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Makoto Taiko: makototaiko.org

Shumei Arts Council of America:
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SHUMEI FOSTERS HEALTH, HARMONY, AND HAPPINESS FOR ALL.

Shumei is a spiritual and humanitarian organization committed to furthering the well-being of all humankind. Reflecting this, the editorial stance of this journal is apolitical and nonpartisan. Nor do we support one religious point of view.

CREDITS

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Sensei Eugene Imai facilitated the publication, and it was edited and designed by **George Bedell**. We thank **Masayo Sugimoto** and **Ron Helgesen** (Publication Managers); **Crystal Lau** (Copy Editor); **Sandy Synder-Traverso**, **Atsushi Fujimaki**, and **Roy Gibbon** (Supervisory Staff); and **Cody Binkert** (Editorial Intern).

Front and back covers: In the autumn months, a flourish of gold and vermillion Japanese Maple leaves greet visitors while following Misono’s Sacred Pathway. **Page 2 & 3 spread:** Fallen maple leaves scattered across the worn pavement stones of Misono’s Sacred Pathway. Both images, as well as that on page 30 and 31, were captured by the photographer **Haruyuki Suzuki** while walking through Sando, Misono’s Sacred Path. For more information concerning these images and Misono’s Sacred Path, please see page 30 of this issue.

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The Zajacs display their wine and honey at Shumei America's Headquarters in Pasadena. From left to right: Zoubeida, Ylias, Remi, and Meti. Photo by Haruyuki Suzuki.

Powicana

Creating California's first Natural Agriculture wines

Zoubeida and Remi Zajac

Six years ago, Remi and Zoubeida Zajac and their two sons underwent a transformation when Remi gave up a lucrative career in Silicon Valley to create and maintain a farm and vineyard in Mendocino County, California. The Zajacs founded Powicana Farm, a family vineyard that grows grapes and handcrafted wines. Powicana is a sustainably and organically cultivated vineyard. Remi and Zoubeida follow the French tradition of bringing out the most distinctive qualities of wine, expressed through the match of varietal and terroir¹. Their vision is to help the wine reveal its personality by applying traditional techniques with minimal interventions to craft natural wines.

An extraordinary family of pioneers, the Zajacs produced California's first Natural Agriculture² Wines. Their grapes are nurtured in the purest soil, water, and air. Sulfites, fertilizers, and preservatives are never used.

Powicana Farm also produces fruits and vegetables by biodynamic, permaculture and Natural Agriculture methods.

*We do not inherit the Earth from our parents,
we borrow it from our children
—Native American Proverb*

We have two boys, Ylias, who is 13 years old, and Meti, who is 8 years old. We live on a small farm called Powicana in Redwood Valley, California, two hours north of San Francisco. We moved here six years ago. Before that, we lived in Pasadena for six years. It was there that we joined Shumei.

Our farm covers 20 acres, with 10 acres of vineyard and 10 acres of woodland. We live in a small old house. We raise goats for milk and cheese, chickens and geese for eggs, and we also have bees



The lush terrain of Mendocino County, with its loamy soil and gentle Mediterranean climate, produce some of North America's finest wines. Photo by Nicholas Cazaux.

for honey. We grow vine grapes, sell the grapes to commercial wineries, and harvest a small amount to make Natural Agriculture wine.

When our kids were born in 2005 and in 2010, we started to question the future that lay ahead of them and the world around us. With this came the realization that we were responsible for not only our children's future but the future of the earth. And so, our thinking shifted. Instead of being solely concerned with the next immediate amusement or interesting thing that came our way, our concerns became more long term. What kind of human beings would our boys be when they became adults? What kind of environment will they live in twenty years from now? Will they be able to raise happy and healthy kids themselves?

This was also the time we became aware of Shumei. Becoming members in October of 2009 crystallized for us the things we found vital for our children and ourselves. What became important to us was cultivating proper nutrition and pure food by creating a small Natural Agriculture garden. Beauty and music by playing taiko³ became important. Bringing spiritual energy and peace to our daily life through chanting, Jyorei⁴, and attending sampais⁵ became a central concern. Becoming Shumei members, we were so happy to find people with shared ideals.

In 2010, we visited Misono, Shumei's headquarters in Japan.⁶ As our spiritual father⁷ Sensei Koji Nakamura⁸ predicted, our visit to Misono became a powerful event along our spiritual path. At that time, we were expecting Meti. When we joined Shumei, we felt it was a bridge to living the full life we aspired

to, and we had to take the first step on that bridge. When we visited Misono, we were touched by the beauty and the deep energy emanating from the place. We visited the Miho Museum⁹, and at the museum, we stopped in front of the Hibo Kannon tapestry¹⁰, a portrait of the divine merciful mother. We spent 20 minutes in front of Kannon's image, mesmerized and deeply absorbed. Silently, tears came. Kannon is like a poem with words that we cannot pronounce. She is the seed and the essence of life. She is beauty, compassion, grace, generosity, nourishing, giving, and responsibility.

After this encounter with Kannon, we knew that we had to go further along on our spiritual path. We knew that we are here to serve other people and prepare a better future for our children. As humans, we have to make do with what we have. We have to do what we can in our mortal



Young Ylias communes with nature at his family's vineyard. Photo by Remi Zajac.

form and with our imperfections. This is the path we took, and we are bound to it.

Why did we leave a comfortable city life with a well-paid job at Microsoft to become struggling farmers?

In 2011, we started to realize that our current path as human beings on this earth was not sustainable at all. We also recognized the short-term consequences of this. Climate change and mass animal and plant extinction mean that there will be food shortages and famines all over the world. Dwindling fossil fuel resources means that everyone will become much poorer. Social instability means that political upheavals and wars are coming. And all this will occur in our children's lifetime. In some parts of the world, it has already started. Our trust in the future, and most importantly in our children's future had been shattered. And our view of life was changed forever.

When confronted with difficult issues, we usually face them squarely and try to find practical actions to address the problems directly. It may mean sometimes taking a radical stance. For us, it was a question of sincerity, of being open to the truth and acting truthfully. Seeing the world as it is, especially when the truth is uncomfortable, is an act of Makoto¹¹. So, when we came to realize how different the life of our children would be, we decided to prepare them as best we can for that future. This meant that we had to return to the very foundations of human life, which are also the three pillars of Shumei: natural foods, beauty in the everyday, and leading a spiritual life. Somewhere along the path of humankind's evolution, we became separate from mother nature. In doing so, our life and our future were put in danger. We came to deeply believe that to save ourselves we had to return to a simpler life, a life connected to the soil, from which we all come and to which our bodies return. And what could be more helpful for our physical and spiritual health and that of our planet's than to practice Natural Agriculture farming?

And that is what we did. We made a conscious choice to change our lives. We let go of the high-tech world, found a farm, and learned to de-

Zoubeida shows her son Meti how to properly trim a grapevine. Photo by Remi Zajac.



velop the practical skills of farming. It has been six years now. Our primary income comes from the farm. We reinvented ourselves by going back to school to learn about agriculture. We were under the illusion that we could live from the land, but after six years, we are still struggling. And we still feel unprepared for the growing changes that we are facing. However, this experience has brought our family closer together. We think that we live a more balanced life. We are more in harmony with the cycles of nature and with our friends who live similar lives.

In farming, we try to follow the patterns of nature at its purest. We feel that the Natural Agriculture crops we produce in the vineyard and in our family garden give us abundant vitality. We grow the highest quality grapes without using chemicals, fertilizers, or pesticides. Although it was difficult at first, we are seeing the vineyard slowly responding over the years by producing extraordinary fruit. At the winery, we also make natural wines without any chemicals. Although many wine-makers feel that this approach is way too risky, it is

Within the last few years, flames have become a constant threat to wine producers of Northern California. Fortunately, Powicana has escaped the devastation of the last two fire seasons. Photo by Remi Zajac

the way people have made wine for millennia. The practice of Natural Agriculture also produces wines that are very flavorful and feel more vital on the tongue than conventional wines. After drinking our natural wines, we found it hard to go back to the more usual varieties.

About a year ago, we sent our wines Fair the Mendocino County Fair Wine Competition. Our Petite Sirah was awarded a Best of Its Class and Double Gold, meaning it was judged the best of all Petite Sirah wines in the competition, which is quite an honor since Mendocino is particularly well-known for its Petite Sirah. We were happy to receive the recognition and find that experienced wine professionals thought our wine was exceptional.

We changed our life not only for the two of us and our children but also because we wanted to be part of the solution to the world's problems. As Mahatma Gandhi is said to have once advised, we tried to be the change that we wanted to see in the world. Beyond teaching and raising our children so they can have fulfilling lives, we also teach young people coming to our farm to learn about farming through the WWOOF Association¹². Over the last six years, we have had about 200 young WWOOFers from all over the world come to help us with working the farm while they learn about Natural Agriculture and regenerative farming. This seems like a dream come true as we watch the young WWOOFer's view of the world changing as they establish a deeper connection with nature. We have witnessed the miracles of unfocused souls sharpen-



The Zajac's sacrifices and labors of the last few years have paid off handsomely with the production of award-winning wines. Photo by Remi Zajac.



ing their sights as they become influential community players.

We once hosted a young couple from Canada who bought a camper and were touring the USA so that they could learn enough about sustainable agriculture to start their own farm. They planned to stay with us for three weeks and ended up staying almost six because there was so much they could learn on our farm. It makes us happy to see that what we are doing is helping others.

Before closing, we would like to share two things with you:

First, we cannot wait for tomorrow to change for the better. Tomorrow is not going to be better unless we make things better right now. You are in charge and responsible for the way you live your life—no one else is. After six years, we have seen that all the many challenges happening on our planet are accelerating. We need to make decisions and take actions for the benefit of ourselves, our families, our friends, and our planet now—not tomorrow.

Secondly, last year in the middle of the night, a sudden and fast-moving fire came within three miles of our farm. There was no alert from authorities, only our neighbors yelling from door to door as they fled for their lives. It is at times like this one realizes that whatever we try to accomplish, we are all bound to the forces of nature. This was a humbling experience as we came close to losing everything, including our lives. Fortunately, the fire bypassed us. Others were not as lucky.

Friends, in truth, life itself is of the ultimate value. We are spiritually connected to every other life form on this planet. One needs to cherish, protect, and revere every other living being because we all depend on each other in one way or another.

So, every day, give gratitude to the living world that supports us. Remember, no matter how hard life is, beauty is everywhere. /

1. The term *terroir* derives from the French word for *land*. It refers to the particular soil, climate, the weather of a certain year, and all the other environmental aspects that influence a crop's growth. *Varietal* refers to a wine made from one particular variety of grape, such as Cabernet Sauvignon or Chardonnay. It is both *terroir* and the grape from which the varietal is made that gives a wine its character. As mentioned in the article, the Petite Sirah grapes grown in the favorable soil and climate of Mendocino produce some noteworthy wines. The fine Petite Sirah wine of Mendocino County is an excellent example of *terroir* and varietal working well together.

2. Shumei's founder Meishusama developed **Natural Agriculture** in the late 1930s to help farmers who at that time were experiencing hardship and poverty because of poor harvests. Natural Agriculture is a spiritual practice as well as a practical means of food production that does not use chemicals, fertilizers, or manure, and pays particular attention to the farmer's spiritual relationship to the environment.

3. In Japanese the word *taiko* simply means *drum*, but in recent years it has come to signify a particular style of modern ensemble performance involving traditional Japanese drums, flutes, song, poetry, and a good deal of contemporary stagecraft and performance practices.

4. **Jyorei** is the spiritual practice of sharing divine light that was created by Shumei's founder, Mokichi Okada, and is administered to people by Shumei members. Repeated sessions of Jyorei might bring improvement in physical and emotional health, and foster spiritual refinement and growth. In Japanese, Jyorei means *Purification of the Soul*.

5. **Sampai** refers to a special time or place set aside for honoring God with reverence and gratitude. In Shumei, *sampai* means explicitly to engage in the following actions: visiting one of the sanctuaries of a Shumei Center, chanting, sharing Jyorei, and expressing gratitude. The two primary purposes of *sampai* are to receive Light and to strengthen our spiritual connection with God. There are scheduled Daily Sampaïs at all Shumei Centers.

6. **Misono** is Shumei's International Headquarters and Spiritual Center in the Shigaraki Mountains of Shiga Prefecture, Japan. The name *Misono* means *Sacred Garden*.

7. It is customary within the Shumei organization to refer to a person who introduces a new member to Shumei as the new member's **spiritual mother** or **spiritual father**. The designation carries with it some of the same responsibilities as being a godfather or godmother in the Christian tradition.

8. **Sensei Koji Nakamura** is considered one of today's finest taiko artists. He was the Shumei Taiko Ensemble's first leader and can be heard on most of the Ensemble's recordings. Most recently he has been featured on Eugene Friesen's CD, "Sono Miho" and Paul Winter's Grammy-winning CD, "Crestone." Koji came from Japan to live in Pasadena, CA with his wife, Tomoko, and their two daughters, Takako and Masako in

2005. Among the reasons for his move was to promote the art of taiko in North America.

9. Designed by the famed architect I.M. Pei to house the Miho Collection, the **Miho Museum** opened in 1997. Mr. Pei's inspiration was the Chinese classic "Peach Blossom Spring," in which a humble fisherman finds an earthly paradise after following a light emanating from a narrow mountain crevice. The museum is nestled among the wooded slopes of the remote Shigaraki Mountains and visitors first glimpse the main building's entrance after following a luminous, mountain tunnel; thus, following the storyline of the Chinese fable. The structure, eighty-percent of which is below ground, follows the contour of the mountain's ridges, and its style is at once wholly contemporary while remaining faithful to traditional Japanese architecture. Inside, one finds a light-filled space that opens to a vista of mountains and sky, where sunlight from pyramidal skylights and space frames play across honey-colored limestone. Its plan ideally balances natural and manmade beauty.

For more information in English concerning the Miho Museum, please visit www.miho.or.jp/english/.

10. Completed in August of 1992, the **Miho Hibo Kannon Tapestry** found its home in the Miho Museum in April of 2009. It was created by a team of weavers from the Kawashima Company to commemorate both the one hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the company and the twelve hundredth anniversary of the City of Kyoto. Its design is based on Meiji era (1868—1912 AD) artist, Kano Hogai's famed painting Hibo Kannon, which is now housed at the Tokyo University of Fine Arts. The tapestry stands as a model of unparalleled technical virtuosity. Over 4,500 different types of thread were used to create it.

Shumei's leader, Kaicho-Sensei, stated during the celebration of the Grand Sampai of 2009 that the Miho Hibo Kannon's enshrinement in the Miho Museum is a good portent for Shumei's commitment to fostering the well-being of all humankind.

11. **Makoto** is an ancient term often used by Meishusama in his teachings, such as "Makoto—Sincerity and Truth." It sums up the basic view of life in which we are all part of the whole and can live in harmony by practicing truth in thought, word, and deed. Essential to its practice, as Meishusama saw it, are a consideration for others and for the Divine will. Its meanings often vary according to circumstance and may include sincerity, a true heart, honesty, hospitality, integrity, loyalty, and dedication to principle.

12. **WWOOF** is an acronym for World Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms. An international organization, WWOOF brings together people who want to experience living and working on sustainable farms with growers who are willing to share their lifestyle and knowledge. The host growers offer food and accommodations to their visitors, known as *WWOOFer*, in exchange for the WWOOFer's help on the farm. The organization aims to help build a sustainable, global community. For more information visit: woofinternational.org

Finding Unity in Our Diversity

Three Perspectives

Lisa Faithorn

Lisa Faithorn is a research anthropologist, organizational consultant, and educator. She has worked with groups in the US and abroad focusing on individual and organizational transformation, collaborative problem solving, and effective team dynamics.

Dr. Faithorn co-founded the Anthropology Graduate Program at the California Institute of Integral Studies (CIIS) in San Francisco and taught there for 20 years. While at the Institute, she worked for the establishment of the Women's Spirituality Program and created an area of specialization within the anthropology department entitled Ecology and Social Change. Following her tenure at CIIS, Ms. Faithorn worked for a decade as a social scientist for NASA, where she facilitated collaboration among scientists of diverse disciplines and between flight controllers and computer scientists. She continues working part-time with NASA and currently supports a roundtable dialogue between NASA and the Northern New Mexico Pueblos concerning indigenous education. Today, Lisa is part of the faculty of the Academy for the Love of Learning in Santa Fe, NM. The Academy's mission is to enliven and nurture the natural love of learning in people of all ages. She facilitates a variety of public programs and works with educators in the Santa Fe Public School District.

Since moving to northern New Mexico in 2006, Lisa and her husband, Djann Hoffman, established Farside Farm, a certified organic farm and vineyard, and an educational venue concerned with sustainable practices. After discovering Shumei several years ago she and Djann now practice Natural Agriculture on a section of their farm, where they grow garlic and apples. Lisa became a Shumei member in late 2016.

This article was drawn from a presentation that Dr. Faithorn gave in Shumei Hall, Pasadena at Shumei America's 26th Anniversary celebration. The text has been edited for this publication.

I am delighted to be here with you on this beautiful day to celebrate Shumei America's anniversary—and I am honored to have been invited to share a few thoughts with you as part of this celebration.

What I feel we are celebrating, in addition to this special anniversary, is the experience of coming together with others, known and unknown to us personally, in a spirit of open-heartedness and generosity. In the face of all of the current divisiveness and polarization, here and elsewhere, our world needs this kind of harmonious collective energy now more than ever, and I thank Shumei for being such a community.

I currently live in northern New Mexico with my husband Djann Hoffman on a small or-

The Cultural Perspective: Our backgrounds give us a particular set beliefs and views. As humans, we need to feel part of a greater community. However, this outlook can lead to alienation from those of other backgrounds. It can further lead to prejudice and conflict. This is the ME OR YOU perspective.

ganic farm where we are now practicing Natural Agriculture. Since learning of Shumei several years ago from our dear friend Sharon Franquemont,¹ and attending Shumei events in Crestone, Colorado² and in California, we have had many wonderful and healing experiences with the Shumei members we have come to know. Given our own histories and past experiences, particularly with indigenous and Asian cultures, Shumei's focus on healing, art, the appreciation of beauty, and on growing healthy food through a spiritual relationship with the land spoke deeply to both of us. Djann became a member in November 2015 in Crestone, and I joined two years ago right here at Shumei's National Center in Pasadena.

Over these recent years of practicing Jyorei, participating in Shumei events, and working side by side on our farm with Shumei friends who have come to help, we keep learning more about Shumei's founder, Meishusama,³ and the core principles and practices that emanate from his broad vision and his subsequent life work. We also keep learning more about Japanese culture as well as the challenges and gifts of cross-cultural engagement.

From an early age, I became fascinated and awed by the incredibly diverse ways of being human that is expressed through our different cultures, worldviews, and traditions. I pursued anthropology in college and went on to graduate studies. My Ph.D. dissertation was based on research I did while living with an indigenous tribe in the Highlands of Papua New Guinea in my early 20s, a truly life-changing experience.

Over many years of working with diverse people in diverse settings as an educator, an organizational consultant, a trainer, a researcher, and just going about my daily life, I have observed that most people, myself included, tend to approach any situation from one of three perspectives. I call these the *cultural perspective*, the *cross-cultural perspective* and the *trans-cultural perspective*.

I want to share this model with you because I believe that the more aware we are of which perspective we are operating from in any given moment, the greater our capacity to consciously choose an appropriate response in the service of the greater good rather than to unconsciously react.

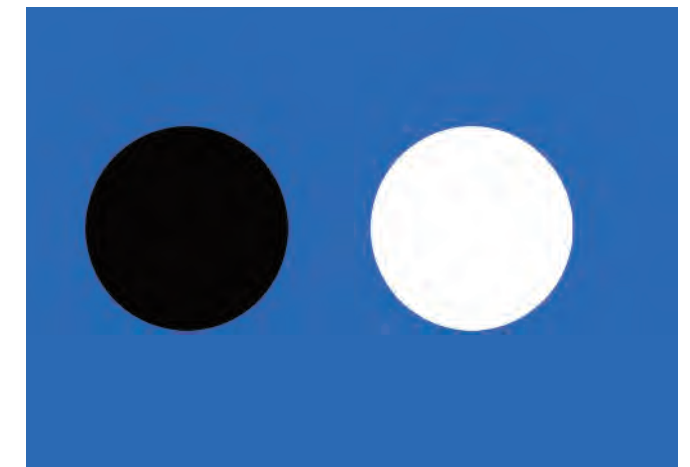
The Cultural Perspective

We are all cultural beings. Most of us are born into a national or ethnic culture, or perhaps a subculture within a larger society, whether in the US or Papua New Guinea or Japan or Mexico or anywhere else. Our cultural backgrounds teach us from birth to embrace a particular set of perspectives and values and ways of being. This is positive because we humans are social animals and need to belong, to feel a part of a larger social community. Yet a key aspect of this cultural conditioning is a feeling of separateness from those of other cultures. There is often wariness of and judgment about those who are different from ourselves. This is an ethnocentric view that instills in us the idea that our way is the right way. This is the ME OR YOU perspective.

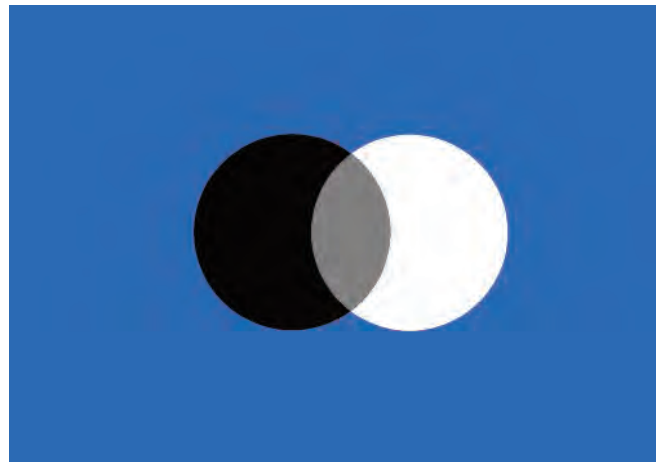
We also live in a world where it is increasingly likely that for many reasons, we find ourselves closely engaging with those of other cultures, sometimes by choice, sometimes by circumstance. This can feel disorienting or even threatening and can lead to conflict. But it can also be an experience of learning and positive change. And since no one person is exactly like any other, we could actually view every individual as a mini-culture unto him or herself, and every encounter with another as a cross-cultural event.

The Cross-Cultural Perspective

It takes awareness and skill, vulnerability and the desire to learn and grow to successfully navigate the boundaries between cultures, whether between cultural groups or between two individuals. It does not require giving up one's own culture. But it does require respect for difference, a willingness to examine one's own conditioning and explore



The Cross-Cultural Perspective: This perspective demands a desire to learn and grow, a need to find shared areas of agreement, and a wish to bridge borders between cultures and individuals. Respect for differences and a willingness to compromise are essential. This is the ME AND YOU perspective.



new values and ways of being. From this comes an expanded sense of self and a cross-cultural perspective. When we are operating from a cross-cultural perspective, we can build bridges across borders and boundaries and find shared areas of agreement. This is the ME AND YOU perspective.

We are living now in what are clearly critical times for our planet and for our species, not to mention the vast numbers of other species whose survival depends upon human decisions and actions. And we are finding that even the cross-cultural perspectives we have expanded into are not sufficient for addressing our current planetary crisis.

Many of us, in many parts of the world, are being challenged to reassess deeply-held beliefs and long-standing behaviors, as our negative impact on fellow humans and non-humans becomes more evident. Clearly, there is resistance to this process.

The Trans-Cultural Perspective

Yet, a challenge is also an opportunity, and everywhere we can see more and more people creatively responding to this emerging understanding of an interdependent world. The experience of our common humanity—one species sharing one planetary home—is leading to a more widely shared trans-cultural perspective.

When one is grounded in a trans-cultural experience of the world, apparent boundaries disappear and deeper human values, once identified, supersede conflicting cultural values. Diversity becomes a resource to draw upon as common goals are pursued. This is the US OR WE perspective.

The Trans-Cultural Perspective: When grounded in a trans-cultural understanding of the world, boundaries disappear and deeper, shared human values supersede clashing cultural values. Diversity becomes a resource to draw upon as we pursue common goals. This is the US OR WE perspective.



The Three Perspectives

My view is that we have the capacity to become aware of and consciously hold all three of these perspectives, shifting from one to another as we orient ourselves toward a desired outcome—well-being for self, well-being for other, well-being for all. It takes practice and perseverance, non-defensiveness, and compassion.

If we find ourselves in a situation that feels oppositional or polarized vis-à-vis another person or group, or if experiencing cross-cultural misunderstanding, we can develop the capacity to shift to the transcultural view. This opens the way to deeper common ground based on values that transcend cultural boundaries.

I am currently on the faculty of the Academy for the Love of Learning in Santa Fe, New Mexico. Santa Fe is a community of many diverse cultures—historically Native Americans, Hispanics, and Anglos, and now many others who have come from Mexico and other Central and South American countries as well as from all over the world.

This diversity is clearly represented in both the students and teachers in Santa Fe's public school system.

One of the programs we offer is called El Otro Lado, which in Spanish means The Other Side. Using a curriculum based in the arts that is adapted for kids and also effectively used with groups of adults, participants are guided to explore and share aspects of their life stories, their past experiences, and their hopes and dreams by creating poems, collages, journey maps, totems,

touchstones and many other forms of expression. Currently, El Otro Lado is being implemented in several Santa Fe public school classrooms. Supported by Academy staff, teachers and students collaborate to explore and share their personal and cultural identities and perspectives. As knowledge and understanding of one another grow, social bonds deepen. In this way, participants become open to the experience of cross-cultural engagement with their classmates and more fully come to know and enjoy each other in their diversity. Over time the exercises contribute to the development of trans-cultural perspective as well, a sense of shared humanity, of not being alone, as stories are told that engender compassion and empathy and a desire for one another's well-being. At the end of the school year, participating classes come together for an event where students, teachers, school administrators, and family members view the projects created in the classrooms and celebrate together.

We all carry within us imprints of where we come from, what has influenced us, what has contributed to our uniqueness. In El Otro Lado one way personal identity is explored is through the writing of short poems inspired by the prompt *I Am From*.... What emerges for most people comes from all three dimensions of our experience – the cultural, the cross-cultural, the trans-cultural.

I will give you an example of an exercise we used in the El Otro Lado Program. We ask the participants to turn to their neighbors, say hello, and decide who will speak first. Then each will take a turn sharing a few lines from their own spontaneous *I Am From* poem. They do not have a conversation. Just for a few moments, they give each their attention and the gift of deep listening. I will give a personal example from when I brought this exercise to a workshop recently. This is an *I Am From* poem that I created:

*I am from salt water, mixing with
fresh water,
From animated family conversations
around the supper table.
I am from broken-heartedness that found
its way to joy.
I am from a blue and green planet that
shines bright in the dark sky.*

My personal interest, and I think our most important work these days, is to focus on becoming more aware of, strengthening and acting out of our trans-cultural perspective, what some might think of as our divine nature or our spiritual selves. Telling our stories, appreciating our differences, finding unity in our diversity, interacting with one another as fellow humans whose lives depend upon caring for each other and for our Mother Earth is the path forward—the momentum for what Joanna Macy⁴ has called The Great Turning.⁵

Spiritual teachers from many traditions have identified the same trans-cultural values that are alive within the human spirit and that, if practiced, can guide us forward toward our own evolution and greater well-being for all, compassion, empathy, generosity, kindness, humility, gratitude, humor, love, and others.

The recent work of neuroscientists, in particular, Richard Davidson⁶ and others at the Center for Healthy Minds⁷ at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, is underscoring and affirming what our spiritual leaders have been saying for a long time. Davidson and his colleagues have discovered four independent brain circuits that influence our lasting well-being. The first is *our ability to maintain positive states*, the second is *our ability to recover from negative states*, the third is *our ability to focus and avoid mind-wandering*, and the fourth is *our ability to be generous*.

Sensei Tamao Koyama⁸ in his address at the anniversary of the Shumei International Institute in Crestone, Colorado this year reminded us that Meishusama urged us to become people who reduce the suffering of others. Meishusama said, “Your actions should be for the benefit of your fellow citizens and society, and you should be as sure as possible that what you do is just and good.”

When asked what joy is, the Archbishop Desmond Tutu said, “...ultimately our greatest joy is when we seek to do good for others....It's how we are made...we're wired to be compassionate.”

The Dalai Lama recently said, “We must develop the sense of *we*. Once you're able to develop that sense of common humanity and the oneness of humankind then naturally you will want all others to be free from suffering and enjoy happiness.”

I was deeply touched and inspired when I learned that Meishusama sees our task as creating Paradise on Earth. I have really taken this to heart.

When I feel despair because of all the bad news one hears every day, and all of the suffering that humans are enduring in so many parts of the world, I find my footing again by coming back to this. There is always some small step I can take that feels like it is contributing to this vision of Paradise on Earth.

I want to quote Sensei Tamao again and use the same words he spoke at the end of his talk in Crestone. “Let us all work together to create a better world.”

1. **Sharon Franquemont** is among the pioneers who established a graduate program in intuition at John F. Kennedy University. For more than 29 years, she has taught individuals, couples, and organizations how to channel their intuitive and soul powers for better health, communication, and a more fulfilling life. she is the author of *Do It Yourself Intuition*, *You Already Know What to Do*, and *Intuition: Your Electric Self*.

Sharon also works with the Life Science Foundation in Excelsior, Minnesota on projects related to intuition, health care, and science. She is also a member of the Board of the Shumei Crestone Center.

2. Shumei’s **Crestone Center** is located near the town of Crestone, Colorado above the San Luis Valley in the Sangre de Christo Mountains of Colorado. It is the headquarters of the Shumei International Institute and, along with Misono and Kishima Island, one of Shumei’s three major Centers. It opened in May of 2002.

3. **Meishusama** is an honorific often used by Shumei members when referring to Mokichi Okada, Shumei’s founder. Meishusama means *Master of Light*.

4. **Joanna Rogers Macy** is an American environmental activist, author, and scholar of Buddhism. She is the author of eight books. Her work addresses psychological and spiritual issues, Buddhist thought, and contemporary science. Ms. Macy has given lectures, workshops, and training sessions throughout the world. Along with David Korten, she authored *The Great Turning Initiative*, a book that popularized the term *The Great Turning*. Among the other books she wrote are *Coming Back to Life: Practices to Reconnect Our Lives*, *Pass It On: Five Stories That Can Change the World*, *Widening Circles: a memoir*, and *World as Lover, World as Self*. For more information about Joanna Macy, visit her website at www.joannamacy.net.

5. **The Great Turning** is a phrase used by David Korten and Joanna Macy among others to define a movement of diverse communities throughout the world that are concerned with a broad range of issues, among them environmental justice, racial justice, habitat rehabilitation, and ecological

sustainability. Essential to this movement is a deep commitment to act with vision, courage, and solidarity to meet the problems that these concerns entail. A recent example of group participation in the Great Turning is the bands of Indigenous North Americans who resisted fossil fuel extraction from their sacred lands in the Upper Midwest of the United States.

All the many groups and individuals that are part of this movement are united and motivated by a profound yearning for a peaceful world in which societies fulfill the essential needs of their members and support freedom, dignity, and justice for all life.

6. **Richard J. Davidson** is an American professor of psychology and psychiatry at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Dr. Davidson’s research focuses on the neurological centers of emotion in the brain.

A variety of modern medical procedures are used in his study, including magnetic resonance imaging, positron emission tomography, and advanced genetic and epigenetic techniques. Davidson has directed studies with people suffering from emotional illnesses such as mood disorders and autism. He has also done extensive research on those who have mastered the art of meditation. Mainly he is concerned with practices that promote human well-being, among them meditation and other contemplative exercises. His research has focused on subjects across their entire lifespans. Davidson has propagated the concept of *neuroplasticity*, the idea that a person can learn to be happy and compassionate, just as a person learns any skill, such as playing the piano, riding a bicycle, or learning a language. A principle of neuroplasticity is that the brain develops physically in response to mental training. So, it is thought that with time and practice one can learn the art of being happy. In 2006, Time Magazine named Richard Davidson one of the world’s 100 most influential people.

7. **The Center for Healthy Minds** at the University of Wisconsin-Madison was founded by Dr. Richard J. Davidson to cultivate well-being and alleviate suffering through neuroscientific research. The Center’s purpose is to help create a kinder, wiser, and more compassionate world by engendering fresh insights and tools that will improve the well-being of people of every age and background. The organization benefits from cross-disciplinary collaborations in the arts and humanities, the physical and natural sciences, and the social sciences. For more information about The Center for Healthy Minds, visit centerhealthyminds.org.

8. **Sensei Tamao Koyama** is the son of Shumei’s second president, Sokichi Koyama and the grandson of Shumei’s first president, Mihoko Koyama. He is a much revered and respected Shumei Sensei who often represents his aunt, Hiroko Koyama, the current president of the organization at Shumei functions.

Toward a Still Mind

A Swimmer’s Passage

Benjamin Austin

Since retiring as a professional athlete, Benjamin Austin has been an inspirational speaker. This new opportunity has led him to share his unique perspective on overcoming physical and emotional obstacles in his life. He now has his own company, Inspired Speaking, through which he shares his story and its lessons with people from a wide variety of backgrounds in Australia and the Americas. His passion is to impart what he has learned from his life’s journey to motivate people, so they will have the courage to realize their full potential.

I was born under difficult circumstances. There were complications when I was fully formed in my mother’s womb. The doctors think that either my head got stuck on my left arm or my left arm was pressed too tightly against my mother’s ribcage. Whatever the circumstance, blood and oxygen were cut off to my left arm. Doctors call the condition *ischemia*. I had an ischemic limb. I was born in a hospital in a small country town in the central west of the State of New South Wales in eastern Australia. So, shortly after my arrival into this world, I was flown by helicopter to Sydney, where there was a hospital that was better equipped to handle my condition. But, despite the more advanced healthcare in Sydney, gangrene set in. And, when just two weeks old, my arm was amputated above the elbow.

My parents were devastated. Yet, they never gave up when it came to making plans for me to grow up as normal as possible. They wanted me to have a good sense of self-esteem

and a positive body image, regardless of my disability. Their plans involved visits to the local swimming pool, where my father was the manager. My mother spent many hours there with my three older sisters and me. We all swam for fun and participated in competitions at local swim clubs. We were a family that loved the water. So, it was inevitable that I would learn how to adapt my body when learning how to swim. Before long, I adjusted very well to the water and surpassed my parent’s expectations. I developed a very unorthodox swimming style. My right arm turned fast, like the wing of a windmill, while my legs kicked furiously to keep my body from sinking.

At three years old, I won my first trophy. I was the youngest boy competitor. Before long, the children growing up around me would often forget I had lost an arm because I was doing everything they were doing. I was comfortable with my shirt off, and my self-esteem was good. This gave me the confidence to try other sports. To my parents’ credit, they allowed me to play whatever I sport I wished, soccer, basketball, water polo, rugby union, and, my favorite, rugby league. I also became an excellent swimmer, and I remained undefeated against able-bodied kids right throughout my primary and high school years.

However, in my early high school years, I fell into depression. As an amputee, I experienced discrimination on many occasions and started to doubt my abilities. At times I was very angry with the world. And this anger was expressed at home against my family.

Eventually, my mother got me to stop feeling sorry for myself when she took me to my first disability swimming competition. It was the first time I competed against athletes with disabilities. In my hometown, I had been competing and continually proving myself against able-bodied athletes, and I developed a poor attitude towards other people with disabilities. That would all change after this first swim competition. The event that would shape my destiny for the better. Entering my favorite race, I was overly confident and assumed an easy victory. Beside me on the blocks was a fit looking swimmer from Denmark. Although he looked in good shape, he was missing not only an arm but a leg as well. This would be an easy race, I thought. He beat me by seven seconds over the 50 meters.

I was shocked at his speed and his athleticism. Thanks to him, I woke up to the real possibilities in my life. I came away from the experience more determined than ever to achieve my full potential.

Yet still, I was caught in a negative mindset. By the time I graduated from high school, I did not know what skills I could offer society. I was unsure of a career. I had no idea what I wanted to do with my life. Then my parents told me that I must either get a job or take up swimming seriously. I took the latter option because I thought it would be easier. It was not. My parents stipulated that I must train full-time to really have a go at it. This meant joining a professional swim team and waking up at four most mornings. I did it, but it was a tough adjustment to get up that early to practice swimming up to three miles with able-bodied national level swimmers. But like so often in my life, when given a chance, my body adjusted. It adapted to the aches in the muscles of my right arm from swimming so many laps during high-level workouts.

I improved quickly. My parents secured some funding to send me to New Zealand for an international swim meet, and I broke the national record in the 50 meters freestyle. The Australian Paralympic¹ Swim Team were there competing for practice. The Sydney Paralympics were fast approaching. I caught the eye of the head coach, and I was soon on the radar for



the Sydney Games. I had a new-found belief and determination and began to dream of the possibilities that lay ahead.

However, there was one huge obstacle to making it through the Paralympic trials. The local

pool that my father managed had closed down for the winter. I had nowhere to swim. So, I remained active and confident in pursuing my dream by keeping fit by running and riding my bike. Of course, in the water, we use different muscles than we do in running and cycling and too much running and cycling soon become detrimental to a swimmer's physique.

Fortunately, with the Paralympic Swim Trials six months away, my parents received a call from the manager of the Paralympic Team. The organization had secured a full life in scholarship for me at the Australian Institute of Sport. This was the biggest challenge of my early career. The Institute of Sport was Australia's premier place of sporting excellence. It was created by the government to better our nation's chances in the Olympics. The Australian Institute of Sport was a cut-throat place, where if you were not getting the desired results, you would lose your scholarship. The training was intense, and I was expected to step up to a level I had never trained at before. I did eventually adjust and survived the grueling routine, which sometimes included swimming 30 miles in seven days. I was expected to keep up with the able-bodied elite athletes, no questions asked.

I soon went from an unknown to a number one ranked swimmer in the world for the 200 meters Individual medley.² At the Sydney Paralympics, I won Australia's first medal in the pool, a silver. And I finished the games with four medals, two were silver, and two were bronze. I decided that I had found my calling and continued to work hard towards fulfilling my dream.

At the 2002 Manchester Commonwealth Games in England history was made when the games committee decided to include elite athletes with disabilities to compete in the same games with able-bodied athletes with all medals included in the official medal tally. I made the team and that year broke world records in the freestyle sprints. I won two gold medals and broke a further two world records at the games. As a result, I joined Queen Elizabeth II for dinner. My profile as an athlete was now sky high.

At my second Paralympic Games in 2004, held in Athens, I became one of the first amputee swimmers to break the one-minute barrier for the

100-meter freestyle swim and I won my first Paralympic gold medal. I won six medals from six races during the games, two gold, three silver, and a bronze. And I also captained the team.

Unfortunately, during my third and final Paralympic Games in 2008, held in Beijing, I con-



Benjamin Austin was awarded six medals, two gold medals, three silver, and one bronze, at 2004's Paralympic Games in Athens.

tracted the flu. It affected my swimming, first physically and then mentally, and I swam the slowest times of my career. My confidence was down. I asked my coach if I could pull out of my place as the last swimmer in our final blue-ribbon event, the 4x100-Meter Relay.³ My coach said he believed in me and told me I had to swim for the sake of my team as I was the team captain. My ego had been so used to winning that my whole self-image was based on it. I had tasted success for so long that as soon as I was no longer on top of the world, I crashed back into low self-esteem. My mind was eating me alive by telling me I was worthless. The only remedy for this self-doubt was to lie down in an area of the Olympic village where there was a forest. There I would stare at the tops of the trees until my mind became still, and I was entirely in the present moment. I would lay there for hours. Eventually, I became more and more self-assured.

When the race came, I was relaxed and calm. I swam the fastest time I had ever swum, and

we won the gold medal. I also beat the individual gold medalist of the 100-meters freestyle though we dived into the pool at the same time. I made a six-second improvement in only two days. It showed me the power of a quiet mind. That led me onto a spiritual journey after I retired from swimming. I wanted to find out more about stilling the mind and finding happiness.

I traveled the world and sought out many different traditions and spiritual ways. While they all were amazing and very sacred experiences, I still felt incomplete.


That started to change when I found Sensei Yasunao Kido⁴ giving Jyorei in a vegetarian café in Sydney. I was still searching for that one elusive light beam of understanding on my spiritual journey. When Yasunao told me this healing prayer called Jyorei would only take five minutes, I was skeptical. I was waiting for him to ask me if I liked it enough in five minutes would I be willing to spend money on a full course of thirty-minute healings. I am glad to say I was wrong.

In five minutes, I felt one of the strongest of sensations I had ever experienced. My body felt as if it were swirling around and around, my head would nod up and down again, and a myriad of colors endlessly swirled around my head. More importantly, I felt a sense of peace that I had never felt before. All this in just five minutes. And Yasunao never asked for anything in return. Afterward, it is fair to say that I was more than a little curious and wanted to know more about Jyorei.

Over the next five years, I regularly received Jyorei from Sensei Kido whenever I was in Sydney. And every time I was amazed at how deep the healing felt. My body continues to move in many ways while receiving Jyorei, and I found myself finding more profound and deeper levels of peace after each healing session.

Sensei Kido encouraged me to be initiated into Shumei so that I could continue to be healed and heal others, and deepen my relationship with Meishusama and the Shumei organization. It was an easy decision to commit to after the incredible benefits I received from Jyorei over the years. So, in July of 2017, I received my ohikari.⁵ I have felt blessed ever since. Now I can share this incredible healing and love with my family and friends.

Even my father, an atheist, is quick to tell people how good Jyorei is. Even without belief, Jy-

orei works. And the giver and the receiver both receive healing. Often when someone describes their experience to me after I give them Jyorei, strangely, I realize that I felt everything that they felt and had seen the same colors that they did. Yet, regardless of the experiences one has while giving or receiving this healing prayer, Jyorei always has a positive effect on both the receiver and the giver. And that is a true blessing. 

1. The **Paralympic Games** is a prestigious international sporting event that involves top athletes with various physical challenges. These games are usually held soon after the Olympic Games. The games were initiated in Britain in 1948, shortly after the World War, which left a great many disabled people in its wake. Since then, it has become one of the most significant international sporting events in the world. Today thousands of athletes from over 100 countries participate in this competition. The games are governed by the International Paralympic Committee.

2. The **200 Meters Individual Medley** is a swimming competition in which, after diving off the block, contestants swim a long course (50 meters) doing the butterfly stroke until touching the end of the pool, then turn to do another long sequence of backstrokes till touching the opposite end. The process is repeated with a long course of breaststrokes and finally another long course of freestyle swimming. The 200 Meter Individual Medley was first recognized by the International Swimming Federation in 1956.

3. The **4x100 Meter Relay** evolves teams of swimming in competition with each other. Each team is made up of four members. Each member of a team swims 100 meters and is succeeded by another member who swims another 100 meters. Each team member performs a particular stroke before relaying off to the next teammate. The first swimmer does a backstroke, the second does a breaststroke, the third a butterfly, and the last swims freestyle. Benjamin Austin, as team captain and the last relay swimmer, would have performed the freestyle.

4. **Sensei Yasunao Kido** is the Director of Shumei Australia. He was born in Japan in 1968 and became a member of the Shumei family in 1988. After immigrating to Australia in 2007, he became an Australian citizen in 2013.

5. An **ohikari** is a small sacred emblem worn by people who give Jyorei. It consists of a parchment square bearing artistic calligraphy by Meishusama and worn about the neck, much like an amulet or scapular. The silk pouch in which an ohikari is held must be kept clean and changed regularly.

The Heart of a Seed

Ken Greene

Ken Greene is the founder of the Hudson Valley Seed Library. The Library was motivated by his concern for the loss of genetic diversity and the growing monopoly of seed supplies by the biotech industry. As a librarian, he realized that seeds have much in common with books, each seed has its own story to tell. From this realization, the idea of creating a library for seeds arose. He is also the co-founder of the Hudson Valley Seed Company, a source of seeds for home gardeners and farmers throughout the USA. Mr. Greene is on the board of directors of the Organic Seed Alliance and a member of the planning committee for the National Organic Seed Growers Conference.

This article is drawn from two of Mr. Greene's presentations for the Shumei organization, one given at the Shumei America National Headquarters in Pasadena, CA and the other at the Shumei International Institute in Crestone, Co.

When I started paying attention to seeds, I had not thought much about where our food came from, how food is grown, or who grows it. It did not come just from the grocery store. It seemed as if there was this whole world waiting for me to explore.

The wonderful thing about local farmer's markets, especially when living in a small community, is that you can meet the farmers and talk to them about how they grow our food. You can find out what their agricultural practices are and what varieties of plants they grow.

Yet, when I asked questions about seeds, I did not get answers. I could not find out who grew the seeds, how they were grown, or

where the seeds were grown. When you cannot get answers to what seems like a direct question, something funny is going on. It may be that people do not want those questions answered. So, I started to pay more attention to seeds and tried to figure out the part seeds play in our lives.

Everything around us comes from seeds. Yet we rarely think about them, even though they touch our lives daily in many ways.

One reason seeds are overlooked is that when we eat, we rarely eat the seeds. Seeds are the agricultural process behind agriculture; they are what is behind our food. We do not often think past the food on our plate. If we do, we ask who grew the food, how they grew it, and where they grew it. We look for answers to these questions when we go to a farmer's market or when buying Natural Agriculture products. We can get answers to those questions. But interestingly, when asking farmers and gardeners where their seeds come from, how their seeds are grown, and who grows them, we do not get answers. There is not a lot of transparency in the seed industry.

The question I often struggle with is what a seed is?

Take a moment to look at the seeds in the photo on the next page. What do you notice about them? Notice anything interesting? Yes, there is a little heart on each seed. These seeds are called *Cardiospermum*, which means *heart-seed*. It is a beautiful seed to look at.

We use the word *seed* in very symbolic ways. We talk about seed money, seeds of change, about planting the seed of an idea, or sowing seeds of doubt. All of these symbolic expressions make us think about the future, for



The *Cardiospermum* is known as the Heartseed because of the small, white heart shapes it bares on its hull.

Now, shift the perspective a bit. Look at a seed and think of it as a living being. This small seed is alive. Instead of just thinking of it as what it will become or what its yield is going to be—or if you are with a large seed company, how much money it will make—instead think of it as a living organism. It is hard to remember that seeds are alive. They are tiny. They do not move. They do not have eyes or limbs. Still, they are living beings.

Evolution is fascinating. Seeds did not show up until about 400 million years ago. Those were the *angiosperms*. There were plants before that time, but they did not reproduce through seeds. So, 400 million years ago we find in fossil records the first plants reproducing through seeds. This was still a very long time before animals started having relationships with the plants that produced seeds.

ships with the plants that produced seeds.

The first grains came about 160 million years ago. Whether corn, rice, or wheat, all came from ancient grasses that appeared about 25 million years ago. These first grasses were the ancestors of the most familiar foods we have today. We humans did not show up until around two million years ago. Our more advanced traits, such as complex symbolic expression, art, and culture first emerged about 100 thousand years ago. And what is interesting is no matter how far back we go, to the very beginning of humanity, our lives have been touched by seeds. As a species, we have never known life without seeds, their flowers, their pollinators, their fruits, and the circle of life from seed to seed.

Exciting things happened during the evolution of seeds. Many early plants needed to protect themselves. So, they developed poisons that had a bitterness that did not taste good to animals. They developed thorns and ways of producing rashes. Also, they produced small fruits, not like the large fruits we are used to today. We depended on

the plants, and as we began to save seeds, the plants realized they could rely on us. We became their protectors. When we took on that role, the plants could let go of many of their natural defenses. They could do things that were more beneficial to us, larger fruits, more nutrients, sweeter taste, no poisons, and less bitterness. They trusted us. To care for us, they became more vulnerable.

Some promote the idea that there were centers of origin for different plant families located all over the world. There would be a center where most of our brassicas came from, an area where most of our tomatoes came from, and another part of the world where most of our root crops came from. This suggests that there were different human cultures in those different places and times. And each of these communities played a part in the stories of each family of plants. So, plant families and human families, plant ancestors, and human ancestors have relationships that go back to the dawn of agriculture.

We can reconnect with our ancestral plants and at the same time reconnect with our ancestors. When we look at these centers of diversity, something beautiful and fascinating happens. When you start tracing how plants traveled from place to place, you begin to see a story evolve, a story full of color and travel. Seeds have migrated, developed, and evolved just like people and cultures. They grew to become very regional, very local, and at the same time, very global. They became a rainbow of diversity.

The history of civilization and culture is the history of the seed savers. It is the history of our ancestors who learned how to save seeds, protect them, plant them, and have a food source they could depend on year after year.

When thinking about seeds, you can go to the textbook definition: a seed is an embryonic plant enclosed in a protective covering. It sounds scientific, but it is really saying the same thing that Mokichi Okada said. Seeds are alive! That is easy to forget when holding a seed in your hand. They are tiny, do not move, and do not have eyes and arms. We are limited in what we view as life and what we do not. The seed is a living organism. But this is just a small part of how I think about seeds.

Different varieties of seeds developed in different cultures. We can look back to a time when seeds were enclosed in certain geographic bound-

aries. People were not traveling that much, the plants were not traveling with people, and so they developed in particular climates, in certain types of soils, and with specific human cultures.

As people began to travel, they took seeds with them. We all come from seed saving ancestors. We can all look back to the seeds that our ancestors saved, and we can reconnect with their legacy. When you look at the Latin root of the word *cultivation*, you see that it means to *care for*. So, this ancestral relationship that we have with seeds is not entirely science-based. It is about caring for seeds as a living being. And it is about the plants caring for us in return.

Seed is created to renew, to multiply, to be shared, and to spread. Seed is life itself.

—Vandana Shiva

People did not collect seeds just to hoard them. Seeds were shared. They were part of the commons, the same way a water source is shared. Seeds are about generosity. When you plant a seed, it grows into a plant. That one plant produces hundreds or thousands of seeds. This reflects on how we develop culture. When we look at the generosity of seeds, we see that it is our role as caregivers to pass on that generosity. It would be disrespectful of the plants to say that all of their abundance is just for one person or group and not to be shared with others.

When sitting down and looking at the food on our plate, what we see is an immigrant plate, a migration plate, a diversity plate. The foods that we eat came from many different cultures from all over the world. Often, we forget that. We have this diversity because of the relationships between cultures and peoples.

So, what have we done with this generosity and this relationship over time? Many of you have heard the term *loss of genetic diversity*. The phrase could mean that when your great, great, great grandmother came from Italy to the United States, she brought tomato seeds with her of a certain kind. Her family had been saving and passing on those seeds for generations. If just one generation were to stop saving the seeds, the chain would break. It would be the end of one variety of tomato, along with the stories and the culture that came with that seed. It would all disappear forever.

good or bad. That seeds are used in our language in so many ways to show how essential seeds are to our culture.

A book I recommend is “Visions of the Living Seed.”¹ It was written in a partnership between Shumei and Navdanya, a seed organization in India. It is comprised of a series of essays from people with different perspectives. It has wonderful photos. Here are two quotes from that book, each is about how we connect to seeds:

The seed is the foundation of life.

—Mokichi Okada.²

Living seeds are the source of life—the embodiment of natural and cultural diversity.

—Vandana Shiva.³

What most people think about when they look at a seed is what it will grow into. What the seed becomes is an integral part of seeds, and it is an essential part of the story.

For thousands of years, evolution was all about increasing variety. As seeds traveled, they changed. People changed. And there were more and more varieties and more strains and more developments as people and seeds adapted to different parts of the world.

However, over the last century, we have gone from having many varieties of cabbages, many types of tomatoes, and many varieties of cucumbers to having only a few today. And this is just in the last 100 years. Let us look at radishes. There were 462 different varieties being used regularly by people throughout the world. There were only 27 left by the 1980s. There were at one time 544 varieties of cabbage. By the 1980s there were only 28 left. Looking at sweet corn alone, there were once 307 different types. Now, there are only 12 left. There was a survey done in the 1950s of diverse rice varieties in India. It was estimated that there were 30,000 to 50,000 varieties in the subcontinent. There was rice from different elevations, there were dry farmed rice and wet farmed rice, rice for different types of dishes, medicinal rice, ceremonial rice, and rice for dyes. They redid that study in 2015 and found only 50 varieties left of the tens of thousands listed in the original research. These are massive losses. That is what we have done with the seed's generosity.

Corn is an ancient example of these old relationships we have with seeds. The indigenous people of Central Mexico took *teosinte*, a tall wild grass that looks nothing like modern corn and guided and coevolved it, turning it into one of the world's most important crops.

However, today, corn is one of the most genetically engineered foods. For a corporation to say, "Because we made this small change to corn, we now own it, and it is illegal to save its seeds," ignores all of this crop's history. The people of central Mexico put thousands of years more work into corn than any modern corporation ever did. So, if anyone gets to own and license corn, it would be the people of Central Mexico. Interestingly, they do not want to own it. They wanted to share it freely. They tried to pass on the generosity they learned from the plants and spread them throughout the world.

I work with Native American communities, including the St. Regis Mohawk tribe. Many of their sacred varieties are disappearing. There is a variety of corn, Mohawk Red Bread Corn, an im-

portant corn, very specific to a particular ceremony. It was used to make the food served in that community's Longhouse Ceremony.⁴ There were only two ears left in existence until recently. By working with the St. Regis Mohawk community, last year, we produced 800 pounds of this corn. This year, we are producing about 2,000 pounds. All of that is going back to the community. It is their seeds, it is their story.

Wheat has a similar story. There probably at one time were one-hundred-thousand varieties of wheat. Today, there are only nine left.

This is what we are facing. This is our legacy. This is our responsibility. As diversity shrinks, there is a consolidation of seed resources globally. This is depressing, but it is essential to know where we are right now so that we can understand the work ahead of us.

One main reason for the loss of genetic diversity is the consolidation of seed resources. Large corporations now own most seed resources on our planet. These chemical and pharmaceutical businesses have bought up large seed companies and wholesale seed houses. They do not change the name of those companies, so it is hard to trace where seeds are really coming from.

The biggest corporation that controls seed resources is Monsanto. Behind this giant are Bayer, Dow, Syngenta, and DuPont. These are chemical and pharmaceutical corporations, and they control close to 85% of our seed resources globally. These are not health organizations. These are not agriculture businesses. And, these companies are not focused on food justice, food access, nutrition, or the health of our planet. They either are manufacturing chemicals or finding ways of delivering pharmaceuticals through the food we eat. And that is who is controlling our food and seeds right now!

Monsanto tried to buy Syngenta but failed. Bayer is buying Monsanto. A Chinese chemical corporation is buying Syngenta. And Dow and DuPont are merging. So, we are going to be left with three mega-multinational corporations in control of close to 90% of the planet's seed resources.

Let that sink in a moment.

Let us look at the way corporations control seeds. To them, a seed is a commodity. It is something to profit from, something to control. They took out that part of the definition that spoke of care, of life, and of spirit. They stripped down the

answer to what is a seed. And we agreed to their new definition. This led to the initial loss of genetic diversity. The loss of diversity was caused by the consolidation of seed resources and our forgetting how essential seeds are in our lives.

What is a seed? Do not accept the definition given by corporations, because they are trying to deny us our ancestral right to connect with seeds, our ancestral legacy, and our agreement with the plants that if we care for them, they will care for us.

This is why I started saving seeds from my garden. I did not want to be part of this system. You ask, what can one person do? There actually was something I could do in my own backyard to make a difference. It grew from there. It grew into starting a seed library and a seed company. It grew to work with organizations like Shumei to create seed cooperatives that would promote the seed library movement all over the country. It grew to the creation of independent sources of seeds.

But it was the seeds themselves that I had to learn from to understand how to make a difference. One of my biggest lessons was about resilience. Even if you do not have a farm or a garden, I think it is important to find your own way to connect with seeds. One way to connect with them is to listen to them. I used to tell people that I was like the Lorax in Dr. Seuss' children's book of the same name.⁵ But instead of speaking for the trees as the Lorax did, I spoke for seeds.

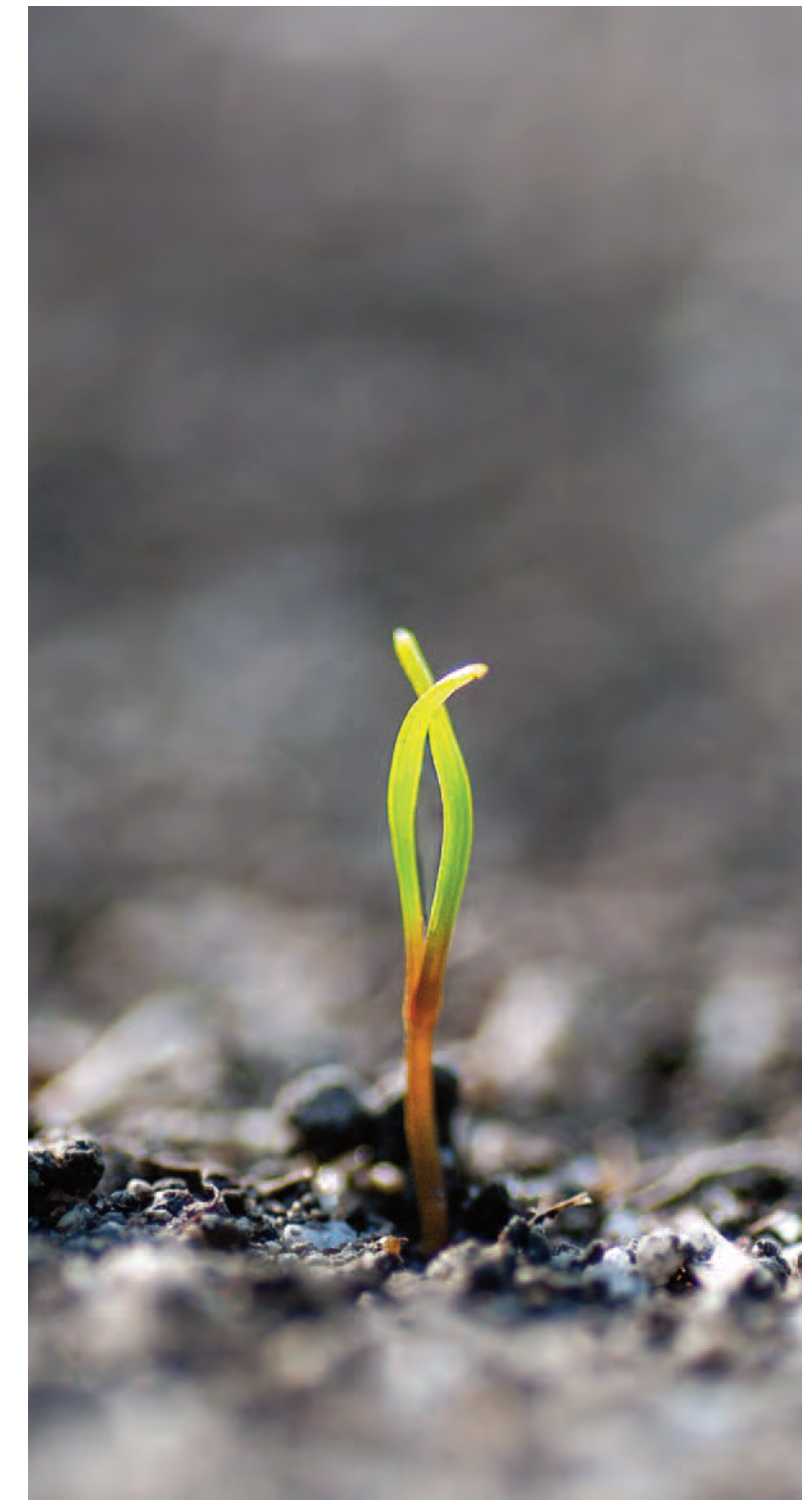
But I found that I really did not speak for seeds. What I am trying to do is listen to seeds and then sharing their stories. I am learning from them rather than being a voice for them. The resiliency of seeds, their ability to remain true to themselves no matter where they go and yet adapt is a huge lesson. We do not have to change because the world is changing around us in ways that we do not like, we can remain true to our essence and our beliefs, but yet we have to be adaptable as things change. That is how we survive.

Transformation is one of the other big lessons to be learned from seeds. Planting a little seed every year, every time I do it, I ask myself if this tiny thing I am planting in the earth is really going to turn into a big plant that makes a lot of tomatoes. Can this small seed really do all that? And it is miraculous every time it does. The transformation never ceases to amaze me! I lose a little faith every winter.

I live in the northeast where we all lose a little bit of faith in the cold winter. That is just the way it is. But when spring comes, we get it back.

Another great lesson is generosity. When you plant one seed, you have in your hand the ability to feed your friends, your family, to create beauty, and make your community stronger. Then if you save the seeds from those plants, the generosity becomes exponential. Suddenly, that one seed becomes a hundred seeds or a thousand.

When those seeds go out into the community, each person that plants a seed and in turn



The images on the Hudson Valley Seed Company's packets are designed by various artists. Each tells a story about how a seed adapts to the soil, water, or air in which it is placed, or about the people who plant them. At left is the artwork for Echinacea seeds.

saves seeds from the last harvest continues that generosity of multiplying one seed into many seeds.

This is the reason the Hudson Valley Seed Company works with artists when designing our seed packets. When we became a company, we got to create our own seed packs. What did we want our packages to look like? I thought back to when I first started to garden. I would look at the photos on the seed packs. Then, I would look at what I grew in my own garden and would think, "I'm a terrible gardener!" But those photos were just like those in a fashion magazine. They were too perfect. They were airbrushed, and the colors were super-saturated. If there were a blemish on one side of a tomato, it would be turned so as not to be seen. So, we do not use photos because we do not want people to try to grow something they could not. We wanted people to think about the story of the seed and the spirit of the seed. We thought the best way to do that was to work with artists. In their own way, artists are cultural seed savers. They choose all of the different elements of what exists, they think about the past, and they rearrange these elements to create a vision for the future. That is what seed savers do as well.

Each of our packs is designed by a different artist, and each tells a different story. Sometimes we tell a very agricultural story about the seeds. It might be a story about our place, about the way we care for the land, or about the way seeds experience the place through the soil, water, air, and the people that are with them. One of the more fascinating stories is that seeds grown using chemicals and toxins are adapted to farms that use chemicals and toxins. Seeds grown using organic practices grow better on organic farms. If we start producing seeds using the Shumei Natural Agriculture methods, those seeds will be happier and healthier on Natural Agriculture farms.

There also are ecological stories. We not only need to think about the relationship between farms and seeds, but also about the seeds and the area around our farms, their natural environment.

Milkweed gives us one of these ecological stories. Monarch butterflies are disappearing. We lost about 80% of their population. Where are they going, why are they disappearing? It turns out that it is because the milkweed plant is disappearing. Milkweed and the monarchs have a symbiotic relationship. Native milkweed is the only plant that



monarch butterflies will lay eggs on. The eggs hatch and their larva eat some of the plant, continuing the life cycle of the butterflies. But why is milkweed disappearing? Milkweed is disappearing because of genetic engineering and the use of Roundup Free corn.⁶ When farmers started planting Roundup Free corn, suddenly they could spray more herbicides than before. In the past, they had to pinpoint where they applied herbicides. Then, with this new herbicide-resistant corn, they could spray everything in the field. This increased the use of poisonous chemicals, which drifted to areas around the farms, killing the plants in the natural ecosystems that were the milkweed's home, those in-between areas, open fields, the edges of forests, and beyond the boundaries of these farms. The danger of genetic engineering is not just about our personal health and what we put into our bodies. It is also about the health of the environment, which has consequences for our bodies in many different ways.

I have been accused of taking things too personally. But perhaps the problem is that we do not take things personally enough. When we take things personally, we see that something is wrong and we want to make a change, do something about the problem because we feel its effects.

As for seeds, when those living beings suffer abuse, it hurts all of us. It is OK to take it personally. That is what motivates us to make a difference.

This story of the Pippin's Golden Honey Pepper, an African-American heirloom, comes with

a deep history, a lineage of slaves bringing seeds with them when abducted from their lands. They did not know where they were going, and so brought with them the most precious things they had. They brought seeds so that wherever they were going, they would have a piece of their culture, something familiar and comforting with them. These seeds came from African-American people, like Pippin, the famous African-American folk artist,⁷ for whom the pepper is named.

One of the most compelling things about seeds is their resiliency. And one of the wonderful things about people is our resiliency. It is not too late for us to rekindle the familial relationship that we have with seeds. We can turn this around. We can not only preserve the genetic diversity we have left but actually increase it.

We are not all gardeners or farmers. Yet we all can connect with seeds and make a difference. Even if you never planted a seed in your life, there are ways to rekindle that relationship.

When holding a seed in my hand, these are some of the things that come into my head. I ask the seed, whose hands held you just like this? How many generations cared for you? How many layers of transparent fingerprints are inscribed on your seed coat? How many oceans did you cross before you came to rest in my hand? What historical moments did you witness, and what personal tragedies and joyous moments were you born through? What myths held you in their magic? What ceremonies do you need to be fulfilled? Whose personal taste influenced your form, your flavor, and who are the seed stewards that are an essential part of your story?

What is a seed? There are many ways to answer this question. But I will leave you with this answer: seeds are hope. Honoring the future is about hope. And really there is nothing more hopeful than planting a seed.

1. **Visions of the Living Seed** is a collection of essays and photographs that explore the importance of seed as the source of life on our planet. Copies can be ordered on Amazon through the following link: <https://www.amazon.com/Visions-Living-Seed-Satish-Kumar/dp/490393005X>

2. **Mokichi Okada** is Shumei's founder, known to Shumei members as Meishusama, which means Master of Light.

3. **Dr. Vandana Shiva** is an internationally respected physicist, environmentalist, and the author of over 20 books. She is a leading figure in the Alter-Globalization Movement, a group that seeks global integration to advance democratic principles, human rights, fair trade, and sustainable development. She has argued for the wisdom of many traditional practices, such as those of her own heritage, India's Vedic legacy.

4. **The Longhouse Religion** (Ganioda'yo), was founded by a Seneca profit named Sganyodaiyo toward the turn of the 19th century. The faith has elements of the older, animistic religions of the Iroquois peoples, but also aspects of ecstatic Christian practices, such as the revival movements taking place in the United States at the time. The longhouses in which the movement's ceremonies took place where traditional Iroquois communal dwellings that served as living spaces, meeting houses, and theaters. Today, about 5,000 people adhere to this spiritual practice.

5. **The Lorax** is a children's book by Theodor Seuss Geisel, known as Dr. Seuss. Its story concerns the plight of the environment when faced with greed. The main character, the Lorax, speaks for the trees against the Once-ler, a one-time lumber baron who felled Truffula trees for profit until he destroyed them all, thus cutting off his source of wealth. The book is a fable that concerns the danger that corporate greed poses for nature and mankind.

6. **The Monsanto Company** first brought glyphosate, an herbicide that kills a wide range of weeds and grasses, to market in the 1970s. Its brand name is Roundup. Later, Monsanto introduced Roundup Free, a variety of crops resistant to glyphosate poisoning. This allowed farmers to kill weeds but not their crops, thus increasing Monsanto's profits. However, strains of glyphosate-resistant weeds have naturally evolved. Glyphosate is used widely throughout the world. Its long-term effectiveness and impact on human and environmental health are a significant concern.

7. **Horace Pippin** [February 1888 – July 1946] was an African-American artist. As a boy, he showed an early talent for visual art and sketched many of the sights that surrounded him. Except for a brief stint at the Barnes Foundation in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania towards his later years, he was self-taught. As a teenager, he started working at various menial jobs to support an ailing mother and family. During World War I [the Great War] he was a member of the famed Harlem Hell-fighters. While fighting in the trenches, Pippin kept an illustrated journal that captured his military service. Born right-handed, he was wounded in his right arm by a sniper and took up drawing the sights of war and army life with his left hand. After the war, he drew and painted to strengthen his right arm. Slowly, he gained recognition as a fine artist. His distinct style captured childhood memories and war experiences, scenes of everyday life, landscapes, portraits, biblical subjects, and historical events. The unfairness of enslavement and segregation figured in much of his work.

WORDS FROM SHUMEI AMERICA'S DIRECTOR

To Our Youth

Sensei Eugene Imai

Sensei Eugene Imai was the first Shumei Sensei to work in North America. He is the Director of Shumei America and former Director of Shumei's International Department. As a citizen of the USA, he is Shumei's first American Sensei.

The following is drawn from an address Eugene Imai gave at the Fourth Annual Shumei Youth Sampai, held on March 24, 2019, at Shumei America's National Center in Pasadena, CA.

The stated purpose of this year's Youth Sampai is to provide an opportunity for young people to find meaning, purpose, and direction in life, and to unite their minds and spirits to work for the happiness of all humankind. I hope that this goal will be eventually accomplished for all of you, individually and collectively.

This sampai is not only meaningful for the youth who attend, but it is significant for me, an ex-youth, as well. And I hope that it will also be useful for all those who remember what it was like to be young and those who want to encourage our youth. Personally, I enjoy being around young people. I receive so much energy and ideas from them.

The theme of this year's gathering is One World, One Family. Given our current divisive world, this is a particularly appropriate theme.

What are your goals? What are the aspirations of your life?

Young people tend to be idealistic. Are you idealistic? Do you have dreams for the future? What would you like to do with your life? Are you still searching for what you want? Let me share what I was thinking and doing when I was about your age.

From my late teens to my early twenties, I was thinking and talking with friends about how

we could help our country, Japan, be a better place. But it all ended up mere talk, and I did not take any specific actions toward that end. Instead, I decided to go to university and become a chemical engineer. I thought I might be able to do something good for others and the world through my job, or at least make my family and myself happy by generating a good income and by being a good citizen. In other words, I settled for a more practical, personal goal.

However, my life took an unexpected, a one hundred and eighty-degree turn, with my father's death. He died after a three-year battle with muscular dystrophy. I was 19 years old at the time. After his struggle ended, my mother was exhausted and depressed by the long and drawn-out process of my father's illness. But she was lucky. She received Jyorei regularly at that time, and the blessing was immediate. It brought relief from her sorrow, and she began to feel hope returning to her life. She brought Shumei into our family. At first, I was not interested in the spiritual teachings of Shumei. But I was more interested in Shumei's selfless sharing of the healing prayer called Jyorei. My youthful, idealistic disposition allowed me to find a practical application in Jyorei. And soon, I became an active member of a Shumei college student group.

Many years have passed since I was 19 years old, and all those years have brought change and understanding. Through my journey with our organization, I learned that young people need good friends. These friends help reinforce their social identity while it is still being formed. I was fortunate to find many good friends with pure hearts and a willingness to give themselves to people in need. In the years since then,

my friends have continued to support me, as I hope I have continued to provide them support. They helped me grow spiritually and to overcome many challenges. To this day, my friends and I continue to inspire each other and work toward making Meishusama's vision of Heaven on Earth¹ a reality. We still are comrades in our dedication to a noble cause.

Do you have good friends—people who value such things as love, gratitude, integrity, and honesty? By being around such people, you receive positive energy and opportunities for growth. It is your responsibility to choose your friends. The people you spend time with is important.

Young people also need role models. I was fortunate to have had many exceptional mentors in my life, whom I admired and learned from. One was Kaishusama,² the first president of Shumei. When she first introduced me to Meishusama's teaching concerning the purpose of life, my spirit trembled, awakened, and was uplifted.

I will share that teaching with you:

What is God's purpose in this world? It is to make an ideal world, to create a Paradise on Earth... God gives each individual a unique mission in this world. He gives them special characteristics and special talents. He gives them physical existence and takes it away again, and He makes us all move ever forward towards the ideal object of Eternity. Good and evil, war and peace, destruction and creation—all of these are processes necessary for this on-going evolution.

—Mokichi Okada (Meishusama),
The Strata of the Spiritual World

I do not know how you would feel after reading this teaching for the first time. For me, it was as if I had been living my whole life inside a house, when suddenly Kaishusama entered, looked me in the eye and said, "Eugene, what are you doing here?" Then, she yanked me out the door and told me to look at the vast, bright blue sky. "This is the world," she said.

"So, this is the world," I thought. Here I had been spending my whole life in a small, dark house looking at a low ceiling. And then, one day I saw the boundless expanse of sky. I was overjoyed to

find a higher meaning in life and finding my real purpose. Please do not misunderstand me. I was not miserable before that time. I was content. I had a good family, good friends, good grades, and a good job awaiting me after I finished school. But yet, I did not know the real meaning of life or my true purpose.

Each of us is born into this world. Each is given a *unique mission*, *special characteristics*, and *special talents*. We are all special. You are special, and I thank you for being here.

Today's youth have a special mission to open a new era for humanity. Considering the challenges we are facing, this is more important now than ever. This poem by Meishusama is a succinct expression of this mission:

*How long can this world created by God
remain in darkness?*

*Light descends into darkness, illuminating
every corner of the earth.*

*Mysterious! Words cannot fully express
God's grand design.*

—Mokichi Okada (Meishusama),
Ceremony of the Century

I will share a story of a young visionary, who also happened to live at a critical time. It is the story of a teacher and his ardent disciples. Together they contributed to the profound transformation of Japan in the 19th century. The teacher's name was Shoin Yoshida,³ who lived from 1830 to 1859. He was executed when just 29. Although his life was short, he made an immense contribution to his country. Shoin was an educator who inspired his students to dedicate their lives to a higher purpose. His private academy was called Shokasonjyuku. It was located in Yamaguchi, Japan. Shoin and his students were all young, in their teens and twenties, and came from all social classes. Shoin refused to be called a teacher. He studied alongside his students and insisted on acting as their equal. In his school, everyone was a hero, respected for his or her unique talents and abilities. Shoin encouraged them to use the knowledge they acquired to benefit society.

Shoin Yoshida believed that knowledge without action is useless. However, if one's actions come from pure Makoto, honesty, and integrity, they will move people. They will move society.



Attendees, both young and some older, of Shumei's Fourth Annual Youth Sampai in Shumei Hall, Pasadena, CA. Sensei Eugene Imai is seen top row, center.

The mid-eighteen-hundreds was a crucial time for Japan. The country was threatened by mightier western powers. Yet, its people still lived in an outdated feudal society, a society run by samurai. Shoin and his students, as well as many other selfless young people, inspired each other to help transform Japan into a modern society. This extraordinary historical period is called the Meiji Restoration. That Japan was able to go through this transformation with relatively little turmoil was close to miraculous. The transformation was supported by a great many fearless young people like Shoin and his students.

You who are young have the power to bring about a change in our society. Do you believe you have such power? You may not realize it, but you do. And these are the reasons I think you do:

- You have an overwhelming passion. Yes, sometimes you are so passionate that you go too far. Sometimes your passion is naively out of place. But your naivety and enthusiasm are all for the good. That is the way it should be.
- You are restless. You do not wait. You want to see, hear, feel, and do things right now. Well, what better time than when you are young?
- You do not have as much to lose as us older folk. You are not as bound to possessions, family, or social status. You can afford to take risks. So, do not be afraid of making mistakes. Sometimes it is your failures that help you the most. You will find that other people are not as interested in your successes as they are in how your failures made you successful.

You are not bound by conventional wisdom. You do not know why things became the way

they are or why things cannot be changed. You are fresh and inexperienced—I am not insulting you, I am praising you. These traits are not drawbacks. Like Jonathan Livingston Seagull, you are free to believe that nothing is impossible.

That is why so many youth movements have contributed to great changes throughout human history, such as the American Revolution of 1776, the American Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s, India's peaceful struggle for independence in the first half of the 20th century, the environmental movement, the feminist movement, the global-wide democracy movements, and many other noble causes. All of them were supported by young people.

But unlike the youth of yesterday, today's youth have a unique tool and particular skills. You have the internet. If you use it for good, you can become connected to, inspired by, and bonded with others. The whole world is brought closer to you. You can bring people together for the good.

So, now it is your turn. It is your turn to take action. Look around. What do you think needs to be changed in the world? A lot, you might think.

But I ask you, will this change be accomplished by violence? Can things be changed for the better by demonizing those who think differently from you? Or do you believe in gentle persuasion? What do you think is the best way to advance people's hearts and minds?

Meishusama told us that significant change must first occur in the spiritual world before it can be enacted in the physical one. This is what is called the Law of Spiritual Precedence.⁴ What the world needs most now is a spiritual revolution. Albert Einstein once said, "You can never

solve a problem on the level on which it was created." Yes, we must first approach the world's problems from a broader level before tackling them on a narrower one. We must allow people's hearts and minds to open naturally and peacefully.

If we approach the world's problems with loving hearts and intelligence, then maybe things will improve. As you have noticed, human society is sharply polarized on a great many vital issues today. Nobody seems to listen to those who think differently from themselves. There is too much anger and intolerance, and not enough civility, patience, and understanding. We need to listen to those with differing views with respect and an open mind. Without listening to or trying to understand the other person's point of view, how can we cooperate with each other? Can anything significant be accomplished by hostility?

Quoting the Christian bible, Abraham Lincoln once famously said, "A house divided against itself cannot stand."⁵ Similarly, a world divided against itself will not stand either.

Martin Luther King Jr. so eloquently warned us that, "Returning hate for hate multiplies hate, adding deeper darkness to a night already devoid of stars. Darkness cannot drive out darkness. Only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate, only love can do that." These are wise words. They echo Meishusama's teachings.

Reverend King began his work while young, just 25 years old. The same was true of Nelson Mandela, who started his civil rights work while also in his 20s. Do not let your age stop you from accomplishing something great. But, remember, do not do so with hatred, anger, or violence. Instead, change the world with peace, harmony, and wisdom.

Shumei's mission is to help create Heaven on Earth by fostering health, happiness, and harmony for all. Would you like to make this happen? Does this sound like a noble cause? Would you like to help make this happen?

To our youth, I thank you for being born at this moment in time. Please, remember that God gave each of you a unique mission, distinct characteristics, and special talents to help create Heaven on Earth. Remember always that you are *special*, *gifted*, and *divine*.

With love, I wish you success.

1. **Heaven on Earth** is a term often used by Shumei's founder, Mokichi Okada (Meishusama), to describe his vision of a future world free from illness, poverty, and strife, and filled with joy and contentment.

2. **Kaishusama** is an honorific name used when referring to Mrs. Mihoko Koyama, Shumei's much revered and loved first president and spiritual leader. Kaishusama passed away in November of 2003.

3. Born a younger son of a minor samurai, **Shoin Yoshida** (born Sugi Toranosuke, 1830-1859) was one of the most influential and colorful characters in 19th century Japan. Through youthful misadventure, he was stripped of his samurai status and the stipend that went with it. However, this shortfall freed him to enjoy a decade of scholarly pursuits. He seems to have been frequently at odds with the Tokugawa Shogunate, the ruling order of the day. At one point he was arrested for trying to stow away aboard Commodore Matthew Perry's ship, the USS Powhatan, to visit America and gain firsthand knowledge of the West. Later, he inherited an uncle's private school, the Shōkasonjuku Academy, where a devoted group of students collected around him. Because of the turmoil and oppression of the day, Shoin made the unfortunate decision to put down his pen and take up the sword, precisely what Sensei Eugene Imai cautioned young people against in the above article. In the aftermath, Shoin and a few of his students were imprisoned and later beheaded for their involvement in a revolt and assassination attempt. According to his executioner, Shoin died an honorable and dignified death.

Although he did not live to see the full flowering of his more peaceful, scholarly pursuits, many of his students went on to become instrumental in the fall of the Tokugawa Shogunate and the foundation of the Meiji Restoration. One of them became Japan's first prime minister, thus bringing Japan into the modern world and making it a global power.

4. **The Law of Spiritual Precedence** is one of the basic tenets of Shumei, as advocated by Shumei's founder, Mokichi Okada. It can be summed up as the belief that everything in the physical world begins in the spiritual realm. For things to change here on earth, they must first undergo a spiritual change. As such, it is believed that one's primary concern is to cleanse impurities on the spiritual level.

5. **A House Divided Against Itself...** The phrase President Lincoln used is from the King James Version of the New Testament (St. Matthew, 12:25). Lincoln used the quote before becoming President and before the American Civil War broke out, during his acceptance speech after being nominated as the Republican candidate for the office of U.S. Senator from Illinois. The full Biblical quote reads, "And Jesus knew their thoughts, and said unto them, 'Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand.'"

WORDS FROM OUR FOUNDER

Natural Power

Mokichi Okada (Meishusama)

The basic and underlying principle of the universe is that everything that exists in the material world has the origin of its existence and activity in the spiritual world. One must first try to deal with problems in the spiritual world in order to bring about a real solution of the troubles in the material world. Thus, in the case of illness a true, genuine cure is only possible by dealing with the illness in the spiritual world. That is, one must first heal the spirit by Divine Light in order to bring a cure to the body.

The cure of an illness is a process of dispelling an accumulation of toxin or breaking up a mass of toxin in part of the body. When this process takes place in the soul, the accumulated toxin takes the form of clouds that dull the spiritual body, and the *dissolution* is the dispelling of this cloud. Medical treatment until now has been directed only towards dealing with physical symptoms, and this has not resulted in true cures.

The soul is capable of unlimited life, while the body is limited and exists as a thing of secondary importance. So, if we are going to deal with people, the true object of our attention should be the soul, not the body.

MISONO'S SACRED PATHWAY

Walking along Misono's Sacred Path is an experience visitors to Misono know well. The pilgrimage starts inconspicuously. The entryway is barely noticeable, no more than a shady opening in a mountain forest. Upon entering, one first encounters a large trellis, its wooden frame draped with wisteria. Then the way curves toward a splashing cascade, Kumo Ga Taki,¹ where visitors ritually wash their hands and mouths before continuing. The path's quiet beauty belies the magnificence that awaits. At its end, one comes to a stately bell tower, named Joy of Angels.² Turning left, one enters a vast, marble-paved plaza. And there, under a large expanse of sky, one finds, at the square's far end Misono's heart, Meishusama Hall.³

In fall, the Japanese maple lining the pathway turn deep shades of yellow, orange, and vibrant crimson. The cobblestones have their own story. Each was collected by Shumei volunteers who gathered them from the area around Kyoto's old railway station, which was being demolished to make way for the city's present station. Imagine the millions of footsteps, with their own stories and destinies that trod these stones, making them smooth, long before they came to rest in this quiet passageway.

1. **Kumo Ga Taki** was designed by the sculptor Masayuki Nagare. Its water is thought to have healing properties.

2. The **Joy of Angels** carillon was the first structure I.M. Pei built in Japan. Its 50 bells were cast at the Eijsbouts Bell Foundry in The Netherlands.

3. **Meishusama Hall** is the centerpiece of Shumei's Headquarters in Misono, Japan. Designed by Minoru Yamasaki, it is considered one of the world's foremost engineering feats. The interior is a vast, light-filled space with glass walls that allow visitors to enjoy the surrounding gardens and mountains. It holds over 5,000 people.