



We are days away from the 2020 finish line, our year of unprecedenteds. A year many of us will gladly turn our backs on while we anticipate the emergence of a Covid-19 vaccine. We are ready for a new year of The Whole Face. 2021 needs to be a year to yank off our masks and pitch them into the wind, a new year of unmuffled laughter and radiant smiles. 2020 was my year to be *intentional* but it is ending with my focus on a prefix - de.

As 2020 folds in on itself, I am nearing the end of a 10-day detoxeliminating dairy, gluten, and sugar from my diet. The ten days are focused on cleansing, an exploratory process to learn if my body changes for the better. So far, my face is breaking out and chia seeds are getting stuck between the gaps of aging teeth. I feel so much better.

Along with de-tox, I am de-cluttering. I've been unpacking and purging since I left Beaufort in September for Brevard, North Carolina. I have nicknamed Brevard "Beaufort in the Mountains." Small town, beautiful landscape, quirky, quaint, and filled with local shops and cozy churches. Sound familiar? A good declutter includes ReStore and Goodwill, just like Beaufort. There are plenty of people in need, just like Beaufort. Just like Everywhere, USA.

In French, Spanish and Portuguese languages, "de" is used as an indicator of a place or family of origin...de Paris, de Medici. I would be Vivian I. Bikulege de Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Or Vivian de Bikulege. Okay, I'll stop.

In my new relationship with de, I've been focused on de-cide. Decide to get off of my rear-end and move my body. Decide to finish my health insurance choices before December 14. Decide how involved I want to become in my new community. Decide what to eat. Decide on how to best celebrate Christmas this year. Decide to decide, and then change my mind.

And then there's determine, a word whose Latin origin means "to limit or fix." Now I'm onto something. Determine the best ways to invest the next twenty years of my life – fix my life – in time to meet my Maker. Unless I am de-nied another twenty years and stand before those Big Gates having to explain why I didn't declutter and donate sooner, why I was in denial all those many years, and why I didn't de-ploy my talents more generously.

De-cember. The word originated in Roman times de-noting the tenth month of the year. Romans had a ten-month calendar with December signifying the beginning of winter. When the Julian calendar was established in 45 BC, January and February led the line-up of months. This pushed December to the twelfth position moving September from 7th to 9th and October from 8th to 10th.

. Too much backstory but interesting nevertheless.

What's the point of all of this? It's the beauty of language; the linguistic feat by the smallest combination of letters to impact meaning, thought, and behavior as we communicate to ourselves and with one another. I am detoxing, decluttering, and deciding as I end the year in December. How does this set me up for the new year? My actions today will determine my future, how I want to dedicate the time I have left. I think the benefit of understanding the "de" words in my life is the avoidance of getting derailed by details. It also helps me move from "de" to "di" or "dis".

Better health so that I do not contract diabetes. Freedom from stuff to discover new places and opportunities. Focus so that I do not digress into the insignificant. Faith to keep me from distorting pain, suffering and loss. And love to help me dissolve communal walls and avoid divorce. (It's all good. The North Carolina mountains have not destroyed my marriage!)

Di-cember. I don't think so. Since "di" also means two, I don't want to add another month of winter to any year. I certainly don't want to add another month, week, day, hour, minute or second to 2020. I want this year to disintegrate so that 2021 can arrive with new energy, solid science to thwart Covid, unity, and the happy dilemma of starting over. Until then, try to find a

glimmer of delight in this season of miracles. Happy December.

Vivian Bikulege shares her life with Mac & Trooper. Along with writing, her passions include faith, family, friends and the natural world. She holds an MFA from Queens University of Charlotte and has contributed to Lowcountry Weekly for fifteen years.