

African Wisdom Traditions and Healing Practices: Performing the Embodied, Contemplative, and Group-based Elements of African Cosmology, Orality, and Arts Modalities

非洲智慧传统和疗愈实践：表现非洲宇宙学、口述和艺术模式的具身、沉思和基于群体的元素

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Abstract

This study on African wisdom traditions and their healing practices, as conducted through embodied modalities and in community settings, addresses a gap in mainstream discourse centered on Eastern meditation practices and Western cognitive therapeutic practices. During a research retreat in South Africa, traditional healers, creative arts therapists, and performers were invited to facilitate indigenous contemplative rituals and arts-based healing practices. The study intended to classify selected Southern African practices and question how they contribute to healing trauma, supporting well-being and enabling human flourishing. This article presents a definition, brief history, and the performed elements of five healing practices: *Umphahlo*, *Umgidi Wokulingisa*, *Isicathamiya*, *Iintsomi*, and *Djembe drumming*.

Keywords: African contemplative practices, African wisdom traditions, embodied and communal rituals, healing and wellbeing, creative arts therapies

摘要

本研究通过具身方式和社区环境中进行的非洲智慧传统及其疗愈实践，填补了以东方冥想实践和西方认知治疗实践为中心的主流话语中的空白。在南非的一次研究进修营期间，传统疗愈师、创造性艺术治疗师和表演者受邀促进土著沉思仪式和基于艺术的疗愈实践。该研究旨在对选定的南部非洲实践进行分类，并质疑它们如何有助于治愈创伤、支持幸福和促进人类繁荣。本文介绍了五种疗愈实践的定义、简史和表现元素：Umphahlo、Umgidi Wokulingisa、Isicathamiya、Iintsomi 和 Djembe 鼓乐。

关键词: 非洲沉思实践, 非洲智慧传统, 具身仪式和公共仪式, 疗愈和幸福, 创造性艺术治疗

Introduction

Contemplative practices that foster inner silence and increase receptivity lie at the heart of the world's wisdom traditions. Although the term “wisdom tradition” is often associated with the religions of the axial age, Smith (1998) includes the earlier oral traditions of Africa, the Americas, and Australasia in his categorization. All wisdom traditions are concerned with the transformation of the individual and humanity as a

whole. Healing, defined as the movement toward wholeness and balance (Duffy, 2020), is a constituent aspect of this transformation.

Bourgeault (2003) describes the wisdom way of knowing as a precise and comprehensive science of spiritual transformation that is not about knowing more with the mind but about knowing with more of ourselves, embracing the whole of us, body, emotions, mind, and spirit. In contrast to the world religions, African wisdom traditions emphasize the role of the body in accessing wisdom. As van Binsbergen (2009) states,

The movement of the body in space and time confirms dance and music as the most obvious way of situating the individual in its social and cosmological position, and of refinding that position after illness, crisis and bereavement [...] it is the body that situates individuals in a chain of continuity across generations, whose perpetuation is implied to be the true meaning of life (2009, p. 36).

The practices and rituals of African cosmology, orality, and the arts, often explored in anthropological research, are beginning to receive attention as contemporary modalities of healing. The research retreat from which this paper emerges was supported by a Think Tank grant from the Mind and Life Institute, which sought to open new fields of inquiry around transdisciplinary epistemologies. The Drama for Life Department, based at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa, is an arts center for social transformation and healing. The department was able to bring together applied, therapeutic, expressive, and reflexive arts-based practitioners in an exploration of African ritualistic practice, contemplative meditation practices of the East, and cognitive therapeutic practices of the West. The research project aimed to define the process and benefits of selected indigenous rituals and cultural practices from an African context. Traditional healers, creative arts therapists, and performers who originate from, and practice within, African wisdom traditions facilitated contemplative and embodied healing practices.

A practice-led, performative research approach (Haseman, 2006) was selected for its effectiveness in generating contextualized knowledge through exploring the content and processes of embodied practices. A qualitative descriptive method was used to classify the facilitated practices, and a literature review and interviews with the practitioners were conducted to provide a definition, brief history, and elements of each practice, namely *Umphahlo*, *Umgidi Wokulingisa*, *Isicathamiya*, *Iintsomi*, and *Djembe drumming*.

The retreat took place at the Tara Rokpa Centre in South Africa, in 2019. This center was founded by a Tibetan tulku, Choje Akong Tulku Rinpoche, who had a spiritual connection with Vusumuzulu Credo Mutwa, a well-known Zulu healer, *sangoma*, and thus represented a suitable meeting place for Eastern and African wisdom traditions.

Conceptual Framework

Africa has a rich tradition of embodied healing practices that bring together dance, singing, drumming, and storytelling (Edwards, 2011; Edwards et al., 2009;

Mutwa, 1996). Although distinctions are evident among the cultures of different tribes, practices for individual health, community cohesion, and connection with the natural world generally rely on participation, which is aligned to the African philosophy of *ubuntu*.

The concept of *ubuntu* has expanded since its first appearance in written discourse in 1846 (Gade, 2011). Initially considered a human quality, and later translated as African humanism, a philosophy, an ethic and a worldview, the concept mirrors the Buddhist philosophy of “interdependence, communalism, sensitivity towards others and caring for others” (Le Roux, 2000. in Venter, 2004, p. 149). In relation to Western healing practices, often characterized as individualistic and positioned in opposition to African collectivism, Eze (2008, p. 106) argues that “the individual and the community are not radically opposed in the sense of priority but engaged in contemporaneous formation.” This is supported by Battle (2009, in Mangena, 2016) who describes *ubuntu* as the interdependence of persons for the exercise, development, and fulfillment of their potential to be both individuals and community. This implies that the healing, well-being, and flourishing of individuals and communities co-arise—the one cannot be independent of the other.

The study is framed within the belief that these ancient embodied cultural practices may well hold the key to working skillfully with body-mind connections—supporting resilience and enhancing human well-being and flourishing to address global mental health issues and other social disorders. Thus, practices experienced at the research retreat are presented to provide approaches to achieve individual and collective benefit and to contribute to related and emerging fields. Although this paper speaks of these contemplative and healing practices as “African,” it acknowledges a particular focus on South Africa, and wishes to honor the diversity of practices throughout the continent that may not be represented herein.

Methods

Sample

The study included a multidisciplinary team of 13 participants: two traditional healers, two arts therapists, two applied theater practitioners, a neuroscience researcher, and a Buddhist monk, as well as a group facilitator, a videographer and three researchers, trained in mindfulness and arts-based research. The sampling was purposive and pragmatic, choosing researcher-practitioners who had experience in African contemplative practices and rituals with a preexisting relationship of trust with the Drama for Life Department. The therapists and theater practitioners who train at Drama for Life have skills of critical reflexive praxis that support rigorous phenomenological research, ensuring that their applicability and effectiveness are constantly examined. In their joint quests for healing and human flourishing, these researcher-practitioners are committed to the ongoing evolution of these epistemologies, understood within the context of the African philosophy of *ubuntu*. The diversity of the group was noteworthy in terms of race, gender identity, religion/spiritual tradition, and languages spoken.

Practice-led Research

Challenges inevitably arise when the Western scientific method is used to study practices from different cultural contexts. An African relational ontology includes both seen and unseen, living and dead, requiring an epistemology that reflects this non-materialist view (Walach, 2020). Considering Fletcher's (2016, p. 4) cautions that "ontology is not always reducible to epistemology," the research design focused on the most effective ways of creating knowledge—as a performative and experiential learning journey, using the methods of practice-led research (Haseman, 2006; McKechnie & Stevens, 2009). Haseman (2006) explains practice-led research as a distinct approach to designing, conducting, and reporting research. The artistic form is intrinsically experiential, and the research output includes the performance itself and the experience of the performance, both directly by those present and indirectly through recordings, in order to stimulate dialogue (Gergen & Gergen, 2003, in Haseman, 2006).

The six researcher-practitioners were invited to respond to the research question "How can African contemplative practices be used to heal the past, transform the present and for future flourishing?" They each prepared an interactive performance or presentation, drawing on their specific area of expertise.

All the researcher-practitioners present participated in the facilitated practice sessions and reflected on their experiences across the five practices. The researchers rotated roles as participant observers and external observers of the sessions, recorded and transcribed to ensure the accuracy of field notes. In addition, the writers of this article conducted an artistic audit (Haseman, 2006), contextualizing the performances within current literature, thus connecting earlier work with the embodied experiences from the performances. The research process was approved by the Ethics Committee at the University of the Witwatersrand (H19/05/07).

Research Outputs

Indigenous wisdom traditions inscribe cultural practices and spiritual values in ritual, communal, and generative approaches. They give meaning to the purpose of existence, allow communities to conceptualize places and issues beyond their own immediate experience, enable active participation, and enhance diverse dimensions of human life (Masoga, 2005). Although several traditional healers such as Vusamazulu Credo Mutwa and Dr Velaphi Mkhize have codified African oralities and traditions, most literature in this field is drawn from anthropology. A literature review was conducted to clarify the definition, brief history, and elements of each practice. The following is both an overview of the, albeit limited, literature on the foundational beliefs and practices in six Southern African healing practices with video footage and exploration of the performative phenomena.

Umphahlo

Certain people, considered gifted, receive the spiritual calling to be a healer from their ancestors (*amadlozi*). Within Southern Africa, this calling, known as *ubizo lomoya*—the

word *umoya*, translated as energy, breath, or spirit—requires the process of *intwaso* or *ukuthwasa* (spiritual emergence), guided by a *gobela* (spiritual teacher/healer), to enable the gifts of the healer to be called forth (Booi & Edwards, 2014). Endowed with distinctive gifts, healers may become *izangoma* (vibration/energy practitioners), *inyangas* (moon/earth practitioners), *abayasyonis* (prophets or messengers), *izinyanga yokwelapha* (herbal/plant practitioners), *isanusi* (wisdom keepers), or *lingcibi* (traditional surgeons) (Edwards, 2013; Gqaleni et al., 2007; Steyn, 2003). Although many modern-day Africans find ways to heed their calling without full immersion in the healer’s way of life, *ubizo lomoya nokuthwasa* is considered by some to be a maturing of a soul in its journey on the path of life and more than just an ancestral journey or an initiation of a healer’s path (Mkhulu Ibrahim, 2019a,b).

Ukuphahla is a ritual for communicating with the ancestors (Bogopa, 2010), and a daily lineage invocation (Ngobese & Masoga, 2019), performed by a traditional healer. Mkhulu Ibrahim (2019a,b) describes it as a supplication or prayers to the unseen spirits. Gogo Moyo (2017) positions this ritual within a three-stage practice of prayer, *umphahlo*, and meditation, performed at *umsamo* (a shrine or altar) indoors or in nature. Practitioners pray to their maker (higher power or God), then *phahla*—burning *imphepho* (African sage or helichrysum) and offering *ntsu* (snuff/tobacco)—while calling every ancestor that they know by name and surname and other spirits that bring peace, love, kindness, and light—before introducing themselves and requesting to the living-dead to make them welcome. After this preparatory phase, practitioners vocalize thoughts, questions, or concerns, and then meditate, to allow for multisensory listening into how the body feels, the energy in the room, and any felt sense of guidance that reveals itself through emotions or thoughts. The practice can be carried out daily to maintain a connection with ancestral spirits and give thanks, or at a time when the practitioner is seeking guidance or experiencing difficulties. The benefits include a sense of connection with those who have gone before and opens the way for guidance to arise, beyond the ego-centric self (Edwards, 2011).

The two healers presented on their calling (*ubizo*), their training (*ukuthwasa*) (Video 1: *Ubizo and ukuthwasa*, <https://youtu.be/WpkDj0sr0gI>) and demonstrated the supplication practice of *umphahlo*, inviting the group to join in the singing, creating a visceral sense of the sacred (Video 2: *Umpahlo*, <https://youtu.be/x1c-ttmlynM>).

Mkhulu Zola offered an African spiritual and a contemporary secular interpretation of *ubizo* as not only a sacred purpose, but also an honoring of the talents embedded in one’s DNA, which can be put in service of others. Indeed, this potential for awakening and living a life of purpose and service forms part of many religious, philosophical, and humanistic teachings, as noted by a participant equating *ubizo* with the Sanskrit term *svadharma*, or own truth. This concept of purpose in life has recently been examined through a neuroscientific lens (Kang et al., 2019).

When describing the process of *ukuthwasa*, Mkhulu Zola translated the word *thwasa* as “dawn,” the rising of the sun.

Universal divine consciousness within you is now starting or choosing to rise, to make itself present and aware in your life experience... your

consciousness is awakening...[and] you have to go into a process [to] awaken with it.

Gogo Moyo explained the ritual of *umphahlo* as offering access to people who wish to honor their ancestral lineage, providing a sense of feeling rooted, connected, grateful, and still, even if they do not believe in the existence of *amadlozi*, the living-dead.

Umgidi Wokulingisa

Umgidi wokulingisa is a stamping/dance ritual, traditionally performed to engage in dialogue with *amadlozi* (ancestors or living-dead) by entering a deeper state of consciousness. People who live a worthwhile life become *amadlozi* and are venerated for their connection with *uNkulunkulu* (the Supreme Being, God), as they can provide protection and prosperity to individuals and intervene on their behalf (Mkhize, 2004). There is a responsibility placed on humans to practice “their culture in order to protect the interdependence of *amadlozi* and *uNkulunkulu* by performing *umgidi*” (Seleme, 2017, p. 11).

An *umgidi* practice entails *ukugiya* (stamping)—an act of lifting each foot and bringing it down with force to the ground, as if jumping—and musicking (Seleme, 2017). Traditional *umgidi* is a phenomenon that involves participation by every member of the community for individuals to acquire and create knowledge of their identity. Its underlying ontology entails a conception of reality that depends on relations to others (visible and invisible) and to the environment (Mkhize, 2004). *Umgidi wokulingisa* can thus be viewed as a harmonious dance in which individuals adjust to the rhythm of their community in preserving their sense of interdependence across the three-way relationship among humans, ancestors, and the Supreme Being (Ogbonnaya, 1994).

Seleme offered the *umgidi* practice as a secular, drama therapy intervention (Video 3: *Umgidi Wokulingisa*, <https://youtu.be/GvUsozwc9hU>). Instead of seeking connection with ancestral spirits, each participant was invited to embody a significant other and to drum and stamp/dance like them. This sets up an inner dialogue between the self and the imagined other, gaining profound insights into the self and the relationship with the other, which was ascribed to the practice. The facilitator’s earlier research spoke of how the experience enabled access to unconscious symbols with positive effect (Seleme, 2017).

In the reflection session, several participants noted enhanced capacities for uninhibited expression, empathy, compassion, and a sense of internal strength and body-mind integration, despite coming from different cultural backgrounds.

Isicathamiya

Isicathamiya, also known as *cothoza*, *imbube*, or *ingoma yobusuku* (night song) is a contemporary adaptation of the ancient *ngoma* dancing from Central and Southern Africa. It developed in South Africa in the mid-20th century by migrant Zulu communities, forced to move from rural to urban areas to find work (Erlmann, 1987). In these migrant communities, workers formed vocal ensembles and held competitions

between hostels. This served as entertainment but had far more significant political, social, and emotional benefits as a “medium of expression within working-class resistance to domination and political oppression” (Erlmann, 1987, p. 3). “*Isicathamiya*, always sensitive to the social and political contexts of the era,” enables an embodied understanding of the history of South Africa and maintains its significance in post-apartheid South Africa (Gunner, 2014, p. 347).

The song aspect comprises a trilogy of story, information, and problem solving, while the dance entrains support, listening, connection, cohesion, and a sense of homecoming and joy.

The style is acappella, using a typical mixed-voice choral line-up...with the bass line dominant. Along with the rich, multi-layered vocal polyphony is the antiphonal call-and-response...The final section of each song, called *istep* (or *istebhu*)...added to the performance repertoire possibly in the late 1960s (Gunner, 2014, p. 346).

Ethnomusicologist, Sithole (1979, p. 279), differentiates the dance steps of the “subtle, almost silent footwork” of the urban *isicathamiya* form, with the “virile, fighting movements” distinctive in rural *ngoma* dancing, asserting that “the steps in *isicathamiya* have to be gentle, as if stepping on eggs or tiptoeing on forbidden ground.” Gunner’s (2014) writing of the contribution of the practice in opening to “soft masculinities,” supports Ballantine’s (1996) depiction of the practice as enabling performers to develop their agency as peacemakers. Participating in a group allowed for the creation of a place of refuge and safety, and group members spoke of the shared values of respect, equality, friendship, and sharing (Gunner, 2014).

In his presentation of *isicathamiya*, Mahlangu spoke of the brutality of 1980s and the impact of loss and trauma in South Africa’s history, saying

we are the ones whose wounds are very wet...I’m traumatized, but I don’t know that. I don’t even know the word ‘traumatized’...

What made me was the sound of the space. There was music all the time... We would sing and dance around the circle until we reached an altered state of consciousness.

In the ensemble practice, the singing creates a sense of solidarity and the stamping releases trauma from the body. The call and response enable a transcendence from the mind’s turmoil. Mahlangu guided the group through a dance enactment, offering an embodied experience of life “deep in the shaft, digging for gold.” Songs are not just songs; they are a story or information or problem solving, he explained—the rhythm of the song and movement helped work teams lift heavy objects and made the inhumane working, living and social conditions a little more bearable (Video 4: *Isicathamiya*, <https://youtu.be/DR1Bk7mIQ4A>).

Participants commented that, in a South Africa still laden with remnants of past injustices, healing needs to happen to let compassion resurface, for social integration to

be meaningfully practiced and for collective co-regulation and cultivation of pro-social qualities.

lintsomi

lintsomi is a traditional folktale-style oral storytelling often held in community by elders in the isiXhosa culture. It is not a simple story narrated through the spoken word, but rather an immediate and dynamic performance that uses dramatized elements to enable the power and transcendence of hearing and telling stories. Studies demonstrate that orality is a system of consciousness, which differs significantly on a cognitive level from the dominant literary system of consciousness (Rao, 1993).

With every story and re-telling of story, people re-author their lives and their relationships, entering into the stories with their experience and their imagination (Busika, 2015, p. 7).

Creatively removing participants from a self-conscious position to a playful, spontaneous, imaginative one, encourages innovation and improvisation rather than stressing rigidity and structure (Turner, 1998). Within this flexible structure, *lintsomi* employs specific dramatic elements to evoke different emotions and thoughts, while regulating and holding the participants' emotional experience of the story, allowing for the learned social information to be retained (Busika, 2015). As articulated by Busika (2015, p. 30),

an *lintsomi* is a container for the imaginative experience where there is a co-existence of the imagined world and the reality of the participant; and in this overlap, known as the metaxis, learning takes place. In the co-existence of the two worlds the participant begins to reflect on the meaning made within the *lintsomi* and, once insights have emerged, begins to make inward changes.

The negotiated invitation to listen to the *lintsomi* is held in the call and response participatory ritual, beginning with the words "*Kwasuhkela ngentsom*" (the invitation) and the participants responding with "*Cosie*" (we receive the invitation and are ready to hear). The climax and denouement are based on the storyteller's improvisatory skills and interaction with the participants. The end is marked by the words "*Kwaphelaphela Ngentsomi...Cosie*." "*lintsomi* seldom display a sense of completeness or closure," giving participants space to reflect and find within themselves ways of understanding experience and dealing with disorder (Busika, 2015, p. 40).

Participating in the embodied experience of *lintsomi* allowed participants to engage cognitively and intuitively in an inner process of contemplation. Engaging improvisation and the imagination, the participatory aesthetic of the *lintsomi* provided a way for participants to identify with a story, a character, and their own anxieties, fears, and longings in the metaphor of the story and at a distance; creating a space where mindfulness, learning, and resilience-building were facilitated through narration, embodiment, and reflection, where participants listened, shared, and supported each

other, tapping into their inner resources, imagination, creativity, authenticity, and reflection.

Busika framed her use of *Iintsomi* as a way to build resilience with children.

I found Iintsomi as a medium through which distancing can happen, where children can share from a point of safety...to give voice to that child...to know that they hold agency, even though their circumstances are difficult...I try to allow children to have community amongst themselves, listening to each other and formulating empathy.

Busika facilitated *Iintsomi* stories, games, a praise poem process followed by a group reflection using movement, poetry, and sounds (Video 5: *Iintsomi*, <https://youtu.be/1npVmgsTguQ>).

In reflection, one participant was reminded that:

it is important to continue thinking like a child when you want to unlock creativity. Children never judge themselves...Children believe they can do anything. And when you believe, you really can do anything.

Two participants shared poetry, the first referring to the sense of personal potential held within the praise poem partner activity:

The person in the praise poem sounds like me
but a version of myself I'd like to be.
What I can't see in myself yet, the other captured in a vignette.
Resilience is a process of scaffolding
from the self that one perceives,
to the highest potential or ideal.

The next offered gentle appreciation of the experience of creating community:

Ah, let's rejoice in being with each other
How splendid it is to dance in each other's hearts
And rest in the tenderness of each other's eyes.

The session was a powerful reminder of the rejuvenating and restorative power of play—holding deep and profound human experiences.

Djembe Drumming

Both the skin of a drum and nighttime dance ceremonies are known as *ngoma* (Janzen, 1992; Mans, 1997). This word has a meaning similar to vibration or resonance, which allows the transmission and receiving of messages. It is also the root of the word *sangoma*, someone who can receive messages from the ancestors. A drumming practice is carried out with a sense of moving into conversation and enabling the drummer's intention and words to be transmitted through the vibration of the drum. Nzewi and Nzewi (2007) differentiate between two conceptualizations of drumming

as (a) excitation to produce psychoactive effects and (b) contemplative drumming to produce a transcendental state. This allows for a conversation to be held between the drum and the drummer and within the drumming circle, which Núñez (2016, pp. 228–229) defines as a form that “engenders community through sacred space” and a process that “expands awareness, elevates consciousness, commune with Spirit, and restores balance...through the constructive amplification of life-force energy.” Diallo and Hall (1989) similarly assert the sacred, healing remedy of drumming for both physical and psychological imbalances, facilitating communication and harmonizing forces of the visible and invisible worlds.

Kgotle led the drum circle, explaining how, “when we play together there is a conversation happening, because we send our thoughts and feelings to the drum.” (Video 6: *Drumming*, <https://youtu.be/BPIIVK9pKu8>). In this way, the drumming supported emotion regulation, the release of stress and trauma from the body, and the building of community. After the introduction, the group took the drum circle to the fire and experienced a deepening sense of connection and social cohesion.

Reflection and Future Research Directions

Throughout the retreat, participants discussed how African contemplative and healing practices have been undervalued by the history of oppression. The belief that past traumas may best be served with practices that have evolved within this continent and that are congruent with its worldview, finds parallels in purposive rituals and practices from other shamanic, or indigenous communities, which knew what was required to release trauma from the interconnected body-mind. In a reflection session, the Buddhist participant acknowledged that

There is a perception that healing is from the Himalayas, but here I am witnessing great wisdom. This powerful knowledge system needs to be acknowledged and protected.

His comment highlighted the transformative potential of this research, in re-establishing understanding and respect for an African relational ontology and its healing practices.

In the final reflection session, participants explored what individual and communal well-being might look like for healing the mind by returning to the body’s wisdom, transforming sorrow and cultivating joy, returning to reclaim the forgotten familiar African practices, sustainable well-being through arts-based practices, further production of African wisdom, *umkhiqizo wo lwazi*, and the integration of different paradigms of well-being in research.

A subsequent paper, titled “Cultivating Well-being, Community Cohesion, and Sense of Purpose through African Contemplative Practices,” explores the four recurring threads (sacred sense of purpose, nervous system regulation, pro-social qualities, and community cohesion) that emerged from the phenomenological data, participant reflections, and thematic analysis of the experiences presented in this article.

During the reflective sessions of the research, retreat participants commented that arts-based practices could offer a promising way of incorporating indigenous

ceremonies and rituals into secular contexts—using the embodied, contemplative, and group-based elements of African cosmology, orality, and arts modalities for healing trauma, supporting cohesion, cultivating well-being, and enabling human flourishing. This echoed van Binsbergen’s (2009, p. 37) assertion that, “In African systems of corporality we find a wisdom which not only has remained vitally important to African people today, but which has also proved to be capable of reformulation into a global format.”

The research outputs presented in this paper do not claim to produce replicable data, but rather to offer decolonial epistemologies and open an on-going dialogue—as proposed by Haseman (2006) —with contemplative science, social neuroscience, and arts-based therapy research globally. We close with a poignant comment from one of the traditional healers, Mkhulu Zola, exploring the potential of research and practice of the world’s diverse wisdom traditions:

The knowledge has been spread across the world with different tribes migrating. The knowledge that Africans kept was the knowledge of spirit... In Europe they worked with knowledge of the material plane, the mind and the material. To the East went the healing arts—martial arts, tai chi, yoga, chi gong, meditation and contemplative practices. The Native Americans to the Polynesian Isles were left with the knowledge of the Earth Mother practices....Now we are in a globalised world, now we can share each other’s knowledge...The knowledge is coming together again.”

About the Authors

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Data Availability

The videos of the practices performed at the African Contemplative Practices research retreat can be accessed via [10.6084/m9.figshare.22139828](https://doi.org/10.6084/m9.figshare.22139828).

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