

# South of the Garden

The Newsletter for the Resource Center for Women and Ministry in the South

Volume 42, Number 4

December 2021

## Winter

by Rebecca Welper

With winter coming, I'm wondering once again how to balance holiday traditions with our family's feminist values, especially given how perceptive my five-year-old daughter is. Will we go with extended family to a Christmas Eve service dripping with patriarchal obsession with Mary's virginity? Should we look past that to enjoy the ritual and community? How hard should we try to change holiday practices, and at what psychological and social cost? I know making holiday traditions more inclusive can be scary; traditions are comforting precisely because they don't change. They provide anchoring in a world of bewildering anxiety.

I was recently talking with a friend from high school about the microaggressions she'd experienced as a Jewish student in a predominantly Christian community. She reminded me how much Christian choral music we sang in our public school choir throughout the year, but especially in December. (It was a lot.) One year—in the 1990s, the golden age of multiculturalism—the principal finally made our director include one Hanukkah song in the winter holiday concert. Our director complained openly to us students, and encouraged us to join him in mocking the song during rehearsals. I am ashamed to admit that at the time, I unquestioningly absorbed his resentment.

We see this over and over again, how people in the dominant culture—those with some relative power or privilege in relation to others in that particular context—start to feel as though they are the ones with less power. Fear of losing power can make people do ugly things, indeed.

I think about the recent protests at school board meetings about the ginned-up controversy around critical race theory. I think about people protesting against trans students' rights to use the correct bathroom for their gender and play sports with their peers. More so than the protestors themselves, I blame politicians who are creating wedge issues. The parents protesting, the ones who are buying into racist and sexist propaganda, must be reacting out of fear. Fear of losing their traditions, their meaning, their place in society. When I am in the right psychic place, I can respond to that fear with compassion instead of anger. I believe our job is to make it clear that it's not a zero-sum game. More inclusion for others doesn't mean less belonging for you. How do we communicate that across increasingly large chasms of belief in our society? Let me know if you have ideas!

While we wrestle with these questions, and more, let's explore creativity, health, spirituality, and community together this winter. We hope you'll join us for some virtual and in-person events, including Honoring Your Health in a Busy Season; a Fabric Postcard workshop; a reading of *Flesh and Bones: Learning to Love This Body*, by Liddy Grantland; and Art, Sea, and Sue, and Making Your Art, both led by Sue Sneddon.



*Flesh and Bones* cover illustration by Julia Illana

## Books

by Jeanette Stokes

RCWMS has published two wonderful books this fall. Both books were designed by Bonnie Campbell, proofed by Rebecca Welper and Rachel Sauls, and printed in Raleigh by Barefoot Press on 100% post-consumer paper with soy-based inks.

*Flesh and Bones: Learning to Love This Body* by Liddy Grantland (RCWMS, 2021) \$25, includes shipping.

Liddy Grantland offers an honest and hopeful vision for what the world might look like if we all learned to love our flesh and bones: how our churches, schools, relationships, and politics could be liberated by an intersectional feminist ethic of embodiment. This collection insists that hurt and healing, grief and wholeness, fear and hope have never been mutually exclusive, and that the work of being present to the pain of our bodies and our world will set each one of us free.

Liddy Grantland, grew up in Columbia, SC, graduated from Duke in 2020, and lives in an intentional community in the DC area.

*Letters from Old Screamer Mountain*, by Melanie S. Morrison (RCWMS, 2021) \$25, includes shipping.

In 1939, Melanie Morrison's mother, Eleanor, at age eighteen spent a winter weekend at the home of Lillian Smith on Old Screamer Mountain in North Georgia. Smith was a white Southern author who wrote scathing critiques of white supremacy. That weekend on Old Screamer Mountain was a turning point in Eleanor's young life as she and her college friends stayed up late listening to Lillian read from her manuscripts and talk about the shriveled-up heart of whiteness.

In 2012, Melanie made a pilgrimage to the Lillian Smith Center on Old Screamer Mountain to write about the intergenerational legacies of lynching and how that reign of terror remains largely unacknowledged by the descendants of its white perpetrators.

From the mountain, Melanie wrote letters to her mother describing the avalanche of emotions and epiphanies she was experiencing. She did not send those letters because Eleanor was living with significant dementia, but she intended to read excerpts to Eleanor when she returned home, hoping to retrieve pieces of her mother's history that dementia had erased.

*Letters from Old Screamer Mountain* is an intimate testimony to the power of intergenerational legacies and the urgency to write what must not be forgotten.

Melanie S. Morrison is a racial justice educator, writer, and speaker with thirty years of experience designing and facilitating transformational group process. She is the author of four books, including *Murder on Shades Mountain: The Legal Lynching of Willie Peterson and the Struggle for Justice in Jim Crow Birmingham*. More: [melaniemorrison.net](http://melaniemorrison.net).

# Calendar

\* = RCWMS events. More info: [rcwms.org/events](http://rcwms.org/events).

\*December 5, 2021, Sunday, 2:00–4:00 pm Eastern Time  
FABRIC POSTCARDS: Workshop with Kimberley Cartwright (via Zoom)

Just in time for the holidays! Create a gift for yourself or for others! In this workshop, fiber artist and quilter, Kimberley Pierce Cartwright will teach you to make a one-of-a-kind art piece perfect for mailing, gifting or displaying.

Leader: Kimberley Pierce Cartwright began quilting and painting in 2006 and understands quilt work to represent an abstraction of real life. She says, “I have the power to create art in my life. I do that through my quilting. Sometimes I plan what I will do and sometimes I don’t. The result is always something I love. Everyone has the same power to create art in our own unique way.”  
Cost: \$50. Sliding scale. Contact [info@rcwms.org](mailto:info@rcwms.org).

Register: [www.rcwms.org/events](http://www.rcwms.org/events)

\*December 9, 2021, Thursday, 7:00–8:00 pm Eastern Time  
READING: *Flesh and Bones* by Liddy Grantland (Zoom)

Please join us for a reading with Liddy Grantland from her new book, *Flesh and Bones: Learning to Love This Body*. Grantland lives with a body that hurts all the time. During her final year as an undergraduate, she decided to write about chronic pain for *The Chronicle*. Her words, collected in this volume, tell an intimate and particular story of what one woman’s body is teaching her about love, loss, and justice. Grantland offers an honest and hopeful vision for what the world might look like if we all learned to love our flesh and bones: how our churches, schools, relationships, and politics could be liberated by an intersectional feminist ethic of embodiment.

Author: Liddy Grantland, grew up in Columbia, SC, graduated from Duke in 2020, and lives in an intentional community in the DC area.

Purchase the book: [rcwms.org/publications](http://rcwms.org/publications)

Cost: Free. Registration is required.

Register: [www.rcwms.org/events](http://www.rcwms.org/events)

\*December 12, 2021, Sunday, 2:00–4:00 pm Eastern Time  
HONORING YOUR HEALTH IN A BUSY SEASON:  
Workshop with Solita Denard (via Zoom)

Does the upcoming season seem overwhelming? As we attempt to care for ourselves and our health, we may face more challenges than usual with mindfulness, food, quiet time, or physical activity. Come learn how to invite support from others, honor our own experience, and begin to integrate and sustain positive health practices even during a holiday season.

Leader: Solita A. Denard, MSW, IHC, partners with clients as they create and activate a vision for better personal health.

Cost: \$25

Register: [www.rcwms.org/events](http://www.rcwms.org/events)

\*December 15, 2021, Wednesday, 7–8:30 pm Eastern Time  
THE MINISTRY OF BLACK WOMEN’S SELF-CARE:  
A Series with Kim Gaubault (via Zoom)

Self-care is too often an intervention after a crisis rather than a preventative measure. Allowing our bodies, minds, and spirits to break down in the course of doing our work puts ourselves at risk and risks the integrity of our work. This series will offer practical tools for everyday self-care to Black women-identified people in all forms of ministry, in church and community.

Leader: Kimberly Gaubault (McCrae)

Cost: \$10-40

Register: [www.rcwms.org/events](http://www.rcwms.org/events)

\*January 9, 2022, Sunday, 2:00–4:00 pm Eastern Time  
ENNEAGRAM WORKSHOP with Chelsea Yarborough  
This workshop will focus on how we can use the Enneagram as a tool for spiritual growth and continued connection with those around us.

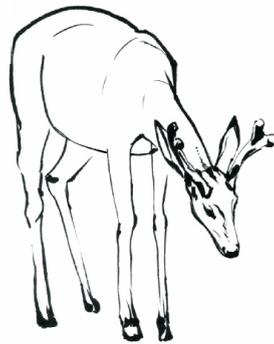


Illustration by Julia Illana

Leader: Chelsea Yarborough, MDiv, PhD, is an Assistant Professor of Liturgical Studies at Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary, an ordained minister, a poet, and an Enneagram enthusiast.

Cost: \$25 (\$15 for students)

Register: [www.rcwms.org/events](http://www.rcwms.org/events)

\*January 13–March 3, 2022, Eight Thursdays, 12:00–1:15 pm Eastern Time

MORE PROMPT BY PROMPT: Writing with Carol Henderson (via Zoom)

In this 8-week generative writing workshop, we will write in response to carefully selected prompts—two, maybe three, each week. (Prompts from the fall 2021 workshop will not be repeated.) As with all the prompts Carol offers, you can run with them literally or go wherever your thoughts and feelings take you. We will have time for a few readings during each session. Come prepared to write a lot, to go deep, and to be surprised. Open to writers of all levels and genres.

Leader: Carol Henderson, writer and workshop leader  
Cost: \$160

Register: [www.rcwms.org/events](http://www.rcwms.org/events)

\*January 23, 2022, Sunday, 1:00–4:00 pm Eastern Time

FLASH OF SLIVER: Writing with Laurel Ferejohn  
Flash: it’s crystalline and compelling. Many literary journals look for it, many writers want to know what it is and how to write it. In this three-hour online workshop for beginning to seasoned writers of memoir or fiction, you’ll learn about the form that stands proud in its brevity and that can boost all your other writing. Enjoy creating to prompts, with readings and discussion. And enjoy a virtual gathering in celebration of our diverse experience of creativity and resilience. Ahead of class, the instructor will email examples of flash memoir (including one in-the-making!) and a list of thirty or more flash-friendly journals to read and to submit to.

Leader: Laurel Ferejohn is a writer and independent editor with publications of flash fiction, flash memoir, a Thomas Wolfe Fiction Prize-winning short story, essays, and poetry. She’s a believer in the power of writers coming together.

\*February 4–6, 2022, Friday–Sunday

ART, SEA, & SUE: A Weekend of Art with Sue Sneddon  
Maybe you haven’t done any art since grade school. Maybe you’re accomplished in one medium, but would like to learn another. Maybe you’ve started a painting but don’t know how to finish it. Maybe you’ve said to yourself—why is this brush shaped like this? Maybe you just want to hang out with other people doing art. Sue can demonstrate techniques in a variety of media. Each of the eight media will have its own station for you to play around with.

Leader: Sue Sneddon has been a full-time painter since 1984. Much of her work has concentrated on the ocean, especially the NC coast, where she now lives.

Cost: Workshop \$375. Housing in a beautiful beach house is optional for \$125 (double) or \$225 (single).

Register: [www.rcwms.org/events](http://www.rcwms.org/events)

\*February 10–13, 2022, Thursday–Sunday

MAKING YOUR ART: An Advanced Workshop with Sue Sneddon

Boat House, Emerald Isle, NC

A retreat for women who have already taken Sue’s “Finding Your Medium” or “Art, Sea, and Sue” workshop. In a lovely cottage on Emerald Isle, NC.

Cost: Workshop \$400. Housing in a beautiful beach house is optional for \$125 (double) or \$225 (single).

To register, contact Jeanette at [info@rcwms.org](mailto:info@rcwms.org).

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# Identity

*"Searching for Identity: Finding Words" by F.I. Goldhaber won third place in the 2021 RCWMS Essay Contest.*

The right wing blames leftist indoctrination for an apparent exponential increase in the number of people who identify as transgender in recent years. The left prefers to attribute acceptance and reduced stigma.

While the latter offers some truth, additional factors influence how people identify along the gender spectrum, including words.

Words have always been my stock in trade. But, I never found any for my own identity until very recently. I doubt if I'm unique in that for those my age (and even younger).

I was never interested exclusively in girl things or boy things. I didn't enjoy watching team sports or excel in any solo athletic endeavors that appealed to me. So, I read a lot, wrote fiction and poetry, and put in many, many hours in the high school theater program. Those activities offer the opportunity to live inside other worlds/times and the heads of different people.

The summer before my freshman year of high school I'd moved with my family from Virginia to Texas, the sixth and final move I'd make with my parents. Although moving every few years I became somewhat of a chameleon, I never really fit in anywhere, especially in the Deep South. I attended high school in what was then a small Texas town where principals patrolled the hallways with rulers to enforce gender conformity by measuring the length of girls' skirts and boys' hair.

By the time I made it to college, I was so sick of what passed for education in the United States I only wanted out of the system. I took a ridiculous course load that allowed no time for extra-curricular activities and escaped with a sheepskin after less than three years. If there were resources then on the University of Washington campus for people who were not cis and/or didn't fit within the gender binary, I never knew about them.

I started my writing career as a reporter in eastern Washington and I used initials in my byline to avoid gender bias. When I moved to a newspaper in West Virginia, a woman calling about a piece I'd written, exclaimed that I wrote like a man, intending that as a compliment. At my last newspaper reporting/editing gig in Indiana, I got calls for Mr. Goldhaber and mail addressed to Frank or Fred. Since I wouldn't tell anyone what the F. stood for (I'd used my middle name since college) folks in the newsroom just started calling me F.I.

In Illinois, where I first went into business for myself, the initials became a good way of separating personal from professional identities. They also proved a useful tool for dodging sales calls. The staff knew that anyone asking for Mr. Goldhaber didn't get put through. I once got a taste of what the team put up with when I was the only person in the office during a lunch hour. The caller for "Mr. Goldhaber" insisted he knew me personally and would get me fired for not putting him through. I had to mute my end so he didn't hear me laughing.

When I moved to Oregon a quarter century ago, I discovered I'd landed in the first state that would allow me to put just my initials on my driver's license. That and my Social Security card allowed me to get a passport



Drawing by Sue Sneddon

with those initials. (At the time, the U.S. government did not issue passports with any initials at all—full names or nothing.) I stopped telling people what the letters stood for.

My first exposure to the concept of transgender identity was discovering Christine Jorgensen's biography in one of my parents' large, crowded bookshelves. But, her story never resonated. I wasn't AMAB and I'd no desire to embrace femininity. I never felt a need to transition. I just had no definition for myself.

Once I stopped working for other people at the beginning of this century, I ceased wearing skirts and dresses most of the time. I donated the bulk of my working wardrobe to Dress for Success in the early aughts and only donned skirted apparel for weddings, funerals, and author reading/appearances.

With clothing manufacturers moving production offshore, I avoided giving them money by buying exclusively at thrift stores. I shopped for convenience (pockets!), comfort, and durability. Clothing made for male bodies ranked better in all three. Soon the only clothing I owned that was specifically female were items needed to support my tits. In 2019, for the very first time, I attended a formal wedding wearing slacks which I topped with a silky shirt and a brocade vest, all purchased in the men's section of the thrift store. It was liberating.

But, my body shape and voice—which fluctuates with weather, pollen count, and mood—register as female. So, most people read me as female. I did not believe I "qualified" as transgender.

I have friends who have medically transitioned from FtM and MtF. While I understand, applaud, and support their decisions, I've no desire to modify my body or even to take hormones.

But, having adopted they/them pronouns, as awareness has grown and corporations recognize the need, when people assume I'm female I use that as an opportunity to educate them on why they shouldn't do so. As I explained to one customer phone service representative, you could have just ruined somebody's day by misgendering them the way you misgendered me.

Recently, several external influences helped me finally, in my early sixties, choose words to describe my identity.

In 2017, the state of Oregon became the first in the U.S. to offer a third-gender option on identity documents. I changed my driver's license gender to X the next time it came up for renewal, two years later.

Meanwhile over the past two years, the number of trans and non-binary individuals in my social media feeds grew because of their strong presence in racial justice protests. Many of them are very young and secure in their identities and for the first time I saw various memes that say "Non-binary people do not owe you androgyny." I wouldn't call that life changing, but it did give me words to embrace who I am, how my brain works, and how I maneuver through society, separately from how my body looks and my voice sounds.

So finally now, after more than six decades on the planet, I have words for my identity: gender non-conforming

(Continued on back.)

# Calendar..

2022 dates now available.

**FINDING FREEDOM: White Women\* Taking on Our Own White Supremacy** (via Zoom)

This 5-part online workshop aims to deepen our individual and collective understanding of how we as white women are complicit with white supremacy. The workshop supports participants to live more deeply and consistently into our racial justice commitments and move ourselves and people in our networks to join the fight for racial, economic, and gender justice right now.

\*All women, gender-nonconforming, trans, mixed-race and white-passing people of color welcome.

Cost: \$50-\$300

Register: [wearefindingfreedom.org](http://wearefindingfreedom.org)

\*2nd Tuesday, monthly, 11:30 am-1:30 pm Eastern Time (via Zoom)

**ART OF CONSCIOUS AGING: A Group for Women** (January 11 is the next gathering for this group.)

Info: [www.rcwms.org/events](http://www.rcwms.org/events)

Tuesdays, weekly, 11:15 am-12:30 pm Eastern Time  
**TUESDAYS WITH TILLIS**, Indivisible Weekly Rally  
Nonviolent community of resistance meets via Zoom.  
Registration: Email name to [jmwheele52@gmail.com](mailto:jmwheele52@gmail.com).

Tuesdays, weekly, 7:00-8:00 pm Eastern Time  
**MUSIC: takeOut jazz with mahaloJazz!**  
Join Alison Weiner for jazz every Tuesday evening.  
Attend: [www.facebook.com/mahaloArts/videos](http://www.facebook.com/mahaloArts/videos)

3rd Thursday, monthly, 7:00 pm Eastern Time  
**TARA PRACTICE** with Rachael Wooten (via Zoom)  
Leader: Rachael Wooten, PhD, Jungian analyst, writer, Tibetan Buddhist dharma teacher, and author of *Tara: The Liberating Power of the Female Buddha*.  
More on Rachael: [rachaelwootenauthor.com](http://rachaelwootenauthor.com)  
Cost: Free. Info: [www.bhumisparsha.org/events/](http://www.bhumisparsha.org/events/)

Ongoing, day or overnight options  
**SOLO WANDERINGS!** Creative Retreats  
The Stable, private retreat in Durham, NC  
Self-guided offerings for one to four people.  
Leader: Claudia Fulshaw, artist & creative retreat leader.  
Cost: \$100 solo/\$65 additional person, plus overnight  
Contact: [artwanders.com](http://artwanders.com), [claudia@artwanders.com](mailto:claudia@artwanders.com)

\*RCWMS Weeks of QUIET & WRITING  
Leader: Jeanette Stokes, except May 8-15 will be led by Carol Henderson.  
For information, contact Jeanette at [info@rcwms.org](mailto:info@rcwms.org).  
January 2-9, 2022 (Sunday-Sunday)  
May 1-8, 2022 (Sunday-Sunday)  
May 8-15, 2022 (Sunday-Sunday)  
September 18-25, 2022 (Sunday-Sunday)



Illustration by Julia Illana

# Identity

and xgender. There is a peace in finding that piece of myself I didn't really know was missing.

Of course, children born in this century arrived in the world with terms such as genderqueer, gender fluid, non-binary, etc. already available to them. As they establish their individuality, and discover their own identity / personhood, they have words to describe how they fit along the gender spectrum. So too do young adults who grew up in repressive environments and who, even if they are not allowed to express their identity at home, have those words available for them to use once they move out on their own.

Those words convince the right wing that they've been indoctrinated. But, in reality, they are words that allow them to embrace their own identities with pride.

*F.I. Goldhaber's words capture people, places, and politics with a photographer's eye and a poet's soul. As a reporter, editor, business writer, and marketing communications consultant, they produced news stories, feature articles, editorial columns, and reviews for newspapers, corporations, governments, and non-profits in five states. Now paper, electronic, and audio magazines, books, newspapers, calendars, broadsides, and street signs display their poetry, fiction, and essays.*  
<http://www.goldhaber.net/>



RCWMS is a forty-four-year-old nonprofit dedicated to weaving feminism and spirituality into a vision of justice for the world. RCWMS sponsors workshops, conferences, and retreats on women, religion, creativity, spirituality, and social justice. The organization mentors and encourages young women, religious leaders, writers, and activists.

RCWMS appreciates contributions of time, energy, money, and stock. To contribute, contact RCWMS or visit [www.rcwms.org](http://www.rcwms.org). We are especially grateful for support from E. Rhodes & Leona B. Carpenter Foundation, Mike McLeod, Emerald Isle Realty, Inavale Foundation, and the Triangle Community Foundation.

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ISSN 0890-7676  
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