

First Aides

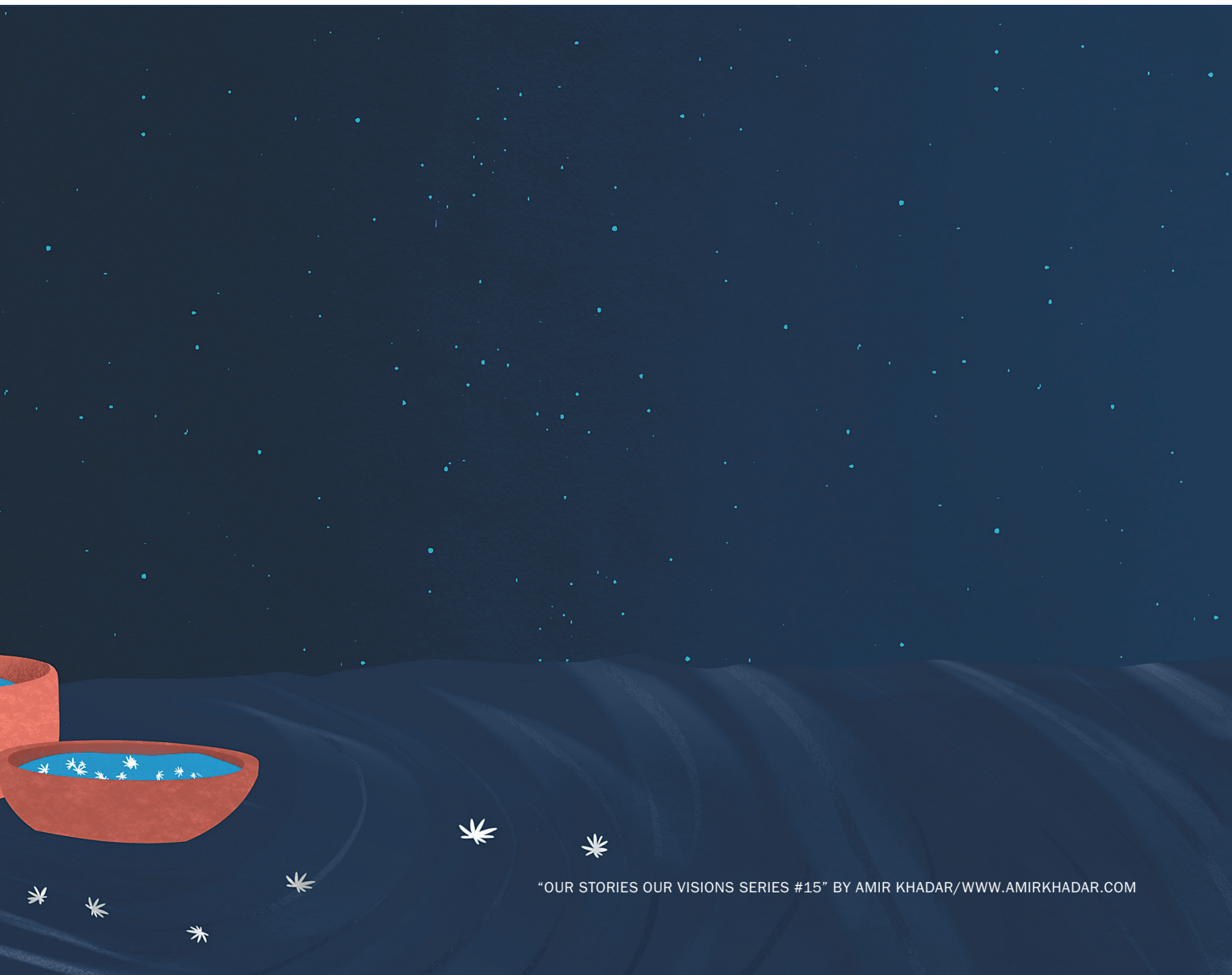
Indigenous Stories to Reclaim and Reframe Our Highest Health to Each Other and Mother Earth

by Solana Rose Booth





Emotional and spiritual health directly affect our mental and physical health, so health justice needs to be inclusive of all our parts and our relationships to all of Mother Earth's inhabitants. This includes Mother's Breath. These plant medicines and power invoke in us the connections we already have inside us to other inhabitants, to the star people, to our ancestors and our grandchildren's grandchildren.





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llow me to invite you to radically accept that we as a human family and Mother Earth have been in an unhealthy relationship, and that this relationship in turn is causing us to have an unhealthy relationship within ourselves and with one another. Regardless of which happened first, we are all in tough times—we are in “the thick of it” (a term used to refer to a tough time during a plant ceremony with entheogenic, or psychoactive, plant medicine). This story is a testament to humanity and Mother Earth. This story is what we are all asking for—what humans are asking for and also what Mother Earth is asking for.

Indigenous people are the original sentinels of Mother Earth. This means that we have an intimate, informed, and practice/evidence-based connection to her. It is knowing that we are both made of the same elements—mostly water. Here is a first story of how deeply connected we are to Mother Earth as a human family, and how we can reframe the dysfunction happening among all of us right now.

Today, we are thick in the cycle of healing, and it feels more like a cycle of suffering. The COVID-19 pandemic has reminded Indigenous peoples that we are all not just survivors of genocide and sour truths but also are surviving radical physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual labors of migrations. While we have desires and will to connect both to our ancestors and our grandchildren’s grandchildren (who are yet to be born), we are also in an opportune position *right now* to heal, reconcile, and sustain our health. There are many medicine people with wisdom who have passed on, and there are people who are tapping into their highest selves these days to help us keep going forward toward *our* highest selves.

The story of “The Eagle and the Star People” came to me May 27, 2021. Earlier that week, I had helped to rescue an eagle. Later that week, the eagle, whose name came to me as Zelda, shared many knowings of her travels, of her mate, of her eaglets, and of the nests she had made throughout her journeying across Turtle Island. Zelda shared examples of her song and of tools she’d used to share her songs. She was strong, and took up a lot of space; she was regal, and demonstrated by her posture primal ways of being a bird of prey—the one who flies the highest of all the winged creatures. The night she went to her new house (she passed away), I held her, and she showed me more relationships she’d sown, and how she had sustained her nest. The story came to me as a memory later that evening, and I quickly shared it with a sister and brother as it downloaded into my mind and I embodied its essence. It was as if Zelda were whispering more and more parts of the story while I was sharing. It is one of the longest Creation stories I have known.

The star people were gathering and sharing their stories, and they sensed and they noticed that the human family weren't looking up at them as much. They noticed that soon the human family did not notice them at all.

THE EAGLE AND THE STAR PEOPLE

Before colonial contact, Indigenous peoples relied on Creation stories to heal our hearts and grow our minds and human development to maximize our potential for love, creation, and relationships with each other and Mother Earth, including her other inhabitants, our individual human technologies, and more. First narratives are the oldest healing modality, and existed long before newspapers and other written texts, before radio and TV, before diseases, and before hospitals, prisons, and other institutions.

This story I am going to share with you is to remind you of a time when people *sensed*—they didn't speak with their mouths.

This story comes from a time of not having certain amenities and not having certain conditions that we're living in today. It was a time when the star people and the human family had a special kind of relationship. If we asked them, the star people would say that this time was about *sensing*, *noticing*, and *speaking to*—and it was about *light*. The human family would say that it was a time when they could see in the dark—the dark times: the cold becoming warm, sharing stories, and trusting each other, all of Mother Earth's inhabitants. The humans would also speak of their relationship to Father Sun, but that is a different story.

In this story, "The Eagle and the Star People," the human family would gather into groups and tell stories to each other. And the star people told stories to each other, too, as they gathered in groups. And they had an order to the way they told their stories. The star people noticed much happening in the daytime, so they would gather into their groups every night and share what they sensed and noticed. The people down below would sense the star people noticing them, and they would look up and notice the star people clustering into their groups, their constellations.

The people would sense the stories the stars shared, and interpreted the stories as advice on what they should or could be doing. It's as if the people looked up at the stars to

get a framework or template and ideas as to what they needed to be harvesting, or how they needed to be foraging, or where they needed to move camp, or what was coming for the people.

The star people also sensed and then noticed why the human family were doing what they did and how they modified themselves according to the stars' stories. Star people noticed the human family begin to mimic them by gathering into groups and families or tribes to share their stories among each other.

Pretty soon, the star people decided to pay extra attention to the human family and their stories, and one day they made an extra effort to sense and emotionally feel what the people down below were doing. It was interesting, because that same day, the human family decided to pay extra attention to each other. They noticed strong emotions, and they decided to pay extra attention to Mother Earth—so they didn't look up as much when the night came.

The star people were gathering and sharing their stories, and they sensed and they noticed that the human family weren't looking up at them as much. They noticed that soon the human family did not notice them at all. At night, the stars shared their stories, and went on about their nights of shining and days of not shining, and they created their plans of movement and which stars were going to gather into what groups and share their stories for the human family down below.

Night after night, they noticed that the human family continued not looking up as much anymore. The star people decided to watch them and figure out what was going on, and sensed the humans' attention to their own advancing technologies.

Soon, the humans didn't look up, and would only look at Mother Earth sometimes. The stars noticed that the humans had begun to not look at each other, and that they had stopped sharing their stories. Humans focused most of their time on the technologies that they created, and on sharing those with each other—and pretty soon, the star people also stopped gathering into their groups.

Humans were starting to become sick—not sick from disease or other physical ailments, but sick in a way of lacking authenticity, of not being able to sense truth, of not noticing that their relationships were failing.

The stars weren't showing as much light anymore at night-time. Humans were so busy looking down at their technologies, and then looking down on each other, that pretty soon they didn't talk to each other anymore, either. Humans kept to themselves, and pretty soon, night after night, it began to get darker and darker, because the star people weren't lighting up anymore. They had no stories to share, so there was no longer any reason to light with each other, and they began to dim.

Nights became darker and darker, the human family below kept creating as many things as they could, and they decided to create their own tools so that they wouldn't need the stars' light anymore. Humans had their own "synthetic" light now; they didn't have to look up anymore to see where they were going or what they were going to be doing, so they just kept moving about their lives.

As it became darker above, it got darker below. The darker nights quickly became a problem for all the other relatives of Mother Earth, including Eagle, who sits at the top of the trees and notices what goes on in the sky and what goes on down below. Eagle is a wise one, who's able to fly atop Mother Earth's atmosphere, notices everything during the daylight, and senses people and many others of Mother Earth's inhabitants. Eagle could have been a messenger to the star people, helping them to interpret the human family and their needs. Eagle has very good vision, so Eagle could see people's behavior from far, far away, and could sense that the star people were still out at night, even though they were no longer gathering and sharing stories.

Since Eagle was around during the times when the star people shared their stories and lit up the night sky, Eagle knew those stories of care, collaboration, and other human behaviors. Eagle began to do some research, and to soar and find other relatives. Among the plant relatives, Eagle met Mother's Breath (psilocybin), who told Eagle about when the people used to come and harvest the plants.

Eagle also stayed awake after day's end and talked to the keepers of the night, like Owl, Killer Whale/Blackfish, Mosquito, and more. Eagle and the night keepers and plants were talking a lot of wisdom, they were exchanging stories.

Eagle helped them to tell their own Creation stories from as far back as when the star people would first gather for the humans.

Eagle remembered long ago, and recalled Cedar Tree's genesis. Cedar Tree began to talk about generosity, and how she shared her moisture with the other trees—and she helped Eagle with Eagle's own Creation narrative. Cedar Tree began to talk about the Salmon stories, about when Salmon comes back home to spawn, and all the stories Salmon has of the people fishing them, of Killer Whale/Blackfish, and other mammals fishing for Salmon way out in the middle of the sea.

Cedar Tree told stories from the sea, from the plant people, from Mother's Breath, from other winged creatures—and pretty soon, someone else was scratching at Cedar Tree. It was Bear, who had their own stories of the humans, and who shared more "remember when?" stories. These were stories from a time of chaos, like what was happening now, with no star stories at night.

Eagle, Owl, Cedar Tree, Bear, and Mother's Breath sensed the River and Stone stories also—and the hydromorphology of the rivers and the mountains were shared with them.

Everyone except humans were in these stories. Humans weren't connected to the stars, to Eagle, Owl, plants, Cedar Tree, Mother's Breath, Salmon, rivers, and mountains, even though humans were physically walking around. Humans were starting to become sick—not sick from disease or other physical ailments, but sick in a way of lacking authenticity, of not being able to sense truth, of not noticing that their relationships were failing. I'm not sure exactly how sick they got, but pretty soon they were no longer conducting themselves as tribal or familial creatures—meaning no more singing, gathering, sharing, foraging or harvesting, or honoring their relatives. Owl, Eagle, Bear, plants, Cedar Tree, Stone, and River felt that humans were disconnected or that there was something amiss in those relationships with them.

After a short time, Eagle stopped the stories of chaos about the humans and the stars that were being shared among the relatives. Eagle interrupted all these stories, and stopped the cycle of pain. Eagle said, "Originally, humans



noticed, or sensed, as the stars sensed and noticed. Let's get the people to look up again and notice—just notice.”

Eagle, Owl, and other winged creatures decided to gather and sing as strongly as they could high above the human family just as the night was coming—when typically you might see the first star shine, around that special time of transition, when night and day are one, and all the relatives are ready for change, for the dark to fall, or for the light to go. The winged relatives shared all these stories high above the people, causing some of them to look up. Stars sensed humans looking up at them, and soon, with the help of all the other relatives—with the plant people, Mother's Breath, Cedar Tree (from whom humans gathered for their clothes and tools), river people (stones, freshwater, cleansing areas)—got really busy at that time too, and decided to spread that message to the humans to look up. Salmon also talked to the humans, since they knew humans were hungry and had to eat. “Look up” is the message the humans received from eating Salmon.

Soon, humans and star people began to seek and be curious about noticing and sharing stories, and what we might call a *reconciliation* happened. Humans and stars began sharing stories of light, sharing stories of being in the dark, remembering stories of being able to see in the dark. Finally, all the humans and all the other inhabitants began looking up to the sky at night, while stars gathered into their constellations, groups sharing their stories, sharing their light, showing their direction.

Things have changed quite a bit since then; but what hasn't changed since the stars came back, since Eagle sensed, noticed, then remembered and spread that message, is that humans still look up to the star people even when it's cloudy. People still look up to that light in the dark even when it's raining. People still look up and notice constellations and groups of stars sharing their stories.

That's the end of the story for now. This Creation story goes on and on, and can last for days, as it explains many things, many dynamic relationships, and other interconnected Creation stories.

That darkest of times demonstrates a true collaboration among the star people and the human people, and the winged relatives, Eagle, Salmon, river people, plant people and Mother's Breath, and others. Repairs and reconciliations among different relationships have happened since then, and one thing that's steady and consistent is that people still look up and that the stars are still noticing us, as well.

There are many way to interpret this story—many reflections. That moment when humans started looking up again holds an interpretation: There must have been stiffness, aches in the back of the neck and elsewhere in the body. Human bodies have needs too, supported by how we forage for plant medicines, go fishing or hunting or gathering, connect emotionally and spiritually with plants, rivers, Salmon, with the eagles when we notice them flying above us. The comfort of knowing that the eagles that we notice are the descendants of the eagles that our ancestors noticed as well, the wisdom in sensing and noticing the first stories, and the love in all those relationships among our relatives—and seeking the love and light inside of people, and noticing the cries for help, the cries for connection, the cries for reconciliation.

Another interpretation is how when you're feeding a baby (bottle or breast), oxytocin floods your body, and you feel like you want to go to sleep. Feeding a baby brings feelings

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of calmness and peace inside. The desire to connect, care for, and nurture causes oxytocin to flow. When you're eating and your baby wants you to hold them, it's because the baby knows about the oxytocin effect and how they'll get more nourishment because oxytocin is present. The baby wants to sustain their own life, which means your health matters most. This is reflected in Salmon giving the messages of "look up, look up, look up" and "notice" and "care" as they swim and listen to the river—it's the benefits of looking up, and it's also the benefits of eating this Salmon.

Another reflection from this story (and there are many more) is how, as Indigenous peoples, we are losing so many to suicide, disease, and addiction—and how, recently, the remains of thousands of Native children have been found on the grounds of former boarding schools in Canada. This reflects the story's dark time, when human and star stories were not being shared, there was no connection to Mother Earth's inhabitants or each other (there was only a focus on the self), and there was endemic sickness. The pandemic of self-medicating and young people dying and causing harm to themselves and each other are today's *not-looking-up-anymore*. Whether harm happens on purpose or by accident is irrelevant, because the truth is, they were causing it to happen. Harm is on humans whether they are looking down at their devices or self-medicating or committing suicide—and it comes from not being in good relationship with the plant people or Eagle or prayer or whatever else they are neglecting.

That part of the story carries a lot of pain and reminds me of the possibilities we can begin to seek again. Now is the time for us to share, listen, integrate, reclaim, and reframe our stories. It's time for us to look up together, provide sustainable services to one another. And we can't talk our way to healing—we must sense it and notice it and feel it. Being able to care during this pandemic and civil unrest among all of Mother Earth's inhabitants is an act of radical compassion as well as an example of *somatic spoilage*.¹ Wisdom of the helper is reflected in the story when Eagle shows insight and provides reframing of the stories for the stars and the humans to reclaim their relationship. There is always

someone demonstrating love, care, and authenticity during times of crisis, which interrupts trauma or becomes a catalyst for transformation for humans. When this happens, we are invited to look inside and do the reflection or partner with the relative. This happens in the story many times, when it describes how we can't go into special places of our hearts and minds by ourselves. It took the stars grouping together into constellations for the people to see the stories and directions. And stars had to be telling a story in order to gather into groups in order to become constellations—just as the people down below needed to group together in order to look up in order to share their stories for wellness.

It is the same for humans now: we need a witness, we need a partner—whether it's a colleague, a friend, a sister or brother, an uncle, an auntie, a grandparent, nephew, niece, child, plant. We need somebody in order to go into that story inside of us. We need someone to go into that moment with us in order for us to get there. As humans, we can't go into certain parts of our heart for redemption or into our body for reconciliation, for forgiveness, for grief or sorrow, for love. We just can't go into certain parts on our own: we need another being with us on those travels.

Trauma clusters into constellations in our bodies as the stars cluster in the sky. If we don't deal with it, then heal, then integrate our stories, we cannot "light up" again. When we begin to sense more, notice, and then share more of our human stories—of navigating our healing journeys of emotional, spiritual, physical, and mental abundance-seeking—then we can look outside to our other relatives, to Mother Earth's inhabitants, including plant medicines. Mother's Breath is craving visibility, trust, and vulnerability, but humans can't give what we don't have. All the examples we need of order among chaos exist outside of ourselves, demonstrated by Mother Earth and our other relatives. There is a lot of discipline and a lot of trust and a lot of obedience to our natural protocols reflected there. And as the original sentinels of Mother Earth, Indigenous peoples understand the natural laws best. We have an unmatched, beautiful relationship with ourselves, each other, Mother Earth, and her Breath (plant peoples).

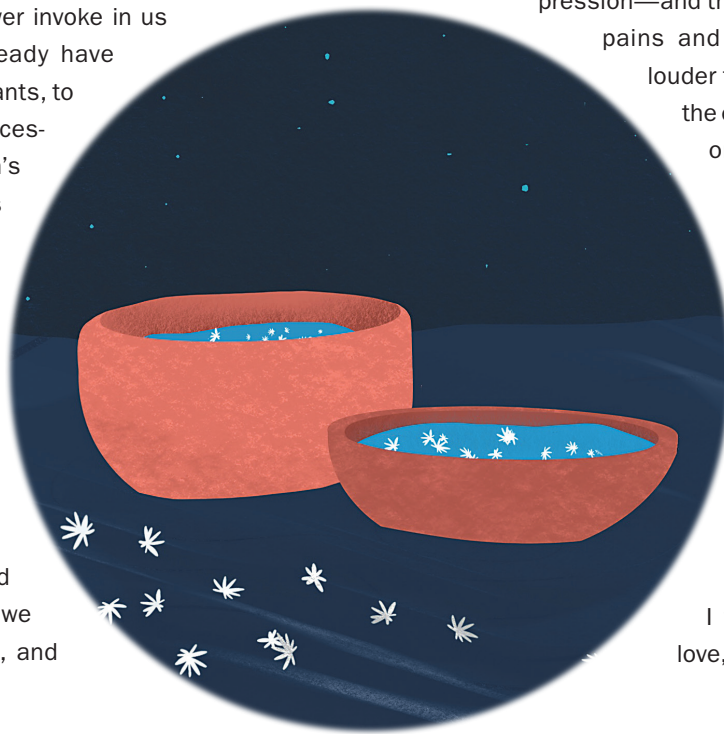
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I invite you to consider parts of this story shared to be true. And I invite you to reconcile with yourself and with Mother Earth as a partner in a relationship again, as it once was. For Mother Earth, and for ourselves, this relationship is about preservation. It's about partnership. It's an invitation, a call to action. It's about reclaiming and reframing our stories.

Emotional and spiritual health directly affect our mental and physical health, so health justice needs to be inclusive of all our parts and our relationships to all of Mother Earth's inhabitants. This includes Mother's Breath. These plant medicines and power invoke in us the connections we already have inside us to other inhabitants, to the star people, to our ancestors and our grandchildren's grandchildren. In Mother's Breath medicine, tucked-away stories of implicit memories from familial territories, including relationships of trauma and truths for love and connection, are revealed. Entheogenic plants crave for us to trust, be vulnerable, and give them visibility, just as we crave healing, belonging, and

the progression of whole-health justice. I've talked a lot about this regarding social justice activism and protest, because as important as it is to not be silenced and to speak out against un-rights, we cannot via protest heal the traumas and existential disconnection without looking at the roots of our pains. Whole healing cannot take place without individual and collective recalibration and recovery from trauma. Our pregnant people have been delivering Indigenous babies while in fear that our babies will be taken from us or not make it past the age of four months. Many things, like this, don't get talked about, which causes suppression—and the more we suppress these pains and traumas and hurts, the louder the silencing becomes and the easier it becomes to silence oneself. Since humans are mostly composed of the element of water—just like Mother Earth—this lack of movement causes dis-ease. In terms of correlation and causation, one's health is dramatically impacted by neglecting the emotional and spiritual self.

I write this from depths of love, trust, and radical humility.



NOTE

1. "Somatic spoilage" is a reframing and recalibrating of "empathy erosion" to articulate that people cannot, in fact, erode their empathy. Rather, they create and further hold *somatic spoilage* in their bodies, which is at the root of racism, sexualizing or objectifying peoples, and so forth.

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