

## Pentangle and Wassail Weekend

Here we are nine months into the pandemic and heading toward a holiday season where even socially distanced family gatherings may be impossible for some.

I treasure the holiday traditions, and will miss our family gatherings. The loud chatter and the quiet gossipy corner conversations. The kitchen filled to the brim with plates of ham and turkey, assorted side dishes, and 8 o'clock mints served on Mom's old silver trays. Infants shuttled between eager aunts and uncles. Unmarried cousins sharing stories reminding us what life was like before owning a house and raising a family. The great grandchildren tearing about the house, creating chaos in their wake. And of course, the dirty jokes shared across the table.

I have yet to meet Silas, my nephew's son, and Ana my niece's daughter. But so many blessings we have when so many do not. Our large family has remained healthy and thankfully employed or retired. My heart goes out those who have lost loved ones without even having had the chance to say goodbye, and to those still out of work wondering how they will make ends meet. And to those black and brown people who remain victims of unfettered police violence while simultaneously experiencing the ravages of the pandemic in unfairly high numbers.

On the work front, this is the time of year, under normal circumstances, we would be putting the final touches on our Wassail Weekend programs, which would have included the 19<sup>th</sup> Annual Holiday House Tour, (our largest and most successful fundraising event) the 36<sup>th</sup> Annual Messiah Sing, two live holiday performances, and for the kiddos screenings of holiday movies and Cookies with Santa.

Speaking of that, I have received numerous calls from folks asking about the Holiday House Tour. I am incredulous that some complained that the Tour was cancelled. Personally, I cannot think of a worse super spreader (other than a Trump rally) than folks from all over the country lining up cheek to jowl to tour our lovely village homes.

The Chamber of Commerce is working with area businesses, Billings Farm and Museum, and residents to deliver a safe but scaled down Wassail Weekend. Look for more information on the Town web site, and on the list serve in the weeks to come.

As we enter this unusual holiday season, let us not forget that regardless of who wins the Presidential election, systemic racism will persist in this country. As an arts presenter, Pentangle will continue to put a mirror up to society and create opportunities for creativity and inclusivity that allow us to see the world from varied perspectives. In that vein, we'd planned on a November school-wide assembly and workshops at Woodstock Union High School with Burlington-based poet Rajnii Eddins. Due to scheduling conflict this program will now happen in May 2021.

Rajnii Eddins is a, Spoken Word Poet and Teaching Artist who has been engaging diverse community audiences for over 27 years. Here is a poem from his latest work *Their Names Are Mine* that aims to confront white supremacy while emphasizing the need to affirm our mutual humanity.

**I Want to .....**

I want to write about trees  
But the lifeless dangling from their branches  
Raise my pen from the dead.  
I hear their voices on the prairies  
Singing in the running waters  
The beauty of nature tells me everywhere  
There is light  
Even amidst the ugliness of humankind.  
And I see it in you  
Even when you don't  
See it in me  
Seeing it in yourself  
Where are Frost and Whitman  
Traveling roads less traveled  
Is something  
We have grown accustomed to  
Our roots are so deep  
They cling to soil  
Old long before  
Nature had a name  
This game of cat and mouse  
That fattens sows for the butcher  
I sit by the rivers of my mothers  
Humming songs my fathers hummed  
When they were lovers

Still I want to write about trees  
Not wretched countries  
Dying by degrees  
Oblivious decrees  
To bullet ridden bodies  
And spiritual disease  
Hideous amnesia and hostilities  
To Negros taking knees  
I'd write about the wind  
But I still smell the burning skin  
Upon the breeze  
Even in these sheaves  
I taste the blood  
Upon the leaves  
Tis why through the majestic  
Beauty of the seasons  
I mourn the morn at dawn  
And grieve the eve  
Greener pastures  
Skies of azure I receive  
I want to note the clouds of hope  
That stream and beam  
This knotted oak that chokes my throat  
Won't let me breathe  
Less I raise my pen to paint  
Each limb of the deceased  
I'll write my first nature poem  
When with my kin I feel at home  
And not a beast

Some periodic sacrifice  
For them to feast  
When oceans blue  
Do not review  
A vanquished peace  
When my love is not  
Returned with evil deeds  
I'll plant a seed for every herb  
Flower and fruit  
That ever be  
When that discord within the horde  
Finds melody  
When these brown hands dig in the soil  
Toil for peace  
When our allegiance to its meaning's loyalty