

# Merelyn's Background

Merelyn was raised in New Iberia, Louisiana in a poor, close-knit countrified community. Although she grew up in what unclear eyes might call 'poverty,' Merelyn believes her greatest fortune was experiencing the powerful sense of community within her family and town. She uses her experiences in this community as a model for a sustainable community. Though the community was very poor, the members protected and supported those in need. She grew up listening to stories of powerful

role models, including her grandfather who led a successful, though seemingly impossible, project-- the creation of a school for black children in New Iberia. She was inspired by her grandfather's desire to not only better the lives of his own children but all children in the community. Merelyn recalls her mother encouraging her to "put your mind to it," giving her the belief that no dream was too large to be accomplished. This gave her the "temerity to believe that things are possible."

