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Dear Friends,

"My experience is what I agree to attend to." -William James

I decided this year that I'd like to continue my practice of creating a small painting every day. I could see how it grounded me last year, how it engendered a practice of being present to the world and to the page, and how much I looked forward to it each day.

So I am continuing that practice in 2020 along with a focus: I am creating a small painting of the sky each day this year. I call it my Cloud Diary because I love clouds, but in reality, it is a Sky Diary, clouds or no clouds. You can follow along on my sky journey on [Instagram](#) if you'd like.

As I wrote on [Facebook](#), "I am painting the sky and the clouds every day this year, and it is clarifying how paying close attention to something changes one's relationship to it." Presence changes things. Your presence changes things.



What do you attend to? Where do you place your presence?

[For those wondering, I create these quick paintings in watercolor on some days, and with acrylic paint on others. There is nothing special about the brushes I use, but the holder of all these paintings is a dated [Hobonichi Techo planner](#) (A6 size). These planners (which I also use as my actual work planner in the A5 Cousin size) contain my favorite paper, Tomoe River Paper, which is Bible-paper-thin, but (somehow) holds up to all the paint I can throw at it.]

Things to ponder:

1. "One of the biggest challenges in slave studies is this idea that people were unknowable, that the slave trade destroyed individuality," says Daryle Williams, a historian at the University of Maryland. "But the slave trade didn't erase people. We have all kinds of information that are knowable—property records, records related to births, deaths, and marriages. [There are billions of records. It just takes a lot of time to go look at them, and to trace the arc of an individual life.](#)" To trace one slave's narrative, read Zora Neale Hurston's *Barracoon*, this month's pick for the [Hard Conversations Book Club](#).
2. I am a fan of yoga. I would go so far as to say that it has saved my life after a PTSD diagnosis. [Here are three lessons yoga can teach us in a digital world.](#)
3. [About pronouns.](#) Educate yourself - and practice.
4. Here's a pretty good plan for a daily routine: "One ought, every day at least, to hear a little song, read a good poem, see a fine picture, and, if it were possible, to speak a few reasonable words." -Goethe
5. "What's the problem with being 'not racist'? It is a claim that signifies neutrality: 'I am not a racist, but neither am I aggressively against racism.' But there is no neutrality in the racism struggle. The opposite of 'racist' isn't 'not racist.' It is 'antiracist.'" — Ibram X. Kendi, [How to Be an Antiracist](#)

What's coming up:

Women's Writing Retreat - Fall 2020 - Come write with me in the mountains of NC in September (Sept 7-12). Info is [here](#). This is my most intimate retreat, with only 7 writers for 1:1 time in a beautiful space. *Three tickets remain.*

Life is a Verb Camp - October 29 - November 1, 2020, near Asheville NC. [Go here](#) to get information and to register. You'll leave inspired, with an amazing community to support you in your journey.

Hard Conversations Book Club - It's never too late to join this group of folks who read and think in community each month. Our reading list will expand your world. You can find the 2020 list and other information [here](#).

Hard Conversations: An Introduction to Racism - Online class begins March 3, with live calls from 8-9:15 pm Eastern on March 10, 17, 24, and 31. Systemic racism, white privilege, the myth

of colorblindness, and how to be an effective ally. [Go here](#) for more info.

NEW COURSE

Hard Conversations: Whiteness, Race, and Social Justice

The newest class in the Hard Conversations Series begins April 7. This class focuses on white racial identity, hallmarks of white identity and white supremacy culture, what it means to be white in a racist world, and how to create a positive white identity. [Go here](#) for info.

Thanks for reading. If you like this newsletter and want to support it, forward it to someone who'd like it. If you're seeing this newsletter for the first time, you can subscribe [here](#).

Be fully present,
Patti

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