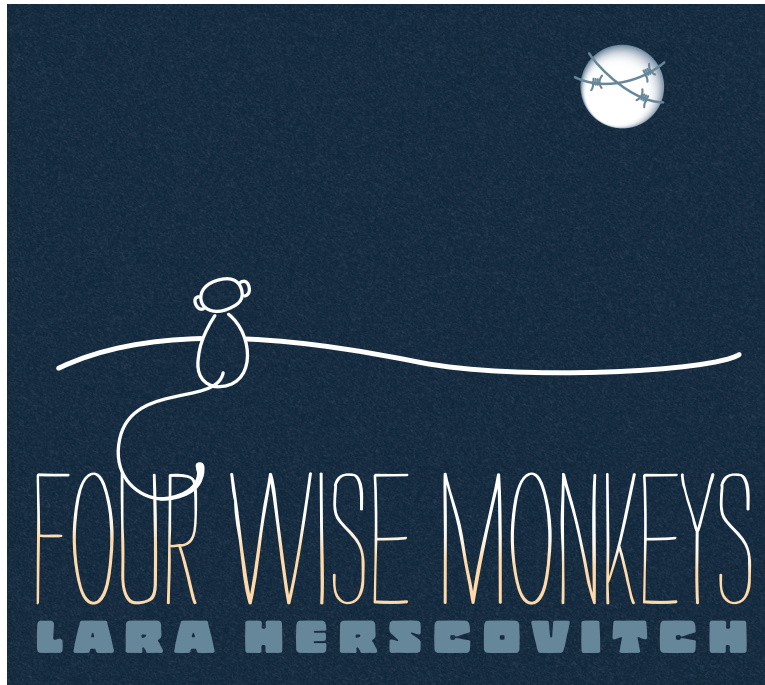


**"DON'T BOTHER JUST  
TO BE BETTER THAN  
YOUR CONTEMPORARIES  
OR PREDECESSORS.  
TRY TO BE BETTER  
THAN YOURSELF."**

—WILLIAM FAULKNER



**"REACH DOWN REALLY  
DEEP WITHIN AND  
PULL OUT STUFF YOU  
NEVER KNEW YOU HAD,  
STRENGTH YOU NEVER  
BOTHERED TO FIND  
BEFORE."**

—STEVE VAI

**THE MEANING OF THE PROVERBIAL THREE WISE MONKEYS IS DEBATED. WHEN THEY SEE NO EVIL, HEAR NO EVIL, AND SPEAK NO EVIL, SOME BELIEVE THEY ARE STOPPING EVIL; OTHERS BELIEVE THEY ARE PERPETUATING IT. THEIR INTENTION HERE IS CLEAR: TAKE A STAND. MAKE A CHOICE. PICK A SIDE.**

**THESE SONGS ARE ABOUT FACING ADVERSITY AND TRANSFORMATION—PERSONAL, SOCIAL, POLITICAL. MANY SPEAK TO ONE OF OUR BIGGEST CIVIL RIGHTS CHALLENGES: THE U.S. HAS ONLY 5% OF THE WORLD'S POPULATION, AND A STAGGERING 25% OF ITS PRISONERS. MY HOPE IS THAT WE EACH JOIN THE FOURTH MONKEY AND DO SOMETHING TO CREATE A BETTER WORLD. THE WORLD NEEDS US, AND WE NEED EACH OTHER. BUT FOR THE GRACE.**

**THANK YOU, EVERYONE WHO HAD A PART. IT IS AN HONOR TO WALK ALONGSIDE.**

—LARA

**"WE MUST MOVE PAST INDECISION TO ACTION... NOW LET US BEGIN. NOW LET US RE-DEDICATE OURSELVES TO THE LONG AND BITTER, BUT BEAUTIFUL, STRUGGLE FOR A NEW WORLD."**

—REV. DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.

- |                                      |                                      |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| <b>1. LET US BEGIN (3:55)</b>        | <b>6. YOU ARE BEAUTIFUL (3:30)</b>   |
| <b>2. BUT FOR THE GRACE (3:48)</b>   | <b>7. A CIRCLE DRAWN (4:06)</b>      |
| <b>3. MISSISSIPPI LULLABY (2:37)</b> | <b>8. FOLSOM PRISON BLUES (3:40)</b> |
| <b>4. TIME (4:00)</b>                | <b>9. FROM A BRIDGE (3:53)</b>       |
| <b>5. BETTER LEFT UNREAD (3:33)</b>  | <b>10. FOUR WISE MONKEYS (3:36)</b>  |

**PRODUCED BY JOHN JENNINGS**

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## 1. LET US BEGIN

(chorus)

Never give up  
Never give in  
Never give up  
Let us begin

Let us stop trying  
Let us do  
Let us find inspiration  
To believe the truth

Let's turn our attention  
What it means to be free  
Take one step then another then another  
'Til we reach eventually

(chorus)

*The concept behind this song was inspired by Dr. King's "Beyond Vietnam" speech; Steve Vai added finding strength deep within; and William Faulkner the idea of being better than oneself (see the three quotes above). We have the tools we need – forged long ago, including on the underground railroad and in safe houses where people took care of each other and fought for justice. "This history" is about remembering that we (each of us and all of us) shape tomorrow by whether and how we act today.*

Let us find strength  
From the old railroad  
Deep underground and deep within  
Let us begin

Let us find shelter  
In each others' grace  
The wheels are still turning  
The house is still safe

Let me aspire  
In this history  
Not to be better than you  
But to be better than me

(chorus)

## 2. BUT FOR THE GRACE

Lost in the labyrinth of quicksand and keys  
Making millions ... into refugees  
Labyrinth of quicksand and keys  
Land of opportunity  
1 in 100 can't get free  
Supervising 1 in 30  
How much longer 'til it's you and me

(chorus)

But for the grace go I

Broken hearts, broken glass  
Forgotten on the wrong side of the tracks  
So many thin steel lines  
What's a disease, what's a crime  
Who stands on which side  
How big are the dollar signs  
Who's out of sight and mind  
Locked up and left behind

(chorus)

So many bodies behind revolving doors  
Addicted sick tired and poor  
Huddled yearning masses ignored  
Calling abolitionists  
If this is still the Civil War

Quicksand and keys  
Making millions ... into refugees  
Lady Liberty in custody  
How much longer 'til it's you and me  
Lost in the labyrinth of quicksand and keys  
Made into refugees systematically  
How much longer

(chorus)

*The U.S. faces a new civil rights crisis. One in 100 Americans is behind bars, a much larger ratio than any other country. One in 31 is under court supervision (probation, parole). We're arresting children in schools for things like temper tantrums and smoking. Most are people of color: black and brown – often not because they act differently than their white counterparts, but because our systems – education, law enforcement, mental health, and justice – treat them worse. Over criminalizing human behavior is bad public policy. It hurts individuals, families, communities and society. People should certainly be held accountable for their actions, but punishment should fit the crime, and some things shouldn't be crimes in the first place. I could go on... but you're better off hearing it from experts like Michelle Alexander (*The New Jim Crow*), Paul Butler (*Let's Get Free*), the Justice Policy Institute, Campaign for Youth Justice, National Juvenile Justice Network, W. Haywood Burns Institute, Center for Children's Law and Policy, Innocence Project, and many others. If you're in CT, you can ask those of us working at the Connecticut Juvenile Justice Alliance.*



### 3. MISSISSIPPI LULLABY

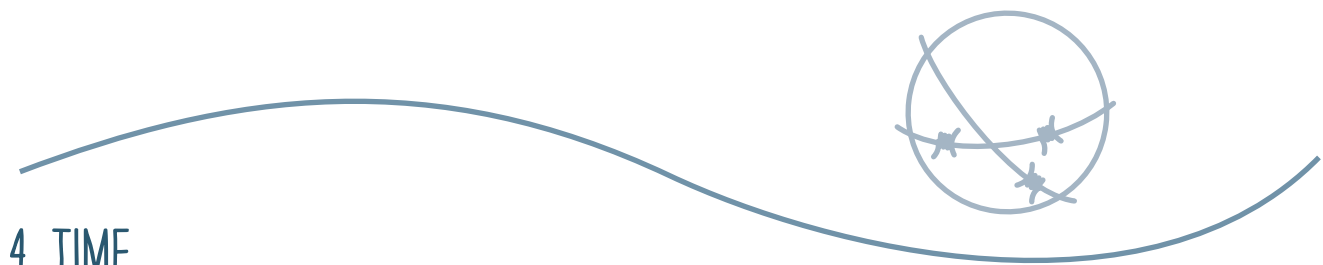
You won't see a stoplight, or a grocery store  
The kind of town that leaves you wanting more  
It might have to say goodbye  
No bottom to the bottom line  
Can't afford to sing a Mississippi lullaby

The mayor got an offer he could not refuse  
Now if you need work you get to choose  
Behind the walls inside, or at the uniform supply  
So you can sing a Mississippi lullaby

One part blessing, five parts disguise  
One part truth, five parts lies

It's a perfect factory for things no one needs  
But people here have mouths to feed  
Children doing time after time after time  
Get in line to sing a Mississippi lullaby  
We're all in line to sing a Mississippi lullaby

*Inspired by a NPR news investigation about the Walnut Grove Youth Correctional Facility in Mississippi (archive at NPR.org). The number of people in private prisons has increased by 353.7% over the past 15 years. "The Grove" is one example of the inherent conflict between profits and rehabilitation. Staffing is kept at a minimum, often well below recommended standards; things like education, substance abuse and mental health treatment are cut. Private prison company lobbyists influence legislators, resulting in harsher policies and more incarceration (which is good for their business). The so-called "prison industrial complex" is such that a local facility like this, while hurting kids and teaching many of them to become better criminals, is also seen as a source of jobs and income in a struggling town. In Walnut Grove, there are twice as many kids in prison as there are citizens.*



### 4. TIME

Trouble and me were like gravity  
So much time back then  
On long and winding beautiful dead ends  
Wondering if a future's around the bend

The moon is wrapped in razor wire  
But it will rise – and someday so will I  
Me and patience never did get along  
But I'm trying to be strong

Time...

Carved all my plans into stone  
But it turned to sand  
Now I follow guards and commands  
Nine times fallen ten times stand

Leaning toward a sunrise  
Daybreak where I'll see  
Of all the wishes whispered to the wind  
Which one will set me free

Time...

*Inspired especially by the strength and resilience of girls who get caught up in the juvenile justice system. Most children who end up incarcerated have been victims of trauma, and have been failed along the way by the education and mental health systems. The good news is that caring adults and effective services can successfully rehabilitate them and prepare them to lead productive and happy lives.*

## 5. BETTER LEFT UNREAD

Last thing I remember you said play or be played  
Tomorrow can't always be the better day  
I can't sing a love song cause you can't sing along  
Guess I'm gonna have to find another way

I'm getting better at living alone  
Trying not to turn to stone  
Rain rain go away  
Looks like you're not coming back someday

Thought you should know we almost had a little girl  
Wonder if her hair would've looked like mine  
Wonder if she'd bottle up everything like you do  
I would've called her Clementine

Wonder if she would've liked your tattoo  
Riding roller coasters like you do

If this little family would've got us through  
But she's lost and gone forever now like you

(chorus)  
So many things I wish I could forget  
So many tears I couldn't make you shed  
Some things are better left unsaid  
This letter is better left unread

Too many ghosts in these sheets, no matter  
how I try  
I can't get them to say goodbye  
Gonna get a new zip code, flap my wings and  
hope for flight  
Wish I could get between those bars tonight

(chorus)

*Reflections on how much an entire life can change in one instant, with one bad decision made out of frustration or passion or despair. Incarceration affects not just those behind bars, but also their families, children, and communities.*

## 6. YOU ARE BEAUTIFUL

They knew you by a number 6 digits long  
Never imagined you'd have to be so strong  
Counted the hours 'til you could leave the place  
All they ever noticed were your mistakes

Something written on a building you tried to see  
But no one ever told you it was a possibility  
And painted on the overpass, you prayed it told  
the truth  
This is what it looks like when someone believes  
in you

(chorus)  
It said you are beautiful

The wolves all around you had their say  
But you get to raise yourself at the end of  
the day  
So packed up your courage, left the rest  
Started walking and hoping for the best

Like a flower through the pavement, you found  
your way to free  
Staring at the sidewalk, you finally agree  
With all this graffiti and what it guarantees  
You thank some stranger for helping you to see

(chorus)  
That you are beautiful

No matter what you look like, where you've been,  
what you do  
Where you live, who you love, who you pray to  
What you know, what you show, and what you  
try to hide  
Look inside look inside look inside of you

(chorus)  
Cause you are beautiful...

*Inspired by the (anonymous) graffiti artist(s) in Birmingham, Alabama. Every time I see one of their You Are Beautiful messages on the side of a building or sidewalk or highway overpass I wonder who else takes it in and what inspiration they draw from it. I continue to be amazed by the power of art to say what should be said.*

## 7. A CIRCLE DRAWN

Does the tree let go first or the leaf  
What if one of them isn't ready  
You asked life to keep you surprised  
It delivers every time

It must be time to learn, 'cause the teacher is here  
From the foundling wheels of yesteryear  
Can't get over or around it's up to you  
To find a way through, you're gonna get through

(chorus)

A circle drawn around this place and time  
You've arrived; it's gonna be alright  
One thing certain, nothing stays the same  
Sometimes walking home is walking away

There are things meant to be saved  
There are times to walk away  
There are moments to let go  
How do you know, how do you know

(chorus)

Standing on the near side of goodbye  
You wonder if you'll change your mind  
Staring at someone else's life  
Every hourglass turns over only so many times

(chorus)

...Sometimes you just move on  
To get where you belong

*This song is about endings and beginnings; having to learn things you really don't want to; having faith you will find your way; healing and hard-won optimism; and destiny. The concept was inspired by Elizabeth Gilbert, who wrote: "I thought about one of my favorite Sufi poems, which says that God long ago drew a circle in the sand exactly around the spot where you are standing right now. I was never not coming here. This was never not going to happen."*

## 8. FOLSOM PRISON BLUES (JOHNNY CASH)

I hear the train a comin', it's rollin' 'round  
the bend  
And I ain't seen the sunshine since I don't  
know when  
I'm stuck in Folsom Prison and time keeps  
draggin' on  
But that train keeps a-rollin' down to San Antone

When I was just a baby my mama told me, "Son,  
Always be a good boy, don't ever play with guns,"  
But I shot a man in Reno just to watch him die  
When I hear that whistle blowin' I hang my head  
and cry

I bet there's rich folks eatin' in a fancy dining car  
They're probably drinking coffee and smoking  
big cigars  
I know I had it coming, I know I can't be free  
But those people keep moving, and that's what  
tortures me

If they freed me from this prison, if that railroad  
train was mine  
I bet I'd move out over a little farther down  
the line  
Far from Folsom Prison, that's where I want  
to stay  
And I'd let that lonesome whistle blow my  
blues away

*Over the years I have wanted to do a slow version of Folsom Prison Blues, but couldn't find the right way. John's answer was "let the song speak for itself."*

## 9. FROM A BRIDGE

So many mistakes, sad story lines  
Hang over my head like stars in the sky  
I've been running to leave them behind  
As if they don't win every time

I turned those stars into specks of gold  
Gathered them inside a stone  
Polished smoother every time  
I turn it over in my hand and heart and mind

(chorus)  
Breathe in tomorrow  
From a bridge across the Colorado  
Alone with the undertow  
Ready set...

I came all this way  
To give the past back to yesterday  
15 miles down carrying the stone  
Somehow I'm gonna get back up alone

(chorus)

(repeat chorus)  
I'm gonna breathe in tomorrow  
With everything I wished was different  
in the palm of my hand  
And the river below  
Ready set... I let go

*A few years ago I was given a dark, polished stone with lots of gold specks in it. I kept it until a night spent at the bottom of the Grand Canyon, which happened to be lit by a full moon (the next day's thunderstorm ended with a full rainbow along the entire upper part of the canyon – seriously). That stone is still at the bottom of the Colorado River, resting in peace. I wonder now if this was technically littering. If so, I hope no one from the National Park Service reads this.*

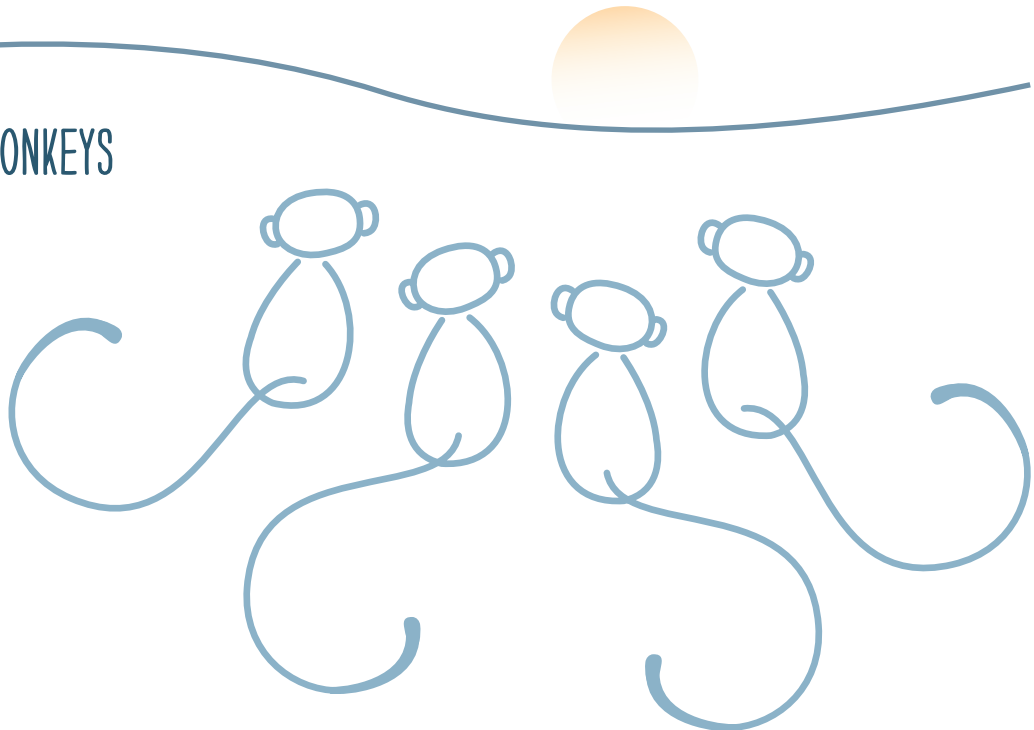
## 10. FOUR WISE MONKEYS

See no evil  
Take a stand

Hear no evil  
Make a choice

Speak no evil  
Pick a side

Do something



*I've heard and seen the Three Wise Monkeys parable for many years. I didn't think a lot about it until I started considering it as a song theme. I researched the origin and realized its meaning is debated. If the monkey Sees No Evil (and so on), is s/he stopping it or allowing it to thrive? I didn't want my song to be ambivalent, so I gave each monkey an answer, and then turned each into the fourth one – calling on themselves and each other to be an active part of improving the world.*