

(Trailmaster Program, cont. from page 2)

new location. We originally launched the Trailmaster Program in 2003 with such a ride in Palo Duro Canyon, TX, for a meeting concerning an Indigenous Science film. The results were very positive and while we were unable to put the program into effect in Sowbelly, we are very excited to offer it not only to meeting participants but to individuals who are willing to make a weekly-commitment to it.



### The Plight of the Mustang: the Mustang Freedom Project

As many of you know, we are deeply committed to the Mustang horse, both wild and gentled. We were first drawn to Mustangs because of their connection to the land. They are one of the few remaining breeds that are bred by nature, without humans having any voice in characteristics of the breed (there are now domestically-bred Mustangs, but they are showing characteristics not typical of the wild Mustang). After getting to know Mustangs, we realized how intelligent and calm they are; how hardy they are; and how much they love being around humans and working with them.

When we were at Sowbelly Ranch, we launched the Mustang Freedom Project. It allowed older Mustangs and those who had been to adoption 3 times and had not been adopted to roam free on 100 acres. It was not a sanctuary, however. We were hoping to have workshop and meeting participants interact with the Mustangs, on the Mustangs' terms, and then assess how that interaction influenced the meeting and/or workshop, and individual. It had been our hope to expand the program from the three initial horses that we were able to buy thanks to a grant from Pierce Brosnan. Our relocation to New Mexico meant we had to halt the program, and we thought that was a permanent end to it.

We have reached the point where we feel we can relaunch the Mustang Freedom Project. We are beginning the process of finding enough land in northern New Mexico so that we can have several small herds of wild Mustangs – there is even the possibility of the purchase of land adjoining our new facility near Santa Fe, NM. In addition, we will be blogging about the plight of Mustangs on our blog, The Voice of the Horse. For example, the Bureau of Land Management has just announced a roundup planned for this fall of almost one-quarter of the wild Mustangs who roam freely in Wyoming. This announcement follows on the heels of documents recently released under a Freedom of Information Act request that strongly support the belief that the BLM  
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cultures were extinguished (fig.11). Greed for land and resources, brutally efficient weaponry with the sense of power born of it, and the tantalizing possibility of "might makes right"—these human factors undergirded the conquest of "new worlds." Would it be unreasonable to suppose that these same human factors sealed the fate of indigenous peoples whose lands adjoined the Fertile Crescent and the civilization it cradled (fig.12)?

This line of thought led to disturbing questions often debated among academics—but for me, these questions have become personal. What is progress? Does it really exist? Why is change a good thing, if an existing situation is good already (fig.13)? Is it possible that unlovely traits like greed, abusive power, and fear have always been the most common motive forces in human change?

Now that the Western world is beginning to perceive the number and variety of plagues spawned in its long shadow, some people have begun to look with yearning and regret at Earth's remaining Indigenous peoples. Unfortunately, when we look we tend to see through the lenses of our own worldview, darkly. We do not see these fellow-humans as people who belong to themselves, with their own lives and concerns, but as solutions to *our* problems, romanticized projections of *our* notions of a paradisaic age. Our long habit of objectifying those unlike ourselves refuses to die.

Perhaps wisdom remains for the healing of the Earth. Perhaps sustainability is something we can learn. Perhaps if we ask with respect, elders may share their wisdom. But first we of Western culture need to look to our own house, and try to halt the toxic juggernaut of progress that may yet destroy us all.



Fig.3. Mother-Goddess giving birth enthroned between 2 leopards, baked clay, 6000 BCE, Catalhoyuk, Anatolia. Photo credit: Roweromaniak, Wikimedia Commons.

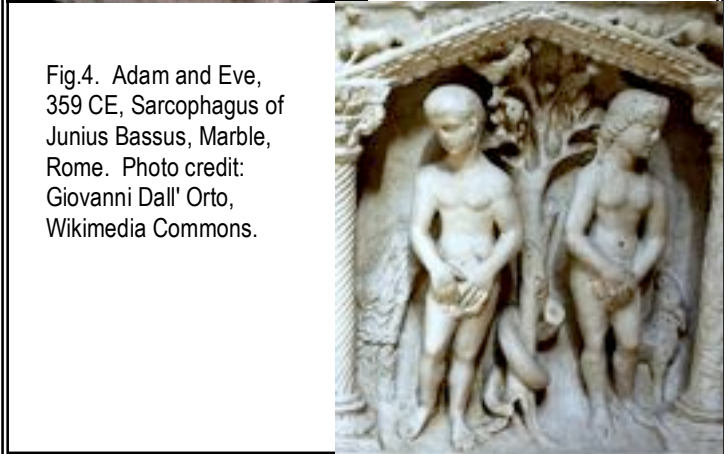


Fig.4. Adam and Eve, 359 CE, Sarcophagus of Junius Bassus, Marble, Rome. Photo credit: Giovanni Dall'Orto, Wikimedia Commons.