

# DECOLONIZING THE PSYCHE



***by Pegi Eyers, Author of Ancient Spirit Rising***

The presentation that follows is based on my own particular theoretical framework. Others may have completely different axioms on white behavior, and that's OK. The set of habits I will be commenting on developed through my own lens of life experience, and the ongoing evaluation I have learned to practice on how coloniality manifests in the world. As I outline in ***Ancient Spirit Rising*** [www.stonecirclepress.com](http://www.stonecirclepress.com) my definition for decolonization is very broad, and my work includes an in-depth comparison between western thinking and ancestral mind (or Indigenous mind). I have discovered that there is basically nothing in common between western thinking and ancestral mind, and I even use language not currently in favor by applying the term “binary” to these comparisons.

The white behaviors I am about to describe are deeply connected to capitalism and consumer behavior. And yet beyond these beliefs and behaviors there are others that I talk about elsewhere, that other activists and authors identify, and others that will occur to you. My focus is not specifically about unpacking racism or white privilege, although there are linkages between our thought patterns and racism, but to identify white behaviors that hold us back from changing the humancentric worldview of our civilization. A decolonized mind, body and soul tends to adopt an ecocentric worldview, that embraces our human place in Earth Community.

The more we sink into uncolonization, the more we realize that preserving the colonial paradigm is not a rational choice, and it is only by stepping outside of the patriarchal power-program that we develop a mind and soul free of offensive conditioning. Anti-colonial work is a personal choice made by dismantling the western mind, or as Indigenous professor Michael Yellow Bird calls it “neurodecolonization.” Deeply imbedded in our psyches, the core memes of Empire have been created, spread, upheld and perpetuated over centuries, yet it is untrue (and another lie of Empire) that somehow the very structure of the human mind has pre-determined these choices. All of us hold the power and have the agency to challenge our own habitual thinking and belief systems, and to embrace new thinking, gestures and actions that reflect our responsibility to Earth Community.

Here is my “short list” of colonized patterns and behaviors:

**#1 Reject Consumer Capitalism.** How much do we really need to live a comfortable life? We have strayed far beyond the boundaries of natural law that keep us in balance with the natural world, and current levels of consumption cannot be maintained. It is better to begin our uncolonization process now, to give up our expectation of material wealth and accumulation, and to see our privileges and benefits as the illusions that they are. Consumerism has infiltrated every aspect of our lives, and it will take much examination to discern between the things we need, and the things we think we need. Beyond the necessities for a comfortable life, we need to give up the “greed to possess” and the desire for superficial materialism. Reject the notion that industrial civilization is the only way to live, or that those of us in the western world will continue to live this way for years to come.

**#2 Reject the impact of commercialism on your identity formation** by resisting the brainwashing coming from the worlds of entertainment, movies, sports and fashion. There is a healthy sharing of creative ideas, but the marketing machines in these mega-industries exist to make you think you need something that you do not, or that you are someone you are not. The notion that specific “brands” in fashion or sports define who we are, are all powerful illusions that amount to a web of capitalist lies. As consumers we are conditioned to align our identify with mass-produced movies, music, fashion and sports, all products designed to extract wealth from the masses to fund their industry. Haven’t you wondered why the success of non-business people like guitarists, writers, performance artists and hockey players are still assessed by how much money they make? From the capitalist paradigm we have internalized the key principle that wealth and fame equals worth, but this is an illusion resulting from the absence of true connection and the sacred in our lives.

**#3 Reject the impact of commercialism on your spiritual life.** The blueprint of capitalist consumerism runs deep, and it is a delusion to think that spiritual enlightenment can also be obtained in the marketplace. Spiritual products, workshops and conferences have become commodities, and careers in self-help, spirituality and self-empowerment are big business. And yet any society that needs to constantly revise or re-create a spiritual practice, or “pay to pray,” has blended their priorities into a strange new world. In the same way that we strive to keep the sacred (religious bias) separate from the secular (political sphere), perhaps we also need to realize that the economic paradigm has no business in our spiritual lives, and adopt other structures of energy exchange for spirituality, like barter or the gift economy. For models in this process, we can look to the integration between the sacred and secular that is achieved in Indigenous societies.

**#4 Reject hierarchy, privilege and domination.** Empire has inculcated us with the toxic structures of patriarchal hierarchies that are so damaging to ourselves and the planet. Beyond the necessary leadership that will arise organically in any human collective, stratification, ranking, “othering” and oppression have no place in the new paradigm. Uncolonization means being aware of how and when we perpetuate racism, classism, speciesism, ableism or genderism, and working to rid ourselves of this conditioning. Of course, to live in a society that prizes dominance, is to have dominance in our souls. Watch how you monopolize any situation, sphere of activity, or ecosystem, and be mindful how your speech

and actions directly or indirectly convey that unmistakable sense of racial, economic, cultural, or even human, superiority. In direct opposition to what we have been taught by the business model of capitalism that promotes competition, individualism and the cult of narcissism, the world does not revolve around us, our hypertrophied ego, or our petty ambitions and concerns. Collectively, and as a species, we need to re-learn our humble place within natural law and the natural cycles of all life - which brings us to our next point – humility.

**#5 Reject self-importance.** A huge driver in the building of Euro-Empire has been a delusional separation from the natural world, and humanity's place WITHIN the circle of all life. Our humancentric bias has convinced us that it is only our admiration for ourselves and the obsession with our own creations and technological achievements that is important. Some day we will pay the price for this massive mistake. On this gorgeous paradise of a planet, surrounded by natural wonders and the manifestations of mysteries we will never fully understand, our best response would be to cultivate an attitude of humility, gratitude and grace.

**#6 Reject the notion that human beings have some kind of special “entitlement.”** The so-called “perfect” conditions of weather that provide us with beautiful sunny days are not just the backdrop to a set of activities that further our appearance, our ego, our need for acquisition, or the daily machinations of capitalism we enact to perpetuate the goals of Empire. The phenomena and elements of nature that make themselves apparent to us as humans are a blessing and our highest authority, not something to take for granted, ignore, put in a cage, or complain about when the conditions don't suit us. Forget about the perfect weather, the perfect car, or the perfect outfit to showcase the perfect you - the natural world is not there to be enslaved and endlessly provide for our egocentric wants and needs. Our only status is to stay respectfully within the boundaries set out in natural law, and the notion of human entitlement is a tragic delusion.

**#7 Reject self-Indulgence.** Don't get caught up in the self-absorbed emotional traps of fatalism, escapism, alienation, apathy, numbness or boredom – there is work to be done! You are part of the living ecosystem, and your gratitude for the natural world that sustains you can empower you to hold the vision for a return to earth-centered culture. To please the Divine is to treat yourself scrupulously with total love, respect and positive energy, (and to know that you are the perfect manifestation of divinity.) *“Love yourself. Then forget it. Then, love the world.”* [Mary Oliver] Detoxify your life by eliminating activities that do not align with your true values, and negative pastimes that emit a low vibration, such as gossip, personal drama, and consumer entertainment.

## **NEW DIRECTIONS**

**From Consumer to Creator.** Be content with the simple things, find meaning in slowing down, going for a walk, riding a bike, basic food choices, a few good pieces of clothing, the beauty of the ecosystem, tending the gardens, the company of friends, and the pleasures of your own making. There are many alternatives to the accumulation of “stuff,” and being defined by what you buy, use and wear. Stop chasing after the latest trend, and learn to be a creator instead of a consumer! Our liberation from Empire comes from having gratitude for what we

already have, not from wanting more, and true happiness comes from creativity, spiritual pursuits, and being of service to others and the land. Replace the shopping malls with employee-owned essential businesses, solar grids, greenhouses, gardens, art studios, gratitude cafes and community activity spaces! Giving up the notions of entitlement and privilege leads to cultural cohesion and sustainable local alternatives.

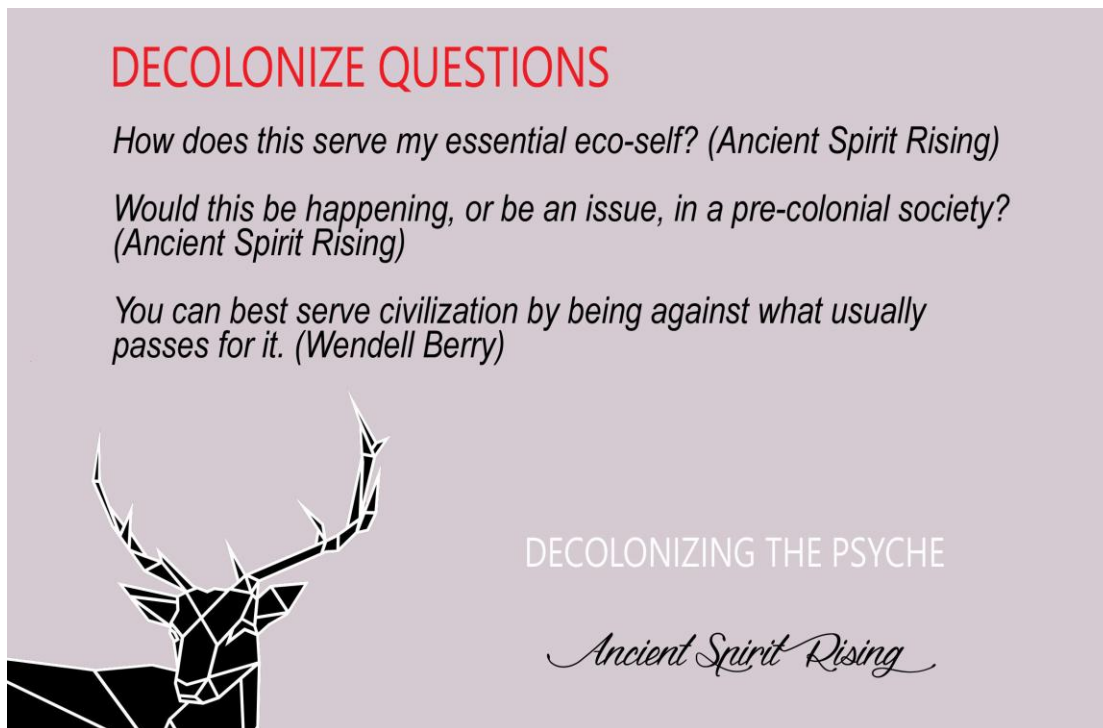
**Embrace your True Self.** It is essential to continue the process of uncolonizing the fabricated identities we have assumed from our conditioning and what we do for a living, and to reclaim our authentic self. Solitude, deep introspection, time spent in nature, dreamwork, and other places and spaces outside of Empire allow us to explore who we really are, and to claim the pursuits that make us feel most vibrant and alive. We have a responsibility to care for the relationships we have with each other and the other-than-human world, and each one of us has an important purpose and valuable skill to contribute to the whole. Actualizing our true identity as embedded in Earth Community, will lead to the cultural transformation of both the individual and the collective.

**Embrace Community.** Don't buy into the myth of social isolationism that Empire has perpetuated to keep us working on the wheel of endless industry and disconnected from one another. The toxic cult of individualism, the sterility of our institutions, the competition in the workplace, and the entertainments and distractions of the man-made world do not lead to the happiness, security and connectivity that we crave. Like all networks in the natural world, human societies are mutually empowered by the gifts of sharing and caring. Decolonization in this case means sustaining our current relationships, nurturing new connections, building healthy social networks, and linking people together in authentic ways for community building, healing, soul nourishment, and celebration - all essential for making the shift from "Me" to "We."

**Embrace the Sacred.** For millennia now, the nonspiritual society that modern civilization has created can be located by the glaring lack of spiritual values at the root of the systems, structures and relationships we take for granted. For some strange reason human beings have adapted well to materialistic life, and the vast majority of us are accustomed to this dysfunction, which is far from our natural way of being. As a result of materialism, we have lost the ability to realize the world through a spiritual lens, and this disconnect means we are constantly seeking to understand the meaning of life over and over again. Human beings are first and foremost spiritual beings, and we need expressions of ritual, myth, ceremony, song, dance and art as much as we need food and drink. Embracing the sacred through an active soul connection to the land creates a deeply grounded and authentic spiritual life, the same enchanted and holistic world that our tribal ancestors experienced, and to which we must return.

**Embrace Massive Change.** There is no doubt that our times are challenging our fundamental belief systems, and both natural and man-made events may force us to change our entire way of living. Our civilization and our worldview are not eternal or unassailable, and the more that we remain in denial about massive change, the more painful it will be. All actions have consequences, and when an Empire is built on principles that go beyond the boundaries of natural law, it will fall. It's just a matter of time. We were born to be witnesses to this

turbulent time, and instead of getting all traumatized about it, we can be joyful that such a toxic civilization is ending. In an uncertain world, the best response would be to ground our souls in overwhelming gratitude for the gift of life, and to be thankful that we have the agency to make choices that lead to the healing of ourselves, and the remediation of Earth Community.



*Questions that have helped me on my own decolonization journey.*

## **CODA**

Once we have decided to locate the conditioning that Empire has inculcated in our hearts, minds and souls, we can work to eliminate this programming, and then continue to resist the ongoing conditioning that Empire continues to push at us. The new trend toward essentialism, minimalism and downshifting is the right direction, and pandemics such as the COVID-19 disaster may force us to let go of many of our privileges in the years ahead. Uncolonization starts off as an individual practice, but it is important to quickly move forward in solidarity with our communities and/or chosen kinship groups. The hope is that if enough people change their thinking patterns and way of living, system-wide transformation will happen, and the shift to an ecocentric paradigm and peaceful co-existence will become an unstoppable movement.

There are thousands of activists and scholars working in decolonization today across the intersectional spectrum, and the good news is, more are taking up this work everyday. For visual learners I recommend that you watch as many videos as possible, and for scholars to read as many books and articles as you can. Decolonization is the most difficult challenge we face individually and as a species, to unplug from the false paradigm of unlimited progress, and to dismantle the systems of capitalism, hierarchy and humancentric entitlement that make it possible.

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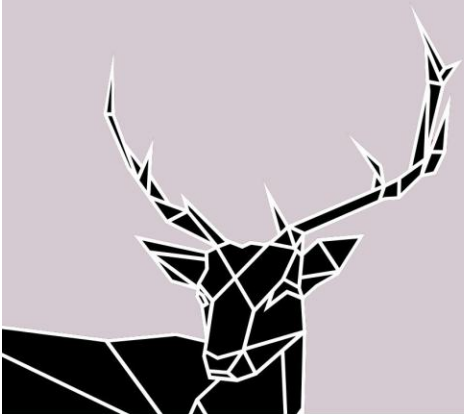


Pegi Evers is the author of the award-winning book ***Ancient Spirit Rising: Reclaiming Your Roots & Restoring Earth Community***, a survey on social justice, uncolonization, nature spirituality, earth-emergent healing and the holistic principles of sustainable living. Pegi self-identifies as a Celtic Animist, and is an advocate for the recovery of authentic ancestral wisdom and traditions for all people. She lives in the countryside on the outskirts of Nogojiwanong in Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg territory (Peterborough, Ontario, Canada), on a hilltop with views reaching for miles in all directions.  
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CAPITALISM >>> EGALITARIANISM

ECOCIDE >>> ECO-SELF

*Are we willing to trade western knowledge, western civilization and its amenities for a return to the garden and right relationship with the Earth? Human beings are meant to honor the Earth in all we think, say and do, and there is a better, more harmonious way for us to live, interconnected with nature, the other-than-human world and Earth Community.*



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*Ancient Spirit Rising*