



It is the silent place. God calls us. Quieting our minds and souls. Where our eyes are turned away from the world. We are called to this place to be consecrated with the revelation of His Word into our hearts. Divine instructions. Open and expanding. Holy. Sacred Ground. We become where we are. For He meets us there. Whether seeking or discovering this precious earth beneath our feet, we find a revealed space of deep communion with the Creator of all.

## The Earth

*Sacred Synergy: The Reconciliation of Abraham's Seed (2018)*

## Inside this issue:

<i>The Earth</i>	1
<i>My Journey of Healing</i>	2
<i>Meditation:</i>	2
<i>Child Mental Health: Suicide Awareness</i>	3
<i>Photo Essay: Sanctuary</i>	4-5
<i>Sacred Synergy: Water</i>	6
<i>Beauty for Ashes: Rebuilding The Sacred</i>	6
<i>Asylum</i>	6
<i>Becoming Trauma Informed, Sensitive</i>	7
<i>Remembering McKenzie</i>	7
<i>Circles of Love</i>	8
<i>Wisdom Note: Resilience</i>	8

## Cover Photo:

**Washington National Cathedral**  
Washington, DC  
**Sanctuary (2019)**

FROM OUR  
ALBUM

## PAGE 2

*Ladies of Quality student group at Freedom High School invited AWARE Founder Dora Muhammad to speak to student body and enjoyed a private mentoring session afterwards. (Woodbridge, Va.)*

## THE REQUIEM The Song of Her Natal Voice

I was alone, disconnected and totally isolated from the world. I was three people: one known to the world, another hidden from the world, and one unknown to everyone, including myself. I was seeking a way out. God was making His Way in.

I began to hate myself. If I was not innocent, then I was guilty or dirty or poisoned. Everyone else was pure and I was this horrible ugly monster. I did not want anyone to see me. I did not want to see myself. This was beyond depression. I was on the road to suicide. And on that road were my weaknesses of fear and cowardice, negligence and carelessness, shame and lies.

I could not be real for this to be happening to me. The root of my depression was my inability to find the real me. I knew she was in there, but where and how was she doing? I could not love her if I did not know her. The known me refused to acknowledge and continue to give life to the hidden me. She was powerless, yet dominated

my being; she was thriving, like fungi in cool, dark places. Who aspires to be bacteria when they grow up?

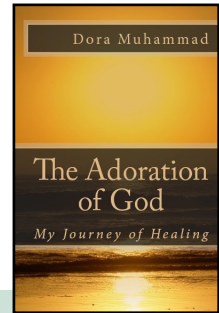
I could not look at myself. If you do not look at what does exist, you will never see it, and you cannot care for what you do not see. I was totally detached from myself, when I carefully decided and calculated to kill myself. Plain and simple. January 1, 1990. **the requiem**

New Year's Day. I was 15 years old. It was my way out. I did not see another way out. And I refused to lie or put on a façade. I could not do it anymore. The known me and the hidden me collided and colluded, got hold of a razor blade and went searching for the unknown me.

The requiem I did not die; I became pissed off. And I remember *screaming*, "Why?! Why God won't you let me die?!"

**the requiem: the song of her natal voice**

It was a prayer.

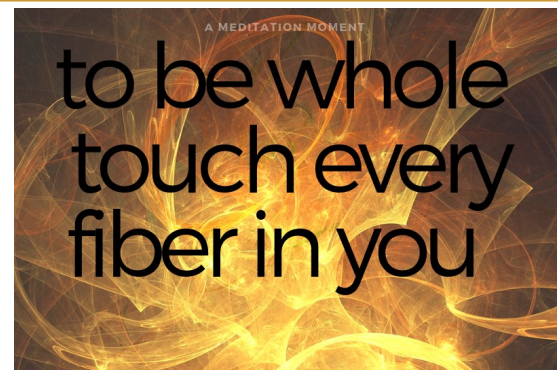
**MIDNIGHT** *tahajjud*

It is the period of prayer after midnight, those special and intimate prayers offered in the thickness of the darkness. To forego sleep to pray in the depths of the night, one must desire to make an earnest and sincere supplication.

**DAWN** *peace be still  
better days*

I was learning myself. I searched out a place in every park to sit for hours in reflection and serenity, appreciating the beautiful creation around and in me: air, water, trees, earth, blood, bones, tissues, loving the breath that issued from my body into the world; feeling connected to life.

*The Adoration of God:  
My Journey of Healing (2013)*



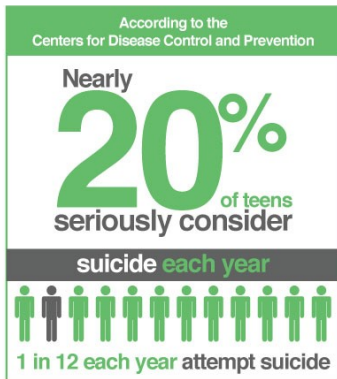
healthy coping mechanisms always strengthen  
our minds, bodies and spirits

seek that which reinforces life  
CREATIVE GRACE CONVERSATIONS





## CHILD MENTAL HEALTH Suicide Awareness & Prevention



Remember when children played outside along their block until the street lights turning on signaled it was time to go home? What happened to that embedded safety in our neighborhoods?

While most studies delve into the layers surrounding adolescent suicide, very little detailed information is available for child suicide rates. That's right—the ages of 5-12.

According to the Centers for Disease Control, between 1999 and 2015, more than 1,300 children in this vulnerable age range took their lives. This data translates into an average of one child in this age range dying by suicide every five days.

Analysts and advocates point to developmental issues and the lack of a family or social network as root causes of this heartbreaking trend. The isolation of our children has become even more acute in this digital age where social media and gaming have replaced cultural activities and neighborhood play.

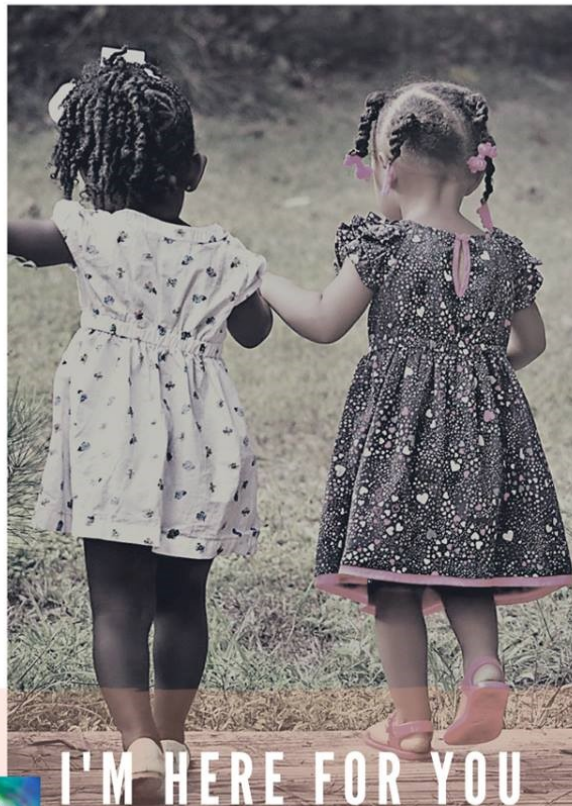
More than anything, this data should inform us all that children are not too young to have a talk about suicide and their mental health.

We should not wait until behavioral and emotional problems during teenage ages present as warning signs. Signs such as a sense of no purpose in life, substance use, uncontrollable rage or anxiety, reckless and risky activities, dramatic mood changes or irregular sleep patterns.

Talking to children about suicide will not plant the idea in

their minds. On the contrary. Intentional, measured and steady communication can prevent the darkness of despair from eclipsing their young lives. Here's a few tips:

- Pick the best time for getting your child's attention.
- Think about what you want to say. Rehearse if necessary. Reference a news story, school event or incident.
- Acknowledge your discomfort; it will give your child permission to do the same.
- Ask for and listen to your child's response. Don't over-react or under-react.



**I'M HERE FOR YOU**

WORDS YOUR FRIENDS ALWAYS NEED TO HEAR



SPEAK  
KINDNESS

NATIONAL  
**SUICIDE  
PREVENTION**  
LIFELINE™  
**I-800-273-TALK**  
**I-800-273-8255**  
[www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org](http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org)

### Keys to Healthy Management of Your Time and Mental Energy

#### TRUST YOURSELF

Every person has at least one gift within themselves. Believe in the process and patience needed to develop and grow what's inside of you. **Your life has value.**

#### PRIORITIZE

Make your to-do list less overwhelming by breaking each goal into small tasks. As you check things off as done, **you'll feel better about your progress and have hope for your future.**

#### TAKE A BREAK

It's good to demand excellence from yourself, but seeking nothing but perfection is pressure you don't need. It's ok to take a break from your work to **relax, have fun with a friend or just breathe.**



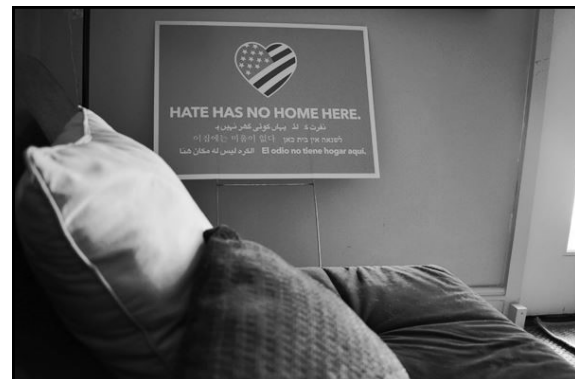
# *sanctuary*

**: a consecrated place  
: a place of refuge and protection**

We rest on scripture and holy texts to deepen our compassion for the asylum-seeker. We sharpen our laws and policies to shape the contours of community to welcome the stranger. We reinforce principles of service and care to provide essential services for the other.

Sanctuary extends far beyond offering physical dwelling to the vulnerable.

Springing from the same source of reverence for what we hold sacred, where we unite with the divine, how we touch the beauty of humanity, why we cherish life and who we become in the intimacies of our faith, our hearts will swell in shared inspiration to preserve and uphold the dignity of the undocumented.



**Empower Thought**  
Temple Rodef Shalom  
Falls Church, VA

**Welcome**  
Quaker Friends House  
Charlottesville, VA

**SANCTUARY** is a traveling photo documentary exhibit throughout Maryland, D.C. and Virginia. A companion coffee table book will be available in the summer catalog of The AWARE Project.

**Freedom**  
Frederick County Detention Center  
Frederick, MD





**Metropolitan African Methodist Episcopal Church**  
Washington, DC



**Embrace Compassion**  
Vedanta Center  
Silver Spring, MD

**Peace**  
NAKASEC  
Falls Church, VA



## BEAUTY FOR ASHES Rebuilding The Sacred

### Sacred Synergy: Water



Dora Muhammad  
AWARE Project Founder  
Spoken Word for Handwashing Blessing  
Interfaith Justice Seder, April 22, 2019  
Temple Beth-el, Richmond, Va.

#### Torah Recitation

Exodus 2:10

*She named him Moses, saying  
"Because I drew him out of the  
water."*

#### Epistle Recitation

Hebrews 10:22-24

*Let us draw near with a true heart  
in full assurance of faith having  
our hearts sprinkled from an evil  
conscience and our bodies washed  
with pure water. Let us hold fast  
the confession of our hope without  
wavering, for He who promised is  
faithful. And let us consider one  
another in order to stir up love and  
good works.*

#### Qur'an Recitation

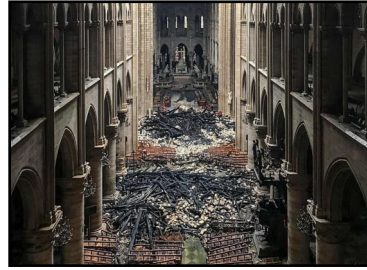
Surah 67:30

*Say: Have you considered if your  
water should subside who is it then  
that will bring you flowing water?*

News of the fire consuming the Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris spread across the world while reports of the flames Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem were primarily contained in the East. Yet, the sorrowful astonishment of witnessing two fires on the same day, at the same time, burning holy sites for Christians and Muslims, was universal. Both the believer and the observer of these faiths felt the intrinsic loss and damage.

The 850-year-old cathedral and the 984-year-old mosque both hold historic symbolism of centuries of triumph over empires at war and perseverance of persecution of the faithful. These institutions beckon all to gather in worship God or wonder at the edifice's beauty every day.

Strikingly, more than \$1 billion was raised overnight for the reconstruction of Notre Dame Cathedral, without any issue of a call for donations. Criticism continues to heighten over this



spontaneous worldwide crowdfunding because it surpasses support for recent cultural and historic monuments destroyed by fire across the world as well as global UN drives to fund humanitarian aid in developing countries or even the French public's will and government's commitment to the poor.

However, noble and just as these calls, the spirit of God calls forth from within each of us, unprompted and with greater zeal than any other purpose will. Perhaps this moment will allow us to understand that, if we frame social movements and causes of justice within the realm of a shared humanity, we are enabled to tap into the power of the divine spirit within us all.

The poignancy of the moment is further deepened because these concurrent infernos happened at the start of the last week of Lent, a season of prayer and penitence, Holy Week.

Yet, the smoldering grounds bring us full circle back to the beginning of the Lenten season—the observance of Ash Wednesday, a place of humility and recognition of Almighty God as sovereign over all.

Throughout scripture, fire represents the Presence and

Power of God. And in this season of Passover and Resurrection Sunday, and with Ramadan on the horizon, the Abrahamic faith communities are immersing themselves in remembrance and celebration of God's ability to restore,



regenerate and resurrect.

It is in this place we recognize that people are temples of the indwelling of God, the truest sacred space to respect, protect and uplift.

*"The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn, and provide for those who grieve in Zion—to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of joy instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair. They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the Lord for the display of his splendor. They will rebuild the ancient ruins and restore the places long devastated; they will renew the ruined cities that have been devastated for generations."*



#Asylum is legal.  
You enter at the borders but  
are processed through the  
courts. #immigration  
#migration #humanitarian  
#HumanRights

84%

of refugees are hosted  
by developing countries

**Refugees** flee their home country because of risks to their safety and life. Refugees have a right to international protection. **Asylum-seekers** have not yet been legally recognized by a host country as refugees while their asylum case is pending. Seeking asylum is a human right. **Migrants**

leave their home country to

work, study or reunite with family, or fleeing poverty, natural disasters, gang or domestic violence, or political unrest. Migrants should never be detained or forced to return to their country without a legitimate reason.



## SYSTEMS OF HEALING Becoming Trauma Informed, Sensitive

Suicide is the second leading cause of death for adolescents in the U.S. but the risks and incident rate for Black youth has sharply heightened to crisis levels. In a leadup to Mental Health Awareness Month observances in May, the Congressional Black Caucus announced its creation of an Emergency Task Force on Black Youth Suicide and Mental Health.

The move is, in large part, a response to a 2018 study that found the rate of suicides of Black children aged 5-12 was higher than white children for the first time, while those for white teens remained 50% higher than Black teens. Published by the Journal of the American Medical Association Pediatrics journal, it concluded that more than a third of elementary school-aged suicides involved Black children.

“We can no longer stand aside and watch as the youth in our community continue to struggle with depression, traumatic stress, or anxiety. Far too often the pain that African Americans experience is either overlooked or dismissed,” said CBC Chair, Rep. Karen Bass during a panel of mental health experts convened to discuss task force priorities. “That has to end today.”

The group will focus on raising awareness, improving access to mental health care, and increasing funding for training, staffing



*We must work across systems to reduce the structural factors that lead to a child being exposed to toxic stress and enhance the buffering caregiving systems in a child's life. We need to connect and integrate our work. We need coordinated efforts on the ground to transform outcomes for our children and communities.’*

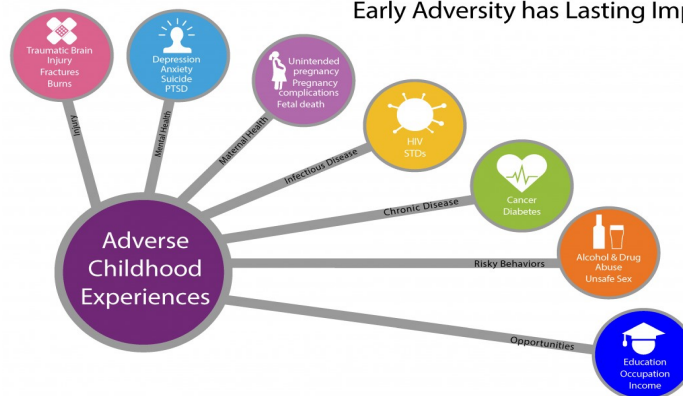
**Dr. Nadine Burke Harris, California Surgeon General**

Founder, Center for Youth Wellness

*Virginia Summit on Childhood Trauma & Resilience, April 25, 2019*

*Hosted by Voices for Virginia's Children, Richmond, Va.*

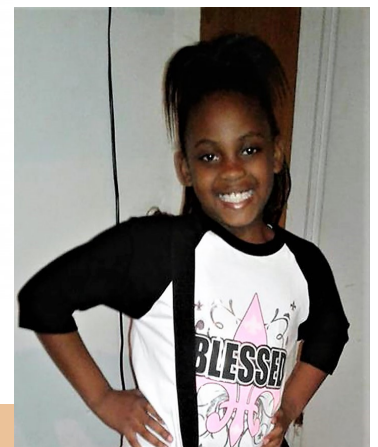
### Early Adversity has Lasting Impacts



### 10 Adverse Childhood Experiences

(1) physical, (2) verbal or (3) sexual abuse; (4) physical or (5) emotional neglect; a family member who is (6) alcohol or substance addicted, (7) diagnosed with depression or mental illness, (8) a victim of domestic violence, or (9) in prison; and (10) the loss of a parent through divorce, death or abandonment.

and services. It will also promote greater inclusion of Black people in clinical trials. A priority is identifying causes and factors specific to Black youth, who are more likely to be criminalized or diagnosed with ADD or ADHD than get the treatment they need.



### Remembering McKenzie

On Dec. 3, 2018, McKenzie Adams finished her homework as usual and excused herself from the table. When she took too long to return, her grandmother went looking for her and found the body of the nine-year-old hanging in the bathroom. Her mother points to the racist bullying her daughter endured for nearly a year.

School officials say they have no record of a complaint of bullying. The local Board of Education's investigation upheld the school's claims, and local police did not find any evidence to support the family's claim and closed its case.

According to HHS, 1 in 3 students say they have been bullied; yet only 20-30% report bullying to an adult.



As we move in the morning light  
soft echoing taps and chimes link us  
in beauty and style  
her sister and daughter  
her sister and niece  
my mother and aunt  
three together  
circles of love

**circles  
of love**



Links

WISDOM NOTE | WEDNESDAY, MAY 1, 2019



# resilience

n. in physics, the ability of an elastic material to absorb energy and release that energy as it springs back to its original shape

origin. Latin *salire* meaning *to leap*

CREATIVE GRACE CONVERSATIONS

The AWARE Project is a non-profit organization that leverages a multi-media art platform to raise awareness, increase civic engagement, and further the advancement of policies impacting women's rights, child welfare and human rights.

By intersecting community and municipality, faith and advocacy, and the arts with policy awareness, it creates a dynamic synergy offered to inspire the humanity in others with an unmatched passion to improve the quality and dignity of life of the vulnerable and marginalized.

Advocacy for Women's  
Activism, Rights & Empowerment

**THE AWARE PROJECT**

[doraym.wix.com/aware](http://doraym.wix.com/aware)

**ART AS A CATALYST  
FOR ADVOCACY**



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