

Reclaiming Legacy. Beyond a Binary Narrative

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Volume 8

Issue 1

Spring 2025

Abstract

What happens when we cannot grieve for what we have lost?

Unacknowledged memory

piles

on top

of unacknowledged memory.

A thick layer of entanglement grows.

Individual stories wiped out,

covered with a blanket

woven with the 'truth'

of who is good

and who is not.

Citation Link

What happens to descendants who inherit the legacy of unspoken stories?

So many dead,

are walking with us.

So many bodies in the water,

bones,

forgotten in the earth.

Memories swimming in the seas,

buried in the soil.

The guilt of it

flowing,

steadily,

stealthily,

in my blood.

What do we say to the forgotten waiting to be remembered? What do we say to the excluded waiting to be seen?

I want to know your story,

to remember who you were.

I need to.

I need to remember myself,

home,

*to the bones
of my belonging.*

*I know the children who were lost in this,
I am one of them.
I know of the souls who were lost in this,
I have been walking with them.*

It is breaking my heart.

*I can feel you trapped
between the worlds
of before and after,
remembering and forgetting,
guilt and innocence.*

*You are not alone.
Parts of us have been lingering
In the waiting
with you.*

*I know of the vow,
that we shouldn't speak of this.
I do not agree.*

We won't contaminate the descendants by speaking of it.

*What a lie
we have been fed.
Slops of poisoned punishment,
dressed as nutrition.*

*Guilt can have a place
without
becoming a God.
Stories can be visited,
without losing your passport.
There can be more
than guilt
in this.*

In this tussle for good versus evil... the unspoken remains silent, the dead remain unacknowledged, and the unborn prepare to carry the burden onwards.

The descendants
whisper,
to those,
in the before:

*I am looking outside of guilt,
I want to know your story.*

*There are wounds between us.
There are unspoken words
in those wounds.*

*I know they exist.
I feel them.*

*I don't know what to do with the pain.
I witnessed
the giving of pain
to others.
It only,
created
more pain.*

And so I refused.

*Instead.
I held it tightly.
So tightly,
to numb it out.*

*There was a cost
to the numbing too.*

*I lost part of my heart
I want to feel
my heart again*

*I know the words
'it would have been better
if I hadn't been born'.
They are written
on my skin.
I thought they
were whispered
only to me.*

*But you were carrying them
within you too.
And they come
from outside of you.*

*I know the weight
of those words,
the numbness,
the scars.*

*We don't have to live
in them anymore.*

The silences are breaking.

*I am telling the stories
That were forbidden
With each breath that I take.
With each step on the earth.
Leaving notes
in my footsteps,
songs in the air,
poems in the water.
For those,
who will,
come after,
and want to know,
what we do not speak of.*

*I'm raising the expectations
of what a legacy is.*

This poem was written from the felt narrative of some of the unspoken stories and memories that have emerged in the systemic constellation and entangled memory maps for the Tending Hope project.

Part of our intention with Tending Hope is to create space for the re-membling and tending of collective trauma from our entangled past as well as our entangled present. We do this to support our own generation, cultivating our ability to thrive and to live joyful and compassionate lives, offering the possibility and truth of a life of autonomy and choice to the generations yet to be. We can choose what legacy we live and we can choose what legacy we leave. The choice matters.

With the Tending Hope project we are focusing on creating space for voice, witnessing, story, grief and acknowledgement. With every trauma point a before/after fracture point emerges that has the potential to become an entanglement for present and future generations if untended. This fracture

space contains memories of dispossession, land appropriation, forced displacement and war, where parts of the individual/collective 'self' become bound up with what existed in the 'before', the entangled 'after' and the liminal space in between.

Re-membering requires a reckoning with the silences that have been held and imposed at each fracture point of historical dismemberment. Giving grief a place represents an acknowledgement of the many different ways that existence has been denied, including the lost existence of the descendants within any one cultural heritage, or those who were not born. Grief for those who have not been seen and have been excluded, requires restoring a place for these absences, for 're-membering.'

About the author

Nicola Mackay is a clinical physicist turned systemic constellation therapist and researcher. She has been in private practice for over twenty years and has a busy therapy practice and teaching school based in Western Europe and the United States. She is the author of several books on systemic therapy. She is the founder and project leader of Tending Hope CIC and is dedicated to researching and exploring the impact of historical trauma and displacement through the use of constellation and entangled memories. She has a passionate focus on uncovering and witnessing the untold stories of generations of souls rendered unseen and voiceless through her work with collective memories held within the land, the waters, and our physical bodies.

Citation

MacKay, Nicola (2025). Reclaiming Legacy. Beyond a Binary Narrative. *Murmurations: Journal of Transformative Systemic Practice*, 8(1), 54-58. <https://doi.org/10.28963/8.1.9>