



Hallowed Ground—Ceremony at Ground Zero

by Jaes Seis, of Pachamama Community in Southwest Wisconsin

Ground Zero, in lower Manhattan, has become hallowed ground. Where once twin towers of the World Trade Center stood, hundreds of workers continue to search through the rubble. Thousands of people come to look, to pay their respects to the dead and the living, and to stand witness to an event of catastrophic proportions. It has become a sacred site on the earth in a time of pivotal transition for all of humanity.

Being consciously on a spiritual path and living closely in harmony with the heartbeat of the Mother Earth is important and makes a difference in these times of change and possibility. Collisions of realities create new forms of expression in the group consciousness. The entire world was impacted by the events of September 11. There is a spiritual aspect to these events that each of us can connect with as individuals and as communities. It is a work in progress.

One aspect of the destruction of 9/11 was the bringing together of many separate groups of people. The disaster caught the world's attention. The result was a great pooling of intention, effort, and resources. Although lives were lost in Pennsylvania and Washington, D.C., New York became a symbol of that date's events. It was a day when everyone became a New Yorker, and New York became the world in a greater sense than it already was. This instant reality-stretching and boundary expansion allowed for a greater understanding and appreciation of community and collaboration.

We now stand in the space between. It is a powerful, yet often bewildering place to be. The space where the Trade Center towers once stood is now a great open space, a pit, where something has been, where the remains of the previous reality are still

being lifted up, sifted through to find the messages and stories, and the literal remains of loved ones lost. There is an honoring of who and what has been, creating a space for what will be.

Energetically there is a doorway that has swung wide open at Ground Zero in the space between the living and the dead and of what was and what will be. New York has historically stood as a doorway or entrance into the United States. Liberty stands with her torch ever-burning to guide those seeking freedom into and through this doorway. This powerful statue of the Divine Feminine rises up out of the waters to initiate and illuminate. She stands at a portal of hopes and dreams. Like the Virgin of Guadalupe in the south, and Quan Yin in the east, Liberty also embodies compassion. Compassion is another aspect of the healing and transformation that has emerged from the devastation. It is a potent seed of what we can cultivate for our future.

I want to encourage spiritual people to continue to explore and work with the changing energies of what happened September 11th, with all its various levels of reality that are reshaping our world. We are living in the crack of time, between the ages, birth and death and rebirth again. So many people are being inspired and drawn to live a Shamanic life, actively aware and in living communication with the spiritual realms of creation. We are all gathering inspiration and information that is important to share. No one person has all the information. We each get a part of it that can connect to a whole, greater story.

I would like to share my experience of doing ceremony at Ground Zero and what led up to it. I encourage others to share what they have learned and to con-

tinue to stay open so that we might learn and grow and hopefully help shape the direction our communities and world will take. I want to thank Myron Eshowsky of Community Shamanism for honoring his calling and providing a forum for all of us to share what we are learning and experiencing. These are important times.

I had already seen the cloud of smoke mushroom up some time before I saw it on television that day on September the 11, 2001.

As I stood staring at my TV set that Tuesday morning, every cell in my body was alert and wanting to spring into action. Standing in my rural Wisconsin home, I wanted to jump in my car and drive east. The telephone was the first connection I reached for and called my friends Maryanne and Heather in Brooklyn. Maryanne answered the phone and told me she had not gone to work because she had planned to fly to Italy that day. Normally she would have been in her office in Soho. She told me Heather had made it safely to her office in Midtown and that they were both OK. She mentioned that there was a very bad smell in the air. That was our last contact for many days because the phone systems were disrupted. I let them know that I planned to come out there and that I wanted to help if I could.

Heather wrote me a letter while on the subway. She explained what was happening and what it was like for her. She recalled the vision I had shared with her and Maryanne many years ago when they first planned to move to New York. She reminded me that when I had visited that summer I had remarked that perhaps the danger was passed. I had never seen New York so bright and strong as it was when I was there in June of 2001. In her letter she explained that she had had a feeling in the pit of her stomach that told her the danger had not passed.

Since the attack on the World Trade Center I have heard from several people in the Shamanic community that they had visions or dreams about this occurrence before it happened. I have read how others had premonitions. I heard on a CNN broadcast how there was information that Osama was concerned about the secrecy of the planned attack being disrupted because so many around him were dreaming about it before it occurred. What can we do about this information? How can we validate and responsibly share visions, dreams, and premonitions?

I had an intensely vivid vision in the summer of 1986, of buildings in New York disintegrating, with a mushroom-like cloud rising above them. In the cloud I saw the face of a white turbaned man with a beard, smiling. I imagined it might be an atomic bomb because it appeared so devastating and destructive. That vision had many details and lasted for over an hour. The woman who witnessed me in this state at the time began to take notes about what I was describing. She had contacted me in 1993 when the first attack on the World Trade Center occurred. We both hoped that that would be all that would come of it. We met in Chicago on Sunday, September 16, 2001, along with others to grieve and share in our collective grief. She told me she was searching for those notes and trying to remember more about the details of the changes that I had spoken of coming after that event.

Committed to my community in Wisconsin, I stayed engaged in the work at hand there. I was unable to abruptly leave the commitments I had in my community, so I did my spiritual work long distance with New York and with the circles that gathered for support and to grieve. But while I worked with clients and students here where I live, I bought a ticket to fly to New York in December.

In my journeys immediately after the devastating events, I was inspired by Spirit not to do psychopomp work. They showed me that this was a special situation and that I needed to pay attention to what was happening. There was a purpose beyond what was obvious. I could see the twin towers extending up into the heavens as buildings of light. I also saw a very dark dense energy impacted deeply in the earth. When I asked what could be done, I was shown a circle of people holding hands encircling the site. I wondered how such a circle could be organized.

Many years ago in my training with Spirit, I was shown how sudden mass death creates an opening between the worlds. It literally pierces reality. An enormous energy is shed into the earth. Living beings who are open may receive a kind of inheritance. When one person dies, that 'inheritance' or spiritual energy often goes to a member of the family. When many hundreds or thousands of people die at once, the "inheritance" becomes generational, entering many.

In mass death, a great spiritual energy also leaves the earth. Sacrifice creates the opening for something new to enter. There have been times in history when

mass deaths occurred that signaled a new energy coming into consciousness in both large and small ways. One such time was during World War II. The use of the atomic bomb impregnated our global consciousness with new material that has continued to evolve and grow. Mass death literally pierces the veil or spiritual membrane between worlds and opens up a doorway where new information and essence can flow in. Many young people are enacting this piercing of our earth with their own bodies. They dance out the energy in their own ways as they move towards being the generation who as adults will cope with its effect.

We are in a time of mass extinction on our planet. With death there is also birth. Big death correlates to big birth energy. It was clear in my early journeys and visions that a larger plan is in place and moving in a deliberate way towards a larger birth we are all involved in. Along with other spiritual people, I saw my role as being like a midwife in this time of earth birth and at the same time offering compassionate care similar to hospice for the dying of consciousness we've known.

Being aware of the bigger picture is only useful if it helps to guide us in the ordinary moments of our everyday life. Being an active member of a spiritual community, contributing to the growth and wholeness of individuals and being willing to do my own work has kept inspiration alive for me. Some of the work within my local community involves doing regular ceremony and ritual together. Eight days before September 11, over the Labor Day weekend, our community gathered with others to share together at the Midwest Shamanic Gathering called "The River of Islands." For four days we shared meals, prayers, ceremony, workshops, and play. We were a community of 140 people, including whole families with children. It was a dream realized for many of us.

A week and a half after September 11, many gathered for the Autumn Equinox ceremony at the effigy mounds here in southwest Wisconsin. The mounds are the sacred sites of the ancestors of this land and their spirit is still present there. We had gathered many times at these particular mounds, but I noticed this time that there was something different about them. I felt a shift happening in March of 2001, at the Vernal Equinox gathering. Something seemed to be waking up. By September it was open and a new energy was alive at the mounds.

The mounds had a message. That message connected to what was going on in New York and other places on the earth. We listened to the messages from the earth and interpreted what we could to support the process. I was able to meet with some other members of the community and do a ceremony before I left for New York. We laid a circle of crystals around the part of the mounds that appears to be the belly of a pregnant woman. Our group agreed that we would do a ceremony together. They would meet at the mounds at the same time I was to be in New York at Ground Zero. In the message from the earth I was made aware of how there was energy from New York City coming through the mounds in our area. We needed to find out more and support the earth's process to heal.

When I first arrived in New York City in early December, I spent time with family and friends. I listened to stories and shared inspiration and support. I offered to do spiritual healing work. I listened to stories throughout my time and travels there. The city was alive with stories that needed to be heard and held. I visited many shrines on the streets, the subway, and at police and fire stations. I visited churches and attended services. I listened and prayed with many others.

Everything I did became ceremonial. My first visit to Ground Zero was Friday, December 7. My friend went with me. It was her first time there too, even though she watched it happening from the train crossing from Brooklyn to Manhattan that September morning. I'd heard many New Yorkers express not wanting to see the site. Many tourists were there that late Friday afternoon. As we walked around the streets, most areas were blocked off or had tall chain link fences with covering over them to block the view. This did not deter the people gathered there. Holes the size of faces had been torn into the coverings. The holes were torn at different levels to allow for people of different heights to look in at the wreckage. People waited to look through. I watched and waited my turn to stand there as evening set in. I stood there at Greenwich Street where the trucks were washed down before leaving the site, to take the scrap and debris to be examined on Staten Island. I noticed an instrument used to test air quality taped to a light pole next to where we were standing. The reports were bad on that matter. The fire was still burning.

I was finally able to cry from a deep place when I stood there looking through the hole in the fence. I

could feel the intensity of what had occurred and the energy of the spirits of the earth—the dead and the living all mixing together. I was aware that I was breathing in the dust of the buildings and the people who had been inside them. Everyone in New York has the dust and ashes in them. We have all become part of a living memory and memorial. I knelt down and pressed a golden cross and Virgin Mary pendant into the ashes and prayed. I had just purchased it from a jeweler who opened his shop for the first time that morning there at the gateway to the site. He told me his story of what happened to him that day. The cross is a powerful symbol and connection to death and rebirth, as is the Divine Mother in all her forms—a connection to merciful compassion and rebirth. As I connected to the ashes with my prayers and this pendant, I offered my tears to the earth. I made an offering of ash that came from the sacred fire carriers' ceremonies that had been passed down for generations by the Native Americans of our region of the Midwest and shared by many other fire carrier traditions. I offered the ash of the sacred fires to join it with the ashes of atrocity and continued to create sacred space as others have done and continue to do there. I offered cornmeal to the earth as a remembrance of her creative regenerative life force and to honor her abundance.

The time of the connected ceremony with my community was scheduled for 10 a.m., Sunday morning, December 9. The weather was chillier after the previous day's rain. I took the subway down and walked to the corner of Fulton and Broadway where St. Paul's Chapel is located. I had seen on my previous visit that this was the place where the World Trade Center site was most visible. That morning the tourists were just arriving. There were not as many people as in the afternoon or evening. I spoke with a woman at the door of St. Paul's Chapel and told her I had come from Wisconsin to do a ceremony connected to my community to support the healing process. I asked if there was anyplace she could suggest that I might do it? She was very kind and thanked me and the community I came from. She said they still appreciate all the love and support coming from others. She told me the Chapel was only open for workers' support, but I could do the ceremony anywhere I chose outside.

I picked the spot at the corner of the churchyard where the street was blocked off and people were standing to look. I stood away from the best view to be out of the way—or so I thought. As I looked at my

watch I could see and feel that it was time to begin and there was no time to hesitate or worry about what it looked like or how to figure out any more details. I had to completely surrender to the moment and let Spirit guide me; get out of my shy ego reaction and let myself be an instrument in service to a greater purpose.

As I laid out a small altar on the pavement below me and picked up my drum, I could hear the steady clicking of cameras all around me. I closed my eyes and began to drum and sing my prayers. I sang my song of death. It is all that came through me and it did come through strong and constant. I began my journey through the middle world to experience the spirits of Ground Zero. I went down into the earth and journeyed west through the Hudson River. At first it was like a wall, very hard to move through. I consciously connected with a woman I'd just met in New Jersey who was working with healing the Hudson River and using spiritual intent and merging to transmute the polluted, shocked waters. I could feel her efforts and the efforts of others in the water helping the wall to shift and transform. I was aware of the connections of all the underground waters working together. I continued to journey towards Wisconsin to the mounds where there were others in ceremony. I could see the fire and the circle of crystals. I connected with the hearts and intentions of those gathered there.

I was aware of how the earth is healing, like our bodies heal. When one part of our body is injured the whole body works together to help heal that part. The mounds in Wisconsin were transmuting the energy of Ground Zero. I followed this energy through the earth and up out of the mounds where my community and spiritual family were united in healing intent. It was amazing to feel the power of the heart, our hearts joined with the heart of earth, moving the dark dense energy that had impacted into the earth beneath the World Trade Center.

I continued to sing as tears streamed down my face. I was aware of the movement of others in front of me. I asked Spirit and without opening my eyes, I was shown how I had been led to set up my altar right at a place in the barricades where the police, fire, and construction workers all walked through to leave and enter the site. I was standing in the doorway and my altar was at their feet. They had to step over my altar and pass by me. I asked Spirit what to do when the first one paused in front of me? I was shown to extend

the energy of the healing with the earth to those who came through. So never opening my eyes or missing a beat, I extended the circle of energy to include all the workers and police. Often they would pause and quietly and respectfully step over my altar and pass. This continued on throughout the ceremony and became a part of it.

As the energy of the earth strengthened in connection with my community and my living place on the earth in Wisconsin, I saw the power of many other old sacred sites on the earth activated. These places that have survived hundreds and thousands of years in sacred communion with human beings are healing centers for the earth and people. By participating in a conscious way with the natural healing currents and flow of earth, we can support the healing and transformative energies happening within the earth.

I realized that this interaction with the earth needs to be personal. I was shown this through my experience that day. Our personal experience is our connection point. Where humans have hurt or harmed the earth, others can heal through loving sacred connection. After making the connection by journeying to the group at the mounds, I saw the spark of connection fly out to many others I know that have sacred connections to the earth. I connected to them through my heart and the spirit of the earth-healing traveled through to them and out to the places they held sacred on the earth. It was like seeing a spark hit a circuit board and then fly off in many directions all over the world. It seemed that all the people I held in my heart were wired through their hearts to other sacred places on the earth. The earth appeared to light up in many places, all activated and working together towards healing. I was shown how we could intentionally participate in this healing by cultivating these connections of the heart and consciously activating the circuit.

A circle is forming at Ground Zero, created by the tourists, the workers, fire personnel, and the police at its perimeters. In my journey I saw another circle forming. When all those people died at once, many went to the light instantly as though a path and plan was prepared for them. Some beings took longer to go, with others still on the way. There was a lot of spiritual activity still going on there. I saw with my spiritual eyes that many spirits of those who passed were completely filled with light and had returned to help. They seemed organized and busy with a specific task

to do. I watched firefighters and police in their spiritual light bodies helping to organize the movement and direction of the activities at the site. At first I thought they were the physical police and firefighters passing by me, but then I saw their luminescence and recognized how perfectly their skills and life purpose was related to their souls purpose. Many people of light formed a circle around the World Trade Center and joined hands. I noticed that there were enough spirits in light to create a large circle surrounding the wounded area. From that circle grew a circle of light that went high up into the sky. I saw an eagle holding a clear crystal orb into which the sun's rays were focused. As the light passed through the orb, it became a viscous liquid which became a golden drop with the appearance and qualities of honey. I was told that this place of great loss was part of a sacrifice that has created an opening between the worlds for new power, a true power to be born on earth. It comes slowly and drips like honey. I was told that there is a reason why it was that place and those people. The towers were symbolic of the way power is expressed in the world. The fact that so many young adults died in that space and all at once brought a young energy into the old power dying. The many people who died, who were in light, are literally holding the space for this new life force of true power to come in. They each had a purpose and have a connection to the energy of transformation coming in now. Their sacrifice has a greater purpose. They seemed to know and be joyfully in harmony with this purpose. Their souls understood the task at hand. I was astonished at the ease of these many beings working together in perfect harmony with a greater work in process.

Almost abruptly the journey ended. It was complete. I lifted up my offerings of healing earth from the Sactuario in Chimayo, New Mexico, water from the sacred spring on our land in Wisconsin, cornmeal, and sacred ash that was part of my altar and gave them to the grasses in St Paul's churchyard. I knelt and thanked the Earth and Spirit. I gathered my altar objects and drum back into a bag and walked down the street to thank the woman at St Paul's and to write a message on the public shrine in front of the Chapel. I went to church services down the street at Trinity Church and when I came back, I was allowed the rare honor of going into St. Paul's. The Chapel is filled with memorials and shrines of support sent from all over the world. I knelt and prayed there in gratitude for my

experience and all the hope shining there.

Before I returned to Wisconsin I sat in LaGuardia airport writing thirty-three postcards. I sent them to as many of the people who I'd seen and connected to in the journey at Ground Zero as I could. It seemed to be the last important piece of the ceremony. At least I thought it was the last part. I wrote them out on top of my journal while listening to the ceremony at Ground Zero for the three-month anniversary on the airport TV. I flew out of New York on Tuesday Dec. 11. I didn't realize until I was home that I had lost my journal, which had all my experiences, recorded since Sept 12. That was the last part of the ceremony. I had written all the postcards on top of that journal, and then accidentally left it on the airplane. When I returned to Wisconsin my spiritual sisters called to the journal to return. It did return after flying back and forth from coast to coast for a month, part of my sacrifice to send energy out and connect it back again in a sacred way.

As I finish writing this account of my experiences, it is once again the Vernal Equinox. It has been a day of ceremony again at the sacred effigy mounds here in Wisconsin. The mounds are very much alive now—activated and pouring energy through that comes from the losses but which has been transmuted into a new power given to our world. As I sang and danced and laid on the earth I felt this new energy pour into me. I was drinking it in for a long time. It was wonderful. I was in a journeying, non-ordinary state of complex intersecting realities, allowing the energy of the transmuted earth to pour into me. I vomited out into the earth briefly and once again began to drink. I saw how this energy here in Wisconsin at these mounds is anchored by energy in Peru, Alaska, Siberia, and Antarctica.

In a state of opened consciousness, I was told that the true power that is being transmuted from wounded areas on the earth is now flowing up through these sacred old sites like the mounds here in our area. It is facilitated and supported by sacred human interaction. These are places where humans have interacted with the earth in a sacred way for thousands of years. It is the conscious contact and

connection to our own communities and our relationship to the earth where we live that allows us to participate in the transmutation of other wounded places on the earth. We can work in harmony with the earth and our communities to release the blockages and ease the suffering in the areas of the earth that are being raped and pillaged by other wounded human beings. The human struggle for what is often the illusion of power, can give way to the potential of discovering what true power is about. In my journey I was shown that we are free to drink the golden honey of this new power at these sacred sites, but to be aware that this power is for other, not self, and that it is about service, not self-aggrandizement. The golden energy that goes in is very healing and connects with aspects of self that are stuck and self focused. It pulls those false and stuck energies out like the vomiting part of my journey today. I had to release what I held in me and allow the power of the Earth healing herself to become part of my life in a bigger way.

As a result of this journey, I accepted even more of a role of service in these times of healing change. It was this connection to the mounds and the new energy flowing through them that allowed me to face the challenge of finishing this article for others to read. I find that the stuck places within me have given way to a greater concern and empathy for our earth and our relationship with each other and all of life's creation.

Although I have not personally experienced the energies of the Pentagon in Washington and the area of the plane crash in Pennsylvania, I believe similar spiritual realities are taking place. I can only imagine the possibilities of the energy of true power pouring into the United States center of defense. I encourage others to share their inspirations and experiences and to continue to work together to help transform us and our world. Through our love for each other and our love of the earth, we can safely birth new realities into being.

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