

SOURCED DESIGN

[ABOUT](#)[VITALITY-CENTERED DESIGN LAB](#)[GIVE](#)[CONTACT](#)[CURRICULUM](#)[THE NETWORK](#)

Build beloved community

Our goal is to create a beloved community
and this will require a qualitative change in our souls
as well as a quantitative change in our lives.

— *Martin Luther King Jr.*

This principle recognizes that while we honor individuality and cultivating personhood, we also value the collective. When connection to community and individuality are both fostered, creativity emerges that is not simply a sum of the parts, but like Carl Jung would call, “the third thing” or “[transcendent function](#)” emerges. Something new is born when each individual is committed to their own development within the life giving structure of community.

The beloved community supports each person to become more fully, and vitally, who they are. This strengthens the collective and its connection to place. The German poet Friedrich Ruckert writes: “When the rose beautifies itself, it also beautifies the garden.” When sustainable values are at the center of the community design, cultural practices emerge in the community that strengthen and solidify the life giving values within each person, the community itself, and in connection to place. In this section, we will highlight a few practices that build beloved community at Springhouse, including navigating difficulty to deepen relationships, fostering personal responsibility including owning projections, and holding rites of passage to honor and celebrate individual growth within the community.

Beloved Community

More and more in today’s culture people are feeling alienated, and afraid, especially in rural America ([Green](#), [DelReal & Clement](#)). Political, racial and religious differences are being reinforced through divisive rhetoric on all sides ([Johnson](#)). There are few opportunities for real human connection or developing a sense of community and belonging, let alone ones that bridge these cultural gaps ([Alexander](#)). This is especially pronounced in sparsely populated, rural Appalachia, where income earning opportunities are limited, and cultural institutions that facilitate connection are struggling to stay open

(Carey, MIT Dep Urban Planning). Loneliness and social isolation are such pronounced problems that they might even be considered a public health crisis (Lyons). Beloved community is needed now more than ever.

The term beloved community was used often by Martin Luther King, Jr. to describe a vision where agape love, or a deep and rigorous love, is the guiding principle for the community. The King Center defines the beloved community as follows:

Dr. King's Beloved Community is a global vision, in which all people can share in the wealth of the earth. In the Beloved Community, poverty, hunger and homelessness will not be tolerated because international standards of human decency will not allow it. Racism and all forms of discrimination, bigotry and prejudice will be replaced by an all-inclusive spirit of sisterhood and brotherhood. In the Beloved Community, international disputes will be resolved by peaceful conflict-resolution and reconciliation of adversaries, instead of military power. Love and trust will triumph over fear and hatred. Peace with justice will prevail over war and military conflict.

To read a rich exploration of the beloved community, click [here](#).

Through ritual, dance, song, shared leadership structures, and more, Springhouse builds beloved community. Sacred Dance, one of the primary ways we foster individuality and community connection, is not performative or technical; it is a practice that keeps us connected to ourselves and each other. Embodiment is a radical act; one that we see as essential if we are to meet the incredible challenges we face today. Dance holds us together as a community in ways that words simply cannot. We dance to strengthen our bonds, to celebrate, and to summon the vitality, courage, and joy it takes to serve a world in need.

Community reminds us that we are not alone and is a crucible for healing and healthy development to occur. It is the ground from which vitality emerges, and nourishes both the community itself, and the larger culture it is embedded within. Beloved community requires rigorous practices that tend to relationship—both within the individual and between community members; particularly fostering the skills needed to navigate difficulty.

Regenerative Relationships: Navigating Difficulty in Relationship

Community is made up of relationships that are rich with ways to learn about our strengths and weaknesses, both individually and collectively. Learning from community, whether that is through reclaiming projections or navigating the complexity of relationship, requires participation and a willingness to be seen. Community makes healing multi-dimensional, and gives us the opportunity to face fears related to connecting with others authentically. When we invite a witness into the reflective process, we receive another person's perspective, and as a result our learning deepens. It is in that complex and regenerative relationship where we learn about the depths of ourselves. We value the power of community-based learning because it is in relationships that we come to know ourselves, and our world, more intimately.

When pain is owned and honored, transformation becomes possible. Feeling pain is difficult enough; to face it alone is daunting. In a macro-culture that fears pain, facing it together as a community gives difficulty solid ground to stand upon. The more that we

can stand as witness to our own pain, the better equipped we are to stand with others. Community can teach us how to do this. When it honors individuality and respects autonomy, community can be a place where turning toward difficulty leads to a deep and sustaining vitality; a light that the Bhakti poet Kabir calls "a lamp with no wick and no oil". The great mystics of every faith have written for centuries about this love or life or light, deeply embodied in the darkness of our earthly lives. We use our own agency and choice to take this journey, but we cannot do it alone. We are not meant to. Community is a container that can reflect back to us the love we may not feel in dark times, and celebrate our wholeness as we reclaim who we authentically are.

Turning away from pain is not life giving. With addiction of all kinds on the rise (Johnston, O'Malley & Bachman, 1998), the climate warming due mostly to human overconsumption (in the United States primarily) (McCarthy, 2008), and dangerous emotional reactivity that includes violence in our schools (Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence, 2012), we cannot deny that as a collective we are on the run from ourselves. The 13th c. poet Rumi writes, "Don't turn your head. Keep looking at the bandaged place. That's where the light enters you." How we choose to move in the world with our pain determines greatly how we relate to ourselves, each other, and the planet.

Living one's life fully includes facing difficulty, within oneself and in relationship with others. The community can help us grow in this capacity and [there are great gifts that come from facing difficulty](#) when it is held with responsibility and care. Projection is very important to be aware of in a community and when approached with skill and care, can lead to individual and collective regeneration.

Projection

[Projection](#) (defined by Carl Jung) happens when we project our positive and negative qualities onto each other so that we can see and reclaim them. When positive or negative qualities are projected onto others, it is difficult (if not impossible) to respond to the world from a place of wholeness. Through the rigorous process of self-study, what we project onto others, we reclaim as our own. For a community to be sturdy, rigorous self-reflection and responsibility is required. There are many scholars today studying the power of creating community and its ability to transform individual and collective narratives of disconnection and isolation (some listed in the resources below.)

Relationships with others challenge us to know ourselves better, and in turn strengthens community. Carl Jung writes that there is a "lack of understanding wrought by projection" and encourages the West to "give some thought to the question of human relationship from the psychological point of view, for in this resides its real cohesion and consequently its strength". When we project both our negative and positive qualities onto others, we become disempowered; blaming and disowning our power, and inner or outer conflict can ensue. Transformation becomes almost impossible from this disempowered place. When we bring the focus back to ourselves, we are empowered. It is through the withdrawal of projections that we can begin to know ourselves more deeply, and community is fertile ground for this reclamation.

Rites of Passage

Rites of passage (i.e. the preparation and marking of one's transition from one phase of development to the next) are critical for today's youth and culture at large. Rites of passage have traditionally been supported by the whole community. An individual would leave the village to engage in deep self-exploration in order to return to the village and be of greater service to their community. Our modern culture lacks meaningful and transformative initiation rites. As a result, adolescents initiate each other into what they think is genuine adulthood. They do not have the support or example of committed,

engaged adults. The result is usually not good and can include “mindless binge drinking, emotionless friends-with-benefits sex, and a focus on consumerism and economic status”.

Rites of passage programs support young people and their parents, guardians or mentors. In order for teens to transition from childhood to adolescence in a healthy way, parents and other adults in the community must be involved. It is natural and developmentally appropriate that, during adolescence, a young person’s focus shifts away from their families and moves toward their peer relationships and social status. . Bill Plotkin writes in *Nature and the Human Soul* that “the passage of puberty usually holds a good deal of unavoidable sadness for both the parent and child. Childhood is over.” It is therefore necessary that parents and guardians are supported as they do the rigorous work of letting their child go, knowing that there is a community to receive their son or daughter as they do so. It is the role of the parents to let them go, while it is the responsibility of the community to receive the child and mentor them during this turbulent and creative time. We find that parents often need education on the developmental phase of adolescence in order to best serve their children.

As these shifts occur, teens need support outside of the family structure. They need to be seen by their peers and adults who are not their parents. They also need to be challenged in healthy ways. According to the School of Lost Borders

When young people are not offered the opportunity to push their edges and challenge themselves through rites of passage, they will seek self-initiation nonetheless, a pattern observable in the modernized world through high rates of suicide, substance abuse, violence, gang activity, and myriad forms of recklessness displayed by teens.

Without a marking of this passage, many teens continue to live like children, even into their adulthood. This work is important because we need a generation that is grounded and empowered, that can be caretakers of themselves, their communities, and the Earth.

Resources

Beloved Community

[Youth On Fire: Igniting a Generation of Embodied Global Leaders](#)

[We Are the Beloved Community | John Lewis - The On Being Project](#)

[The King Philosophy- Beloved Community](#)

[Community: The Structure of Belonging](#)

[The Power of Collective Wisdom & the Trap of Collective Folly](#)

[The Next Buddha May Be a Sangha](#)

[Developing Sustainability, Developing the Self: An Integral Approach to International & Community Development](#)

[Walk Out Walk On: A Learning Journey into Communities Daring to Live the Future Now](#)

[Living Inquiry: Me, My Self, and Other | Meyer | Journal of Curriculum Theorizing](#)

[Hawaiian Knowing: Old Ways for Seeing a New World \(Ala Kukui\)](#)

[Transformative Leadership: From Domination to Partnership](#)

[Seeing Through Native Eyes: Understanding the Language of Nature](#)

[Spiritual Dance, Semester at Sea](#)

Navigating Difficulty

[The Gifts of Imperfection: Let Go of Who You Think You're Supposed to Be and Embrace Who You Are](#)

[Healing Through the Dark Emotions: The Wisdom of Grief, Fear, and Despair](#)

[Finding Our Way: Leadership for an Uncertain Time](#)

Rites of Passage

[Animas Institute](#)

[How to Help Young People Transition Into Adulthood](#)

[The Journey To a Genuine Life](#)

Springhouse examples

[Springhouse Community School Hosts First Annual Gathering](#)

[Learner Panel on Five Principles](#)

[Learn Life Talk](#)

Reflection questions

- What is your relationship to community? Have you received gifts from being part of a community?
- What does “beloved community” mean to you? Have you experienced the beloved community based on The King Center’s description?
- What are some of the ways your community practice belovedness? What are ways that your community could grow in this area?
- What are the cultural practices of your community? Do they build beloved community?
- What are the cultural implications of not fostering beloved community? What are the consequences of this in your community?
- What is your relationship with difficulty? Has community supported you through difficulty? Can you articulate examples of this in your life? Or ways your community supports members through difficulty?
- Have you had a rite of passage? What happened? Tell the story.
- What are the cultural implications of not having rites of passage?
- What are the developmental frameworks that support holistic development?

Quick Links

[Springhouse and Regenerative Culture](#)

[Introduction to Vitality-Centered Education](#)

[Take care of vulnerability](#)

[Cultivate personhood](#)

[Respect the wisdom of the Earth](#)

[Love and serve others](#)