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Dear Friends,

A week or so ago, I had gone to bed a bit early to read Isabel Wilkerson’s new book, *Caste*.

After about 15 minutes of reading, there was a light knock at the door to the bedroom. I said, “come in,” and my son, Feliks, opened the door just a crack. Without saying anything, I saw his arm raise up through the crack in the door, then he threw something at me and closed the door again.

Whatever he had thrown hit the bed cover with a small thud. I searched for it and found a very tiny wrapped chocolate that looked like Santa Claus. I recognized it from his Christmas stocking.



That is what love looks like.

It reminded me of several years ago when Feliks very shyly brought me a tiny package. I opened it and found small erasers shaped like acorns, which he knows I love. He had seen them while out shopping with his dad and had bought them for me with his own money. He doesn't ever give gifts out of obligation, so the ones he does give have even more real meaning for him--and the recipient.

That is what love looks like.

Even earlier than those two events, I was in a small bedroom in the basement of the Bend of Ivy Lodge, in the mountains of North Carolina, when a text came in on my phone. I was at the Lodge because I was leading one of my 6-day writing retreats. In the days before COVID, of course.

I had taken a little time to rest before dinner, so I texted Feliks just to say hi and see how things were going at home.

I was unprepared for his response. I took a photo of it and keep it on my phone, now years later. I was still in tears when I went up for dinner with the group. It was a huge milestone, something so precious to me. His text to me that evening at the retreat ended with a simple "love you."

He was about 13 or 14 years old at the time. He had been diagnosed with autism when he was nine, after nine years of what felt like pure hell--for him and for us. This text was the first time he had ever said any variation of "love you" to me.

Whenever I would say "goodnight, love you" to him for all those years, he would say "ok." I had grown to understand that I wouldn't end every phone conversation with us both saying "love you" at the end, as I do with my daughter, Emma. It was just part of his autism. I understood that. It didn't stop me from saying "I love you" to him, and I didn't feel disappointed at the lack of reciprocity. I understood it.

But the emotion that welled up in me when I read that simple "love you" from him was so strong, so sudden, so sure. We all need and want that acknowledgment of kinship, of love, of connectedness. Maybe I had wanted that more than I realized.

But as I considered my reaction, I realized I had been looking for it in the wrong places from Feliks. He still says "ok" when I say, "Goodnight, I love you." He hasn't, since that text, ever said "love you" again, and he may never say that again to me.

But he buys me little acorn erasers and throws tiny chocolate Santas at me in bed, and he teaches me to play his video games even though he knows I'll be terrible at them. He calls me on his phone from his bedroom when he's lonely and asks me to come and sit with him as he falls asleep.

That is what love looks like.

### LINKS YOU MIGHT ENJOY

Here's [my favorite at-home yoga practice](#).

And [one of my favorite recipes](#). So easy and yummy when it is cold outside.

Here is a list of [10 books you should read](#) if you are a U.S. citizen.

## UPCOMING OPPORTUNITIES

### WRITERS IN THE PANDEMIC (starts Jan 25, 2021)

I started this online class when the COVID-19 pandemic struck in 2020, and, well, here we still are. So if you'd like a writing community, support, feedback, and motivation for your writing, you might enjoy "Writers in the Pandemic." This is a 2-week online class where you will receive several prompts each day to get you seeing, thinking, and writing more deeply and more consistently, with a group of other writers doing the same alongside you. Two one-hour Zoom calls are included, as well as the online classroom (open for three months) and an ongoing Writers in the Pandemic Facebook group. This is priced for the pandemic at \$37. [Go here for information and to register.](#)

### FREE WRITING PROMPTS FOR 2021

Do you want to get back to a consistent writing routine in the New Year? I am offering free writing prompts **every Monday-Friday** in 2021. If you'd like to receive them, you can do so in either of the following ways:

**By text:** Text "writing prompts" to me at 828-248-7513 to sign up for free. Your first prompt will arrive via text the day after you sign up.

**By email:** [Go here](#) to sign up for free. Your first prompt will arrive the day after you sign up. We added this method because some of you couldn't participate by text. I hope it is helpful!

### HARD CONVERSATIONS ONLINE CLASSES

#### WHITENESS, RACE, AND SOCIAL JUSTICE (starts Jan 19)

Starts on January 19th and meets every Tuesday for five weeks, with an online classroom of readings and activities as well as five live Zoom calls (\$99). You choose between an afternoon (3-4:30pm ET) or evening cohort (8-9:30pm ET). All calls are recorded, should you have to miss one.

Week 1: Introduction

Week 2: The Social Construction of Race and Whiteness

Week 3: The Color of Supremacy

Week 4: The Making and Unmaking of Whiteness

Week 5: Developing a Solidarity-Based Action Plan

The course includes five 90-minute live sessions with your hosts and other participants, small breakout group discussions, an online classroom for study and discussion, and an extensive resource library on whiteness. Included: access to the discussion forum and resource library for three full months, as well as ongoing access to our private Facebook community for alumni.

#### **REGISTER:**

Students may choose the afternoon or evening series:

COHORT 34 - Afternoon Cohort: January 19 – February 16 (Tuesdays) with Live Seminars from 3-4:30pm ET (12-1:30 PT) on January 19, 26, February 2, 9, 16.

COHORT 35 - Evening Cohort: January 19 – February 16 (Tuesdays) with Live Seminars from 8-9:30pm ET (5-6:30 PT) on January 19, 26, February 2, 9, 16.

[Go here for more information and to register.](#)

### **DEEP DIVE INTO RACISM AND ITS UNDOING** (formerly Intro to Racism and Its Undoing)

Starts on January 21 and meets every Thursday for five weeks, with an online classroom of readings and activities as well as five live Zoom calls (\$99). You choose between an afternoon (3-4:30pm ET) or evening cohort (8-9:30pm ET). All calls are recorded, should you have to miss one.

We include discussions of racism in general, and across several dimensions of diversity. Given the 2020 police shootings of Breonna Taylor, George Floyd, and Jacob Blake, and violent police and vigilante reactions to the Black Lives Matter protests, most resources in the course are focused on black/white racism. Though this is certainly not our only focus, discussions of anti-blackness are what prompted the creation of this course. We will hear diverse voices. We will ask questions. We will tell our own truths. And we will become not just allies, but effective allies.

Week 1: Introduction

Week 2: On Systemic Racism

Week 3: On White Privilege

Week 4: On Color Blindness and Microaggressions

Week 5: On Being an Effective Ally: What Will You Do Next?

The course includes five 90-minute live sessions with your hosts and other participants, small breakout group discussions, an online classroom for study and discussion, and an extensive resource library on racism. Included: access to the discussion forum and resource library for three full months, as well as ongoing access to the private Facebook community for alumni.

### **REGISTER:**

Students may choose the afternoon or evening series:

COHORT 36 - Afternoon Cohort: January 21 – February 22 (Thursdays) with Live Seminars from 3-4:30pm ET (12-1:30 PT) on January 21, 28, February 4, 11, 18.

COHORT 37 - Evening Cohort: January 21 – February 22 (Thursdays) with Live Seminars from 8-9:30pm ET (5-6:30 PT) on January 21, 28, February 4, 11, 18.

[Go here for more information and to register for the Cohort of your choice.](#)

If you have any questions about these courses, please email [support@pattidigh.com](mailto:support@pattidigh.com).

NOTE: If you would like to receive text notifications about upcoming Hard Conversations classes and events, please text "Social Justice" to 828-248-7513. If you are alumni of one of these courses, please text "Alumni" to the same number.

### **HARD CONVERSATIONS BOOK CLUB**

This ongoing group meets virtually every month to discuss the book for that month (The 2021 list is below). The cost to join is just \$5 *for the year*. We'd love for you to join these monthly conversations that deepen our understanding of racism and other -isms. You can find [more information here](#). Each call is on the third Sunday of the month from 8-9pm ET. If you are unavailable at that time, each call is recorded for later listening. Here is our booklist for 2021:

**January** - *Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents* by Isabel Wilkerson

**February** - *Killers of the Dream* by Lillian Smith

**March** - *The Family Tree: A Lynching in Georgia, a Legacy of Secrets, and My Search for the Truth* by Karen Branan

**April** - *Begin Again: James Baldwin's America and Its Urgent Lessons for Our Own* by Eddie S. Glaude, Jr.

**May** - *My Grandmother's Hands: Racialized Trauma and the Pathway to Mending Our Hearts and Bodies* by Resmaa Menakem

**June** - *Crazy Brave* by Jo Harjo

**July** - *How to Be Less Stupid About Race: On Racism, White Supremacy, and the Racial Divide* by Crystal Marie Fleming

**August** - *Real American: A Memoir* by Julie Lythcott-Haims

**September** - *Twelve Angry Men: True Stories of Being a Black Man in America Today* by Gregory S. Parks & Matthew W. Hughey et al 4th QUARTER

**October** - *Inventing Latinos: A New Story of American Racism* by Laura E. Gómez

**November** - *Our History Is the Future: Standing Rock Versus the Dakota Access Pipeline, and the Long Tradition of Indigenous Resistance* by Nick Estes

**December** - *Uprooting Racism: How White People Can Work for Racial Justice* by Paul Kivel

Stay safe. I'll see you next Friday from my orange desk!

Patti

Sent to: [\\_t.e.s.t\\_@example.com](mailto:_t.e.s.t_@example.com)

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Patti Digh, LLC, 638 Spartanburg Highway, Suite 70 #337, Hendersonville, NC 28792, United States

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