

Finding Our Way Podcast

hosted by

**Prentis Hemphill with
guest Rowen white**

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Prentis: [inaudible] What's in a seed is as much memory as it is possibility. As much record as it is unknown. What we plant the seeds, we tend set the promise of what's to come. What's the relationship between our stories of place, of home, and our grief? It seems that we can't find our way back into relationship, each of us without facing what's been lost. This episode, we talked to Rowen White. We discussed the tiniest of time capsules, the seed. And the grief that we must feel to reconnect to their meaning. She leads us through an exploration of how living in place calls on us to acknowledge the vast tapestry of relationships that we've always been a part of. These relationships in fact, birth us and mature us. To honor them is to be watered, to be grown, to be remembered. Rowen White is a seed keeper from the Mohawk community of Akwesasne and a passionate activist for indigenous seed and food sovereignty. She's the educational director and the lead mentor of Sierra Seeds. And as a farmer leader, writer, and storyteller, Rowen is deeply committed to a lifelong practice of embodied prayer. We hope you enjoy the episode.

Prentis: I feel so excited that you're here today with us on Finding Our Way. You are someone that I have, um, just been paying attention to learning from following probably in the last eight months or so. And I've been really struck by your work, what I think it has to teach us about where we might be headed, and what kind of practice we need to be in to get there. So first,

I just want to say thank you so much for being on the podcast or saying yes to the requests are really happy to have you.

Rowen : No, I feel so honored Prentice. Um, you know, I've been listening in on the first session and just the depth of the conversations and, um, the medicine that you bring to us with your grounded presence is a real gift.

Prentis: Thank you so much. I really appreciate that. I, I have so many things that I want to ask you, but we will start at the first question, which is if you were to look around right now and describe this moment, both where we currently are, the factors at play, the things that we might not want to nurture in this moment and the things that we might want to build up, grow, nurture. Um, what do you see from where you are?

Rowen : You know, as a, as an indigenous woman in this, in these times that we're living in, um, I see a lot of cultural insanity, you know, all around us and, um, and the accumulation of that, um, you know. This insanity is really born from, um, an accumulation of people not being able to grieve their sense of disconnection from place, and from, you know, their ancestry. And how I like to speak about it is in this concept of a diaspora of disconnection, I don't think there's a single one of us here who is untouched by the grief of that disconnection of living in diaspora. I think we don't, I don't think we name it enough. I don't think we reckon with the fact that, you know, even the irony of me being a Mohawk woman, you know, on the continent of my ancestors, living in diaspora. Um, you know, even though I'm actually living in place, but that, you know, diaspora can mean a lot of different things.

Rowen : And when I speak about this diaspora of disconnection, I think, um, you know, many of us, no matter what our ancestry is, um, by, um, violence or trauma or any number of circumstances have found ourselves very distanced, and apart from, um, the lifeways of our ancestors. And there's a lot of accumulation of grief that comes with, um, being disconnected. And I think that we don't have a cultural container, given the, you know, the times that we're in the confluence that we're at, I think we're all moving towards it. I think we're trying in our community organizing, *mmhmm* but I think we're, um, trying to find the right cultural container that can hold us so that we can do the grief work. You know, I often talk about the, the need to compost past failures in order to get to this place where we can really reckon with the cultural insanity of this current time that we're in. So that way we can really, I guess, settle in and, and ground into, I think the work of our times, which is to create a culture of belonging that, um, values diversity, that values, um, our innate and beautiful differences. Um, but at the same time, giving us a real clear, deep taproot of understanding of who

we are in the cosmology of, of, of, you know, of, of this planet and the relationships and the matrix of relationships that we're all held by. We oftentimes haven't been initiated into a deeper understanding of the significance of the relationships that we're all held by in this time. And that creates a certain amount of cultural insanity, which, you know, transmutes and transforms into the, the violence and the chaos that we're seeing in community at this time across the globe.

Prentis: You know, this, this is a moment where some could say there's an incredible amount of connection. You and I are talking from across a couple thousand miles at this point, uh, and we're always kind of tied in, or looped into technology and communicating across that. And I hear you saying that we are reeling, or that we are in this, these diasporas of disconnection that there's, there's something that's happening to us on another level where there's a deeper disconnection. So I'm wondering if you can talk to, just from your perspective, the contradiction, maybe between how connected or tied in we seem to be, and this experience of collective disconnection that you're talking about.

Rowen : Absolutely. You know, I think I can speak to it from my own embodied experience, but I imagine that through, you know, my own words that other people might see themselves in that, which is that being born into this body as a Mohawk woman in this time; I've known what that means on the surface and sort of peripherally, you know, um, I've been informed that I'm, you know, the color of my skin and, and sort of like this external identity. And that makes me have an affinity to, um, community members and other folks that are like me, or, you know, um, but I think in some ways, what does it mean to belong? What does it mean to have a sense of place and purpose? I think in this time of, um, community organizing and connection, it's like we can sometimes have a very cerebral understanding of who we are, like, you know, where our identities or the things that we write in our bio or the things that we, you know, sort of connect on common ground with people in our community.

Rowen : Um, but I think what I'm inviting or what I'm reckoning with myself, is what does it mean to feel truly at ease with who I am and in my in place and feel deeply, deeply connected? Not only to my other human relatives, like the people who I'm in community with, but to feel like I have a connection to my ancestors and the way that what they went through informs and animates me the way in which there is a multitude of relatives seen and unseen plant human mineral, um, spiritual, um, that are around me at all times that I'm in a really reciprocal relationship with that. I don't necessarily, even as an indigenous woman, who's fairly closely knit into my

community of origin, that I still am trying to understand that cosmology and enlive it and have it be something living and dynamic, as opposed to just static and, um, and removed.

Rowen : And I think many of us, I would imagine that many of us have a sense of, you know, kind of who we are at the surface, but who are we in connection to the multitude of beings that allow us to be alive in this moment and that deep storied web of understanding of who we are. I think that's what I'm speaking to when I say that grief of disconnection, because that's what culture does, is it, it weaves this tapestry of understanding and connection and relationship that we can then sort of stitch or knit ourselves into. And I think many of us may be only have tattered shreds of that and there's large lacunas, or gaps, or voids of, of information of cultural information. And that can make us feel very disoriented and can make us feel, I think, a grief that a lot of us don't name, actually, *aha* I think it's something that kind of rides under the surface, um, and compels us to go a mile a minute, or to be on social media a lot, or to have these kind of surface level connections. And I think where I am imagining and what I pray is happening from the fruits of our work and community organizing is that we're, we're doing the culture work and we're deepening into people creating a greater sense of, of that deeper connection and relationship. Um, and I guess generating or cultivating a cultural container that's never been seen before that that emerges from all those diasporas and disconnection into, you know, something that can feed and nourish and give life again, because I feel like we've gotten to a place of disconnect of that kind of deep disconnection, where we've have a dominant culture that only knows how to take life, and only knows how to sort of be extractive, and exploitative. And,*mmhmm* but I think we can turn that around if we're willing to do the deep spiritual, cultural work to create a cultural container that can actually give life and can make us be those, you know, can grow us into those humans that are worth descending from that are good ancestors that are responsible descendants. Yeah.

Prentis: Yeah. That's beautiful. It's beautiful. When you were sharing about kind of knowing who we are and where we come from. Uh, I was thinking a lot this week about purpose and how one of the gifts of purpose individual or collective purpose is that it helps us set the, the, the standards of satisfaction for our own lives. And when we don't have a purpose, or we're not clear on what our purpose is, or maybe we're not listening to our purpose, that it's so easy to be influenced by other people's standards for life, what life is about, what life should do it should take, it should be seen in these particular ways. But when you're, when you're grounded in your

purpose, you're like, oh, these are the things that satisfy me. My, my work with seeds or my work, you know, um, healing or whatever the work is. We, we, we start to have standards for our own lives that are not externally dictated to us. So just thinking about how powerful that is *absolutely* when we're able to recover that.

Rowen : Yeah, we reclaiming that because, you know, we have a, a larger voice that's telling us what it means to succeed or what it means to have a good life, you know, and when we can reclaim our agency and defining what it, what it means *exactly* to be to succeed, like for me, that's very different. And I've had to reckon with that and decolonize or reindigenize my understanding of what a good life means, as opposed to what the capitalist voice tells me a good life is.

Prentis: That's right. That's right. That's right. There's another, uh, thread that I want to pick up here that you offered. I'm curious your thoughts on how feeling this grief that you're mentioning. Can you make the connection more for me of how grief relates to belonging, how it helps us get there that just felt really stirred by that offering?

Prentis: Yeah, I guess I'll find my way into that through a story. So I come from a long line of people who were farmers who connected to the land and that connection was severed for a number of reasons, but most in most recent living memory was that my grandparents and my great-grandparents were taken away, um, to, to Indian boarding schools and were, had their language, and their culture, like literally sort of beaten out of them. My grandmother was the last in our bloodlines to speak our Mohawk language as a first language. Um, and that was taken from her. And, and, and at that moment in our bloodlines, that was sort of the traumatic event that disconnected us from planting and growing. Um, but as a young girl, I always had an affinity - everybody used to always say, um, that I had an affinity, I would, they would find me in, um, they would find me in the pantry, like getting into my mom's cornmeal and putting it all over my body, *laughing* or, you know, getting out into the ground and bringing in bugs and all these things. And they were always staying like, oh, that's your Grandma Rina or your great, great grandma, you know, um, Annie, you know, coming through. And, um, and I found myself at 17, um, on an organic farm, just really curious about, you know, food and, and you know, how we nourish ourselves and wanting to learn how food is grown. And I remember having a very visceral moment of unearthing this grief that you're asking about, which is that I was sitting on this dusty farmhouse floor, um, in this new England farmhouse in Massachusetts on this farm. And my mentor had given me this box of seeds and they were all tomato

seeds of all different colors and shapes. And it was like, I was, you know, it was pleasure and joy and sensations of like complete, um, I don't know, just kind of inebriated by like the diversity that was in this box of something I'd never known about. Um, and learning that each of these seeds had a lineage and connection to people and a connection to place. And, you know, just, I have a very curious mind. And so that was like, this is doorway and that, but then I began to think, I remember it's so visceral. I was sitting on that, that farmhouse floor. And I remember thinking, well, these people had seeds from their grandma that they carried across, you know, sewed into their vest coat pocket and came through Ellis island. And, you know, and because they wanted a flavor of home, right. Because they wanted the taste of, of the grandma's kitchen, or even though they were far away from home, that that little bundle of seeds would always be an umbilicus or always be a connection to home. *mmhmm* And I remember, I think equal to my, my joy and my excitement of discovering this connection between seeds and people are rediscovering. It, I guess, is that there was this undeniable feeling of grief, longing and sadness that I, as a Mohawk woman had no idea what were the seeds and foods that fed my ancestors, that I had no recollection *yeah* that that was a cultural inheritance that was not handed down to me. That that had been severed, um, somewhere along the line. And that actually lit a fire inside of me actually. And that, that grief actually ended up, you know, grief takes lots of forms, right? Grief takes anger and rage or you know, sadness, or, um, sometimes complacency. *yeah yeah* Like there's a lot of ways in which grief, um, emerges. But, you know, when I first kind of was allowing myself to feel that the bitterness of that grief in that moment, um, I was able to, you know, as, you know, as young people, as, as resilient humans, do we think, well, what am I going to do with this?

Rowen : Like, I, I'm sitting here with this understanding that there was something that should have been given to me, that was my birthright, that I don't have any more right than this connection to land, this connection to seed and food. And so I made a promise to myself at that moment, and I said, I'm going to find out like, what, who are the foods that fed my ancestors and I, and there was an anger, there was a rage, there was a fire that was lit in me at that point that said that they tried to take that from us, but I'm on this threshold of memory as, as a young woman and I'm not going to let them take that from me. And so that was 20, almost 25 years ago. And here I am still asking myself that same question and still in that same, um, arc of inquiry, um, and following those, those breadcrumbs, you know, home, so to speak.

New Speaker: And so I, you know, I, and, and so I, I say that story because I feel like if I hadn't felt that grief and longing, I don't think I would have the energy or the impetus or the catalyst to be able to go deep into my work that, that it's evolving into today, that it was that, that grief and that longing, um, that kind of woke me up and said, that's, that's something that I long and care for, and it was actually uncovering. And I guess maybe other folks can, or maybe you can, um, relate, which is that it uncovered a hole or a, a longing inside myself that I didn't even know I missed it. You know, like it was, it was naming something that I was missing that I didn't know I was missing. I didn't know that that was even something that was possible to miss, but once I saw it, and then I said, 'oh, I have a wound there. I have, I have a wound there.' And probably that wound was one of that my mother carried and that my grandmother carried and that her mother carried. And so what is it that I can do in this time to begin to soften that scar tissue begin to soften that wound; and, and reweave my myself back into that, that web of relationships? And that's where I feel like many of us, um, when you, you know, stitching together, the grief and disconnection is that, you know, many of us who live in this diaspora of, of deep disconnection, don't even can't even name or don't even know all of the things that were once our birthright, or were once, you know, sort of our cultural container that we're missing. And it's actually subconsciously creating like the chaos and pandemonium of these times. *mmhmm* And so what if we have the courage to slowly through these little doorways, like maybe not, everybody's going to find their way home through food and seed, but maybe some of us will, and maybe that, that will begin to soften that not of that grief and that disconnection.

Prentis: Yep. Hmm. That's so powerful for me. To share that piece about being on the threshold of memory and that kind of agency and power and that declaration, that I'm on the threshold of memory, so I choose now to remember *mmhmm* just really, really struck me so deeply. And I often think about how the culture, that we're kind of, I don't know how to talk about our relationship to it is it feels like it's on top of us sometimes, and it feels like it, it does not want to remember. It does not want to look back. It does not want to do this grief work that you're talking about. It's a culture of denying impact, denying history, denying relationship, even. So what you're saying about how grief, when you dropped into your grief, you also, this is my interpretation. You recovered some of the power that you had by feeling into that, *yeah* because it's just really incredible. It feels like such a, an important learning, given how we can experience the, the dominant culture, the culture that is imposed on us, it, it just feels a powerful alternative. If we could feel our grief. What might we recover?

Rowen : Absolutely.

Prentis: I want to ask you specifically about seeds here. Um, and I think I want to enter into it. I've read you talk about the kind of, um, intimate immensities of seeds and, and what they contain. And I, I wonder if you can talk to me about your seed work and talk to me about that framework of intimate immensities cause it, it is really striking to me that offering.

Rowen : Yeah, absolutely. I think, um, seeds carry so much, right? Like I'm, my world is very seed centric. Like I, you know, I'm just so enamored and passionate about, um, what a seed can carry, you know, a seed is, um, it, it, it holds this, um, memory across the ages, and is like an unwritten record *mm* of this co-evolutionary relationship between plants, and humans, and the elements and the land, all in this teeny little, you know, this compact little bundle, you know, this cosmic little bundle, um, and, you know, on, on so many levels, I mean, people can understand the depth of the metaphor of seed, but for those of us who have been blessed and honored to be seed keepers and to carry seed, and to relate to seed, and to witness them, um, you know, coming completely undone and, um, you know, transforming into these, like, you know, a handful of squash seeds will transform into this ruckus field of vines and pollinators and, you know, all the things. I mean, that's like my church, right? Like that's my temple. *yeah* Like, that's the place where I just can fall in love with the earth all over again. You know, I, I, I'm in a practice. I, I name it often in my work, um, that I call reverent curiosity, um, which is really, um, it's practicing fascination. It's a deep spiritual practice of, of, of not taking for granted the, you know, that a tiny seed can then become a whole field and then, and then be distilled back down to, into these tiny seeds and, and the miracle of that. And, and so that's, I think what I'm naming when I, when I claim that they're intimate, immensities because they can, they hold so much. I think we don't have enough reverence in, in our current sort of like, you know, pop for, um, that, which animates us.

Rowen : Like, if you think about this, I just want to lean in for a second and get us to think about like that, which the energy that, um, that is inside of a seed that can crack it's seed coat, and roots can go down and these leaves can go up, is the same energy that swells, um, the lilac buds in the spring, and as the same essence, that then turns that blossom into, you know, into beautiful beans or seeds. But it's the same essence that grew you in your mother's womb, right? It's the same life force and that same, um, essence. And in our Mohawk language, we have a word for it that's, it's like the divine, you know, it has a feminine, um, like verb-root, but it's like this divine feminine energy that animates all of us right then that animates us. And,

and I think when we can begin to cultivate ourselves individually into humans that can honor and hold reference for that, the immensity of that, the immensity that's held inside of a seed or inside of a bud, then we start to move ourselves closer to, into, um, being humans that can, that can carry a lot more of, of, of what can seed the future.

Rowen : And I talk a lot about reseeding imagination. Like I think we need to reseed ourselves as humans. I think we need to, in this time, we need to reckon with the fact that in each and every single one of our bodies holds living memory of our ancestors coming into agreements with plants and animals, and those agreements are those, um, covenants that our ancestors, you know, wove themselves into with plants is that they said, "we'll give up a little bit of our wildness." And the plant said, "we'll give up a little of our wildness." And we would come together in this beautiful co-creation and that we would promise to take care of each other. And there's a lot of humans on the earth right now who ate today. Like a lot of people who are listening today, you ate today, right? And you have food in your body, and those plants never, um, gave up on their agreement to you to, *mmmm* to take care of you and to nourish you. But a lot of us humans, whether it's by force or by choice, we've abdicated our relationship to seeds and to food, um, in ways that I think spiral out into consequences, I don't think we can even fully reckon with. Um, and so, you know, when we talk about receding ourselves, receding people is, you know, not everybody's going to be a farmer or a gardener, but we all have an ability to come back into a deeper understanding and a relationship with those foods and, um, plants and, and beings who feed and nourish us every day. And I always say those agreements they've run like wild rivers in our blood and our bones.

Rowen : And there's all kinds of ways in which, in my work, as a mentor, as somebody who cultivate seed literacy in my community and cultivates connection with, you know, hold space so that people can cultivate a connection with the land and with seed again, is that I can often see the moment that those agreements start to become rehydrated in people *mmm* like there's a sparkle. There's a something where people say, "oh, yeah, I know that I remember that. I can physically feel it in my body that the body remembers." And that's why food and seed work is so powerful because, you know, we oftentimes, we humans, we're, we're, we're foolish bunch, right? Like we, we oftentimes think that our brains can sort of get us out of any conundrum, but a lot of the times, the ways in which our other senses, like outside of our thinking mind, like our multi-sensory capacity as humans, um, when we eat food, um, and when we smell food cooking, or when we taste food, it, actually those foods go inside of our

body and they've rehydrate old cellular ancestral memory that, that we, that was laying dormant that was latent in our bodies and helps us to uncover and unearth a deeper sense of who we are.

Rowen : And so that's why in this work that we're doing with food sovereignty and, um, using food as a catalyst or a vessel for, for healing, that grief and that trauma is that those foods go inside of ourselves and, um, reconnect us to places inside of ourselves that we didn't even know existed. Like they rehydrate the memories and ideas. I mean, cause all of us know we've had that moment where we smell something and it's like conjures a memory, right? Like it conjures this like deep, old memory. And so that's the power of those intimate immensities is that they carry, they encode so much that that can be ingested and, and taken into our bodies. Um, even just being in the garden and having our hands in the soil and, and, um, receiving their sensory, um, messages that they carry to us. Um, it's just profound healing.

Rowen : And I think in the work we work in trauma informed and impacted communities and the capacity for this work to, um, work with plants and land is one of the greatest catalyst to heal that intergenerational trauma than I think anything I've seen. I think I've seen the impact so deep and profound of people being able to shed literal generations of curses and cycles, um, that I think, um, you know, it just, these plants in this practice of, of being in relationship to plants, um, helps us to, um, to heal in a way that's much deeper than anything I've I've seen otherwise. So, yeah.

Prentis: You know, in the healing work I do. And I know that you do obviously healing work in an embodied way, but it's all embodied if we're aware of and feeling what it is that we're doing. Um, it's really been an important for me to think about my healing work and my embodiment work as a restoration of relationship. Less so kind of fixing a body - which I think is the way that people have approached embodiment work that, "okay, we're going to work on your body. So that you'll be fine." It's like, no, we're, we are born also into relationships. And that is how we are expressed, how we become, that there all these relationships that you're talking about beyond human, um, and that healing can't really be, there's all a lot of talk these days that I'm sure you've heard about healing and it's so important and it's something I'm committed to. And I think that we, we miss that, we can't do it out of relationship with all that's around us. You can't just heal your individual body, that it's relationships, um, that have to be healed and restored. So, I mean, I feel like you've spoken to this, but if there's anything you want to kinda add or lift up there, um, I'm just curious your thoughts.

Rowen : Absolutely. I mean, I think, um, like it was told to me by elders of mine that, you know, the seeds have many things to gift us, right? Like they, um, you know, they, they grant us sustenance and nourishment and there's all these, um, gifts that they bring us and how we understand it in our cosmology. But one of the gifts that they bring us as that they bring people together, right? Like, um, historically and present day, you know, it takes, um, a group of people to cultivate a field and to tend the earth and it, and when we have meals, like how much richer of an experience is it when, you know, we feast together and, and the, you know, that the significance of feasting is that those seeds actually help stitch us together because they recognize our, our interdependence, like as humans and also our interdependence on, you know, the multitude of, of, of beings who, um, hold us and surround us and, um, are held like we live in the earth, we don't live on it.

Rowen : And in that earth, we're actually woven into this beautiful web of relationship. And I think the greatest insanity is time, is that people don't realize that because you know, anybody, no matter what your ideology is, or, you know, your connection to the earth, you are held in that web of relationship, if you are living and breathing and eating. Um, but the insanity is that we don't recognize it, right. We can't even see that we're being held by all of these beings. And so what I think is so powerful is that with the seed and food work, and, and that's been profoundly powerful for me in cultivating a sense of belonging and is cultivating this culture of care where we work together and we restore these communal agreements, right? Like we have individual agreements. I spoke about them of like that we feel them in our blood and our bones and that we feel this reverence or this appreciation or gratitude for these foods and seed and connection to land. But we also carry them communally. And in my Mohawk culture, our whole ceremonial cycle, where we come together as a community to feed and nourish and, um, and give gratitude for all that is being gifted to us as humans is this is the agricultural calendar. *mmhmm* It's like not separate, you know, it's not separate from the seasonal calendar that, of, of those foods and seeds that feed us. And so I think, again, speaking to the insanity of the times is that, we no longer have, um, sort of a dominant cultural rhythm or you know, these life cycles aren't imbued into our culture where we have a collective way to honor, you know, the turning of the seasons, or honor a collective way of all the, all, all the gifts that the seeds give us. Like all of us descend from people who had that. Like, there's not a, one of us who doesn't descend from people who at some point in their, in their lineage comes from people who have rich cosmologies and stories, um,

that give them an understanding and a blueprint for how we can communally, uh, celebrate and uplift this gift in these relationships.

Rowen : And I think that's where I think the myth of self-sufficiency like you have this whole movement of people who want to, um, like get back to the land and to, you know, be self-sufficient. Well, I think I would, you know, I'm, I'm very quick to point that out and say, you can't, there's an, that's a myth, actually that that's one person on 40 acres or whatever the, this idea is, is possible because feeding and nourishing ourselves is actually a collective act. And it has to be, and it has to be a cooperative communal endeavor, and if we can reach back into our past and, and, um, remember and rehydrate the things that informed our, our ancestors and, and those in our lineages. But then also remember that culture is a verb, right? Like culture is always changing *yes yes yes yes* and moving that we can add together the collective intelligences and experiences of today and, and practice that radical imagination to imagine, what does a relational food scape look like in the future and how do we, how do we build that?

Rowen : We're not going back; we're gathering our ancestral brilliance, right. That, that comes through all of us, but we're, you know, allowing that to, to create a confluence with what we hold today is true and, and moving forward. And, um, and that's where I think my commitment as a, as a thought leader and as a seed keeper and a farmer is to use narrative and storytelling and, um, like sensory, um, ways that, I think inspire or delight the senses so that people can imagine and like taste and like, just like this undeniable, like pleasure infused, um, like brilliant relational food system that's possible. And that's where Black Indigenous and bodies of culture who have a little bit closer proximity to those memories. Um, we, we are the ones seeding that future, and we are the ones who need to be resourced to be able to seed that, that brilliant future through our radical imagination.

Rowen : And because what I'm seeing now in the food world is that there's a lot of traumatized people sort of, you know, just reconfiguring this like messed up system into, um, into new forms of harm. Right. And so, um, that's where I think those of us who are more closely in proximity with culture and community. We're always going to build systems that reflect us, which means that we're always going to cultivate, um, solutions that are communal in nature that are, that that recognize our interdependence that recognize, um, our interconnectedness. And until, until we get to that place where those folks are resourced and given, you know, the agency and empowered to do that, then I think we're always going to create a system that is based on exploitation and extraction and independence. And

because that's what American agrarianism is based on is *that's right* rugged individualism extraction and exploitation.

Rowen : It's stolen people on stolen land, um, you know, and just ad nauseum, you know, moving forward. And so I think, I mean, I have great faith. I see in the last 20 years of me doing this work, the food sovereignty movement has just grown exponentially. I mean, even like the seed, I feel like it's kinda kearneling, like one seed turned into a hundred, and then it just keeps [Prentis laughing] growing because who can deny the absolute beauty and brilliance of these foods and the way they make us feel and the, you know, and the way that they, you know, help us to heal.

New Speaker: And, and so I think there's this like movement continues to bubble up and grow. And so my, um, my prayer, my, the love poem that I make my life into is that I will just want to resource those young people who are coming up, who will, you know, like my children, I have two children, they're teenagers, and they've never not known the flavors of home, which are corn and beans and squash and sunflowers. And they've grown up on a seed farm. I didn't have that, but in just one generation, my children know that, and it's written on their heart. You know, it's written in, into some place inside them that is like, nobody can ever take that away from them.

Rowen : And, and, you know, to that end is that, you know, the colonizers, when they came here, they knew that we as Indigenous peoples resourced ourselves from the land. And that was where our true power resided. And that's why they very specifically manufactured their colonial tools to sepearte us from the land. And the same is true with Black enslaved people who are brought to this land to it was the same colonial tool that was used. But here's the thing is that that, which gives us life and power and spiritual power, they can never kill that. And it's always in the land. It's always there. *mmhmm* It's always there ready to invite us back home. And so if, if we remember that, if we, um, can get a, if we can continue to reinforce that to as many of us who have the ears to be able to listen and to cultivate spaces where that's, um, like can help us rehydrate that understanding whether it's personal or communal, then we begin to tap back into that, like that true power that we have. It's not power over. It's not the dominion over, but it's a power that is, um, that recognizes interdependence and recognizes that we're held in that way. And so that's my that's my prayer is that we all can find our way into a relationship, whether it's a mentor or a community member or somebody like I've apprentice myself to plants. Like those have been my teachers, and I've been carried through a very unconventional rites of passage, um, as a young woman into grow motherhood.

Rowen : And eventually, you know, God's willing into, you know, um, grandma, you know, grandma hood and, and being an older woman, they've carried me in, initiated me through a very unconventional rites of passage, which helped me to understand what it means to be a modern indigenous woman in my full spiritual and cultural capacity. And, you know, some people have humans who help them do that. I didn't. And so I had, I did have amazing elders who helped me, but ultimately the plants, they held that and they said, "well, now you have the seed and now you need to know how to grow it? And then now you know how to grow it, do you know how to cook it?" Like, "okay, now I know how to cook it." "Oh, now I have so much food. I don't know what to do with it. Okay. Well, have a feast!" You know, and like, *that's right* it's just all these layers that they just kind of help us to be human again. [chuckling]

Prentis: Wow. That is so beautiful. The way that the seed compels you into more and more relationship and more and *mmhmm* more learning. That's so powerful. I feel like that kind of points us in a direction of practice. I think for everybody, how can we, uh, let that relationship, relationship with land, make us more human?

Rowen : Indeed. And we're never too late, right. For instance, so no matter where you are at, in your life cycle, um, that there, that those, that those beings unseen and or seen, you know, the plants, the minerals, the animals, the land; they're always there waiting for you to come home. You know, and that, um, whatever it is that invites you or inspires you to, to reconnect, whether it's finding a food of your ancestor, you know, that that has some sort of cultural significance, and you begin to learn how to plant that or cook with it, or, you know, engage in some sort of relationship that it's, it's never too late, you know, and we do the work that we can in this time. And then that will ripple out into whether it's people in your community, around you or your descendants. Um, however, but it's, it's never, it's never too late.

Rowen : And that we in order, you know, to go back to that point of that threshold of memory, is that, is that, you know, um, is that - we are that generation *mmhmm, yeah* who, who can make renewed commitment to make that bundle of cultural inheritance, whatever it is. And even if there's just tattered rags, and shards in there, we can make it a little bit more beautiful for those yet to come. And even if it's just a little contribution that we make, we make it that much easier for the next generation to continue to heal and to find their way home. And, and that's what keeps me going. You know, I, if I try and look at the immensity of all the wounds that need to be healed and all the things that were taken that will send you into a spiral of

despair, but if you can find one thread, like for me, it was corn like deeply, deeply relating to corn-mother again, and to learn how to take care of her. And, and she's grown me in so many ways like that garden has grown me into the woman I am today, and I hope will continue to grow me into the grandmother that I hope to become. And, um, you know, it's just layers, layers that if we just start small and that's the wisdom of the seed is that they're so small. So you can just start small. You can just start with one seed or two seeds and, and they'll continue to help grow us into, into good humans that can nourish and sustain and, and can be that, um, you know, that example of the innate abundance or generosity of the earth, like we, we forget that in this time as that, you know, the dominant narrative wants to tell us that there's not enough, but there's always enough. Like if you apprentice yourself to seeds, you will, we will never, ever, ever doubt that the earth herself is benevolent and is ever generous and ever creative. And that we have that inside of us that we're made of that same too. So thank you Prentice for, um, for opening up the space and allowing us to talk into these, um, these beautiful thoughts.

Prentis: Thank you. And actually, I know we have to end, but I just, it, I think I more want to share this with you. I, you know, I grow some food now, but I, I think I started with growing years ago, collard greens, cause I'm from the South and *mmhmm* I love collard greens and I wanted to do collard greens at my house. I started growing collard greens and just the abundance of collard greens, like how they grow and grow. [Rowen laughing] And they just keep offering an offering and offering, um, really was what pulled me into wanting to grow food. Cause I was like, "oh, this is something I love. And I can, I can just have it here at the house." And now we have, you know, some land where we are growing food and the lesson this year has been, I think, what you were sharing of like having community grow there together, having other folks come and, and grow and dig in together has been this year's lesson of like, okay, we can't just do this alone.

Prentis: We have to do it in community has been such a gift. And and the grief that you mentioned on top, I mean, I think as a Black person to feel the, the grief, the layers of grief, both the disconnection that has happened with this land, even though very recent ancestors had connection here and then disconnection to the land where we were taken from, feeling that I was gardening recently and just had this flood of memory come in while I was bent over. And the message was; how do I not bend over in a way where I'm out of alignment in my own body and the way that I think my ancestors had to be because of the, the forces of exploitation. That I took a minute, I could almost just feel, oh, is how you get forced into making this work and

not making this life. So how do I be in my body in a way that a relationship reciprocity is possible with the land? So I feel so grateful for the, the lessons here that you were offering us. And, um, uh, so much is awakening in me, to be honest, it feels alive and, and what you're sharing. And it, it, it, it helps me know. And this is such a, a wonderful lesson. I think maybe for all of us, it helps me know just how vast it all is and how much there is to keep learning and relating to and not do that limiting scarcity thing. Like no creation is vast and you can sink into it and keep learning. So just grateful, grateful.

Rowen : Exactly so grateful just to speak quickly to what you just said there, Prentis, which is that also in that moment, when you were bent over and you were, you know, recognizing and, and centering and acknowledging, you know, whether it's, you know, those, that force, um, and *mm, mmhmm* kind of getting into a correction is that, um, we also can reclaim our power in those actions. Like, I know a lot of Black compadres say, "well, we don't farm" or their, you know, family didn't farm because of the trauma, when, when something like that is traumatic - but how do we reclaim it as an act of honor and sustaining our people and nourishing our people and say, this, this, this movement, this practice of growing food, um, I do the healing work to unhook it from the *that's right* trauma and reclaim it as a, as a, as a pleasure practice or as a, as something that empowers me to reconnect to my ancestors. Right. *that's right.* That's deep, powerful work. And I just want to name and thank you for giving voice to that because that's profound, um, healing that you gift your, um, you know, your community and your ancestors *that's right* and your descendants like, oh, that's good.

Prentis: That's right. That's right. That's right. It's time. It's time. We're doing it. It's time.

Rowen : It is time, indeed. Well, thank you, Prentis. Thank you, Eddie.

Prentis: Thank you, Rowen. I'm so grateful you're here.

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