

February 2022

“You do you.”

I have picked up this phrase from my children, though I try to shift their teasing tone to a cheerleading one when I say it. I appreciate the sentiment of standing tall in yourself. In a time of needed, global coordination, emphasizing the individual might be tricky, and on this second anniversary of COVID, I am learning the balance between the community’s needs and my own. I would even claim that these two years have pushed me to build a practice to listen for what is most essential to me and for what I need in a given moment. As we cross this second-year threshold, I consider what practices that I have used to survive this time will I retain in a post-Pandemic world? I wonder how to continue my self-listening practice when the world opens more and to be an accountable community member.

These last two years have been a journey. Is it a journey or a metaphorical bridge? Collectively, we are in a new place, and there is no going back to our old lives and old ways. The Pandemic happened to all of us. Its havoc and strife have varied based on our pre-existing health and socio-economic conditions, and yet we all have adjusted the tempo of our days with personal costs. We have navigated changing information and shifting directions from our community leaders and from the scientists.

Changing directions was challenging for an outwardly-focused individual like myself. I came of age as a people pleaser and did not give it up when I grew into adulthood. I was the A student who figured out what the teacher wanted for an answer, not the student who dug deep inside for what I believed was right. After graduating from literal tests, I became a surveyor who took polls of others’ opinions before deciding my next turn. And then the Pandemic happened with its collapsed time, changing directions and social distance.

When directions change daily, I have had to learn to look inward more to find my compass of sanity and safety.

For me, I have learned to befriend myself. My mother modeled the adage: She with the most friends wins. In my collecting of friends, I often neglected a relationship with myself. This time of reduced activity has been the perfect stage for me to learn to be a friend to myself. What a time to practice feeling and being present to my emotions!

Much of our work at Fresh Pond Capital is asking questions for clients to explore how one’s financial resources can benefit the larger community. We ask questions that shift the focus from “That’s Mine!” to ways to think about how we live interconnected lives and can invest to enhance our own lives in community with others. Similarly, there is a balance between living outward facing and inward facing – the extreme of either is disillusioned and unsafe.

Milagros Phillips, racial healer and educator, wrote the FPC quarterly letter last quarter. Don’t miss it! Here is a [link](#) to find it as our newsletter. Phillips tells the story of financial scarcity and uncertainty that has been an American story now amplified by the pandemic. This story is not mine and I can hear its truth. What I could not hear for a longtime was my own inner voice.

Today, I live with a heightened sense of the uncertainty. If I plan a trip or even make plans to see a play in two weeks, I am aware that there is a chance for things to go a different direction. Pre-pandemic my consciousness was not attuned to the uncertainty as it is now. The recently passed, Buddhist Philosopher Thich Nhat Hahn's wisdom that life is ephemeral were words that have become a daily awareness. Truthfully, life before the pandemic was filled with uncertainty and my privileged economic life masked it. I could feign a level of control and certainty as I planned my year and my life each New Year. Now, I seek the quiet to hear from my inner friend. Meanwhile, I balance myself with a commitment to educate myself with the voices of people like Phillips.

I believe when we become better listeners to ourselves, we hear through the noise of life – the media, the chaos for what is truly essential. We become better listeners for truth and for those telling the true stories for themselves. We become present and connected with one another.

With an interest toward our connection with one another, we have invited Phillips to host a zoom session with our community in March. She has titled it, "Trauma, Race and Money." I promise you will find healing and not trauma in your time with her if you join us. Email us if you would like to join.

I welcome hearing what practices you are keeping as we move forward in this new rotation around the sun.

Your performance is ready. Email with questions. Below is the Long Run.

Julie Johnson McVeigh

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