

Today is Monday, July 19<sup>th</sup>, and the raft is currently floating near Leddy Beach, Burlington, Vermont. This coming Wednesday, we will tow “Grace the Dancing Dandelion” to the mouth of the Winooski River, and anchor near an island roughly the size of a football field. After speaking with the Burlington Police Department, the Coast Guard, and the head of Burlington Parks and Recreation, we have successfully cleared a path for the creation of space beyond limitations previously perceived as real. This output will document my holistic vision for this project, how we arrived at this point, and finally, appropriate next steps and future implications. My design methodology for this output is to lay a foundation, create a language for discussing the project, organize and clarify my intentions, and most importantly send out a call for participants. This document will be a chronicle, an invitation, and a manifesto of sorts. My intention for this output, and for the project in general, is to ignite the imagination, and instill confidence to realize actions with super-expansive implications, whatever form those actions may take. Presupposing that our spirit is innately and inherently free, and acknowledging this truth we can finally watch the blossom of this inheritance burst into form, I write this output claiming total responsibility for whatever unfolds. I acknowledge that the beliefs I hold about my reality become elegantly manifest; that these beliefs are as arbitrary and malleable as the objects I place around my home; that I feed those beliefs that are fundamentally expansive and nurture the wild unfolding imagination.

## **Vision**

Floating vessels bursting with life. Swaying to sleep atop islands that heal the bodies of water they rest in. Illuminated bridges connecting small floating home-worlds. Music and dreaming float as glowing pulsing threads across an undulating bundle of healing spaces. The moon howling and beaming her body into buoyant sleep and song and eating. Sun spreading radiant hair across stones and ripples and sleeping bodies. Breakfast with my fingertips streaming across the golden waterface. Unhitching my home from a glowing central node to ramble along the waterways of this continent. Visiting foreign floating nodes, swirling and working with the beings there. Returning to home node. Water hoop walkers. Potlatch. Laughing and laughing with child’s trust.

## **The Nitty Gritty of Potential**

### **Realized Regenerative Living**

When I’ve presented this project to curious inquirers, I’ve often described the raft as my attempt as a 22 year-old waitress to realize an ecologically regenerative lifestyle. I say, “It’s been decidedly easier to build this food producing, inherently off-grid, floating space complete with composting toilet, than it has been to convince my landlord to let us get some chickens.” The raft is about creating space to live regeneratively outside a beauracratc system that has become suicidal. *If radical urban permaculture embodies the regenerative use of existing space, the raft project embodies the literal creation of regenerative space.* If executed in integrity, a raft could serve as a cheap and beautiful way to practice what you preach, and the more rafts there are being built, the easier their execution will become. I’ve built the foundation for at worst a socio-ecological

experiment, and at best a prototype for socio-ecological regeneration and liberation. The raft is not an attempt to sever ties with land bodies. Rather, a raft could serve as a mirror to land-based communities, illuminating a potentially available lifestyle when we stop affirming current limiting structures as valid or necessary.

### **Rent and Ownership**

My primary partner in this project, William Pearlman, or Poppa Neutrino, presented the idea of raft communities 2 years ago as a way to throw off the chains that burden every renter. He says, the fact that a person hand over money to a landlord every month to occupy a space, and yet comes no closer to owning that space, is insane. He asks what a person might do with their time if there was no incumbent rent payment, or more simply put, perpetual debt. Along with my more recent education in the workings of big banks, it seems to me that creating structures that don't use collective debt to function "properly", is essential. While I still don't fully understand how big banks and the Federal Reserve function, I know the structure's we're agreeing to presently create the illusion of lack in a world of abundance. The raft acknowledges that economic turmoil is a product of intentionality. We are affirming a different set of intentions: Abundance, the expression of each beings natural inalienable inheritance of freedom, and total responsibility for our experience in this lifetime.

What I believe offers this movement a new and unique open channel for expression, is our planet's current ecological state. An ecologically regenerative raft is an expression of action in the interest of the health of our planet and progeny. Now, more than ever, it has become more widely acknowledged that our current modus operandi guarantees no more than our extinction. Those holding positions of authority in this country are moving at a snail's pace, if at all, to nurture the life web of which humans are a part, back to health. The urgency for regenerative action, and the insanity of the current structures, become clearer to the collective every day. The raft is a parallel structure, an offering. It is my hope that the fruit of this project be so beautiful, so relieving, so inspiring, that the fear that keeps us clinging to our current way of being will dissolve, making space for thousands and thousands of structural creations consciously born of the love that we are, rather than the fear we claim to be. Freedom from rent is only a part of this evolution that more and more beings begin to consciously seek every day. I would posit that rent is just one manifestation of a collective belief in bondage to anything external. When we collectively begin to acknowledge the inherent truth of our freedom, the rental structure will dissolve alongside a host of other limiting beliefs and their expression in form. Now, however, the rent dynamic is a particularly potent access point into the world of collectively held limiting belief structures. It is for this reason I choose to focus on it when entering the discussion of liberation, using the language of a potential reality called "Raft."

**Liberation from Perceived Imprisonment-** *This begins the portion of OP4 post-accident.*

If we are to truly claim responsibility for our experience in this life, the question of our own oppression quickly turns to reveal a new face, one that is both challenging and exciting, in that once more it offers the possibility that each being holds the key to her own freedom, period. At this point in time I am choosing to believe that I literally, down to the tiniest coagulation of atoms, create my reality. This is not to say that this world is a figment of my imagination, but rather an infinite sea of living possibility within which I shape experience, and orient perception. I do this by choosing, consciously or unconsciously, beliefs about reality. The beliefs I hold about reality are made elegantly manifest. Many, and perhaps all “facts of life” are rather the blossoms of beliefs I’m choosing to hold about being alive, here and now. Collective belief structures shape collectively experienced events, and within these shared events, the myriad personal beliefs find their harmonic place within the whole, a place where personal experience and collective experience seamlessly coexist. Within infinity there is room for infinite harmonies. I cannot look at oil spills, earthquakes, sweeping prejudice, etc. and claim to have purified all fear based belief structures from my mind. This planet is our reflection, period. This does not make me or you, or the CEO of BP guilty. Does the terrified child deserve punishment for her terrified actions? Is she evil? Imagine there was an encompassing over-mind, of which you are a part, that could hold all the detail of infinity within its awareness. Imagine you are, with this being, co-choreographing and enacting the most efficient and expansive way to help you remember the truth of who you are in this life. You are innocent. You are love. You are free. The raft could serve as a way to eliminate the most common “external” roadblocks that we blame for our experience of imprisonment or limitation. In essence, we as a species have figured out how to survive and thrive with ease, joy, and grace, and have simultaneously created structures to live within that depend on toil, limitation and collective fear for their survival and proper functioning. We now believe these structures to be more real than the grace of our being. The raft project aims to reveal the unreality of the current “external” fear-based structures, and nurture space and time for each being to use her inexhaustible light to reveal the unreality of her “internal” fear based belief structures.

### **Liberated TIME for Presence and Authentic Expression**

I met Poppa Neutrino within a week of choosing to drop out of the University of Vermont. I was an English major, and though often inspired by my professors and the material, was completely disheartened that there seemed to be very little time available for investigating what the material actually meant for our little lives. Deconstructionist theory was totally quaking my experience of reality, but there was no time to join together in discussing the implications of the impossibility of having an experience beyond the perceptive lens of language, for instance. Also, the past winter my previous partner, Nick Garza died when he fell into icy Otter Creek late one winter night in Middlebury, Vermont. The insanity of dedicating so much of my time to a suffocating academic pursuit, when death could come at any moment, drove me to make what many would call the insane decision of dropping out one semester short of graduating. But that’s what I did.

Within this context, Poppa's question of "what would you do with your time if you weren't spending it paying rent?" was particularly intoxicating. Already high from the decision to completely reclaim my own time, his vision for creating time to do absolutely anything you felt like at any given moment felt incredibly powerful.

This is the everyman's fantasy. The dream of ultimate time liberation drives humans to sit behind desks for fifty years so that they may one day be able to do what makes their heart sing, at any time of day or night, limitless possibility. What keeps us from actualizing our beautiful dreams? I would venture to guess that the majority of humans would cite either time or money or both, as the depressingly inescapable culprits. I would also posit that it is neither of these things that keeps us in an experience of limitation, but rather our belief in limitation itself.

In any situation of discontentment, we are left with three options: Continue living discontentedly, change those things "outside" of yourself you hold responsible for your experience, or change those things "inside" yourself you hold responsible for your experience. Between the last two options, I don't think either of them is ultimately more or less effective or efficient in reaching an experience of contentment. Each path offers opportunity to see those belief structures rooted within limitation that you are insisting on calling real. It is essential however, that you reclaim your experience of linear time to dedicate it to the illumination and dissolving of your illusions of limitation, or put another way, fear, or yet another way, separation from and isolation within the infinite web of being.

So, the belief structure may unfold as follows: I cannot dedicate my time to illuminating my beliefs in limitation, or nurturing my creative expression, because it has been appropriated by something or someone else. Then: I must sacrifice my time; I have to surrender to the appropriation of my time in order to survive. And finally: I have to survive if I'm ever going to experience my limitlessly creative self. And round and round we go.

Anything can become a vehicle for remembering our inherent freedom, worth, and joyously creative impulse. The raft offers a reality where those "external" limitations we've spent lifetimes affirming, don't exist. The raft however, does not offer a reality where your personal beliefs in limitation cease to exist; only you can offer yourself that. Ultimately, the raft can potentially offer a reality where there is *time* to start getting down to the nitty gritty of creating your own experience in this life. You're doing it anyhow, right now in fact. But it's possible to give this life, your foremost creation, the light of your conscious awareness and the respect of your daily temporal practice. It is possible to do this and live in an experience of safety, comfort, love and **abundance!** The raft is one among an infinity of solutions to the perceived "time/money" problem; one I find particularly beautiful. What's your unique and beautiful solution?

### **Mobility/Gypsy/Water Hoop Walker Potential**

At last year's Gaia Southeast orientation at the Farm in Tennessee, my

friend and fellow associate Seda told us all the story of the Hoopwalkers. These were a nomadic people, who roamed the Great Basin(insert wherever that is) of the US, essentially tending a giant vital, edible garden as their way of life. Literally, the *way* they roamed regenerated and nurtured the earth sustaining both themselves and their entire ecosystem in a state of health. They walked, ate, and shat flowers and food for themselves and all other living creatures along the hoop. When Seda told these stories, my heart blossomed open. I share with many of my friends a deep desire to live as both a nomad *and* an integrated member of my ecosystem. I dreamed of a reality in which I could choose to travel the hoop, or stay at more settled nodes along the hoop, tending the earth there. A hoop with vital settled nodes dotted all along it, would offer rest to hoop walkers, and also provide for them a place to come and offer the bounty, both literally and figuratively, of their journey. Winter could also be a time when the settled nodes were more active, eating the stores of the warmer seasons, and using the time winter offers to create: theatre, story, song, image, dance, craft, anything at all. All throughout the year, one could be as mobile or rooted as one liked, never having to act out of fear for survival, or taste the sting of knowing that their mode of travel was degenerative to mother earth.

The whole idea of property and everything it carries with it, (borders, taxes, etc) makes this dream a little more complex, on land. Rafting communities however, offer a lot of resolution.

My prototype for any and all rafts would use environmental regeneration as the primary foundation for its construction. This means closed loops in terms of renewable energy, waste management, and food production. It also includes the use of purifying aquatic plants at every opportunity. The discussion of the technology behind regenerative rafts is too large to discuss here, and would require research and experimentation I haven't done yet. I am certain however, that simple, cheap solutions for creating regenerative structures abound, especially now. So often the biggest challenge is figuring out how to get the house you're renting off the grid. The raft is born off the grid, in more ways than one. My vision for Grace the Dancing Dandelion for instance, was to surround the whole perimeter of the vessel with purifying aquatic plants, so that she, just by sitting there, would be cleaning and healing our planet's watery bodies. The more permanently settled floating nodes could take these ideas to the next level. These nodes would be like gathering places, community centers, or temples. No one would actually live inside them, but rather, you could arrive in your own vessel, and sort of "hook on" for however long you like. They could serve as material, emotional, spiritual, recharger stations, and as you journeyed there, you would leave a regenerative trail rather than a plume of exhaust. Some would obviously choose to hook on for longer periods of time, maybe forever, but the ability to leave at any moment and bring your means of survival with you, offers a freedom many of us crave but believe to be impossible. It offers us the nomadic freedom of a wild animal, and the option to rest in the womb of community. The freedom to stay or roam has led many people to choose to make their home mobile. But even with a boat for a home, it is still very difficult to exist outside the current socio-economic structure. My dream for rafts and rafting communities is to make

it possible and even *easy* to stay or go, to ground or sail away, to do or don't do, and most importantly, to *actually* live regeneratively if that's your choice.

Poppa also often brings the concept of "participate, redirect, or leave" into play. This essentially states that first we must choose to participate in the context we find ourselves. If in participation we feel unsatisfied, we must then attempt to redirect interaction to a place of integrity and alignment with our hearts. Finally, if this attempt at redirection proves futile, we must leave. If we continuously opt to leave, we may find ourselves in an endless mire of redirection as we relive our own personal process over and over again. Even so, this triad of action is certainly powerful in terms of unfolding our patterns so that we may ultimately unravel and dissolve those portions that no longer serve us. The raft could be viewed as a major attempt at redirecting the current mainstream socio-economic structure. It also allows each individual the freedom to participate, redirect, or leave the floating micro-communities of which she is, however briefly, a part. In this way too then, the mobility of a rafting reality offers each rafter the freedom to unlock and liberate herself from her limiting patterns.

### **Parallel Trade Structures; The Floating Free State**

*In these times of economic hardship...* parallel trading structures are popping up like daisies. Complementary currencies abound. The Internet especially has made it possible for people to exchange goods and services to meet their needs without the "help" of banks. However, rent, mortgages, and ultimately property tax make participation, at the very least indirectly, within the current economic structure a requirement for most people's survival. Yes, I could live in the woods, off the land, far beyond the concern of state authorities of property owners. Maybe I could even do this with all my friends, were they willing. I suppose reclaiming state parks and rural wild lands in an act of regeneration would be a harmonious sister vision of the raft. Still though, while the wild offers uncharted territory in terms of degenerative development, the water offers uncharted territory in terms of degenerative beaurocratic laws and regulations. The details of a potential parallel socio-economic structure are well beyond the scope of this output, but what I wish to convey here is the beautiful fertility of a raft reality to begin to form these new regenerative structures, and hopefully enter into a reciprocal discussion with land dwellers in terms of what modes of exchange we ought to keep, and those we can clearly let go of. Again, rafts would serve as mirrors, as floating grounds for experiments in free, regenerative ways of being. A raft would not be a floating declaration of separation, or independence, but rather a blank canvas built to help us discover the infinite possibility of interdependent co-creation, available to us the instant we choose to take total responsibility for our personal and collective reality.

## **The Birth of Raft Consciousness in Burlington, Vermont**

It all essentially went like this. Poppa Neutrino came to town, finding it no small coincidence that Lake Champlain connected to the Atlantic Ocean via the Hudson River. With the powerful assistance and vision of Lee Anderson, he infused the Burlington

community with the vision of a rent-free floating reality, and began to hold meetings for the Owl Party behind the Radiobean Coffeehouse. These meetings served as an arena to discuss the art of being alive, and were also planning meetings for the construction of an enormous mother raft. This 200 square foot raft would support a host of dormitories, a theatre and ballroom, and a bowling alley among other features. The mobilization to get this raft built was enormous. Numerous gigantic old Vermont barns were deconstructed for their wood, and in the backyard of 30 Decatur St, the construction of the raft began. I remember Lee saying to all of us one night that these moonlit meetings would go down in history as the birthplace of our beautiful revolution. It wasn't long before interpersonal drama, the immanent and unstoppable winter, and many would argue the inherent impossible nature of interacting with Poppa Neutrino, put the Raft to sleep for a little while. Winter came and went, and came and went again!

## The Birth of Grace the Dancing Dandelion

I held onto the idea of living on the water like the memory of some bright golden day I spent as a kid. When I enrolled in Gaia University, the idea of making these floating vessels ecologically regenerative was too enchanting to let in sleep inside me any longer. With funds only available to me via enrollment in university, and Poppa Neutrino back on the Burlington block, we came together to endeavor to resuscitate the Raft. The vision for the raft was and is perpetually morphing. Nevertheless, we somehow, within a week, constructed a 22ft by 32 ft floating platform. I like to think that the magic of how help came, just when we needed it, in so many unexpected forms, was the confetti of many hosts of angels being thrown down upon us for materializing a beautiful dream. The raft truly came into the world the night of July 3<sup>rd</sup>, flanked by fireworks atop the safe dark lake. So many people that were a part of the July 3<sup>rd</sup> celebration said that night was one of the best they'd ever known. The indescribable, holy communion of that evening serves in my eyes as a testament to the heart of this community, and the mysterious capacity of the water to rock us into the world of our more expanded selves.

## My Vision for the future of Rafts in Burlington

Again, the community's passion for raft building has gone to sleep. Poppa, Scott, Stevie and Julie are about to complete the construction of a sea-going travel raft, bound for Cuba and departing on the 7<sup>th</sup> of October. Grace the Dancing Dandelion is sleeping at the mouth of the Winooski River. My vision for her remains essentially the same: I want her to grow up to be a Temple, a floating edible garden, a healer, and an instigator. We have to figure out how to help her survive the winter, and come spring I intend to keep on unfolding my dream, keep on nurturing it, keep on feeding it the light of the creator through my body and mind. I have no doubt a bouquet of outputs will be dedicated entirely to the raft's next chapter. One of these will include a manual for the construction of a raft similar to the Dandelion.

## Conclusion

While I expected the majority of this output to be a chronicle of what occurred, I'm ecstatic that it inspired me to finally articulate my holistic vision for rafting communities. I found that I could express with more certainty my motivations and visions, than events of the past or future. Trying to remember the constellation of events up until this point is like daydreaming in some faraway land. I can only find and isolate potent blossoms of memory, and they follow no rhyme or reason. Talking about the spring landscape for the raft is like musing on the features of my unborn child. I just know that this dream rests and breathes in an ancient part of my soul; it is so precious and so powerful. I'm choosing to trust the power of my dream. I'm choosing to welcome ten thousand cosmic midwives into the birthing room so wide and dark and deep. So stay tuned! And you who are reading this, whoever you are, I'll be in your dream if you'll be in mine?