

NATURE AND HEALTH

EMERGING KNOWLEDGE INFORMS NEW POLICY DIRECTIONS

NOOSHIN RAZANI, MD, MPH, GUEST EDITOR

Growing Upward

• music video by Rupa and the April Fishes | videography by Zen Cohen

Rupa Marya, MD
www.theaprilfishes.com



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sBoAFXAIvtQ>

Artist's statement

I wrote this song from the perspective of a dandelion seed germinating under asphalt as I consider how our imaginations have been curtailed by colonial systems, where nature and society were separated by false notions that have created ongoing violence towards animals, the water, Indigenous people, and the other entities we share this planet with. I explore in this song my own indigeneity, the part of myself that extends back to a time before systems of supremacy posited that I, as a human, was somehow more worthy than a plant or a microbe. In my work as a physician, mother, healer, artist, I seek to dismantle that delusion, to reimagine life where we are

situated back in a web of healthy relations, the web that has been damaged and continues to be damaged by the mindset that brought colonialism and all its harmful structures. We are not separate from nature. We are her.

Rupa Marya is an associate professor of Medicine at the University of California, San Francisco in the Division of Hospital Medicine with a focus on Social Medicine. She is a co-founder of the Do No Harm Coalition, a group of healthcare workers committed to changing social structures that make health impossible for different groups of people. Through her work with the coalition, she has worked on the health impacts of police violence specifically and the health legacies of colonialism globally.

Rupa's work in social advocacy in health has earned her trust from the Indigenous communities where she lives, in Ohlone territory, and in places where she has served, such as Lakota territory. In 2016, she was invited to Standing Rock to assist with medical response to increasing state violence towards Indigenous people protecting their sovereign land in the face of the Dakota Access Pipeline. Through her investigations, she has been developing an understanding of the greatest health challenges we face, including climate change, as a consequence of colonialism and the interruption of traditional ways of caring. At the invitation of Lakota elders, she is helping to develop a clinic to decolonize food and medicine in Lakota territory to serve the Indigenous communities, the Mni Wiconi Health Clinic and Farm.

Rupa advocates deeply for creating a culture of care as the most effective way to manifest impactful change in population health. She believes the interruption of ways of caring through colonial structures disproportionately causes the suffering of Black, brown, and Indigenous people around the world. Through changing those colonial structures and through reasserting the primacy of our relationships to the earth, to our foods, and to one another, holistic health for all becomes achievable. In partnership with agroecological farmer Benjamin Fahrer, Rupa is studying how farming practices directly impact human health through the connections between the respective microbiota of the gut and soil.

Currently Rupa is writing a book making a case for a global culture of care with writer, economist, and food systems activist Raj Patel, entitled *Inflamed: Deep Medicine and the Anatomy of Injustice*. The book will be released by Farrar, Straus & Giroux and Penguin Press in August 2021. In addition to her work in medicine and writing, Rupa is also the composer and front-woman for Rupa and the April Fishes, a polyglot band who has traveled to over 29 countries sharing musical soundscapes of building an alternative world that is beautiful, inspiring, deep, and empowering. She attributes her views on wellness as the direct outcome of playing music professionally for over 20 years, traveling with her band to witness the impact of social structures on wellness and suffering. Legend Gil Scott Heron described her sound: "This is Liberation Music."



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