



MBRLC

NEWSLETTER

WINTER 2021

Editors: Hilary K. and Idony Lisle

www.mbrlc.org/newsletter



And here it is Winter in Boston! For once we can be a little glad of the masks now helping keep our faces warm.

By the time you read these words, the Solstice will have passed, and bear in mind as you dress in the darkness that the days are getting longer, minute by minute.

This issue brings you some fine poetry, a couple of thought-provoking articles, and a pet parade! (And a word search. Woohoo!)

Past issues of this newsletter can be found on our website, <https://www.mbrlc.org/newsletter>, along with submission guidelines (articles should be under 600 words in length and not be political or otherwise ranty). Please see idony.lisle@bmc.org with any questions.

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sensible five senses to battle Covid

by Richard Sheingold

WE will start with the nose
You must cover it I do suppose
Lavender smelling or a red rose
Breathing gets better from head to
toe

Most people's favorite sense is taste
Eat slowly, and do not taste
It's all going down to your haste
Battling the virus, you must be paced

Hearing is the work of the ear
Put on some upbeat music and don't
fear
Listen to Dr. Fauci a vaccine to help
bear
Listen to positive sounds, don't shed
a tear

Be careful where you put your hands
Soap and water, no other demands
No more high fives, but applaud
dance bands

Wear gloves and no touching is many
lands

Perhaps sight is the most useful
sense

Go on a vacation, see things from
camping tents

Relax, close your eyes and don't be
tense

Look into the future , way past this
nonsense





Thinking about Movies

by Susan Landy

Recently I watched a video of bell hooks speaking on “Cultural Criticism and Transformation (Part 1).” The video is on YouTube, and is under ten minutes. hooks has been called a scholar whose work is understandable. She has written 30 books about race, gender and money, to show how they work together against groups of people with less power than rich, white men.

hooks is a Black American Feminist interested in pop culture, especially movies. She spells her name in lower-case because her writer-name is taken from her great-grandmother, who was “known for her snappy and bold tongue.” She uses lower-case so people will know it’s her, not her great-grandmother. She was teaching at City College of New York, in Harlem, at the time of these videos (fourteen years ago). She is now sixty-nine and teaches at Berea College in Kentucky.

In her first video on Cultural Criticism, hooks says that her students were put off

by reading that was very academic, and they asked what it had to do with their lives. She found that she could teach critical thinking by sending her students to watch popular movies like *Pulp Fiction*, *Forrest Gump*, *Terminator*, *Brave Heart*, and *Hoop Dreams*. She says that her students had trouble believing that the image of Black people in the movies was *created by the filmmakers*. That the choices filmmakers make about what Black people are doing and saying in the movie, and how it is supposed to be taken, are not accidental. For example, we may be encouraged to laugh at a Black man who is made to look stupid, or shrug about a homeless Black woman who is murdered. hooks tries to get her students to understand that the movie is not “a slice of life,” but is a collection of moving pictures. These pictures may represent common beliefs that are racist or sexist, or make poor people seem worthless. She asks her students to ask themselves, “Why am I laughing?” or “Why don’t I care about this dead woman?”

As an example of filmmaker choices, in *Hoop Dreams* hooks mentions a Black, young basketball player who tries to get into professional basketball. We stay with him for quite a while before there is a sudden picture of his girlfriend and their baby. hooks states that it was the filmmakers’ choice to leave out the young Black man’s relationship with his girlfriend - and just show her and the baby as a barrier to what the young man is working for. In teaching her students, hooks often tells them to notice what they are being told to accept or believe.

Another major point that hooks makes in the video is that her white, liberal

friends have told her that representations in the movies are not important. Even things in the movie may remind you that the action is not real or important - it is "only a movie," or just entertainment. This attitude can make violence against women seem normal - or a movie that shows Black people only in low-level jobs can make racism in education and work seem normal. hooks wants us to think about what messages we are buying as we pay for Netflix, or our movie ticket.



Untitled

by Sheila Kennedy

Silence

Can mold my world

Private disarray

Seems to be shy

Dramatic inside

See my features

Without words

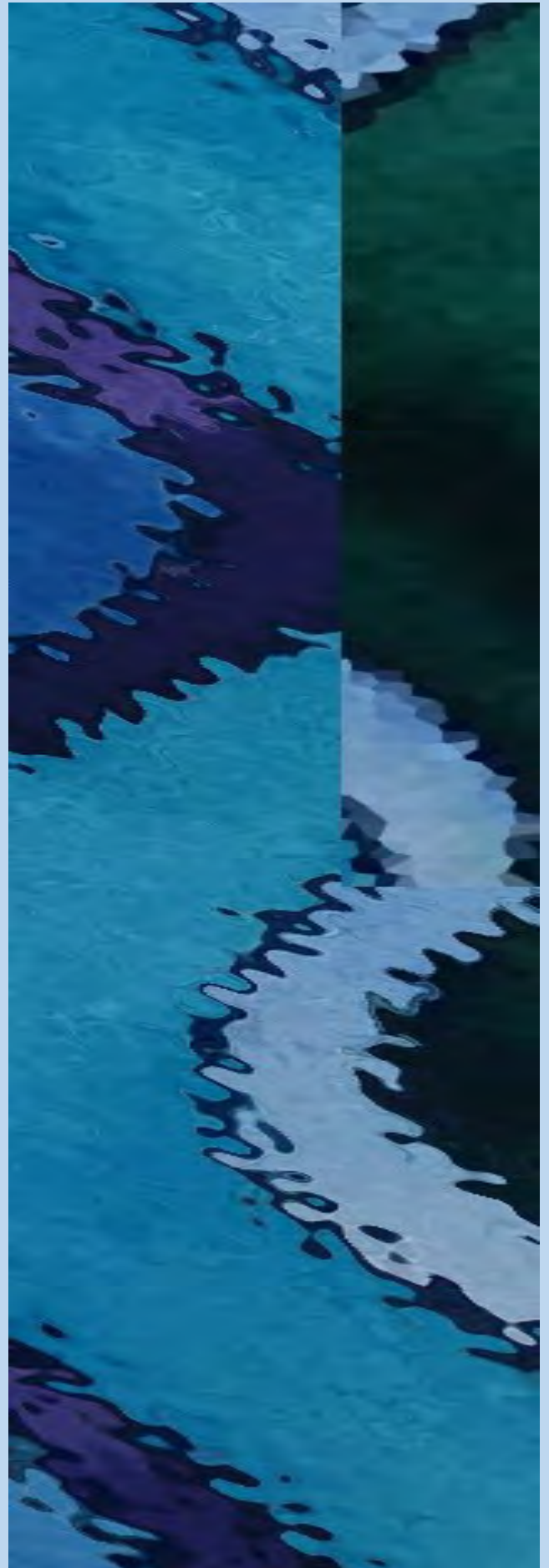
See my actions

Don't judge

Hear my voice

Although blooming

Listen



On Safe Injection Sites

by Heidi Lee

I definitely didn't believe in supervised injection sites when I joined the case management team at BHCHP last Dec.

I'm not sure I had a stance on nurses handing out condoms, but I know I definitely didn't grasp what harm reduction was all about until I learned the individuals impacted by opioid abuse as an illness.

And even that was questionable for me at first.

Doesn't one choose to inject/consume their drug of choice? I asked myself.

But then I witnessed one after another . . . people making choices that so closely resembled my personal experience with mental illness, that I could not possibly think that it was a choice anymore.

An example: One of my clients who is a mother of three (ages 2, 8, 14) once chose her next hit over accepting the phone call of her 14 yr old daughter on her birthday. Her daughter was utterly devastated, to the point that she attempted to take her life the next day.

My client knew how frail her daughter was, yet she "chose" to do something that went completely against her core values and character.

And it's not just her. I've watched one after another. Individuals who've given up their health, their youth, their money, their

looks, their healthy friends and family, their passions, and oftentimes their sense of dignity.

I ask myself: Why would anyone "Choose" to give up Everything that matters to them for one more hit?

I don't know the answer. But I no longer believe that it's a choice.

Why do I believe in safe injection sites?

Because I see that people who use are dying at insane rates, and it's only getting worse. The drugs out there now are laced with a synthetic opioid that is almost 100x more powerful than its naturally derived version.

When people use at safe injection sites, lives can be saved because trained clinicians know how to revive them with anti-overdose meds like Narcan. They are also more likely to receive education on how to not get HIV, HepC, and even on how to seek treatment for their addiction, methadone clinics, etc.

It also keeps dirty needles properly disposed of, as opposed to on streets where kids walk home, or worse, used again by others who can't afford new needles.

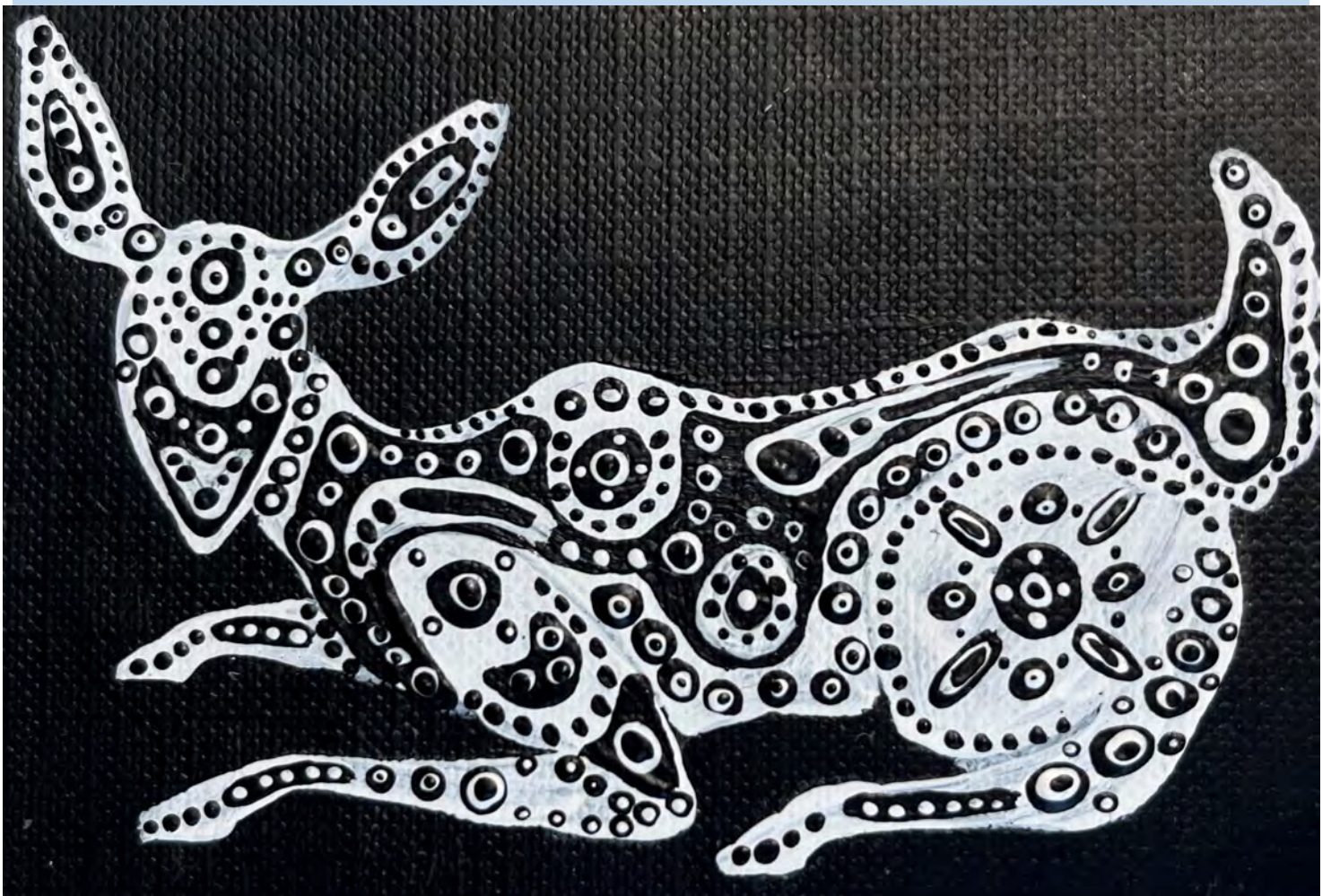
This is complex, no doubt. And there are certainly both pros and cons. but what I'll say is this —

I believe in harm reduction because it is one of the best chances we have towards combatting this current epidemic. At least we

can't afford to continue our current "strategy" with expectation of different results.

We tend to not see other people's lives as precious until we know Who they are. These individuals are more than their illness.

I'm grateful that when I was very sick, I received the help I needed to get a second, third, fourth chance at where I am now. I can't even imagine how my life would have deteriorated if others told me that I Chose to have my condition, and therefore I needed to stop this negative behavior . . . without them trying to understand Why I was hurting myself and all those who love me.



Grandma Rose #3

by Richard Sheingold

Thanksgiving will be soon ; day after tomorrow

I want to write this poem without sorrow
Thanksgiving to me means thanks for all
You've given me much, winter to fall

Your love ; I can not ever forget
Surrounding me like a huge caring net
I thank you from my head to toe
how you made me, from scratch, a pillow

Toys, clothes, anyone could have bought
But it's life lessons that you taught
for example you said to thine own heart be true

I learned so many helpful things from you

Be the good guy you would always say
When things weren't going my way
I am great, I am beautiful you would teach
and my goals I certainly could reach

Grandma, I'm sure you would watch from heaven

How did I get you ? Did I roll a seven?
How do I spell your name L.O.V.E.
Thanks for all you've given to me



Haiku

by Rob MacDonald

In your cauldron are

Memories, vague and sharp and

Worthy is the night



Meet the BRC Best Supporters!

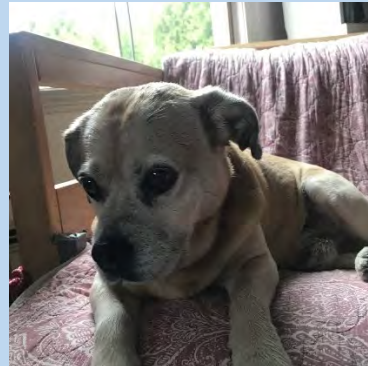
By Hilary K. and Staff

RASCAL



I came from Arkansas with the name Praline and all my papers say I am a female dog. My hobbies are destroying tags, scrounging under the bed, hunting plastic and staring into the back of the closet. I'm learning the ropes in the dog parks. I act looney if I don't have proper naps. I doubled in size in 2 months.

ICHIRO

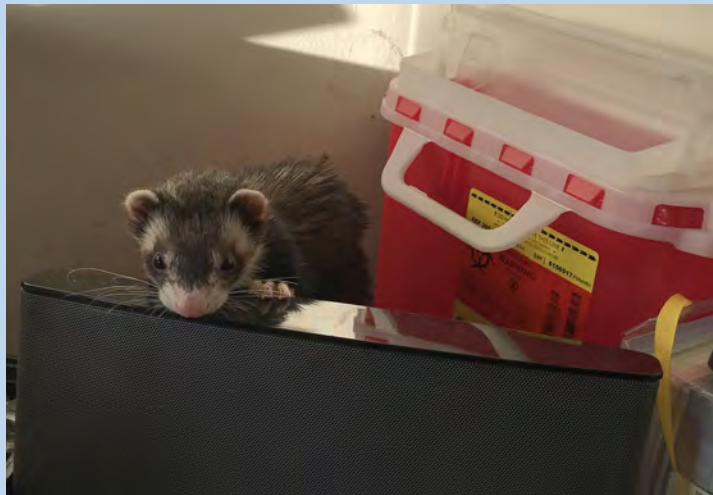


Our dog Ichiro, which means oldest son, is our 14-year-old puggle, half pug, half beagle. He still bounds up the stairs to our 2nd floor apartment after each walk. He used to be indifferent to food, but has recently developed a fixation on Pup-peroni. He has never been more than a pound more or less than 29 pounds. He loves to sleep with us close by, but doesn't like to be held. On walks, he enjoys finding shrubs to brush up against to give himself a back rub.



TALI

My name is Tali-Zorah Lisle Woodward, and I run the house. Even as Mom writes this for me, I am at her elbow telling her she has spent too long at the desk for the day! I was born in a barn in Kentucky, but I look just like a rare breed called a Khao Manee: I am pure white and have one blue eye and one gold eye; many people believe this allows me to see into the spirit realm, but I'm pretty busy in this one.



MAX

Hi! I'm Maximilian. (Or Maxibillion, Maximo, or Maxmon. Whatever.) I love my family, and I love being a ferret. Lookit me push stuff off shelves! Wahoo! Or let me steal things made of silicone. Or water bottles! Burrowing through the recycling is my second favorite thing to do--my first is interacting with Cloud and Tali, or getting cuddled by my two-leggeds. All ferrets have ADHD, so--whoa! Did you see that?? Later!



FENWAY

Hi! My name is Fenway. I was named after the Red Sox stadium. I like to chew things, especially things that are not supposed to be chewed, like cushions and pillows, books and papers, shoes and socks. Every once in a while, I'll chew something that does belong to me, like a bone. No matter how much trouble I get into, I know I'll always be loved and

I'll always love my family, too.



JASPER SKY AND SCARLET LEE

Greetings! My name is Jasper Sky. I was born Valentine's Day which I live up to by loving on my Mom, CD Collins and my sister Scarlet Lee. My favorite game is catching the pink bird that magically flies around our house. Mom says I'm getting a little 'man face.'

Hello, I'm Scarlet Lee. I am from Kentucky like my little 'brother' Jasper Sky. When Mom brings in rescue kittens I explain to them how the house is run and make sure they follow directions. I am known as a Ragdoll. Pick me up and I melt into your arms.



CLOUD

My full name is Cloud Merida Lisle Woodward, I come from Kentucky, and I have tortitude! This is a baby picture of when I would just hang out and keep Mom's wrist warm at the keyboard. Now I'm too big. My favorite things: Eating out of the butter dish and leaving footprints on the counter, gnawing through an entire shipment of cat treats (hey, the box was marked "Chewy!") and sliding



Assets

by Idony Lisle

Every year in my spiritual tradition, we take a period of time in the early spring to concentrate on ourselves in a meaningful way. Throughout history, people have tried to improve themselves and the way they interact with others. In our tradition, this often involves extra prayer, some fasting, and—the most frequent observance of the period—denying oneself a particular pleasure (or vice).

I noticed this year (surely not for the first time) that it's a lot like making a Fourth Step in a Twelve-Step tradition—putting together a “searching and fearless moral inventory.” OK, I've done this before, usually focusing on my numerous character defects.

But this year, I decided to see what would happen if I spent this time focusing not on those defects (which I beat myself up over on a regular basis anyway) but on my assets instead. Sounded kind of wacky, but why not? Maybe I'd learn something.

Well, the first thing I learned was that putting together a simple grocery list of my better qualities was very difficult for me! I'm not used to thinking of myself in that way. And I believe that's significant; in a way, I've stumbled on another flaw: I don't cut myself enough slack.

Modesty (one of the list) forbids me to share them with you; besides, what they are don't really matter. The important thing, I think, is that I admit to myself (let alone another human being!) that I have them, and that moreover I appreciate them. Some of them have taken a good deal of effort to cultivate, and some I was born with; they're all part of my resume, though, just like all the bad stuff I wrestle with most of the time.

One of the oldest texts in my tradition insists that the Creation of All That Is was a powerful thing, not just because it happened at all, but because the Creator (who should know, I guess) deemed that it was Good. So as part of that story, I have to see my inner goodness as well.

I recommend it as an exercise. Give it a try yourself, especially if you tend to cringe from tooting your own horn. Maybe you too will learn something, or re-learn it, and that will just be another item on your list.



C F C O F X A R W B B P C O C O A I S H
 H H A I O J A E S U V I T S E F C L O O
 Q G R M S C M T L S C X U D N E L P L L
 T S E I I U A N O I J Y X S W A D A S I
 J M R T S L M I N R Z I N B B I A S T D
 L O G E N T Y W D J D U W W P Z S E I A
 S N E T T I M V L L H I O U N N E I C Y
 R Y W A C S M A R Q O N G A O J I T E S
 E K Z T E A A K S B S C W I G A K R F H
 S E L C I C I E S V K K T S K Y O A P S
 O C I V J H E N R T J A I S M N O P N I
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 U T J R D O I A L I N V P L C A W S F G
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 I F R S U D H I T O G E T H E R N E S S
 O V J L Z X T S S I O H J N P B H Z C S
 N D E G J N Q Q P P Y W T V M E T J A Y
 S T R W A S O F L I Q J Q S C Q O F K N
 K B G Q D U U Q A E X A I J R T B X K M
 T O Q H K N U Q N X Q E S G S X E B K I

anticipation
 cold
 Festivus
 ice
 lights
 noreasters
 snowballs
 togetherness

Christmas
 cookies
 Hanukkah
 icicles
 mittens
 parties
 snowmen
 winter

cocoa
 family
 holidays
 Kwanzaa
 music
 resolutions
 Solstice
 Yule

