



INTO DARKNESS INTO LIGHT

Anthropology of Consciousness

41st Annual Spring Conference

St. Louis, MO

April 6-10, 2024

President

John Baker

Program Coordinator

Lisa Gezon

Secretary/Treasurer

Nicole Torres

Saturday, April 6

9:30 – 10:30 Coffee and Refreshments: Registration Opens

10:30 – 11:00 Opening Ceremony and President's Welcome

10:30-12- Panel: *Playin' in the Dark, Searching for the Light: Diasporic Consciousness, Cartographizations, and Commencements*

10:30 Phil Colquitt: *What are we Sowing?: Octavia Butler's Parables and What She Lends Us for an Africana Women's Anthropology*

10:45: Tsering Wangmo: *Racialized other - the radicalized other - Necropolitics on the Tibetan plateau*

11:00: Yhovana Karen Chura Cussi: *Post-racial Ideological Notions in Plurinational Bolivia*

11:15: Sonam Norbu: *The taste of butter tea*

11:30: Discussion

12-1:30- lunch break

1:30- 3:00- Panel: *Health and Healing; Mind and Body*

1:30 Vincent Laliberte: *An Ecological Approach to Loneliness and Voice-Hearing Experiences*

1:45 Mason Wilson-Tanev: *Psychedelic Modalities and Midwifery; A History of Enclosure*

2:00 Emily Gillard: *Hands Off the Light Switch!*

2:15 Tiffany-Ashton Gatsby*: *Guiding the Guiders: Ethics of Psychedelic Care*

2:30: Discussion

3:30-5:15--Panel: *Post-conflict, Memory and Wisdom*

3:30 Liv Russo: *Redefining Erikson & Handelman's "Ethnic Community" through Media: Following the Lead of Ethnic Diasporas*

3:45 Jordan Kiper: *Memory Conflicts and Conflictual Memories: Remembering Collective Violence in the Western Balkans*

4:00 Soren Pearce: *"Belfast is going to Hell Fast": the Destruction of Moral Worlds in Northern Ireland*

4:15 Jeffrey MacDonald: *Learning from the Elders: Preserving lu-Mien Refugee Ritual and Literacy Traditions*

4:30 Mira Amiras*: *Sages of the Zohar, in Darkness finding Light*

4:45: Discussion

5:30- 6:30 Mira Amiras film: *The Day Before Creation* (38 minutes)

Sunday, April 7

8:30-9: Coffee and refreshments, registration

9-11:00 Laura Lee and Paul Robear Workshop: *Experience the 'Waking Dream' Visionary Spirit Journey with Ritual Postures*

11:15-12:30: Panel/roundtable: *Identity: BIPOC and Transpiritual Perspectives*

11:15 Enoch Page: *BIPOC Transpiritual Leaders: Imagining Spiritual Liberation to Repudiate the White Public Space of Westernized Religion*

11:30 Enoch Page: Round Table: *Using BIPOC Transpiritual History Website as a Teaching Resource*

12:30-2- Lunch Break and AoC Board Meeting

2-3:30: Panel: *Environments, Earthly and Celestial*

2:00- Susan Paulson: *I'm a Productivist Pig. How Can I Learn to Sing and Dance Around All Day?*

2:15 Merve Goknar: *Into Oneness with the Trees*

2:30 Tony Hull: *Ancient Sky Consciousness: Celestial Reference in Alignment of World Sacred Architecture*

2:45 Stephanie Fox*: *The Cosmos: Beliefs Across Time*

3:00 Discussion

4:00-5:00: Richard Choquette: Workshop: *Toy Design as Constructs of Consciousness*

5:15 -7 Reception and AoC business meeting (all invited!)

8:30 Christian Suhr film: *Light Upon Light*

Tuesday April 9

9-10:30 Panel: *Beyond the Human, Beyond the Living*

9:00 Yadong Li: *The Occult and the Hopeful: The Work of Hope Among Ufologists in Post-Socialist China*

9:15 Phyllis Passariello*: *BEYOND THE HUMAN: Synesthesia and Non-Human Consciousness as Templates for Grasping the Post-Human World*

9:30 Kathryn Stam: *The Tibetan Concept of Rainbow Body and the Material Remains*

9:45 Discussion

10:45-12:15 Nicholas Long Panel: *Art and Media at the Technology/Consciousness Nexus (5 papers)*

12:15-2 Lunch

2-3:30 Panel: *Light, Dark and Psychedelics*

2:00 Christine VanPool: *Light in the Darkness*

2:15 Todd VanPool: *Darkness, Light, and the Creation of a Magical Community*

2:30 Lisa Gezon: *Psychedelics and the Reframing of Religiosity and Spirituality*

2:45 Michael Winkelman: *Into Darkness, Into Light: Patterns of Traditional Entheogen Use* 3:00 Discussion

3:45-5:00 Julie Raymond-Yakoubian Workshop: *Ecological Grief Cafe*

Music and revelry with Richard Choquette

Wednesday April 10

9-10:45 Nicholas Long Workshop: *Lights of the Mind: Exploring Consciousness and Sociality with Biofeedback Technologies*

POSTERS and ART:

Anya Lewinski: *In the Mind's Eye: Of Darkness and Light*

Richard Mora: *Circles of the Sun*

Abstracts

Panel: *Playin' in the Dark, Searching for the Light: Diasporic Consciousness, Cartographizations, and Commencements*

"This panel attends to Toni Morrison's *Playing in the Dark* and the place of the racialized other in readings and the world writ large. This panel's work extends Morrison's notion of American Africanism, which focuses on the ways in which an African or nonwhite presence in the United States has served literature, predominately white literature. This panel extends this work to include not only Black Americans but other racialized people who reside outside of the United States, such as in the cases of Bolivia and Tibet and assesses these racialized experiences in literature, art, and other mediums that call for cultural criticism. These scholars' work attends to who has oppression or privilege and can the two coexist simultaneously, linguistic practices and what language means and for whom, transformation and change in a world that reifies you as a habitual other, and addresses barriers to situating and centering oneself, and the opening that brings for racial futurities and imaginaries. The question the panel addresses is: What awareness must one have to be the racialized other, and what are the ways the "'darkness'" as racialized other is perpetuated in Anthropological discourses? Furthermore, what are the ways in which "'the dark'" serves as a liberatory tool rather than a sociopolitical and discursive binder?

The panelists will work with and through concepts such as necropolitics, racialized and radicalized "'others,'" the relationship between death, dying, and development, exile, transtemporality and memories, otherworlds, nonnormativity, Black Feminist Thought, postcolonialism, and language systems. Furthermore, scholars utilized to address these concepts are Black studies scholar Achille Mbembe, Tibetan scholar and writer Tsering Dhondup, Black futurity writer Octavia Butler, Black feminist anthropologist Irma McClaurin, and Latin American scholars Cortina et al. This diasporic consciousness panel lends itself to the conference to include those perpetually excluded.

Phil Colquit

What are we Sowing?: Octavia Butler's Parables and What She Lends Us for an Africana Women's Anthropology

Octavia Butler's mappings and constructions of otherworlds allow readers to visualize and theorize new imaginings of bodies, particularly bodies and experiences that read as nonnormative. Many of her writings critique the nation-state, create unique community formations, traverse the human experience as we know and experience it while illuminating how all bodies are gendered and racialized. Her recognition of identity as conditional and fluid is palpable. She provides a template for interventions to decolonization. One central question this work asks is: Is there a possibility for an Africana Women's Anthropology, and what are the ways Black feminists have cartographized a conduit for us? This question centers Black feminist anthropologists as pedagogical predecessors of a future Africana Women's Study discipline. While Octavia Butler was neither a Black feminist (some would say) nor an anthropologist, she was a world-builder, map-maker, and decolonial pedagogical leader who believed in building other or (im)possible worlds for Black folks. *Parables of the Sower* provides Black feminist anthropologists with a seed, or an Earthseed, if you will. Black feminist anthropologists have laid the groundwork for Africana Women's Anthropology to stand on its own legs as a discipline. One that intersects with the field of Black Women's Studies. Utilizing

Octavia Butler's *Parables of the Sower*, this work additionally asks: In what ways is the concept of Earthseed freeing, hopeful, imaginative, and generative? How have Black feminist anthropologists planted the seeds, alongside Black feminist theorists, for a proposed discipline? Is it possible to create a world/discipline in which Black women/femmes are not the habitual others? Is *Africana Women's Anthropological Studies* the light in the darkness in the field of Anthropology? This work will weave together contextual analysis, media studies, and autoethnography to serve as a decolonial pedagogical tool.

Tsering Wangmo

Racialized other - the radicalized other - Necropolitics on the Tibetan plateau

This paper examines the Chinese colonial assertion on Tibetan bodies through the lens of Necropolitics (Mbembe, 2003), critically analyzing state violence justified through the labeling of "Splittists". At this point in Tibet's history, Tibetans are not only perpetually confronted with literal deaths - in the forms of self-immolations, imprisonment, and torture but also in the forms of cultural deaths and deaths of the soul wrought by the lack of access to one's own land. In this process, what we see is not only the formation of the racialized "other" but also a radicalized "other" whose desire for an unapologetic existence in their own land is denied and suppressed through means of the fraught citizenship obligations and the rule of law. This "radicalized other" is unacceptable to the colonial power, but a certain degree of radicalism is maintained and even perpetuated by the state itself to further the nationalistic tendencies of the Chinese citizenry - specifically the Han Chinese. The violence and radicalization of Tibetans are strategically used by the state to inculcate solidarity among the Han Chinese by positioning Tibetans as risks and dangers. In this perpetual "othering", a desire for Tibet reverberates across the plateau, to the souls of Tibetans in the diaspora, especially young people. It leaves cracks through which memory, history, and the future merge for the "staying alive". Necropolitics in Tibet is multifaceted, and its impacts and methods are unique to the functioning of Chinese colonization in the 21st century. This paper explores these arguments through the analysis of the short story "The Valley of Black Foxes" written by the Tibetan author Tsering Dhondup and selected contemporary Tibetan music videos and lyrics from Tibet. The paper locates colonial discourse to Tibet and critically engages with the state apparatus of "labeling" and more importantly focuses on the multiple ways that Tibetans reemerge from "deaths".

Yhovana Karen Chura Cussi

Post-racial Ideological Notions in Plurinational Bolivia

Studies conducted between the U.S. and Latin American countries have highlighted the importance of addressing racism as a global issue. As addressed by Hernandez (2012) confronting the persistence of a "new race ideology" is vital. Building on this, Hernandez emphasizes that racism in Latin American countries mirrors that of the United States, perpetuating systemic racism and educational inequalities. The use of segregation in education has historically played a crucial role in maintaining supremacy in the Americas, raising doubts about the educational attainment of

marginalized Indigenous communities in Latin American countries. Cortina et al. (2014) delve into various experiences and outcomes regarding the education of Indigenous peoples, highlighting the role of Intercultural Bilingual Education (IBE) in fostering progress and reducing educational inequalities. Gustafson (2009, 2017) highlights the significant impacts of one reform after another on Indigenous communities and in their languages influencing how languages and people who speak those languages are understood. These changes, along with the formation of a new ideology, signify Bolivia's progress in the inclusion of Indigenous and Afro-Bolivian nations, cultural practices, and languages. Cho (2009) outlines key characteristics of post-racialism ideology, including racial progress and transcendence, race-neutral universalism, moral equivalence, and distancing moves. Furthermore, Hernandez's (2016) transnational comparison reveals that despite acknowledging multiculturalism and implementing policies in areas such as education, racial exclusion persists, obscuring the racial hierarchy of Latin American racialism. Thus, this paper aims to explore how the 2010 ASEP education law and policy reforms in education institutions in Bolivia may silence the voices of marginalized Indigenous and Afro communities, potentially contributing to a post-racialism ideology in a purportedly decolonizing society.

Sonam Norbu

The taste of butter tea

This is a presentation of an experimental short film where I attempt to visually theorize life in the context of exile. This conceptualization is especially attuned to a time when borders are concrete but I also say that this is a time where memories influx, breaking norms of temporal and bodily relations to individuals and community. Life is, in many ways, a continuous journey, akin to the vanishing footprint of wet feet on a rock during a hot sunny day. It possesses a sense of impermanency, but the body in movement is not without concrete relations to the world it inhabits; to itself, it is real and permanent. We move from each experience to the next, and in this continuous journey, and in these vanishing footprints, our memories flow like metaphorical rivers—sometimes forcibly, but at other times, calm and homely. In tying all of these experiences to the meaning of life in this situation of exile, the thought and desire for a home are always close to the heart and always relevant.

Panel: *Health and Healing; Mind and Body*

Vincent Laliberté vincelalib@gmail.com

An ecological approach to loneliness and voice-hearing experiences

The phenomenon of loneliness and its substantial health consequence are receiving widespread recognition, including from anthropologists. Chikako Ozawa-de-Silva and Michelle Parsons have argued that loneliness is a social phenomenon; the perception of loneliness is shaped by a context in which one is feeling unneeded, rejected and lacking in mutual recognition. Additionally, the study of voice-hearing experience has garnered attention in anthropology, particularly through Tania Luhrmann's research, which shows how the social and cultural context influence the content of voices and their emotional valence. However, there is still a dearth of interest in the relation between loneliness and voices hearing in anthropology. In this paper, I draw from my long-term

ethnographic work with carriage drivers in Montreal to tell you about the story of Jerome who experienced loneliness and voice-hearing following the ban of the carriage industry on December 30, 2019. I use an ecological approach to consciousness to consider that psychic phenomena such as loneliness and hearing voices emerge from one's engagement in an environment that includes humans, but also animals and places. I also look at the ways that these relations are themselves embedded in broader ecologies that shape them. Moreover, the story of Jerome reveals that it is possible to describe the apparition of voices ecologically, as a process that evolve in time and that is shaped by the environment. Lastly, and also drawing on my clinical work as a psychiatrist working in a shelter, I will discuss about some of the implications of this ecological take on the experience of loneliness and voice-hearing for conceptualization and treatment of psychiatric symptoms.

Mason Wilson-Tanev novamidwife@gmail.com

Psychedelic Modalities and Midwifery; A History of Enclosure

"This paper explores the intricate linkages between historical processes of enclosure, the professionalization of midwifery, and contemporary restrictions on psychedelic modalities, particularly concerning self-directed use in the postpartum period.

Building upon historical analysis, the paper then examines parallels in the contemporary context, particularly within the realm of psychedelic practices. It contends that the professionalization and medicalization of psychedelics, especially in the postpartum period, echo historical patterns observed in midwifery. The current emphasis on clinical providers as gatekeepers of psychedelic modalities restricts access and perpetuates a narrative that self-directed use is inherently risky or illegitimate.

Moreover, the paper explores the implications of this professionalization for individuals seeking alternative modalities for postpartum support. It argues that the restriction of psychedelic modalities to clinical settings not only limits access but also reinforces power dynamics that prioritize medical authority over individual autonomy and experiential knowledge. This has significant implications for reproductive health, as it marginalizes the voices and experiences of those seeking non-traditional forms of support during the vulnerable postpartum period.

By examining the historical entanglements of enclosure, midwifery professionalization, and contemporary restrictions on psychedelic practices, this paper offers critical insights into the broader socio-political dynamics shaping healthcare landscapes. It underscores the importance of recognizing historical continuities in order to challenge prevailing paradigms and advocate for more inclusive and equitable healthcare systems. Ultimately, it calls for a reevaluation of current restrictions on psychedelic modalities, particularly in the context of postpartum care, to better align with principles of autonomy, accessibility, and harm reduction.

Emily Gillard

Hands off the light switch!

Beyond being able to practice in the dark, being willing to practice in the dark is foundational to midwifery care. By staying in discomfort while providing birth care, midwives are not simply honouring patient choice for dim lighting within the birthing room, but are also enacting a continuous orienting of care towards the patient. This foregrounds the patient and the patient's needs over the midwife and the midwife's needs. In the act of giving over to patient needs, the midwife provides care that goes beyond patient choice – she legitimizes dark as necessary to the birthing process, she co-creates with the patient the safe territory for release that is necessary to the birthing process.

Reflecting on twenty years of midwifery care in southern Ontario, I explore fictionalized birth vignettes, amalgamations of personal birth care experiences, to showcase how midwives provide care through their own discomfort in dark birthing rooms. I draw on Annmarie Mol (2008) and Fahy and Parratt (2006) as well as more recent work on radical vulnerability to theorize the significance of being willing and able to stay in the dark as a healthcare provider. I conclude that knowing how to work in darkness and being willing to do so, are integral midwifery skills that should not only be the purview of midwives, but part of the care provision of all birthing people.

Tiffany-AshtonGatsby tagatsby@uw.edu

Guiding the Guiders: Ethics of Psychedelic Care

Current Issues in Psychedelic Research: Illuminating Opportunities, Challenges, and Cultural Respect

"Despite enduring stigmatization and sensationalized media coverage, interest in psychedelics persists, fueling exponential growth in research, particularly within the realm of psychedelic therapy. Accumulated evidence from years of clinical trials underscores the therapeutic potential of various psychedelics in treating conditions such as PTSD, depression, and other mental health issues—entheogenic healing practices have roots dating back millennia among Indigenous peoples. Biomedical research suggests that some psychedelic medicines may even address chronic pain and opioid use disorder. However, despite mounting evidence, legal constraints in the U.S. federally prohibit access to most psychedelic therapies.

Outside of legally approved clinical trials, psychedelic therapy is emerging as a significant market, with demand steadily increasing. Yet, practical barriers hinder access, including legal constraints and insurance issues. Underground practitioners are proliferating, alongside referral networks for trip sitting, psychedelic doulas, and facilitators. Additionally, individuals often seek support through integration groups, both online and in person.

While some states have legalized psychedelic use and others are considering such measures, the FDA may approve certain psychedelic drug therapy protocols later this year, potentially facilitating integration into mainstream healthcare systems. With the rapid rise in demand, ethical considerations in psychedelic care protocols have become a burgeoning industry. Training programs for psychedelic practitioners are being established, offering certification in anticipation of the eventual legality of psychedelic therapies. However, marginalized populations, including BIPOC, LGBTQIA2S+, low-income, disabled, and immigrant communities, are often overlooked. Some states are striving to incorporate the history of entheogenic medicine as an act of Indigenous reciprocity. However, these efforts may fall short in fully honoring and respecting the origins of plant medicine and may overlook the neocolonialist dynamics inherent in psychedelic tourism and the Westernization of Indigenous culture for biomedical gain.

This roundtable brings together scholars from diverse backgrounds and career stages to explore the multifaceted opportunities and challenges faced by researchers in the field of psychedelics. By fostering dialogue and collaboration among stakeholders, the roundtable aims to illuminate pathways for overcoming challenges in psychedelic research while promoting cultural respect and examining the potential of psychedelic care."

Panel: Post-conflict, Memory and Wisdom

Liv Russo omr3540@gmail.com

Redefining Erikson & Handelman's "Ethnic Community" through Media: Following the Lead of Ethnic Diasporas

Ethnic diasporas are consistently adjusting to a globalized and colonized world, in which occupation of their physical homelands is often impossible. In his book *Ethnicity & Nationalism*, anthropologist Thomas Erikson begins to conceptualize the diasporic experience. He applies the term “diaspora” to individuals whose, “primary identity connects them to their ancestral country, even if they have lived their entire lives elsewhere” (2010, 186). Erikson himself notes that this term and attached meaning is “contested” (2010, 186), claiming that the world does not operate under single-file definitions, but is instead dynamic and adaptive (2010, 187). This idea of adaptation has been adopted by the diaspora groups themselves, and the results are the focus of this paper. By filtering diaspora media, in its many off and online forms, through the constraints of ethnic classifications set forth by Thomas Erikson and Don Handelmann, I will show that diaspora media is not just tangential to the realms occupied by diaspora groups, but instead functions as a concrete territory that is comparable, and at times synonymous, with the geographic homeland.

Jordan Kiper jkiper@uab.edu

Memory conflicts and conflictual memories: Remembering collective violence in the Western Balkans

By attending to how people speak about remembering collective violence, anthropologists can find diverse answers to the question of what it is like to have individual memories entangled with collective memory. For most memory scholars, remembering historical events is little more than reconstructing a community's shared narrative and then selectively tracing individual memories through it. But for postconflict ethnographers, memories of collective violence are far more cautious than what the literature would predict – even when there are incentives to conform with one's community. In this paper, I seek to reconcile these observations by drawing from interviews about collective violence with postconflict communities in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, and Serbia. I propose that uncertainty about memory offers a window into phenomenal consciousness by which people constitute their postconflict subjectivity. That subjectivity is not restricted to fitting into the collective but sharing qualia in a culturally accepted way. From this observation, I address three additional findings. First, contrary to theories that pathologize memory, communicating uncertainty about memory allows people to safely express themselves amid relevant power dynamics in the Western Balkans. These include the politics of contested memories, memory laws, and conflicts over memorialization. Second, showing uncertainty about memories is an everyday practice to initiate apology and reconciliation, or to signal identities and conflictual social relations. Third, uncertainty about memory challenges views of the Balkans as cultures zealously committed to the collective memories of ethnic nationalism. My interview data challenge this view and show that expressions of memory are often used as a signaling devices for managing social relations. To conclude I argue that attention to how people talk about memories can help us understand subjectivity without questioning conformity or accuracy.

Soren Pearce sorenpearce@gmail.com

“Belfast is Going to Hell Fast”: The Destruction of Moral Worlds in Northern Ireland

Much of the academic discourse on millenarianism—belief in the end or radical alteration of the world—has focused on overtly religious societies and organizations. Among people who are popularly considered more secular, millenarian beliefs are frequently reframed as “conspiracy theories”; while such a label may certainly be accurate, it frequently invites a level of academic dismissal that ignores the lived realities of the people who hold these beliefs. Discourse about conspiracy theories commonly associates the phenomenon with either political gullibility or psychological pathology, further distancing the academic discussion of the concept from the

actual experiences of real people. This paper, drawing on fieldwork conducted in Northern Ireland, is an attempt to reorient the study of conspiracy theories as the study of millenarianism through conspiracy theorists. By focusing on lived experiences instead of political perspectives, we can reconstruct the moral worlds in which people are actually living. I suggest that in order to understand conspiracy theories and millenarian beliefs, we must first consider the ways in which the end of the world is actually experienced in their everyday lives.

Jeffery MacDonald jmacd25@hotmail.com

Learning from the Elders: Preserving Iu-Mien Refugee Ritual and Literacy Traditions

An enduring research interest in immigration studies is the cultural disjunction between first generation refugees and their offspring. Traditional rituals are often the most difficult to pass on and sustain in the face of cultural change and language barriers between seniors who mostly speak their native language and their grandchildren who often do not. This paper traces how Chiem Finh Saechao, an Iu-Mien refugee spirit master, transmitted his shamanic traditions and rituals to the next generation in Oregon from 1989 to his death in 2018 via folk art's apprenticeships and the preservation of Iu-Mien sacred texts using collage, calligraphy, drawing, and photocopiers. Chiem Finh also generously shared his knowledge with me in the hopes that I too would be part of his preservation effort. The paper discusses anthropological roles and responsibilities to preserve and share cultural knowledge, however imperfect, that we gain from our teachers and departed sages.

Mira Amiras mira.amiras@me.com

The Sages, in Darkness and Light

The deaths of our greatest sages, like the deaths of our ancestors, can be an almost unbearable loss. This loss—and the attempt for reunification—is one of the themes in the Zohar, “The Book of Radiance.” The Zohar, a kabbalistic commentary on the Torah, is the most sacred mystical text in the Jewish tradition, spanning approximately 12 volumes of Aramaic commentaries. It is believed to have been written in the late 13th century primarily by Moses de Leon (1250-1305) in Sefarad—Spain. At one level, Zohar is ‘merely’ the tale of ancient sages convening together on the road, moving at times between dimensions, sharing tales of their own beloved teachers at the same time that the tellers of these tales hundreds of years later are themselves walking on a path sharing tales of their own more recently departed teachers. As we study Zohar today with our own sages we too become part of the line of seekers on the road, endeavoring to retrieve our departed ones from the past. Instead of turtles, in the Jewish tradition we seem to have sages all the way down supporting the world. Zohar gives us methods for the living and the dead to reconvene and retrieve their severed connection. This paper will examine two of those methods, and the consequences of attempting reunification with the departed we have lost. Zoharic notions of what is concealed and what revealed light will be examined in relation to living sages and the dead.

Laura Lee and Paul Robear olauralee@gmail.com

Workshop: Experience the ‘Waking Dream’ Visionary Spirit Journey with Ritual Postures

"Ritual Postures are ""ritual instructions"" depicted in select ancient art and artifacts from many early cultures around the world. The research of anthropologist, linguist, and CI founder Dr. Felicitas D Goodman, commencing over five decades ago found these unusual postures, when held as part of a ritual, could induce an ASC. The commonly shared elements and range of these experiences have relevance for flourishing, healing, transformational learning, and both individual and collective awakenings. The research into and practice of this work has continued worldwide with thousands of participants under the auspices of The Cuyamungue Institute.

In a 90-minute workshop, Conference participants may experience first-hand this altered state. This practice foregoes any use of plant medicine, entheogens, or outside agents. Neuro-pathways are activated by our own internal, endogenous production of biochemicals, as one part of a multi-faceted physiological shift that occurs through the body-mind's response to the cues in the ritual. This experiential state of a "waking dream" is also indicated by 1980's lab tests revealing predominant and simultaneous Beta plus Theta brain waves, and a surge of beta-endorphins. This experiential workshop is offered in follow-up to a paper recently published in the Journal for the Anthropology of Consciousness: Ritual Postures Trance, posture, and tobacco in the Casas Grandes shamanic tradition: Altered states of consciousness and the interaction effects of behavioral variables - VanPool - Anthropology of Consciousness - Wiley Online Library.

*Laura Lee & Paul Robear have taught Ritual Postures around the world in a variety of venues for over 20 years. They serve as Directors of the Cuyamungue Institute, the non-profit educational research hub in Santa Fe and world-wide headquarters for this work. They worked with the late Dr. Felicitas D Goodman during the last ten years of her life.

Panel/roundtable: *Identity: BIPOC and Transpiritual Perspectives*

Enoch Page dr.ehpage@gmail.com

BIPOC Transpiritual Leaders: Imagining Spiritual Liberation to Repudiate the White Public Space of Westernized Religion

"BIPOC transgender leaders are forging spiritual liberation by shedding the inquisitional culture imposed on their people before and during colonization. By creating sacred space for the radical inclusion of transgender people they lead their congregants into the light and out of the darkness of their shared anxieties, pain, and oppression. Inspired by a think-tank considering their lack of spiritual care as one end-of-life issue intensifying the suffering of Black transgender elders, the interviews exist on a website documenting the emergence of transpiritual leadership from BIPOC communities. It situates these advocates of a queer movement as calling transgender people into sacred space and providing alternatives or opening cis-gendered religious institutions to receive them. Countering religious practice that excludes trans people from sacred space or converts them to heteronormativity, the website resurrects the buried spiritual history of today's BIPOC transspiritual leaders. It weaves their aspirations back into the trajectory from which their spiritual consciousness continues to evolve. It locates them in a timeline shaping their contemporary racialized gendered identities over centuries and regards as commonsense their quest for liberation by forming BIPOC coalitions against heteronormative anti-blackness. They desire the same religious freedom that drove pilgrims to North America. Their mission honors their gender-conforming and gender non-conforming ancestors who found themselves cast out of pre-colonial Iberia. By purging white supremacy from the archival record - the website's interviews no longer are simply personal transgender narratives; they become descendant narratives. They provide kaleidoscopic insight into an inquisitional crucible in which gender nonconformity came to be oppressed within societies predicated on anti-blackness.

Enoch Page dr.ehpage@gmail.com

Using the BIPOC Transpiritual History Website as a Teaching Resource

Participants will be led on a visual tour of a website commissioned by a queer history organization called LGBTQ-RAN. Curated by the anthropologist, Dr. Enoch Page, it counters the tendency to reify transgender people and their experience. Page achieves their historical recontextualization by expanding the timeline of emergent BIPOC transgender spiritual leaders back to their inception in

imperial Spain. The website demonstrates how their experience changes under various sequential regimes of anti-blackness aiming to racialize gendered religious difference and subject that difference to inquisitional surveillance and abuse in both the old world and the new. A contemporary movement that otherwise would be truncated to encompass 1995 to the present takes on the full regalia of historicity spanning 2000 years in a website replete with partial but substantial documentation. This multimedia exhibition provides images, archival materials, videos and a narrative voice that demonstrates the religious origins of transphobia while it also celebrates the BIPOC transpiritual leaders who are trying to change the course of history by creating sacred space, once again, in which transgender people can heal, grow and thrive.

Panel: *Environments, Earthly and Celestial*

Susan Paulson spaulson@latam.ufl.edu

I'm a productivist pig. How can I learn to sing and dance and play around all day?

"In my world, a person's worthiness is measured by work performed, and social value calculated by contribution to the dominant goal of human organization: maximize productivity. Theorists explain the dependence of colonial-capitalist expansion on the manufacture of new subjectivities. Thanks to extraordinary neuroplasticity, we humans internalize languages and narratives we engage, together with bodily practices we repeat, to continually shape our brains and muscle memories. But how did that ethos of productivism get into me?

Participants explore this question together while viewing a story about three little pigs, each representing the behavior and material culture of one stage of Lewis Henry Morgan's social evolution: savage pig, barbarian pig, and civilized pig. In contrast to others, the indubitably superior civilized pig transforms far greater quantities of material and energy, separates himself more from nature, and prepares better for the future, positioning him to be the savior of immature live-in-the-moment pigs. Gender, racial and speciesist messages align civilized pig with the dominant side of hierarchical binaries.

We end the session by asking: How is obsessing with productivity and eschewing pleasure and playfulness working out today for the wellbeing of humans and other nature? What kind of ritual, consciousness journey, or collective awakening can re-shape me into a creature who delights in singing and dancing and playing around all day?

Merve Goknar merve.goknar@cantab.net

Into the Oneness with Trees

"Be like a tree and let the dead leaves drop." ~ Rumi

Many tools and practices (as well as substances) abound to help humans let go of the limitations of the mind and recognize their interconnectedness to the universe. This paper delves into trees, one method that has not been thoroughly investigated in our discipline. Since ancient times identifying trees as conscious beings is no novelty for many around the world, and science now has proven that trees communicate with each other, can feel pain, and even show signs of memory – a distinct marker of consciousness. This paper enquires about the ways in which people can connect to tree consciousness, and how that connection benefits humans and trees. People tap into the consciousness of trees for various reasons such as receiving spiritual insight and guidance in their self-exploration and self-transformation. Giving back to nature based on the messages channeled from the trees stands out as another purpose for communicating with them. This research investigates the possibilities of experiencing an interconnected state of consciousness – oneness – through strengthening one's connection with tree consciousness. The research is in progress. I've

been conducting interviews with people who work with the consciousness of trees. I've also started practicing that connection myself. The next stage of the research will take place in a community of people (in Kent, UK) who have an established spiritual practice with tree consciousness. "

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Ancient Sky Consciousness: Celestial Reference in Alignment of World Sacred Architecture

Throughout the ancient world, Asia, Europe, Africa and The Americas, sacred architecture is frequently aligned to The Cardinal Directions North-South-East-West. Since these directions reference the SKY, it seems entirely reasonable that the intent is to relate the celestial hemisphere to the terrestrial. But in what MANNER, and HOW is this accomplished? We will describe our analysis of the Gnomon method, the simplest explanation of how a sun watcher accurately could know cardinal directions, and thus can accurately align Public Architecture. In this discussion, we will (1) Develop the mathematical theory and sensitivity of The Gnomon, (2) Describe the construction and use of a Gnomon at The Cuyamungue Institute, and (3) Present experimental data and accuracy of a gnomon referencing the near perfect East-West alignment of the entire west end of Chaco Canyon's Great House, Pueblo Bonito.

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The Cosmos: Beliefs across time

"In anticipation of witnessing a celestial event, it is a good time to take a moment and look back at the way humans viewed these events in the past. By revisiting various myths from around the world, we can reflect on how people may have found meaning, transformation, and connection in the stories they told. The connection between mythology and astronomy is an old one. Early methodologies for studying myths accepted that the stories were a form of proto science – they explained the world as science does now. While astronomy is probably the oldest natural science in countless cultures, at the beginning religion and science were combined; the very first astronomers were also astrologers. Imagine viewing an eclipse in a time without our current understanding of the cosmos; it must have been a terrifying event. Even as they learned how to predict it, as cultures like the ancient Maya or Chinese did, they still saw it as an ominous event. The ancient practitioners of astronomy would foretell an occurrence and ascertain what precautions or rituals needed to be observed. Today, even though we understand celestial phenomena through the scientific method, it is still a profound experience. Some would even say it is spiritual, with real psychological and social impact. Many people travel around the world, much like a pilgrimage, to witness total solar eclipses, chasing the wonder that can only be experienced by certain kinds of events. In this presentation, we will follow the thread of the spectacle of the cosmos from ancient beliefs to our current state, and possibly beyond.

Richard Choquette

Toy Design as Constructs of Consciousness

In this hands-on workshop we will experience ways that toys can entice us into amusing scenarios of discovery and authentic expression. I will present some of my own toy designs including Andes Poppers, Hobo Oboes, Brain-in-a-Box, and a Facets of Consciousness Puzzle.

"Whether it's childhood make-believe, the theater, sports, or even market speculation, play is one of humanity's seemingly purest activities: a form of entertainment and leisure and a chance to explore the world and its possibilities in an imagined environment or construct."

Promo blurb for *Why We Play: An Anthropological Study* by Roberte Hamayon, 2016.

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Film: Light Upon Light

"One day, his Egyptian friend gave Danish anthropologist Christian Suhr a piece of advice: Stop focusing on all the darkness in the world, and look at the light instead. Tired of studying the tensions between Muslim and Western world views in Europe (Descending With Angels, Suhr 2013), Suhr began to study religious experiences of light in post-revolutionary Egypt. Light Upon Light seeks to understand what light – in the context of faith – means to practitioners of Sufi Islam. Along his journey in Cairo and back home in Denmark, Suhr engages in conversations with friends and acquaintances while also observing and participating in mystical rituals. The film ultimately offers a nuanced portrayal of religious practices that are too often reduced to simplistic clichés as the filmmaker embarks on a transcendent journey to understand ecstatic experiences associated with Sufism."

Panel: *Beyond the Human, Beyond the Living*

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The Occult and the Hopeful: The work of hope among ufologists in post-socialist China

Almost simultaneously with Reform and Opening Up, the emergence of Unidentified Flying Objects (UFOs) has become a hallmark event of the post-socialist transformation for many citizens of the People's Republic of China (PRC). Although the majority of UFO enthusiasts have only scant certain knowledge of UFOs, they believe that UFOs can bring dramatic, and largely positive transformations to the Chinese society and their own life. This article situates the stories about UFOs within the changing socio-political context of post-socialist China, discussing why and how the extraterrestrial imagination strikes resonance among China's post-socialist generations. Drawing on the literature in the anthropology of hope, this essay explores how the occult inspires hope in the context of post-socialist China. In doing so, it aims to contribute to the understanding of the modern revival of occult cosmologies, and the enduring preoccupation of the occult in human society. By adopting the lens of hope to examine post-socialist China, it also offers Chinese studies a feasible framework beyond the repression-resistance paradigm. [hope, China, occult cosmologies, postsocialism, temporality, ufology, modernity, transformation]

Phyllis Passariello

BEYOND THE HUMAN: synesthesia and non-human consciousness as templates for grasping the Post-Human world

In 1909, zoologist, Jacob von Uexkull used the word Umwelt to mean the perceptual world of all living beings, seeing the concept as "...a unifying and leveling force" (von Uexkull (1909). Understanding Umwelt is one key to understanding consciousness and how life functions. Pulitzer Prize winner Ed Yong says "...that the senses of all creatures...pull relevance from randomness and weave meaning from miscellany" (Yong An Immense World, 2022: 5,6). Perceptions co-construct with consciousness, thus leading to the insights and actions of daily life. Synesthesia, whether a gift or a malady, significantly alters what a species perceives, transmitting the synesthetic information to a consciousness that then will operate within its synesthetic condition, different from that of the majority of that species. There are many fascinating forms and manifestations of synesthesia among human and non-humans, and possibly also among some other lifeforms. The mysteries and paradoxes of synesthesia and its unavoidable impact on perceptions only complicate the relationship between consciousness and any and all perceptions, leading us to speculate about the plethora of senses found in other species, and their relevance to human and non-human consciousness, and beyond.

This discussion leads to the topic of non-human consciousness, and how other life forms perceive reality. I am turning to philosophy and anthropology to highlight the contemporary work of two scholars, Donna Haraway and Eduardo Kohn, both think outside the box, particularly concerning non-humans. Where Haraway first wrote about cyborgs and human's "companion animals," she has developed her ideas into a sharp critique of the Anthropocene, writing creatively "...we require each other in unexpected collaborations and combinations, in hot compost piles." She generally de-emphasizes human exceptionalism in favor of multispeciesism (Haraway 2016: Staying with the Trouble). She is an inspirational scholar.

Similarly, after Eduardo Kohn did years of fieldwork in Avila, the home of the Runa people in the Ecuadorian Amazon, shaped his ideas into what he called the “Anthropology of Life.” A philosopher/anthropologist, he wrote extensively about ontologies plural because, like Haraway, he was concerned with all living things. His well-known book, *How Forests Think: An anthropology beyond the human* (2013), describes a rain forest revitalized, where there are thinking trees, spirits of predators and spirits of prey, non-human overlords who are powerful spirit masters, and dogs that routinely dream prophetically. He describes these entities as real. The local people not only interpret their dogs’ dreams, but also are fully invested as participants in this on-going, interactive, not only multi-specied but also multi-being-ed world. Both scholars continue to push their ideas toward the political, trying to solve the mortal dilemmas of our planet in the post-human world.

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The Tibetan concept of Rainbow Body and the Material Remains

The Tibetan Bon concept of “rainbow body” involves the practitioner/monk’s physical transformation after death from a typical size to a small size (that of a toddler) or even the light in the colors of a rainbow that then disappears into space. Left behind is often just nails and hair. This presentation focuses on several well-known historical and recent examples of the rainbow body, witness accounts, and the meaning of rainbow body for peoples’ lives. For example, what happened when a witness wanted to measure the corpse and journalists got involved, as in the case of Rakshi Topden in 2001? I will use ancient Bon texts in translation and the books of Chogyal Namkhai Norbu and Francis V. Tiso as a springboard for discussion of this rich and surprising topic.

Panel: *Art and Media at the Technology/Consciousness Nexus*

Nicholas Long n.j.long@lse.ac.uk

Organized Paper Session [5 papers]

"Light and darkness are central, both literally and figuratively, to human engagements with controversial new technologies such as deep learning algorithms and generative AI. As we switch on our devices, light pouring out of their once dark screens, we are offered the promise that they can shed new light on things that interest us, and light up our lives with newfound opportunities for creativity, discovery, and even companionship. Yet there are more sinister, darker, versions of this story. The outputs of such technologies may obfuscate as much as they illuminate, misleading us or leaving important truths concealed. People may ‘lose themselves’ in scrolling, or find the creative opportunities of generative AI leads to their ethical horizons becoming unmoored. Anthropologists need to develop ways of understanding these technologies that acknowledge both their dangers and their benefits; critically exploring the affects that surround them but without falling into hyperbole.

‘Consciousness’ is an especially fruitful lens with which to think through engagements with these emergent technologies, given widespread debates about whether and how our engagement with them, and their outputs, might be shaping how we think, act, and are. This panel thus brings together scholars of consciousness and technology to address three interrelated questions. Firstly, we examine the assumptions and ideas about consciousness informing the development of these technologies. We will explore how these ideas have affected how machines respond to human users and represent human consciousness in the materials they generate, and how this in turn shapes the human reception of the technologies and their outputs.

Building on this, we examine how the humans who interact with such technologies come to attribute ‘consciousness’ to them, the extent to which such ‘consciousness’ feels ‘human’, and

the forms of human-machine socialities that can arise from such attributions.

Finally, we examine how and to what effect these technologies serve to elicit various modes of consciousness in the humans who interact with them, whether via the content they curate, the nature of their interface, or the affects they elicit.

Presentations will combine anthropological analysis with the display of technologically generated or curated art and media, affording audience members an opportunity to experience their own direct reactions to these works and then to reflect on those reactions in light of the ensuing discussion. In this way, the session uses the theme of ‘consciousness’ to speak both intellectually and affectively to contemporary debates and anxieties about whether current technological developments are leading us ‘into darkness’ or ‘into light’.

Panel: *Light, Dark and Psychedelics*

Christine VanPool vanpoolc@missouri.edu

Light in the Darkness

I explore the link between altered states of consciousness and the paradoxical transformation of night/darkness into light as a component of, and evidence for, spiritual potency. Throughout the world, ancient and modern people often consider night the time when the spirits are awake. As a result, shamans and other spiritual specialists often interact with spirits and ancestors at night. Nicotine intoxication in tobacco shamans causes the pupils to dilate, making them sensitive to light. They consequently became active at dusk, dawn, and night, just as others find it difficult to carry out their typical activities. The alkaloids found in many hallucinogenic plants and fungi can cause bright and colorful visions to appear even in the darkest of nights. These chemicals can also make the eyes sensitive to light. The plant medicines thus paradoxically allow spiritually potent people to transcend the limits that night/darkness places on others. Transcending darkness does not require entheogens, though. Other practitioners (e.g., occultists) have developed ways to see colorful images and lights in the dark. Here I suggest that the intentional interplay between night/darkness and light/day is central to the interplay between the world of the mundane and perceptions of spirits and their world.

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Darkness, Light, and the Creation of a Magical Community

Human cognition both enables and limits the ways humans interact with spirits and forces that are typically unseen or that otherwise transcend the physical world. Research in psychology, anthropology, and related fields indicates that social and physical contexts are central to activating the cognitive frameworks that facilitate spirit-human interaction, especially when paired with entheogens, physiological stress (e.g., sleeplessness, prolonged hunger, pain), and other factors that instigate altered states of consciousness. Here we explore how the built environment of Paquimé, the ceremonial heart of the Medio period (AD 1200 to 1450) Casas Grandes culture (northwestern Mexico), was intentionally formed to create environments associated with “haunted” locations that encouraged significant spirit-human encounters. This includes the use of light/darkness, the placement of burials and symbolically significant materials, and the form of the buildings themselves. These traits are linked to create locations that are inherently magical, in that they have bundled objects and features that reinforce each other’s potency for representing and making accessible the spirit world. These locations consequently were distinctively primed to inspire spirit-human encounters. Examples we consider include the T-shaped ballcourt with its architectural and symbolic elaborations, and other interior ceremonial spaces associated with

human remains and darkness.

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Psychedelics and the Reframing of Religiosity and Spirituality

Many people who take psychedelic substances experience transformations of many kinds. In this paper, I explore shifting experiences of religion and spirituality, focusing on participants in a community-based, peer-led integration group in the US Deep South. In the context of participant observation in the group, interviews, and a focus group with participants, the topic of religion often arises. People often discuss how their experiences with psychedelics contrast or enhance the experiences with religion that they grew up with. In particular, many people use their psychedelic experiences to reframe the Christianity they were raised with – evangelical in many cases. Responses include refusal of Christian religious practice and ideology, reframing of Christian principles in light of psychedelic spiritual experiences, and adoption of “new age,” universalist types of beliefs. According to many participants, the integration group itself represents some of the most positive aspects of their church experiences. This talk engages with theological discussions about the future of Christianity, exploring how psychedelics and Christianity creatively intermingle in some contexts.

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Into Darkness, Into Light: Patterns of Traditional Entheogen Use

"Clinical research on psychedelics ascribes determinant factors of set and setting to personal and social influences. An evolutionary psychology approach suggests optimal psychedelic set and setting involves biogenetic adaptations. This biogenetic structure is revealed in common elements of extant indigenous and mestizo entheogenic healing practices of the Americas. These indigenous groups of the Americas (Wixárika/Huichol, Mazatec, Nahuas, Otomi, in Oaxaca, Kamëntsé, and Shipibo-Konibo) and mestizo acculturated Christianity groups (Peruvian vegetalismo, Santo Daime, Brazilian ayahuasca traditions, San Pedro, the Peyote Church, and the Rastafari) illustrate common approaches to set and setting. Typical features of these practices go “into darkness” in a night-time reunification of a social group that engages in singing, drumming, dancing, and music. Preparation required sexual abstinence and dietary restrictions, often fasting, before the entheogen is consumed by both clients and healers. The entheogenic experience is “into light,” a visionary experiences providing information for diagnoses. These nighttime, collective, mimetic activities reveal the evolved psychology is commonalities with shamanic rituals of foraging societies. The shamanic approach engaged: pre-ritual preparation with social isolation and sexual abstinence; food restrictions (diets and fasts); prolonged wakefulness; a nighttime communal ritual; extensive physical activity (i.e., dancing) with drumming, chanting, and music; a relational animistic worldview; internal imagery manifesting spirit relations; development of relations with animals as personal powers; and dreams that reveal the path of healing and addressing life problems. Post-session integration involves social support, therapeutic activities, and restrictions on sex, food, social contact, and drugs. Success requires that the information is integrated into changes in how one lives, feels, and relates to the world.

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Workshop: Ecological Grief Cafe

You are welcomed to join a conversation about ecological grief at this gently-facilitated café-style discussion. ‘Ecological grief’ describes the senses of loss and mourning that we experience as a result of actual or anticipated ecological degradation, climate change, and other events that

impact places and ecosystems that we both cherish as individuals, and which we value as a global community. As a participant, you will have the opportunity to voice natural places that are meaningful to you and to engage in discussion with others about the meaning and importance of natural places, how traumas to those places impact us individually and collectively, the ways in which we process ecological grief, and other related topics. While active participation is not required, we encourage participants to join with a desire to engage in discussion (this is not a presentation). Participants are invited to bring a candle, something to write on/with, and an object that is from or represents the natural world to our gathering. There will be a group ritual (optional) to close our time together."

Nicholas Long

Workshop: *Lights of the Mind: Exploring Consciousness and Sociality with Biofeedback Technologies*

"The development of portable electro-encephalogram biofeedback technology such as the MUSE 2 Headband is offering people new ways of beholding their consciousness. By measuring fluctuations in individual brainwaves and using these data to generate brightly coloured visualizations and/or soundscapes, the headbands and associated software bring otherwise unobservable mental processes to light. Such insights can afford new possibilities for understanding (and regulating) oneself and others, based on how one is affected by various mental and social events. This experiential session juxtaposes two installations to consider the implications of these technologies for anthropological enquiry. Participants will be invited to consider the use of these technologies as something that can be investigated ethnographically but also to explore their value as tool for research, teaching, and self-exploration.

Installation 1, Modern Metaphysical Hypnosis is a work of participatory performance ethnography drawing on anthropological fieldwork with Indonesian hypnotists who seek to combine the principles of Balinese ritual with the psychology of hypnosis, including the use of biofeedback. Installation 2, Brainwave Smackdown tracks how brainwaves are affected by gameplay. 4 player participants will be invited to engage in a storytelling, Dungeons & Dragons-like ""smackdown"" in which each player's scanned brainwaves will be projected onto screens to create an immersive environment. Viewers will interact with players according to the rules established by this ad hoc game, the goal of which will be for each player to attain a sustained sense of equanimity despite visual or sonic disruptions imposed by the other players or audience members.

POSTERS and ART

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In the Mind's Eye: Of Darkness and Light

I will present a painting that attempts to visualize the forms created in our minds within the contrasting settings of light and dark. The goal of this project is to create an interactive medium in which the intricacies of the human mind can be visualized and pondered. The mind is a wonderful, interesting, complicated place. This artwork visualizes this complexity in the form of a thought as the mind absorbs the world around it. It utilizes words, pictures, colors and shapes to form a representation of abstract thought. This multidimensional work attempts to replicate the perception shift that occurs during the transition from light to dark spaces. As things appear different to us in the daylight as opposed to in the dark this painting also looks different. A second mural has been painted over the first and will appear when it is placed in the dark. Many of the same shapes in the initial painting are utilized and transformed into something different. These are

simple concepts that many people can relate to and experience in their own individual way.

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Circles of the Sun

"In a small town, in Texas, here lies an ordinary neighborhood. One that perhaps commuters' travel to and from the city to gain lot exposure and natural landscape. As it is tranquil in setting, as this open home and temple to those seeking comradery and guided meditation with ancient Maya treatments learned from travel and study. Here in a circle in the latter part of a weekday evening, I sit with eight other men commencing a brotherly bond over a warm flute filled to the brim non-psychoactive Maya cocoa from an all-female indigenous community. This is the Circle of the Sun.

Mindfully linguistic, for a glimpse of the surrealistic
Pathways are in motion. To move and to flow and feel emotion.
We are roots to a tree, you cannot see.
Inclusion of all, and how to Be is perhaps what appears sheer.
To not judge, off the makeup will rub.
Do not just accommodate or like, as rushed waters splash against a concrete dike.
You will not know me, unless I show Me.
You are here, because We are here.
Solution to the over contribution.
Plateaued asking for more? One should sit still and explore.
Ask for this, and the galore.
Ask of why? Blushing and shy.
Take all and have little or small.
A message to unwind; is honor with an honest mind.
Do not pay to buy happy thoughts, but please claim your spots.
Understand and register what you hear; listen without fear.
Grey inclusive is taking in the dark with the light. Nothing is pure delight.
In Doing so protected by this church, a sacrament found in this search.