

Opening Forgotten Sanctuaries: Recognizing Education as Sacred Encounter (Emergence Series)

Clay Lerner



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Opening Forgotten Sanctuaries is ostensibly a book about education, but that subject is only the thematic content of a deeper offering. Woven throughout the book is an invitation to recognize the essence of our humanness in our Belonging to Earth. On the surface, it may appear that the author is calling for yet another educational reform process, but he is really offering an understanding of how, in the cross-generational dynamics of education, we intimately touch the essential humanness of our children. Historically, that touch has not been a reverent one.

We have seldom paused to consider the holy ground of child-presence before assuming that we know how to introduce these sacred beings into a healthy life journey. We have rushed in to control and to develop a product, and we have done this in all kinds of schools—public, private, and parochial. We have argued over how this shall be done, what are the best methods and organizational arrangements. And we have frequently disagreed over what the product should look like—model citizen, accomplished intellect, or embodiment of religious rectitude. But hardly ever have we questioned the *nature* of this cross-generational process—the intentionally controlled development of a human-looking product.

The result has been, from all branches of schooling, the perpetuation of human control of whatever we want to manage, including the Natural World. But what if the human relationship to the Natural World is the very essence of the sacred? Then the education of our young would have to be a sacred process. We would have to touch the essential humanness of our children very differently than we do now. What might that transformed engagement look like? What understandings must we come to, what opening of our own forgotten sanctuaries, if we are to step onto that holy ground from where we are now?

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