stories.”¹⁰⁰

This work of creating safer and braver spaces brings us back to the notion of our space suits, and the recognition that our protective mechanisms are there for many complex reasons, which include individual and

97. See López & Brooks, *Teaching in Community*, *supra* note 91, at 160-61 (“Building trusting and supportive communities, both among our students and in partnership with our clients and client communities, takes significant time and requires tremendous patience and dedication.”); see also Bliss et al., *supra* note 2, at 22, 25 (emphasizing the need to “mov[e] at the speed of trust” in the context of legal education, and how slowing down can help support trust-building as well as a greater sense of belonging and well-being) (quoting BROWN, EMERGENT STRATEGY, *supra* note 9, at 42).

98. See Brooks, *Fostering Wholehearted Lawyers*, *supra* note 27, at 428-30 (describing practices and tools law teachers can use in the classroom to encourage students to speak openly and engage with the course material as authentically as possible).

99. See Brooks, *Listening and Relational Lawyering*, *supra* note 27, at 368-89 (reflecting “the recognition that meaningful listening requires both head and heart, along with awareness of bodily sensations”).

100. *Id.* at 368.

collective histories of trauma and oppression. The key takeaway is that we cannot simply say or think the words “safe space” and expect students or clients magically to feel safe. We need to invest in showing up and acting in ways consistent with all the guidance here as our daily practices, and “[m]ove at the speed of trust.”¹⁰¹

V. ADDITIONAL TOOLS AND PRACTICES FOR FURTHER EXPLORATION

Before concluding, I would like to offer several additional tools and practices that can support *Tikkun Olam*, which also point to possible future directions for the work of reimagining lawyering. One important source and inspiration for these ideas is *On Being*,¹⁰² a resource hosted and curated by Krista Tippett.¹⁰³ Tippett wrote something recently about the importance of naming the “generative story of our time,” which she defines as the “ordinary and abundant reality of things that are going right”¹⁰⁴ Similar to what I have discussed earlier, she acknowledges that stories of catastrophe and critical analysis of our problems, which are riveting to our brains,¹⁰⁵ are real and grave, and yet, they are “not the whole story of us.”¹⁰⁶ Tippett emphasizes that noticing and naming what is good can support our well-being and help us move in the direction of the world we want to inhabit.¹⁰⁷ Again, “[w]hat we pay attention to grows.”¹⁰⁸

A. Experiencing Everyday Awe and Wonder

One way we can devote more of our energy and attention to the good is through practices that allow us to experience a sense of awe and wonder. A psychologist named Dacher Keltner has undertaken extensive research on this topic, which he refers to as “the new science of awe.”¹⁰⁹

101. This is among my favorite quotes, which I learned from the work of adrienne maree brown. BROWN, EMERGENT STRATEGY, *supra* note 9, at 42; *see also supra* note 97.

102. For more information on the On Being Project, see ON BEING, <https://onbeing.org> [<https://perma.cc/8KCE-JWQV>] (last visited Dec. 2, 2023).

103. *See* On Being with Krista Tippett, *Seeing the Generative Story of Our Time*, ON BEING (Oct. 13, 2022), <https://onbeing.org/programs/seeing-the-generative-story-of-our-time/#transcript> [<https://perma.cc/4DAR-LMRT>].

104. *Id.* at 00:12-00:51.

105. The way our brains attach to negative information relates to the Zones of Self-Awareness and our survival instincts and how they get activated by threats, whether they are real or perceived. *See supra* Part IV.B.

106. On Being with Krista Tippet, *supra* note 103, at 00:31-00:41.

107. *See id.* at 05:15.

108. BROWN, EMERGENT STRATEGY, *supra* note 9, at 34.

109. DACHER KELTNER, AWE: THE NEW SCIENCE OF EVERYDAY WONDER AND HOW IT CAN TRANSFORM YOUR LIFE xvi (2023). Among Keltner’s many accolades, he consulted on the

He defines awe as: “the feeling of being in the presence of something vast that transcends your current understanding of the world.”¹¹⁰ He has identified what he calls the “eight wonders of life,” which emerged after studying twenty-six cultures over more than a decade.¹¹¹ Pursuing any of these experiences for even fifteen minutes a day can literally improve our health and well-being.¹¹² Interestingly, the form of wonder that shows up most often in his research is the experience of being moved by what he refers to as “moral beauty,” which is generally about witnessing acts of courage, kindness, strength, or the overcoming of adversity.¹¹³ The second category Keltner discusses is what he calls “collective effervescence,” experiences where we feel like we are “buzzing and crackling with some life force that merges people into a collective self, a tribe, an oceanic ‘we.’”¹¹⁴ Examples include weddings, funerals, graduations, sporting events, and political rallies.¹¹⁵ The third category, which will probably come as no surprise, is experiences in nature, the power of which I referenced at the beginning of this talk.¹¹⁶ According to Keltner, “it is hard to imagine a single thing you can do that is better for your body and mind than finding awe outdoors.”¹¹⁷ These everyday wonders can contribute to our ability to experience our interconnectedness, the feeling of being a part of something much larger than ourselves.¹¹⁸ Keltner states:

Awe integrates us into the systems of life—communities, collectives, the natural environment, and forms of culture, such as music, art, religion, and our mind’s efforts to make sense of all its webs of ideas. The epiphany of awe is that its experience connects our individual selves with the vast forces of life.¹¹⁹

Keltner describes the physiology of awe by highlighting the role of the vagus nerve, which Resmaa Menakem refers to as the “soul

award-winning Disney Pixar film *Inside Out*. See *Inside Out*, IMDB, <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt2096673> [<https://perma.cc/HM8G-JWBN>] (last visited Dec. 2, 2023).

110. Keltner, *supra* note 109, at 7.

111. *Id.* at 10-11.

112. The “eight wonders of life” that are most likely to induce awe are as follows: moral beauty, collective effervescence, nature, music, visual design, spirituality and religion, mortality, and epiphanies. *Id.* at 18.

113. *Id.* at 11.

114. *Id.* at 13.

115. *Id.*

116. See *supra* text accompanying notes 2-5.

117. Keltner, *supra* note 109, at 128 (detailing the physical benefits of experiencing everyday wonder, including reducing the likelihood of cardiovascular disease, respiratory disease, diabetes, depression, anxiety, and cancer, and also aches and pains, allergies, vertigo, and eczema).

118. See *id.* at 36-37.

119. *Id.* at 249.

nerve.”¹²⁰ The vagus nerve counterbalances the parts of our brain that get activated when we are in a state of panic, while also reducing our blood pressure, release of the stress hormone cortisol, and inflammation.¹²¹ “It slows your heart rate, calms the body, and through enabling eye contact and vocalization can bring about a sense of connection and belonging.”¹²² Keltner offers examples of how experiencing awe can activate the vagus nerve, such as listening to melodious music.¹²³ He notes further that physical proximity to others, including supportive touching and even embrace, can also stimulate the vagus nerve to create “a neurochemistry of connection,” which includes the release of oxytocin, a neurochemical that promotes openness to others.¹²⁴

B. Active Hope: The Great Turning and the Work That Reconnects

The web of life is calling us forth at this time.
 We’ve come a long way and are here to play our part.
 With Active Hope we realize that there are adventures in store,
 strengths to discover, and comrades to link arms with.
 Active Hope is a readiness to engage.
 Active Hope is a readiness to discover the strengths in ourselves and in
 others;
 a readiness to discover the reasons for hope
 and the occasions for love.¹²⁵

The final set of practices I want to share come from the work of Joanna Macy, which she refers to as “the Great Turning.”¹²⁶ Macy uses this phrase to reflect the dynamic and fluid quality of the existential challenges we face and invites us to act as creative agents of change. Her response to our troubled world focuses on the idea of “active hope,” which she defines as a practice or a thing we *do*, rather than simply

120. RESMAA MENAKEM, MY GRANDMOTHER’S HANDS: RACIALIZED TRAUMA AND THE PATHWAY TO MENDING OUR HEARTS AND BODIES 138-39 (2017) (calling the vagus nerve the soul nerve to reflect the unique and complex nature of how this organ communicates through sensation and vibes, which can be transmitted internally within the body and also between people, as well as how it functions entirely outside of our thinking brains).

121. See KELTNER, *supra* note 109, at 127.

122. *Id.* at 46.

123. *See id.* at 152.

124. *Id.* at 53-54.

125. JOANNA MACY & CHRIS JOHNSTONE, ACTIVE HOPE: HOW TO FACE THE MESS WE’RE IN WITHOUT GOING CRAZY 35 (2012) (excerpted poem).

126. Macy and her co-author Johnstone describe the Great Turning as one of three stories that represent different responses to our challenging times. The other two responses are “Business as Usual,” which could be viewed as instrumental or transactional, where the focus is on economic growth and getting ahead, and “the Great Unraveling,” which emphasizes scarcity and separation. *See id.* at 4-5.

have.¹²⁷ Active hope requires three key steps: (1) taking a clear view of reality; (2) identifying the specific direction and values we want to see changed; and (3) taking concrete steps to move ourselves and our situation in that direction.¹²⁸ Macy's definition of active hope brings to mind the work of Mariame Kaba, who speaks of hope as "discipline."¹²⁹ Kaba invokes a "grounded hope" we have to practice on a daily basis.¹³⁰ She states that hope is a choice to think and act that we can make in spite of all the understandable reasons we might feel hopeless, including the choice to trust other people until they prove to be untrustworthy.¹³¹

Macy emphasizes the importance of intentions guiding the practice of active hope.¹³² Even when we are feeling somewhat hopeless, if we focus on making a choice and then acting accordingly, hope can be our guide.¹³³ The "contribution each of us makes to the healing of our world is our gift of Active Hope."¹³⁴ Macy's work thus returns us to *Tikkun Olam*. Engaging in this work can help energize our sense of purpose and help us discover, or maybe more accurately, uncover, strengths we did not know we had. Active hope therefore is about receiving as much as it is about giving. By practicing this approach, we are "stepping into a state of aliveness that makes our lives profoundly satisfying."¹³⁵

We can live into active hope through a set of practices Macy first developed in the late 1970s known as the Work That Reconnects, which focus on "restor[ing] our sense of connection with the web of life and with one another[.]"¹³⁶ The Work That Reconnects is depicted as a spiral with four stages: (a) Coming from Gratitude; (b) Honoring Our Pain for the World; (c) Seeing with New Eyes; and (d) Going Forth.¹³⁷ The spiral encourages us to keep journeying through these stages, as each of them strengthens with every repetition. Importantly, these practices are intended for work with others as well as work we can do by ourselves.¹³⁸

127. *Id.* at 3.

128. *Id.*

129. MARIAME KABA, WE DO THIS 'TIL WE FREE US: ABOLITIONIST ORGANIZING AND TRANSFORMING JUSTICE, at 31 (2021) (ebook).

130. *Id.*

131. *Id.*

132. *See* MACY & JOHNSTONE, *supra* note 125, at 3.

133. *See id.*

134. *Id.* at 4.

135. *Id.*

136. *Id.* at 5-6.

137. *Id.* at 6.

138. *See id.* at 7.

1. Coming from Gratitude

The first stage invites us to begin with gratitude and keep returning to gratitude.¹³⁹ Taking the time to feel into gratitude allows us to become present to the experiences of everyday awe and wonder that can contribute to our well-being and help build our individual and collective strength to face yet another day of unexpected challenges. When we consciously bring gratitude to mind, we can change our brain chemistry in ways that contribute to improving our mental health and well-being.¹⁴⁰ Further, Brené Brown notes the research connecting gratitude with joy, which creates its own “intriguing upward spiral.”¹⁴¹ Living into the traits of gratitude or joy in a given situation predicts increased future experiences of both of these emotions and feeling states.¹⁴² According to Brown, gratitude is also an antidote to what she has described as perhaps the most challenging emotion: “foreboding joy.”¹⁴³ Foreboding joy is that moment when we nearly simultaneously experience both joy and the quiver of fear that “if we allow ourselves to feel joy, we are inviting disaster.”¹⁴⁴ The good news is that we can lean into joy by using that same quiver “as a reminder to practice gratitude.”¹⁴⁵

2. Honoring Our Pain for the World

Coming from gratitude therefore supports us in facing the roller coaster of life’s realities, which leads us naturally into the second phase.¹⁴⁶ As much as we need to slow down to make time and space for gratitude, we need to do the same for our feelings of pain, sorrow, grief, and outrage, along with any other feelings we may have in response to the difficulties of our world. Admitting the depths of our sadness and expressing our grief, even to ourselves, takes us into “culturally forbidden territory.”¹⁴⁷ From an early age we are encouraged to stay cheerful

139. See *supra* note 5 and accompanying text.

140. See Joshua Brown & Joel Wong, *How Gratitude Changes You and Your Brain*, GREATER GOOD MAG. (June 6, 2017), https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/how_gratitude_changes_you_and_your_brain [https://perma.cc/R3PJ-6982] (presenting research that supports the immediate and potentially longer-term positive effects of incorporating gratitude practices). Keltner also points out how expressing gratitude “[w]ith a simple warm clasp of another person’s arm” activates the vagus nerve and other positive chemical responses in the recipient. Keltner, *supra* note 109, at 85.

141. BROWN, ATLAS OF THE HEART, *supra* note 58, at 206.

142. See *id.*

143. *Id.* at 214-15.

144. *Id.* at 215.

145. *Id.*

146. See MACY & JOHNSTONE, *supra* note 125, at 38.

147. *Id.*

and keep it together regardless of our circumstances, so honoring our pain for the world defies the social taboos that can silence us and ultimately contribute to deeper forms of unwellness.¹⁴⁸ Honoring our pain is also about recognizing the value of sadness and grief as ways of demonstrating our deep caring for the world and each other, which is also about embracing “our interconnectedness with all life.”¹⁴⁹

3. Seeing with New Eyes

Affirming our interconnectedness brings with it a strong sense of belonging, which in turn allows us to recognize a wider array of resources that are available to support us. Macy refers to this perspective as our “ecological self.”¹⁵⁰ Another way of thinking about this ecological understanding is to analogize it to relational consciousness and the interconnections among our personal, interpersonal, and systemic dimensions. Similarly, Macy speaks of this third stage as drawing on “insights from holistic science and ancient spiritual wisdom, as well as from our creative imaginations.”¹⁵¹ Seeing with new eyes also reminds us of the importance of doing this hard work in community with others. By working together, we can co-create a richer, more diverse set of ideas, practices, and tools drawing from our collective deep wells of lived experience and knowledge.

4. Going Forth

The final stage is about taking action to address the challenges we face informed by our collective wisdom. Going forth means identifying the practical steps we can take toward healing our world that align with our vision.¹⁵² This idea brings us back to *Tikkun Olam*, which we can now see with new eyes. It also brings us back to the idea of fractals, which can support our efforts to honor and value even what might seem like very small steps forward.

Along similar lines, going forth also requires taking the long view. Macy states that when we are seeing with new eyes, we are not alone in facing life’s and the planet’s challenges.¹⁵³ We are just a very small “part

148. *See id.* For an in-depth exploration of these social taboos and how embracing our sadness can contribute to our well-being, see SUSAN CAIN, BITTERSWEET: HOW SORROW AND LONGING MAKE US WHOLE 44-46 (2022).

149. MACY & JOHNSTONE, *supra* note 125, at 38.

150. *Id.*

151. *Id.*

152. *Id.* at 39.

153. *Id.* at 40-41.

of a much larger story, a continuing stream of life on Earth that has flowed for more than three and a half billion years and that has survived five mass extinctions.”¹⁵⁴ The more we can “sink into this deeper, stronger flow” and experience ourselves as part of it, we can create the conditions in which a different set of possibilities can emerge.¹⁵⁵

Another perspective on taking the long view comes from the work of John Paul Lederach, who speaks of the idea of “critical yeast”—small groups of people who live into a new quality of relationship, and who contribute to creating the critical mass necessary for systemic change.¹⁵⁶ As described by Krista Tippett:

The invitation here is to be critical yeast. . . . [B]ecause to really trust in something like critical yeast in a world which emphasizes what is big, we have to really trust in a long, reality-based sense of time. We have to sink into time’s capaciousness. And that is something that I want to encourage you to try to feel in your body, as much as take in as an idea.¹⁵⁷

Tippett suggests a way we might be able to create a more embodied understanding of this notion through conjuring up our “200-year present,”¹⁵⁸ which begins with the oldest person you knew as a child and ends with the hundredth birthday of the youngest person “you have held in your arms.”¹⁵⁹ If we can bring to mind these people in our lives, it will roughly amount to a 200-year span of the lives that have touched ours. So, the 200-year present is a way of feeling into perhaps a small taste of what those ripple effects might look like for each of us.

Mariame Kaba also emphasizes the importance of taking the long view. In her words, “I take a long view, understanding full well that I’m just a tiny, little part of a story that already has a huge antecedent and has something that is going to come after that.”¹⁶⁰ Kaba adds that this recognition puts her in the frame of mind of appreciation that allows her

154. *Id.*

155. *Id.* at 41.

156. On Being with Krista Tippett, *Taking a Long View of Time, and Becoming “Critical Yeast,”* ON BEING, at 06:13-08:00 (Oct. 27, 2022), <https://onbeing.org/programs/taking-a-long-view-of-time-and-becoming-critical-yeast> [<https://perma.cc/L9K5-KYG9>] (referring to the work of John Paul Lederach); see also John Paul Lederach, *On Mass and Movement: The Theory of the Critical Yeast*, in *THE MORAL IMAGINATION: THE ART AND SOUL OF BUILDING PEACE* 87, 90-93 (2005).

157. On Being with Krista Tippett, *supra* note 156, at 08:29.

158. *Id.* at 10:08.

159. *Id.* at 10:14-10:49.

160. KABA, *supra* note 129, at 32.

to feel good about whatever she is doing even if it is significant to one or two people.¹⁶¹

VI. CONCLUSION

I would like to close with two brief quotations that I hope offer encouragement and inspiration for where we go from here. The first is from Rainer Maria Rilke, who I quoted earlier. It speaks to the ideas of radical acceptance and active hope, which require us to take the long view. It also speaks to how we can hold onto kindness and curiosity, even when the journey or even the immediate path ahead of us remains unclear.

[H]ave patience with everything unresolved in your heart and [] try to love *the questions themselves* as if they were locked rooms or books written in a very foreign language. Don't search for the answers, which could not be given to you now, because you would not be able to live them. And the point is, to live everything. *Live* the questions now. Perhaps then, someday far in the future, you will gradually, without even noticing it, live your way into the answer.¹⁶²

So, the invitation is to live and to love the questions. And finally, I will leave you with words of encouragement from Joanna Macy, for those of us who seek to reimagine lawyering and the rest of our lives by living into the Four Rs and working toward repairing the world. May we be inspired to pursue our life's work for healing and liberation, in our 200-year present, now and for future generations.

[E]ach of us has something significant to offer, a contribution to make. In rising to the challenge of playing our best role, we discover something precious that both enriches our lives and adds to the healing of the world.¹⁶³

161. *Id.* at 32.

162. RILKE, *supra* note 79, at 34-35 (emphasis in original).

163. MACY & JOHNSTONE, *supra* note 125, at 238.