

The Henceforward Episode 26 Meditating on the Elsewhere

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Eve: Aang aang. This is Eve Tuck, and this is The Henceforward, a podcast about connections between Indigenous and Black life on Turtle Island. Here we come to the table to discuss settler colonialism and anti-Blackness but more, to imagine shared futures and the practices of theory and care that it will take to get there, to get elsewhere.

Sefanit: Welcome back to The Henceforward. My name is Sefanit, and I'm speaking with you today from Toronto, on land that is part of the Dish with One Spoon Agreement. This is an agreement originally created between the Anishinaabe and the Haudenosaunee peoples who have cared for and protected this land since forever.

In November of 2017, Black and Indigenous artists, activists, scholars and community members met together at the University of Toronto to imagine what it might look like to get elsewhere. In the spirit of The Henceforward, the elsewhere was imagined as both something that is lived and created every day, but also realms of unknown possibilities.

Members decided to create guided meditations to help us think through what the elsewhere could look like. In this episode, we feature three of those guided meditations. One takes us on a walk through 125th Street in Harlem. Another one invites us to imagine a place that we yearn for. We invite you to listen closely, perhaps close your eyes and travel with us into elsewhere.

[Gentle Transition Sound]

Marie: What do you yearn for? Imagine it in your mind. Imagine that you're there.

Karyn: Pay attention to the temperature of your body. If there's light coming through, where is that light coming from? What's the texture of the ground beneath your feet? Or if there's no ground beneath your feet, what are the textures of the air, space, water around you?

Marie: In this world, the world that you yearn for, what does the air taste like? Take a deep breath and exhale.

Eve: Let yourself be curious about this place that you're in. Let yourself ask some questions about it. Who else is here with you? Who is so happy that you're here? Who will you bring with you next time?

Go a little bit further into the space, into this place that you've been yearning for. Go further until you come to the edge of a body of water. That body of water could be a big body of water, one that spans farther than you can see. Maybe it's a moving body of water, something that's flowing past you. Or even as you begin to go into that body of water, maybe your body of water is floating alongside that body of water.

Notice that there's not a difference of temperature between your body and this body, that the air and the water and you are all the same temperature. The way that you know that you are in the water is because you've been able to let go of some of that weight, some of that gravity, and now you are surrounded by a velvety kind of lifting.

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Zoe: You're no longer grounded, but you're no longer afraid of your feet not touching the ground. You see parts of yourself, your present self, your past selves, your future selves, your kin and your ancestors. There are many ways of being and becoming an ancestor. You can be an ancestor while you are able to continue to have possession of your corporeal form. There are many ways of developing kinship. Your future kin and your past kin are all inside of you. They're all within this body of water.

Karyn: In this space, star and water are the same. You let yourself seep into this water and aren't afraid of seepage. You think to yourself, what are the shapes and contours of love? You look around and those you have brought with you, your future ancestors. What are the shapes of love? What are the colors of love in this space? How is love experienced here? What are the gestural forms of lovemaking in this space? How does one star love another in this space?

[Gentle Transition Sound]

Mistinguette: Feel the tongue in your mouth at ease, bathe in the sudden rain, let it know you. Speak into the world what it means to be well, what you want to be well. Listen to the stone reply. Notice in which hand you carry an instrument of justice, a staff, a drum, your grandmama's church fan.

Down the hill, and the land is flat for a long time before it crops off really sharply. Walk over the broken-paved edge, and we climb over the big red stones to get to the water.

Sandi: I stop to ask the stones for their consent. Is it okay if I climb over you today? Is it okay if I use you to touch the ever-clear water on the other side? Is it okay if I climb down your back in order to feel that cleanliness on my hands and on my face? I want to know that you're in agreement with this as I climb over you. I definitely know that your consent means the world to me.

Susan: It's my first time on 125th Street, and I've arrived as an uninvited guest. There's a high-rise with people who have chosen to live there, and they all have a say in what happens in their territory. So I go to them, and I've asked their permission to be on the land, and they've allowed it as long as I'm in right relationship with the land that 125th Street is on.

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I've come to the rocks. These rocks have a story. These rocks and the people and the land have made peace with each other. The water holds shellfish with food for people to eat, and no one is going hungry because no one is hoarding, and everybody is sharing.

Chelsea: Take a pinch of tobacco and lay it in the water. I'm asking permission from the water to access the shellfish. I'm an outsider to the treaty between these people and the shellfish, but I've been given permission on one end of that treaty, to gather just enough for a meal for myself. I still have to negotiate my own terms with the water, and the water can show me displeasure by sweeping me away if it wants, or it can guide me peacefully into it.

Shay-Akil: I consider the ways in which some of our ancestors have mistakenly not honored the water and not ask permission. I think about the ways in which I'm engaging with a relationship and a connection, rather than an ownership, and consider what ways I can continue to honor the water and ways in which I will carry it with me through the consumption of the shellfish and its sharing with me so that I can make it to the next day with my one meal.

Andrea: I take a sip of the water, and I know that I'm home, that this water is my connection to my neighbors in the high-rise beside me and the rocks and all of the life that surrounds me.

Mistinguette: My grandmother's grandmother remembers when we thought we could not walk across this land or stand on these rocks, and I am grateful for her work to let me stand here today.

[Gentle Transition Sound]

Stephanie: Wholeness is a future without fracture. It is a future without rupture. It is a rupture. Breathe into this space. Improvise, dream and build here.

Fikile: Land has a memory. It remembers us. We may have forgotten, but we have learned to remember in the elsewhere. Land doesn't forget us because our people are there, and they'll never leave us. Land doesn't forget us.

Danielle: Breathe in and think of how it sounds like to learn a new language of decolonization while unlearning gendering and racializing. Breathe out and feel oppression, marginalization and patriarchy leaving our body. Breathe deeply and feel the future.

Eve: The Henceforward, Indigenous and Black life on Turtle Island.

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