

Report from the Spring Renewal 2016



THE 22nd SYDNEY

SPRING RENEWAL

*DANCES OF UNIVERSAL
PEACE RETREAT*

Experience a weekend with
Noel Butler and Trish Roberts
at Jamanee Gunya.

Learn about the culture
of the Budawang people
- the local Aboriginal people
of the Milton area
on the South Coast
of New South Wales.

Noel Butler
is a traditional custodian
and educator.



Dates & Times:

Fri 30th Sept 5.00pm - Mon 3rd Oct 2.00pm

Cost: \$195 Please bring your own food to
share, camping gear and musical
instruments

On the October long weekend we had our 22nd Sydney Spring Renewal Retreat, which was the 3rd on the beautiful land of Uncle Noel Butler and Trish Roberts, Jamanee Gunya. Each time we have returned to their land it feels like we've got deeper in our relationship to both the people and the land. While we had a smaller group than in past years, this added a depth of intimacy and gave people more time for sharing our stories and experience. As was the plan we followed the Creation Spirituality Cycle developed by Matthew Fox, which I describe below in the email that was sent out to participants to prepare them for the retreat.

In the end we did follow the cycle but not in the way it was initially planned. Because Noel was unwell, we had to reschedule our day with Noel. So we began our dancing on the Saturday, and danced our way through the first 2 parts of the cycle: the Via Positiva and the Via Negativa. Then on the Sunday morning we danced the 3rd part, the Via Creativa, and then Noel and Trish turned up. After some teaching and stories Noel took us to the Grandmother tree and then in the afternoon Trish took us out on the walk at the north head of Ulladulla Bay where Noel had created the story of the Aboriginal people in the area both pre and post invasion and colonisation. Finally on the Monday morning we completed the 4th stage of the Via Transformativa. Meanwhile on both evenings we had gatherings around the fire and shared stories about our connection to country, which was the theme of the whole weekend, to explore our connection to country through the creation spirituality cycle. As always the practical processes went well with Karen organising the food preparation and Sabira organizing the transport needs. As well as Noel and Trish made sure we had everything we needed to make our stay comfortable.

We began the program on the Saturday morning with a dance and then Nicola facilitated the Via Positiva with a ritual and then we had dances of affirmation and invocation like Ko Papatuanuku, Ancestors Sky People, the Shamanic Al Hamdulillah, E Malama. Then after lunch we embarked on the Via Negativa, the time of letting go. Again we began with a ritual that I facilitated around the many stages of darkness in the Maori creation story, which led to the dance Te Kore, along with other creation dances like Abwoon D'Bashmaya, Bereshith, as well as dances about the moon like Neesa Neesa and forgiveness like Estaferallah. By that stage we felt full and complete and we sat in that 'letting go' energy for the afternoon.

After a beautiful evening meal we sat by the fire that evening sharing stories of our connection to Country, in the Aboriginal sense of the word. It was very moving to hear the stories, there was a resonance with what Uncle Max, who happens to be Noel's cousin, once said at a Social Ecology gathering that for non-Aboriginal people the way to connect to Country was through going to places where people felt a connection to the natural world.

The next morning Karen facilitated the Via Creativa session with a ritual as a drama and then we had dances including Greening with Life and Wishita. After

that session Noel and Trish turned up, as Noel was feeling better and we had a nice talk and then he took us off to the Grandmother Tree in the Meroo National Park. What an amazing experience that was! He told us the story of the tree and it's name in Budawang language: Wajan Bidinya. We talked about creating a dance for the tree. Then after lunch Trish and Nicola took us out to the headland at North Ulladulla, where Noel had created an art trail of wood carvings telling the story of his people in the area, both before invasion and after invasion. It was very powerful and moving. I'd been taken on the trail before by Nicola, but it was even more powerful a second time with Trish's stories as well. It was a beautiful sunny day and the story was both inspiring and depressing, especially to see the way the local council had not supported the upkeep of the artworks, many of which needed attention and restoration. We said we would write to the Ulladulla Council to ask them to do something about the situation. Apparently they had just elected a new mayor who may be more sympathetic.

(Here's a link for those who want to write to the council;
<http://www.ulladulla.info/contact-us>)

Thus our Via Creativa, which began with a playful drama and some dances turned into an inspiring celebration of Country and artistic creativity and story telling by Noel and Trish and our whole dance family.

The final morning we celebrated the Via Transformativa as a collective co-creative process. The dances in this part included En La Kech, Innana Ishtar, Shalom Salaam, the Mantra of the 4 Elements, the Celtic Blessing and Min Mia's song Nanjanatia that Michal led us in. We began this session with a Sulha Sharing Circle that really helped bring the weekend together. There was a sense from this last session and the weekend as a whole that we had deepened our relation to Country and to the First Nation people of the Country, which in those parts are the Budawang people. There was a strong feeling that we should return again the following year, which Noel and Trish also seemed to resonate with.

Clearly this needs to be discussed and affirmed by the Sydney Wisdom Council and also confirmed with Noel and Trish. Any thoughts are welcome!

Here's some feedback from participants and my emails post and pre-retreat:

Thanks for these gorgeous pics Arjuna! And deep gratitude to you and Karen for creating and holding the space over the weekend, truly a via Transformativa Retreat.

I am still at Bingi, enjoying this beautiful environment and being with my dearest friend Meg! We have been watching whales passing this morning, walking the Dreaming Track and cooking all our food in the outdoor oven. I'll be back for tomorrow night's talk, and yes I would love to come to dance on Saturday night. Hope your wounds are healing well and you are both feeling good after the big

journey of Renewal.
Much Love and Blessings
Maria-Eleni XX

Hi Ben

We love the pics and thank you for your words. We too also love the weekend with you all and you are now family. We look forward to your stay with us.

Wada
Noel & Trish

Hi All,

A huge thank you to Noel and Trish, and everyone.

It is a continuing and growing gift for me, to learn more about Swan Country, I feel as a group we are 'singing up' a very special new song in our Grandmother dance,. Through our opening to daddiri listening, open to the history and life experience of Noel's first hand account of the aboriginal perspective, we may create a dance that goes beyond our group to touch the hearts of many in this opportunity.

I send a big huge thank you to Ben and Karen- such treasures, such sparkling gem's together in the dancing community. And yes.... "We are truly blessed..."

I have come back bursting with the 'Spring' on all levels, feeling very alive.

Thanks you to everyone for all your deeply enriching sharing - all of it, our dancing together, connecting in the heart, hearing each others journeys and adventures, and offering up our tender care for the hopes and dreams of all that still lay ahead.

A beautiful weekend,

Thank you, to each of you,

love and light,

Nicola

Nicola Lambert (B.Ed M.Ed Psych Grad Dip)
President of the International Coach

Federation, NSW Branch.

Beautiful pics
Thank you and Karen for the fab weekend
Sorry we weren't there for the clean up
Zoe

My email post retreat:

Dear Friends,

What a fabulous weekend retreat! Thank you all so much, especially Noel and Trish for so generously sharing their Land.

Thank you all for your creative contribution to the rituals, the dances, the food, the clean up, the conversations, the stories etc, etc. etc.

This is really a peace movement!

Any feedback is welcome!

Below are a couple of pix,

Love Arjuna Ben

Email to Participants Pre-Retreat:-

Dear Friends,

The theme for this weekend's retreat is **Connecting to Country**. On the **Saturday** we will receive Aboriginal teachings from Uncle Noel and some of his relatives. As with the last 2 retreats at Jamanee Gunya, once again we'll be taken to somewhere of his choosing as part of this day.

In the **evening** we'll have a camp fire and share stories about our connecting to Country as well as challenges that we may have in connecting to Country.

On all day **Sunday** and the **Monday** morning we'll follow the Creation Spirituality Cycle inspired by the work of Matthew Fox. We'll explore the

4 paths through Dances of Universal Peace inspired by the world's indigenous traditions and related practices. We'll do each of the first 3 paths on the **Sunday** and the 4th path on the **Monday**. (*for dance leaders see the Creation Spirituality booklet for ideas of dances appropriate to each path) Each path will be introduced by a small group of us who will create a ritual that embodies that path.

On the **Sunday night** we'll have a 2nd sharing around the camp fire of creation stories inspired by indigenous traditions and other relevant traditions, to which we may have a connection.

Please bring along any stories, books, dances, songs, poems, art works or natural objects and other material that you think will be relevant to this creative process. Dance leaders can prepare dances to lead and others can request dances or offer other practices they feel will enhance our weekend.

WHAT IS CREATION SPIRITUALITY?

Honoring all of creation as Original Blessing, Creation Spirituality integrates the wisdom of Eastern and Western spirituality and global indigenous cultures, with the emerging scientific understanding of the universe, and the passion of creativity. It is both a tradition and a movement, celebrated by mystics and agents of social change from every age and culture. It is also the tradition of the historical Jesus himself since it is the wisdom tradition of Israel.

—Matthew Fox

from <http://www.matthewfox.org/what-is-creation-spirituality/>

The Four Ways to the One

All Four paths are simply that, paths to the One. Though one may build on the others, none are more advanced or better than another. Also it is well and truly expected that experience of the Paths will be cyclic, that we will re-visit them all many times as we move through our life. That said, if we wish we can, in broad terms, assign the Paths to stages of the spiritual and magical life noting that sub-cycles of Paths occur within each Path also.

The first two paths, the *Via Positiva* and *Via Negativa* are ways of *being*, the approach and interior consciousness we carry with us. The other two Paths, the *Via Creativa* and the *Via Transformativa* are ways of *doing*, the methods and approach to interacting with the world around us. In addition, the *Via Creativa* is linked to and builds upon the experience of the *Via Positiva*, and the *Via Transformativa* is linked to and builds upon the experience of the *Via Negativa*.

THE VIA POSITIVA – Loving Life

“Thou shalt fall in love at least three times a day.”

In the Via Positiva we find the One in new beginnings, within awe, by awakening to beauty, delighting in the divinity and mystery of the world and those around us. The Path is reverence and acceptance, the new vision of those newly fallen in love or awakened by spiritual communion, initiation, art or erotic beauty. It is the rushing forth of energy and excitement, seeing all things in the light.

From [Walt Whitman](#):

To me every hour of the light and dark is a miracle,
Every square yard of the surface of the earth is spread with miracles.
Every foot of the interior swarms with miracles.

THE VIA NEGATIVA – Embracing the Dark

The Via Negativa is where the light of Positiva begins to wane and the darkness approaches. We move interiorly and enter the awareness that existence is suffering, finding the One within the suffering and the darkness. We embrace the dark, rather than trying to deny its existence. This means we embrace but do not wallow in our pain. We reveal hidden aspects of ourselves and above all we *let go*: let go of the need for control, to be OK, to be fine and perfect. We empty ourselves of falsehood and are still, and silent.

From [T.S. Eliot](#):

Embracing the dark. Letting pain be pain.
I said to my soul – be still
and let the dark come upon you
which shall be the darkness of God.

THE VIA CREATIVA – Expressing the Self

In the Via Creativa we find the One through creativity, imagination, generation, and re-creation. Here we give birth to our true selves, and images of the self. We are powerful in generation and expression. The universe pours into us, seeking to be born through us and our art, our craft, our new way of being in the world. We are called to connect with the incredible divine creative potential within us and to express ourselves as the unique expression of the One that we, in essence, really are. We enter the unlimited and are re-made.

From [Marianne Williamson](#) (who was **not** quoted by Nelson Mandela. Really.):

Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure.

It is our light, not our darkness, that most frightens us.

We ask ourselves, who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, fabulous?

Actually, who are you not to be?

You are a child of God.

Your playing small doesn't serve the world.

There's nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people won't feel insecure around you. We were born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us. It's not just in some of us; it's in everyone.

And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people

permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others.

THE VIA TRANSFORMATIVA – Enacting Justice and Compassion

In the Via Transformativa we find the One when we act to relieve suffering, work for justice and restore balance, to work for the Tikkun Olam, the restored world in Qabalistic terms. Here the insights from the other three paths are brought to bear on ourselves in a new way. We are moved to act beyond our own sphere, motivated by the deep desire that all may live fully and without suffering. We act in the world and through that action we are changed, no longer concerned with just our self and our own, but with the whole world. We stop being consumers and observers and become partakers and sharers of a new story that includes all, particularly the Anawim – those on the margins, those dispossessed and shunned by the mainstream. Matthew Fox calls this “erotic justice”, justice making motivated by the awareness of the sacredness of all life.

From the great man himself, oft quoted on MOTO, [Martin Luther-King](#):

We are tied together in the single garment of destiny, caught in an inescapable network of mutuality.

And whatever affects one directly affects all indirectly.

For some strange reason I can never be what I ought to be until you are what you ought to be.

And you can never be what you ought to be until I am what I ought to be.

This is the way God’s universe is made; this is the way it is structured.

from <https://magicoftheordinary.wordpress.com/tag/four-paths-of-creation-spirituality/>

**With Love and light,
Arjuna**

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