



RESPONSE-
ABILITIES
IN THE
ANTHROPOCENE

A COLORADO COLLEGE
CLASS'S WEEK AT
CRESTONE/BACA

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Response-Abilities in the Anthropocene

A Colorado College Class's Week at
Crestone/Baca

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Photo by Mary Andrews

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Overview: Exploring Response-Abilities in the Anthropocene at Crestone/Baca

“Anthropocene” is an anthropology course that forms part of our First Year Experience program at Colorado College. The class explores how our orientations toward “being human” shift in an era marked by human-caused climate and ecosystemic turmoil. The core problematic asks about human collectivity: Who are “we” as humans, and what kinds of “we” exist that can act, collectively? For anthropologists, the Anthropocene raises questions of human adaptability, resiliency, and social ecologies – of self, equitable communities and systems, and interdependency beyond the human. Existential questions also abound – how do we avoid fear and paralysis, and practice response-abilities? How can we find inspiration to “stay with the trouble” of these times? The first week of the course delved into all these aspects through film and diverse readings.

Colorado College’s block plan (in which students take just one course at a time, for 3.5 weeks) meant that the week we spent at our Baca Campus was the students’ second week of college--and that by the time we left, the course itself was nearly half over! (The student’s second block course will be a geological look at the Anthropocene, and also visit the SLV). At Crestone/Baca, we collaborated in a community-based learning with participants in the local Crestone/Baca Resiliency initiative, exploring governance, air, water, food, energy and “endings” (waste and end-of-life) facets of seeking resiliency in a remote, rural community. In effect, we explored the community as a case study of concerted efforts to rise to the challenges of the times.

Each student took on a segment from our schedule, and authored an ethnographic snippet of that portion of our class’s encounters. As a group, we then revised the document, holding careful conversations about storytelling, reciprocity, and creating constructive, honest representations. This course itself grew out of

long-term collaborations of many of the folks who appear below, including course instructors Sarah Hautzinger & Myra Jackson, who are CBR members. Our shared commitments and efforts toward planetary stewardship and thriving created this learning and relationship-building opportunity. In gratitude for all community members generously and knowledgeably shared with us, we offer this collection as a humble gift in return. May our shared work, best hopes, and visions for possible futures live on! Enjoy your reading, and profound thanks to all who wove into our visit.

– Sarah Hautzinger, Cheyenne Canyon, September 14, 2019

Sunday: 9/1/19

Roles of Governance in Building Resiliency by Lili Weir

Our arrival on the Baca campus left our group little time to appreciate the beautiful Sangre de Cristo mountains and the stillness of the surrounding desert where we would be spending our next week. We hopped out of the vans, shook off our grogginess, and joined Kirsten Scriber and Kate Steichen in the library for our introductory seminar exploring what different styles of governance could be effectively implemented in the Crestone area. The Crestone/Baca Resiliency, represented by Kate and Kirsten, welcomed our group with copies of the Crestone Eagle, their local newspaper, which created an atmosphere filled with their eagerness to embrace us as learners in their community.

Initially, Kate and Kirsten teamed up to present some of the community problems that Crestone/Baca Resiliency tries to address, such as energy access, food resources, and water accessibility. This revealed the root of the problem with the current makeup of the local government, or lack thereof. The town of Crestone, with a population of 143 people, is a municipality; the Colorado state government grants it the privileges of being an official government body, which include taxation, government funding, and community spaces. This poses a frustrating array of problems for the neighboring Baca Grande citizens, who comprise the majority of the population (around 1600 people) in the Crestone-Baca-Moffat area. Baca Grande is run by the Baca Property Owners Association (POA) meaning that only property owners have any sway in decision-making processes, and renters or others who live in the community have no say in communal policy. This poses a variety of challenges because the majority of property owners don't live locally, which makes them less invested in community matters and unlikely to vote. The

lack of eligible voter responses makes it difficult to change local policy because often the POA cannot meet quorum due to the property owners' unresponsiveness.

As they explained these issues and their possible solutions, Kate and Kirsten felt like they were resigned to this recurring debate, and had workshopped the solutions repeatedly. They spoke about turning Baca Grande into its own municipality that would work in conjunction with the POA, or simply eliminating the POA altogether. Many of these solutions are further complicated by issues such as transitioning from property dues to taxation, and lack of emergency response infrastructure in place. Then, Kirsten illustrated the perpetual challenge of governance in Baca: how the natural beauty and suburban feel have created a radically diverse community, and how finding a balance between people's desire for autonomy and creating stability for the community is challenging. So when Kate opened the floor to us to brainstorm and create our ideal Baca government, we all broke out of our fog and eagerly tried to think of place-based solutions. The table dialogues that followed broadened my perspective on possible solutions, and deepened my understanding of the importance of active listening and designating tasks to suit people's strengths. For instance, the majority of my group all had similar ideas about changing the voter eligibility system. However, Casmali's proposal of a system of committees, each designated to their own individual issue, contrasted my idea of a more broadly reaching government that managed all issues, and ultimately shifted my framework of thinking. These exchanges, to me, are invaluable in the process of creating shared communal values that reflect a diverse population. Aside from the academic discussions, my table group was also able to break out of the intellectual mindset and laugh a bit about our lack of spelling abilities and ingenious corrections.

Susanna, Zach, and I presented the giant sticky notes each of our tables had created with an outline of our common ideas. My group chose to emphasize

changing the criteria for voter eligibility and creating a governing body that is representative of the people's needs. Susanna's table broke their action plan into four steps: the creation of a communication committee, a change to residence based voting, the establishment of a city council, and all dues being paid to the city instead of the POA. And lastly, Zach represented his table's idea of joining Baca with the Crestone municipality and forming special interest groups to address localized Baca issues. Following these summaries was a quick photoshoot, and our class eased into our discussions concerning leadership, its connotations, and whether or not singular leadership roles are necessary in terms CBR meetings and what the Baca community needs. Ultimately what struck me most about our first activity of the week were Kate's thoughts on how it is "vital" for people within a small community to simply "get along with one another" to create a balanced governing system, and I brought this thought forward with me throughout our time in Crestone-Baca.

Monday: 9/2/19

Morning hike and discussion with Sandy Skibinski by Olivia Coutre

Photos and artwork in this section by Olivia Coutre

We all circled up in the morning shade on the gravel parking lot of the North Crestone Creek Trail and met the soft-spoken Sandy Skibinski. She told us of her outdoor-filled childhood and the years she resided in a cabin in the Maine woods. We were all instantly captivated by her smooth and reflective anecdotes. Sandy instructed us to observe the stream in silence, emphasizing that a watershed is not limited to just the bowl of water created by the mountains, but also the air,

currents, flora, fauna, soil, rocks, stars, planets, moons, atmosphere above, and all human and nonhuman interactions it encounters.



Watershed drawing by Olivia Coutre

We started by walking uphill of the trailhead and while sitting on the bank, I felt the cool rush of water and eyed the many logs hectically lining and shaping the stream's flow. The dappled sunlight, the moist moss, and the single mushroom sitting nearby almost put me in a meditative state, but something made my heart beat faster than it should have. The crashing of the water along the rocks and logs made me anxious when I felt like I needed to be peaceful. Later in our discussion, my classmate,

John Byers, spoke to my feelings by explaining that the wild segment of stream made him feel less significant as a human being.

We walked a few minutes downstream adjacent to an empty campsite and repeated our observation. While sitting on the shores I found a corner of a granola bar wrapper, signifying the human presence the stream has experienced. I tried my best to drop any of my expectations and I was surprised to feel the water's calm and orderly flow. It didn't lack power but it wasn't strewn with debris and large rocks which made me feel safer than before.

The third stop was at the bottom of the road at Sacred Land Sanctuary and it followed this theme of tranquility and was even more collected and contained than the other segments. It had been altered to a pristine presence, each stone held its place and the blazing sun shone on the glossy moss. Sandy instructed us not to move the rocks because the energy flow of the site was specially curated by those before us. The banks of the stream stayed straight and even, which suggested human alteration and a more serene aura. It was clear this spot had been tended to and appreciated by many, and our class was quick to notice and respect this difference. We all felt calmer as the stream went from wild to tame and untouched to controlled.

Under undraped tipi poles, Sandy asked us to share our experiences from the stream and how we affected the stream's energy and vice versa. We talked about how our heart rate, clarity, and ability to reflect depended on the wildness of the stream. Alek Malone noted that he felt like the whole place seemed to breathe with him and Zach Ginn felt like the space he took up created an echo that distorted the earth's pulse.

Sandy then explained how the water reacts to everything it experiences such as light, heat, chemicals, and material matter which changes its chemistry and composition. In my head I easily connected it to the story she told us earlier about the leaching of aluminum into rivers, which killed trout. This is a major concept we needed to understand to truly appreciate our waters: we can't be polluting something necessary for our sustenance. Sandy then introduced us to the works of Dr. Masaru Emoto on water consciousness. Emoto asserts the very way we show up to the water and what tone we used to speak to it, impacts its crystal structure when frozen. Later in the week, I found our class sitting next to a stream praising and comforting it, all because Sandy and other water activists changed the way we looked at water.



An image from the first spot on the river

Lastly, Sandy introduced us to a whole new way of thinking about solving the current environmental crisis. She said for people to truly care about the environment, they must spend significant time within it. As Sandy said, “It's easy to understand the physical sense of the environment but when you spend enough time observing it, there is another spiritual level you reach”

which in turn makes you care about it more. After hearing a story about a diseased tree in Sandy's front yard that she saved by listening to what it wanted, she explained to us that there's a sense of spirituality in nature and not everything can be explained by science. She said it's important to experience and be a part of nature's energy transfers and that we need to “work with the environment, not for it.”

We were encouraged to not think of water as just something that comes out of a faucet, but as a living, breathing, energy-filled being that we must find mutual respect with to survive. I think many of us spiritually connected with water for the first time in our lives, which balanced and enforced our connection with the natural world.

Monday: 9/2/19

Water Panel pt 1 by: Zach Ginn

Photos in this section by Zach Ginn

I walked into Baca campus' conference room to see an aging man sitting in front of a striking poster: a bright blue water droplet ringed by the words "NO WATER EXPORT, NOT ONE DROP!" Wearing a striped button-up shirt tucked neatly into faded jeans, the man pensively introduced himself as John Loll, a board member of the Baca Grande Water and Sanitation District. As the other members of the group had not shown up at the 1:00 start time, Sarah sat with him and opened the panel.

Fiddling with a large turquoise ring on his finger, John began speaking about water in the San Luis Valley. He explained how the San Juan snowpack melts every spring and flows into the Rio Grande, an artery of life that winds through the western part of the valley. On the eastern slopes of the Sangre de Cristo mountains, small streams



John Loll, Janie Thomas, and Chris Canaly

cascade down and seep into one of the largest high-altitude aquifers on Earth -- so large in fact, it rivals the Ogallala in size. As he spoke somberly about the "downhill trend in available water" over recent years, I couldn't help but remember

my father quitting his job as a raft guide in New Mexico because of the low flows. We often griped about how Colorado withholds the majority of the water for agriculture. I asked John how Coloradans think about the communities downstream and he responded by explaining the compact between Colorado, New Mexico, Texas, and Mexico that dictates proper water distribution. I felt conflicted learning about how climate change associated drought put pressure on people on the other side of the border too.

John detailed how the San Luis Valley was built on a culture of agriculture and ranching. Hundreds of years ago, the first Spanish invaders established water rights for settler families. These seniority water rights remain very valuable because they have first priority in low water years. As Anglo colonizers also moved into the valley, their younger water rights came into play, creating unique cultural interactions between Hispanic and Anglo farmers. These two groups, John explained, were united by the water because “the water, not the money, create[d] the agricultural culture.” John’s explanation of the history of the valley was suddenly cut short as Myra Jackson and Janie Thomas entered the room. The class buzzed with an air of uncertainty as the two newcomers argued that the start time was actually 1:30. Janie, with curly white hair shining against tanned skin, sat down at the panel table and Myra retired to a seat on the edge of the room. Leaving little room for the newcomers to speak, John circled back to the poster behind him. He spoke of the numerous attempts by corporations to export well water over the mountains to the front range. Amid this conflict, John asserted that “they’re fighters here. They will continue to fight. They won’t give up.”

John’s words were pointedly demonstrated in the next hour. Suddenly, a woman wearing tortoise-shell glasses hurried into the room and sat down. She introduced herself as Chris Canaly, and without hesitation proclaimed that “water connects everything.” While her exuberance breathed some energy into the room,

Chris' late arrival seemed to irritate John. Pushing on, Chris started into an explanation of her history with Crestone. She moved to the area in 1988 and was quickly confronted with an American Water Development Incorporated employee trying to buy water rights to export water to the Front Range for over-development. Chris explained that she felt "horrified" by this corporate exploitation in "the middle of no-where." In response, Chris and her flour supplier (for her bakery) Greg Gosar founded Citizens for San Luis Valley Water. She explained how the threat of water export was "an amazing galvanizer" that brought everyone in the community together. Her words reflected a common theme that environmental crisis brings people together. After twelve years of fighting for her community through water courts and legislation, the 2000 Great Sand Dunes National Park Act "became an anchor for the valley to start focusing on preservation." Drawing larger lessons from Chris' story, Chris asserted the importance of diversity and understanding vulnerability. Chris poignantly stated that "it took all these voices to come together" in order to beat the water corporations, and that often corporations tried to "take advantage of people's vulnerabilities." Her individual experience in Crestone speaks to larger systems of oppression and community resilience. Understanding these systems through stories will help all of us move forward in these times.

Water Panel pt 2 by Sophia Jacober

I entered the water panel on Monday afternoon with a keen interest. For the past eight years, I spent the greater half of my time farming the soil on the San Luis Valley floor. As a result of my background in agriculture, water has played an important role in my lifestyle, and I was excited to learn about the water needs and

concerns for the Crestone/Baca community and how they interacted with the rest of the San Luis Valley. After the miscommunication on the panel's time, and Chris' history of involvement with the San Luis Valley's water exportation issues, Sarah proposed a question concerning the water issues in the Crestone/Baca area that redirected Chris' speech. While the class's attention and energy drained after half an hour of listening to John Loll, we stayed with Chris as she went into a brief explanation about her involvement in water sovereignty in the SLV. She informed us that the main issues facing the water district are funding, infrastructure, and a large amount of water loss during transport. Since the majority of the community's supply of water is pumped up the valley from the Open Basin Aquifer under the valley floor, the CBR is focused on addressing these water issues in order to become more resilient and less dependent on the valley's water district. The infrastructure that is in place to pump the water is old and is prone to leakage. As we learned later in the week, the San Luis Valley imports energy from coal-powered plants, and a large amount of that energy is used to pump water out of the aquifer, beneath the valley floor, up to the community at the base of the Sangre de Cristos. This seemed to be a point of debate within the CBR. Myra interrupted the flow of Chris' speech by calling the CBR out for not taking more steps towards establishing a reliable pumping system. John Loll addressed the fact that the San Luis Valley has large potential for solar energy due to its high levels of solar radiation, but he seemed unsettled that as yet there is no initiative by the Crestone/Baca community as well as the San Luis Valley as a whole towards switching to renewable energy sources. From what Chris mentioned during the panel, the Crestone/Baca Resilience Project is trying to find more sustainable systems of obtaining water for the community by using solar energy pumps and better infrastructure, but has yet to find a clear plan for implementation.

The idea of adapting and action during the Anthropocene was a major discussion topic throughout our week at Crestone and was not left out during our water panel. The Crestone/Baca Resiliency Project is working hard to adapt to the crisis that would arise as a result of climate change. Riled by an earlier disagreement with Myra, surrounding a lack of off grid pumps that would provide water in case of an emergency fire, John voiced his belief that “the human species as a whole is bad at adapting” to change. Chris countered his pessimism by voicing her optimism for the future. She believes strongly in the younger generation’s ability to adapt and rise to the occasion presented by climate change. This statement increased the tension throughout the room. Chris cut him off by stating that he should not be saying something like that to a room full of young people because we are the hope for the future adaptation. It made me wonder why he was helping find a more resilient supply of water if he had no faith that the human species could adapt in time like the Anthropocene to prevent an existential crisis.

Once the conflict of human’s ability to adapt died down, the panel discussion was brought to a close by Janie Thomas with the idea that water has a memory. While the other two panelists were discussing other water related issues, Janie passed around a book, whose title had come up in our morning’s discussion with Sandy Skibinski, by Dr. Masaru Emoto called *The Hidden Messages of Water*. It was a thin, paper-backed book with a photograph of a frozen water crystal on the cover. Inside, it contained more pictures of water crystals that had been exposed to different emotions, in liquid state, then frozen to make intricate crystalline structures. I found it hard to believe that water could create such different crystals depending on whether it was played Beethoven or rock music. It was an interesting topic to think about, especially after spending the morning sitting by the South Crestone Creek. Feeling the energy of the creek in the three locations, with varying human impact, made me wonder if it was possible for water

to be impacted by humans in a deeper sense rather than just the health of the ecosystems around it. Even though many of us found it hard to believe that water could retain emotions, the idea emphasized the need for water to be handled with extreme care and thought.

Tuesday: 9/3/19

Off-Grid Home by Casmali Lopez

Photos in this section by Sarah Hautzinger (1) & Kate Steichen (2 & 3)

Framed under the picturesque Sangre De Cristo Mountains, surrounded by the wind-twisted and dancing pinyon-juniper forest, Janet Woodman and Kizzen Laki welcomed us into their home, an example of off-the-grid living and sustainability. In the tour they addressed three main components necessary for thriving off the grid: energy, water, and philosophy. Each intrinsically connected to the others, and holistically wove together their story of living.



As we walked into their home, they noted that this was “probably the most people we have fit in here.” The coolness of the house hit us immediately. Janet and Kizzen stood framed by the natural light shining through their windows. The light illuminated a cozy and

welcoming house filled with life and art. Originally the cabin had been a bunkhouse for a ranch. They laughed with us and explained how the first time they

saw the house, a few cows stared back at them from inside of the falling-apart cabin. When they bought the land they had the option of tearing the place apart, instead they decided to salvage the wood and rebuild the cabin. The house was rebuilt using the 140 year old hand planked juniper logs and 100 percent recycled materials. Kizzen's son worked in the solar business and helped install a rudimentary off-the-grid photovoltaic system. Over the years they have had it upgraded. They described how living with solar was “living with free power.” It contained both moments of constraint but also lessons about using energy when it is available. Living off of solar “puts you in touch with your energy consumption.” Some days the battery is full and they are not using the extra solar energy, in which case, “We should do something! Batteries full, let's vacuum!”



What if we all used energy in such a way? Utilizing it when we had it, but also learning those lessons that restriction also gives, about energy conservation? Surely, at the least we would use much less fossil fuel. This also gives us a new modality of relating to energy. Not energy on demand, but energy in relation to necessary load and power availability. In Kizzen’s words, “You really gotta plan.”

The house is also designed to use passive solar in multiple ways. The aforementioned warm light shines through south-facing windows that have an overhang specifically designed at such an angle as to allow the sun to shine into the house during winter and to provide shade during the summer. Thermal mass is

utilized to allow for a near-refrigerator temperature for their cold-room pantry, allowing them to preserve food without taxing their photovoltaic system. They explained that thermal mass, or dense materials, could be used to absorb enormous amounts of heat and hold it to be redistributed during cold periods or used as insulation. Kizzen thought for a moment before saying, “You can open it up; it’s not that messy,” and Janet allowed us to walk into the pantry. The cool therein was striking. They noted that everyone says “Oh, you have your air conditioner on?” Their response; “No, none for us!”

Kizzen hauled water for four years before she could afford a well. In the water-scarce area where they are located, people were sceptical that they would find water for a well. Kizzen and Janet dowsed, “communicated with the earth,” and with the help of friends using everything from Lakota willow sticks to coat



hangers, found a spot that supplied them with water. The area they drilled was a natural fissure in the crust that allows the water underneath to gush up. Their years of hauling water taught them about water consumption and water saving. Thus even though they don't necessarily need to, they utilize grey water systems and conserve water

through all means possible. Kizzen and Janet noted that they have developed a respect for the water due to their previous intimate relationship with it, “Just keep

track of the things you are using!” Kizzen and Janet’s relationship to both water and energy is one that is not concerned with “just what you do, but what you feel and how you connect.” For them Water and Energy are honored because their use necessitates connection and dependance. Once you see that connection, “It’s like being with your eyes open.” In normalcy and emergency they are connected; they have reliable water and energy. They have reached a point of thriving. To sum it up beautifully, Kizzen explained that, “Being off grid is just wonderful, just eating sunshine like a plant.”

Class visit to Janet and Kizzen's garden by Wild Lucy

Photos in this section by “Wild” Lucy Capone

Janet and Kizzen’s garden sat slightly downhill from their off-grid house and was surrounded by a wooden fence. The garden was about half the size of a football field and filled with all the colors of the rainbow. There were flowers of colors and shapes I hadn’t even seen before. The Sangre de Cristos loomed in the background, making it seem almost unearthly. There must have been enough vegetables in the garden to feed the two women for a whole year. We saw asparagus, swiss chard, lettuce, carrots, many kinds of peas, and countless others. We walked around and picked snap peas off the vine and they were some of the sweetest peas I’d ever tasted. Some people pulled carrots out of the ground and ate them too. Interspersed between the vegetables were flowers of all kinds. Taller bushes and vines grew along the fence, resembling a green wall. Walking



around, seeing, tasting and smelling all these foods growing from the earth I felt like a kid again. It was exciting to see veggies at all different stages of life. I wanted to get lost in the maze of edible plants.



A crucial aspect of the garden were the compost piles that sat off to the side. As of our visit, there were two main piles of compost. The first--and newest--resembled a pile of rotting food scraps.

The other was more decomposed and had squash plants growing on top of it. I had never seen this before and was a little confused, but Janet explained that the squash plants help to further decompose the compost. A third pile was decomposed soil ready to be added to the beds. In addition to

composting their own household food scraps and yard waste, they get donations of overripe fruits and vegetables from the local food bank. Janet and Kizzen pointed out how most commercial plants come in



sterilized dirt. However, bacteria are important for soil health, so when Janet and Kizzen sell or give away plants they pot them in dirt from their compost pile which has plenty of healthy bacteria in it. In terms of irrigation, black hoses ran along the



ground through each of the beds providing drip irrigation in the dry environment.

With Janet and Kizzen's well, groundwater is plentiful, but surface water is not.

Next to the garden was a little fenced-in area where they keep bees. The fence is electric to keep out hungry bears

and coyotes, which have been problematic in the past. The bees provided honey for Janet and Kizzen, but also served an important role as pollinators of the garden. In a way it's like they have a mutualistic relationship; the bees provided honey and pollination, and in return they were protected from predators by the electric fence. [Haraway!]



Something that struck me was how frequently water and electricity conservation were highlighted throughout their discussion. This attention to eliminating possible areas of waste caught my attention. Living off grid breeds a



whole new mindset of awareness about where your limited resources are going. It makes you conscious of every leaky faucet, it corrects bad habits of leaving electronics plugged in, and it brings us back closer to the minimum of what we really need.

PEBL by Griff O'Neil

Following an insightful and inspiring morning at Janet and Kizzie's beautiful home and garden, we returned to Baca campus to enjoy a hearty lunch, and what proved to be an entertaining display of technological advancement with Vince Palermo.

Vince, described by some as "a total silver fox," rocked a solar-powered fan hat, and simultaneously taught us a lesson about sustainability, practicality, and high fashion. He set the tone early; his youthful enthusiasm was evident while he gave us the full rundown on his personal, sustainable mode of transportation; Better Bike's PEBL (he called it Personal Electronic Bike for Living, but we weren't clear that this was the official meaning behind the acronym).

Better Bike was founded in 2016 by the father-son duo, Kevin and Nevin, who sought to "provide sustainable and alternative transportation through small eBike Based vehicle innovations." Quickly, their idea took off as they found significant funding through crowdsourcing on the online platform Kickstarter—exceeding their initial goal of \$20,000.

At first glance, the PEBL appeared to be a shell, resembling a smart-car precariously mounted on a tricycle base. However, as Vince highlighted the bells and whistles of his ride, we came to understand that this was an advanced and impressive means of transportation, perfect for a simple Baca lifestyle. Designed for use in all seasons and conditions, Vince's PEBL boasted features like max speeds of 20MPH, cruise control, regenerative braking, full lighting, suspension, and pedals that provide additional power when necessary. Most importantly, however, was that this vehicle produces zero emissions, running entirely on a lithium-ion battery powered engine.

Vince, being the model citizen he is, took things a step further, achieving the pinnacle standard of sustainable transportation through utilizing a photovoltaic solar array rewired to facilitate his PEBL charger. He demonstrated his deep understanding of energy management and described his endeavor to entirely rewire the electrical systems in his home to leave absolutely zero carbon footprint in his daily travels. This conversion of electricity was necessary given the type of power

provided by his passive photovoltaic system— from DC (direct current), to AC (Alternating Current).

Most importantly, when asked if the PEBL helped him to pick up ladies, Vince offered only a sly grin— a testament to his unquestionably humble nature. May Vince serve as an inspiration to us all, not just for being a model environmentally-oriented citizen, but for doing so with such style.

Tuesday 9/3/19:

“Caminito” by Emma Fitzpatric

Photos in this section by Sarah Hautiznger



We began our “Caminito”, our shortened version of the Crestone Camino, a pilgrimage to many of Crestone’s spiritual centers, at Crestone’s Haidakhandi Universal Ashram. While there we

met in the community’s kitchen in an earthship, an energy-efficient structure made of recycled materials. We had the pleasure of drinking chai tea and eating cake while our host, Bill Aldinger, told us about the history of the Ashram and detailed the energy efficiency of the earthship. The earthship, which was constructed in the late ‘80’s out of recycled tires, uses passive solar engineering, solar panels and propane to regulate temperature and fuel amenities. The Ashram is always

accepting guests and volunteers to help build a second long-term resident hermitage. They are also accepting monetary donations for the construction of the building through a GoFundMe, which can be accessed through this [link](https://www.gofundme.com/f/help-finish-solar-hermitage?pc=wd_md_campimage_r):

https://www.gofundme.com/f/help-finish-solar-hermitage?pc=wd_md_campimage_r

If you do want to stay at the Ashram, for either personal seclusion or for the sole purpose of helping them out, you must follow their daily schedule and practice “karma yoga,” which Bill described as saying prayer while and by serving. After we finished our wonderful tea and cake, we started the “caminito” walk/hike, which was intended to begin at the Ashram and end at the Crestone Mountain Zen Center.

We walked the “caminito” mostly in silence, not only to be one with the sounds of Nature and our thoughts, but also to respect those at the Zen Center who were taking a week of personal time. While we did get a little lost on our hike and ended up driving to the Zen Center, we still experienced a small section of the Camino.

When we arrived at the Zen Center, we were greeted by Christian Dillo, a Resident Teacher and Director at the Zen Center. We had read an essay of his earlier in the class, which touched on using Buddhism to understand what is happening in the Anthropocene, and how we should best respond. Dillo told us that while the Zen Center was not off-grid, they do have a zero-carbon vision for the future. The vision is coming into practice in three rounds: using propane instead of electric, building a PV solar system, and a collection of smaller projects that are easier to fund. [While the changes they are making are definitely positive, our previous activities at the Ashram and at Janet and Karen’s House, which were both off-grid buildings, made the Zen Center seem less remarkable.] Dillo then

explained his experience with the Anthropocene and the Zen Center and how those stories are intertwined.

Like many people, the facts of the climate crisis scared and overwhelmed him. In his young adulthood, he did not feel grounded enough to do the necessary work to make any meaningful change; and that feeling of not being grounded is what led him to Zen. He realized that he needed to work on self-care in unison with his environmental work. We were very shocked when he revealed that the energy company in Crestone charges 50% more for renewable energy, and they are not forthcoming about why the price is that high. Dillo believes that for the access to renewable energy to be more universal, change has to happen on the state scale. He also briefly told us about the book he is writing titled Zen Lessons for an Ecological Age, which seems to be an expanded version of the essay we read.

Life at the Zen Center follows a very rigid schedule. The wake up bell rings at 4:30 am, and then there is meditation until 9 am breakfast, followed by scheduled work and study for the rest of the day. Sundays and Monday afternoons are set aside for free time for residents and guests. I understood Dillo's assertion that he doesn't think he could wake up at 3 or 4 in the morning if it wasn't for helping others do the same; it is a mutually supported habit. When we asked what the best way to get into Zen is, he recommended attending a place like the Zen Center, where you can receive instruction from a qualified teacher. Teaching visitors and guests is actually Dillo's main job at the Zen Center. Dillo then began to talk about "the value of consciousness" and human suffering, but it started raining, so he cut it short. We were very grateful for the opportunity to talk with him, as we were not expecting to have the opportunity.

Kofi by Adri Gautreaux

“Remember the X-men? You are just like them, heroes who are capable of saving the world.” Alexander “Kofi” Washington speaks with resounding spirit, his voice reverberating through the living room as all eighteen of us are closely gathered with our taco dinners. “You are significant beyond measure,” he drills into us. Wow, me? all of us simultaneously ponder. Kofi, who grew up in high crime Gary, Indiana, turned spiritual guardian, protector of land and people, and Sun Dancer, indulged our growing minds with his wisdom. He opens, preaching that if “we can embrace” our worldly significance then “we will undergo a transformation [that he experienced during his decade living with indigenous populations] like at Wounded Knee.” Having been adopted by elders Crazy Horse and Wesley Black Elk, he was taught a prophecy, one that ancient tribal chief, Crazy Horse, declared on the site of Wounded Knee before his demise. The prophecy as told to us (and reportedly to the white massacrists at the time) is as follows: “My people gon’ come back; [they’ll] come back in red skin, yellow skin, white skin, and black skin.” And according to Kofi, they did. Kofi earned the honor of representing the black race; after being told the tribe was “waiting for him” to stand for “all people of all cultures.” He was joined by yellow skin representing air; red, the land; and white as water. Such diverse and illuminating experiences allowed Kofi to understand that there lies “a morphogenic field that connects all beings” which explains emotions of “evolving together as one being.”

Kofi emphatically explained that our “human robes” eclipse the realization that our spirits are ancient; this he was sure of having experienced through goosebumps, or as he encouraged us to call them, “godbumps,” in our presence. Kofi has taken on such immense spiritual endeavors not to worship, but to honor his ancestors as that is “the most important part of being alive,” to honor lineage. Kofi circled back to connect his thoughts, mentioning that it is imperative that we

never let go of our child-like tendencies and that all lives are connected in standing for planet earth.

This man exudes mysticism as he elaborates upon the power of indigenous medicine and prayer claiming he cured a woman's terminal cancer because he "gives himself to the medicine." To listen to Kofi preach of the divine feminine and the divinity of man was moving, the room was both enchanted by the words that left his lips and uncomfortable with his references to heteronormativity. Although he was speaking from a place of heteronormative terms, it is important to recognize his culture and way of life and how that may not be synonymous with ours. A metaphor that stuck with the room expressing that "with a king there is always a queen" and that "they are interdependent as one is not trying to be the other, like a positive and negative charge, they work together." The most impactful message from Kofi remains, "know you are divine, be divine, and be who you are."

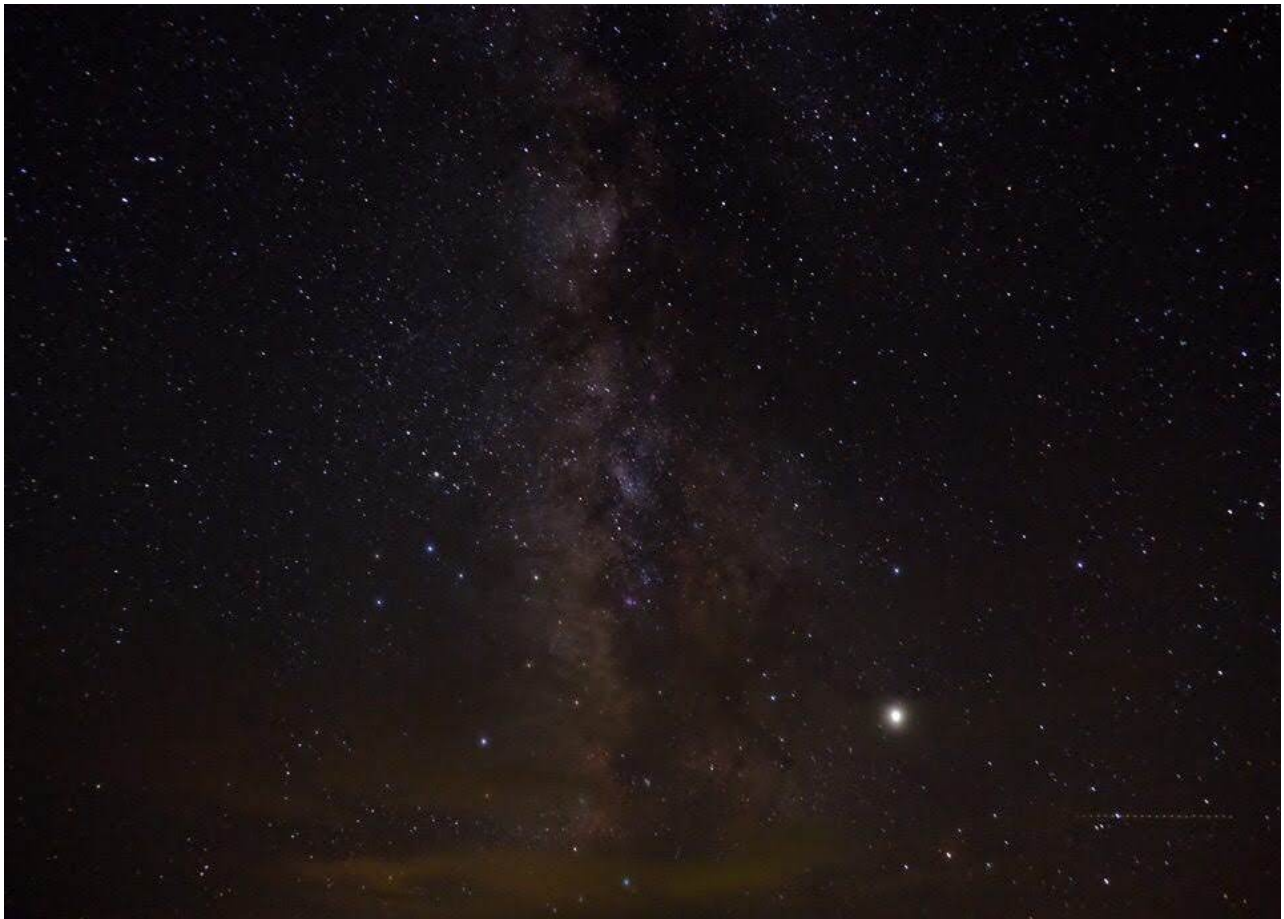
Kofi now has been asked to pray and protect the indigenous from a distance. During the event of Standing Rock, the elders requested him "to stay behind and pray for this brothers and sisters as they, and he knew that he would get violent while witnessing wrongdoings" to his people. As he is told to focus on his prayer, Kofi ends up in Crestone, protecting the sacred land that is the Crestone-Baca area.

Dark Skies by Robin Andresen

Photos in this section by "Wild" Lucy Capone

I vividly remember the first night that our group spent at the Baca Campus. Earlier that day we had driven for 3 hours, quickly set our stuff in the lodges, then rushed to a session on local politics and the Crestone/Baca Resiliency initiative, scarfed down dinner at Desert Sage, and finally returned to the lodges, minds full

of possibilities and predictions for the week to come. That night we were overwhelmed, but full of hope and curiosity. As the sun set, curiosity drew us to the roof of the lodge to stargaze. We each stepped out onto the roof to witness the cosmos unfurl above us, deep and dense with stars. We laid on our backs and watched intently for shooting stars, trying to pick constellations out of the dense cosmic tableau, and waxing philosophically about mortality and divinity. The simple pleasure of an unpolluted night sky had reinvigorated our worn-out minds and injected us with creativity and inspiration, turning what could have been a monotonous and weary night into one of intimacy and communion.



A photo of the night sky from the roof of Lodge A

Two days later, Bob Bohley, the amateur volunteer astronomy ranger for Great Sand Dunes National Park, gave us a presentation on the Dark Sky Association and its involvement in the San Luis Valley. He told us that due to the towering Sangre De Cristo Mountain Range, nighttime lights from the Front Range do not pollute the sky of the San Luis Valley, and thus the nighttime is exceptionally dark. In fact, Crestone's unpolluted cosmos is sacred, being one of the darkest sites in the USA. There is a crucial initiative underway to preserve the cosmos of the San Luis Valley.

On the entire planet there exists only 13 Dark Sky Reserves, a shockingly low number considering that prior to the invention of the lightbulb 140 years ago our entire planet would have been considered a Dark Sky Reserve. The loss of visible stars in urban areas holds serious implications for migrating birds. During their migrations, birds depend on the motion of stars to find their way. Bohley told us that when these birds fly into urban areas, they lose sight of the stars and their migrations get disrupted until they can find their way back into a darker area. Unfortunately, these urban environments can prove deadly for birds, as the reflective windows of skyscrapers disorient them and can cause deadly collisions with windows.

According to Bohley, 80% of people on Earth today will live and die without having seen the Milky Way due to artificial light reflecting off the atmosphere. The global lightening of the night sky isn't only an issue for stargazers; human pineal glands rely on cues from the darkening sky in order to trigger the production of melatonin, a chemical which allows us to sleep. Brighter night skies have undoubtedly contributed to the epidemic of insomnia plaguing urban developed areas of Earth.

Another effect of the night sky, which the Anthropocene class learned that first night at Baca, is that the cosmic tableau has incredible, inspirational energy.

Cultures worldwide have been tapping into this energy for centuries, spinning stories and navigating dark lands and waters by the stars. The desire to preserve dark skies reaches beyond nostalgia, beyond any stubborn resistance to change held by stargazing old-timers. Stars inspire people to look beyond themselves and forge an understanding of the vastness of the universe. This act of bringing people together and opening up the world around them fosters resilience in a rapidly changing world.

Wednesday: 9/4/19

Restorative Justice by Alek Malone

Photos in this section by Mary Andrews



Wednesday morning was the third morning of our week. In the days leading up to it, our class had been exposed to the Crestone/Baca community's relationship with water, energy, and how the community was governed, but not yet to what would happen if someone's actions went awry. Walking into a meeting about justice in southern Colorado, thoughts of sheriffs and cowboys come to mind, but not in Crestone/Baca. Here a more holistic approach takes priority. When the class met with Molly Rowan Leach, she enlightened

us about the meaning of restorative justice in Saguache County. As defined in our meeting that morning, restorative justice is looking back at a conflict from a holistic perspective to look at more than just the specific incident. This method acknowledges the imbalance between parties and works to build a relationship of understanding as a supplement for punitive justice, a process that 75% of people who believe it is needed, do not think it is actually affective.

In our discussion with Molly, she led us through the process both by describing it and by using our class as an example. As we asked her questions she used techniques such as reflective listening to move the conversation forward whilst taking the time to make the speaker feel acknowledged. This process led to a level of comfort that spilled over to all of the students, making them more willing to participate. This willingness to participate in the discussion that she created mirrored the restorative justice process. The fact that the entire process is only started by the volunteering of the giver(s)/(offender(s)) and the receiver(s)/(victim(s)) of harm is the basis of what makes this process so influential in the lives of both parties.

As the conversation continued more questions arose: "Are there crimes that are too gruesome and violent for restorative justice to even be an option?"; "How does Restorative Justice work in places with differing opinions and ideologies?" As this was said, nods could be seen around the room. Molly answered these questions in two stages: reflective questioning and question answering.

In regards to the possibility of some crimes being too violent for restorative justice, the answer was that any crime could be too violent depending on the willingness of the community and of the affected parties to volunteer for the process. Molly cited Crestone's ability to go through this process as an example of both good and bad. The major positive was that the community showed immense willingness, though the process was not gone about as smoothly as it could have

been. The affected parties were not ready to be put into a position beyond that of talking with the facilitator when they started. Molly explained that the discrepancy was misreading willingness as readiness, rather than fully acknowledging the needs of those involved, something that must always be held front and center.

In regards to differing ideals, she explained that finding common ground was the best solution. Creating a person-to-person or a circle process of storytelling between the affected parties, to find common ground humanizing the giver of harm, allows for the restoration to take place, internal tension and hatred can be let free. This common ground gives a basis for respect and some sort of relationship.

Following the questions on creating common ground, Molly had us join her in another room to be part of one of the aforementioned circle processes. We sat on the floor in a large circle looking at each other wondering what we were about to do when the talking piece was brought out. It was a cylinder forged out of the barrel of a gun specifically to be used to create a peaceful conversation, a perfect metaphor for the way restorative justice works as a peaceful resolution to a painful beginning. Seemingly at ease, Molly started the circle off by sharing with us her nickname, Molly Hatchet. The circle proceeded to follow suit, offering up names both recently used and long forgotten, such as The goat, Marv, Shaq, Sal, Phil, and Myro. As the talking piece moved through the circle smiles began to enlarge and laughter became freer. This circle and this laughter showed us truly the potential that restorative practice has. If it can help create a family out of seventeen homesick teenagers, then it has the potential to resolve almost any conflict.

Thursday 9/5/19

Mock Cremation by Susanna Mirick

Photos in this section by “Wild” Lucy Capone

During our week at Baca we woke up each morning ready to have a completely new experience studying part of the Crestone/Baca Community. We had the opportunity to meet people involved in all types of environmental issues and community involvement such as the water, energy, and governance groups. The mock cremation was by far the most new and different experience we participated in throughout our time at Crestone/Baca.

It was fascinating to begin to consider how and why we care for people who pass away as we do. Paul Kloppenburg explained what he saw as the importance of owning the passing of a loved one, rather than immediately discarding the emotions, and the person’s body, to move on out of fear. He encouraged us to consider why the traditional funeral system exists. I agree with Paul’s analysis that people tend to call a funeral home and move the body out of their home quickly, because of their shock and fear. Paul criticized the corporate culture and unnecessary sense of fear associated with the local morgue. I appreciated the thought and consideration of his suggestion for people to keep the body of their loved one who has passed in their home surrounded by love for a few days before moving on to the cremation. One facet of the Crestone End of Life Project is teams, including the Care of Body team, who families can call to come to their home and conduct the initial care of the body. They help prepare the body to stay within the family for a few days after the person’s passing. This time allows people to accept what has happened and embrace it without being dismissive or hiding from their emotions. They are allowed the chance to contemplate their grief and shock, which can help it to diminish by the time of cremation.

The Crestone End of Life Project (CELP) grew out of a community desire to take more care of loved ones who have passed. Throughout our week in Crestone we heard many references to how Crestone is in a rural area at the end of the road and in need of the ability to be self sufficient in the event of a disaster. Paul and Gussie Fauntleroy explained how if a family in Crestone wants a traditional burial, the hearse must drive all the way out from Salida and then the friends and family need to drive back for the funeral. When looking at it from this perspective, it is very logical to have a local, community based cremation rather than driving many miles for a traditional service. Learning about the many elements involved in cremation was extremely captivating, and makes sense as a possibly better alternative to the traditional funeral.

The mock cremation was an emotional and somewhat shocking experience for our class. We began with our classmate Zach, who generously volunteered to



be the body, lying down on a wooden platform. We covered him with a blanket and then six of us ceremoniously carried him down the winding path and around the circle in the cremation area before placing

him on the pyre. The slow and steady drum led us along with incense burning in front followed by a procession of classmates holding juniper branches behind us. There was an overall sense of surprise as to how realistic the procession and following formalities were. Zach stayed still on the pyre while people placed

wood, juniper and flowers on top of him. Allison Wonderland and Paul then explained how the fire is tended. We examined the rods for poking the fire and considered the heat along with the necessity of an even burn and constantly covering the body. They helped us to visualize the clouds of smoke rising up and blowing different directions depending on the wind that day, including the daunting image of the town of Crestone covered in a layer of cremation smoke.

Afterwards, many students were at a loss of how to explain their emotions relating to the ceremony. I had to keep reminding myself throughout it that Zach was okay and, if he wanted to, he



could simply stand up and walk away from the pyre. For many people it stirred up emotions of friends or family member's passings, which gave the ceremony a very serious and somber tone. We were learning about the process while our classmate was lying on the pyre where so many people have previously been cremated. The emotions of the morning stayed with our class in a way that is continuously present but hard to articulate.

Thursday 9/5/19

Mountain Zen Garden + Speaker Steve Allen by Nick Bishop

Photos in this section by Mary Andrews



After a full cremation ceremony, our sun-dried bodies vanned our way to the Mountain Zen Garden. After a short stop at the loo, we worked our way around to the front entrance, an often forgotten (as explained

by our guides, abbot Steve Allen and his wife and fellow monk Angelique Farrow) practice of Zen in Crestone. The entryway was a rundown, wooden structure that had clearly seen good use over the years. On each side, and surrounding the entirety of the structure and garden, was a tan wall that clearly marked the boundary. This, as informed by Allen, was important in Zen practice, as it created two thresholds (inside and outside the Zen center). As we embarked on our journey into the garden, I immediately noticed the slightly muted color and vibrance. The pond was a dark brown; flowers that usually radiated the beauty of their deep purple and yellow appeared more bleak than usual. Maybe it was the arid climate, shortage of water to the area, or me being accustomed to lush gardens of the rainy Pacific Northwest. The garden showed signs of its potential to radiate beauty, and I am confident that it will again. One of the goals we learned from Zen's "grounded"

practice is its connection to the earth, garden, animals, life, and the overall importance in creating the harmony with nature, and this garden helped to reflect that practice.

As we remained circled near the pond, Allen’s calming voice continued to explain the practice of Zen, its intersectionality with everyday life, and the significance it has with the garden. Allen commented how Zen is “every day existence embedded in the natural world.” This demonstrates the significance of the garden in a zen center, and why it is a crucial aspect of the structure as a whole. It is also important to note how the garden acts as a “fundamental principle of organic life.” Allen lastly noted the use of his garden as a teacher, and critiqued other religions with their lack of connection to the earth.



We then moved into the kitchen, an octagonal space that led us to learn the importance of circles and squares and their significance in Zen architecture. We awkwardly squeezed around the outskirts of the room as Allen began

to speak, and in his calming tone, explained that “circles resemble heaven,” “squares the earth,” and octagons unify the symbolism of each.

Next we were led up the winding stairs on either side to a teaching room. Beautiful Buddhist art decorated the walls, and a late morning light shone through the windows on either side of a Buddha sitting at the front of the room. The

incense was lit as we took our seats on the cushioned ground or chairs filling the room, and perhaps most of us assumed meditation would precede. Before meditating, though, we listened. Allen preached a lot about meditation as a tool used to explore our sense fields that are intangible. Sight, touch, smell, sound, taste, are thrown out the window to explore the sense that “reveal the fundamentals of our own being.” He then described the pillars of Buddhism, which led him to explain the analogy of a “pendant and chain.” When a pendant is hung on a chain, it reflects independence, dependence, and interdependence. The pendant is an object independent of itself, needing the chain to be worn, creating the pendant’s dependence to the chain, and the interdependence between the two. Allen then compared religion and science, and asserted science’s inability to explain “why.” This comment provoked thought, as I was interested in how some minds depend on science to explain the “why,” but maybe this dependence needs a spiritual aspect as well. In reality, the detailed and spontaneous monologue had wandered onto a separate path than we anticipated.

A quote that stuck out to me was his mention of how “distractions allow you to recreate what you were going to say in a new way.” There is accuracy here to the function of distraction, and I also saw that distraction can lead to new wavelengths of thought and idea. At the end of the teaching session, Sarah was forced to make the awkward announcement that our departure would have to be imminent; we concluded, then, with a quick five-minute meditation. We thanked Allen and Farrow for their time, and scurried back down the windy stairs. It was an educational experience in spirituality and Zen that fully contributed to our diverse adventure.

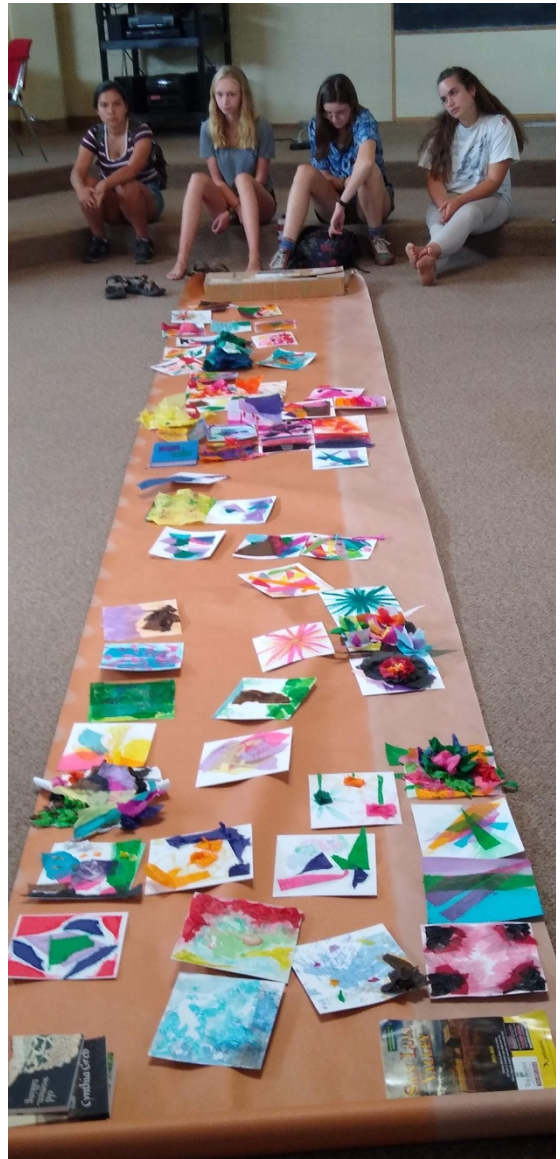
Thursday 9/5/19

Art and Mortality Workshop by Sanya Ramirez Rodriguez

Photos in this section by Sarah Hautzinger

On our fourth day at the BACA Campus, we covered interesting concepts: Waste, Death, and Dying. While the whole week was packed with newfound perspectives about natural elements this day started off with a staged cremation. The morning's cremation set the tone for the day.

After the staged cremation and the "Dharma" talk with Steve Allen, we had a workshop at 2:30. With a title as dire as "Art and Mortality," I was expecting a very serious talk about how the art world can help give a new perspective on the Anthropocene and help spread its awareness in a less intimidating, science-y way. However, I was pleasantly surprised to find that we would be sticking tissue paper onto a blank canvas with glue. This was one of the more entertaining lectures we've had all week.



At the beginning of the workshop, we received a few words from Noah Baen and Allison Wonderland about "finding resilience and strength by owning your feelings." As we went along to the workshop room where tissue paper, glue, water, and a small canvas was laid out in every table I found myself feeling like a child



again. The whole experience was a relief to me. We just glued things together and didn't work towards a specific goal.

First, we

worked on one canvas for three minutes, then another for 5, and the last one for 10. Between each canvas, we paused to take notes on how we were individually feeling in our notebook. As I glued, I found that each piece I placed changed, depending on what I was thinking about at the moment. Funny how that works, right? My pieces ranged from thoughts of the Anthropocene and life at home-- which created an incomprehensible amount of dark tissue paper and glue.

After the class was done creating own masterpieces, we separated into partners to talk about our pieces. As I spoke to my partner I realized how my thoughts directly affected my art and how I felt better just getting crafty. When the partner's sharing came to an end, it was time for people to speak on what they learned. Here's what I got from my classmates' sharing:

- The tissue was used as an art medium because of its difficulty to control;
- This demonstrates how we should not try and control our future, the way we tried to control the tissue because at the end of the day it is what it is;
- The activity got rid of expectations on what art should be because of how hard it is to control;
- It was messy and freeing

The comments can be related to the Anthropocene in the sense that we, as humans, don't know for certain how much time we have left in this way of life. All we can really do is prepare for change and acknowledge that we don't control everything.

After the sharing was over, Allison Wonderland shared a poem with us called “The Cure” by Albert Huffstickler. The poem was the most impactful for me because it stated that no one really gets over anything-- it becomes part of their experience. We don't get over things, our life's “shape” changes. I tend to ignore things when they're difficult to handle. I leave the house when there's conflict, and I ignore negative emotions, but this poem made me rethink everything I was ignoring.

This workshop made me realize that people don't know how to handle the fact that the world is dying due to our greed and bad habits, so they ignore it, when they should be changing the shape of their lives.

Thursday 9/5/19

Rewilding with Carolina by Sophia Nolan

Eighteen of us piled into two cars to drive up the hill to Carolina's home. All the seats were filled, lazily splayed legs and arms formed a mat of eighteen-year-olds. Quiet conversation hummed as we drove toward the evening's activity. Nobody knew quite what was ahead, except that we would be together, somewhere else, talking with someone new; this sense of unknowing had become a constant for us as the week unfolded.

Carolina's house sits on the side of a mountain overlooking the San Luis Valley. The dark wood seems like a natural extension of the deep forest that

surrounds it. Her driveway wraps around back, almost inviting cars to be hidden. There is no pavement. Flowers lace through her collection of gardens.

She waited, smiling, as we unloaded and gathered in front of her. The valley sat beyond our right shoulders, blanketed by a grey haze, even though the setting sun was flooding the far horizon with a deep purple.

“Rewilding,” she quietly proclaimed, “is the theme of tonight.” This word echoed in my mind as she explained that her life did not start here in Baca, but rather in cities and within the common, capitalistic culture. Eight years ago, when she was stirred by the question of “What is my, natural, positive place in this web of life?”, she moved into her van. Throughout her explorations, she kept circling back to Baca and Crestone, a place of intense natural beauty and spirituality.

As dusk set in, she led us up a set of stairs and onto her deck that looks out over the entire valley. She directed us to find a space and lay down. Maybe it was the threat of coming rain, but she seemed almost anxious to move along.

Our shuffling and de-shoeing quickly transitioned into silence. Then, as she began the exercise, I noticed how words seemed to drip out of her mouth, as if they were meant to flow together.

We all breathed in and out together as she told us to try to sense everything that was around us. *I’ve been to yoga classes before*, I thought, *I know how to do this*. But this porch was unlike any yoga studio; the space surrounding Carolina’s home is so vast that her prompt felt impossible. My mind jumped between the rain hitting my face, the sweeping valley below, and the uneven breath of my classmates.

Soon, she invited us to get up and walk around. Without any thought, we moved across the wooden boards, heels pounding. She stopped us, telling us to now move across the deck in any way other than forward. We skipped and spun and smiled. Then, she directed us to stomp, and then to speed walk as if we were

moving through city streets. Next we plugged our ears and rushed around the deck again. Then we moved silently. We giggled each time we neared collision. There was a sense of silliness in our “rewilding.”

Carolina stopped us after fifteen minutes of movement and introduced the idea of power and presence during the time of the Roman Empire. She described armies entering war for the first time in heavy boots. Stomping is a recent development in human history. We have always needed silence when moving through the outdoors. “This impact is transmitting into the land,” she suggested. “If you want to be in rapport with the land,” you must unlearn this practice of impact.

It was dark now. We followed Carolina down the stairs and across the street toward the woods. I stuck close behind her, wondering whether walking in the dark was part of her nightly routine.

A half mile up the trail the rain began to fall heavily on our faces and shoulders. I reached my hands out and stuck out my tongue, knowing that “rewilding” isn’t simply about walking. Rather, it is a welcoming of the natural world into your whole being.

Soaking wet and sitting in Carolina’s living room, she asked us to reflect. Those who spoke communicated a sense of awe over her practice of “rewilding.” Others, who didn’t reflect in the circle, later communicated discomfort; from the cold rain to the emphasis on silence, the sense of *kumbaya* didn’t mix well with everyone.

As the evening drew to a close, Carolina left us with a final, central message: “Be open to the possibility that magical things may happen [...] that extraordinary moments can happen in the most ordinary places.”

Friday 9/6/19

Winterizing the Community Garden by Mary Andrews

Photos and artwork in this section by Mary Andrews



Some of us were shoveling, more of us raking, a few carrying buckets of filler, and others bringing wheelbarrows of soil to where the organizers of the class were giving

directions. We were all sweaty and, yes, covered in horse manure, but fueled by the support and encouragement that the members of the Crestone/Baca community had graciously given us all week. We felt excited for the chance to give back to the community that had given us more than we could have asked for in knowledge, insight, openness, and opportunity. We began winterizing the community garden by practicing permaculture: adding first a layer of manure and straw to make mulch, and then creating a bed of soil on top. In doing this work, we were not only improving the garden, but also engaging with community members who have created the food group as part of the Crestone/Baca Resiliency Initiative (CBR).

As Ginny Ducale emphasized before we began our gardening, the mission of this group is not just to plan for resiliency by feeding their community, but also to bring people together in order to foster relationships between secluded groups within Crestone and Baca. (Ginny also mentioned that CBR is about planning for

crisis. This statement is a place where views differ within the CBR and wider community. Some folks are part of the movement because of sustainability reasons, or other personal reasons that do not fall under the umbrella of planning for a crisis.) For example, the Shumai, Sawachi, Crestone Youth Initiative, unify (global meditation), and CBR all work in natural agriculture together in the community greenhouse. Under the roof of this greenhouse, they grow organic food in a way that brings a spiritual component to their work. They are not damaging the earth with their way of agriculture, but rather pouring their love and kinship into the food and the land. Aha Arnie Alba and Erin Mcgrath, husband and wife who are major players in the food group, both touched on the shift from big agriculture to natural and small farms. We were all excited to see how this plays out in terms of climate action and resiliency. Aha talked a lot about how the work for the community is driven by his love for God. He called it “Jesus’ work.” This is another example of how the community is making the work of gardening a spiritual practice, and it was interesting to see how that exceptional drive to benefit the larger community is a shared goal for all the spiritual groups in the area. Although the CBR is majority a spiritual community, the idea of gardening for Jesus’ work that Aha so wholeheartedly emphasized is so different from the

Episcopal Church that gave the land up for the community and it also differs largely from the many other types of spiritual groups in the area. So, although there is a lot of common spiritual gardening, there are also problematic aspects to enforcing one



religious idea on a very diverse group of gardeners. Banding together and creating relationships to make that shift to natural agriculture even more drastic sounded like a great response-ability to me, and I was excited about the food group's encouragement to start a self-sustaining farm at Colorado College, or to take more action to enrich the CC farm that already exists!

In addition to bringing people in the community together, the food group has two clear goals: producing high quantities of high quality food and supporting gardens at local homes. These goals are being met by an incredible team of people from the community lead by Ginny Ducale. The team includes: Johnathan Drew, Michael Agape, Aha Arnie Alba, Erin McGrath, Maureen Eich VanWalleghan, and Miranda Jahalayiti Clendening among others who we did not have the pleasure of meeting. These people are monitoring and accounting for the food in Crestone and Baca that is supplied by three sources: commercial transport, local farms, and community food grown by their initiative. They were able to add this third tier of food supply because the episcopal church gifted the land for the garden, as well as a building on the property. They use this gift to store and serve free Saturday lunch (which is open to the whole community). Throughout our time in Crestone and Baca, it became clear that the community is striving, and succeeding, to become a self-sustaining community. This morning of gardening allowed us to contribute to that vision of a strong, resilient community, even in the time of the anthropocene.

Friday 9/6/19

Closing Ceremony by John Byers

What a week. The week, or technically five days, that we spent at Baca were joyfully excruciating. I don't mean to be cryptic, but rather I have no idea how to express what we collectively experienced. We experienced grief, surprise, shock, despair, and a whirlwind of emotions. As we all discussed in class on Monday, there really was no way to summarize the experience of the week. The words do not exist to do so. However, in an attempt to bring closure to a tumultuous week, the last activity we did as a group at Baca was a closing ceremony.

Slowly we all made our way to the firepit that was hidden by trees from the stucco buildings of campus. Once the group had gathered in a circle, Alexander "Kofi" Washington introduced himself. The class had already spent some time with him, but there were a few community members that had joined us for the ceremony. He initially seemed imposing; over six feet tall and wiry. He told us briefly about his upbringing in Gary, Indiana, and about his African and Native heritage. He was wearing a traditional native shirt, two beaded necklaces, and a beaded choker with an arrowhead menacingly pointing towards his throat. He and his wife Isaline Washington, who he calls his queen, presented Sarah with a bundle of sage for her work. As they did, a sudden gust of wind rushed through the trees above us, and many of the community members gasped or exclaimed in excitement. To them, this was yet more evidence of their deep and intimate connection with nature. Kofi said that this is proof Mother Earth is listening to our pleas.

We began to sing a song as a group about Yemaya, who rules over water and is the mother of all. Our voices had a tangible energy to them as we caught on to

Kofi's voice, and sang in unison. Kofi broke away from us after the chorus, lost in emotion, and his high tenor seemed to resonate on a primordial level -- meaning I could feel the environment change around me. Trees became closer, sun became hotter, mosquitos became part of a larger system instead of just being pests. Maybe it was just my heightened senses. Once the song had finished, those who are familiar with the custom said "A'ho," as an expression of appreciation and gratitude.

All eyes then turned to Casmali, who quickly glanced around, and then embodied the aura of an authoritative and confident singer. He asked someone to talk a little bit about the song he was about to sing. For about two seconds, nobody moved. We were hesitant to get something wrong, or not do the song justice. Not wanting to leave him hanging, I answered. I said that this song "is a gathering song, because it's easy to learn, and that as we are singing it we should remember that a lot of people struggled to pass the song to us." Myra smiled kindly at me. It wasn't phrased very effectively, but I was trying to communicate what Casmali had told the group earlier, about how the songs had been passed down in secret through dozens of persecuted generations. Casmali lead us off, and began singing in a booming, invasive, and beautiful voice. We joined in. During the song, we were all connected. There was a visceral feeling of humility in the grandeur of the earth, as well as pride in being a part of it.

We moved onto the final section of the ceremony -- everyone, if they were comfortable doing so, shared one thing from the week that they will take with them. I won't go into everything mentioned, but there were two major themes I noticed: optimism, and appreciation of water. Optimism is about how to be resilient. Since the day we met her, Myra had been saying, in a voice fierce with meaning, that she is "radically optimistic." Throughout the week, we observed how people were resilient, and had that phrase repeated to us many times (even in the

closing ceremony). Also, we had been told time and again about the importance of water, the aquifer, and how water responded to feelings and thoughts (Emoto). I think it finally sunk in.

This was an important way to finish an exhausting week, and I think it was a microcosm of our time at Crestone. It gave us closure, release, and a chance to express our final thoughts to those who had the context and the will to listen.



Photo by Sarah Hautzinger