

Claiborne Ashby

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Good morning and happy Sunday,

This month I'm revisiting a blog post I published last year but didn't share. I want to discuss it now because as time goes by, it seems more and more important.

A couple of years ago I heard that the Native American Iroquois tribe had a democratic system of government called The Great Law of Peace. I had to know more, so I found the book, *Kayanerenko:wa: The Great Law of Peace*, and spent a number of full weekends reading all 431 pages. It was so inspiring I didn't want to put it down.

The Iroquois formed a democracy on this continent in the 1100s — it was delivered to them by a prophet. They practiced The Great Law for *centuries* before our American democracy was created. As I write, their government influenced the writing of our constitution, but ours is only a pale version of theirs.

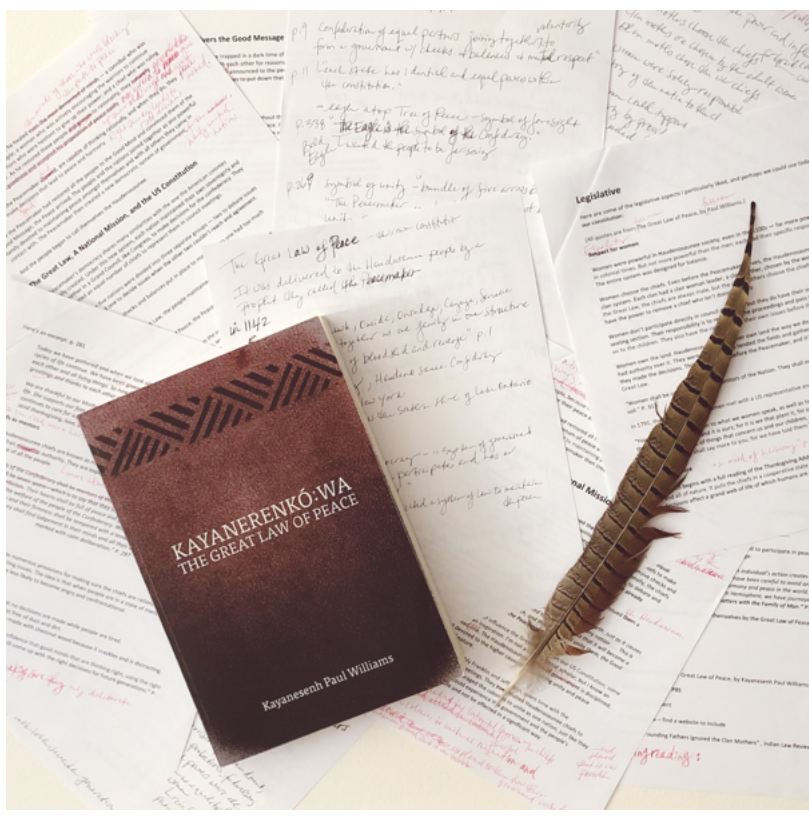
Their society was far more evolved.

“The [Iroquois] democracy is disciplined, thoughtful, respectful, and devoted to the higher cause of maintaining unity and peace amongst all people, and with all of nature.”

I see this as direct evidence that it is possible to have a society dedicated to higher principles. That equality for all people is a normal condition. That freedom is our natural state. That a “government of the people, by the people, and for the people” can exist and thrive for centuries if the people will it.

The Iroquois dedicated themselves to treating each other, and all strangers they encountered, as one family. They practiced respect, mutual aid, and generosity. The people lived with a sense of peace and freedom we can barely imagine.

And instead of learning from them, we called them savages and took their land.



Keep scrolling for the blog post.

See you back here next month.

xo,
Clay

On the Blog

The Great Law of Peace



Some say Jamestown VA is the birthplace of American democracy; others say it's Philadelphia PA. But in truth, it isn't either of those places — the Native Americans formed a fully functioning democracy in the area of NY centuries before a single colonist arrived.

Their government influenced our government.

So said the US Congress in a concurrent resolution in 1988:

“ . . . the confederation of the original Thirteen Colonies into one republic was influenced by the political system developed by the Iroquois Confederacy as were many of the democratic principles which were incorporated into the Constitution itself ”

The Great Law of Peace is the constitution of the five nations of the Iroquois Confederacy — Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga, and Seneca; it's part narrative and part legislative.

READ THE REST ON THE BLOG

Links & Notes

~ **The patriarchy:** Someone on my IG feed wrote that what we're witnessing right now is the “extinction gasp” of the patriarchy. It's a system that has been in control for thousands of years, and it's dying, but it wants desperately to stay alive. This idea stuck with me — that the extreme nature of the chaos happening in the world is something that will eventually die out.

I'm holding onto that and it makes me feel better.

If you want to know more about the patriarchy, I wrote about the two books that best explained it to me [here](#) and [here](#).

~ **Embroidered bags:** I'm in love with [these bags](#). I know, they ship from the UK, but I still want all of them. Especially [this one](#) and [this one](#).

~ **Artist inspiration:** I recently discovered the American painter, Charles Burchfield, and I'm so into his watercolors, like [Wind-Blown Asters](#) and [Sunlight Pouring Down](#).

In the Studio

Coming soon . . .



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