ANCHOR

where spirituality and social justice meet

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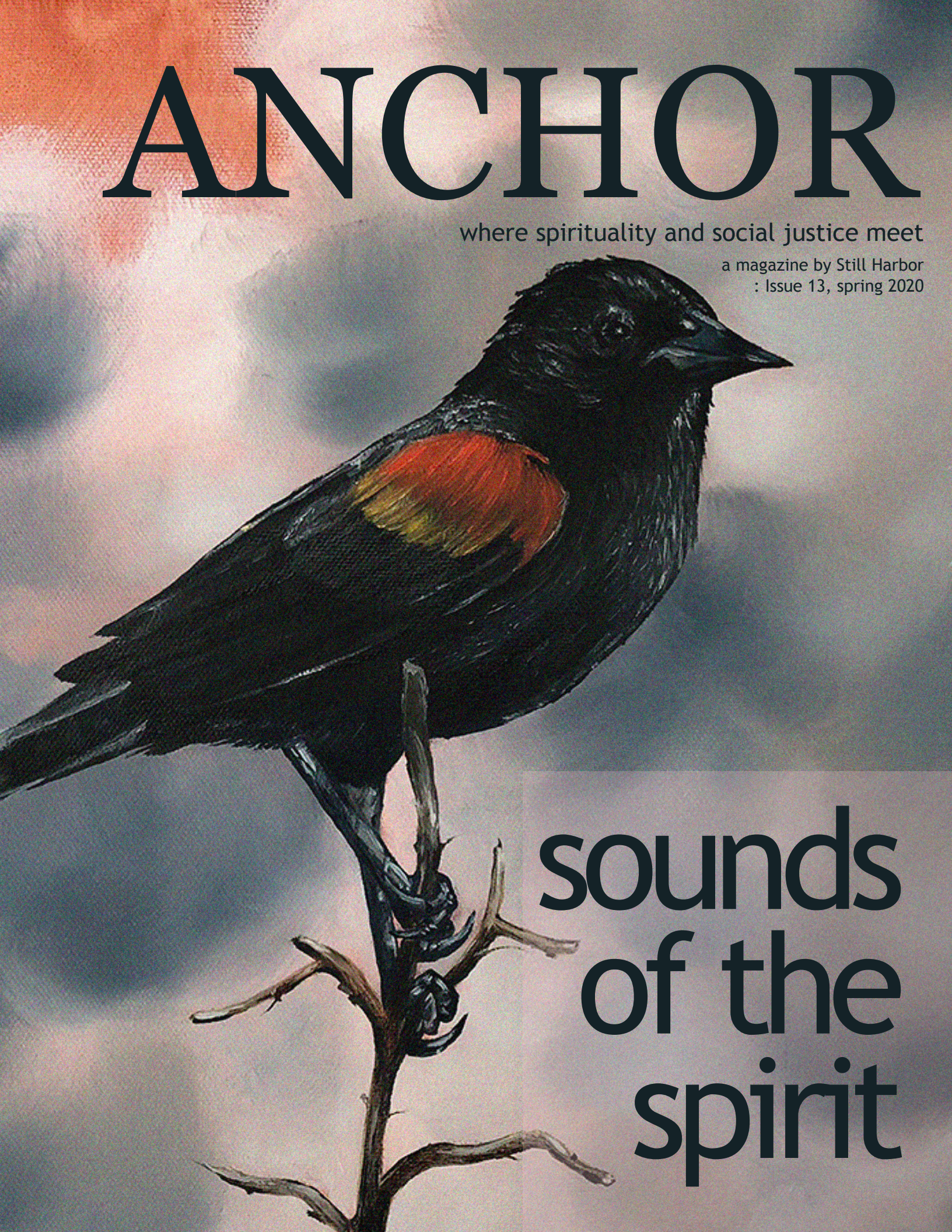

sounds of the spirit

ANCHOR

where spirituality and social justice meet

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ABOUT ANCHOR

Still Harbor publishes four issues of *Anchor* a year filled with content that explores the ways spirituality and social justice intersect in our lives and our societies. We strive to include a diverse collection of personal narratives, spiritual ideas and practices, and creative expressions.

Opinions and ideas expressed in this magazine are the opinions and ideas of the authors, poets, and artists, and they may or may not represent the opinions and ideas of Still Harbor or the editors.

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Supporting & training justice-oriented, peace-minded spiritual leaders for the 21st century.

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ANCHOR

COVER ARTIST

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"My work pays homage to the survival, endurance, and nature's instinctual wisdom that allows it to thrive in challenging environments." - *Mathew Barnes*

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"My hope is that my art helps us remember each other, and that we are future ancestors. What we choose to do today has an impact on what comes after us..."

- *Aisha Fukushima*

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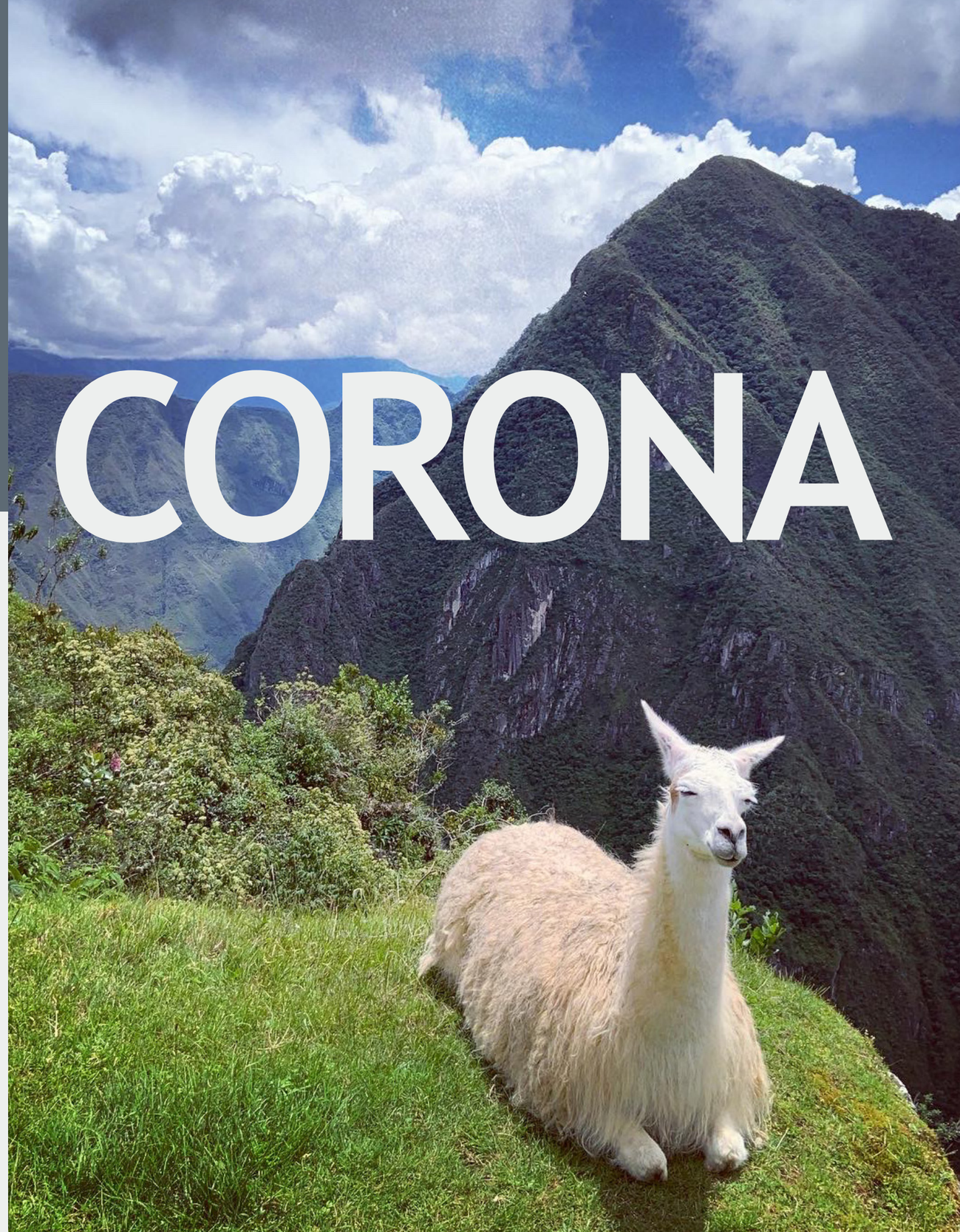
REDISCOVERING GROUND IN THE TIME OF CORONA

BY LIZ OGBU



"IN THE TIME OF CORONA."

Prior to a few weeks ago, I had never thought of or seen this phrase. Yet, it has now become a ubiquitous presence in my emails, texts, WhatsApp messages, and social media posts. To me—and I suspect to many others—it has come to represent not just this pandemic crisis period, but the absolute recalibration of "normal" that has come with it. And if I'm really breaking things down, it's not just the understanding of normal that has shifted; I believe that for many, recent events have also recalibrated our understanding of what is "ground."

To me, ground represents our rootedness; it is the thing that helps us understand who we are, where we are, and how we are. And that rootedness feels called into question when so many things that once seemed so certain that they barely registered as thoughts—like the ability to buy toilet paper whenever I needed it—are now unknowns. While other things about whose certainty I haven't always been sure of—like the strength of my community and relationships—have become clearer guideposts, sometimes in the most surprising ways. Our world largely teaches us to run from uncertainty and change. They are seldom fun or easy places to linger, and more often than not, they co-exist with feelings of fear.

I find myself feeling thankful that my personal growth journey over the past few years has included a healthy dose of sitting with this discomfort of uncertainty, change, and fear, inspired initially by Buddhist teachings. More recently, I had the profound opportunity to build upon this practice with a spiritual learning of a different sort. Just before this global pandemic made shelter-in-place my reality,

“Thoughts of interconnectedness have reminded me that it is not only my individual sense of ground that I must hold space for, but our collective one as well.”

and in the seemingly liminal space between when reports of community transmission started popping up and when places like the Bay Area, where I call home, went on lockdown, I traveled to Peru on a plant medicine and indigenous healing journey to the sacred sites of Machu Picchu.

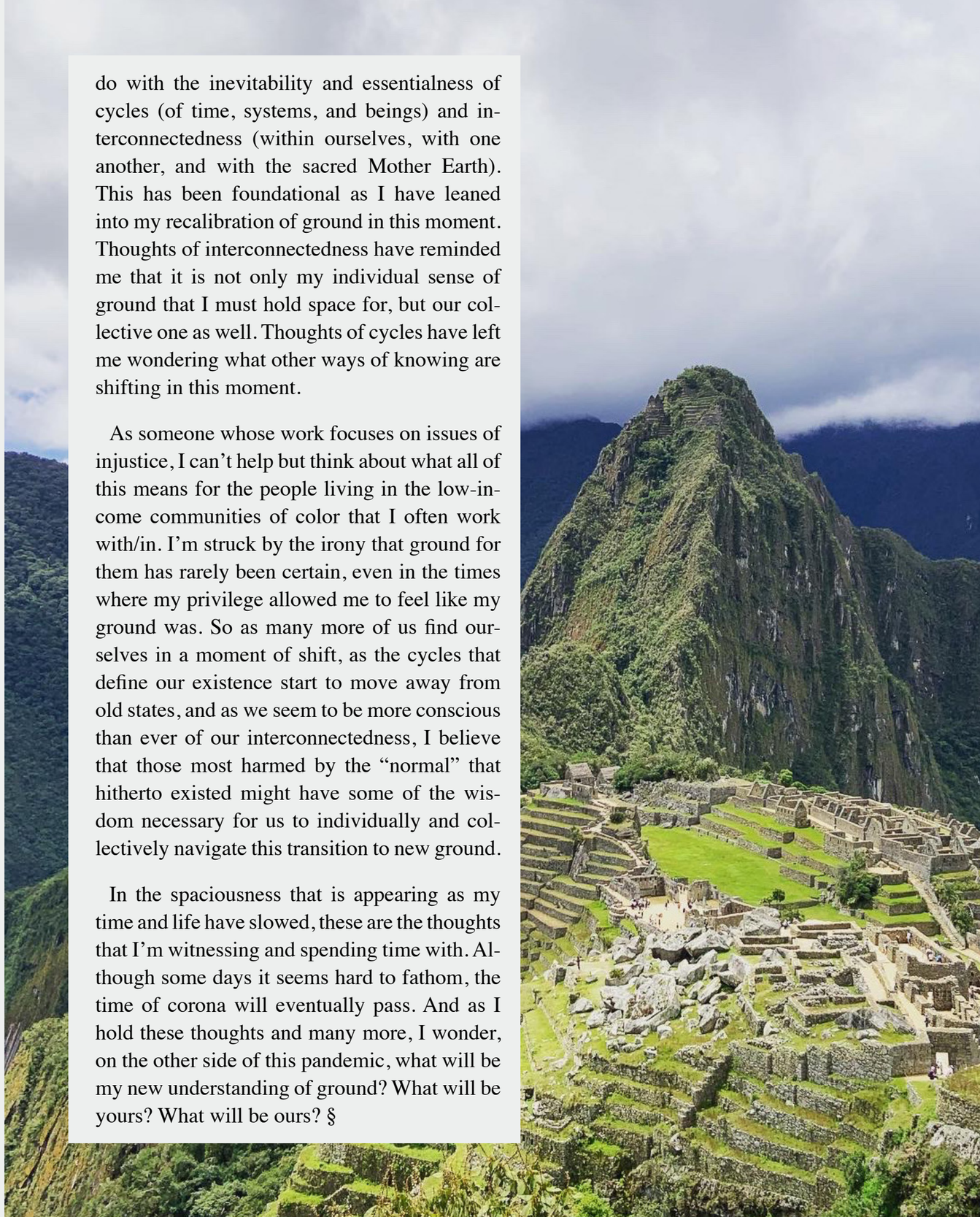
A few months prior, I had first felt the call within me to go on this trip. Part of it was professional. I’m an architect and spatial justice activist, and I focus a lot on how the built environment can be a catalyst for justice. Over time, I’ve become increasingly interested in what insights indigenous wisdom around healing and the land could provide for this work. I also take to heart the words of nonprofit leader Anne Marks, who once remarked: “Hurt people, hurt people. Healed people, heal people.” And so, the trip also spoke to the parts of me, conscious and unconscious, that needed to go in order to heal.

The trip was magical, with healing and wisdom in abundance. In ways that I’m only now beginning to understand, it was also incredibly grounding and set up my ability to enter the time of corona from a place of flow. Experiences with plant medicine (Huachuma/San Pedro and Ayuhuasca) had stripped away the layers that normally exist between my ego and my heart and soul, leaving no place to hide from my hopes, fears, and doubts. There’s a nakedness that came with that clearing, and it has opened me up to experience more truth, wonder, and wholeness in the midst of our uncertain moment.

In recent days, several friends have remarked that COVID-19 was literally born of the earth. It is almost as if she felt not enough of us were listening or too many people had forgotten their connection to her, and so she needed to call louder. In Peru, the depth of that sometimes forgotten bond between us and Pachamama (Mother Earth) played out often and powerfully: a llama grazing in a circle around us at a sacred site in Machu Picchu, misting water from a sacred waterfall blessing me as I stood in awe before it, and a healer calling out a musical prayer to Pachamama with a voice like a hummingbird.

As I reflect on how the concept of healing has taken on new resonance in a landscape in which a virus is running wild, I feel blessed to have also witnessed many forms of healing during my time in Peru, from the actions and teachings of the shamans to the words and joy from my fellow spiritual journey mates to the grace I learned to offer myself when my own pain was revealed. As I learn more about those afflicted by COVID-19, including those in my circles, I try to remember the need for and the power of that multi-layered healing.

A number of the shamans’ teachings had to do with the inevitability and essentialness of cycles (of time, systems, and beings) and interconnectedness (within ourselves, with one another, and with the sacred Mother Earth). This has been foundational as I have leaned into my recalibration of ground in this moment. Thoughts of interconnectedness have reminded me that it is not only my individual sense of ground that I must hold space for, but our collective one as well. Thoughts of cycles have left me wondering what other ways of knowing are shifting in this moment.

As someone whose work focuses on issues of injustice, I can’t help but think about what all of this means for the people living in the low-income communities of color that I often work with/in. I’m struck by the irony that ground for them has rarely been certain, even in the times where my privilege allowed me to feel like my ground was. So as many more of us find ourselves in a moment of shift, as the cycles that define our existence start to move away from old states, and as we seem to be more conscious than ever of our interconnectedness, I believe that those most harmed by the “normal” that hitherto existed might have some of the wisdom necessary for us to individually and collectively navigate this transition to new ground.

In the spaciousness that is appearing as my time and life have slowed, these are the thoughts that I’m witnessing and spending time with. Although some days it seems hard to fathom, the time of corona will eventually pass. And as I hold these thoughts and many more, I wonder, on the other side of this pandemic, what will be my new understanding of ground? What will be yours? What will be ours? §