

# The Healers Project Decolonizing Knowledge Within Afro-Indigenous Traditions

## Clip of Interview Joe Scott, Cultural Fire and Food Sovereignty (Transcript)

Recorded by Dr. Ana-Maurine Lara and Dr. Alai Reyes-Santos

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Well that's--so it's always, you know, the fire that's in us all is as old as the universe. Do you know what I mean? Like it's the thing that keeps our cells, you know, our molecules vibrating. That was, you know my father taught me that. He's like, "we're

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all descendants of the sun." You know? "We all come from that energy, that heat, those vibrating molecules and atoms. And we're bioelectric

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organisms." You know that was my dad. He could draw me a picture of it. He was a scientist, right? In the very Western tradition. So there's just always been fire, you know?

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My father was an explosives expert. There's just always been. He used to encourage me, I was thinking back on this, he used to encourage me to build fires.

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He was like, “you need to know how to do fire.” You know? Just get off air in a gravel bar, whatever, go build a fire. And then like that was the thing I always wanted to do when I was in scouts. So I mean it was always there.

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You know I did raku pottery when I was younger, which is very, like it’s about fire. I mean hands on, face in, explosions,

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flames, smoke. It’s beautiful. It’s the most beautiful symphony of heat and it’s just wonderful. And so I think it’s just always been there.

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And then when I first had an opportunity to visit the Andrew Reasoner Preserve and then was basically advised that this is, like this is 400 acres

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of space for exploring traditional ecology. And you just can. You know? The first thing I did was get my flamethrower out and just burned off

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a section of that upper meadow. And Katie actually took a picture of it and I still have that picture. I love it ‘cause that’s like the first time I was able to like really put that knowledge,

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that thing that was in me, on the ground. Like literally right there. And from there, you know I was supported by a lot of people too. Katie specifically just was

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tapped into this network of wonderful people, tribal and non-tribal people, who were very focused on supporting the reestablishment, continuation, celebration of cultural fire. And so

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I just, that was, talk about following your hands. Like that was the thing. It's the thing that ties it all together because it's not just in us, you know? It's in everything. And it's just such a universal,

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and it's the thing that you see, you know? It's the thing that I think people react to the most out of the elements, you know what I mean? Like if you're gonna talk about it on an

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elemental level, like people's reaction to the earth and people's reaction to water and to the air is sort of in this category, and then their response to fire is in a completely different

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category. And that was like clearly this was my trajectory. And so when I started seeing the connections between this element and the foods that sustain us,

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the ecology that makes all living things possible, and just the role that fire has always played in that dynamic, I knew that that was a place I needed to go if I were going to truly and really

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work toward establishing first foods as a food sovereignty issue, as something to sustain, enhance the health and wellbeing of tribal communities. You know? Put a pound of

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acorn flour in people's pantries, right? To do that properly, you're gonna need to understand fire. You know? Because acorns are a fire-adapted plant, oak trees you know? So many of our first foods--

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it would be hard for me to think of some, very many at all, that don't, in one way or another, require fire. And that's everything from tending with fire

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to using fire as part of ceremony. You know? All of them. Fire to cook it, you know? There's fire in there somewhere. So finding out the places where that make sense, you know

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just spending time looking at a place and picturing how the moving pieces all fit together to make these beautiful things like acorns, you know? Like all of these beautiful things that come together to make

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a camas meadow. You know? This force of destruction in people's minds that is actually just a force of renewal and a force of, you know, collaboration. It's like

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the thing that connects us to all of these foods. It's the direct line.

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