

# MAGNOLIAS IN MOTION



MAGNOLIA MOONSHOT  
2030

[www.mm2030.org](http://www.mm2030.org)

## THE SHADOW AND THE SUN OF THE MAGNOLIA

In April of 2019, the first group of founding women advisors met in Wheaton, Illinois for 2 days to begin sensing into what we could bring into being by focusing on women, leadership, climate, spirituality, and the United Nations SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals). By the end of our time together, we had birthed Magnolia Moonshot 2030.

We chose this symbol for its significance in the natural world: love and joy, pollinating, strength, beauty, femininity and the connected nature of women, perseverance and endurance (the magnolia tree is estimated to be 95 million years old), and gentleness. And we were off on our journey together! In 2020 when the world witnessed, yet again, the prevalence of racism, white privilege and power in the murder of George Floyd, we began to explore the shadow history of the magnolia tree. The NAACP has reported there were 4,743 lynchings (reported) between 1882 and 1968 in the United States. Of these, well over 70% of the victims were black and the vast majority occurred in the South. Thus, the magnolia tree also symbolizes death, despair, and the dehumanization of the black body.

One of our fearless Magnolias, Tanya Davis shared with us: “These types of conversations - between Black and White women - are not happening in many other places, maybe nowhere.” We have been building our community of trust, vulnerability, truth telling, love, curiosity and courage - to transcend our own either/or thinking and to explore what is possible when we embrace all perspectives and realities.

So, we had a conversation.



**“I believe that you can create a world ‘where none is lonely, none hunted, none alien.’ I believe you can create a world where all people have community and safety. Where we can all belong and be known.” – Elizabeth Alexander, Poet**

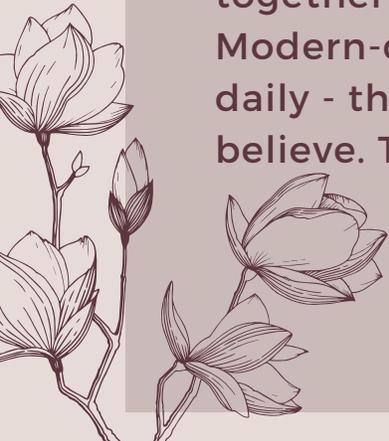
We gathered on this day, remembering our shared commitment to the beauty of nature and the potential for women to make an impact in our world. In this conversation about the symbolism of the magnolia tree, we set forth with our mission in mind, to reconnect to what has been disconnected within ourselves. We know that in our world this shows up as socio-economic injustices, climate change, and fracturing of our connection to self.



Our visioning retreats together created a basis of trust from which we stepped into the deep end, experimenting with how to manifest love, truth, and an energy of dialogue and listening. After all, our group had bent, swayed, and endured through the storms of Trump, George Floyd, a pandemic, and countless tragedies. Diverse in our identities - African American, Jewish, Indian, lesbian, white, US, Canadian, Albanian - we all sat under the symbolic shade of our namesake, the Magnolia Tree, looking through its branches to the sun above.

The call to authenticity kept beckoning, and on this day the question emerged, the question that could not remain silent any longer. "Does everyone know the historical meaning of the Magnolia tree?" Beyond the positive associations we had explored - strength, connectedness, resilience, beauty - was also the painful truth of lynchings on magnolia trees. The song "Strange Fruit," written by Abel Meeropol, a Jewish schoolteacher from New York and made famous by Billie Holiday echoes through time to remind us:

"Pastoral scene of the gallant South  
The bulgin' eyes and the twisted mouth  
Scent of magnolias sweet and fresh  
Then the sudden smell of burnin' flesh"



The very symbol of the magnolia tree that brought us together now challenged us to a deeper level of reckoning. Modern-day lynchings like George Floyd continue - almost daily - the history not quite as distant as some would like to believe. The history is still unfolding now.



Dialogue and listening begin to unravel our politeness and soften our guard as our voices emerge, sometimes shaking:

“Am I the angry black woman again?”

“I don’t always feel safe speaking up because I don’t want you to say ‘oh, here she goes again.’”

“We’re sick of doing the work, it’s your turn white women, it’s your work to do. YOU are the ones who have the power and can change the system. You need to do the work so you are available to help us.”

“56% of white women voted for Trump. We have work to do.”

“I need to have my feet in the grittiness of the dirt. It is time to recognize our interconnected history and its lasting impacts. Only then can we look to the future together.”

“I am always living in the gritty as a Black woman, so I need the guiding light of love to keep me going. I stay glued to the news – it might be one of my friends, it might be one of my relatives.”

“How do we get around the madness of systemic racism? Look at our art and our music and understand our strength.”

We sit together in the tension of looking toward brighter futures while seeing our shared and devastating past and present. We sit together under the symbolic magnolia tree, crying, shaking our head, smiling, hoping. We know we can look at the shadow with the eyes of the light; this is the only way we are going to change. We sit together and look through the leaves and branches to the sky. We are Magnolias, strong, enduring, beautiful.





This is the calling of the Magnolias. Let this community of women be a place to sit together, to grieve, rage, despair, honor, witness, connect, dialogue, listen, and ultimately to create a new way of being together. We believe the past lives in us and that if we leave no one behind, our shared awareness can move us to new futures.



Women of all identities, we need your voices. The magnolia is magnificent enough to hold all of us: wealthy and poor, Black and white, young and old, Jewish and Christian, LGBTQ+ and not, and most importantly, all of us in between. Come to be nourished. Come to fuel. Come to challenge. Come together. We need all of our experiences and perspectives so we can see our what is not yet visible to us, to have a chance to wake up and choose our future.

In the spirit of leaving no one behind, we welcome your voice.

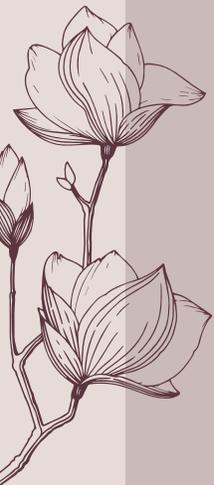
~ The Magnolias

“Black leaders are indebted to Harriet Tubman who embodied the notion of reclaiming the symbolism of trees and the woods as tools of freedom in the black tradition.”





-In our June newsletter we will feature our conversation with Jasmine Sanders, CEO of Our Climate, doing amazing work in passing state-level policies, and thus federal action, investing in and supporting youth leaders, and growing and diversifying youth led climate action!



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