

It's Not About Hair: Part 2

Written by Katherine Tandy Brown

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"When one tugs at a single thing in nature, he finds it attached to the rest of the world." – John Muir

In case you're not aware of him, influential Scottish-American naturalist John Muir co-founded the Sierra Club and was known as the "Father of the National Parks." He got those natural treasures going. Our environment was delighted this man came down the pike...er...wilderness trail...when he did. His quote above is pure cosmology that we're seeing played out on the earth during the current pandemic when The Great Pause has brought the emission of environmental hazards to a crawl.

You may have seen aerial photos and videos that are recording Mother Nature's resilience. More than 80 percent of existing pollution has been reduced in areas such as Wuhan, China (origin of the bat spit that birthed COVID-19, so experts think), North America, Europe, and Northern Italy. Once visible only as a grey haze when cars, trucks and buses were spewing massive clouds of carbon dioxide, and industries were belching out toxic fumes, skies are now morphing to a brilliant blue. In Venice sediment in the canals is settling, thanks to greatly-reduced use, and the water is clearing to reveal vibrant aquatic and plant life.

Even in our Lowcountry, for goodness sakes, I hear comments frequently about how splendid nature is this spring. Yes, I know it's the character of the brilliant season after winter to shine with new life, but she's outdoing herself in 2020. Don't you agree? Creeks and rivers along the Spanish Moss Trail sparkle in the sunlight, clouds skitter with seeming joy across a luscious blue backdrop, hundreds of fingernail-sized frogs with remarkably loud voices are hopping around boggy areas, big ol' winter-rested snakes are popping out – watch out! Trees and plants of every ilk are a magnificent green, and the birds...oh, my. The birds, including a few not

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frequently seen in these parts, are warbling to beat the band. At the risk of over-personifying our feathered friends, those little guys obviously are happy campers.

To take Muir's words a step further, everything on our planet and in our universe is connected. Seems coincidental, but a virus is a good example in this greatly simplified explanation. (By the way, I haven't believed in coincidence for years; rather I embrace the notion that seemingly coincidental occurrences happen for reasons. But I digress....) Years ago, I read a beautifully illustrated article in *National Geographic* about the world of viruses, and was amazed to discover that when a particular virus mutates, say, in Africa, the same one mutates in similar fashion in, say, Illinois. Their "hotline" is quick to deliver a message of change by a vehicle far more advanced than human genetics, which can take at least a generation to transmit epigenetical changes.

The concept of interconnectedness is not new. Millennia ago, Taoists in China understood its existence. South African Anglican Archbishop Desmond Tutu called this sense "Ubuntu." Its varied meanings include "I am because we are," and "What I do, and even what I think, affects another person, or possibly the whole human population, in some way."

You've no doubt witnessed the patterns of a great flock of birds on the wing as their sky-held mass wheels and turns at a change of direction graceful as a ballet. Someone who seemed wise told me years ago that particular behavior is known as "kiting," but I can't for the life of me find proof. At any rate, how do birds know to move as one? They're part of the universal connectedness. As are we. People acting in unison can be quite a powerful force to accomplish things. It's how wars are won, families bond, teams win, coups succeed, and prayers lift.

Even at this time of social distancing, lonely isolation, and deferred dreams for some, we can "come together" mentally, emotionally and spiritually, and be stronger for it. The time is right for pumping as much positive energy into the collective consciousness as possible. It's sometimes called "the collective," for short, and is a sociological concept that refers to our societal shared ideas, beliefs, and attitudes. And yes, when the world seems upside down, wrapping one's mind around positive thoughts can be a stretch. Our situations vary widely and wildly. It's easy to tumble into the trap of "I'll be happy when... You fill in the blank... my car is paid off, the love of my life shows up, I get a raise, I finish writing the Great American novel, I lose weight, I can travel again. These excuses for inaction are so popular and easy to embrace that they have a name – deferred happiness. I know personally whereof I speak on this one.

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Many individuals are grieving during COVID-19. I don't need to elucidate the reasons why, as news is rife with heartbreaking stories every day. Perhaps the fact that you can't yet get a haircut, belly up to your favorite bar buddies, enter a store without a mask, or watch a NASCAR race with hollering fans in the stands is annoying, but as my grandmother used to say, "This too shall pass." (I realize I've quoted this wise woman before; you can trust that I will again.)

Right now, you can contribute to the state of the world in an unbelievably easy way. Rise up from those luscious crunchy snacks, quarantinis and zoom cocktail hours and help your fellow man. Or keep your "sun over the yardarm" sipping dates with friends, while devoting your mornings to a change in attitude. From "When will this whole crazy thing end and things get back to normal?" to "I'm actually doing relatively okay. What can I do to make someone's life a little – or a lot – better?" In the first place, no one has a clue when things will settle nor what "normal" may look like. But most importantly, helping another human or humans injects that collective consciousness with a dose of positive energy at the same time that it makes your "helpee" happy and you feel like a hero. Which you will be. Yet another win-win.

According to Oxford physicist Vlatko Vedral, "No object in this universe is isolated and completely independent."

Not even you. You can make an affirmative difference in someone's life and thusly, in the world and in the universe. This is big stuff. Pretty cool, huh? Rock with it!

[Read Part One here.](#)