

Mysterious Ways

A Cyberzine for Queer Pagan Men.

Summer/ Fall 2024
Volume 5, Issue 2

Theme this Issue: Working with Ancestors

Welcome to the latest issue of Mysterious Ways! This issue is about our ancestors. These are the people who come before us whether through our bloodlines or those with whom we resonate in spirit. Our ancestors are our parents and grandparents and their parents and grandparents backward through time. Our ancestors also include kindred spirits to which we hold an affinity. These might include the magickal peoples of past times—the witches, the druids, the shamans, or the ancient priests and priestesses. Our ancestors of spirits can also include the LGBTQ people who came before us—regardless of what terms they used in their respective times and places.

Like modern families, we have those relations who we are stuck with regardless of whether their ideas and politics match our own, but we also have chosen families whom we've adopted as our own regardless of genetic ties.

How do we discover our ancestors of blood and spirit? How do we honor them? How can we connect with them? And what do these people long gone from this world have to offer us the living?

On the other side of things, at some future time we will be ancestors of blood or spirit to those who come after us. How can we be good ancestors and how can we preserve our information for posterity?

These are some of the topics we will be discussing in this issue.

- Mel Mystery



In some traditions, crows are seen as messengers carrying messages from departed loved ones. *Photo courtesy of the Wikimedia Commons.*



Image from the Wikimedia Commons

“To forget one’s ancestors is to be a brook without a source, a tree without a root.”

— Chinese Proverb

Inside this issue

Welcome	1
Events and Gatherings	2
From Across the Pond	6
Working with Ancestors	8
Preserving Your Story.....	13
Poetry and Art.....	15
Resource Listing	16
Upcoming Events	17

Special Thanks

Special thanks to all who contributed articles , poetry, and art this issue.

Events and Gatherings

Arcadia to be held, November 15-17, 2024

By Mel Mystery

The Arcadia Retreat for Queer Pagan men will be held in-person the weekend of November 15-17, 2024. The event will take place at a campground in Virginia Beach, Virginia. Eric Eldritch of the Radical Faeries and Stone Circle Wicca will facilitate the weekend.

Rather than having a specific theme for the weekend, Arcadia is trying out a new participatory model where attendees will suggest and vote on topics ahead of the retreat to fill three workshop slots on Saturday. Topic categories might include LGBTQ+ Community, Culture, History, and Rights; General Pagan Paths and Practices; and Pagan and Magickal Paths and Practices specific to Queer men.



In addition to workshops, participants will create an altar and sacred space for the weekend, and participate in a nature hike, a main ritual, and a Saturday evening social. The social will feature a disco ball in the woods and a fusion of Pagan drumming with Queer and Pagan themed pop culture music. Folks are encouraged to dress up as their favorite nature spirits.

For more information:

<https://www.olympuscampgroundresort.com/arcadia-main/>

Arcadia
A spiritual retreat for Queer Pagan Men
November 15-17, 2024
Virginia Beach, VA

A weekend of Pagan exploration, Queer sensibility, and male bonding in an open, participatory, safe and sacred space.

For more information
www.olympuscampgroundresort.com/arcadia-main/

Between the Worlds scheduled for September 16-21, 2024

Between the Worlds announced a new event site for 2024. This year's Between the Worlds spiritual gathering for men who love men will take place at Four Quarters Interfaith Sanctuary in Artemis, PA. Past retreats have taken place in Ohio. The gathering is scheduled for the week of September 16-21, 2024.

This year Between the Worlds celebrates "The Year of the Warrior." Rather than focusing on specific Queer deities this time, Between the Worlds will focus on Aspects of the Queer Spirit as inspired by the book "Gay Spirit Warrior: An Empowerment Workbook for Men Who Love Men" by John R. Stowe.

The gathering also announced a new motto this year "A spiritual gathering celebrating the aspects of the Queer Male Spectrum." The new motto is an effort to "better express the expansiveness and inclusivity we are striving for within the BTW Community."

Between the Worlds celebrated their 20th anniversary in 2023.

For more information: <https://betweentheworlds.org/>



Help Us to Help You and Our Tribe of Queer Pagan Men

Where else can you find a publication geared toward your unique interests and experiences as a Queer Pagan man?

Submissions to Mysterious Ways are not only encouraged, they are vital to provide several voices to the content of this Cyberzine.

I usually start sending out requests across various social media about a month before the submission deadline, but you don't have to wait for my request to get your articles in. The submission deadline for the next issue is always listed in the current issue and I'm always happy to receive submissions anytime during that six month period. Mysterious Ways is published semi-annually. While there is usually a specific theme for each issue, submissions of a general nature are welcome too.

Please consider sharing your voice by sending in your articles, book reviews, event reviews, poetry, art, or anything else that might be relevant to Queer Pagan men. Don't forget to share information about your Queer Pagan Men's groups and events!!!

Submission deadline for the next issue of Mysterious Ways is December 15, 2024.

Virtual Brotherhood by the Bog Offered “A Shift in Perspective”

By Mel Mystery

Brotherhood by the Bog retreat for Pagan men of all paths, backgrounds, and orientations was held virtually this past spring the weekend of April 5-7, 2024. The theme of the weekend was “A Shift in Perspective.”

Workshops included Practical Lycanthropy with Mel Mystery; Glamour: Magickal, Mystical Manifestation with Eric Eldritch; Adam Black and Sawyer Massie of the Unnamed Path presented on Spiritwalking for Queer men; author Denny Sargent presented on Pagan and Witchcraft Werewolf Cults and also hosted a Werewolf Magick

Shapeshifting Ritual; Gwydion Ream presented on Shapeshifters in Popular Culture. Dallán facilitated a panel discussion on Saturday and a group guided discussion on Sunday. Mel Mystery and David Coffman presented opening and closing rituals featuring the transformation of the Fool to the Hanged Man and beyond in the Tarot. Gwydion Ream hosted an Otherworldly Trivia Game on Friday evening.



The next Brotherhood by the Bog is set to be an in-person retreat to be held in the Spring of 2025. The event will take place at a campground in Virginia Beach, Virginia. Additional details are yet to be announced.

For more information:

<https://www.olympuscampgroundresort.com/brotherhood-by-the-bog-main/>

Brotherhood by the Bog A Retreat for Pagan Men

Spring 2025

**Brotherhood by the Bog will return in-person at
First Landing State Park in Virginia Beach, VA.
Details to be announced.**

<https://www.olympuscampgroundresort.com/brotherhood-by-the-bog-main/>

A Virtual Name Change

By Mel Mystery

Virtual Brotherhood by the Bog and Virtual Arcadia will now be one online retreat called “Brotherhood Across the Boundaries.” The in-person Brotherhood by the Bog and in-person Arcadia will retain their original names. The reason for the name change is to reduce confusion regarding which events are virtual and which are in person. Last year in 2023 when Brotherhood by the Bog had our in-person retreat in Virginia Beach, we received a number of enquiries asking about Zoom links from folks who had gotten used to Brotherhood by the Bog being virtual during Covid. The newly named virtual Brotherhood Across the Boundaries will be identical to our previous virtual Brotherhood by the Bog retreats. The event will be a weekend retreat running from a Friday to a Sunday. It will be open to Pagan men of all paths, backgrounds, and orientations. Workshops, presenters, and activities will include both those of general Pagan interest and some specific to Queer Pagan Men.

In-person Brotherhood by the Bog and Arcadia retreats will take place every other year in the spring (BBTB in odd numbered years) or fall (Arcadia in even numbered years). The Virtual Brotherhood Across the Boundaries will alternate between spring and fall retreats in the season opposite the in-person retreat for that year.

For more information on the virtual retreat :

<https://www.olympuscampgroundresort.com/pagan-brotherhood-across-the-boundaries/>

Stone and Stang to be held in-person October 3-6, 2024

Stone & Stang 2024

Hosted by Unnamed Path

A Spiritual Gathering for Pagan Men-Who-Love-Men

"Bonfire of Brotherhood"

Thursday, October 3rd through Sunday October 6th, 2024

At the SIREnity Farms Campground in Sullivan, Missouri

Join us for a transformative experience at Stone and Stang - A Spiritual Gathering for Pagan Men-Who-Love-Men! Unleash the power of unity as we come together under the enchanting glow of the Bonfire of Brotherhood. Immerse yourself in a sacred space where like-minded individuals, connected by a shared spiritual journey, gather to explore. Engage in rituals that unlock the essence of unity and strengthen the bonds of brotherhood. The flickering flames of the bonfire will guide us on a journey of self-discovery and acceptance. The event will include Sacred Rituals, Heart-Centered Workshops, and Mystic Conversations. This gathering is open to all Pagan Men-Who-Love-Men seeking spiritual growth, connection, and a deeper understanding of their unique paths. Embrace the diversity of our community and celebrate the strength that comes from standing together. Don't miss the opportunity to unlock unity and brotherhood at Stone and Stang's Bonfire of Brotherhood.

For more information please Email stoneandstang@unnamedpath.org Or Call us at (619) 800 - 8218.

Stone and Stang **A Spiritual Gathering for Pagan Men-Who-Love-Men**

“Bonfire of Brotherhood”

October 3-6, 2024

<https://unnamedpath.org/stone-stang/>

From Across the Pond

Ancestral Paths

by Anarion (*writing from Portugal*)

The theme of this Mysterious Ways is 'Ancestors'. Many gay Pagans revere their ancestors: be they those of blood or those found through other ancestral currents such as in the Unnamed Path. However, this article is about blood ancestors, and how many people find meaning in their own lives, through tracing the stories associated with members of their family bloodline.

I have been tracing my ancestors since I was a young (and thin then, unlike now!) 13 year old; so for nearly 54 years. I soon learned that people either love genealogy or they hate it (my family hated it). There seems no middle ground unless if you accept those who 'look for' famous or rich relations simply to swell their own egos. A serious genealogist, or family historian, is more like Sherlock Holmes, in that your family's past is much like a jigsaw puzzle which stretches to infinity. You often find missing pieces hidden in the most unlikely of places, or, you find that an essential piece is lost for ever. Our American readers will know all about this from the number of records that have been destroyed by war, fire or neglect, especially during the Civil War era. It is good to reflect (especially at a time like the present when warfare is being used for personal power or greed) that although the lives lost in conflict (be they military or civilian) are the central and undoubted core tragedy of war, there are other victims too, which are not human or animal, but contain a sacred entity which is known as 'Knowledge'. Come, Come, I can hear you declare. Surely a pile of old dusty documents, which no one has looked at in decades, are of no consequence at all! Well, in actual fact, they are very important. Not only do they reflect and illuminate the lives of all the generations past, but they contain the lessons of History. In these days when the internet and clever 'tools' make it so easy to 'change' history to what is wanted by those who wield power or personality, the plain facts are being lost or twisted in meaning. History should be like the scythe swishing skeletal figure of Death who, when not running off to play rock music or farming, should be reminding each new generation to not make the mistakes made in previous generations. It should mean the reduction in suffering and pain for all those who have no true protector any more. The 'forgetting', 'erasing' or 'falsifying' of history just leads to more suffering because people have not learned the lessons of the past and humans, nature, and the Earth itself, suffer once again in a continual Groundhog Day cycle.

Why go on about this? Because it is from our ancestor's lives that we learn. Not all can talk to the spirits of the departed and so most have only the 'facts' to find, read, and learn from. It may be an unconventional view (and let's face it I am not your standard conformer type), but I feel strongly that genealogy helps us to understand more about ourselves, and our ancestors, both in actions and in the thoughts and beliefs we maintain.

I have just returned from a rain soaked, grey clouded, and very cold London where I went to do research in three primary archives, namely: The UK National Archives, The London Metropolitan Archives, and the Institute of Historical Research, where I digitised many manuscripts to the tune of most of the 4,787 photographs which I took during the trip. My family research is a tad wider than most genealogists as I research my family name (in all its variants) as a One Name Study. That is to say, I collect records not only from my own direct line, but from every country where the family has been found. In following this path, I have been to most continents of the world, and met a huge number of people (including Mel) as a result, who have helped me to appreciate and accept many cultures other than my own. So in this respect alone, genealogy has made me learn from the past and present and allowed me to grow as a person.

It takes many years of learning and making errors to construct a family tree and then add the leaves and flowers which are the added snippets of each life reflected on the tree. Each family historian has their own way of doing things, all of which are equally valid. In brief, I will tell you a little of how I went about starting mine. I began with me and my siblings. I remember typing out on my typewriter (do you remember those days before computers, laptops, tablets and mobiles??) individual sheets upon which I recorded all the facts I could find about my brother and sister, my Mum and Dad, Aunts, Uncles and Cousins. I had to ask them all in person of course, and if you do this too, you will demonstrate interest in the lives of those still with us. This then extends back to those now not still living. Their basic life facts such as birth, marriage and death, can be obtained from official sources, and are bolstered by other akin records like baptisms and burials. Official sources often record other facts that come out in such things as a census, or tax records. I looked at tax records in London stretching back to the 14th Century on this trip. Then there are newspapers, that record so many things which otherwise would never be known, or court records. These can be of your criminal (or victimised by bad laws) ancestors who found themselves transported to America or Australia, for crimes as small as stealing bread, or the many inter family feuds over land or inheritance fought out in civil courts. Sometimes a record can shed light on all the people living in a single area. For instance this trip I digitised the whole of the Hearth Tax of 1666 for the County of Suffolk in England. This tax was recorded on long pieces of parchment listing all Hearths (fireplaces) in each house in every village of that East Anglian County. It is a rare window into the ancestral past, which not only tells you the individual names of the household heads living in each place (who had a hearth that is), but also the distribution of wealth because a person with 4 hearths taxed is going to be living in a much larger dwelling than a person with only

1 hearth or those exempted from tax for having none. Going even further back in time, a man, who is most likely one of my early ancestors, signed a charter granted by the King of Mercia in the year 731 CE. Most researchers, I hasten to add, cannot get back much more than a couple to three hundred years of continuous ancestral links for many, many reasons. But the glimpses of your family in much earlier times gives you a vision of more heroic and bloody, not to mention Pagan eras.

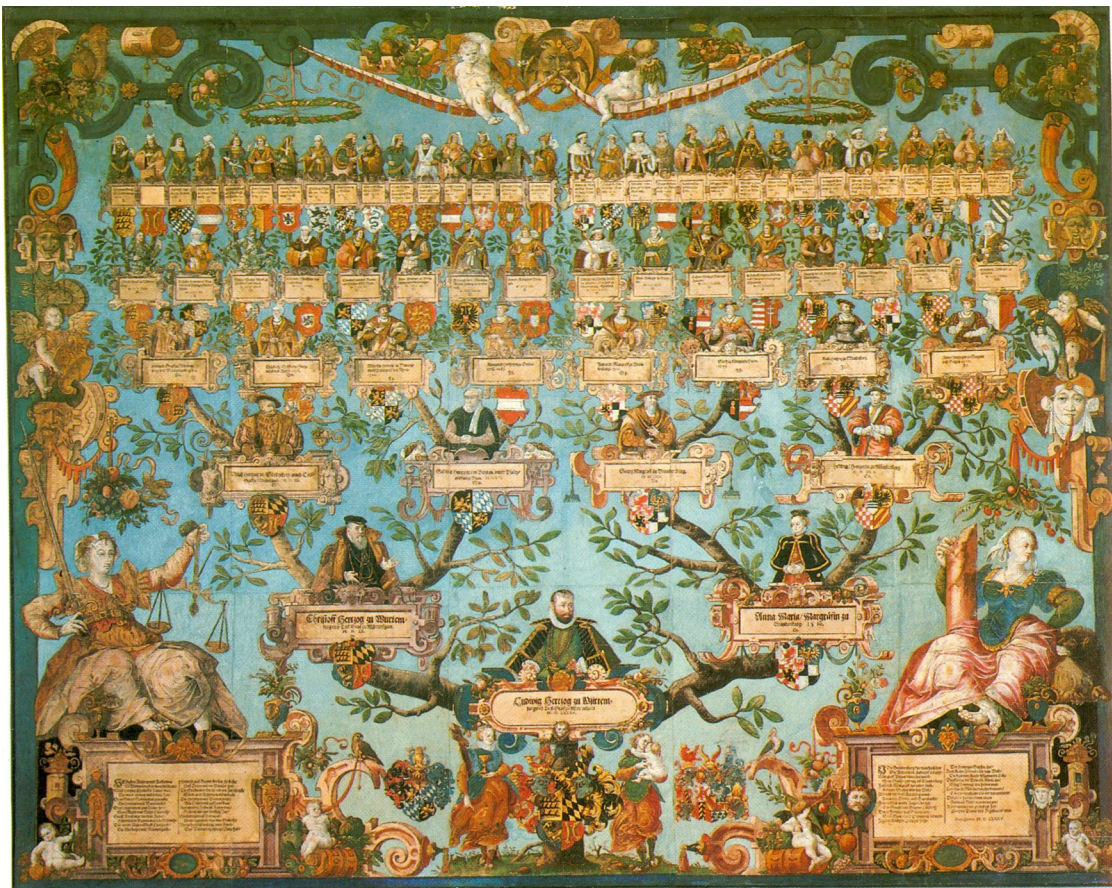
With each new piece of information found, you gain more insight into how your ancestors lived and died and how the society of that time was so different from our own. Many now clamour for reparations (actually if they really thought what they were asking, it would be retribution) for things our ancestors condoned or actively pursued in the past, such as slavery. The lessons of the evil nature of such things as slavery, racialism and sexism can, and sometimes are, learned by looking at the past and how people (our ancestors) lived their lives. However demanding monetary compensation for those acts from the present generation is misguided, because those who live in the present era judge former times on the basis of our own enlightenment (when we have it!). It would be like me demanding financial compensation for those who were gay in former times and who were imprisoned, tortured (electric brain therapy was used at one time) or burned at the stake for sodomy. I cannot demand such things because the society of bygone times judged things on their own sense of ethics and not mine in this present era. Same with the many so called witches or werewolves (ask Mel about that) who were cruelly tortured and killed under unjust laws in the past. No! What is needed is to learn from our ancestor's treatment of others, which was mistaken or the result of religious or tribal/societal bigotry or ignorance. To make the world a place where these evils no longer happen would, I sincerely believe, make our persecuted ancestors happy in a way that retribution could never achieve.

So I hope that with this small window into family history I have demonstrated how important our ancestors are and how understanding them and their societies allows us to amend our own errors and crimes against people now. It is also my personal belief that the ancestors have much yet to tell us, if you are an adept who can spirit walk. But that is something for others to talk about.

I ought to mention before concluding, that as a descendant of the Anglo Saxon King Penda of Mercia, and through him, of the God Woden, although I welcome your comments, Woden has a nasty habit of smiting those who malign his descendants :)))

Good fortune in all your quests to learn what your ancestors were like, and did, and the wisdom that these researches can give you now.

Anarion (Boetia@protonmail.com)



Working with Ancestors

Thicker Than Blood, Deeper Than Water: Embracing Gay & Queer Ancestral Currents **Written by: Sawyer Massie & Adam Black**

We are living Ancestors. We wear the flesh of our foreparents. The blood in our veins reaches back through generations. But we also inherit culture – cultures – and lead lives that were already in motion. Ancestral veneration is a deeply rooted practice common to many cultures which honors one's forebears while carrying a legacy, not just a memory, onward into the future. We are never alone, and we have never been alone. But what does it mean to carry a legacy? Whose do we carry and why? In moving beyond bloodlines, we can celebrate and honor individuals that have profoundly influenced our lives and shaped our communities. We recognize roles commonly designated to kinship among our chosen family and friends. By embracing gay and queer ancestral currents, we affirm the contributions of our brothers and siblings while fortifying our foundations as a community.

Chosen Family

Although we have access to our familial and biological lineages, we are not indebted to them. The experience of life is yours *because* you exist, not because someone gave it to you. Existence is an inevitability. Life, living, is something we must claim for ourselves. We are not obligated to indulge, pacify, or uphold people or systems that neglect, abuse, marginalize, or subjugate us. So when approaching veneration it is important to ask: where is the love?

Chosen family is familiar to many gay men and queer people, although not exclusive to our experiences, and mostly applied to individuals external to our kinship ties. However, it is also applicable within our familial and biological lineages. We are not required to honor or work with those Ancestors, collectively or individually, but that determination is something we must make – choose – for ourselves. What this form comes to take, if it takes one at all, is allowed to deviate from traditional models in your personal practice. Again, where is the love? Where is your love and where is there love for you?

It is worth noting that we may have gay or queer Ancestors in our familial and biological lines that we both know and do not know about. How do we hold space for these Ancestors? We welcome them to our table. We acknowledge their existence, call out from an open heart, and invite them into our space. This same method can be used to work specifically with your general bloodline as opposed to any direct Blood Ancestor. For example, “With love, honor, and respect, I reach through my body and blood, back through my creation, and I call to my Blood Ancestors that love me unconditionally and who watch over me. Be with me, guide me, and make yourselves known to me as you would have me know you.”

When we move from love, and when we can be enveloped in it, we are supported in our power. That current flows from one source to another, from one life to the next, because it is shared. In that sharing is belonging. There is family. And the reality of chosen family emphasizes the complexity and diversity of lineage. It highlights those we validate as influencers, mentors, guides, and protectors. It honors those individuals and the advice, inspiration, and wisdom they shared as we embody them along our paths in life.

Identifying Gay & Queer Ancestral Currents

Once we start identifying energetic signatures and markers that otherwise indicate someone as “one of our own,” we move in ways that affirm the prevalence of experiences that exceed isolated incidents and enter the realm of culture. To this point, we must be careful not to stereotype ourselves or others, or to adopt vitriolic or fear-based projections from external sources. However, we must also be mindful not to deny, reject, or shame the vast expression of our individual and collective gayness or queerness. And it is through



these shared experiences across culture, time, and place that our distinct cultural and energetic lineages are woven together.

As initiates of the Unnamed Path, a spiritual tradition for Men Who Love Men, our ancestral practices are centered in relationships with the Ancestors of Men Who Love Men. However, our personal practices incorporate various relationships with more broadly Queer Ancestors. This is a collective term used that includes the Ancestors of Men Who Love Men, but also Men Who Love Men & Women, People Who Love People, Women Who Love Women, etc. Our energies and mysteries are aligned with certain ancestral currents, but we are not restricted from intersecting or forming dynamic relationships with others where it is desired, necessary, and possible.

Identifying our energies provides a solid foundation to start a journey in getting to know gay and queer Ancestors. This identification is not to limit the potential of our spiritual experiences, but to better align us within currents and mysteries that resonate with our own energy. From this point, we start to move with those currents and all that contribute to that source. And the relationships we cultivate can be as intimate and focused or complex and expansive as our needs and space allow.

Getting to Know the Ancestors

There are various excellent methods for getting to know the Ancestors, namely meditation, journeywork, spirit communication, and divination. However, “on the ground” work in the Middle World should not be overlooked. The spiritual world is not separate from the physical world, and nothing is mundane unless we designate it as such. By engaging in processes of familiarization and introduction, we demonstrate a level of sincerity to pursue something more substantial.

Demographics are helpful pieces of information that outwardly orient a person with their experiences. There is a lot of subtle information behind many of these factors. Names, for example, have meanings. Surnames can indicate a number of ancestral origins. Dates and locations of birth and death are intricately tied to specific threads of fate. By studying archives and records, media and social spheres, and having conversations with others that had relationships with these individuals, we can also extrapolate this out to possibly include occupations, hobbies, and interests which all provide more intimate insights as to the ongoings that express their sense of individuality.

Always work in consent based and privacy oriented practices, and exercise discernment and discretion in this work. Unless we obtain information through direct, firsthand experiences, we are knowing these Ancestors through the perspective of whatever source it originated with us. There is the potential for personal assessment, exaggeration, embellishment, and distortion. When in doubt, go directly to the source.

The practice and techniques of ancestral veneration imply the continuity of existence beyond the physical. Many traditions regard the Ancestors residing in the Underworld. Fortunately, veneration coupled with practices such as journeywork, spirit communication, and divination allow us to engage Ancestors in direct and personal experiences. This extends to the purposeful erecting and use of an Ancestor altar. These encourage us to continue building relationships with an Ancestor, or the Ancestors, as their journeys continue in their (new) state of spirit. Perhaps change has brought them to new places in their evolution? These spiritual spheres of information retrieval allow us to share (in) their stories where they currently are.

Conclusion

As living Ancestors, we are the liminal space that bridges all of what has come before us with all of what can be in a beautiful moment that promises us nothing more. It is up to us to make the most of it, to wield it in wise, loving, and powerful ways for a more visible and equitable future for those that will eventually carry our torches. We have a responsibility to ourselves and future generations to affirm tradition through relevance, applicability, and evolving philosophical perspective. Embracing gay and queer ancestral currents encourages us to move with our history, fortify our foundations as communities and a community, and share a legacy that fosters identity, connection, and belonging.

Building & Working with a Queer Ancestor Altar

Written by: Sawyer Massie & Adam Black

Magical tools are extensions of our will and focal points in our practices. They are mediums for the energetic exchanges at play in our work. Although ultimately a matter of preference, understanding ourselves as the vessel bridging the physical and spiritual, they can provide symbolism and encourage ritualistic gestures that provide an atmosphere that is conducive for magical and spiritual movement. They are also reminders of our spiritual connections. The Ancestor altar is a temporary or permanent working space where we honor, make offerings, engage and communicate with our Ancestors.

Considerations for a Queer Ancestor Altar

As a structure, in terms of function and purpose, a Queer Ancestor altar is no different to an altar used to honor Blood Ancestors. Even their operations are mostly similar. It is how we engage with, even possibly consecrate, a Queer Ancestor altar that aligns it to these ancestral currents. And although magical and spiritual traditions may have specific guidelines as they relate to their practices, these altars are allowed to reflect the communities and cultures of the individuals they are intended to serve.

Veneration is an objective of an Ancestor altar and, moving in alignment with spirit, spontaneous inspirations are welcomed and encouraged. While permanent altars build energy over time through consistent engagement, a valid consideration if your desire and space allows, temporary and momentary structures are no less effective. If we can orient ourselves as sacred space, we move forward carrying sacredness wherever we go. And if we further align our intent with the local land spirits, we are equipped with all we need to effectively move energy and communicate with our Ancestors.

There is a case to be made for private and public altars, both reflecting our relationships with our Ancestors and their role in our lives. With respect to our radical histories and elders, as well as the journeys of acceptance many gay men and queer people experience in owning themselves, it is our choice to determine what we share of ourselves, when, and with whom. Be honest with yourself and consult with your Ancestors. It may also be helpful to consider what types of workings you might engage in at this altar when determining location and visibility.

Another important consideration for this altar is if it is going to be shared. You are welcome to explore shared altar space with your Queer Ancestors and Blood Ancestors. As a spatial concern, this is practical. We are nothing if not practical and resourceful. However, it is worth considering these relationships, their dynamics, and compatibility before bringing them into shared spaces. It is also helpful to be considerate of the uses of this altar and what activities we are comfortable or intend to engage in when at these altars. Remember, Queer Ancestor altars are allowed to reflect our identities and cultures.

Setting Up a Queer Ancestor Altar

Unless working in traditional parameters, "traditional" referring to lineaged traditions as opposed to familiar perceptions, or dedicating an altar to a specific spirit, there are many liberties that can be taken in setting up an altar that is ancestrally and culturally relevant, aesthetically pleasing, and fully operational. What is needed to get started is minimal.



Items Needed:

- Working Table
- Table Covering
- Photographs
- Candle
- Glass of Water
- Offerings

What is ultimately required for an altar is its surface. These are working tables intended to hold items while allowing space to magically and spiritually work. These can stand alone or be incorporated into existing furniture. If incorporating into existing furniture, be mindful of the surface you are designating as the altar. The furniture can remain functional, but it is important to treat your altar with care and consideration. You have designated it a sacred space and it should be regarded with this liminality in mind. And as previously discussed, these can be permanent, temporary, or momentary. Even with permanent structures, you may erect temporary altars away from these places as your spirits, inspiration, and desire guides you.

There is a familiar image of altars covered with some type of covering. This can serve multiple functions. Aesthetically, the color of cloth selected can support our work in focusing our attention and creating a desired atmosphere. Black is generally associated with the dead and is a viable option, but this does not have to be absolute. The symbolism, application, and evolution of color is a significant factor for the LGBTQIA+ community broadly. The various iterations of the pride flag and the diverse, growing associations of the rainbow are fabulous sources to draw from and incorporate into your altar. Allow your spirits and intuition to guide you.

More so, these culturally specific elements are excellent ways to connect directly with our Ancestors. These symbols in their various stages have their own meanings. As we reach back through gay and queer lineages, we can better appreciate their symbolism and history as they were applicable to our communities during those times. The objective of this altar is to bridge connection. Meeting our brothers and siblings where we are and where they were is itself a means of honor and respect.

Another use for the table covering centers on the possible inclusion of a private symbol delivered by your Spirit Guardian to facilitate movement and communication. This symbol aligns the altar to its power. The covering allows this symbol to remain private regardless of the visibility of the altar itself. However, from an animistic perspective, the working table itself contains its own spirit and could be communicated with to bring it into alignment with your spirits and goals. Determining the use of this altar, your relationship with the Ancestors, and their role in your practice can help in deciding what is mutually acceptable for all parties.

Returning to more aesthetic and practical elements, including photographs and tokens of remembrance of the Ancestors on the altar is a familiar practice. Although decorative and balancing to the altar space, this is honorific. Where the altar is aligned with the greater ancestral current, which includes us as Living Ancestors, photographs reflect our developed and ongoing relationships. And while not themselves spirit houses, these photographs and tokens can serve as focal points to support us in magical and spiritual work.

When selecting photographs, it is important to be mindful of the boundary between the living and the dead. Ancestor altars, regardless of their energetic stream, are aligned with the death current. Do not include images of yourself or the living on this altar. This could result in dire and unintended consequences. We are responsible for our actions. We should strive to be men and people of action in our lives. As such, it is beneficial to be mindful, self-reflective, and proactive.

There is another element to consider in selecting photographs if the altar is intended to be shared space. It may be helpful to designate sections of the altar to different ancestral groups. This allows us to honor and work with our Ancestors collectively where it is possible, but it also gives us the option to create privacy where it is needed or desired. If there are activities or workings you are not comfortable engaging both Ancestral groups in, you may use a covering to respectfully focus your attentions. In the Unnamed Path, for example, we are taught the left side of the altar would be for the Ancestors of Men Who Love Men, which can be extrapolated out to Queer Ancestors broadly, while the right side would be for Blood Ancestors. Again, allow your spirits and intuition to guide you.

The purpose of the candle is largely functional. It provides a source of light. Black candles, like the table covering, are a familiar option due to the death associations of the color. But if we engage the candle with intent, we can align it as a beacon of light, inspiration, illumination, and guidance for our Ancestors and the dead. The glass of water however is more symbolic in its function. It is a symbol of connection, depth, and movement, and it is intended to facilitate communication. Similar to the candle, we can also align it to provide suste-

nance and nourishment to the Ancestors and the dead. These intentful engagements are what bridge otherwise perceived mundane into sacred activities while also functionally applying the intended symbolism.

This also brings these functional elements into acts of reciprocity. We honor the Ancestors because of the enrichment their presence brings to our lives. We need to be willing to reciprocate this enrichment and put effort into these relationships. Not out of obligation, but out of gratitude, love, and respect. There are traditional things, such as alcohol (“spirit”) or tobacco, that are wonderful to make as offerings. Offerings of things enjoyed by the spirit in life and those specifically requested by the spirit are going to have more meaning and significance to them. It is not necessarily what is offered but the attention and engagement that is given in the offering. That said, it is courteous and good practice to make offerings and give gifts that are relevant to the individual.

Another good practice with offerings, similar to the water, should be replaced at least once a week. This is a matter of cleanliness and hygiene. You do not want offerings to become rotten, molden, stale, or stagnant. Unless otherwise specified by the spirit or spirits an offering is being made to, most are going to be acceptable for removal after 24 hours to three days. And when preparing to dispose of the offerings, give thanks and release the energy, and then discard them outside or in the trash. If leaving consumable goods outside, always exercise caution and be mindful of the animals and wildlife in your area. They, too, are our brothers and siblings.

Conclusion

The process of setting up an Queer Ancestor altar, because of the cooperation we have with our spirits and the relative freedom we have to designate spaces that reflect our realities, can encourage us to lean into vulnerability. Working with and at these altars is very intimate. While inviting the Ancestors into our spaces, these altars fortify our relationships and sense of community across time, space, and place. They also remind us of the inevitability of the physical condition and our place among the Ancestors.

A Simple System for Working with the Three Kindreds

by Mel Mystery

Many paths within Paganism honor what are known as the “Three Kindreds.” This includes deities, ancestors, and nature spirits. A few years ago I wanted to come up with altars for each of these and also a simple system for honoring each of these kindreds. I did a meditation and came up with the following plan.

I used a tall bookshelf and used three separate shelves to create altars. The top altar is for deities and includes statuettes of some deities I work with and also items I associate with the “upper world.” The middle shelf represents the “middle world” and largely focuses on my animal totems and guides and items related to this kindred and the middle world. The bottom shelf represents the “underworld” and includes photos of my ancestors and a glass of water that I refill weekly as an offering. I often leave crystals and jewelry on these various altars to charge them for a specific type of energy related to each of these kindreds.

In my meditation, I wanted to find a simple way I could honor each of these kindreds while taking into account that I’m a busy person. I was guided to the following system. I honor the deities on (or near) the solar high days and cross-quarters. I honor the ancestors on (or near) the new moon. And I honor the animal and nature spirits on (or near) the full moon. Ideally, I would honor each of these days with a full ritual, but most months I just leave offerings and libations on that particular day with a brief acknowledgement of purpose. Offerings and libations might be lighting a candle or lighting incense, and sometimes I offer food or drink.

At some future time, I’d also like to create a full-time Druid altar (as that is my primary Pagan path) and also a phallic / fertility / virility altar. I envision the Druid altar featuring oak, mistletoe, and three white candles representing Awen (the Druid word for inspiration). I envision the phallic altar containing a crystal phallus representing the omphalos or world tree and statuettes of various deities associated with male sexuality and virility.

Preserving Your Story for Future Generations

by Mel Mystery

Much of this issue is about honoring our ancestors of blood and spirit and trying to discover their stories. If you think about it, one of these days when we're long gone, our descendants of blood and spirit might be trying to piece together our stories. We'll be the ancestors. Whether or not you have your own children, you may wish for your story as the eccentric queer uncle who practices magic to be documented for future generations in your family. It might provide inspiration or affinity with those future generations who discover that they are queer or that they are magical. The same goes for sharing your stories or even the stories of your queer or Pagan organization for future generations of spirit.

How do you do preserve your stories and information and how do you ensure they are available for future generations? I recently spent some time sorting through my own family's history. My paternal grandfather dabbled in genealogy and left boxes of photos, slides, cassette tapes, notes on our family tree, obituaries, a partial autobiography, and other information on our family and his life. My dad passed away in 2009 and left a variety of things behind including letters, materials from his time in Vietnam and his career as a police officer, photographs, high school yearbooks, and even love letters to my mom. All these materials had been stored away in boxes for many years. My grandfather's boxes also included records related to my grandmother and my great grandparents. I took it upon myself to sort these materials for each person. I could write a whole article on what I found, but this article is about preserving our current information and stories for the future.

As part of this process, I started a file box of my own records. My plan is to leave something organized and personally selected that can be added to the family records once I'm gone. My file box includes important records – things like my birth certificate, programs from my high school and college graduations, report cards that my family kept for me from grade school, and things like that. I've also kept many greeting cards and correspondence from over the years. While I'm not sure I want to share everything, many of these provide a glimpse of my life and relationships with friends and family throughout my life. At various points in my life, I kept journals. These journals will also be included in my collection. Some of the journals relate to me coming out as gay and my first experiences joining a gay college group and a gay youth group. My mom kept scrapbooks for me and my sister. My scrapbooks will eventually become part of my collection. Right now, they reside with my mom. I've made a few scrapbooks of my own. My adult scrapbooks include photos of my involvement in LGBTQ groups and events, as well as Pagan ones. I'm leaving space for my own yearbooks which are currently housed on a bookshelf in my house. I've been in the newspaper from time to time (especially for gay activism in college) so I'm also including those in my personal collection. At some point, I hope to write an autobiography or to at least include a timeline of major events in my life that may provide more insight into my life to future generations.

My hope is that when I'm gone my story and my experiences will live on. Do I know that they will? The answer is “no, not really.” There's always the possibility that a homophobic or conservative relative down the line will purge my records or censor out what they don't want known about me. The future holders of the family papers might have to downsize materials if they don't have the space or if they don't value their importance. Fires, floods, natural disasters, or just poor storage could damage or destroy some or all of what I've left behind. Sure, some things are a matter of public record – births and deaths, deeds, marriage licenses, newspaper articles, and so on – but I really hope that the record of my life contains stories about who I was and what I stood for and is not confined just to facts and figures.

If you're part of a queer or Pagan group or organization, you might also want your stories and records saved for posterity. Certainly, larger organizations will have their own files and records – possibly going back to the organization's founding. These larger organizations also have an advantage in that many expect to be around for many more generations, if not indefinitely. Smaller groups and organizations still have historical value – even your small coven that only meets to celebrate sabbats and esbats. Some Pagan groups might have constitutions, books of spells, rituals, statements of beliefs, and so on. These things might be important to future researchers and especially to future Pagans. A similar importance can be given to the records of Queer groups large and small.

The same approach given to preserving your personal records can be taken to preserve your group and organization records. You might save things like constitutions and by-laws, statements of mission or beliefs, event calendars, materials related to marketing, newsletters, photos and scrapbooks, and other important records. Your organization might consider having an official or unofficial historian or record keeper to keep and preserve the records and history of the group.

Families and organizations can also record their own oral histories. These are audio or video recordings of family members or group members telling their stories and the stories of the family or group. These can be formal question and answer sessions or just letting Uncle Bob ramble on about his childhood or a founding member talking about the founding of your group. It's good form to create a typed transcript of any oral histories conducted as future generations may or may not have the technology or software to watch or listen to the recording in its original format.

If you really want to "go big", you might consider donating your personal, family, or organization records and stories to an archive, historical organization, or history project. This might also be a consideration if your organization has disbanded or if you fear your personal records might be censored by future family members. At this time in history, many archives and historical organizations and projects are looking for unique collections and also to add diversity to their collections. At one time, most archives and historicals held the records and stories of rich, white, people and families and mainstream organizations, but many are now actively seeking to provide a better balance.

In addition to archives at libraries and universities, there are also community historical organizations and projects. There are historical organizations specifically for LGBTQ history and even for Pagan history. If you donate to such an organization, they take on the responsibility of preservation and storage for your records. They also generally expect that your records will be open to researchers. In some cases, you might be able to set some restrictions or make arrangements for the historical organization to return materials to you that they don't want. You'll usually complete and sign an agreement called a "deed of gift" that stipulates details related to the donation.

With some planning and organization your records and stories or those of your queer or Pagan organization might live on long past your death or past the disbanding of your group.

Preservation Tips:

- Keep your records in a dark, climate-controlled environment. This keeps them from getting too hot, too cold, too damp, or too much sun. Also, keep out pests and bugs.
- Use acid-free folders and paper where possible. A lot of things, especially newspapers, use acidic paper to help them eventually biodegrade. That's great for the environment, but not for long-term records.
- Newspapers and newspaper clippings degrade with age and over time they can also cause brown imprints on surrounding papers. Store newspaper clippings in their own folders. For long-term preservation, consider making photocopies or printed scans of clippings and place these in another folder separate from the originals.
- Whenever possible, store your photos in mylar sleeves with no more than two photos per sleeve facing outward from each other. Photos have a tendency to stick together, especially if they are stored in humid environments.
- Scrapbooks are fun, but they don't always age well. Adhesive mounts stop sticking with age. Photos stick together or stick to transparent page covers. Newspaper clippings degrade and cause browning of items they contact.
- Digital photos, videos, audio recordings, and other files are nice, but it is unclear whether people in the future will have the technology or proper software to access them. You can certainly include data CDs, flash drives, and external hard drives in your records, but it's a good idea to include printed photos and transcripts as well.
- Label things, places, and people. You may know that's your Uncle Bill in that family photo, and your current generation of family might know, but someone in the future might not. The same goes for photos of your family home or your first car. If you're keeping artifacts, for example your high school graduation cap or artwork you created, make a note so that future generations know its significance and who it belonged to.
- Create an inventory. This will help you keep track of things, help identify artifacts, and provide a quick reference if you need to locate something.

Poetry and Art

The Passage of Dreams

When Speakers fall

The power of dreams does its vision fail,

And, as silence closes in upon truth,

A cry is heard,

A great wailing in the desert lands -

the lonely passage of dreams.

For when the grey man treads the darkening path

Know that time is almost come,

When walls will fall and barriers break

And truth in naked gaze is seen,

And horror tares the gracious soul.

But still my heart is called by desert winds,

Which blow in chaos through my life.

And my sleep no longer tranquillity gives,

For I deny the ending

Chosen for my soul.

The river calls its cry to the canyon walls,

And without haste wears the rock thought so strong.

Flooding unto the very source

Of time and untime.

And wisdom crumbles in the face of a child's tears.

When shall the Speaker fall?

And when will stars their journeys end.

When will the storm wave overcome the land,

And darkness combine with light

To beguile the Dragon King.

Sometime.

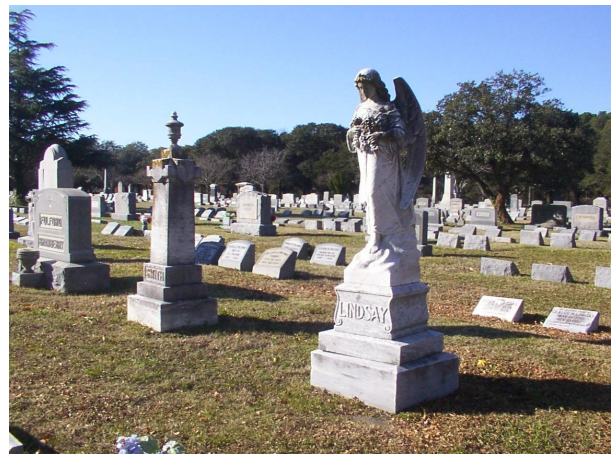
when the poet his pen lays down

And sleep overwhelms the wise

And the last light of Evenstar

is quenched by the world's demands.

John 1998



Stone and Stang 2024 **“Bonfire of Brotherhood”**

A Spiritual Gathering for Men-Who-Love-Men

October 3-6, 2024

At the SIREnity Farms Campground
Sullivan, Missouri

<https://unnamedpath.org/stone-stang/>

Queer Pagan Resources

Queer Pagan Men's Groups

Brotherhood of Cernunnos -- A Brotherhood of UK Gay Pagan Men.

FMI: <http://www.brotherhoodofcernunnos.org/>

Cern'osia -- An eclectic Neo-Pagan faith which focuses exclusively on the veneration and worship of the Celtic Horned God, Cernunnos. Although it could be adapted by anyone who worships the Horned One, it was designed primarily with the needs of a solitary Pagan man in mind.

FMI: <https://cernosia.webs.com/>

Ecclesia Antinoi — Devoted to the worship of Antinous, the lover of the Roman emperor Hadrian. Antinous was deified after his death and is worshiped by modern practitioners as a god of gay spirituality, youth, and beauty.

FMI: <http://www.antinopolis.org/>

Gay Druid Brotherhood — An international network for homosexual and bisexual men on the Druidic and Keltic inspired Pagan paths.

FMI: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/gaydruidbrotherhood/>

Green Faerie Grove — A brotherhood of queer men in Columbus, Ohio.

FMI: <http://greenfaeriegrove.org/>

The Minoan Brotherhood — A men's initiatory tradition of the Craft celebrating Life, Men Loving Men, and Magic in a primarily Cretan context, also including some Aegean and Ancient Near Eastern mythology.

FMI: <http://www.minoan-brotherhood.org/>

Radical Faeries — Generally we are gay men who look for a spiritual dimension to our sexuality. Many of us are healers of one kind or another. Our shared values include feminism, respect for the Earth, and individual responsibility rather than hierarchy. Many of us are Pagan (nature-based religion).

FMI: <http://www.radfae.org/>

The Unnamed Path — The Unnamed Path is a shamanic path for men who love men. The path focuses on four main parts—Magic and Prophecy, Shamanism, Energy Healing, and Deathwalking.

FMI: www.unnamedpath.com

Submission deadline for the next issue of Mysterious Ways is December 15, 2024.

Please consider sharing your articles, reviews, poetry, art, events, and announcements.

E-mail these to Mel at knightsofmatrix@gmail.com. Please put "Mysterious Ways" in the subject line.

Upcoming Retreats and Gatherings

September 16-21, 2024 — Between the Worlds: A spiritual gathering for men who love men held at Four Quarters Interfaith Sanctuary, Artemis, PA. FMI: <http://www.betweentheworlds.org>

September 26-29, 2024— Gay Spirit Visions Fall Conference at the Mountain Retreat and Learning Center in Highlands, NC. FMI: <http://gayspiritvisions.org/annual-gatherings/>

October 3-6, 2024—Stone and Stang gathering for men who love men. “Bonfire of Brotherhood.” To take place at SiRenity Farms Campground, Sullivan, Missouri. FMI: <https://unnamedpath.org/stone-stang/>

November 15-17, 2024 — Arcadia Retreat for Queer Pagan Men. To take place in-person at a campground in Virginia Beach. Guest facilitator Eric Eldritch of the Radical Faeries and Stone Circle Wicca. FMI: www.olympuscampgroundresort.com/index.php/events/arcadia

January 17-19, 2025— Gay Spirit Visions Winter Meditation at the Mountain Retreat and Learning Center in Highlands, NC. FMI: <http://gayspiritvisions.org/annual-gatherings/>

May 9-11, 2025 — Gay Spirit Visions Spring Retreat at the Mountain Retreat and Learning Center in Highlands, NC. FMI: <http://gayspiritvisions.org/annual-gatherings/>

Spring 2025 — Brotherhood by the Bog retreat for Pagan Men of all paths, backgrounds, and orientations. To take place in-person at First Landing State Park in Virginia Beach, VA. Details to be announced. FMI: <https://www.olympuscampgroundresort.com/brotherhood-by-the-bog-main/>

Blogs and Podcasts for Pagan men who love men

A Path through the Woods — Blog by a gay, Pagan, polytheist who lives in Chicago — <https://www.adrianmoran.com/>

Discovering the Male Mysteries — Official webpage for Mel Mystery and the Discovering the Male Mysteries podcast for gay and bi Pagan men. — <http://www.melmystery.com/>

Enfolding.org — A blog by Phil Hine to discuss interests including Tantra, Queer Theory, Gender, History, and Occult Practice. — <http://enfolding.org/>

Faehaven — Based in Harrisburg, PA the community is forming in order to create a space where queers and their advocates can explore spirituality of all sorts and have a safe space to share among like-minded independent individuals. — <https://faehaven.wordpress.com/about/>

Walking the Unnamed Path — Discusses the teachings and techniques given to us by their Ancestors of MWLM, and laid out by their late founder Hyperion. They also discuss topics and ideas pertaining to queer Pagan men in general. — <https://unnamedpath.org/podcast/>

Witches Betwixt — Witches Betwixt is a collective of queer witches representing a wide variety of magical practices and spiritual paths. We release a 45+ minute episode bi-weekly in which we discuss various topics relevant to the experience of a queer witch. — <http://witchesbetwixt.buzzsprout.com/>

**Looking for a speaker for your next gathering, retreat, or other event?
Check out the Queer Pagan Speaker Directory online!**

<https://www.melmystery.com/queer-pagan-speaker-directory/>

Mysterious Ways

The Mysterious Ways Cyberzine is produced and published by Mel Mystery.

Mel Mystery is host of the Discovering the Male Mysteries Podcast for Gay and Bi Pagan Men. He is also author of the book, "The Gay Guys Guide to Werewolves and other Man Beasts" and he has a few other books in the works

You can find out about Mel, listen to his podcast, and find out more about his books at: www.melmystery.com

Archive copies of this newsletter will also be kept on the site.

We need your support!!!

This paper is a community-based project. We're not charging for subscriptions. We're not accepting paid advertising. Those writing articles are not paid for their work. This paper is for the Queer Pagan Men's community and by the Queer Pagan Men's community.

If you think this paper is worthwhile, please consider helping us to thrive. We need folks to submit articles, artwork, poetry, reviews, and other content. We need folks to share this in Queer Pagan groups and social media groups. We need folks to print copies and share them in LGBTQ and Pagan spaces in their local communities.

Thank you for doing your part!!!

Next Issue: Rebirth and Transformation

In the next issue we'll talk about rebirth and transformation. How do many Pagan paths approach the topic of reincarnation and rebirth? How is transformation part of our lives and spiritual paths? How do we deal with change? If lives or our spiritual paths are feeling stale, how can we bring about a rebirth of hope and needed enthusiasm?

Any or all of these topics, and topics of general Queer Pagan interest, are suitable for submission to the next issue of Mysterious Ways.

Please send articles, reviews, original poetry, artwork, spells, and other submissions to Mel at knightsofmatrix@gmail.com by December 15, 2024. Be sure to put "Mysterious Ways Submission" in the subject line.

Submission Guidelines:

1. All submissions should be of interest to Queer Pagan Men and fit at least two of the criteria—Queer, Pagan, and Men.
2. All submissions (especially photography and artwork) should be rated PG-13 or less. Since this newsletter will be shared in social media groups and in Pagan shops where minors might have access, we'd rather err on the side of community standards—not that we necessarily agree with them all.
3. Most articles should be a typewritten page or less. We may consider longer articles based on relevance and content.
4. You retain ownership and/or copyright of any articles or artwork you submit. We are only providing a venue to share your work with the world.
5. We reserve the right to refuse any content for any reason; to make minor edits such as spelling, grammar, and formatting; or to send the content back to you for revision.
6. We will not accept content that is explicitly racist, sexist, homophobic, transphobic, ageist, body shaming, or that otherwise spreads hate, negativity, or misinformation about any population or subculture of people.