



William C. Friday Fellowship FOR HUMAN RELATIONS

Person, Place, and Thing: *Beyond the Noun of Leadership*

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Epigraph

What if...?

Edgar Villanueva, *Decolonizing Wealth*

Stories move in circles. They don't go in straight lines. So it helps if you listen in circles. There are stories inside stories and stories between stories, and finding your way through them is as easy and as hard as finding your way home. And part of the finding is the getting lost. And when you're lost, you start to look around and to listen.

Deena Metzger, *Writing for your Life*

We rely on the known to understand what is unknown. One thing suggests another: the familiar, already experienced, carries us to the strange, as yet unexpected shore.

Brent S. Plate *A History of Religion in 5 ½ Objects: Bringing the Spiritual to its Senses*

Yet all my efforts to start over always ended up taking me back to the past, allowing it to serve as foundation for the present...To me, coming home was often like going back in time.

Barbara Ellen Smith, "Legends of the Fall"

I learn again and again how precious it is to have memory.

We are born and have our being in a place of memory. We chart our lives by everything we remember from the mundane moment to the majestic. We know ourselves through the art and act of remembering. Memories offer us a world where there is no death, where we are sustained by rituals of regard and recollection.

bell hooks, *belonging: a culture of place*

The future is an infinite succession of presents, and to live now as we think human beings should live, in defiance of all that is bad around us, is itself a marvelous victory.

Howard Zinn, *You Can't Be Neutral on a Moving Train: A Personal History of Our Times*

It takes organization. It takes dedication. It takes the willingness to stand by and do what has to be done, when it has to be done. A nice gathering like today is not enough. You have to go back and reach out to your neighbors who don't speak to you.

Ella Baker, Puerto Rico Solidarity Rally, 1974

Prologue

We tell stories to remember our places in the world. In the telling of story, we listen, too. Leaning into the meaning of our own words, we become—human, neighbor, friend, fellow. As one story begets another, words carry invitations to community and belonging. Sometimes, words fail and metaphors fall short. When translation is needed, objects can help us hold the past and future in our hands. Holding, smelling, hearing, and tasting things, we remember truths long forgotten. When our stories no longer hold, we pick up the things that matter. Stories and objects, words and things all bring to life the places we inhabit and call home. In the places where life and word and memory work on us, we find our way to the present. In practices that invite personal reckoning, collective healing, and human flourishing, we foster fellowship. On our own and in community, we retrace our footsteps to uncover pathways that invite an inward turn. Knowing ourselves and others more fully gifts relationship, transformation, and emergence.

Framing

The 2020–2022 Class of William C. Friday Fellows will share in a two-year experience that uses stories and objects to question, examine, and transform the places we inherit and inhabit in the world. Words and things alike will become pathways for question-framing, relationship-building, and world-shifting. Stepping into a fellowship that centers dialogue across lines of difference, Fellows will begin at home, first mining their own life experiences for the foundations that create and constrain how they know themselves and others. This archeology of self and story celebrates the particular—that which makes us unique—while inviting practices of listening and learning attuned to universal themes and possibilities. Digging into their own formation, Fellows will practice being vulnerable with themselves while learning how to generously engage those who are, likewise, exploring the roots of their own being and knowing. Working with storytellers, artists, musicians, and makers with deep connections to places and communities across the state of North Carolina, the 2020–2022 Class of William C. Friday Fellows will remember their own histories and birthright inheritances as they engage one another in meaningful dialogue.

Brave words and sacred objects will help Fellows imagine and embrace new pathways to engage in and sustain relationships across lines of difference. In story circles, Fellows will read and re-read the foundations of their own lives, considering how and why they make meaning and encounter others. In object lessons, Fellows will tackle the material world, handling things

that connect them to place and purpose. Sharing and making things that matter, Fellows will practice place-making and world-shifting together. The two-year fellowship experience will unfold across a series of curated travel experiences that lead to retreat centers across the state where Fellows will spend four days in an intentional community practice together. In movement and at rest, Fellows will become increasingly aware of the impact of their actions and movements as they consider the relationship between journeying, arriving, and departing. Exploring leadership through the people, places, and things that invite engagement and reflection, Fellows will consider their growth as both humans and leaders.

The conscientization process at the core of the fellowship experience invites Fellows into the work of attending deeply—to themselves and to one another. By conscientization, the fellowship means the process of becoming aware of the stories we inherit and those we live out. With conscientization as fellowship cornerstone and framework, the fellows move into a collaborative laboratory where the very stories and experiences at the core of their individual learning become the ingredients of an intentional dialogue. Together, the Fellows embrace a series of practices and techniques to awaken their senses to one another, thereby strengthening their commitments to the flourishing of all.

Learning Technologies

The 2020–2022 Class of William C. Friday Fellows will tell and hear stories, pick up and set down the objects of their choosing and making, and bring to life the many places they call home. Together, the class will hold space to give and receive the gifts, challenges, and surprises that learning and unlearning can bring. Awakening and learning are rarely linear undertakings. Rather, each unfolding process meanders and moves us in circles. Conscientization happens over time and across lines of difference. Some things are easy to see and hear. Others require a new set of eyes and ears. Time and space makes many things possible, including a lifelong journey. Seeing and hearing together, Fellows will embrace the learning they offer one another as each becomes an agent of emergence in their cohort and in their home communities.

The learning of the fellowship will unfold at the pace of relationship and in direct proportion to each Fellow's investment in their own—and others'—journey. Individually and as a cohort, Fellows will make their way by walking, talking, listening, creating, moving, holding, and by pausing. These practices will invite a deepening and opening to the complexities of life, learning, and leadership. Engaging the stories they inherit and love to tell, sharing objects that create meaning and connection, and moving both literally and figuratively through places and spaces across the state, the 2020–2022 Class of William C. Friday Fellows will know themselves more fully. As they interact meaningfully and substantively with difference, Fellows will better understand the origins of their truth claims and the importance of the values that inform their decisions and actions. This alignment between people, place, and purpose, and between value and action, is a key objective of the Friday Fellowship. Learning to trust

themselves and one another, the fellowship nurtures generous listeners, capable conveners, and more fully human and humane leaders.

To support Fellows in their work, the fellowship models and teaches practices of presence that amplify what remains—both unspoken and unformed—and that lift up those who do not yet have a seat at the table. Sometimes, Fellows train their ears on themselves, listening for patterns and looking for habits that speak to their own meaning and purpose. Fellows also hold space for one another, listening deeply to what they are hearing only to find themselves in the reflections of others. Seeing and hearing the roots of their own being and believing in conversation with others, Fellows learn to sidestep the dangers of the single stories they inherit. Together, the 2020–2022 Class of William C. Friday Fellows will rely on one another to tell a new story capable of transforming individual lives and communities across the state of North Carolina and beyond.

A Word on System-Like Things and Powers that Be

Stories, objects, and places—experienced and remembered, disappeared and forgotten, beloved and haunted—invite Fellows to consider the full range of power dynamics and systems that govern our bodies, lives, and worlds. Stories allow Fellows to consider questions of voice and canon. Telling their own stories, Fellows tackle the politics of representation that shape what rises to the surface of individual and collective awareness. Objects, too, offer rich insights into the worlds we make and hold in our hands. Holding, handling, and venerating things, Fellows will pair the thought-work of the fellowship with hands-on making and creating. Fellows, then, are collaborators and conspirators with one another and with the natural and created world. Together, Fellows will transform power and privilege into pathways and possibilities for all.

In the making and moving of things, Fellows will re-create themselves and entire lifeworlds. The combination of story re-framed and object re-fashioned invites Fellows to recognize their autonomy, power, and vulnerability within the systems we inhabit and reproduce. Invited to understand themselves—as agents, victims, perpetrators, and bystanders—within systems both simple and complex, Fellows first learn to see power before considering its reallocation to lift up metrics of accountability, solidarity, and human flourishing.

Telling a new or newly-imagined story, picking up things that have been left behind, and being in community with the places the fellowship convenes, the William C. Friday Fellowship builds leadership qualities for an emergent 21st century North Carolina. Using story, object, and place to amplify their own leadership style and practices, Friday Fellows hear themselves and one another more clearly, ultimately experiencing and engaging the world anew. At the 25-year anniversary of the Friday Fellowship, this class will also step into a sustained conversation about the story the fellowship teaches and tells about itself. This story centers the problems and possibilities of both statehood and personhood and lifts up dynamic and conflicting interpretations of the community and the individual. Who counts? And why? And how do we

reclaim a collective sense of “we”? To answer these questions, the fellowship lifts up the wisdom of networks and communities both rooted in North Carolina and those not tethered to North American geographies or ideologies. Africana and indigenous frameworks counter received histories of individualism and exceptionalism with practices of interdependence and collective flourishing.

By Design: A Practice of Collaboration

To build a fellowship experience attuned to questions of interdependence, indigeneity, and equity, this fellowship design emerged in an intentional collaboration. Over a four-month period, Africana Studies scholar and inclusion consultant [JoJo Ledgister](#) and lead faculty Meredith Doster convened for structured conversation, intentional reflection, and rigorous scholarly engagement. Collaborating across the color line, Meredith and JoJo reviewed, workshopped, and innovated program components of this fellowship design. An intentional modeling of the collaborations that support our best learning and teaching, this relational approach grounds the fellowship design in both equity considerations and in applied practices of learning and leading together across lines of difference. All core and seminar-specific faculty will be invited into a similar collaborative practice that centers relationship and shared leadership.

Postures of Preparation, Practices of Presence

To honor the work of knowing themselves more fully as humans and leaders, Fellows practice being present together at each seminar experience and in structured engagements across the two-year period. Core practices of presence of the 2020–2022 William C. Friday Fellowship include:

- Listening Across the Membrane of Belief (Susan Harding)
- Asking Questions to Find One’s Way (JoJo Ledgister)
- Reading/Re-Reading/MisReading Self and Others (Vincent Wimbush)
- Respecting Sovereign Logic (Sayra Pinto)
- Pausing Righteously (Jaki Shelton Green)
- Making the Way by ... (Paulo Freire)
- Counting the Cost of the Question (Jonathan Z. Smith)
- Getting North Carolinians Together (William C. Friday)
- Making Pots, Forming Selves (M.C. Richards)
- Pacing Change (Heifetz/Linsky)

These postures and practices hone a quality of awareness and adaptability that amplify the leadership practices unique to each Fellow. The fellowship measures its success by Fellows’ commitments to their own leadership and learning. Taking new stories and sacred objects back to their home communities, Friday Fellows spread and share evolving and emergent visions of human flourishing.

Core Questions

As a dynamic and adaptive learning community, the 2020–2022 Class of William C. Friday Fellows will take up a series of interrelated questions that probe the fellowship’s assumptions, premises, and invitations. These questions—rooted in the fellowship’s name and namesake—serve as points of departure from which Fellows will step into their own learning and leading. Some questions will inform specific conversations and experiences. Others will shape and support the development of the fellowship’s arc and framing.

- What does it mean to be human? North Carolinian? In relationship?
- How do we reclaim a collective sense of “we”?
- How do relationships serve our learning and leadership?
- How do we build toward and root power-sharing in commitments to equity?
- Why does difference matter to our engagement – with one another? with other communities? across the state?
- What does radical encounter look like? What/whom does it serve?
- How can radical hospitality reframe our encounters and relationships?
- What does it mean to name something or to live into a particular legacy?
 - What does Bill Friday’s legacy offer in the way of example and precedent?
 - What and whom does it obscure or silence?
- What does it mean to center the state of North Carolina - as laboratory, as case study, as homeplace geography, as community?

Keywords and Core Values

As a fellowship community, the 2020–2022 Class of William C. Friday Fellows takes its place among ten other classes of Fellows who likewise grappled with the challenges and possibilities of building relationships across difference. The following keywords articulate core values of the 2020–2022 fellowship and serve as both foundational premise and opportunity for rich engagement as points of both similarity and difference.

People matter.

The William C. Friday Fellowship centers the work of relationship. Each Fellow is invited to share fully in the holding and maintaining of space for self and others. Practicing presence together and sharing in both structured dialogues and informal conversations, the Friday Fellowship nurtures and supports the flourishing of all people, including—but not limited to—those who journey as Fellows on behalf of communities across the state.

Place matters.

As a statewide fellowship, the places at which the fellowship convenes—and those Fellows call home—become active participants in shared experience and learning. Traveling together

across the state, each seminar weekend highlights particularities of place that contribute to North Carolina statehood and community. Imagined, disappeared, beloved, haunted, traumatized, and erased places are all core to the fellowship experience.

Presence matters.

The fellowship centers in-person conversations and convenings that invite those gathered to show up fully—to themselves and to one another. Being present is a core practice of the fellowship. Learning to notice their own presence and its impact in a room and relationship, Fellows expand as humans and as leaders.

Power matters.

The fellowship's relational approach requires heart-led analyses of power relations and dynamics. An understanding of how power works—on and through bodies and systems—undergirds the fellowship's design. The intentional collaborative design of this fellowship interrupts systems that privilege some voices, bodies, and lives over others. The fellowship invites the naming of inherited systems and stories that provide Fellows with different kinds of tools to navigate life and livelihood. As they learn together, Fellows will examine where and how they wield power in their individual lives and in communities. The cohort will consider its role in dismantling systems of oppression that perpetuate inequities across the state.

Positionality matters.

Seating Fellows across lines of difference, the Friday Fellowship takes context seriously. Fellows will consider the birthright inheritances that shape their voice, experience, and the place from which their truths speak. Fellows will also learn to listen for and engage stories and experiences of lifeworlds beyond their own.

Purpose matters.

The fellowship awakens Fellows to their own formation and its impact on their learning and leadership. Conscientization works on Fellows individually and collectively. While Fellows may not agree about the purpose or impact of their learning, consensus is not necessarily the desired outcome. Instead, the fellowship celebrates many and varied pathways to personal and collective flourishing.

Participation matters.

Participation is key to the fulfillment of the fellowship's promise and potential. When Fellows participate, differences emerge and learning deepens. With the cohort at the center of the design, each Fellow shapes a piece of the curriculum only she can offer. While participation is crucial, it does not necessarily imply vocal engagement. Deep listening and intentional stillness can signal participation as much as engaged conversation.

Pause matters.

As a program of Wildacres Retreat, the fellowship balances deep engagement with intentional rest and pause. Fellows come to the program from busy walks of life, and the fellowship provides tools and techniques to reclaim the sanctity of time and breath. Fellows will spend time in structured and unstructured silence.

Performance matters.

Authentic communication is at the heart of the fellowship experience. Building a community that recognizes and respects “real talk”, Fellows will consider where and how they step into patterned behavior and learned responses that can inhibit organic connection. Sometimes these patterned behaviors resemble performance. Fellows will consider the lines between participatory and performative acts. Each can yield—or foreclose—organic connection, communication, and relationship.

Pacing matters.

The two-year fellowship program requires time, energy, and presence. These resources are gifts that Fellows share with one another. The fellowship journey is more akin to a marathon than a sprint. Fellows will be invited to name and honor that which they can—and cannot—contribute over the arc of the fellowship. Fellows will be invited to continually assess where and how they are spending their time and energy, both within the structured fellowship program and in their lives.

Pandemic(s) matter(s).

The fellowship honors both the pain and possibility of emergence. The current pandemic, in its shape-shifting and border-crossing imperatives, invites reflection on the generative possibility of disruption and chaos. For some, the current pandemic is opening doors to pathways forgotten and futures unimagined. For others, the pandemic is causing disruptions that amplify long standing inequities. For others still, the pandemic is not yet real. The fellowship is rooted in commitments to emergence that invite Fellows to imagine boldly and to lean courageously into the unknown and unknowable. Amid collision and collapse, new worlds are being born.

Politics matters.

The political world creates and constrains our societies and cultures. For some, it is judge, jury, and executioner. For others, it is a sacred sector from which cities, counties, states, and nations are born. The fellowship invites deep relationship across lines of ideological difference. Beginning one month prior to the national election, the 2020–2022 fellowship class will consider the politics at the heart of many lived experiences. Faculty member Darin Waters will offer historical context across the fellowship experience to contextualize contemporary polarization and extremism in North Carolina and beyond.

Process matters.

Transparent and inclusive processes invite the fellowship network's participation in the journey of the fellowship class. Honoring the multi-layered and unfolding work of relationship, Fellows from previous classes make and hold space for one another and for the incoming cohort. Incorporating a new class into the network can take the form of formal mentoring relationships between incoming Fellows and those from previous classes, as well as organic relationship-building across all classes. The strength and impact of the fellowship—and the network—rests on the participation and contribution of each Fellow.

Poets matter.

The fellowship draws inspiration and creativity from poets and wordsmiths whose language invites new ways of seeing and believing. Sessions, conversations, convenings, and engagements often open and close with words that deepen complexity and invite pause. Fellowship readings intentionally balance a variety of genres, lifting up the voices of those whose words offer pathways to critical engagement and celebration alike.

Prophets matter.

The fellowship tackles the complex ways in which humans make and authorize meaning. Fellows are invited to listen for prophetic voices in likely and unlikely places. Intentionally troubling the sacred-secular divide, Fellows will listen to hear and trust their own prophetic voice as they listen to and learn from those who are already preaching their gospel truths.

Praxis matters.

The fellowship is a process and product, and also a group of people. A container and community, the fellowship invites Fellows to participate in an applied, practical learning collaborative. Each Fellow is invited to full participation in the fellowship's core values and practices. Taken together, the fellowship's values, keywords, practices, and teachings constitute a praxis of human relations.

Fellowship Texts

2020 Summer Reading

Books can be important conveyors of stories and journeys, of wisdom and tradition, and of facts and fictions alike. They can remind us of the familiar while opening the door to people, places, and things beyond our experience or imagination. The words of others can sometimes lift up truths we are not yet able to see or hear clearly on our own. Often, words challenge even as they uplift. When we take seriously a book's invitation to step into someone else's world, it

helps us to see more clearly the boundaries of our own believing and knowing. We read, then, for the expansion of our worlds, for pleasure, and for learning that turns us, page by page.

When we read with awareness, we honor the world-making capacity of words, including our own. In *MisReading America: Scriptures and Difference*, theologian Vincent Wimbrush describes reading as a practice of both resistance and liberation. Looking for the place from which a given text speaks—and recognizing the power differentials that amplify some voices and truths over others—transforms reading into a practice of conscientization. Reading with intention also invites humility. When we read with generosity, we can find our way to a fuller understanding of our own life and world. When we read between the lines, we hold space for new insights and welcome unimagined possibilities.

The following six summer reading books give voice to the lived experience of different North Carolina people and places.

Rob Amberg, [*The New Road: I-26 and the Footprints of Progress in Appalachia*](#)

William Barber w/ Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove, [*The Third Reconstruction: How a Moral Movement is Overcoming the Division of Politics and Fear*](#)

Jonathan C. Creasy, ed. [*Black Mountain Poems: An Anthology*](#)

Georgann Eubanks, [*The Month of their Ripening: North Carolina Heritage Foods through the Year*](#)

Martha Mason, [*Breath: A Lifetime in the Rhythm of an Iron Lung - A Memoir*](#)

Edgar Villanueva, [*Decolonizing Wealth: Indigenous Wisdom to Heal Divides and Restore Balance*](#)

Incoming Fellows are considering the following questions as they read.

What might a Madison County chronicler (Amberg) and modern-day prophet (Barber) with roots in Washington County share in common? What can we learn from a life lived in an iron lung (Mason) and North Carolina foodways that nourish and sustain (Eubanks)? How might poets from a disappeared place (Creasy, ed.) respond to the call to decolonize the way we conceptualize and spend our resources (Villanueva)?

Additional framing materials will be shared in late August, as Fellows prepare to convene.

Faculty Collaborations

The 2020–2022 Friday Fellowship will be convened by WLI deputy director and lead faculty Meredith Doster in conversation and collaboration with a group of core faculty and seminar-specific facilitators. Where possible, Friday Fellows will support programming and facilitation.

Core Faculty (Seminars 1–6)

Meredith Doster

[Darin Waters](#)

[JoJo Ledgister](#) (design)

Seminar-Specific Facilitators

Seminar One

[Jaki Shelton Green](#) (InGathering Ceremony)

[David LaMotte](#) (In Gathering Ceremony & Virtual Concert)

Seminar Themes and Modules

Each of the six seminars will share core components tailored to locations across the state and to the fellowship’s evolution across a two-year period. Core seminar weekend components are rooted in the fellowship’s theoretical framing, and include:

The Five Questions – *Inquiry-Driven Dialogue*

The fellowship experience will take place across structured and informal conversations designed for the full cohort, pairs, and regional groups. Each seminar weekend will include dialogues designed for particular places across the state and across the fellowship experience. Each seminar will center a guiding question derived from the *Fearless Dialogues: A New Movement for Justice* by Gregory C. Ellison II. The following five questions will move the Fellows from introductions through increasingly complex considerations of their lives, learning, and leadership. These questions will structure pre-seminar reflections, weekend-level programming, and support the long-arc of the fellowship.

Seminar One – *Who am I?*

Seminar Two – *Why am I here?*

Seminar Three – *What is my gift?*

Seminar Four – *How does it feel to be a problem?*

Seminar Five – *What must I do to die a good death?*

The Places that Make and Break Us – *Journeying Together*

Fellows will participate in curated travel experiences on their way to and/or from each seminar weekend. All travel experiences will be co-designed and facilitated by core faculty Darin Waters and lead faculty Meredith Doster. When possible, Friday Fellows across the state will be consulted and invited to participate in regional travel experiences. Each travel experience will include a travelogue debrief and dialogue with core faculty Darin Waters. Draft travel experiences and dialogues include

Seminar One – Travel Debrief: NC statehood, e.g. *North Carolina Stateline*

Seminar Two – Travel Debrief: NC histories, e.g. *Wilmington*

Seminar Three – Travel Debrief: NC stories, e.g. *Archival Collection*

Seminar Four – Travel Debrief: NC creativity, e.g. *Nina Simone homeplace*,

Seminar Five – Travel Debrief: NC systems, e.g. *Union Square, Raleigh*

Seminar Six – Travel Debrief: Before NC, eg. *Geduah Mound, Cherokee*

In addition to each seminar’s structured travel experience, Fellows will have access to a list of additional sites and travel locations across the state. Lead and core faculty are collaborating with WLI staff, board members, and the fellowship network on this expanded list. Between seminars, Fellows will be invited to engage sites and places listed—on their own, with their families, with their mentors, and with others in the cohort.

Object Lessons – *The Things of Leadership*

Each seminar weekend will open and close in altar-making, table-setting, and place-making featuring an object lesson and associated practice derived from *A History of Religions in 5 ½ Objects* (one chapter/object per seminar). Objects for each seminar include

Seminar One – *Interview Object and Introduction*

Seminar Two – *Stones*

Seminar Three – *Incense*

Seminar Four – *Drums*

Seminar Five – *Cross*

Seminar Six – *Bread*

People, Place, Power – *Place-Based Pedagogy*

Each seminar weekend will center the places at which the fellowship convenes. These places include indigenous lands, state counties and regions, retreat centers, and other locations that invite reflections on important distinctions between map and territory, and between place and its many representations. The fellowship design will take full advantage of the plans to host Seminars One, Four, and Six at the fellowship’s commissioning retreat center in McDowell County. From the fellowship’s home base at Wildacres Retreat, the class will participate in a three-part, place-based dialogue structured to deepen Fellows’ experience of home-places that

are also sites of conscience and violence.

Seminar One – “Retreating: Borrowed Time, Stolen Land” (deferred)

Seminar Four – “Returning to Place”

Seminar Six – “From the Mountain to the Mound”

William C. Friday Interview Series – *North Carolina People*

To engage the legacy of the fellowship’s namesake, each seminar weekend will feature a participatory interview experience that honors Bill Friday’s long standing UNC-TV program “North Carolina People.” Designed and directed by core faculty Darin Waters, this interview module will both model and teach a variety of interview skills that will hone Fellows’ capacities to ask generative questions and to sustain meaningful dialogue. Interview subjects will include the 2020–2022 cohort, Friday Fellows from across the state, as well as others whose lives and leadership can offer learning to the fellowship class.

Making Pots, Fashioning Selves – *Maker Space*

This creative maker-space module accompanies the fellowship’s emphasis on the stories and objects with which humans and leaders forge connections, build resilience, and enact change. At each seminar weekend, the Fellows will work both literally and figuratively with a piece of pottery that represents the fellowship journey itself. Fellows will make, hold, fill, empty, swap, break, and ultimately mend pinch pots. A vessel representative of each Fellow, these pinch pots will parallel the molding and fashioning of the fellowship journey.

Seminar One – *Make Pinch Pots*

Seminar Two – *Bring Pot “Full” to Empty*

Seminar Three – *Bring Pot “Empty” to Fill*

Seminar Four – *Break Pot*

Seminar Five – *Honor Brokenness*

Seminar Six – *Mend Pot*

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