

JOURNEY TO THE BELOVED COMMUNITY

Story Quilts by Beth Mount



We are all tied together in the single garment of destiny, caught in an inescapable network of mutuality.

Martin Luther King, Jr.

Artist Statement By Beth Mount

The **JOURNEY TO THE BELOVED COMMUNITY** story quilts express a vision of a world woven together with this common thread: that all of us count and each of us can help create aspects of a beloved community.

My life work of five decades is devoted to the possibility that all people, particularly those with disabilities, are seen in the light of their capacities and potential. My community works steadily on many aspects of personal, neighborhood, organizational, and cultural change so that the hopes expressed by people and their allies have some concrete impact on the structures of society.

I stitch together symbols and patterns of the longings, joys, struggles, and beauty of thousands of people who are learning together ...how to bring the gifts of every person to life and to create a more inclusive community by doing so. This work has affirmed in me the belief that all people have gifts to bring, and that the fabric of community is strengthened when we incorporate the capacities of "labeled people" into the civic life of all.

The story quilts serve as metaphor and example of the weaving together of the colorful interests of many into tapestries of shared concern. Consequently, the quilts display vibrant collections of diversity-- fabrics, patterns, and identities-- —from people of many cultures finding a way toward an aesthetic that expresses harmony, balance, rhythm, vitality, beauty, and joy in the process of creation.



The method of making these quilts engages people in a joyful common experience of co-creating to share and strengthen vision and create platforms for change. The experience of making artworks with thousands confirms for me the potential of each individual to be a fundamentally creative being.

This Art Spirit is described beautifully by Richard Kamler, "Art is our one true global language. It knows no nation. It favors no race. It acknowledges no class. It speaks to our need to heal, reveal and transform. It transcends our ordinary lives and lets us imagine what is possible. It creates a dialogue between individuals, and communication between communities. It allows us to see and to listen to each other."

Everyone is an artist when involved in the construction of ones world. The creativity, imagination, and contributions of all people are needed to revitalize and restore community.



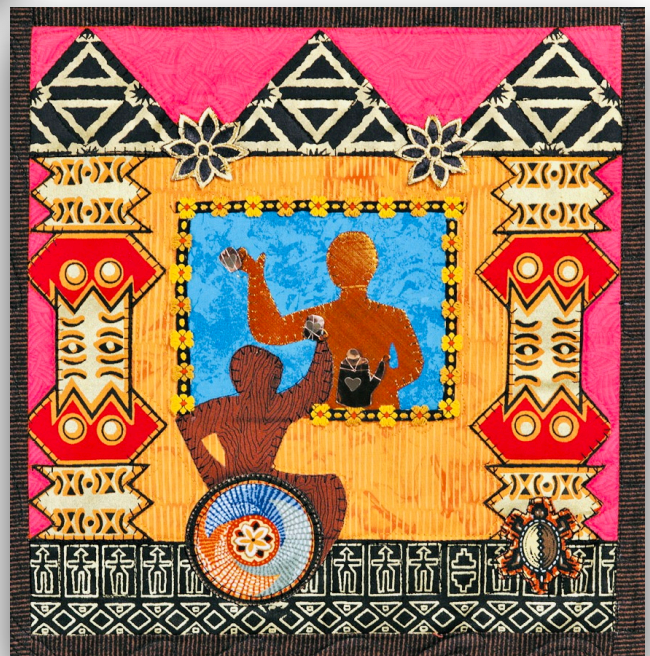
Growing up in Atlanta during the 1960's civil rights movement I was influenced by Martin Luther King, Jr. calling us to remember that "we are all tied together in the single garment of destiny, caught in an inescapable network of mutuality."

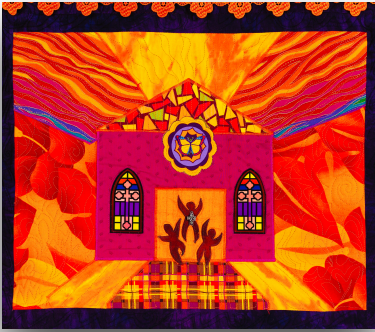
Dr. King's Beloved Community is a global vision, in which all people can share in the wealth of the earth. Racism and all forms of discrimination, bigotry and prejudice will be replaced by an all-inclusive spirit of sisterhood and brotherhood.

Legal and civil rights create the foundation for equal opportunity. However, the vision of the beloved community invites personal and social relationships created by love—and these cannot be legislated. Dr. King describes this *agape* love as an "overflowing love seeking to preserve and create community." Undoubtedly, the people I know benefit from and contribute to this art of relationship building.

The beloved community is not a utopia, but a place where the barriers between people gradually come down and where the citizens make a constant effort to address even the most difficult problems of ordinary people. It is above all else an idealistic community.

*Reverend Jim Lawson
Waddie Welcome and
the Beloved Community*





Working with people from 800 cultures in New York City, the most linguistically diverse city in the world, confirms my understanding of ways that Dr. King's vision touches the hopes and dreams of all people. At their core, Christianity, Islam, Judaism, and all of the major world religions are committed to justice, compassion, and hospitality...to the vision that....["the moral arc of the universe bends toward justice."](#) Every human being is essentially oriented to this just sense of order in the universe. It is up to each of us to create a world together that supports this alignment. Each quilt represents pieces of this promise, memories of the effort made.

I am deeply inspired by the world-wide community of quilters who cultivate beauty, form, and wisdom from discarded and jumbled fragments of cloth. Learn from the women of Gees Bend who transformed the scraps and rags of their lives into astonishing artworks. Study Faith Ringgold's provocative and imaginative story quilts that speak truth to power. Appreciate the work of Dindga McCannon, my art quilt mentor, who creates an endless flow of wisdom making artifacts. It is breathtaking to see these bodies of work made visible and coming onto world stages in these past few decades.

I am deeply inspired by the often unseen world of disability activists and allies who are weaving communities filled with wild possibilities, beautiful relationships, and creative supports. Get to know the unseen visionary artists who find endless ways to fashion something out of nothing, who wake us with the integrity and joy that spring forth from shadows into light filled form.

May these story quilts touch that spark in each of us that longs for the Beloved Community....a world that works for everyone...where every life is treasured and our time together is filled with meaning and beauty.



I can hardly imagine living without hope. As for the future of the world, there is a colorful spectrum of possibilities, from the worst to the best. What will happen, I do not know. Hope forces me to believe that those better alternatives will prevail, and above all it forces me to do something to make them happen.

Vaclav Havel,, Living in Truth



About Beth Mount, Ph.D.

Beth Mount has worked for five decades toward the ideal that every person with a disability can be a valued member of community life. She has practiced the art of person-centered planning with thousands of people with disabilities and their families from every walk of life and from every corner of the world. Her groundbreaking work related to Personal Futures Planning promotes the positive futures and images of people with disabilities throughout the globe, and demonstrates that all of us count and all of us fit somewhere. She has received excellence and service awards from virtually every prominent national and New York State disability organization.

In addition to her social activism, Beth creates art that complements and defines her style of cross cultural and multi-literate communication. She has developed a unique style of fiber art that is both imaginatively graphic and multi-dimensional in detail and meaning. She works with archetypal symbols of transformation, cross cultural fibers and images, and brilliant colors that radiate one grand feeling and gesture of creative expression. She is well known in the disability world for her "Spirit Keeper" story quilts which help people communicate the spirit and beauty of personal, organizational, and social change.



Beth collaborates with Arawana Hayashi, senior faculty of the Presencing Institute, to bring Social Presencing Theater and other social arts into organizational change initiatives. Awareness based design is at the heart of collective creation and action.

Beth has helped establish several art studios for people with disabilities; Pure Vision in Chelsea New York, and LAND in Brooklyn, which promote the art careers of visionary artists though out the world. Beth is mentor, advisor, and patron of many artists who are creating outside of the lines....