

Basic reality is very encouraging.

*Harvey Jackins*



**Present Time**

No. 155 (Vol. 41 No. 2)

**April 2009**



What an inspiring collection of thoughts and experiences you'll find in this April 2009 *Present Time*! This is also the first issue for Rational Island Publishers' new lay-out person, Amanda Martinez. Welcome Amanda! And many thanks to Leah Koch-Michael for her five years of excellent work.

Here are the deadlines for the July Issue: Monday, May 18, for articles and poems; Tuesday, May 26, for changes to the back-pages lists. Please continue to send us drawings and photos, too.

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## Why Wait?

*From a talk by Tim Jackins<sup>1</sup> at the Black Leaders' Workshop  
in Warwick, New York, USA, April 2008*

When our distresses are operating, we often don't remember that anybody is out here. We just go ahead. We've learned to live life that way. We know how to be Co-Counselors, and we make contact, but mostly we don't stop and challenge ourselves on the point that there are other people out here to have real contact with.

There is the other side, too. We don't intrude on each other too much. We're friendly, we're supportive, but we don't step in too close. We don't step in close enough to challenge each other's not being able to tell that anyone is thoughtfully here.

This is all about relationships—and how hard it is for us to think that we could have a relationship that matters, that *we* could matter, that our presence could make a difference in someone's life. Do you think you could do that for somebody? (Shrug. Maybe.) You could do that in any life you chose. Any of us could be that big and important in the life of anyone we went after,<sup>2</sup> but most of the time we don't think about how to go after someone. Even people we see and like, we simply watch go by—though we hope they'll come back. If they do, it isn't because we did anything. We don't take the chance. We don't want to feel like we're intruding. We don't want to be rejected and fail again.

<sup>1</sup> Tim Jackins is the International Reference Person for the Re-evaluation Counseling Communities.

<sup>2</sup> Went after means pursued.



This all starts in childhood. When you were small, how many young people did you reach out to who couldn't reach back? How many groups of children rejected you, and how many groups did you belong to that rejected other people?

It's been decades now, but we're still confused by this early distress. Now we're big, intelligent, capable, attractive, but we're still walking around as if we were small and feeling like we don't know anything. The hurts happened when we didn't yet have power over our lives and were helpless to a certain degree. We didn't have the power to make things go the way we wanted them to. We were told where we had to be, and when we had to be there. And we can still easily feel like things are too big. Going after anybody feels too big for us to handle. Such old confusion! We can do anything we want, including go after a mind and stay there long enough that it notices us. We can also let the person discharge enough that he or she doesn't keep running away forever. We can be as big as we want to be in anybody's life, including in the lives of the people here. We can be the counselor to each other on these same confusing distresses. Yet we hesitate and lean away from each other.

You can challenge this and choose a different perspective. You're going to have to decide that there are people out here. You are going to be with the people in this group for the rest of your life. Face that first. You're going to be with these people the rest of your life. So why wait to make it as rich and full as you would like it to be?

What do we wait for? Well, we wait for our distresses to go away, or we wait for someone else to move first. This is

also out of what was forced on us in childhood. We wait for somebody to come in and contradict our material<sup>3</sup> so thoroughly that we are free of it without having to do any work. The odds are pretty good that that's not going to happen. If it were going to happen, it probably would have by now. So we can go on and try something else.

Let's decide to change our perspective about ourselves and about how valuable and capable we are—how interesting, intelligent, and attractive and how much of a resource we can be in anybody's life we choose. It's when we change our perspective and dare to move that all the distresses that have slowed us down show themselves sharply. It's when we go against the remaining distress patterns that we can discharge them. It's when we decide in our minds that we want it different and we are going to make it different that the needed work lays itself out clearly and things start to move. Then we're not so confused, we don't feel so small and helpless.

Let me say something once more: We're going to be together for the rest of our lives. This group goes on. It goes on and on and on. It will continue after the end of our lives, too, but we're going to be here together as far as we go, and there's no reason to wait. Every single person here wants to know you better, wants you closer to him or her, would love to have you as a resource. Is that accurate? Raise your hands, would you, so that people can see you. Look around. Any confusion you have about this is always out of distress. Always. *(Laughter)* Get this in your minds, and remind each other. Distresses will try to make it leave our minds. We need to keep reminding each other.

<sup>3</sup> Material means distress.

## *The List as a Bedtime Book*

Tonight as my eight-year-old daughter was heading toward bed, she and I were talking about our next bedtime book. We thought of a few possibilities, and then I grabbed *The List*.\* I told her that the man who'd figured out Co-Counseling had written this book and that he'd written part of it with young people in mind. I asked her if she'd like to hear some of it, and she quickly said yes.

We snuggled up under the covers, and I read aloud the section headings under "Information to Which Every Young Person Should Have Access." (These headings alone offer lovely perspectives, for example, "You are all right," and "Human beings of any gender are much alike.") My daughter laughed out loud at "This society is not good," followed by "Past societies have been even worse."

When I asked her if she wanted me to read any of the sections, she chose "Past societies have been even worse." After that she was eager for more and asked to hear "Adults" and "This society is not good." As I read, she would now and then ask a question or make a comment. We were into "nerve cells, nerve systems, quantitative complexity, qualitative changes in our functioning," when I decided to stop for the night.

What a gift to have this collection of Harvey's understandings to offer to a lovely young mind.

*Kathy McCullagh*  
Brooklyn, New York, USA

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\* A book by Harvey Jackins, described by him as "everything I know about Re-evaluation Counseling (and the world) until now." (Harvey Jackins was the founder and first International Reference Person of the Re-evaluation Counseling Communities.)



KAREN BYRD

Being deeply loved by someone gives you strength,  
while loving someone deeply gives you courage.

*Lao Tzu*



## Pain Is Useful

There is a general assumption in society that pain is bad—or, more accurately, that the feeling of pain is bad. Re-evaluation Counseling offers a hopeful perspective on both physical and emotional pain.

Pain is useful. People who cannot feel physical pain tend to injure themselves. Some illnesses have pain as a warning symptom, and not being able to feel that pain can be life threatening. Pain lets us know that something needs our attention. Taking care of illnesses or injuries can be hard if people lack this information from their body.

Similarly, people who have had their emotions shut down because of trauma report that it is horrible to live without emotions, even painful ones. Survivors of trauma are often greatly relieved when they can again feel the pain and feel fully human. Like physical pain, emotional pain gives us useful information. It makes us aware that we need to heal. (More people are understanding that anyone who has experienced trauma needs counseling and that “first responders” to accidents and caretakers of sick and dying people need counseling as much as the persons who have been hurt or are sick.)

We humans evolved with the ability to feel pain because it was useful for our survival. In this sense, it should be celebrated. What is hard is not having access to enough attention to be able to discharge, but that’s a different problem than the pain itself.

I’ve found it’s reassuring to people to know that pain, whether emotional or physical, is “normal” and that feeling it is essential to recovery. I think people also need to know that complete recovery from even the most extreme trauma is possible and that the process is quite simple, though it may not be easy.

Our “modern” societies have begun to talk about recovery and emotions in a more accurate way—for example, acknowledging that people need to grieve. However, most people in these societies have limited tolerance for putting it into practice. The societies that are the least dominated by capitalism seem to have the strongest rituals and social practices for supporting discharge and recovery. They tend to allow someone to stop and take time to recover.

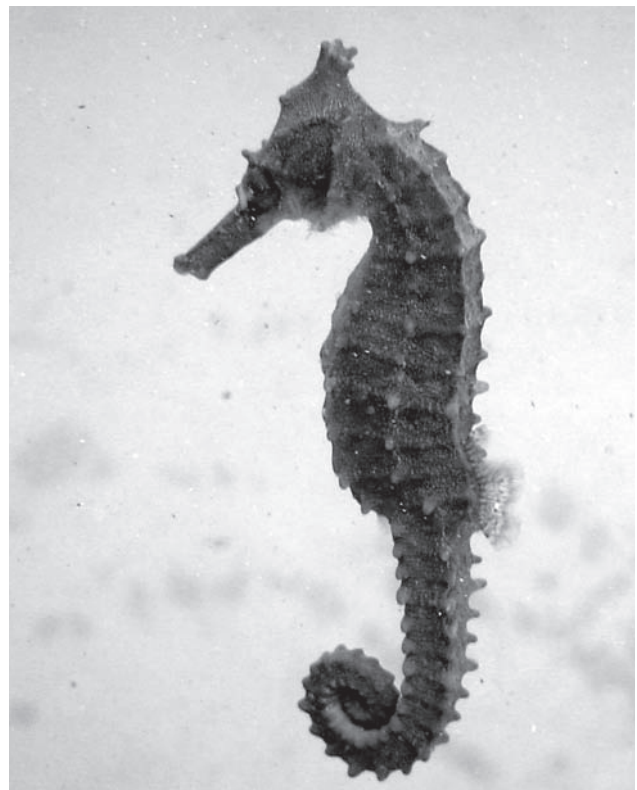
Often the person trying to help interferes with recovery more than not. I spent some time with someone (A—) who had trigeminal neuralgia, a

condition that has been described as causing the worst pain in one’s face and head that one can have. Medical providers know this and are scared of it because people sometimes resort to suicide in order to get relief. A—’s attacks came in bursts of pain during which all she could do was scream. That kind of response is hard for most people to listen to or to witness.

Another person (not a Co-Counselor) and I stayed with A— all day and night for a couple of weeks. Some of the nurses in the facility where she was had never seen trigeminal neuralgia before. One night a nurse came running into the bathroom where A— had been screaming and throwing water on her face. By the time the nurse got there, A— had stopped. The nurse was trembling and his eyes were wide. He asked if A— wanted an anti-anxiety pill. She said no, the attack had passed. After he left we had a good laugh about how he should have taken the anti-anxiety pill.

A— followed the current medical practice and took some drugs that affected neurological activity, and after a short time the bouts of extreme pain went away. Someone else I know had less resource and simply lay

*continued . . .*



PAUL WHYTE

## COUNSELING PRACTICE

*continued . . .*

on the floor of her house and screamed for hours and eventually recovered—a hard course of treatment for most medical providers to recommend, or for many patients to accept.

Caregivers want to “help” and don’t realize how motivated they are by their own painful feelings in the face of another person’s pain. They are often “treating” their own pain. In addition, they are overworked and lack the resource that would allow them to remain flexible in their jobs.

The workings of capitalism are often behind unhelpful practices. For example, drugs designed to make patients forget make it easier for the medical establishment to avoid lawsuits. Such drugs prevent the patient from knowing about mistakes that might

have been made. How many people get a detailed report of what happened during their surgery? Wouldn’t it be good to know? I know that I want to have all the information I can get.

With hospitals and nursing homes cutting back on staff to reduce costs, drugs are increasingly being used to subdue or restrain people who need more care than providers are able to give.

We can change society and develop the necessary resources so that people can get much better care than they are getting now.

*Dan Nickerson*

Freeport, Maine, USA

Reprinted from the e-mail discussion  
list for RC Community members



HONG KONG, CHINA • TIM JACKINS

## **Re-emergence Takes Work**

Re-emergence is a serious job, and it takes a lot of work. It’s not a magic wand. Even if you do make a decisive gain, there is a built-in wish to go farther, whether you are aware of it or not, and new distress will be pushed up by your own basic intelligence, demanding more work. So I think you will probably have to commit yourself to RC seriously and work at it steadily to have the kind of gains you hoped for.

An unreal expectation is common with people new to RC. We so desperately want to be ourselves and have such high hopes that it takes a little experience to realize how much work is necessary. For example, at one meeting with some graduate students, I conducted a support group in which each person had about five minutes. It went very well, but in reporting on it afterward every one of the participants said to me reproachfully, “. . . but I still have my problem.” I could not keep from laughing uproariously, since the problems they were talking about were ones that I would expect to spend a few months working on myself if I had them.

So I encourage you to proceed with your Co-Counseling, to read the literature, and to get a deeper perspective and a longer-term commitment.

*Harvey Jackins*

From a letter written in 1988

## Разряжая самые глубокие травмы – Что-то меняется

Сначала я хочу немного рассказать о себе. Мне двадцать три года, я белая родившаяся в Советском Союзе не-еврейка рабочего класса из России. По национальности я чувашка и русская, и мой родной язык русский. Консультированием я занимаюсь уже почти десять лет, хотя я и раньше слышала об этом от мамы и участвовала в игровых днях<sup>1</sup>.

Около двух лет назад у меня стали подниматься самые глубокие травмы – чувство одиночества и изоляции от всех на свете. Я не целенаправленно собиралась с ними работать, а просто заметила, что они уже здесь и что пора их разряжать.

В октябре 2006 я поехала в Польшу на семинар Джулиана Вейсгласса<sup>2</sup> «Восстановление от травм Второй Мировой войны». Перед семинаром была поездка в бывшие концентрационный лагерь и лагерь смерти Аушвиц/Биркенау. Эта поездка изменила мою жизнь. Нам сказали выбрать себе союзника – кого-то, с кем мы будем держаться друг за друга в течение всей поездки, чтобы никто не остался/лась бродить сам/а по себе. Для меня это был ключевой момент. Во время поездки я этого не осознавала (потому что большая часть моего внимания была сосредоточена на том, что мы там слышали и видели, и на том, чтобы переводить для своей группы), но потом на семинаре я поняла, насколько сильно я уже привязалась к своему союзнику, и мне просто пришлось заметить все поднявшиеся чувства. Ощущение было такое, как будто это сейчас мне действительно одиноко, а не когда-то в прошлом. И все это только потому, что был кто-то, кто явно обо мне заботился.

Мы с моим союзником поддерживаем связь все это время, и (может быть, впервые в жизни) я могу легко и уверенно сказать, что наши отношения навсегда. Я знаю, что сделаю все, чтобы их сохранить и что это полностью в моих силах.

<sup>1</sup> Семейная работа представляет собой мероприятия по переоценочному консультированию с участием молодых и взрослых союзников, включая родителей, в которых внимание уделяется молодым консультированию молодых в игровом контексте (игровые дни). Такие встречи проводятся для того, чтобы поддержать молодых, предоставить им обстановку, в которой они в основном определяют, что происходит (в отличие от обычной динамики от взрослых к молодым). Акцент делается на «соконсультировании», как обычно происходит во взрослом переоценочном консультировании. Такая модель семейной работы появилась в результате опыта, собранного за последние тридцать лет.

<sup>2</sup> Джулиан Вейсгласс – Международное ответственное лицо по изменениям в мире.

Год назад Джулиан проводил семинар по изменениям в мире здесь в России, и в один из дней он пригласил меня поработать на демонстрации с подавлением евреев. Было неловко разряжаться об этом с евреем. Я помню, что я тогда говорила, и иногда в своих сессиях повторяю решение, которое пришло ко мне в конце: «Я принимаю решение бороться за освобождение каждого еврея, и я с тобой, что бы ни случилось». Мне очень нравится это решение, потому что, принимая его, я чувствую не только свою собственную силу, но и то, как глубоко и сильно способна заботиться о других людях.

После принятия этого решения мне стало легче быть открытой и честной и с незнакомыми людьми, и теми, кого я знаю много лет; стало легче делиться своим опытом и тем, что я думаю, показывать людям, как они мне дороги, больше первой идти на контакт, устраивать свою жизнь так, как я хочу.

*продолжение на*



HONG KONG, CHINA • TIM JACKINS



## COUNSELING PRACTICE

продолжение ...

Что дает мне столько надежды и сил, так это то, что нужно было лишь действительно пустить людей в свое сердце. А потом не осталось ничего другого, кроме как взять отношения в свои руки и больше их не отпускать.

В сентябре прошлого года я снова участвовала в семинаре «Восстановление от травм Второй Мировой войны» и в поездке в Аушвиц/Биркенау. То, что в этот раз мы смогли посетить массовые захоронения советских военнопленных, было безумно важно. Когда Джулиан сказал, что мы заедем туда по пути на семинар, я думала, что буду «в чувствах». Но нет, я не только была «здесь и сейчас», но и была счастлива и расслаблена. Мне очень понравилось думать вместе с другими участниками из России о том, что мы хотим там сказать и сделать. Я чувствовала особенное единение и с русскими, и со всеми остальными; и знала, что это важно для всех.

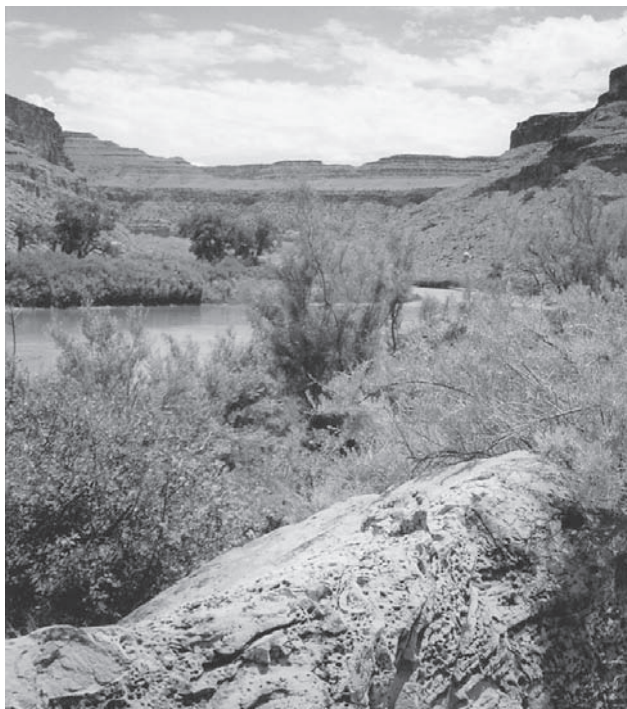
Мне запомнилась одна мини-сессия на семинаре: «как подавление евреев влияет на наши отношения?». Было немножко страшно от того, как прямо стоял вопрос, но именно эта прямота и была самым важным. Я заметила, как часто я просто не решаюсь говорить о чем-то, что вызывает столько чувств и с чем связано столько стереотипов, и насколько ближе можно стать за несколько минут, если говорить о таких вещах прямо и не делать вид, что все в порядке, и ничего не происходит, и что на наши

отношения подавление никак не влияет. Влияет, и еще как. Оттого, что мы знаем о том, что подавление существует, наши дистрессы никуда сами собой не деваются. Если говорить о подавлении открыто, можно обрести сильных и надежных союзников и самой стать таким союзником для других.

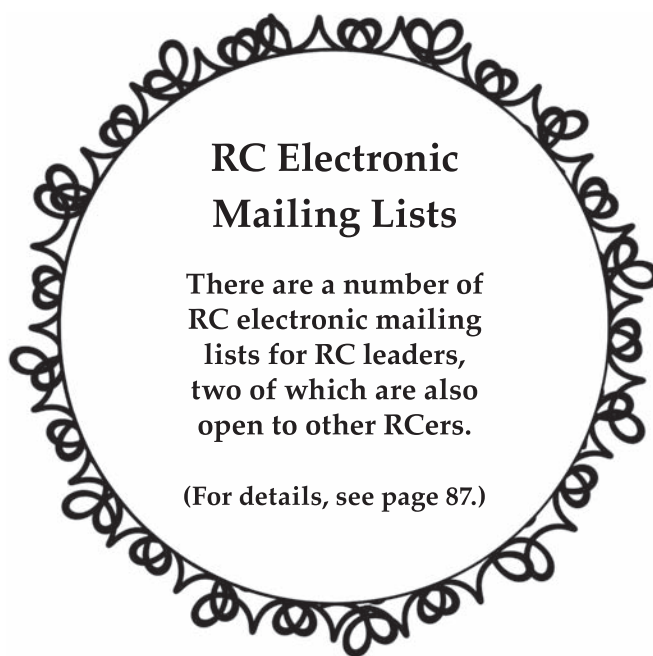
Я продолжаю строить отношения со своими союзниками из России и из других стран. С кем-то получается легче, с кем-то труднее, но со всеми это возможно. С некоторыми я стала пробовать такие сессии об всехразных подавлениях, которые между нами есть, и это работает просто потрясающе. Я чувствую, как растет доверие и уверенность друг в друге и становится легче браться за глубокие травмы.

Я все лучше и лучше вижу, что в принципе возможно в консультационных отношениях: насколько сильно мы можем любить друг друга, насколько хорошо мы можем думать друг о друге, насколько открытыми и честными мы можем быть друг с другом. Один раз начав все это, я уже не могу (да и не хочу) остановиться. Чем больше я разряжаюсь о своем раннем детстве (изоляция, унижение и недооценивание), тем лучше я вижу, какую большую и значимую жизнь я хочу и как много в ней места для многих-многих людей!

*Ольга Ленкова*  
Санкт-Петербург, Россия



COLORADO, USA • JOAN KARP





*English translation of the previous article:*

## Discharging the Deepest Hurts—Things Do Change

First I want to tell you a few things about myself. I'm a twenty-three-year-old white Gentile working-class Soviet-born woman from Russia. My national identity is Chuvash and Russian, and my native language is Russian. I've been Co-Counseling for almost ten years, but I heard about RC before that from my mother and participated in some family work<sup>1</sup> as a young person.

About two years ago I got to my deepest hurts, those of isolation and feeling separate from everyone else. I didn't mean to go there, I just noticed I already was there and that it was time to discharge.

In October 2006 I went to the Healing from World War II Workshop in Poland, led by Julian Weissglass.<sup>2</sup> Before the workshop we visited the former Auschwitz/Birkenau concentration and death camps. For me that was a life-changing experience. We were told to choose a buddy—someone we would hold on to during the whole visit so that none of us would be left to wander alone. That was the key point for me. I didn't realize it during the visit (because most of my attention was on the things we were hearing and seeing and on translating for my language group), but later at the workshop, I realized how deeply I was connected to my ally and I had to face all the feelings that brought



BANTEAY TEMPLE, CAMBODIA • DAN KWONG

up. All of the loneliness from my past life felt present and real, just because someone was obviously caring for me.

My buddy and I have been keeping in touch ever since, and (maybe for the first time in my life) I can say easily and with confidence that our relationship is going to last forever. I know I will do everything to keep it, and that that is absolutely in my power.

A year ago Julian led a wide-world-change workshop here in Russia, and one afternoon he invited me to be in a demonstration on anti-Jewish oppression. It was embarrassing to work on that oppression with a Jew. I remember what I was saying in the demonstration and sometimes repeat in my sessions the decision I ended up with: "I decide to stand up for every Jew; and I'm with you, no matter what." I love that decision, because in making it I feel not only my own power but also how deeply and strongly I am able to care for other human beings.

After making the decision, it became easier for me to be open and honest both with people I didn't know and with those I had known for years; it became easier to share my own thinking and experiences, to show people how dear they were to me, to initiate more contact, and to have my life the way I wanted it. What is so encouraging and hopeful is that it just took letting people into my heart. After that there was nothing left to do but take charge and not let them go.

Last September I participated again in the Healing from World War II Workshop and the visit to Auschwitz/Birkenau. That we

*continued . . .*

<sup>1</sup> Family work consists of RC gatherings of young people and adult allies, including parents, in which the focus is on young people and counseling young people in the context of play. These gatherings are designed to empower young people, to give them a setting in which they largely determine what happens (in contrast to the usual adult-young person dynamic). The focus is not on "Co-Counseling," as it is in the usual adult RC. This model of family work is the result of experiences gathered over the past thirty years.

<sup>2</sup> Julian Weissglass is the International Commonality Reference Person for Wide World Change.

## COUNSELING PRACTICE

*continued . . .*

managed to visit the mass graves of the Soviet prisoners of war was important. When Julian said we would go there on the way to the workshop, I thought I would feel completely stuck. However, I was not only present, I was happy and relaxed. I enjoyed thinking with the others from Russia about what we wanted to say and do there. I felt united with the Russians, and with everybody else, in a special way and could tell that the visit was important for everyone.

I remember a mini-session at the workshop in which we answered the question, "How does the oppression of Jews affect your relationships?" I was a bit scared of how direct the question was, but it was the directness that was crucial. I noticed how I often don't dare to talk about something that involves

so many feelings and patterns, and how much closer we humans can get if we talk about such things directly and don't pretend that everything is okay, that nothing is happening, that oppression is not affecting our relationships. It is, and seriously. Just because we know that oppression exists, our patterns don't disappear on their own. If we talk openly about oppression, we can gain strong and dependable allies for ourselves and become allies for other people, too.

I keep connecting with my allies in Russia and in other countries. With some it's easier, with some harder, but with everyone it's possible. With some I have tried doing sessions on all of the oppressions between us, and it has worked beautifully. I've been able to see how our trust and confidence in each other grow and

how much easier it becomes to take on<sup>3</sup> deep hurts.

I am getting a better perspective on what is possible in a Co-Counseling relationship: how deeply we can love each other, how well we can think about each other, how open and honest we can be with each other. Once started, I can't help going on (and I don't want to stop). The more I discharge about my early years (the isolation, humiliation, and underestimation), the better I see what a big, meaningful life I want and how much space there is for many, many people in it.

*Olga Lenkova*  
St. Petersburg, Russia  
*Translated from Russian*  
*by Olga Lenkova*

<sup>3</sup> In this context, take on means face and do something about.



### A Foundation of Harvey Jackins\*

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- DVD #9 A Rational Policy on Sexuality
- DVD #204 The Human Side of Human Beings
- DVD #225 Counseling with Attention Away from Distress
- DVD #228 The Understatement

For ordering information, see page 109.

*\* Because many RCers did not have a chance to learn RC directly from Harvey, these DVDs provide a "foundation" of contact with Harvey and his thinking.*



## Recovering from the Death of a Child

From a correspondence on the e-mail discussion list for RC Community members

Hello RC friends,

*I would be interested in hearing from a parent whose child has died. I would also like to hear from anyone who has counselled a parent about that kind of loss.*

*My son died suddenly last summer, a month before his twenty-first birthday. I am grateful for all the love and support I have received since then and am learning a lot as I grieve this immense tragedy. I have reached out in many directions, as my brain has tried to make sense of what happened, and one of the things that has helped is hearing from people who have experienced a similar loss. I have heard from parents in the wide world about many different grief journeys, but I would like to hear from someone who has used the tools of RC in this kind of situation.*

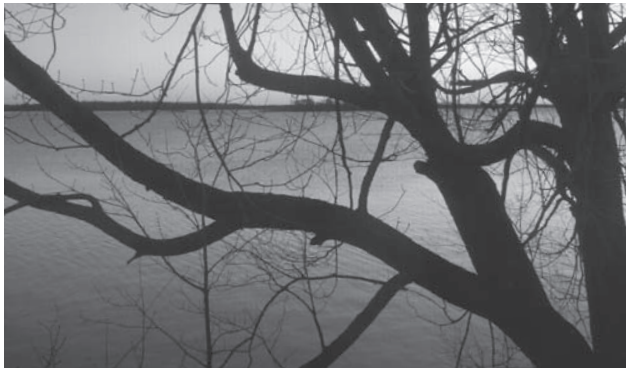
Phyllis Beardsley  
Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada

Dear Phyllis,

I'm sorry about the death of your son. My daughter Ann died in 1995, at age nineteen. Three main points from my experience:

The first applies to any death of a loved one: Cry and cry and cry again, as many times as you can. I've cried a lot, mostly outside of Co-Counselling sessions—in the car, listening to music, looking at photographs. In sessions I have mostly dealt with terror and anger, not grief. That's just how it sits with me (I'm a man). However, I know and say quite openly in the wide world that if I hadn't been able to cry as much as I have,

<sup>1</sup> Shape means condition.



SARAH BRODBAR-NEMZER

I don't know what shape<sup>1</sup> I would be in.

Thirteen years on, I still have a lot more crying to do. I've become busy with other things and haven't been systematic about discharging on Ann's life and death, but I still cry deeply sometimes. And often, when I stop being busy, I feel sad before I feel happy. I don't find this surprising, and I don't conclude that anything is wrong with my life. It's basic RC theory: the distress (loss) is there until it is fully discharged. I've taken enough of the edge off of mine that I can function apparently quite well, but there's still a lot there. A good counselor may help you persist.

**My daughter's early death is an invitation to solidarity, an incentive not to accommodate to oppression.**

A second thing has to do with the sense of unfairness that someone so young has died. It is unfair. I look on it that my daughter was killed by oppression. That's unfair, but it is not unusual. In world terms, my daughter had a relatively long and privileged life. The death of a child—from hunger, lack of clean water, poverty, malnutrition, war—is the experience of many, many people worldwide. Thinking of my daughter's early death can remind me that many parents, many families, many communities, suffer early losses such as this. My daughter's early death is an invitation to solidarity, an incentive not to accommodate to oppression.

Third is that the death of my daughter has created opportunities for internalized parents' oppression to kick in<sup>2</sup> hard. Specifically, I have regrets. I feel pulled to blame myself for not having been able to protect her sufficiently.

Fortunately, we in RC know that regrets and self-blame are always rooted in distress. I did the best I could under unfavourable circumstances. I've learned to be ruthless with the pulls of internalized oppression, to not give them credibility. (Sometimes, with a counsellor who is not going to get confused, I

*continued . . .*

<sup>2</sup> Kick in means start operating.

## COUNSELING PRACTICE

continued . . .

give them an airing: “I wish . . .”) I think my stance against them has been somewhat rigid, but for now the rigidity has been more useful than “wondering how true” the thoughts are. Of course, not blaming includes not blaming one’s co-parent.

The Parents’ Commitment<sup>3</sup> is good against this stuff. Also, on the RC web site, among the Frontier Commitments, is one against identifying as a victim.<sup>4</sup> I find it more difficult, but I can use it in good faith. These commitments help me with perspective as well as discharge.

Here are a few more thoughts:

It’s fine to have your life. Just because your son (or my daughter) died young, it’s no reason for you (or me) to have a small or limited life. We don’t need anyone’s permission or approval to live our lives. This was an issue for my wife especially. It felt to her that having and enjoying her own life were in some way being disloyal to Ann; but she realized this was in no way true and made a clear decision that it was okay to live as fully as she could, that Ann would have wanted that for her.

Most likely there are others you are close to who were close to your son, and you are probably the best resource they have. You’re not obligated to them, but it’s likely some things won’t shift for them unless you help—and that means some extra work for you, either directly with them or in training others to listen to them.

My wife and I have found that many people don’t talk to us about our daughter “in case we get upset.” Well, the fact is we haven’t forgotten her, so we don’t need to be “protected” from remembering her. And yes, we may get upset. We see people’s silence as their not knowing how to handle any grief we may show.

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<sup>3</sup> The Parents’ Commitment: I promise to remember always that I am a good parent, that I always have done the best I could, that I have passed on to my child/children as few of the hurts that I endured as a child as I could possibly manage, and that someday I’ll get a little rest.

<sup>4</sup> The Commitment Against Identifying as a Victim: I now know that all my distresses are simply literal recordings from my past distresses that I was not able to fully process at the time they occurred. I also know that the information in these recordings, as well as all the information content of all my other experiences, have contributed in essential ways to making me the unique, wonderful, and completely good human being that I am. I therefore promise that from this moment on I will cherish every moment of my past as being completely good and right. I will never wish that anything happened in any way other than precisely the way it did, and I will never act on the distortions of reality that these distresses imposed on me. Instead, I will discharge them to gain full and flexible access to the valuable and unique information that they contain.

We encourage people to talk to us about Ann, and we appreciate the ones who do. Generally good things come of it.

Ann’s death has given me some slack around death. I know that I can survive the death of a daughter and also have a good life. That’s helpful when I’m faced with other things that have the appearance of a crisis or disaster. Also, the truth is that my daughter was lucky to have the life she did. And she had, and still has, a big influence on a lot of people. The more I discharge on her death, the more my memories of her and her life are a resource to me and others.

Phyllis, I’m glad you wrote your recent e-mail, and I’m glad to have written in response. What I’ve said here is ordinary, it’s no more than basic RC theory, but that doesn’t make it any less important. The basic knowledge and perspectives we have as Co-Counselors—that discharge matters; that it takes time and persistence; that there are and will be lots of opportunities for crying, in and out of formal sessions; that the crying is worth doing (probably more than I’ve managed); that as parents we are not to be blamed or to blame others—have made a big difference for me. And the ways I’m connected to views like these—RC workshops, RC literature, Tim’s CDs<sup>5</sup>—have also made a big difference.

We don’t need some new magical solution. The solutions we have work fine, if we put them to use.

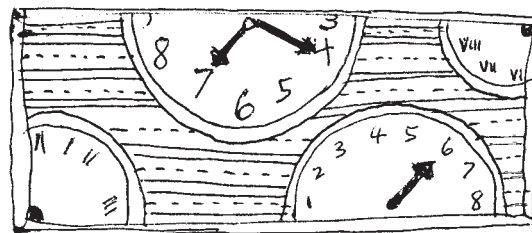
Maybe the most hopeful thing is that while my life has not been easy, I have no doubt that it has been and is good. This includes having had my daughter in it for the time that I did and having the memories of her now. I have been lucky to have her, despite her early death, and her life has enriched the world.

You seem to be on a good track already. I send you my very best wishes as you go on.

Fionntán Hurley  
Edinburgh, Scotland

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<sup>5</sup> Rational Island Publishers has been producing on CD a series of talks given by Tim Jackins at recent workshops. For more information, see page 104 of this *Present Time*.



LEO M. LAZO



## New Day

(a song)

There was a time when I believed all that was said around me.  
I was somehow persuaded that it was I who was bad.  
I believed long ago that perils did surround me.  
You might not imagine all the terrors I had.

In those dark and lonely times I once was haunted nightly.  
Those loathsome ghostly fears and griefs would rise up in my face.  
How very real those mists could seem with no one to stand by me.  
Now I can let them dissolve for good in my friends' hearts' embrace.

*Refrain:*

*Now every time when the sun comes up it is a brand new morning.  
Every morning when I open my eyes it is a newfound day.  
Each new day of my life holds a life's worth of new beginnings.  
Each new thing that I begin brings me closer 'round my way.*

When I was young I was carefully taught all the things I had to do.  
Go to school and chew my food, stand straight and shine my shoes.  
Brush my hair and wash my ears, say please and say thank you.  
Yet I didn't mind these half so much as the things I couldn't do.

When I was told I couldn't sing, then I couldn't sing for joy.  
When I was told be careful, I watched out for everything.  
I shouldn't cry, I shouldn't care, I had to be a boy.  
I couldn't run, I couldn't jump, I couldn't try my wings.

*[Refrain]*

Now I know that those I loved were filled with fear and tension.  
I chose the best I could back then, I was safer when alone.  
Now I have many caring friends, I know how to use attention.  
Here and now, a part of it all, I can make this world my home.

Nothing they said I couldn't do is now beyond my vision.  
All that I've heard I have to do, I now can choose or flout.  
The highest goals I see from here obscure a new horizon.  
The limits all, I took them in, now I can throw them out.

*[Refrain]*

I do declare I like myself and I know me pretty closely.  
I've noticed that you like me too, do I detect a trend?  
As I move out in wider arcs, I can remember mostly  
I am wished well by the whole of all, I claim all as my friend.

When the sun goes down at the end of the day, the moon beams down upon me.  
When I lay down to take my rest, my mind it ranges free.  
I know I've done more good so far than I ever will recall.  
What once were only distant dreams are now reality.

© Russell Hayes  
Lexington, Kentucky, USA



SNOQUALMIE FALLS, WASHINGTON, USA  
ALISA LEMIRE BROOKS

## Reaching Someone by Listening

Harvey has spoken about using with elderly people “the lightest techniques of just listening with complete warm attention.”\* Years ago whenever I visited a friend in a convalescent home, I also spent a few minutes with her roommate whom I was told cried a lot and said little that made sense, which proved to be true. On one visit, I was alone with her in the hallway. Our eyes

met, and I moved close to her and said, “What are you thinking?” She began crying immediately. I told her I believed in crying and put my hand on her shoulder. She cried hard, eyes on mine, and then said in a whisper, “We weren’t supposed to tell anyone about it. They told us never to tell anyone.” I asked something like, “Where did this happen?” Crying, she replied, “The office was so upset.” She said

a few more words about being scared of what might happen, about everyone being scared, and then she cried some more. When I told her I was sorry they had told her not to talk because I knew she had needed to talk about it,” she again cried, her head lowered. Then she raised her head to look at me. Looking in her eyes, I could tell that she was in present time and really with me. She said, “Thank you.” I feel tears behind my eyelids as I recount this.

\* See page 35 of the October 2008 *Present Time*.



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demonstrations, spanning  
the decades of RC.**

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SUPREME COURT, ISRAEL • PAT FISCHER



## Thinking About Special Time

My son is two-and-a-half years old, and since his birth he has had the benefit of two weekly special-time<sup>1</sup> sessions with allies. The connection he has established with these people provides a clear picture of how natural it is for young people to assume that deep, close, permanent relationships are their birthright.

I am now helping him distinguish between special time and playtime. This has led him to ask me (his mom) for special time to do this or that (“I want special time with you for a neighborhood bike ride”). To date we haven’t had a regular routine for special time, and I am increasingly realizing the need to do so, so that we can be clear about when he is having that particular relationship with me and when we are engaging in other forms of activity and interaction (such as errands, chores, playing, or reading).

I have a few questions about this, and I’d love to hear from other parents and allies:

(1) How frequently do you do special-time sessions with your child at this age (going on three)? Is it scheduled and a routine, or fluid? What factors led you to your approach? (2) How long are your special-time sessions? (3) How do you set up sessions for yourself to support the special time you do with your child, particularly if you are at home alone with your child the majority of the time? I have had difficulty, for example, finding and taking opportunities for phone sessions during my son’s and my long days together and am struggling to figure out how to do a pre- and post-special-time Co-Counseling session.

C—  
USA

For most of our son’s first three years we struggled with the distinction between special time and playtime and were not very regular or disciplined about special time. We paid lots of attention to our son and played with him every day but did not label it “special time.” The few times that allies came over and gave him special time were great but infrequent. I don’t think he had a clear concept of special time. In fact, I think he had high expectations and hopes for having an adult play with him most of the time he was awake and able to play. That was

clearly not sustainable for my husband and me. We both felt overwhelmed by the task of paying attention to him for long periods of time and had unrealistic expectations for how much attention we could have available.

It eventually became apparent that we needed to set aside a regular special time with our son, both to make full use of the tool and to distinguish between “you have all of our attention to play anything you want and we will be there with you” and “playtime,” during which parents still need to do other things, like chores and phone calls and other tasks of daily life. We came to this realization partly with the help of a family work<sup>2</sup> class.

When we started doing regular special time with our son (and calling it “special time”), my husband and I each picked times when we thought we would have enough attention and time to make the special time meaningful. My husband picked Saturday mornings (a time when I often have to work and he is home alone with our son), and I picked afternoons after preschool.

Four days a week I pick up my son from preschool and we are at home together for about two hours before my husband gets home. My son and I now do up to forty-five minutes of special time during that time. We try to talk about it earlier in the day so that he can look forward to it and plan what he wants to do. (This was suggested by many special-time veterans, and I highly encourage it.) Before starting special time, we usually set a timer so that my son and I both have a concrete indication of when the time is up.

After special time is over, my son often wants it to continue and sometimes has a short session about that, but often he is ready to move on to the next activity, especially if we have talked about that activity in advance. I usually have to cook dinner after special time is over. I’ll say, “There’s the timer. Special time is over, and now I have to cook dinner.” He’ll sometimes say, “I’ll help you, Mommy,” or, “Can I keep playing with my Legos<sup>3</sup> while you cook?” My husband has had success

*continued . . .*

<sup>1</sup> Special time is an activity, developed in RC family work, during which an adult puts a young person in full charge of their mutual relationship, as far as the young person can think. For a specific period of time, the adult lets the young person know that he or she is willing to do anything the young person wants to do. The adult focuses his or her entire attention on the young person and follows his or her lead, whether the young person tells, or simply shows, the adult what she or he wants to do.

<sup>2</sup> Family work consists of RC gatherings of young people and adult allies, including parents, in which the focus is on young people and counseling young people in the context of play. These gatherings are designed to empower young people, to give them a setting in which they largely determine what happens (in contrast to the usual adult-young person dynamic). The focus is not on “Co-Counseling,” as it is in the usual adult RC. This model of family work is the result of experiences gathered over the past thirty years.

<sup>3</sup> Legos are a kind of building blocks for children.

## COUNSELING PRACTICE

*continued . . .*

with doing clean-up chores immediately after special time. He and our son often clean the bathroom together. Our son typically does not like playing by himself, but he is more relaxed about it, or less urgent about having our full attention, after he has had our attention during a good special-time session.

One thing we have not yet figured out is getting support for ourselves before or after special time. I would love to hear suggestions for that from other parents.

P—  
USA

It has made a huge difference for our family to schedule special time every week. We do it when my son wakes up on Saturday mornings. He knows it is coming, counts on it,<sup>4</sup> and has sessions whenever it is delayed.

My son is the oldest of two, and it has been particularly important for him to have his own time with me. It doesn't always look to me like the special time is so great, but the fact that he knows it is coming, and is his, makes a big difference to him for the entire week. He talks about it a lot. He is almost six, and we've been doing this special time for three years. His sister is three, and she's started insisting now on having her own time slot every week.

We start the special time by chanting, "Special time, special time, goooooo special time," and end with, "Special time, special time, done with special time." My children aren't confused about special time versus other playtime, and if we don't say our starting phrase, it's not special time.

For my family, having a full hour every week at a set time that each child can count on makes all the difference.

J—  
USA

All this talk about special time has helped me remember a story I wanted to share with you all. From the time my daughter was really young (about a month old), I have been doing special time with her. I set a timer and try to give her my undivided, relaxed attention. I began doing this for me, so that I could have a time in the day when I could ignore the pull to do chores and just be with her in the way I wanted to.

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<sup>4</sup> Counts on it means expects it to happen.

I didn't know that it mattered to her until she was almost two. One morning I was trying to cook breakfast, and she was whining and calling my name and wanting me to pick her up while I was cooking. Partway through the meal, I asked her if she thought we should go and snuggle for a while, since she seemed to be feeling bad. She looked up at me and said, "Special time." I was surprised. I had never heard her say those words before and didn't think she was paying attention when I talked about special time.

Now she is twenty-six months old. We do special time several times a week for thirty minutes at a time. My next steps are to extend the time to an hour at least once a week, to push myself to plan at the beginning of the week when we will do special time so that she can know when it will happen, and to do mini-sessions before and/or after doing it.

S—  
USA

*I have an almost-three-year-old son. I do special time with him every Thursday, usually in the morning, for up to sixty minutes.*

*I must say that I am only able to do this because I have a regular and reliable "special-time mini-session" every Thursday evening—the minute my son goes to sleep. (My Co-Counselor does special time with her granddaughter on the same day.) I'm thinking I should get a buddy for pre-special-time, too.*

*Many years ago Corinne Goodman<sup>5</sup> taught a special-time class in Brooklyn (New York, USA) that met every two weeks for a couple of years. It was wonderful to put that much attention on special time. I think it's the reason I've been able to do it consistently with my son. (Special time can feel hard to do! It's so different from how most of us were raised.) In that class we all had a special-time buddy with whom we did a weekly mini-session.*

K—  
USA

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<sup>5</sup> Corinne Goodman is the Regional Reference Person for Brooklyn, Long Island, and Staten Island, New York, USA.



AMANDA MARTINEZ

I have been doing a weekly hour of special time since my daughter was three. (Prior to that, I felt like I did hours of special time.) One thing that helps tremendously is doing a phone mini-session afterward (seven minutes each) on what it was like doing special time and planning when to do it again. I do this in the evenings when my partner is home so that I can give it my full attention.

F—  
USA

*Young people need time, and lots of it. It's tough figuring out how to make that happen. My son's special time has ranged from once a week to once a month.*

*Our special time today involved wrestling on the sofa and bouncing a pingpong ball to land in a receptacle. I've figured out that I have to let my boy take the lead in showing what he wants to do, and I end up having a great time. These days I feel more like his pet than his mother. (He pats me on the head, delighted with his newfound height.) Another thing that seems to work is eating together without the distraction of music or TV. I'm impressed with what he has to say. When I had friends over, he contributed to the dinner conversation and seemed to enjoy himself.*

*It seems that just when I think I have a grip on a particular parenting challenge, a new one is right there. Change is the only predictable constant. I figure discharge is directly proportional to the probability of elegant solutions.*

W—  
New Zealand



MARTY POTTENGER

## Challenging Deeply Held Chronic Patterns

Co-Counseling, as it has developed, especially in new places in the last few years, has rarely, if ever, reached the point of persistence and clarity that would break through a stubbornly held chronic pattern. Unless we can get wide participation in some new developments in theory, Co-Counseling will tend to continue to be used, as it has been in the broad Community so far, as a way of making life within a chronic pattern comfortable.

There are many forces at work, both in the general environment and in Re-evaluation Counseling, including all the efforts and clarity I can put into it, to organize Co-Counselors to actually challenge deeply held chronic patterns.

*Harvey Jackins*  
From a letter written in 1975



## A Breakthrough in Discharging on War

I've Co-Counseled for five years now. Within the first year I knew that I had a lot of discharging to do on the subject of war. One of my beloved Co-Counselors attended the Healing from World War II Workshop, led by Julian Weissglass, in Poland in 2004, and his stories made it clear that it was a workshop that I should attend, that it could be a key to discharging my early distress.

. . . the more I discharge on my childhood, the more my children are relaxed and eager to tell me about their struggles.

I went to the Healing from World War II Workshop, in Poland, in 2006 and 2008. At the 2008 workshop I felt lost. I didn't know how to get closer to discharging a big lump of distress. It was hard to get and stay in touch with the other Co-Counselors. In the meantime, I kept telling stories about my grandfather and his war experiences and about the empty spaces in my teenage years.

At the same time, my teenage son was doing things I didn't understand and our contact was becoming more difficult. That, and the peeling away of distress in my Co-Counseling sessions on war, finally led to a breakthrough.

Two weeks ago in my ongoing RC class I started to realize that there was a big grey cloud hanging over my teenage years. The next day I went to a family-work support group, and with the class of the day before in my mind, I could finally feel the horrible emptiness of my young years. I started crying so deeply that my body hurt. My mom was badly hurt by the war to where she

became completely numb and inactive. She was unable to make contact with her children. She also had trouble at work. She became physically ill, and for years nobody knew. These last couple of weeks I've spent most of my sessions crying about when I was a teen.

Last weekend I went to a "mental health" liberation workshop, led by Margie Doyle Papadopoulou.<sup>1</sup> Margie talked about what "mental health" liberation has to do with war. With a little encouragement I decided to lead a topic table on war. I'd noticed how difficult it was for Co-Counselors to listen to people discharging on war.

Eight of us met at the topic table, and each of us took five minutes to tell our stories. When someone didn't know what to talk about, I asked what his or her parents had done in the war and where they had been. No one had any problem filling the five minutes with his or her stories, and some could even cry about them. Some said it was an eye-opener for them to realize that war had had such an impact on their lives.

I am proud that I got so far in five years of counseling that I could listen to those stories, and show some people that it makes a difference to work on war.

Another thing I've noticed is that the more I discharge on my childhood, the more my children are relaxed and eager to tell me about their struggles.

I am happy that I have Co-Counselors who stick with me,<sup>2</sup> and especially happy that I don't give up on myself.

*Huta Broers*  
Utrecht, The Netherlands

<sup>1</sup> Margie Doyle Papadopoulou is an RC leader in Kantza, Greece.

<sup>2</sup> Stick with me means stay committed to me.



STONEHENGE, ENGLAND • DIANE SHISK



ANNE MACKIE

## ¿Para que quieres dormir? Why Do You Want to Sleep?

En una sesión con una de mis co-escuchas regulares, mi co-escucha habló de las dificultades con el dormir que estaba teniendo y yo le pregunté con un ligerísimo tono lleno de humor: ¿y para qué quieres dormir? que provocó mucha risa. Cuando las carcajadas descendieron, le volví a preguntar con ese mismo tono, ¿y a tí quién te ha dicho que tienes que dormir? Más y más carcajadas siguieron hasta el final de aquella sesión. *In a session with one of my regular Co-Counselors, my Co-Counselor talked about the difficulties she was having with sleeping and I asked her, in a light tone full of humor, “And why do you want to sleep?” which provoked a lot of laughing. When her laughing slowed, I asked her again in the same tone of voice, “And who has told you that you have to sleep?” More and bigger laughing came until the end of the session.*

Según me contó durante su “buena nueva” durante los días siguientes a aquella sesión, no apareció gran parte de la preocupación que sentía relacionada con el hecho de irse a dormir, de dormir suficientemente, de no conseguir descansar. Y eso mismo le permitió dormir más profundamente. *In her “goods and news” in the days following that session, she told me she did not feel the same amount of preoccupation she had been feeling about going to sleep, sleeping enough, and achieving rest and that “de-preoccupation” was the key thing that had let her sleep better.*

Con mucho cariño y deseando buen desahogo para todas y todos, desde el País Vasco,  
*Much love and good discharge to all of you, from the Basque Country,*

*Emilen Castro*

Bilbao, Basque Country

Re-impreso de la lista de discusión de correo electrónico para los miembros/las miembros de la Comunidad de RC

*Reprinted from the e-mail discussion list for RC Community members*



LK

## Discouragement Is Old

Because of childhood mistreatment, I've got a desperation to be claimed, wanted, liked, and part of something. Early accidents and violence left me isolated and afraid of dying. But I am not dying. I don't have to have persistent dreams and daydreams about dying. I am the boy who lived. I got to grow up. In the present I get to have help. For example, G— has agreed to stop doing five things at once while driving the car, and now I find it easier to relax as her passenger.

I don't need to run away from home to be happy. The neglect and lack of supervision, near constants in my childhood, are over. I'm not alone anymore and never will be again. As client and "field general," I can marshall my forces (you, me, the humans from my past) to eliminate the distress recordings. I can go back for the little boy and play games with him, contradicting his isolation so that I can move forward.

When acting as an oppressor, I often feel justified. The justification the adults used to inflict violence on me is now part of my own distress recordings. In my mind I can go back and stop my father from hitting the little boy. In the present I can stop pushing G— when I want her to move and stop teasing her about her struggles that are the vestiges of her own scary childhood. The violence will end with my generation.

I am a major grown-up. I am not a little boy anymore. I am not the youngest. In fact, in most situations I am the biggest person in the room. I will probably die in my bed, a very old and satisfied man.

The feelings of failure are recorded. I can keep trying until I get what I want. Feelings are not a guide to action. Discouragement is an old feeling, and it's never correct to act on it. I can want anything and try anything (children do). I can eat better, have fun



LUCCA, ITALY • KEN DEVENEY

getting fit, and lose ten pounds (as often as I wish). Discouragement about my health and fitness is old. I can find a way to spend time in the wide world as an ally to young people. Discouragement about my role in young people's liberation is old. I can organize Co-Counseling sessions for each week so that I'm doing more than just handling the restimulation of the day. Discouragement attached to finding more counseling for myself is old.

I have plans to become a parent. I don't have to be surprised by parents' oppression. I will organize support now, including from other fathers in RC. Meanwhile G— and I will keep trying to have a baby. The miscarriage we had was a real loss, but the discouragement attached to becoming a parent is old. We get to keep trying and never give up, as long as that makes sense to us.

As a young person I witnessed adults calling people stupid. But any difference in basic intelligence among humans pales in comparison to the sheer power of human intelligence. I am an eager worker toward the liberation of human intelligence.

I can reach for a patient, curious, tender, firm tone with G—. I won't always expect her to be my counselor. Our discouragement about playing the best possible roles for each other is old.

At work I can be the warm, thoughtful co-worker who has everybody's back.\* I don't need a so-called activist job. I need a job that brings in enough money to fund the life that G— and I want. A small-business owner and a respected, visible community leader are fine roles to play in a collapsing society. When I come home upset about work because it feels stupid and meaningless, or I haven't been successful at it, I can find a Co-Counselor to share time with.

Re-evaluation Counseling is about eliminating irrationality so that human intelligence can apply itself to all situations. So I will do an introductory event each month and send out ten invitations to my contacts. I'll teach classes that last a year (because it takes at least that long to get leverage against one's chronic distress). Discouragement attached to teaching and leading RC is old.

N—  
USA

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\* "Has everybody's back" means thinks and cares about everybody.



## Scorning Fear

*Harvey Jackins, from The Reclaiming of Power, pages 93 to 96*

ANY CLIENT'S FEAR CAN BE SCORNED EFFECTIVELY BY THE COUNSELOR, AND THIS WILL LEAD TO ITS DISCHARGE BY THE CLIENT. "Scorning fear" has become a slogan. By this we mean not respecting fear—treating fear with contempt, with amused derision. About two years ago we faced the fact that some of our most experienced counselors tended to be going 'round and 'round on some not-very-important grief, and not progressing rapidly. We recognized that in a way people did not know how to discharge fear, or, more correctly, were not receiving enough encouragement and support against their fear to leap the boundary between tears and shaking. We used the slogan "scorning fear" to highlight the proposed solution.

I have great good news for us, in case you didn't already know it. Most of our experienced counselors are now shaking freely, and enjoying it at least as much as they used to enjoy their crying. Patterned distortions crept in, as usual, however, and I found in many places that fear was being "scorned" by the counselor sitting back and saying, "Scorn your fear, client," (*laughter from group*) and then complaining that the technique didn't really work (*laughter*). The reality of the matter is that the client has been scorning the fear all along, just as much as she or he could figure out a way to do it, and the real improvement necessary is for the counselor to scorn the client's fear. If we don't keep that clear, we will get into distortions, such as the counselor reproaching the client for having fear, or something like that. Workable practice consists of the counselor taking an unafraid attitude toward the client's fear.

L—: Will you give us a demonstration of this sometime in the workshop?

Harvey: How about right now? What are you scared of, L—?

L—: Standing up and asking this question (*laughter from group*). I'm scared right now of talking to you.

Harvey: That's an interesting fear.

L—: Yes (*laughter*).

Harvey: You will probably meet your death from it, but keep on. I can see the headlines now: "Innocent Conference Attendee Has Heart Attack on Floor of Conference" (*much laughter from L— and group*). "Careless treatment by leader charged" (*more laughter*).

L—: I'm glad I raised this question (*laughter, shudder*).

Harvey: What are you afraid will happen?

L—: I'm afraid that I will say something really stupid.

Harvey: I think you can count on<sup>1</sup> that (*much laughter from group and L—*). (*To audience:*) Light, pleasant sarcasm is not the only way to contradict the fear. Once the shakes get going, you'd better get your arms around your client and let him or her feel that there's some unafraid support there, and do many other things, but humor is not a bad way to get started. (*To client:*) That's a very interesting fear you have there. What else might happen?

<sup>1</sup> Count on means be sure of.

L—: I might be massively rejected by this entire group, for asking questions.

Harvey: Care to<sup>2</sup> look around and see the expressions on their faces about your interruption of their valuable time?

L—: They seem delighted (*laughter*).

Harvey: I don't get that impression (*much laughter from group and client*).

Harvey: Okay<sup>3</sup> to put a check on it<sup>4</sup>?

L—: Yes.

Harvey: Fear is scorned by the counselor. Incidentally, as in most counseling, tone of voice, facial expression, and the communication of relaxed confidence is very important.

To get started, we're going to have to be a little daring. When the client says, "I'm afraid of death," we can say in a relaxed way, "That's interesting. Do you think you'll ever die?" and if the client says mumble, mumble, we can happily say, "Well, you probably will," and the tension will get contradicted and the client will begin discharging. You may choke on it a little the first time (*demonstrates, to group laughter*), but if you try, somebody's going to discharge a little (*group laughter*), some small slack will come in, and we'll be able to begin modeling for each other.

<sup>2</sup> Care to means would you like to.

<sup>3</sup> Okay means is it okay.

<sup>4</sup> Put a check on it means stop it there.



AM

## Sketchbook Rambles

### *Art as a Pathway to Liberation*

“Sketchbook rambles” have become a big factor in Ann’s and my re-emergence. They are mini-workshops, with just the two of us, that alternate Co-Counselling sessions with an activity.

They started with the activity of sketching, but we have also used them to work on a current problem, sort out and tidy at home, and practise for a public presentation.

Because of the rambles, I have stopped keeping my art hidden away. I now trust my work, enjoy it, and am giving myself permission to be the “real” me. I have discharged on feeling guilty about doing art while others are having a hard time. I am now discharging on a fear of being successful. Some of my dreams have come true, such as being invited to share a studio with five non-RC artists, and I have made new friends and connections. I have recognised that feeding my soul is essential to liberation.

The rambles have enabled me to discharge on “mental health,” elders’, working-class, raised-poor, and artists’ liberation, as well as care of the environment (I use recycled materials for my sculptures).

*Margaret Barrett*  
Tunbridge Wells, Kent, England

Our sketchbook rambles have been life changing for me. From the beginning I was amazed at the intensity of terror that surfaced—much greater than in ordinary sessions.

When Margaret and I started working together, my resistance to doing art began to surface. I laughed, yawned, raged, and shook my way through a succession of early memories of teasing and ridicule, and internalised negative beliefs, including, “‘Artists are born, not made,’ so there is nothing I can do about it,” “Art is a leisure activity, to do only after important things have been done, and is not a career option,” “I will never be good enough,” “I can’t do it. It is too ha-a-a-rd.” I had learnt to denigrate and devalue my own art.

I noticed avoidance, such as “I will just do \_\_\_\_\_ before I start,” and then I wouldn’t start. I wanted to eat, even though I knew I was not hungry. I mourned the misunderstanding and devaluing of children’s art, and the loss of opportunity due to a lack of teachers and materials during my wartime childhood years. I had a vivid imagination and intuition as a child, but I gradually learnt to hide it and set it aside to focus on the demands of career and adult living. I want it back—all of it. I now understand more clearly how artists’ oppression affects us all.

I discharged on “Am I an artist? Who? Me?” and the competitive stuff<sup>1</sup> triggered by working alongside an art-school-trained artist: “Yours is better than mine.” I worked with intention and decision: “I decide to paint wildly and boldly today.” I discharged on my perfectionist patterns. I let go of control as I explored and experimented more freely, discharging on fears of going into the unknown and on the unpredictable nature of wet paint. I experienced frustration and disappointment.

The first time I realised I was not scared, I missed being scared! From then on my relationship with my work was different. I began to like it and feel excited about it. I became able to see what was good, as well as what needed to be changed, without being judgmental. I could still my directing mind and allow spontaneous responses to take over.

My chronic patterns were visible in my artwork, giving me constant feedback on how far I’d come in freeing myself of them. My struggles with compliance, and conformity to other people’s criteria for how my art “ought” to look, together with my fear of being visible, took me into middle-class liberation: “I will never be quiet again!” I went through a period of three weeks when I felt like I did not know anything about anything. At the end of it, I emerged into a new world of confidence and knowing myself to be limitlessly creative and resourceful.

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<sup>1</sup> In this context, stuff means distress.

I am being “older and bolder,” modelling being an awake elder, having more fun than ever, and enthusiastically using my retirement years to explore new ways of doing and being, and of changing the world now that my sphere of influence is so different from what it was in my working years. I have more freedom than ever before in my life, and I am exploring the experience, meaning, and potential of freedom.

Since we began the rambles, my artwork has become more free, spontaneous, varied, and effortless. I stay with difficulties and challenges longer, knowing that a rich process of discovery is going on.<sup>2</sup> I live more creatively in every area of my life. I have many new friends who are themselves engaging in various forms of art. I relate to them differently than I would have before. I feel more at ease, more of an equal, and more intrigued and less threatened by the differences in our work. I play more spontaneously with children and adults and find more ways to bring fun into my life. I am more resourceful about coping with everyday problems, more self-reliant and in touch with my full power.

I see reclaiming creativity as an inherent aspect of Harvey’s<sup>3</sup> definition of intelligence: the ability to come up with<sup>4</sup> a brand new, fresh, accurate response to every new situation. I also see it as a direct route to finding the Real Me.

My relationship with Margaret has deepened. Neither of us could be doing this without the other. We support each other to discharge, think, and act on where we want to go with our artwork. I am part of various groups of non-RC painters, dancers, and musicians. I support them to reclaim their creativity and to give up<sup>5</sup> denigrating their work. I now want to reclaim my music from “I can’t sing.” The sketchbook ramble format will be useful there, too.

*Ann Trengove*  
Hampshire, England

<sup>2</sup> Going on means happening.

<sup>3</sup> Harvey Jackins’

<sup>4</sup> Come up with means create.

<sup>5</sup> Give up means let go of, abandon.

### **Journey into Creativity**

I take tentative steps  
In the void of unknowing  
Which intriguingly beckons.  
I am hesitant, fearful,  
Chaotic, frenetic.  
I lose myself, find myself,  
Changing direction,  
Retracing my steps,  
Dancing uncertainly  
T’wards stumbling success.  
I feel my way through  
Dense fogs into sunlight  
And storms into stillness.  
With mounting excitement  
I know where I am,  
At least for this moment.  
Then I suddenly know  
It is finished, complete.  
My faith is rewarded,  
The struggle worthwhile.

*Ann Trengove*  
Hampshire, England



STEVE BANBURY



## “I Stopped Talking”

I recently stopped talking in Co-Counseling sessions, reasoning that it's working-class conditioning that makes me think I have to keep my counselors entertained with “interesting” bits of my distress, past and present.

I thought people would be bored, but everyone assures me that it is a delight to be my counselor, and I discharge loads by yawning.

*David Rawlinson*  
Highfield, Southampton, England



## Dates Are for Fun



I had the good fortune of attending two recent workshops that emphasized playing and fun. One, led by Mary Hodgson,<sup>1</sup> was about committed relationships; the other, led by Tim Jackins, was a rural workshop.

In recent years many young people (and I was one of them) have assumed that dates ought to involve long talks about feelings and hang-ups<sup>2</sup> and how difficult one's childhood was. I appreciated what Mary Hodgson had to say about dating: All the soul-searching mainly establishes who will be the client and who the counselor in any future relationship. Contrary to that, dating should be fun! If you pursue the relationship, the fun you have and the good memories you make while dating can hold you together when things get tougher. She recommended that we *play, play, play*; that when planning what to do on a date we consider doing things that draw attention out, such as playing a new sport or card game; that we have interactions that involve living life, not watching life (for example, not going to a movie or watching television).

Tim Jackins' workshop lasted four days, and by day three we were playing as much as Co-Counseling and playing far more than listening to theory. At first it felt odd, but then I got<sup>3</sup> it. This was the way life could be. We could live more communally. We could work together and provide for basic needs and have

an equal amount of time for play and closeness with many people. It felt great to live that possibility.

I want to make it a priority in all my relationships to have fun and get my attention out, and I want to continue having dates and lots of fun in all stages and ages of my relationships. Moving in that direction has brought about a monumental shift that has lightened my life. As a woman and a professional therapist, I used to, more often than not, see my relationships as situations in which to nurture others and assist them in discharging distress. Now I am trying to apply the above thinking about what to do on a date to all my relationships.

All the soul-searching mainly establishes who will be the client and who the counselor in any future relationship. Contrary to that, dating should be fun!

I plan to start a new sport with my twenty-one-year-old stepbrother and a new hobby with my father. Previously I had little or no contact with either of them. Along with helping me discharge a lot of feelings about that side of my family, the direction of fun, fun, fun is allowing me to have my dad and brother back.

*Jennifer Wainman-Sauda*  
Syracuse, New York, USA  
Reprinted from the newsletter of the  
Syracuse, New York, RC Community

<sup>1</sup> Mary Hodgson is an RC leader in Seattle, Washington, USA.

<sup>2</sup> Hang-ups are patterns.

<sup>3</sup> Got means understood.

## The Discharge of Boredom

The usual indication of the discharge of boredom is talk. A fairly standard example would be the material that came in not quite understood because the lecture was boring, or it didn't relate the material to something you already knew. You heard it, but it didn't really make sense to you or get evaluated. In talking over the lecture with someone else in the class or with a Co-Counselor, the talk frees the evaluation and the material begins to make sense. You can evaluate it, understand it, and use it—just as you might have if the lecture had been presented correctly in the first place.

When we've had a client who's been isolated in Alaska (USA)\* for six months, before he can do any other kind of discharging he needs to talk steadily for three or four days, just to catch up on the great grey cloud of information that he hasn't quite thought through because he hasn't been able to talk with anyone about it. It could be called something else, but the word "boredom" fits as well as anything.

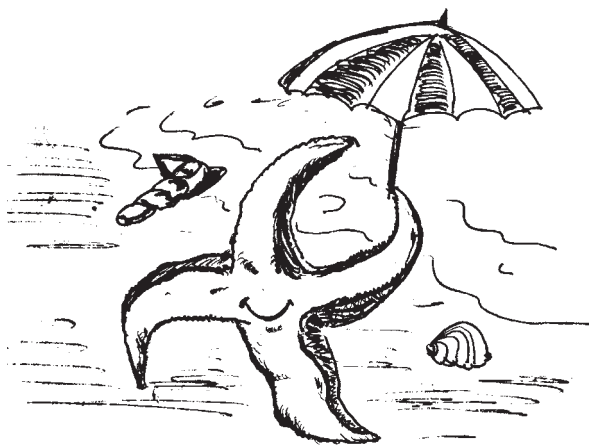
*Harvey Jackins*  
From a letter written in 1975

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\* Alaska is a relatively unpopulated state consisting largely of wilderness.



RAMI BEN-MOSHE



XABI ODRIOZOLA

### FIVE-YEAR SUBSCRIPTION TO *PRESENT TIME*

Rational Island Publishers is offering a five-year subscription to *Present Time*, at the request of many people who would like to not have to re-subscribe every one or two years. The cost is \$84 in the United States and \$104 (U.S.) outside the United States. (A couple of dollars have been added to partially cover the anticipated increase in costs over the next five years.) To order a *Present Time* subscription, see page 110 of this issue.

## Tales of a Raised-in-RCer

Here are some thoughts about growing up as a participant in RC, inspired by my attendance at a recent family workshop.

It was over twenty years ago that I played as a young person at the same camp on Canandaigua Lake where this recent workshop was held—at the first of three weekend family workshops I would attend as a young person before going to my first adult men’s workshop at the age of eighteen. After that men’s workshop, it was years before I began practicing RC as an adult. For a long time, I hoped to find relationships that would support me in the way that RC can, but between the transience of my relationships and the societal barriers to closeness, I was unable to get the support I needed. Finally, at the age of twenty-five, I joined an ongoing class and began my adventures as an adult Co-Counselor.

What did it mean for me to grow up with RC? It was both confusing and amazingly helpful. Anyone who has tried engaging in RC with family members knows the difficulty of counseling with someone to whom one’s chronic patterns are deeply tied. Add to that how for young people, who typically have much more access to discharge than adults, the idea of a session often makes little sense. As helpful as sessions are,

they are, ultimately, a reaction to an oppressive society in which our ability to emotionally process the hurts and joys of our lives has been taken away from us. Without the oppression we would probably, like a newborn, cry and laugh and shake whenever we needed to and thus never need a session.

*Anyone who has tried engaging in RC with family members knows the difficulty of counseling with someone to whom one’s chronic patterns are deeply tied.*

As a young person, when I was closer to reality and still incredibly hopeful about the world, I was bitter and disappointed that my father needed sessions, that he couldn’t simply be present and open to me and my sister all the time. That disappointment got connected to other disappointments I had—in my father, the rest of my family, and the oppressive society. In a way the session, a tool for healing, came to symbolize the oppressions that make people need sessions. That was part of the reason why as a young person and young adult (and even sometimes now) I resisted having sessions. I’ve sometimes seen a similar dynamic with new Co-Counselors: Exposure to sessions allows them to access their disappointment with society, and then they aim that disappointment at RC.

Luckily I could see the value in my father’s sessions in his growing emotional availability and thoughtful engagement in my life. He brought RC techniques of fair fighting and back-and-forth listening into our family, which

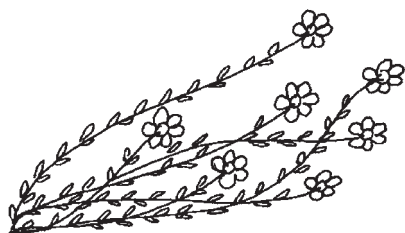
helped us stay connected through times of conflict. He also played hard with my friends and me, and this helped me retain many of the qualities of youth that I have seen society squeeze out of a lot of my childhood friends.

My father’s hard play not only helped keep me playful, it also gave me strength and confidence. I got to learn how to go all-out with my body,\* in a safe setting; the roughness was real but without danger. At this recent workshop, I liked wrestling with the young people, knowing that they were gaining toughness in a supportive environment, not the environment of abuse in which toughness is usually learned.

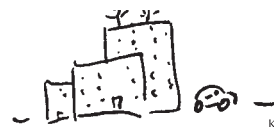
I see many advantages and challenges in having young people grow up with RC in their lives, and I think it’s important that as a Co-Counseling Community we think and counsel together about these things. I know that I personally have many years of discharge and thinking ahead of me to clarify what my relationship with RC was as a young person. I also know that the access I had to RC brought me a closeness in my relationships, a confidence in myself, and tools for navigating life that I would not want to live without.

Brendan Rose  
Syracuse, New York, USA  
Reprinted from the newsletter of the  
Syracuse, New York, RC Community

\*Go all-out with my body means use my body fully, without restraint.



NITI DANDEKAR



KK



## Reading RC Literature as a Group Project

*A few years ago I set myself the challenge of reading all the books on RC theory that Harvey Jackins wrote.*

*I bought the books I didn't currently have, arranged them all in a pile in order of publication, and started reading from the beginning. I had read most of them, a long while back, but decided to read them again anyway.*

*Reading them took about two years. (I went through periods of reading intensively followed by periods of not reading much at all.) I would keep the current book by my bed and read it when I couldn't sleep or woke up early. When I finished it, I would immediately start reading the next book in the pile. I learned exciting new things, even from the books I had read before.*

*One of the books I read was Rough Notes from Buck Creek I. I had avoided reading it for years; I thought it would only be rough notes. Also, because it was clearly older, I thought it would be less interesting. It turned out to be<sup>1</sup> an amazing book—a transcript of everything said in the classes at the very first RC workshop, which was two weeks long. Reading it was like being at the workshop. There were useful insights in that book that didn't appear in any of the others.*

*After reading all the books, my ability to lead in RC improved immensely. I felt more informed (and it wasn't just a feeling!).*

*Since then I've extended my project to reading everything that Harvey wrote, and I'll probably extend it again after that—maybe to reading all the RC literature there is.*

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<sup>1</sup> It turned out to be means in fact it was.



KEN DEVENEY

*At a recent leaders' meeting, I decided to ask each person to talk about his or her relationship to the RC literature. Listening to the details of where each person was in his or her struggle to read it inspired me to try something more widely.*

*I wrote to all the people who were going to participate in my upcoming Regional<sup>2</sup> workshop, proposing that they read a large piece of RC literature before coming. (The correspondence that arose from that is copied below.)*

*I have found that my workshops go better if I choose a central idea and have everything I do at the workshop relate logically to that. My idea for this workshop was, "One distinctive feature of humans is our trend toward the total mastery of our environment—and the (currently irrational) society is our environment." I did a class at the workshop on reading the literature, linking it to each of us building rational communities around ourselves. In the class I included these ideas:*

*\* As Co-Counsellors we each need our own direct relationship to RC theory, as opposed to only receiving interpretations of it from RC leaders. We need to struggle to understand it, and its many implications, for ourselves. Reading RC literature can play a big part in this.*

*\* Taking on<sup>3</sup> a challenge as a group is a good contradiction to feelings of powerlessness and separation. Such a challenge is everyone in a group attempting to read a big piece of RC literature.*

### **A READING ASSIGNMENT BEFORE THE WORKSHOP**

*I wrote the following letter four weeks before the workshop. (The four weeks included the Christmas and New Year holidays, during which many people had at least a week away from work.)*

Dear Co-Counsellor,

At the upcoming Regional workshop we will continue putting attention on reading RC literature as a major part of each of our involvement in RC. Deciding to read the literature is one of the necessary steps in making RC our own.

*continued . . .*

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<sup>2</sup> A Region is a subdivision of the International Re-evaluation Counseling Community, usually consisting of several Areas (local RC Communities).

<sup>3</sup> In this context, taking on means undertaking.

## TEACHING, LEADING, COMMUNITY BUILDING

continued . . .

I also want us to notice ourselves as part of a group of people who can take on a challenge together and gain a new sense of our power as a result. I invite you to join me in this group activity: each of us reading a piece of RC literature between now and the workshop.

This is what I suggest:

Find a book or a pamphlet written by Harvey Jackins. Read the first article in it or the first twenty pages, whether or not you think you will like it. This is about deliberately deciding to read the literature as an end in itself, because it is a useful activity in its own right.

You can read something you've read before; re-reading the literature is useful.

Many of us will have time off work over the next few weeks. You could view some of that time as time for yourself, time put aside for your own re-emergence—the kind of time that seems difficult for many of us to take—and deliberately move forward in the face of pulls toward patterned comforts that keep us passive.

To women: these holidays can be times when you are expected, even more than usual, to put others' needs before your own. You can move against this sexism by setting aside time for yourself to read some RC literature.

This assignment may feel like extra work. That's because it is. However, it is meaningful work—a hundred percent for the benefit of you as an individual and humanity as a whole. It is the kind of work that each of us wishes we had; the kind that is deeply satisfying.

You may need to reach out to someone for help with this. For example, you might like to do it with a Co-Counsellor. I am willing to have a session on it with any of you who ask, and Sheena Mooney<sup>4</sup> has offered to lend books. Others of you may also want to offer these things.

Recent world events indicate that the next few decades are going to be an interesting time for those of us in RC. I think that the time will come when our (rather sketchy) knowledge of how to help people think when they are scared or confused is suddenly needed, no matter how timid we feel. Would you like your knowledge to be a little less sketchy?

*Karl Lam*  
Burwell, Cambridgeshire, England

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<sup>4</sup> Sheena Mooney is an RC leader in Haslingfield, Cambridgeshire, England.



ANDY VERNON-JONES

### A RESPONSE

Sounds like a great and hideous idea. It always feels to me like a chore to read RC literature, but when I'm actually reading it, I love it. S— reads RC literature every day. She is a great advocate. She is always telling everyone what a huge difference it makes to her day and life.

I love what you wrote about us being "called upon" and our skills being needed. It's revolutionary and fits with what I notice in my life—where I do well around people and where I don't know enough yet and get stuck.

What an amazing workshop it will be with everyone coming having recently read RC literature. Awesome idea. I've read some *Present Time*, but tonight I'm gonna<sup>5</sup> start re-reading one of Harvey's books.

*Jonathan Smith*  
Houghton Regis, Bedfordshire, England

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<sup>5</sup> Gonna means going to.

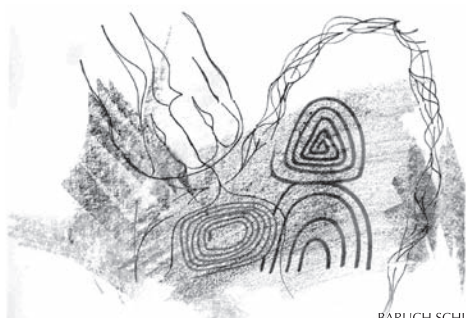
**FOLLOW-UP**

Dear Regional workshop participant,

I'm writing to ask how you are doing in relation to being part of the group activity of deliberately reading some RC literature before the Regional workshop. Write to me, or to all of us on this list, and let us know where you are excited about having done it, or where you are struggling with strong feelings.

This project is about trying to do something together as a group that all of us have feelings about and doing it despite the feelings. It's also about helping each other with our individual struggles so we don't struggle alone.

Karl



BARUCH SCHUR

**MORE RESPONSES**

*I love reading RC literature. I read something every day. I may not get a chance to read much, but I've decided it is important for me to read at least something, as it is a good contradiction to the feelings of isolation I carry around with me.*

*I prefer the smaller pamphlets. (I've chosen to read *Women before the workshop*.) I feel hopeful reading them and get excited knowing that I'm not the only person in the world who has this information.*

*I get restimulated when picking up the big books and feel confused when I'm reading them. I have to take notes; then it feels like I'm back at school. Some days this is fine (I have more attention for studying); other days I just don't pick them up. I am currently reading *The Upward Trend*. I've been reading it for almost a year; progress feels slow.*

*Mostly I absolutely love the literature. Even when I struggle, I still love what I read.*

Susan Throssell  
Leek, Staffordshire, England



KATIE KAUFFMAN

*I've read RC pamphlets and Harvey's books when I'm preparing to teach a class but don't tend to read them otherwise. It's as if I will do it for other people but not for me.*

*I don't have a struggle with reading Present Time, mainly because I leave it near the toilet. This gets around the distress I have with reading because it's not somewhere where I might expect to find it. I also know that I'm only going to read for one to ten minutes.*

*For Karl's assignment, I decided to pick a Harvey book at random and read the first twenty pages. In the end I read forty—once I got started, I noticed how brilliant the information was.*

Mai Mai Lam  
Burwell, Cambridgeshire, England



XABI ODRIOZOLA

I have started reading one of the books. The article in it I'm reading is about counselling between Jews and Gentiles.

I am distracted by the visuals—the size of the fonts used, whether the fonts are in italics, and so on. This particular article is the write-up of a conversation among several people, with a few insertions by Harvey, and each paragraph has a different font style. I am also distracted by knowing some of the people in the conversation; I start thinking about them, and the workshops where I met them, and whether anything I'm reading is making me think about them differently.

I am halfway through the article. I have learnt something about Jewish oppression and will definitely read more soon.

Kay Goodridge  
Fen Ditton, Cambridgeshire, England

*continued . . .*



## TEACHING, LEADING, COMMUNITY BUILDING

continued . . .

Hello Everyone,

I find it hard to admit that I actually enjoy reading factual books. It's as though it's not a cool<sup>6</sup> thing to say. But there, I've said it now!

I go through spurts of reading a lot and then only a little bit. I always look forward to reading *Present Time*, to hearing how people are using RC in their lives. I find it inspiring and hopeful to know that RC is growing and moving.

I love the pamphlets and the journals. And it's great having a library of books on hand, and access to RC literature on the Internet. I like to look up information that can help me with issues I'm struggling with, and learn about topics that are important to the people in my life (Jewish oppression, men's oppression, classism, how racism affects Asians).

I like reading when I choose to do it. I struggle when someone else asks me to read or tells me exactly when to do it.

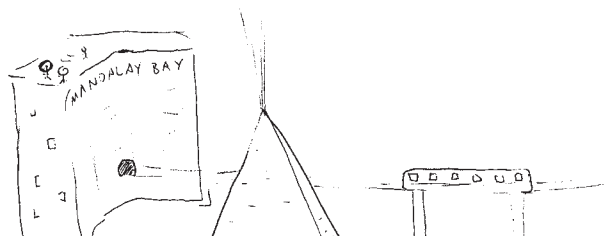
Over Christmas I pushed myself to read the first twenty pages of *The Upward Trend*. The first few chapters looked like they contained boring details about the set-up of RC Communities, and it felt different choosing to read them without knowing first what I was going to get out of them. I found that it was useful reading about how RC began, how much thought and hard work went into building the theory and the Community, the connection between RC and transforming society, and why transforming society is necessary and possible.

I've carried on reading the book and have noticed that a lot of questions I've had that I hadn't consciously realised needed answering are being answered. It has made me think a lot. I've also noticed over the last week a slight but important difference in how I am talking about RC and using it with a particular friend with whom I've just started swapping time.<sup>7</sup>

Alima Adams  
Cambridge, Cambridgeshire, England

<sup>6</sup> In this context, cool means fashionable.

<sup>7</sup> Swapping times means exchanging listening.



LEAH KOCH-MICHAEL

Karl,

Many thanks for the "homework." I don't like it, but when it is done I feel great!

Since being in RC I have read *The Human Side of Human Beings* (the only whole RC book I've read, and I read it in one go<sup>8</sup>; I could not put it down). I keep going back to it for refreshment. And I do enjoy reading the pamphlets. I've read a few pages of one, then a few pages of another, and so on.

In the last few days I have read *Understanding and Supporting Young People*, by Jenny Sazama, and *A Rational Theory of Sexuality* and *The Art of Listening*, by Harvey Jackins. I sometimes visit the RC web site ([www.rc.org](http://www.rc.org)). I was browsing it on the weekend and there, too, came across *The Art of Listening*. I would like to share with you the "Commitments" section of that pamphlet (in Harvey's words):

"On the drive up from Fresno, I helped someone practice a commitment. The commitment is a very powerful tool. It has to be just the right commitment.

"It has to be the person's own commitment. This commitment was, 'I solemnly promise that from this moment on I will never again settle for anything less than everything.' Sounds a little ambitious, doesn't it? But try it a few times. You'll be amazed at the thoughts that come winging through your head.

"In your role as the listener, in your role as the good friend, remember to have high expectations.

"Not reproaches! They're already too plentiful. ('Why didn't you get a higher grade? Only an A+? Why didn't you get better than that?') Offer instead the confident expectation, 'If you want it, you can get it, and I'll back<sup>9</sup> you all the way.' 'You're not sure you can think well enough? I know you can think. Can you do what you want to? Yes, you can. There's no question about it.'

"If you remember that your goal is to be a good listener and friend and remember what a powerful force listening is, and if you then think of the attitudes you always wished somebody had taken toward you, you'll know what to do.

"You'll know the attitudes that your friend is waiting for: confidence, respect, delight, safety, approval, awareness, reassurance that the person has always done his or her best, natural physical contact. Commitment: 'I'll be with you. I'll stick with you. I won't abandon you no matter how hard the

<sup>8</sup> In one go means all at one time.

going gets.’ That may feel like an awful load, as if you listen to five people and you commit yourself, then you may have to be washing everybody’s dishes next week—but it’s not the same thing. If a pattern comes in to demand that you wash the dishes to prove you’re really with them, you say, ‘I’m sorry, that’s not what I really meant. I’m for you, not for your dirty dishes.’ The danger isn’t as great as you may feel it is.”

My commitment: I solemnly promise that from this moment on I will be an excellent listener.

*Eddie Rivero*  
Cambridge, Cambridgeshire, England



LEAH KOCH-MICHAEL

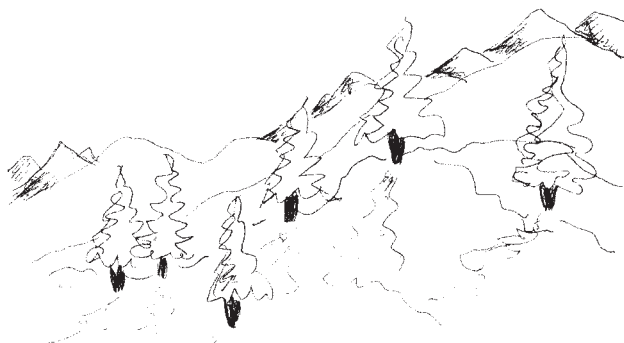
*Hi all,*

*I’m really looking forward to the workshop. Can’t wait to see you all. I’m reading Present Time at every breakfast time now. That is going well and is a lovely start to the day. Present Time sits next to my Total Film Mag, and I read a bit of both. I find all sorts of non-fiction reading difficult. I guess it’s an old school thing. It gets in the way of my job, as I never read any educational material for adults.*

*I want to read a little before going to sleep as well, but reading at night seems to be harder. I’ll try again tonight and let you know!*

*Jonathan Smith*

<sup>9</sup> Back means support.



KATIE KAUFFMAN



LOUISIANA, USA • DIANE SHISK

## Addictions

Actually, no one likes being in the grip of an addiction. Everyone is always hoping that someone from the outside will speak up and interfere with it.

*Harvey Jackins*  
From a letter written in 1975

## Great to Be a Support Group Leader

It's great to be the leader of a support group. It makes me think a lot. I started leading a support group at the age of eleven. My older sister was among the young adults in the group, and it was nice to lead her since I seldom led her outside of RC. Often my sister and I would discharge a lot in the group, and then we could support each other outside of RC also.

At eleven I didn't know much RC theory. I started reading RC theory when I was seventeen. I could feel lots of changes after starting to read the literature. Gwen Brown's pamphlet, *Why Lead in RC*, has helped me in all my leading.

At seventeen I attended my first Pre-World Conference. I learned many new things, and at my second and third Pre-World Conferences I was a support-group leader.

This week when I led my support group, I felt closer to each member, everyone seemed to feel fine about my leading, and I had more fun. One time I got to be with the members of my support group at a workshop, and then I could understand how important the group was to me, and to the others.

I need to shape and sharpen my role as counselor. I had a long session on my counseling, which seemed important even if I had to skip some sleep. After the session I felt sharper. Thanks to Diane<sup>1</sup> for saying that it is important to have at least one long session a week. She is right.

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<sup>1</sup> Diane Shisk, the Alternate International Reference Person for the Re-evaluation Counseling Communities

I love being a leader. However, being a client in front of a group that I am leading has been difficult for me. When Sonal,<sup>2</sup> from the United States, visited us and led a day-long workshop, she explained more about counseling leaders. After that I led an Area workshop at which I had a good turn as client. I didn't think, "I'm a leader," but felt like one among the group. That got me closer to the group, and the group closer to me. After that, many in the group started counseling me and enjoying my leadership more.

Soorya T. Suresh  
Bangalore, Karnataka, India

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<sup>2</sup> Sonal Sheth, a Co-Counselor from Washington, D.C., USA

Please help us keep the lists in the back of *Present Time* up-to-date. People all over the world depend on them for accurate information.

We ask that you take a moment to look over the lists of Information Coordinators, Age Group Leaders, Area Reference Persons, Liberation Reference Persons, Commonality Reference Persons, Teachers Outside of Organized Areas, Contacts, and Workshops and let us know if you find any inaccuracies.

Please e-mail any corrections to <publications@rc.org> or mail them to Rational Island Publishers, 719 2nd Avenue North, Seattle, Washington 98109, USA.

Your help will make a difference and is greatly appreciated.

*Rational Island Publishers*



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## A Young Adults' Workshop in India

A young adults' workshop gave me a good opportunity for re-emergence.

I had sessions about the oppressions aimed at me as a child and currently as a young adult. Discharging on these oppressions allowed me to see a change and feel a freshness within me. I found new ways to solve my problems.

At the workshop I learned to love each and every human. Connecting with and being close to new people brought me out of my distress. The way the group accepted me was good.

Sometimes at the workshop I wanted to be alone with negative thoughts. This made me assume that I am a big distressed man in this world. My Co-Counseling sessions let me know what the reality is about me: how talented I am, how important I am.

I led a support group in which we built closeness. We each had the chance to discharge and re-evaluate. We appreciated each other and from that got to know about the quality and reality of ourselves. I also led a panel about the distresses related to being men. The group accepted me as the leader for it, which was a good thing for me.

Then I agreed to write a report—a new experience for me. I learned a lot thinking about the whole group's experience at this workshop.

In this workshop I learned about many things hidden in myself. I realized the leadership quality in myself. I liked the topic groups on oppression, along with fun time, games, and songs.

*Dilip Kumar (Guru)*  
Bangalore, Karnataka, India



LINDA O. KRAMER

### Independent Means Less Alone

I don't think you will ever be alone again, but I think you'll be operating from yourself instead of being dependent on anybody else. The more independent one is, in my opinion, the less one is alone.

*Harvey Jackins*  
From a letter written in 1973

### Fire

A light, a brightness, a passion  
A fire that will not destroy  
Smoldering away inside  
Waiting to join and ignite

Embers smothered by patterns  
Sometimes smoke is all we see  
Where there is smoke there is fire  
Burn fire burn

Sparked with presence  
Fueled by attention  
A potential radiating greatness  
Let the fires become one

*Stephen Connor*  
Sydney, New South Wales, Australia

## Reaching Out to a Catholic Constituency

I did my annual four-day workshop on leadership and liberation for an international group that is a mix of lay people, religious,<sup>1</sup> and clergy. This year I did demonstrations on discharging racism and sexism. There was lots of discharge, and people loved the workshop.

I also talked about internalised Catholic oppression and the need for a place in parishes where Catholics can share their feelings about being Catholic. I am trying to interest the local bishop in a workshop for clergy and lay activists. I have already led two evenings on leadership for priests in the diocese.<sup>2</sup>

This morning I got an invitation to talk to a group of Church of Ireland (Protestant) clergy about managing change in their parishes.

*Seán Ruth*

New Ross, County Wexford, Ireland

Reprinted from the RC e-mail  
discussion list for leaders of Catholics

<sup>1</sup> Religious are men or women who formally commit to living in community in accordance with Christian ideals.

<sup>2</sup> A diocese is a geographic area under the care and guidance of a bishop appointed by the Pope.

## Sharing RC in Kenya

I was recently in Kenya, where I spent a day with Adelaide Chemutai Kariuki, an RC teacher who lives in Thika and works in Mount Elgon during the week.

One afternoon she and her husband and I joined four other families for a meal. At one point the men and the women were in separate groups and Adelaide asked me to speak to the women about Co-Counseling. I shared my early experience of Co-Counseling and described the origins of RC. Then Adelaide gave a brilliant introductory "lecture." She addressed body image, marriage, gender roles, parenting, pretense, the pain of men, and the inherent goodness of us all. She brought us out of our habitual "cocoon," which is her image of how Co-Counseling changed her life. While she was talking, she choked up with tears, and I held her while she cried. We had time for two

mini-sessions as well as questions from the women.

She told us that she had taught Co-Counseling to the staff at her work site so that they could cry with each other every day. Their work includes giving one-way sessions to people who come to them in need of healing—people who have survived, and still struggle to survive, a recent period of violence. (Mount Elgon's troubles pre-date the post-election violence in Kenya and are due in part to inequitable land distribution, rooted in colonialism.)

I asked Adelaide if she would write to *Present Time* about her work. She said that she didn't have time—so I wrote this report, with her permission.

*Maryhelen Snyder*

Albuquerque, New Mexico, USA



GALIA BRAND

## To Win

Somehow each of us, to win, must reach a point where all the past intimidation and limits are something to say "nonsense" to and proceed on our way, come what may. It helps a lot if we can do it in some company, and you have some company. In particular, me.

*Harvey Jackins*

From a letter written in 1973

## Creating a Safe Workshop for People of Color

Dear Tim,<sup>1</sup>

Each year since 1990, when I became the Regional Reference Person<sup>2</sup> for Idaho and parts of Washington (USA), I have led a workshop at Lazy F Camp in the Manastash Canyon, in the foothills of the Cascade Mountains, near Ellensburg, Washington. For several years it was an open workshop, and I often focused on newer Co-Counselors from small, new RC Communities, to help them get or keep RC going in their localities. For the last several years it has been for RC teachers and leaders.

Our Region, which now includes Montana, consists of lots of rural areas and small towns, some cities, and many Native reservations. From the beginning I have held out that it would be made up mostly of<sup>3</sup> and led by people of color and working-class people and that we would keep discharging whatever we needed to in order to get there. Persistently, however, our annual workshop has been overwhelmingly white. One year there were five people of color—a record number—but they were still only a sixth of the workshop. We kept plugging along, Co-Counseling on how racism has affected our lives, challenging genocide, and discharging, discharging, discharging.

When I heard that in September 2008 you would be leading a teachers' and leaders' workshop for all the Regions in the Pacific Northwest (USA), I decided that our 2008 Regional workshop could once again be for newer folks. I planned to invite all the people to whom I had been teaching RC in my early childhood education classes at Northwest Indian College. I was excited at the prospect of at least some of them coming.

In the spring of 2008 I realized that for our workshop to accomplish what I wanted it to, I needed to focus on what would work best for the Native people. I wanted them to receive counseling from experienced Co-Counselors; attend support groups that were well led, topic groups of interest to them, and classes that focused on what they wanted to learn; and experience a minimum of unawareness about racism and genocide. To make that possible, I needed a cadre of experienced

Co-Counselors who had good relationships with each other and could support the newer folks, and I needed the workshop to not be overwhelmingly white.

In June I led a conference call with my Region's Area Reference Persons<sup>4</sup> and proposed that the workshop be at least fifty percent people of color and Indigenous folks. I shared my perspective that your September workshop could support our Regional one. (After a weekend with you, I figured the white allies would be in better shape<sup>5</sup> to think about the people of color and Native folks who would be coming to our workshop.) We talked about it, discharged some, and started looking at the possibility. My organizer had told me that we needed twenty-six paid workshop attendees to break even on costs. We counted up the Native folks and people of color who we figured would come, and it looked like we could get the thirteen minimum. We decided to go ahead.

In August I led the first-ever RC workshop for Tribal ECE<sup>6</sup> workers and allies at the Yakama Nation, near Toppenish, Washington. It was a bit of a breakthrough. I invited everyone to whom I had taught RC who worked in a tribal Head Start<sup>7</sup> program in Washington or Idaho. Five women from the Yakama Nation Head Start came, plus Betsy,<sup>8</sup> Jeri Marcus (my co-worker at

*continued . . .*

<sup>4</sup> An Area Reference Person thinks about an Area (a local RC Community) as a whole and exercises judgment as to which activities are consistent with Re-evaluation Counseling theory and policy.

<sup>5</sup> Shape means condition.

<sup>6</sup> ECE is Early Childhood Education.

<sup>7</sup> Head Start is a federally-funded comprehensive early childhood learning and social services program for low-income children and families in the United States.

<sup>8</sup> Betsy Hasegawa is an RC leader in Bellingham, Washington, USA.

<sup>1</sup> Tim Jackins

<sup>2</sup> A Regional Reference Person is responsible for the continued re-emergence of both experienced and new RC leaders in a Region. A Region is a subdivision of the International Re-evaluation Counseling Community, usually consisting of several Areas (local RC Communities).

<sup>3</sup> Be made up mostly of means consist mostly of.



SOREN HOLM



continued . . .

the college), and me. Something was clearly changing. People were showing a desire to learn more about RC, and I heard that they had been doing occasional mini-sessions or at least listening to each other discharge.

Three of the Yakama Head Start women at that August workshop vowed to come to the October workshop and encourage others to come, too. It helped that the Manastash Canyon was geographically close to their reservation. As it turned out,<sup>9</sup> only one of them was able to come, but she brought three others who hadn't been able to attend the August workshop.

I read the blurb by Harvey<sup>10</sup> in the July 2008 *Present Time* in which he said that one has to stay in contact with people to organize them, that just having them on a list was like being a bureaucrat and wasn't really organizing. That made me sit up and take notice! After the August workshop at Yakama, I started setting up bi-weekly phone sessions with folks whom I knew I wanted to have as Co-Counselors and whom I wanted to support coming to the October workshop. (I was getting to have my people!)

In September the organizing for the workshop began in earnest. The organizer, Jacob Rosenblum, and I "met" by phone every Monday afternoon to talk about the workshop and have a mini-session. Jacob's warmth and his willingness to ask questions, back<sup>11</sup> my thinking, and keep thinking about details and major issues were excellent and a tremendous contradiction<sup>12</sup> for me.

Jacob and his team phoned many of the people of color and Indigenous folks to personally invite them to the workshop. (They got together with their cell phones and phone numbers and did a "phone-a-thon.") Also, Jan Yoshiwara<sup>13</sup> was inviting the people of color in her Area, and several white allies were encouraging their Co-Counselors of color to come.

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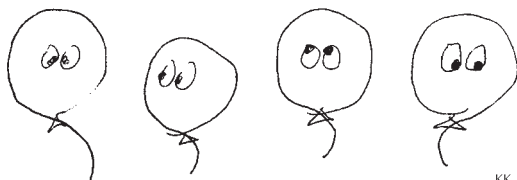
<sup>9</sup> Turned out means happened.

<sup>10</sup> Harvey Jackins

<sup>11</sup> Back means support.

<sup>12</sup> Contradiction to distress

<sup>13</sup> Jan Yoshiwara is the Area Reference Person for Olympia, Washington, USA, and the International Liberation Reference Person for Japanese-Heritage people.



I felt more connected, and more seemed possible. I was making notes daily of things I wanted to see happen at the workshop, thoughts I wanted to convey, Co-Counseling theory and practice I wanted to highlight, how I wanted the schedule to go, and topic groups I hoped we could have. I was determined to make the workshop work for my people. That amount of planning was new for me. I even had my notes in a binder, with sections for different things I was thinking about.

Registrations started to come in. Early on, three people of color in the Region who had been to a previous workshop that was overwhelmingly white said they were coming. Part of my motivation for the fifty-fifty balance was that I couldn't stand to have one more workshop in which the people of color were a tiny minority. After holding out for eighteen years that our Region would be led by people of color and working-class people, I wanted to make it clear that we were not waiting any longer. We had been discharging in that direction; now we were acting. I decided that if we couldn't have twenty-six people, I would take a smaller or no leader's fee in order to have the balance I wanted.

I got braver about inviting Native people and showing more openly that I wanted them. I trembled a lot! I told one woman, D—, that I wanted our tribal communities to have RC so that we would quit killing ourselves and dying young because of the internalized genocide recordings. That actually made her consider coming. After that, I spent several hours composing a letter to my Native Co-Counseling students in which I openly expressed my caring and the reasons I wanted them and their leadership. I said we could discharge the genocide recordings together at the workshop. What I wrote to them was a contradiction to how I've tended to go invisible much of the time and hope that people would "get it"<sup>14</sup> without my spelling out my thinking. Even though D— did not end up coming, communicating with her helped me to open up and say what I wanted.

A few Native women registered. When they got scared, I remembered to not take it personally, to listen and offer counseling and give them room to discharge their fears and hesitations. And I traded time<sup>15</sup> with them so that they counseled me, too. I was determined they would get to do RC fully. I remembered not to feel bad about myself and to discharge (with other

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<sup>14</sup> "Get it" means understand it.

<sup>15</sup> Traded time means exchanged listening.

Co-Counselors) my discouragement. I was relaxed and able to think about several people and help them get to the workshop.

I kept holding out for myself and others that the workshop had already started with the organizing, the people considering coming, the hope that it was engendering for the people of color, and the discharging of discouragement when people said no—that it was already working for our connections and re-emergence. I counseled and cliented with that in mind so that the workshop was not my main goal, re-emergence was. That proved to be a good idea for me, and for others whom I counseled.

I also wrote a letter to the white Natives<sup>16</sup> and attached some basic steps for white Natives “coming home” (Alison Ehara-Brown’s<sup>17</sup> summary of Marcie’s<sup>18</sup> suggestions) so that the white Natives could begin the work of discharging on white identity and genocide. I wanted to include them but not confuse their work with the work that needed to be done with participants who had grown up with an Indigenous or person-of-color identity.

Five days before the workshop, we had a firm count of the people of color and Indigenous people who were coming and could let the allies know whether or not they would be participating. On the Thursday and Friday before the workshop, four Native people dropped out—one because of injuries from a car accident and three because of other crises. Betsy and I offered them counseling time, which I know they appreciated, but they couldn’t see that coming to the workshop would be good for them. People who have never been to an RC workshop can’t really know what attention and discharge can do for their ability to handle injuries and crises. I was sorry but not discouraged. I knew they had tried.

Happily, on the day before the workshop, we added one more Indigenous woman. Most of the white allies who had applied got to come. I conferred with the Region’s Area Reference Persons and teachers outside of organized Areas and prioritized the white people who (a) had discharged enough on racism and oppressor material<sup>19</sup> to be relaxed with people of

color and Indigenous people, (b) were committed in their daily lives to one or more of the people of color and Indigenous folks who were coming, and (c) were geographically close to a person of color or Indigenous person who was coming alone from his or her location (so that they could share rides and perhaps continue to Co-Counsel after the workshop).

Because of the net loss of three Indigenous women and the fact that four Indigenous folks were white Natives, the balance wasn’t quite what I had hoped for, but it was so markedly different from previous workshops that I was pretty<sup>20</sup> sure it would be okay. There were thirty-one people all together, and on final count eleven were people of color or raised Native. With myself and the four other white Natives, you could say that was fifteen—close enough to fifty percent to make a huge difference.

Happily, no more folks dropped out and all thirty-one people actually showed up<sup>21</sup> at Lazy F Camp. I had thought carefully about support groups so that the people of color and Indigenous people would have the best crack at discharging.<sup>22</sup> I had also set up sleeping arrangements ahead of time to minimize restimulation.

Overall, our Region took some significant steps that helped to create a safe workshop for the people of color and Native people—one that they could make their own, and where they could do the work they wanted to do.

I hope to write soon about the workshop itself. That is proving more difficult. I guess some discharge is in order so that I can savor the joys and possibilities the workshop opened up for me, and apparently for everyone there.

*Shelley Macy*  
Regional Reference Person for Idaho,  
Montana, and parts of Washington, USA  
Bellingham, Washington, USA

<sup>20</sup> Pretty means quite.

<sup>21</sup> Showed up means appeared.

<sup>22</sup> Crack at discharging means chance to discharge.

<sup>16</sup> White Natives are people of mixed white and Native heritage who were raised as white.

<sup>17</sup> Alison Ehara-Brown is a white Native and the Area Reference Person for the East Bay North, California, USA, RC Community.

<sup>18</sup> Marcie Rendon, the International Liberation Reference Person for Native Americans

<sup>19</sup> Material means distress.

If we all did the things we are  
capable of doing, we would  
literally astound ourselves.

*Thomas Alva Edison*

## New Challenges in the Battle to End Racism

*From a talk by Tim Jackins, at the West Coast North America Pre-World Conference, January 2009*

Today is Martin Luther King Day.<sup>1</sup> Our government was forced, by the efforts of millions of people, into proclaiming this day a holiday so that the work of an important, intelligent, powerful person would not be forgotten, so that his example would not be submerged and put out of sight. It's important that that happened.

Yet, as with every victory, society has kept cutting away at the corners of it, trying to trivialize it and make it less meaningful. What Dr. King was able to think about, talk about, and lead has been shrunk down for public consumption into a little package. Dr. King recognized and spoke about the many ways people are divided from each other—by class, by war, by sexism, in addition

to racism. He was questioning capitalism and the whole basis of society. All of that was quickly covered over.

We will lose ground if we simply sit and rest while distresses are still being actively played out.<sup>2</sup> We need to use Dr. King's thoughts and work as contradictions to what society has thrown at us, and threw at him. He provided an important example of what a mind can do—not alone, not off trying to figure things out in isolation, but working with people in present-day struggles and growing because of those struggles. He figured something out, he was able to move himself, and he did it without having a group of people to discharge with. He didn't understand the discharge process, but he understood reality

well enough and pushed himself into enough contact with reality that he didn't get stuck. He was able to keep thinking.

All minds are capable of that—no matter what distresses they carry and whether or not they have had a chance to discharge. It does take deciding. Dr. King made a lot of decisions against his fears, against the dangers. He was able to decide in spite of what the oppressive society was acting out in his direction.

Many of us are not sufficiently engaged in struggle to be learning from reality very quickly. We are still trying to protect ourselves, still acting on the fears and numbness our patterns have built into our lives. As more and more of us go out and work against oppression, as we try to build relationships across the lines society's oppressions have drawn to separate groups of people—whether we do it in RC or outside—we are going to have to do things that feel scary and unreasonable, things that we didn't have to do when we stayed within our own group. We are going to have to face distresses (ours and other people's), work on the restimulations, and learn to function differently. In particular, we are going to have to push ourselves to do new things and stop hoping that simply by being "good," and trying to keep from doing anything "wrong," we will somehow reach everybody in every situation. We won't. We have to challenge ourselves more than that. We have to decide that we are capable of it. We have good examples. We have Martin Luther King, Jr.—a tremendous example.

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<sup>1</sup> Martin Luther King Day is a U.S. holiday, on the third Monday in January, in celebration of the birthday of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., a powerful leader in the U.S. Civil Rights Movement. He was assassinated in 1968.

<sup>2</sup> Played out means acted out.



CORAL BAY, PALAWAN, PHILIPPINES • NIK LEUNG



## WE ARE AT A DIFFERENT PLACE NOW

In July my father will have been dead for ten years. We're still here. Those of you who have been around long enough knew my father—knew his history, his struggles, and the things he had to fight through before he understood about discharge, before there was an RC Community. He, too, managed to be in enough contact with reality that things had to happen. Only because of him do we have the resource of the RC Community.

The Community hasn't stopped where he left it. We have been able to continue in ways that are important. We have moved ahead from where we were ten years ago. I think we have some sense of ourselves now, but we don't yet have a sense of how much we can do. We're still a little head-down, unsure.

Our task now is to make our projects move and accelerate in ways that will be useful, given what is now happening in society. As part of this we will need to challenge the ways we stay small and easily discouraged. In every place we go after distress and oppression we will run into the discouragement that says that we can't, that we are too small, that it's only us, that we've always failed before so why wouldn't we fail again. It's crucial to realize that conditions are different now, objectively different. Conditions are not what they were back when we got hurt. The objective conditions are different enough that we can make things happen in ways we couldn't before. Back then we were defeated because of a lack of understanding, resource, and connection, and we lacked a way to discharge enough to build them. We have changed that. We have done enough work that the actual



COUNTY DONEGAL, IRELAND • RUTH NOONAN

conditions are different from the ones we still feel and are often confused about because of our distresses.

## TAKING UP THE CHALLENGE TO END RACISM

It's time that we take up<sup>3</sup> afresh, in a persistent way, the challenge to end racism. This will involve our taking it up collectively, and it will also involve each of us agreeing in our own minds that we personally are going to do it.

We have done well in our work to end racism, we have moved forward, but of course racism continues to hurt people and to confuse every other issue. It can still make us pull back and look at each other in doubt. That's exactly its role in maintaining oppressive societies. It's supposed to disrupt anything that is moving forward. There are big issues that need to be thought about, worked on, and moved on, but our efforts to work on them run into confusion, over and over again, often because of racism. When we can't remember to work consistently on racism, we

get confused and never get to fully face the other issues. We get pushed off into a whirlpool that stays a whirlpool until we remember to discharge. Then the flow starts again.

Every one of us needs to make a decision on racism, and not put it off or believe we are incapable of it. The first goal of the 2001 World Conference of the Re-evaluation Counseling Communities was to make the elimination of racism central. We all agree to that now. It would seem strange now that anyone would have doubt about it, but not long ago we were more confused. Many of us couldn't see the relevance of it in each and every life, couldn't see that racism was something that grabbed on to almost every distress and made it worse, more intractable, more difficult to move. In particular, those of us who have been trained to be the agents of oppression couldn't tell<sup>4</sup> that racism was a part of what lessens and confuses our own lives, including our relationships with people in our own group, and that

*continued . . .*

<sup>3</sup> Take up means undertake.

<sup>4</sup> In this context, tell means see, notice.

## LIBERATION

*continued . . .*

working on racism could change everything.

The place where our discouragement still holds us back is in our deciding to eliminate racism in our own lives. It slows us down in our Co-Counseling relationships, but outside, because there is so much less support to challenge racism there, it holds us back a lot. What I am proposing will be necessary to reach our goal: No matter which side of the line of racism we are on, we have to challenge it with a particular individual. We have to reach across the line drawn by racism toward somebody real in the present whom we want in our lives.

There are lots of those people. You know a lot of them, and you smile and wave, and you wish for more but you don't know quite what to do about it. Over the years things have gotten better, but we are still hesitant, we still hold back from each other.

Those of us who have been trained in the oppressor role need to decide that there is somebody across this line whom we want to know well and have in our lives. We need to do that in Co-Counseling. We also need to do it in the rest of our lives. We won't know exactly how. We won't know until we try to get to know the person well. But we can decide that there is something we want and that we are willing to face whatever distresses we have to and discharge them, that we will tell our Co-Counselors all of our confusions and irrational thoughts, as openly as we can. We can decide that we will not pull back from the goal of reaching the person and having him or her close.

For those of you who have been targeted by racism, the challenge is to dare to think that somebody who has been trained to be an agent of oppression could actually be an ally, that you could want his or her

mind that close to you, that you could dare to open up and show more than your most careful thoughts. Do you dare consider that? I don't want you to be unaware about it; you have to think about what's possible with each individual. But all of us need to look at the necessity of fighting these battles. To actually end the effect of racism on us, there isn't any way around doing this. We have to look at what society has done to us, as well as others, in this particular area, and take it on individually.

Can you, in your mind, think about this possibility? Can you, in your mind, choose somebody? It is only distresses that keep us separate. If you are smart enough to know these are distresses (and you are), if you have enough resource to discharge where you get confused (and you do), if you know that you want to be in contact with somebody (and you do), then what could stop you?



JOAN KARP



## “I’d Like to Get Closer to All of You”

*A letter written to a group of Chicano RC leaders*

Hi everyone,

I was thinking about us this week, for many reasons. First, the Thanksgiving holiday<sup>1</sup> just passed, and I spent a lot of time with the patterns of my family, and the hopelessness we seem to live with about some of those patterns. Then there was the fact that we celebrate Thanksgiving without acknowledging that it is such a strange holiday for Native peoples to celebrate.

Many people in my family have health problems, from diabetes to high blood pressure to high cholesterol. My dad was just diagnosed with Parkinson’s disease. Also, many in my family continue a tradition of treating themselves to ice cream, candies, cakes, and other high-fat sugary foods, as if this were the way to “take good care” of themselves or give themselves a “break.”

I worry about my family, and I struggle with my own eating and exercising issues. Sometimes it seems that if I could just find the right strategy, these issues would go away. I want to give my family members advice or tell them to avoid certain foods, but in RC we know that advice doesn’t work. Plus, I struggle with avoiding the same things. Discharge is what works well, even if it’s slow sometimes.

This brings me to the relationships we all have with our families. It looks to me like we all love our families and would do just about anything for them, and like we also have a certain kind of loyalty to them that can be hard on us. I think we even have a loyalty to our patterns and to our “ways” of being Chicano (or any of our other

identities) and that when we attempt to act outside of these “ways” or patterns, or try to discharge the patterns, we often feel like we are betraying our families and like we don’t fit in with them as well. This can be dangerous, because some of the patterns are bad for our physical being, and our relationships.

I think it is key that we be able to be ourselves completely and still fit in with our families. I think this is something we all want to figure out. Maybe we can figure it out with each other.

To get in there with each other as an RC Chicano constituency we will have to get a lot closer and struggle

more with each other. I know that we struggle sometimes, but I sure haven’t figured out how to move closer in our struggles—which is not an easy thing to do anywhere, but probably easier within RC because of discharge. It hasn’t been easy with my family. I struggle with trying to get closer to my mom and dad and brother. I can hardly work on those relationships within my family. I can work on them outside, with my Co-Counselors, but that’s hard too.



AMSTERDAM, THE NETHERLANDS • PETER STRATON

I know that there’s a way I haven’t been close to people in this group, and I’ve made mistakes with many of you. I’d like to figure out how to get closer to you and rely on you in a way that makes sense for all of us. However, relying on this group would mean that I’d have to let my heart break about how we can’t seem to figure out how to take care of ourselves. I would also have to work on all the ways that my family has let me down.<sup>2</sup> You are all so much like my family in how you look, act, and talk—but one thing that’s different is that you (and I) discharge.

*continued . . .*

<sup>1</sup> Thanksgiving is a U.S. holiday commemorating a feast held by some of the first European settlers in North America, and the local Native people, in celebration of the settlers’ surviving their first winter on the new continent. That they survived was due in large part to the Native people’s assistance. In subsequent years, large numbers of Europeans arrived, killed most of the Native people, and stole most of their land.

<sup>2</sup> Let me down means not treated me in the ways they should have.



## LIBERATION

continued . . .

I've also been thinking about the traditions that have been passed down in my family. Many of them are fun and good, but all of them have some side to them that doesn't make sense. For example, I do a novena<sup>3</sup> with my mom and aunt every year. We meet every morning, for nine mornings, at 6:00 AM; go to mass; then go to breakfast. It is a standing novena, and we never miss it. We arrange our lives around it every year. It's brought us close, and I know a community of people because of this one tradition. It is also tied to some of the most violent and horrible things that have happened to the Native people of this area. Those of us who do it every year are descendants of those Native people. It's strange being tied to traditions like this. It's like celebrating Thanksgiving. It's something we do every year. It's confusing and frustrating.

I remember someone talking about how perhaps a lot of us have no "Spanish blood." The Spanish conquerors went into villages, baptized everyone, and all at once changed everyone's name to a Spanish name. That made it easy to convert people, change their customs, and govern them. (Many of the customs I grew up with were not the original Native customs but the customs of a conqueror.) So on top of the patterns we acquired as a Native people, we carry the customs of a colonized people who were and are terrorized and made the victims of genocide. All this has been part of the development of our Chicano/Native culture. Every single thing surrounding our identity must be continually confusing to us: the lies, the new traditions, and even the old Native traditions.

Many years ago I was driving north of Santa Fe (New Mexico, USA) through a pueblo called Pojoaque Pueblo. There was a restaurant there I had wanted to go to. I don't remember the name of it, but under the name it said, "Native American Foods." I went in curious about what I would eat. I sat down, looked at the menu, and then had to laugh at myself. All the foods were the foods I had grown up with: beans, chile, enchiladas, calabacitas. We had grown up calling them "Spanish," but they were foods from this part of the world. As far as I know, people don't eat enchiladas or calabacitas or red chile in Spain. Most of what goes into them is grown right here in New Mexico, but it has been converted to "Spanish" culture. (I know that other cultures have also come into play,<sup>4</sup> depending on where one is from; this is just my story.)

<sup>3</sup> A novena is a Roman Catholic period of prayer, lasting nine consecutive days.

<sup>4</sup> Come into play means are involved.

I'm not sure what a forced conversion to another culture does to a group of people trying desperately to survive a new and unfamiliar world, as our ancestors were after the arrival of the Europeans. I suspect that changing a group's identity so dramatically and violently would make it hard for the people in that group to take good care of themselves, no matter what end of the pattern they got: the conqueror or the conquered. I suspect we all got some combination of both, depending on how our particular ancestors tried to survive. Plus, we all ended up in different places along the class line, some of us are lighter and some of us darker skinned, some of our ancestors tried to assimilate while others were killed because they wouldn't, some of us are Gay, and all of us are mixed heritage in one way or another. All this could make it difficult for us to figure out who we are and where we belong with each other. It could make it hard for us to trust and get close to each other. And I imagine it could make us protective of our families and the traditions we hold dear.

One of my Co-Counselors told me last night, "Maybe you need to make up new traditions." That's probably right on.<sup>5</sup> I need new traditions that make sense all the way around. I think we are trying to do this in RC—by having sessions, getting to know each other, and struggling to stay close, no matter what we go through.

I don't really know what it takes<sup>6</sup> to be close to each other. A call once a week? A regular session? Seeing each other at a workshop every so often? Who knows? But I'm interested in finding out. I also have no sense of what it takes to move chronic material.<sup>7</sup> I'm interested in moving mine, but I know I can't do it alone.

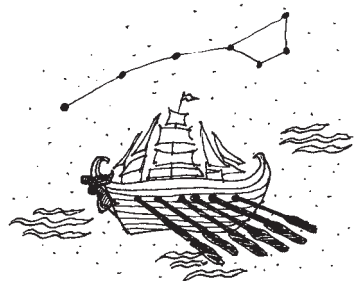
I look forward to seeing all of you, getting closer to you, and trying to be myself with you.

*Sparky Griego*  
Santa Fe, New Mexico, USA

<sup>5</sup> Right on means exactly right.

<sup>6</sup> It takes means needs to happen.

<sup>7</sup> Material means distress.



LEO M. LAZO

## New Year, 2009

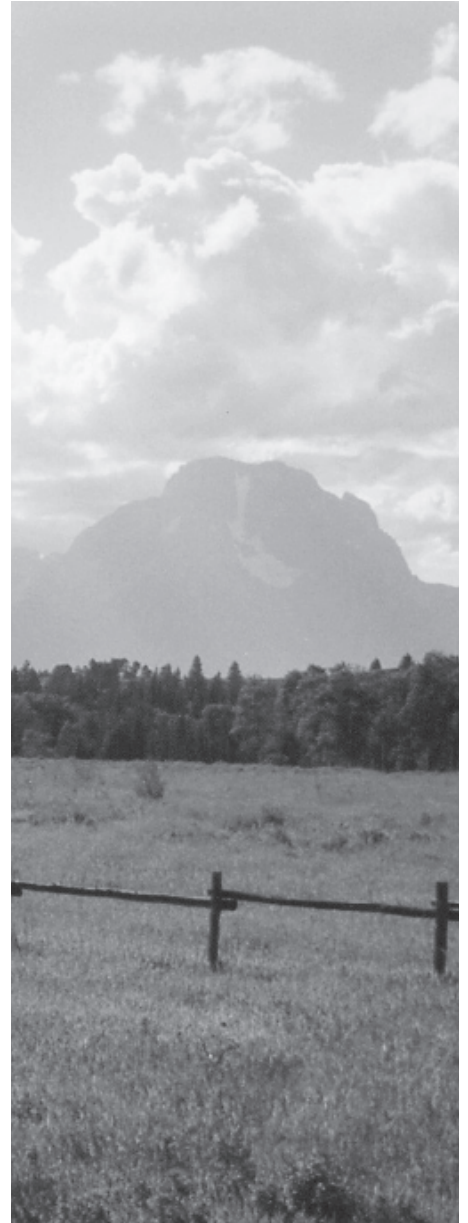
Outside, snow flies into drifts  
The New Year's wind  
Seeps through my window blinds.

Still,  
Whatever chill I feel is old  
This air is fresh with possibility  
An invitation to play.

Although you are miles away  
I receive your e-mail through the web  
Able to remember warmth even before reading it.

It must be the hopefulness of our real connection that  
Dissolves old discouragements, disappointments, and fears  
Into tears and shakes  
Finally providing a clear view  
That allows us to take up the invitation  
To play with abandon in each other's arms, hearts, and minds.

*Chuck Esser*  
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA



GRAND TETONS, WYOMING, USA • JOE RODRIGUEZ

## Eastern and Western Philosophy

I am result-oriented and committed to this. It seems to me that the lack of this is the most important weakness in Eastern philosophy. Western philosophy's weakness has been its failure to look at its assumptions, allowing it to be a servant of whatever oppressive group is operating in the culture at the time.

*Harvey Jackins*  
From a letter written in 1975

## European Women and Physical Power

In September 2008, sixty-five women from throughout Europe gathered for a Women and Physical Power and Well-Being Workshop, led by Diane Shisk.<sup>1</sup> A team of assistants from the United States joined Diane to lead what have become “traditional” women and physical power activities: weight lifting; wrestling; basketball; and a new activity, a version of rugby that we affectionately called “dugby” (short for “Diane’s Rugby”)—the rules are a loose approximation of the game, modified to get the maximum effect for a women and physical power workshop.

There were classes on sexism and health, women growing older, young and young adult women, beautification, women of color, large women, women who are not large discharging on feeling fat, and a new addition—rational rest.

During mealtimes and after classes, women were encouraged to write down their thoughts about the workshop. What follows are some of those comments.

Nanci E. Luna Jiménez  
Portland, Oregon, USA

<sup>1</sup>Diane Shisk is the Alternate International Reference Person. She has also led many women and physical power workshops.



FRED KELLER

Being physical contradicts sexism in so many ways; much of sexism is physical and violent and pushes us to be passive. Just putting our minds toward our physical power can bring up fear.

Ali Bourne  
Newton Abbot, Devon, England



JULIE ANNE FORGIONNE

*I went for a beautiful run during the break. I ran at the same speed and for the same distance as I do at home, but this time I did it with other women, talking and discharging the whole time. At home I'm always exhausted when I finish, but here I was just getting warmed up, and I played an energetic basketball game straight afterward.*

*I figured out a lot about food and nutrition. I felt like I didn't stop shaking. I made progress with thinking about racism. It was fantastic to have so many women of colour at the workshop, being so central and visible. I overcame all manner of internalized oppressions to not only get close to all kinds of women, but to delight in them.*

*Before the rugby game we learnt how to tackle. What a wonderful scene—a field full of women falling together and laughing their heads off!<sup>2</sup> I decided to become a loving ally to large women, after Diane talked so clearly about the distress that leaves us not-large women feeling bad about ourselves, and large women isolated.*

<sup>2</sup> Laughing their heads off means laughing extremely hard.

*I met inspiring women. One example: I had decided two months before the workshop to become a triathlete, and I met a woman who will be competing at the triathlon world championship next year—wow!*

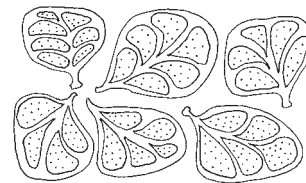
Emily Mitchell  
Perth, Western Australia, Australia



FRED KELLER

Lifting weights with attention from a Co-Counselor made me feel like I could go to a gym. Now I can start training my body. I want to do this kind of physical power work, and that's a motivation for me to be fit.

Karin Lindroos  
Malmö, Sweden



SU EDWARDS

We think it's important that the four of us were here together. This was our first workshop on women and physical power. We want to start this work in Fryslân. It was useful for us to see one of our “gang” out on the mat (or in other physical sessions). It made it easier for us to fight for ourselves. When we fight, not only our struggles as females but also our Frisian material<sup>3</sup> comes right up, so it's important to start work in this area as a team.

<sup>3</sup> Material means distress.



It was also helpful to be a team with regard to language. Our physical sessions went well because a translator was available.

*Ingrid Dollee,  
Hennie Jongsmā,  
Hannie Schuurman,  
and Adalgard Willemsma*  
Fryslân, The Netherlands



LEAH KOCH-MICHAEL

A highlight from the workshop was the way Diane and her assistants worked together. They were respectful and kind to each other (and to everyone). It was inspiring to see them so connected. I want to be like that, too.

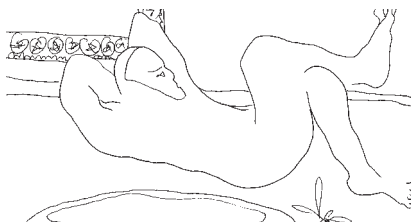
This workshop was good for me because I could see both my strength and my feelings of hopelessness. Feelings of strength came up while I was wrestling. In contrast, hopelessness came up during weight lifting, along with internalized racism and sexism—feelings of not being able to do anything. I learned that I can think more clearly about things after discharging these feelings.

Diane reminded us to trust our bodies and our minds. We need information from medical people, but they are confused by sexism and racism and all the “isms”; we have to take charge of our own health.

I have arthritis in both knees. It was hopeful to get information about this. I now know I can recover from it. That was for me the greatest highlight because in Holland the doctors have deserted me: “You have to live with it. You are at the age when people get arthritis; it’s normal for you at

age sixty-two.” I now think, “No, I will exercise and get strong and heal my arthritis, and moving will be good for my health.” We were encouraged to stay in contact with each other, work on our health, and keep doing all the things we did at the workshop.

*Julia Telting*  
Paramaribo, Surinam  
Now living in Ewijk,  
The Netherlands



PATRICK WILLIAMS

*It is important to prioritise ourselves as women. We are often not aware of how much sexism is affecting us, everywhere and on all levels. To know this we have to think about it and discharge. The physical work helped me to “get out of my head.” I could work on things without thinking about them, which made it easier to work on basic struggles. Being with a large group of women of colour was also important for me. It meant that I could discharge better and connect better.*

*Nirupa Shantiprekash*  
Paramaribo, Surinam  
Now living in Arnhem,  
The Netherlands



AMANDA MARTINEZ

The group about beautification was useful and informative. The deepest insight I got there was that I am not on my own<sup>5</sup> with my doubts about and struggles with my wonderful female body.

*Renate Mueller*

<sup>5</sup> On my own means by myself.

Basel, Switzerland

A highlight for me was thinking about how racism is attached to sexism. I try to end racism and forget to be fully female. I tend to put myself down as a female. For me, racism is the most important thing; I struggle with it and don’t look at sexism.

The physical activities gave me a chance to work on sexism, to feel the hopelessness in my body and discharge it and reclaim my strength and power as a woman.

Another highlight was the number of black women at the workshop. It made a great difference.

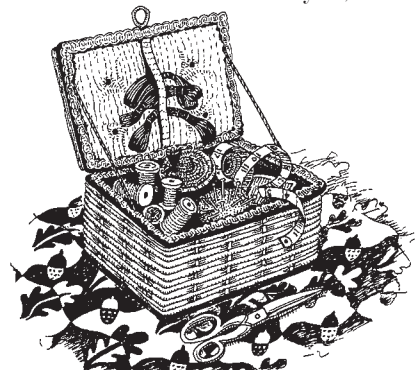
*Marlene Melfor*  
Arnhem, The Netherlands



KK

My highlights: (1) Being with the women of colour group three times—charming, strong women with similar stories. (2) The wrestling and weight lifting. They helped me to feel my power, feel that I can move things in my life. Connecting with the deep oppression of sexism and racism and wanting to move it gave me strength. (3) Playing childhood games outside. We did silly things in public view, waved at people and gave them flowers. (4) Our closeness as Israelis. We were together and supporting each other.

*Simha Amittai*  
Avtalyon, Israel



PAT GREGORY

## Working with Men on Sexism

At an annual working-class leaders' workshop, several women had sessions in front of the group on reclaiming power as working-class people and worked more directly on sexism than I had ever seen women do. I began to wonder what effect it was having on the men, so I decided to meet separately with them to make sure that they were actively engaged and not going numb or being "good."

The men and the women divided and spent most of an evening on sexism. I worked with the men, and Veronica LaCrue, from Colorado, USA, led the women in a class that was, from all reports, a powerful opportunity for the women to discharge directly and deeply on the horrible hurts of sexism.

In the process of separating from the women, the men displayed some blatant, though perhaps considered mild, sexism. It bothered me. I tried to interrupt it once and failed. Then (this was a working-class workshop) I yelled at them. Afterward I explained why what I had seen was sexism. Many of them said that they had not thought of it that way and that what I said made sense. They talked about how no man ever calls attention to their sexism and that it would be good to get rid of it. They did not feel blamed by me (which I was sure they would).

I asked them what it had been like to watch the women work on sexism. Many of them had not seen it as sexism. Even though the women had clearly named it as such, and everything they had said, done, and discharged made it clear how big an obstacle sexism was to working-class liberation, a significant number of the men had missed that.

I talked about how our desperation for attention, a result of our oppression as men, can lead to our not thinking about the women around us, and how women's conditioning pulls women's attention away from themselves and toward us when that

is not what should be happening. It was what had happened that evening. It hadn't distracted the women from what they'd eventually done, but it was nevertheless wrong.

I said that we men were not to blame for our unthinking, having been set up by men's oppression to act in a way that oppresses women, but that we could do better. I said that while we do need to discharge sexist recordings, it looked to me like our sessions were always about us and that this had two not-so-good effects: (1) it made it look like sexism was our

fault, thus reinforcing the idea that we are inherently hurtful and bad and need to "fix" ourselves, and (2) it left no room for us to actually pay attention to and think about women as an oppressed group, about what their lives are like, how sexism impacts and restrains them, what they are doing to liberate themselves, and how we could be a part of that work. In short,<sup>1</sup> I said that we could educate ourselves and take on<sup>2</sup> the goal of ending sexism, not just discharge our own recordings.



MIKA DASHMAN

I pointed out how in RC, while we wouldn't make dismissive comments or jokes about other groups, we persist in doing so about women. I said that I thought we could do better than that and remember that women are an oppressed group. I asked the men if they were ready to go beyond working on their sexist recordings and actually take on the goal of ending sexism. All of them said they were. I then counseled a man on making that commitment. His session led him to realize that he needed to think more about his sister—not just from the point of view of their relationship but about her as a woman and how sexism had impacted her life. He realized that that would shift his thinking about her, and their relationship.

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<sup>1</sup> In short means said briefly.

<sup>2</sup> In this context, take on means adopt.

I've noticed that with working-class people the pull to be or act "good" is not as strong as with other classes, and I think this lack of pretense turns out to be<sup>3</sup> useful.

I did a similar class, at a Regional men's workshop, with men of mixed classes. In that group I had to talk about how middle-class and owning-class men are conditioned to be or appear "good," and how "being good" is not a substitute for actual intelligence. I said that in this regard there is an advantage to being working class. I used an example from the factory: When management would come out and criticize our group of male workers, we would yell back. Our response was not to feel bad that we were not doing a good job. So most of the time management did not criticize us. That got some laughs from the middle-class folks. I said that I knew that my remarks about women had to pass through two filters. One was the "being good" filter of the middle- and owning-class men, and one was the "feeling bad and defensive" filter from the men's oppression that says that we men are horrible monsters who are inherently hurtful to other beings.

I suggested that we think of ourselves not as human males but as aliens from the planet Freebilia who had landed on Earth and discovered a new species of life, humans, that was made up of<sup>4</sup> two genders, one of which was called women—that we were interested in studying these life forms, what their lives were like, and how they lived; that we had discovered a pamphlet that explained how the intelligence of this species worked, how it could be interrupted by recorded distress, and how the recordings would play back and have negative effects on the people (as they called themselves).

<sup>3</sup> Turns out to be means in the end is.

<sup>4</sup> Was made up of means consisted of.

I said that as Freebilians we were interested in learning about the gender of humans called women—what their experience was, what their hurts had been, and how those hurts had been internalized; that we wanted to learn what role we might play in dealing with the societal hurting of women described in one of the pamphlets as sexism. (Freebilians are curious and interested in how things work and tend to devote a fair amount of their attention to fixing things and making them go well.)

There was some laughter. I think I succeeded in changing the tone of our work on sexism from being about us men to being about an institutionalized oppression that we had been encouraged to collude with. My intent was not to stop us from discharging our sexist recordings; or the isolation, inhibition of discharge, internalized violence, or terror that have led us to act out our hurt at others. I simply wanted us to have another viewpoint from which to work on the oppression of sexism. We men can take on<sup>5</sup> the ending of sexism as one of the many things we do to make our world a better, more sensible place in which to live.

I have a whole set of distresses I have not been able to discharge yet and have figured out that to discharge them I need a group of men who are committed to ending sexism and its effects. I need to see men caring for women. I need to see them having sessions that are not just about their own hurts but that show active and intelligent attempts to think about and respect women as separate individuals, rather than as some kind of adjunct to their own lives.

*Dan Nickerson*  
*International Liberation Reference*  
*Person for Working-Class People*  
 Freeport, Maine, USA  
 Reprinted from the e-mail discussion  
 list for RC Community members

<sup>5</sup> In this context, take on means assume responsibility for.

## People Are Loving You

You have lots of love all around you. People are loving you even though they may be too shy to say it directly. Just smile warmly at them, and they will dare to show at least a ghost of a smile back at you.

*Harvey Jackins*  
 From a letter written in 1974





DANNA BYROM

## Short Talks by Tim Jackins, on CD

Rational Island Publishers is producing a series of CDs of talks given by Tim Jackins at recent workshops. They are intended primarily for RC teachers but can be ordered by anyone. A new CD is produced each quarter. The series is called *RC Teacher Updates*. Listed below are the CDs that are currently available.

*The following CDs from 2009 are available for \$10 each:*

- An Effective Way to Work Early
- Understanding Our Present Abilities and Challenging Past Confusions

*The following CDs from 2005 are available as a set or separately:*

- Together for Larger Lives
- Ourselves and Our Societies
- A Human Perspective
- Three Steps Forward

*The following CDs from 2008 are available as a set or separately:*

- A Recent Introduction to RC
- The Early Years of RC
- Fighting for Ourselves
- Overcoming Early Defeats

*The following CD from 2004 is available for \$10:*

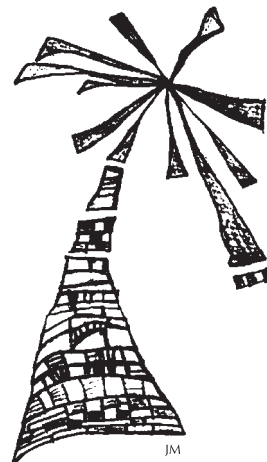
- Perspectives on Ourselves and Our Communities

*The following CDs from 2007 are available as a set or separately:*

- White People Continuing to Move Against Racism
- Overcoming Early Distress
- Perspective and Decision
- RC Leaders, on Class Issues (DVD)

*The following CDs from 2006 are available as a set or separately:*

- Oppression and Sex
- The Uses and Limitations of Reassurance
- Participating in the RC World Conference 2005
- Moving Forward Together: RC Pre-World Conferences 2005



Anyone can order any of these CDs for \$10 (U.S.) each, plus shipping and handling. The entire 2005, 2006, 2007, and 2008 4-CD sets are also available to anyone, for \$25 per set, while supplies last. If you are a certified RC teacher, the four CDs for the current year are available on a subscription basis, one calendar year at a time (but mailed out quarterly as they are released), for \$25 a year. (For ordering information, see page 109.)

## Racism and Connection

I value the connections I have made as a Co-Counselor. I also have the opportunity as an Intensive counselor<sup>1</sup> to have contact, for a week at a time, with many people from around the world from many experiences and backgrounds. I think of all of these contacts as life-long connections and value each opportunity.

I have been noticing a feeling of sadness and loss when patterns of racism interfere with my having a white person close and connected to me. When racist patterns are in the way, I have lost the experience I wanted of being in connection with another human. I am sad about that loss, sad that this thing has come between us, because I love being connected.

White clients often ask me when I offer to be a counselor to them on racism, "Isn't this hard on you? How can you like me when my people oppressed yours? Don't you hate me?" I say, "This is good for me." "How can this be good for you?" they ask. I often say, "I want you as a white person, because I want people. It's a loss to me if I don't get to have you. Wanting to be connected does not come color coded. I want you because you are a human, a wonderful human. I am not confused about your goodness or the goodness of your people, and I want to be connected to you. When I am sitting with you, history does not matter, what your ancestors did does not matter, what you have done does not matter. Here you are, a good human being, and I want you. I want this chance." Sometimes I explain further that when I am client, I discharge on those parts of my

history that I need to but that noticing the reality of having each other now is a wonderful contradiction to the messages of oppression.

I think it important to look at the assumption (when it is there) that those of us targeted by racism are angry at and upset with white people all the time. That assumption does not give us credit for being able to function intelligently, be present, and act on what is true about humans. It is contrary to basic RC theory about all of us being born wanting to be connected and close to people. "It is good for me to be connected to you," I tell my clients. "My life is richer having you in it, and I care about you enough to want to be here for you as you move through anything that gets in the

way of us having each other." Clients have something to discharge if they don't know that, and they can usually discharge well by putting attention on what I am telling them.

I do experience racism, but more than walking around upset, I walk around wanting white people, wanting to be more connected (as I would want with all humans). I want to know about them, I want to laugh and cry with them and share the stories of our lives, I want to lean into them and feel them lean back. And when needed, I want them to grieve with me about any loss of connection between us. I am as pleased to listen to their stories of what has gotten in their way of being close to me as they are to listen to me about any struggle I may have from being targeted by racism.

I like remembering the joy I felt discharging on oppressor material<sup>2</sup> at an allies to Jews workshop a few months ago. By Sunday morning I was over-the-top joyful<sup>3</sup> with the thought, "Doing this work on oppressor material is wonderful. I get to have my friends bigger, deeper." I didn't hang around<sup>4</sup> feeling bad about my oppressor distress, because I was too excited about figuring out how to have my friends bigger and better. I planned to discharge in sessions on where I need to think better as an ally, but the overwhelming feeling was deep, sweet joy. I cried when I thought about my Jewish friends and how by doing this work I was getting them closer.

*Marion Ouphouet*  
Seattle, Washington, USA

<sup>1</sup> The author is on the counseling staff at Re-evaluation Counseling Community Resources, in Seattle, Washington, USA, where leaders of Co-Counseling can come for Intensives (twenty hours of one-way Re-evaluation Counseling, for a fee).

<sup>2</sup> Material means distress.

<sup>3</sup> Over-the-top joyful means joyful beyond anything I had hoped was possible.

<sup>4</sup> Hang around means spend time.



TARA JONES

## A Rational Judaism

In the RC Communities, we have introduced over the years a number of Jewish religious practices (celebrating the Jewish Sabbath at RC workshops, conducting unity Seders\*) as a way of inviting the entire RC Community into a greater commitment to Jewish liberation and the ending of anti-Jewish oppression.

Judaism, like other religions, has wonderful re-emergent elements that can help human beings reach for what is most elegant and human. Judaism, like other religions, evolved over time, when society contained various forms of oppression, and therefore also has irrational non-pro-survival practices and beliefs attached to it.

At the April 2007 International Jewish Leaders' Conference, I asked a number of RC Jewish leaders to work on a series of updated draft policy statements that could be added to the Jewish Liberation Policy Statement.

The following draft policy statement on a rational Judaism is our contribution as RC Jewish leaders to helping everyone in the RC Communities discharge and re-evaluate about what is rational and what is irrational in the practices of each religion.

*Cherie Brown*  
International Liberation  
Reference Person for Jews  
Silver Spring, Maryland, USA

\* A Seder is a service, including a ceremonial dinner, held during Passover in commemoration of the Jews' exodus from Egypt.



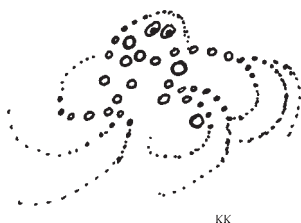
## Draft Policy on a Rational Judaism

Judaism offers human beings the opportunity to express a commitment to life in ways that are meaningful and re-emergent. Every Jew can have a unique, individual relationship to Jewish culture, to the Jewish religion, and to Israel. Organized expressions of connection to the Jewish people range from traditional Judaism based on Jewish law and teachings (Halacha), to numerous and vibrant forms of progressive Judaism, to a wide variety of secular Jewish identities and practices. These secular expressions include humanistic forms of Judaism as well as participation in Jewish communal organizations, cultural programs, and political advocacy groups.

For many religious Jews, a belief in and connection with God is at the center of their Jewish practice. The

relationship between God and the Jewish people is expressed in the Torah (the five books of Moses) and in a body of rabbinic writings that use biblical commentary to provide guidance for all aspects of Jewish life. Secular Jews take inspiration from the ethical and humanistic elements of Jewish tradition and seek to celebrate, preserve, and nurture the many Jewish cultures that have developed in the Diaspora<sup>1</sup> and in Israel.

<sup>1</sup> The Diaspora is the places where Jews are living outside of Israel.



### CONTRIBUTIONS OF JUDAISM TO A MORE RATIONAL WORLD

The following are some of the key contributions of Judaism to a more rational world. They are common to most forms and expressions of Judaism today.

The practice of Judaism is fundamentally a communal endeavor. Connection and holiness are recultivated through righteous behavior and caring relationships. The relationship between the individual and the community is celebrated and sanctified through life-cycle observances—from the welcoming of babies, to coming-of-age ceremonies (bar and bat mitzvahs), to weddings, to traditions of mourning and remembrance.



Several Jewish holidays, particularly Passover, commemorate liberation from oppression. Passover celebrates the liberation of the Hebrew people from slavery in Egypt. At the communal Passover meal, called the Seder, Jews are encouraged to consider the Exodus story as if we ourselves had been slaves in Egypt. This remembrance of our oppression during biblical times makes us more conscious of the suffering of people who live under oppressive circumstances today.

Jews and Jewish communities have a strong and proud history of standing for social justice and *tikkun olam*, the repair of the world. The fair distribution of resources is explicitly discussed in the Torah; for example, every forty-nine years, in the Jubilee Year, all debts were traditionally forgiven.

Judaism places great value on learning through study and discussion, and Torah commentary gives each story multiple interpretations and meanings. Contemporary Jewish theologians are venerated and studied alongside the great rabbinic commentators of the past. Every Jew is encouraged to continually engage in study, to apply fresh intelligence to Jewish texts and traditions, and to make re-emergent life choices based on that process.

Jewish law (Halacha) is based on biblical texts and on subsequent rabbinic interpretation that was codified in the second century CE<sup>2</sup> in the Talmud.<sup>3</sup> Jewish law continues to develop to this day and is based on discussion and debate as new situations arise. This flexible, situational thinking—an inherent element of traditional rabbinic interpretation—has supported the survival of the Jewish people.

Judaism offers the world a special relationship to time that is embodied in the observance of Shabbat: reverence

for past wisdom; honoring and celebrating the present; and a hopeful vision of the future, expressed in a messianic ideal.

### AREAS OF RIGIDITY AND DISTRESS

Like all traditions and cultures, Judaism has areas of rigidity and distress. Beliefs and practices within Judaism that could benefit from rigorous discharge and re-evaluation include the following:

In many places in the Torah, Jews are instructed to be “a separate people.” Throughout history, Jews have frequently lived in communities separated from the surrounding majority cultures, in large part because of anti-Jewish oppression and the resulting feelings of mistrust and unwelcome. Isolation from the larger community, rather than making us safer, actually reinforces the conditions for further oppression.

Being in a special, covenantal relationship with God, or being a “chosen people,” is a core idea within traditional Judaism. It has enabled Jews to develop and nurture a sense of shared historical destiny. Many of us believe that as much as God chose us, we also chose to enter into a partnership with God in the work of repairing the world and creating a more just society. However, the “chosen” concept also reinforces our identity as “other” and as “better” or “worse” than other peoples. While there are ethical and pro-survival dimensions to the tradition of a covenant between Jews and God, the concept of being chosen can foster isolation, lead to irrational attitudes toward conversion and intermarriage, and feed racism.

The practice of ritual circumcision of male infants is irrational. Circumcision traumatizes Jewish males in the first days of their lives and is also hurtful to the male and female adults who witness or participate in it. Over decades of Co-Counseling, many Jewish males

have recognized the negative effects of circumcision on their sense of safety, connection, and power. Because the practice of Brit Milah (circumcision) is deeply ingrained in traditional Jewish practice and belief, ongoing courage is required to maintain a clear, principled stand against it, and to support others who resist it.

The way Jews apply Jewish law (Halacha) can become rigidified. The commitment to honor the wisdom of our texts and traditions while thinking freshly in each new circumstance will benefit from ongoing discharge.

Many of us carry distress recordings about “who is a Jew” and what characterizes a “good Jew.” The belief that we need to defend a particular religious orientation or branch of Judaism can separate us from each other. While the Orthodox and Conservative movements are matrilineal (a child of a Jewish mother is considered Jewish), the Reform Movement considers the child of a Jewish father to be Jewish as well, if that child has been raised as a Jew. The Orthodox view has legal status in the State of Israel, and this has wide-ranging consequences for immigration status, marriage, and other life-cycle issues. Tension among the various Jewish movements and between observant and non-observant Jews is based in distress. By eliminating the distress patterns that pit Jews against each other, we can move more effectively toward true Jewish unity.

Many Jewish observances communicate historical Jewish experiences through a lens of victimization, reinforcing recordings of victimization that can make Jews vulnerable to isolation, political manipulation, and the acting out of oppressor patterns. Yom Hashoah (Holocaust Remembrance Day) and Tisha B'av (a commemoration of the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple) are two such observances.

*continued . . .*

<sup>2</sup> CE means Common Era.

<sup>3</sup> The Talmud is an historic book of commentaries about the Torah (the Five Books of Moses).

## LIBERATION

*continued . . .*

Judaism has honored and at the same time ignored and belittled Jewish women. Jewish women in biblical times were highly instrumental in shaping the future of the Jewish people, but with the exception of a small handful, they were forced to operate within the boundaries of traditional roles defined by sexism. Judaism is a patriarchal religion. Historically, Jewish religious practice has been the domain of men. Women have been romanticized and restricted to traditional sexist roles. Although virtually all branches of Judaism have made progress against sexism, sexism persists within Judaism and we must continue to challenge it.

When the State of Israel was established in 1948, Orthodox Jews gained authority over all matters of religion, including marriage, divorce, religious education, and the evaluation of the Jewish credentials of prospective

immigrants. The majority of Israel's population is not Orthodox. The hegemony of the Orthodox over many aspects of private and public life is experienced as oppressive by non-Orthodox Jews and often met with resentment and antagonism. This great divide among the Jews in Israel is a source of grief and confusion and is a barrier to the development of rational policies for a democratic state.

The transmission of Jewish culture and religious knowledge to young Jews has often been riddled with young people's oppression. The internalized oppression carried by parents, teachers, and other Jewish adults has resulted in urgency, disrespect, and impossible expectations. We need to reach for rational ways to transmit Jewish learning and identity and stop passing on painful emotion from our past or anxiety about our future.

## **CONTINUAL FRESH THINKING**

Jewish religious practices contain elements that point Jews in the direction of ethical behavior and connection to others. Every Jew can arrive at a unique, individual relationship to Judaism based on continual fresh thinking. Let us continue to celebrate living visible Jewish lives, even as we hold our practices and beliefs up to the light of discharge and re-evaluation.

*Ruth Atkin*

Emeryville, California, USA

*Pat Fischer*

Chapel Hill, North Carolina, USA

*Ruth Hartman*

Castro Valley, California, USA

*Cherie Brown*

Silver Spring, Maryland, USA



## **Now Available—The RC Teacher No. 28!**

The newest issue of *The RC Teacher* is long overdue. The previous issue (Number 27) was published fifteen years ago—in 1994.

*The RC Teacher* No. 28 contains 128 pages of excellent material (and because so many good articles didn't fit, we will publish an additional issue, *The RC Teacher* No. 29, within the year).

*The RC Teacher* No. 28 devotes seventy pages to teaching fundamentals. You will be inspired by the variety of ways RC teachers around the world have taught basic RC theory and practice. They share their successful classes and lectures, the creative ideas that worked, the mistakes they learned from, how they screened for their classes, their "naturalized" teaching, and much more.

The section on RC policies will help teachers present the *Guidelines* to their students. It also includes in-depth overviews of the "no socializing" policy and the RC policy on psychiatric drugs.

The section on RC Community goals reminds us of our goals. Following that, a number of teachers write about successful work in their classes and Communities on eliminating racism (Goal 1).

A final section focuses on counseling with attention away from distress. Harvey Jackins explains how to use the Understatement and the Reality Agreement for this purpose.

Whether you plan to teach RC in a class setting or one-to-one, or want to be ready to tell your friends what you are doing, *The RC Teacher* No. 28 is an invaluable resource.

## Persisting as an Ally to a Young Person

Dear Jenny,<sup>1</sup>

I wanted to fill you in on<sup>2</sup> my experience in the “allies to young people transitioning into adulthood” project.<sup>3</sup>

I have been an ally to S— for twelve years. She is now twenty-three, and I am forty-one. S— was in a young people’s class that another family worker and I led together starting when S— was eleven. After that class was over, S— and I did weekly Co-Counseling sessions with each other throughout S—’s teenage years. Her parents were in and out of Co-Counseling but mostly not involved. They did know that supporting S— to have a relationship with me was a good thing, and they were great about driving her to my house every week for a session.

I’ve stayed close to S— over the years and been key to her continuing with Co-Counseling. I’ve backed<sup>4</sup> her to take leadership, which has sometimes worked well and sometimes hasn’t. Mostly she and I have just tried a lot of things together.

One year I helped her organize an East Coast (USA) young people’s workshop, which she did well. It meant hours and hours of work, and I was by her side the whole time. I also backed her to get to local and other workshops. When she participated in workshops, I was always her main ally. Together we strategized about how to come up with<sup>5</sup> workshop fees, recruited

other allies who had attention for her, shared bedding, hung out<sup>6</sup> together late at night, and did mini-sessions. I thought with her about who she wanted to Co-

Counsel with and listened to her about how people treated her before, during, and after the workshops. She did not go to workshops unless she was with me, or with another buddy if I could not go.

I helped her manage being the youngest person in our Area<sup>7</sup> (for a long time she was the only young person). I spent many hours hanging out with her in classes, listening to leaders think about her, offering her one-way time on the way to class and afterward (we often drove together). I thought with her and other Co-Counselors about recruiting into and retaining in her classes people who had the slack to play and hang out with young people. (Being around adults who were not playful made Co-Counseling classes difficult for her.)

Our weekly sessions often included long periods of hang-out time (before we actually discharged) during which S—

would update me on her life. They could take up to four hours, with all the hanging out, laughing, and talking we did. I would often offer her additional time, but even then it was not always easy for her to discharge deeply. The internalized young people’s oppression and other difficulties from her life were just that hard to break through.

S— has been a great ally to younger young people— offering herself, and using everything she knows to think about play and sessions. She has great attention and is often a powerful counselor for them. She is also one of my smartest counselors.

*continued . . .*

<sup>1</sup> Jenny Sazama, the International Liberation Reference Person for Allies to Young People

<sup>2</sup> Fill you in on means tell you about.

<sup>3</sup> A project of the RC Communities that assists young people to keep using RC when they leave home and go off on their own. For more details, see page 54 of the January 2009 *Present Time*.

<sup>4</sup> Backed means supported.

<sup>5</sup> In this context, come up with means find.

<sup>6</sup> Hung out means spent relaxed, unstructured time.

<sup>7</sup> An Area is a local RC Community.



SOOJA KELSEY





young adult playing such a major role—and with mostly older adults, including many Co-Counseling leaders. I had to periodically pull her aside and help her cry about how challenging it was. She thrived on the high expectations and could tell<sup>15</sup> what a great job she was doing.

### NEW PRESSURES

Things got hard once more when the school semester started up last February. This time S— was dealing with finishing school and finding a job. She and I barely saw each other all spring. When we did, it was because I drove over to her neighborhood with my new baby and we went for a walk while the baby slept. I found a way to help S— cry about how hard her life had become, but I couldn't keep after her<sup>16</sup> as I had in the past. I was wrapped up with<sup>17</sup> caring for my new baby, and it broke my heart to watch her slowly fade out of my life.

### RETURNING TO CO-COUNSELING

Now, ten months after my baby's birth, I have not seen S— in four months. She recently wrote, however, saying that she was struggling with her job and all the expectations and demands of being a young adult, and that she was sorry not to be around. Last week she called in the middle of her workday and asked for discharge time to figure out a relationship issue. She cried easily and then called many days in a row to cry some more. We have a session set up for this week at her house. (I am only just now able to leave my baby long enough for such things to be workable.)

Clearly it has taken a huge amount of time and attention for this young person (now young adult) to make Co-Counseling work for herself. I think this is probably typical, given the current state of our Communities. Even though our Area is smack in the middle<sup>18</sup> of strong family work,<sup>19</sup> it was not easy for S— to make the transition from young people's RC to adult Co-Counseling.

<sup>15</sup> In this context, tell means notice.

<sup>16</sup> Keep after her means maintain regular contact with her.

<sup>17</sup> Wrapped up with means very involved with.

<sup>18</sup> Smack in the middle means right in the middle.

<sup>19</sup> Family work consists of RC gatherings of young people and adult allies, including parents, in which the focus is on young people and counseling young people in the context of play. These gatherings are designed to empower young people, to give them a setting in which they largely determine what happens (in contrast to the usual adult-young person dynamic). The focus is not on "Co-Counseling," as it is in the usual adult RC. This model of family work is the result of experiences gathered over the past thirty years.

At this point it looks like S— needs to decide that Co-Counseling is really for her, even if she doesn't have her dedicated ally right there to ease the transition. I need to help her make the decision and assist her to bring a couple of her friends into RC so that she has more peers with her.

### WE WILL HAVE EACH OTHER FOREVER

I have loved being S—'s ally all these years. Our relationship has been as much for me as for her. I have had to discharge about my own teen years—both with S—, when she wanted to listen, and with other allies. I have made many mistakes—with S—, her family, and the RC Community. I have had to keep discharging, apologizing, reassessing things, and coming back to the relationship. I have learned enormously. It has been humbling, infuriating, demanding, empowering, heartbreaking, amazing, and so very good. S— is wrapped tightly in my life, and I in hers. I am clear that we will have each other forever.

In a better world, there would have been many others with the slack to go after<sup>20</sup> S—. In a better world, life would not have been so tough on a young person trying for something revolutionary like being a Co-Counselor, and life would have been easier on me, her ally.

In a better world, this whole project will be easier.

W—  
USA

<sup>20</sup> Go after means pursue and support.



SHIRLEY THATCHER

## LIBERATION

The long detour from reason we have wandered  
Was not our choosing. Evolution's seeking  
For more and greater complex interactions  
Arose within reality itself.

So when intelligence at last appeared  
It's understandable that it was fragile  
And could break down and lapse to previous function  
As humans labored on, half-smart, half-stupid.

But talk and tears and laughter, yawns, and shaking  
Became recruited to a healing process  
And, slowly, re-emergence made its way,  
Becoming, more and more, a conscious effort,  
More planned and organized, and more united,  
Reaching to all the regions of our planet.

This book's a summary, a firm step forward.

Seeing the outcome certain now, I glow.  
My precious fellow humans, struggling still,  
Will make it all the way. I helped a little.

*Harvey Jackins*  
(An introduction to *The List*)



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*La Lista*, por Harvey Jackins

"Todo lo que sé sobre RC y el mundo,  
hasta ahora."

Este práctico, extenso y bien organizado manual de referencia podrá proporcionarle respuestas a la mayoría, o a todas sus preguntas relacionadas con RC.

Harvey escribió en el prólogo a *La Lista*: "Mientras la teoría se ha desarrollado, muchos libros, folletos y revistas se han publicado para comunicar diferentes aspectos de la misma. Pero al mismo tiempo, cada vez mas se hace necesario contar con un resumen general. Siendo yo la persona que ha estado vinculada con el Proceso de Reevaluación desde sus inicios, se me solicitó elaborar dicho resumen."

*The List*, by Harvey Jackins

"Everything I know about RC and the world,  
until now."

This convenient, comprehensive, and well-organized reference "manual" will furnish answers to most, if not all, of your RC-related questions.

Harvey wrote in the foreward to *The List*: "As the theory has developed, many books, pamphlets, and journals have been published to communicate different portions of it. Increasingly, it has seemed that a general summary is needed. As a person who has been associated with Re-evaluation Counseling from its beginnings, I was asked to produce such a summary."



## Challenging Sexism as a Catholic Female

*I want to thank Diane<sup>1</sup> for asking us to share our thoughts on women and religion. Before telling my story, I would like to appreciate each and every female who has done her best to challenge sexism in any way whatsoever. I believe that the ending of sexism for all of us will mean the ending of sexism for each of us in our own context. With that in mind, I hope females who are from Eastern as well as Western religious traditions, matrilineal and patriarchal religions, “popular” liberationist religious movements and traditional religions, will also offer their experiences. I believe that we are indomitable as females, once we fully have each other.*

In 1988 I was given the job of RC International Liberation Reference Person for Catholics. At the time, I had worked on a number of my identities—female, raised poor/working class, cultural Catholic—but I had not done the work of going back to the religion I had been raised in: Roman Catholicism. Since I live in a capitalist Protestant nation where one can “escape” from oppression by throwing away an identity, I decided I needed to go back and face old struggles within my religion. I knew that women of many other nations, where church and state were merged, did not have the option of avoiding the impact of religion and that facing my struggle would give me not only a clearer picture of my own personal liberation but a wider view of the struggles of Catholic women worldwide.

**LESSON ONE: I learned that avoiding my material<sup>2</sup> was different from liberating myself from it.**

Returning to the religion I was raised in offered many valuable lessons. Texts I had listened to growing up I was hearing now as if for the first time. Images I had taken for granted on murals and stained glass windows (heathens burning in Hell, oppressive images of Jews, a fair-skinned Jesus and saints, a male God) I was seeing vividly, with new eyes. I was heartbroken, fearful, and eventually indignant when I realized that, through no fault of my own, I had absorbed the hurtful messages. I knew that I needed to discharge both on being female in my religion and on each of the confusions I had absorbed.

**LESSON TWO: I learned that the more I cleaned up my oppression as a female, the more I could understand and fight against the oppression of others. I also learned that the integrity that fueled my passion to set things right was something I had acquired within my religion, not in spite of it. Perhaps that was the most important lesson, because it was the one that kept me going.**

It became clear and eventually hopeful to me that the more I challenged the messages I had associated with my entire female self—messages of being bad; deserving shame; being secondary, subordinate, and passive—the more clearly I understood that fighting for myself was linked to a larger understanding of the overall liberation of other oppressed people. I came to understand that the oppression directed at people of color, young people, Gay people, and Jews—messages of condemnation, inferiority, and subordination—often had the same source as my oppression as a female: institutionalized religion, co-opted within an oppressive society.

*continued . . .*



COURTNEY WELCH

<sup>1</sup> Diane Balser, the International Liberation Reference Person for Women

<sup>2</sup> Material means distress.

## LIBERATION

continued . . .

**LESSON THREE: I learned that I needed to find a home base, a place where I could feel proud and connected.**

In the 1980s, prior to becoming a Catholic activist, I led an RC women's support group for my Area.<sup>3</sup> Through RC women's work, I learned many valuable lessons that apply to all of us women, including that we are each in charge of our reproductive lives, no woman wants an abortion, each woman needs to discharge on being a mother or not, and to end the oppression surrounding reproduction we need to end sexism. I kept these reminders with me as I worked in a local chapter of a national women's organization.

Something I did not expect was the enormous anti-Catholicism within the women's movement. I became exhausted by the set of assumptions about me and other Catholic women. I decided to look for the smartest Catholic women I could find, women who had the biggest picture, and was thrilled when I found them. I was able to meet and connect with Catholic

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<sup>3</sup> An Area is a local RC Community.



JO ANNE GARRETT

women (nuns, activists, mothers, single women) who led on issues of reproduction on a national and international stage. Their policies were close to those of RC. They were fierce. They had integrity. They knew that they needed to fight within their own base and identity. They led on reproductive issues at international United Nations forums. They refused to let the church hierarchy be the sole voice for Catholic women. They were used to being targeted by the institution and had faced public chastisement. The nuns had been threatened with being forced out of their religious orders. Yet they had persisted, with courage and integrity, in their fight for all women.

I joined with these women. Finally I had a home from which I could fight institutionalized sexism along with other Catholic women. I felt proud as I learned to talk, think, and be visible on reproductive issues—as a Catholic woman, with my courageous sisters. I remember the days when all I could do was shake (and occasionally vomit) about how scary (though exhilarating) it was.

**LESSON FOUR: I learned that as Catholic females we are members of every racial, national, class, generational, and sexual-identity group and that sexism affects each and every one of us and is amplified by our multiple oppressions.**

After a few years I became involved in a local “base community” of women (built on the Latin American liberation model and similar to a support group). I became a representative from that group to a coalition of thirty-six women's groups rooted in the Catholic tradition. It was within that coalition that I learned an important lesson about internalized oppression and multiple oppressions amongst Catholic women.

Two women, both national leaders, became engaged in a bitter fight over pro-choice/pro-life positions, as part of a “discussion” about whether or not our coalition should endorse a particular public position on reproductive rights. The two women's views reflected a division within our coalition regarding whether or not endorsing “choice” was consistent with our mission and goals. Their positions were kept in place by a harshness and condemning sense of moral superiority. The “debate” was personal, public, and unresolved.

Both of the women were friends of mine, and people whom I respected. I had a chance to spend time with each of them and ask how they had arrived at their positions. The first woman, a nun, told me of her mother, who had seven children, dying in childbirth, leaving her as a surrogate mother at fifteen years of age. She knew all too well how Catholic women have repeatedly endured in their families the devastating effects of institutionalized sexist oppression.

The other woman was in a twenty-year partnership with a woman but hadn't been free to be "out" (publicly known as a Lesbian) due to Gay oppression and the high-profile (visible) public position of her partner. I listened to her cry and rage. She wanted a baby. She couldn't have one. She hated Gay oppression, being without a voice, and being invisible—even with her women friends. She hated that anyone would "kill" a baby when all she wanted was to have one.

It is not rhetoric when I say that each of us Catholic women needs to be listened to fully for our oppression to be understood. Layer upon layer of various oppressions (based on sexual identity, race, class, generation, nation) add to and are made worse by the institutionalized Catholic sexism, which is *brutal*. What does it mean for an Indigenous Catholic woman with internalized genocide recordings to think about having children? How many children? Aborting children? What did it mean for an Irish Catholic woman to take charge of her reproduction in a nation controlled by church and state in which birth control and abortion were illegal? What does it mean for Nicaraguan women when their male political leaders make deals with the institutional church in order to win elections and then prohibit abortion? What does it mean to be a political Catholic woman leader in the United States and be threatened with refusal of sacraments for taking public positions on reproduction?

**LESSON FIVE: Claiming my voice as a Catholic woman meant understanding the context of my oppression and challenging the oppression alongside other women.**

Our allies are often confused and astounded by the struggles we Catholic women have with sharing our thoughts and being visible. We are both brilliant and heaped under mounds of voicelessness. I want to

thank Diane Balser, especially, who has recognized the brilliance of RC Catholic women leaders and persisted with us through our struggles to open our mouths. We know, but we don't know that we know. We think, and then we doubt and dismiss what we think. We have been told that we are not entitled to speak; only to follow.

Leading women figures in the Christian New Testament (which was written within a patriarchal slave society in which woman were literally owned by male heads of households) are rendered close to invisible and voiceless. Women's stories are eliminated from Bible readings, or read not on Sundays but only during the week. Even Mary, the mother of Jesus, (called Miriam as a Jewish woman), is rendered almost mute in Biblical texts, speaking only three times.

Catholic women who chose to lead, speak, and be visible were tortured and/or burned at the stake. (The estimates range from hundreds of thousands to millions.) Ironically, some females who were burned at the stake and viewed as troublemakers were elevated to positions of veneration after their deaths. Joan of Arc was burned at the stake and later made a saint. Teresa of Avila was threatened with being silenced (due to her writings and desire to be a priest) and later honored as a pre-eminent leader and referred to as "Doctor of the Church."

Within the last forty years (parallel to secular feminism), Catholic women scholars and activists worldwide have researched, written about, taught about, and challenged the attempts to make women invisible. Women biblical scholars have reminded us of the first words of Mary, mother of Jesus. She spoke about her child coming to "put the mighty down from their thrones, fill the hungry with good things, and send the rich away . . . empty" (Luke 1:52-3). (Sounds like the transformation of society to me.) Over the last four decades, Catholic women scholars have searched out the tradition of women's liberation within religion to remind us of our voices and power, and provide us with the courage to keep going.

At the United Nations International Women's Conference (in Beijing, China, in 1995), Catholic women spoke out about the feminization of poverty, the rights of women and children, globalization, reproductive rights, and war and violence against women. A Catholic woman activist led a panel of

*continued . . .*



## LIBERATION

*continued . . .*

progressive religious women (Jewish, Protestant, Muslim, and Catholic) on the connection between fundamentalism and the control of women (with a standing ovation at the end). I was proud to be there witnessing Catholic women standing shoulder to shoulder with all women, against sexism.

A few years ago in Dublin, Ireland, I was part of the first international gathering of Catholic women on the issue of ordination. It was called Women's Ordination Worldwide, shortened to WOW (which showed our sense of humor). The keynote speaker was a sister from the United States (Joan Chittister). She was later threatened with excommunication (a profound penalty for an observant Catholic that deprives him or her from the Eucharist and severs his or her connections to the believing community) because she dared *to speak* on the issue of ordination. What I want our allies to understand is that the silencing of Catholic women involves extremes of punishment that reach into our souls and attempt to wrench us from our communities. Yet the keynote speaker did not refrain from speaking.

All of the three hundred and twenty-six women at the conference were notified by the BBC<sup>4</sup> that we, too, were threatened with excommunication. The male leadership of the Church was willing to exact on us the harshest of punishments for our daring to challenge a profound form of sexism. Yet no one left. No one backed off. Joan spoke. She was backed<sup>5</sup> by her community of sisters (who were as old as eighty-six) and all of us present. The Vatican withdrew the threat of excommunication. The women gained a new level of confidence and solidarity. Still, these kinds of threats against any Catholic woman who challenges institutional sexism persist, and *they take hold when we speak and are visible*.

Recently I was on a panel, at a Jesuit university, on Women in the Church Today. After a talk that I was proud of, I was asked to comment on a papal encyclical (a letter written to the faithful by the Pope): *Dignitatum Mulieris* (On the Dignity of Women). I was pleased to see the gains I had made (due completely to RC). With relaxed confidence I explained to a non-

RC audience how the content of an encyclical was in error. I felt completely relaxed about why the Pope was wrong. He was confused about the "nature" of women, and the document expressed confusion from top to bottom because of that distortion. It was wonderful to know that the sessions I had done on being attacked, being criticized, and facing "the fires of Hell," witch burnings, and Inquisitions had all made a difference. Many of my sessions had been on terror and having my mind. I recall my first session with a Jewish ally about "wrestling with God" and facing the fires of Hell.

I have learned to speak my mind, and I love backing other Catholic women to face their terrors and have their minds. Presently, as part of my wide-world activism, I lead a Catholic women's group within a mainstream activist organization. I have us tell our stories and learn our history. I encourage us to be courageous as we challenge oppression within the institution and amongst our male allies. I use every direction I have thought of in sessions to offer confidence and safety to Catholic women to reach for their minds.

**LESSON SIX: I have learned from Catholic women everywhere—in RC and out—who are students, theologians, workers within churches, activists, mothers, daughters, and nuns about how colonization, slavery, genocide, and racism intersect with each other and impact women, and why I need to listen to women worldwide to challenge the misinformation and confusions I carry.**

Our liberation from sexism, as Catholic women, will benefit by our remembering that eighty percent of the global population of Catholics are people of color. Colonization, slavery, and genocide recordings have functioned to make women invisible to themselves and others, including their allies. Catholic women of color face double and triple oppression and what Harvey referred to as "super-oppression": imperialism. Yet they are not victims, even in the face of all this.

Because many of us, including our allies, are unfamiliar with feminists in religion, I honor here the names of a few of the women whose shoulders Catholic women stand on: Diana Hayes, U.S. womanist theologian; Ivonne Guevara, a feminist theologian from Brazil; Mary John Mananzan, a Filipina feminist; Mary Condren, an Irish feminist; Indigenous liberationist

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<sup>4</sup> The BBC is the British Broadcasting Corporation.

<sup>5</sup> Backed means supported.

Julia Esquavel; Rosemary Ruether, a U.S. feminist theologian; Mary Robinson, a former president of Ireland and an Irish practicing Catholic who has led on the world stage against racism. It was also Mary Robinson who said, "I am a Jew," when Jews were under attack at the United Nations World Conference Against Racism, in Durban, South Africa.

Latin American women RCers teach fundamentals in their parishes and give priests a safe place to work on their oppression. Black, Latina, and white Catholic women Co-Counselors bring RC tools to wide-world Catholics. Nuns in Argentina, Chile, and Ireland are building RC everywhere they go. Many Latin American women have been inspired and backed by nuns who have understood liberation theology (theology that challenges all oppressions). Indigenous Catholic women have refused to be silent or disappear. They have challenged the Pope. They have fought every trace of genocidal recordings that make them want to die. The brown-skinned Virgin of Guadalupe<sup>6</sup> remains the icon for prayerful activist Catholics.

**LESSON SEVEN: If you are an ally to Catholic women who are challenging sexism, you will be attacked. Thus building alliances and discharging on attacks are key to both women and men allies.**

Our local Catholic women's group worked together with the Jesuit leadership of our region to plan an event challenging sexism. To begin the project, I co-lead, with a Jesuit priest, a group for the twelve of us (six women, six Jesuits) on understanding sexism. Once a month for six months we met and two people told their stories. First the women told their life stories as Catholic females: what had been good and what had been hard, including experiences of sexism. Then the Jesuits told stories of Catholic women they had been close to or who had inspired them with their leadership and lives of integrity. After that they told stories of witnessing sexism.

I do not know which stories were more compelling, but the overall experience moved us all as a group and

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<sup>6</sup> The Virgin of Guadalupe (or Our Lady of Guadalupe) is a celebrated sixteenth-century icon of the Virgin Mary. According to the traditional account, her image appeared miraculously, on the back of a simple peasant cloak, to Saint Juan Diego in December 1531. She is perhaps Mexico's most popular religious and cultural image and is the focus of an extensive pilgrimage. The feast day of Our Lady of Guadalupe is December 12.



ELLIE PUTNAM

## LIBERATION

*continued . . .*

set the stage for our project. We ended up planning and holding an event based on a document about challenging sexism: “Women in the Church and Civil Society.” The Jesuit who had written the document, for thirty-six thousand priests worldwide, addressed the gathering, along with a renowned Catholic feminist theologian. Four hundred people attended. We had planted the seeds of a local movement.

Then a cardinal tried to undermine our work by attacking the Jesuits for their alliance with us. He said he would close down their work at the Jesuit Urban Society, which had become a safe haven for Gay Catholics, holding masses for up to four hundred people. The Jesuits withdrew their support from our women’s group and confessed their fear of an attack on their community, and of Gay leadership within our alliance. Our women’s group was shut out of all Catholic institutional resources (including facilities, financial backing, publishing, and advertising) in the state of Massachusetts. However, we gained nationwide support, and still today we are doing women’s work in the state.

A widely known priest, Father Roy Bourgeois, has for eighteen years challenged U.S. violence, racism, and imperialism by protesting the School of the Americas, a school in Fort Benning, Georgia, USA, responsible for training “death squads” that have murdered countless loved ones in Latin America—including six Jesuits priests and their housekeeper and her daughter—and four U.S. sisters. Father Roy has recently been excommunicated. His “sin”: being present at the ordination of a woman priest.

I am proud to be a Catholic woman. I am proud of all Catholic women who are challenging sexism—inside or outside of our religious institution. And I am proud of our sisters and brothers from every religious tradition.

**Here is my program for Catholic women within religious settings:**

I. Women within parishes, and all Catholic organizations, holding women’s groups and caucuses in which we tell our stories as women and learn our history.

II. Observant women reaching out to secular feminists and sharing victories and challenges in the struggle against sexism.

III. Women in parishes and Catholic organizations developing friendships with male leaders who wish to understand challenging sexism.

IV. Catholic women developing friendships with women across racial and sexual-identity lines, creating a program of unity and gaining an awareness of the impact of divisions on liberation policy.

V. Making the discharge process and the policies of RC women’s liberation central to our program.

*Joanne Bray*  
*International Liberation*  
*Reference Person for Catholics*  
Greenwich, Connecticut, USA  
Reprinted from the e-mail discussion  
list for RC Community members



*Interested in reading more on a certain topic?*



### **Complete Index to *Present Time* Available Online**

On the RC web site you can find an index covering every issue of ***Present Time***. You can search the index by author, title, or topic (from a list of pre-determined topics). You will find the index by going to the web site at <http://www.rc.org/>, clicking on “Present Time” under Publications on the home page, then clicking on “Search PT Index.”

Thanks to the volunteers who made this possible!



## Linking Sexism, Men's Oppression, and Gay Oppression

I have read several postings, on the RC e-mail discussion lists, about sexism. Because of these I've begun discharging more directly on eliminating sexism, counseling my female Co-Counselors more deliberately on the effects of sexism in their lives, and teaching about sexism in my fundamentals classes.

For me, sexism is no longer something that happens to someone else. I'm no longer motivated to work on eliminating sexism in an attempt to "be good" or even out of love for the females in my life. It seems to me that although sexism directly targets females, it is also used to reinforce men's oppression, and it sets up\* Gay men to be targeted for destruction.

One of the effects of sexism is to make being female look like a bad thing. This somehow "rationalizes" the gross mistreatment aimed at girls and women. With the concept "female" distorted by misinformation, and females blatantly and persistently targeted with mistreatment, labeling a man "female" becomes a weapon of men's oppression. Telling a boy that he throws or runs or sounds like a girl, or calling him a wimp, a sissy, or a pansy, is considered insulting and humiliating.

In my experience, boys are ostracized and the harshness of sexism aimed directly at them if they don't allow themselves to be shepherded into an ever tightening confine of "maleness" as defined by the oppression (being tough, not crying, not caring about other people).

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\* Sets up means predisposes.

Men who persist in stepping out of line (out of the oppression's definition of appropriate male behavior) get the label that represents permanent feminization: Gay. All of the fury that sexism aims at women is unleashed at Gay men but without restraint (women are at least necessary for the survival of the species).

Sexism has damaged all of us. Some of us (heterosexual men, for instance) may think we have avoided the worst of it, but I believe that's largely a confusion of the distress, a confusion installed with the terror of seeing women and Gay men being targeted. We fear that the same could happen to us, and this can

leave us with "bystander" patterns or "choosing" the oppressor role. In fact, we have plenty of reasons to want to clean sexism completely out of our minds, our relationships, and our institutions.

I'm interested in thinking about other oppressor/oppressed dynamics. I've read in RC literature about how white people would never collude with racism if they hadn't first been terrified themselves. There is good reason for all of us with any relationship to oppression to work together to end it.

*Johnny Lee Lenhart*  
Brattleboro, Vermont, USA  
Reprinted from the RC e-mail  
discussion list for leaders of men

### Not a Crisis

The pattern of seeing someone else's distresses, whether large or small, as a crisis or a source of crisis can be very misleading indeed.

*Harvey Jackins*  
From a letter written in 1975



FLAG TUNNEL, BRITISH COLUMBIA, CANADA • JULIE TOMSON

## Healing from the U.S. Civil War

In May 2008 I attended a workshop called Healing from the Hurts of War, Working for Peace. It was led by Julian Weissglass.<sup>1</sup> Julian asked the workshop participants to share their thinking on healing from the Civil War and how that war had affected relations between Southerners and Northerners<sup>2</sup> in the RC Community. I am a white working-class Southerner from the Upper South (North Carolina), and here are some of my thoughts.

Oppressive attitudes toward people in the U.S. South existed before the Civil War. The war both exacerbated pre-existing distresses and added some new ones.

The South is comprised of people from different racial, religious, and ethnic backgrounds. Often the term Southerner is used to refer only to white Protestant Southerners. What I am writing here reflects my experience as a white Southerner.

Patterns that seem related to losing the Civil War include defying authority. The literal recording looks something like, "You are not going to tell me what to do." It makes folks defiant and rigid.

Another struggle we white Southerners have is discouragement. We often trudge along, doing our best, without any hope that things are going to get better. Being a defeated people has something to do with this feeling.

We also have distress recordings about being "invaded" and being a colonized people. Included here are a recording that says, "I will fight you with everything I have, to keep you

from taking anything else away," and patterns of alcoholism, violence, and not taking care of our health.

I am interested in hearing from Northerners about what distresses seem related to "winning" the Civil War.

Southern oppression affects relationships between us U.S. Southerners and others. For example, there are subtle and not-so-subtle ways that people dismiss our thinking. If we keep our beautiful accents, we are teased and believed to be unintelligent. If we assimilate and give up<sup>3</sup> the way our people talk, we carry a big hurt, too. As RCers, we worry about how people are going to treat us when we go to workshops outside of the South, especially in the Northeast. Some of you are impatient with us, and we get ignored and are often not visible as leaders. Those of you who are from outside the South, please take note of where and how we irritate you. Sometimes it's abundantly clear that we do. This irritation needs to be discharged.

Non-Southerners (both white people and people of color) have been set up<sup>4</sup> to blame white Southerners for racism and often believe that white Southerners are more racist than other white people. This is a big part of how white Southerners have been separated from other RCers, and it gets in the way of all white USers working together to end racism. This is a good place to start working on Southern oppression.

I would like to hear from non-Southern USers about these issues. What would help us all move forward? We Southerners invite you to be our allies in healing from the Civil War and working to end Southern oppression.

*Rachel Winters*  
Chapel Hill, North Carolina, USA

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<sup>1</sup> Julian Weissglass is the International Commonality Reference Person for Wide World Change.

<sup>2</sup> Southerners are people from the states, in the southeastern part of the United States, that seceded from the United States in 1860 and 1861, leading to the U.S. Civil War. Northerners are people from the more northern states that were on the opposing side in that war.

<sup>3</sup> Give up means abandon.

<sup>4</sup> Set up means conditioned, predisposed.



CROATIA • MOLNÁR GABRIELLA

## My dear precious men

My dear precious men  
They should have allowed us to cry  
Not to fear the tears  
But allow them to fall  
So that they might wash away all  
The pain we have held inside

The truth is  
There are no monsters  
Just men  
Precious men  
Men who walk with wounds so deep  
They can no longer feel  
Their own hearts beat  
For we have created calluses  
Upon our hearts  
And the warm blood  
That courses through our veins  
Has grown cold  
So cold  
We no longer feel the fire  
In our fingers  
Fingers of hands  
Meant to heal  
Not to hurt  
To liberate  
Not to oppress

My dear precious men

We should have allowed ourselves to cry  
Not to succumb  
Or become numb  
But rather to scream and tremble  
So that we might shake out  
All the pain we have held inside

Because men  
Who walk with wounds so deep  
That they can no longer feel  
Can no longer feel the wounds  
They inflict on others

We can help to liberate this world  
But as we do, we must face our hurts  
Cry and heal ourselves  
So that we might feel ourselves  
Once again

My dear precious men

*Julman Tolentino*  
West Orange, New Jersey, USA

## Facing Anti-Jewish Oppression

In the case of the Jewish people, the cultural pattern has been for the leaders of the Jewish community to put the community at the service of the oppressor, using the superior education, and so on, to do the oppressor's or ruler's bidding. This ensures the enmity of the general oppressed population and guarantees, when things come to a boil,\* the betrayal of the Jews and their use as scapegoats to soak up the resentment of the oppressed population.

Addressing this currently would mean, for example, examining the role of the Jewish community in relation to black people in the United States. Internationally it would mean facing the role of the nation of Israel as a watchdog for the U.S. imperialism directed against Arab nationalism and the consequent long-range dangers this guarantees for the survival of Israel.

*Harvey Jackins*  
From a letter written in 1973

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\* Come to a boil means reach a critical point.



CYNTHIA JOHNSTON



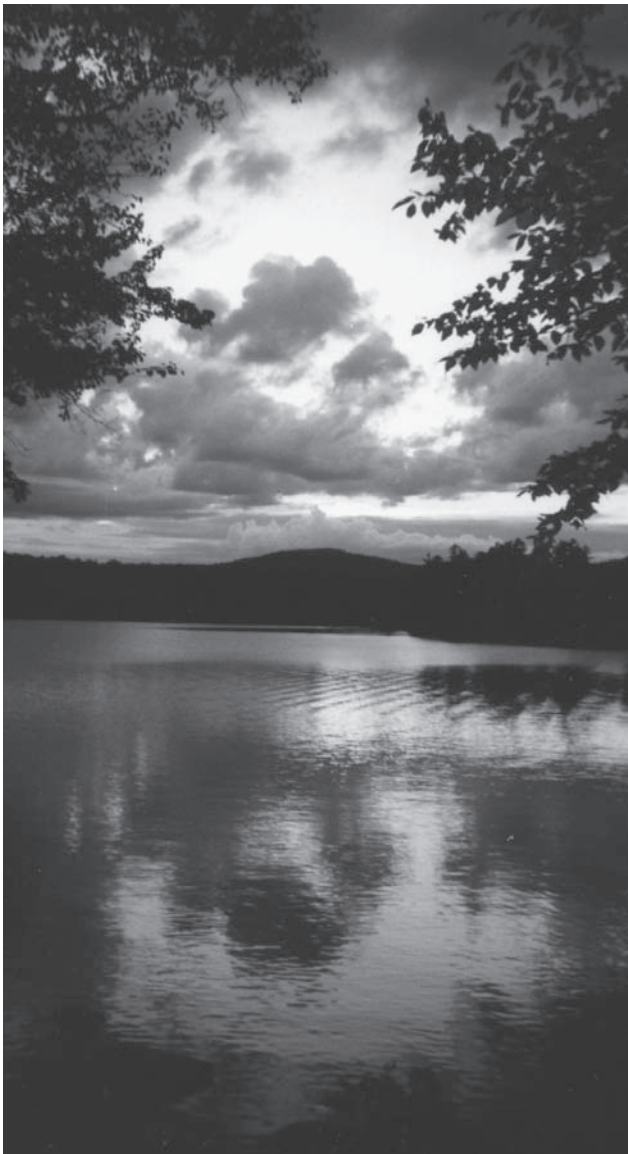
## “Today’s Thought”

Dear RC users of electronic media,

The RC web site includes a page on which each day there is a different RC thought about the world—usually from Harvey Jackins. Many people have requested assistance in making this page the home page of their Internet browser. If you do that, “Today’s Thought” about reality will be the first thing that appears on your screen when you log on to the Internet.

There are many different types of web browsers. We have written out below, for the three most common types, how to make “Today’s Thought” the home page. Try these instructions and see if having an RC thought as your starting point helps you to hold perspective.

With love and appreciation,  
*Tim Jackins*



STEVE BANBURY

### For Safari

- 1) Open Safari.
- 2) Open <<http://www.rc.org/thoughts/index.html>>.
- 3) Choose PREFERENCES from the Safari menu and click GENERAL.
- 4) At the “Home Page” setting, click SET TO CURRENT PAGE.

### For Mozilla Firefox

- 1) Open Mozilla Firefox.
- 2) Open <<http://www.rc.org/thoughts/index.html>>.
- 3) Choose PREFERENCES from the Firefox menu and click MAIN.
- 4) Under the “Home Page” box, click “Use Current Page.”

### For Internet Explorer

- 1) Open Internet Explorer.
- 2) Open <<http://www.rc.org/thoughts/index.html>>.
- 3) Click TOOLS on the Menu bar, then choose INTERNET OPTIONS. Internet Options dialog box appears.
- 4) Click the GENERAL tab.
- 5) Click the USE CURRENT button in the “Home Page” section.
- 6) Click OK in the Internet Options dialog box.



FRED KELLER

## E-mail Discussion List for RC Community Members Involved in Eliminating Racism

What began as an e-mail discussion list for people in United to End Racism has developed into a list for all RCers who are active in using RC to eliminate racism. This list is a way for us to exchange our thinking about and experience with using RC in eliminating racism.

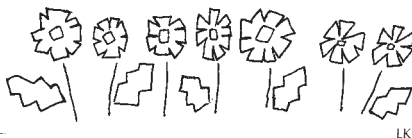
If you would like to be a member of this list, please e-mail us at <uer@rc.org>, telling us of your interest and including a short description of your eliminating-racism activities. Please also ask your Area Reference Person or Regional Reference Person to e-mail us with his or her support of your membership.

*Tim Jackins and Diane Shisk*



RAMI BEN-MOSHE

What used to be called  
Personal Counselors is now called  
Re-evaluation Counseling  
Community Resources (RCCR).



LK

### *I F Y O U M O V E . . .*

and don't tell us in advance of your address change, the post office returns your copy of *Present Time* to us with postage due. (It does not forward bulk-rate mail.) We then have to pay a much higher rate to mail you a second copy. This need not happen if you will kindly let us know of your address change well in advance.

Thank you,  
*Rational Island Publishers Staff*

$$Z(n+1) = Z(n)^2+c$$



You remind me of fractals,  
 Golden, royal purple, cobalt blue,  
 Spirals spiraling within spirals spiraling,  
 Delving inward, ever, ever inward,  
 With unending,  
 Expanding, expanding, immense dimensions  
 of  
 Creativity and thinking  
 Exploring, infinitely, infinitely fascinating,  
 Recreating endlessly, agelessly  
 More exquisite beauty within beauty  
 Beauty within beauty...

Sparkling, crystalline thoughts within crystalline, sparkling thoughts luminously luminous  
 Playfully eternal, eternally playful,  
 Infinitely formed by many treasurers within treasures within treasures...

You, too,  
 have an immeasurable degree  
 of  
 Stunning luminous self-similarity.  
 In the past,  
 as one cell,  
 two cells,  
 fetus,  
 newborn,  
 teen,  
 and now, adult.

Lifelong inner explorer  
 of self and others,  
 Creating new dimensions, unending evolutions  
 to rediscover  
 What it means to be human to human.

A finite area,  
 You,  
 Unbound by an infinitely evolving mind,  
 luminous thoughts,  
 within luminous thoughts,  
 within luminous thoughts ...

*Sojourner Truth*  
Seattle, Washington, USA

LK



## The Inclusion Movement and RC— Crossing the Bridge

In a Community-building workshop in England, Diane Shisk<sup>1</sup> talked about the slow collapse of capitalism and how it's giving us time to experiment with alternatives to our current institutions. The RC Community is playing a crucial role. We know how to help people discharge distress patterns. Without discharge, patterns would inevitably lead to the re-creation of our current difficulties in any new system people tried to introduce. Re-evaluation Counseling is, in part, a laboratory. As we Co-Counsel we discover, develop, and use crucial insights and tools. It is also a leadership training organization. As things in the world become increasingly desperate, we will stand out as people who are *for everybody*, which will make it possible for people to trust us and want to follow us.

As Diane spoke, it suddenly seemed to me that the wide-world inclusion movement might be the only other social experiment that has the same goal: to be there *for everybody*.

It made me think of a large **H** shape. The left leg is the RC Community. The right leg is the inclusion movement, and the line in the middle is the bridge over which we go backward and forward, taking and bringing insights, skills, and information.

Those of us in the wide-world experiment are trying to create a learning community that does not exclude *anyone*. In the developed world, we have focused initially on the state education system. We are attempting to transform it into a *new* system—one that can benefit every child, including the most vulnerable. This is why the work is so radical.

Some schools are already being transformed<sup>2</sup> because the necessary preconditions exist. These preconditions include the following:

- Every child, regardless of class, race, faith, or ability, being entitled to free education from ages five to sixteen;
- Financial, material, and human resources being available to make the above a reality;
- Having the goal (even under a capitalist government) to empower young people so that they can be economically and socially active;
- A growing recognition that segregated education is harmful to society;
- The hope, with each new generation of children, that things can be right for them;
- The fact that in their hearts everyone wants inclusion.

The journey to inclusion is a journey of discovery. There are new values: friendship is fundamental; collaboration is better than competition; “all are different, all are equal”; support works better than punishment.

There are new goals: for example, the building of inclusive communities, the redistribution of resources.

There are new teaching strategies: individualised education plans; team teaching; peer tutoring; learning through the arts.

There are new tools: Circles of Friends<sup>3</sup>; restorative justice<sup>4</sup>; anti-bullying and peer mentoring programmes.

Putting all the above together is creating a new culture, a culture of inclusion. When we get it right for children, they will not accept anything less as they grow into adults—everything will have to change!

I have noticed something about this culture we are creating: people laugh and cry a lot. They have to,

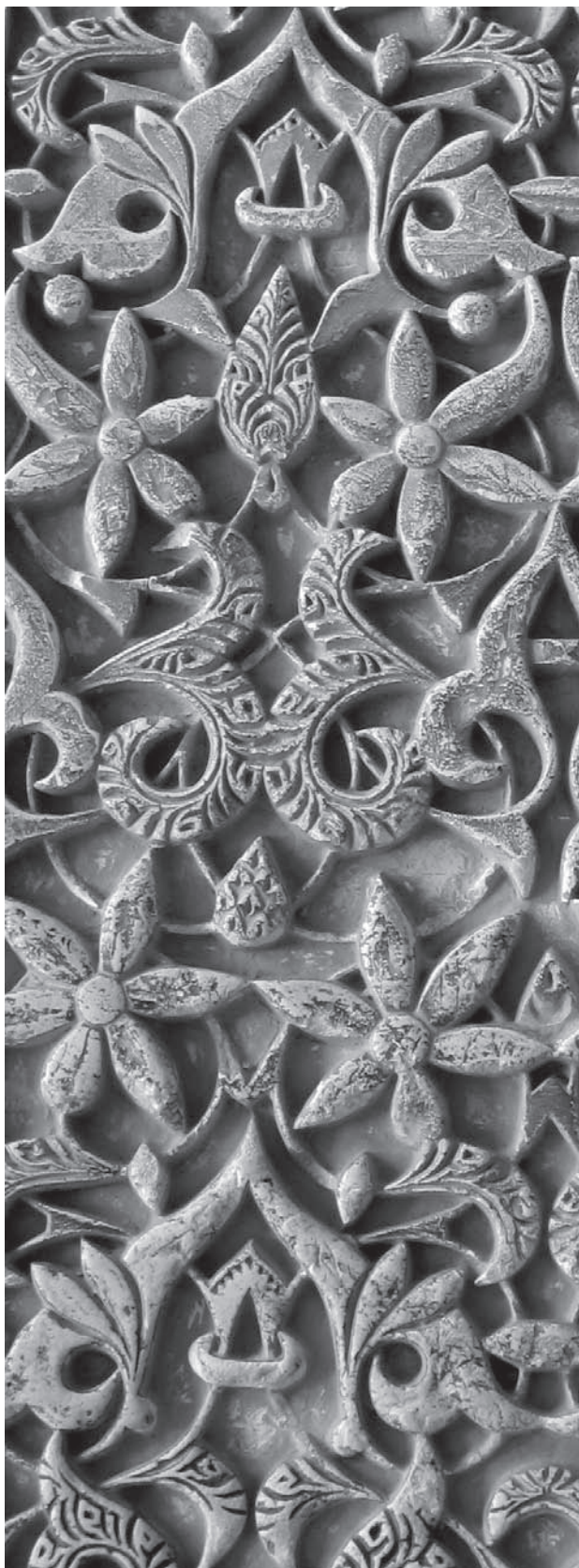
*continued . . .*

<sup>1</sup> Diane Shisk is the Alternate International Reference Person of the Re-evaluation Counseling Communities.

<sup>2</sup> Schools all over the world—from the slum schools in Mumbai, India, to all the schools in New Hampshire, USA—are taking up the challenge of becoming fully inclusive. The Indian government has committed itself to mainstream education for all by the year 2020, and South Africa and New Zealand have similar plans. Italy has already desegregated its education system, and this is being recognised as the “driver” for a different kind of adult society. In England there has been a collaboration among parents, professional allies, and disabled people, with RCers in every group, and I believe this is leading to something even more profound. —*Micheline Mason*

<sup>3</sup> A Circle of Friends is a way to organise child-to-child support for individual children who may be lonely or at risk of exclusion from school because of their behaviour or impairment.

<sup>4</sup> Restorative justice is a structure to help bring together the victim and the perpetrator of some hurtful or damaging behaviour. It takes both of them through a series of questions that leads to them having some understanding of each other's viewpoint and struggles. It ends with a negotiated agreement between both parties about future behaviour.



THE ALHAMBRA, GRANADA, SPAIN • RAMI BEN-MOSHE

*continued . . .*

because they are being required to change from the inside out. However, they are not laughing and crying enough. This is why we need a bridge between the RC Community and the inclusion movement.

We Co-Counsellors need access to the connections and insights flowing from the inclusion experiment. We need it to have a full picture of the “everybody” we want to be for. There are plenty of people who cannot (yet) be part of the RC Community—people with little free attention, with “severe” learning difficulties,” with disruptive or violent patterns—but they are all represented within the school-age population and are therefore the catalyst for change within inclusive schools. We RCers need to know what works.

Those of us who are developing inclusive schools need RC theory and tools, because without them it is much more difficult to be fully human and we could “settle” for less than the whole dream. Like RC, inclusion fundamentally challenges the oppressive society. As a result it is attacked, rubbished, undermined, underfunded, distorted, and ignored—and increasingly so as it is shown to work. Because of this, people involved in the movement need to discharge a lot of discouragement, similar to RC Community builders.

The inclusion movement is not happening only in rich countries. People wanting to bring all children together to learn from each other are active in many parts of the world, including in some very poor areas. There, at least, they don’t generally have a history of institutionalisation to undo. It is real “bottom up” change. With the tools of RC, this change could become a blueprint<sup>5</sup> for the next stage of our life on this planet.

As the International Liberation Reference Person for Inclusion, I see my role as one of perpetually travelling back and forth across the bridge. At first there were just one or two of us. Now I have a support group of over twenty-five inclusion activists, all equipped with the tools of RC. We are helping each other to think more clearly and lead more boldly, in and out of RC. I think this group will grow and become increasingly international, and the people in it more and more influential—especially the young people, who have glimpsed something that has never happened before, however imperfect it still is.

*Micheline Mason  
International Liberation  
Reference Person for Inclusion  
London, England*

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<sup>5</sup> In this context, a blueprint is a plan or programme of action.

## Social Change and RC

Harvey Jackins, at Kirkridge V, in Pennsylvania, USA, May 1972

As the representative of this project, there are two demands that come at me. One is, "Why are you trying to involve people in politics? I came here to get rid of my distress." I say, "Fine. You are welcome to come here and get rid of your distress, but you're going to find out that these things matter, and you're going to be more and more concerned about them."

On the other hand I hear, "What are you, a phony?<sup>1</sup> You get people involved in their own distresses, and the world is bleeding out there. To the barricades—now!" To this I say, "It's great you're aware of the situation in the world, but doing foolish things has never helped bring about social change. It does help to get your own head on straight<sup>2</sup> and come up with<sup>3</sup> a workable program that actually reaches people. You need to figure out if what you are doing will really help stop the killing in Vietnam or whether you are just going to get your head bloodied and be an incarcerated martyr—which is just another drag on people,<sup>4</sup> because they have to go visit you in jail.

It's been necessary to deal with both these things.

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<sup>1</sup> A phony is someone who is not genuine.

<sup>2</sup> Get your own head on straight means clarify your own thinking.

<sup>3</sup> Come up with means figure out.

<sup>4</sup> Drag on people means burden on and inconvenience for people.

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## The Upward Trend Speeds Up

Ten years ago, when we in the RC Communities made eliminating racism central to our work, I had a very different life. As a white person I was numb to racism and had no relationships with people of color, not even in Co-Counseling. I had been raised not to act overtly racist, but I had never seen the adults around me have friendships with people of color, or across class lines. When I became an adult, I had only white middle-class friends, all Jewish.

With Tim Jackins' encouragement to do anything rather than nothing, I awkwardly began to reach for people of color, while feeling (and acting) horribly racist. I blundered and made mistakes, but kept going and struggled to have a good perspective on myself. I learned to fight for myself and for a connection with others. I learned to stop believing any voice in my head that was critical or unkind. I screamed and shouted it down and outside of Co-Counseling sessions made and re-made a decision to walk away from any conversation with it, and as I did so the quality of my attention changed.

Today I have close friendships with people of color—mostly people of African heritage—across class lines. I am able to relax with them, have fun, be myself, be openly Jewish, think well about them and their liberation, and help them discharge. I got to spend election night with an African-heritage family and hold a four-year-old black boy in

my arms as we all cried. As of this week I now have a regular Co-Counselor of African heritage—someone I recruited into RC earlier this year. (Thank you, Dan Nickerson, for your article in the last *Present Time* on how to choose a Co-Counselor.<sup>1</sup>)

Outside of RC I lead as an artist. I hold workshops in which a diverse group of up to a hundred people come together. I talk openly about racism and people's goodness and teach how to exchange listening time. I lead wide-world weekend workshops in which I talk about discharge, contradictions,<sup>2</sup> and liberation and have people do mini-sessions. Most of my students are people of color, and many of them lead and organize in the wide world. More than a hundred of them have regular contact with me, some on a weekly basis. I would never have believed my life could be this big, and I know it's only the beginning of things to come. It wouldn't have happened without Tim's persistence. "It only takes one person to decide. . . ." Thank you, Tim, for deciding.

As Obama's<sup>3</sup> campaign was nearing its end, I thought about the ongoing efforts, big and small, made all over the world, and how all of them added up, preparing the ground for Obama's victory.

<sup>1</sup> "Finding a Good Counselor," on pages 8 to 9 of the October 2008 *Present Time*

<sup>2</sup> Contradictions to distress

<sup>3</sup> Barack Obama, the newly elected president of the United States

So many of us in RC have put our attention on eliminating racism. I think of

- Barbara Love's<sup>4</sup> workshops, Tim's workshops, Dvora Slavin's<sup>5</sup> workshops;
- the United to End Racism delegation to Durban, South Africa<sup>6</sup>;
- the many other United to End Racism projects;
- the building of RC Communities in Africa;
- the work on racism I witnessed among Israeli Co-Counselors;
- the efforts of Co-Counselors in my Region,<sup>7</sup> in New York (New York, USA).

What we've been doing collectively, in loose association with each other, is unprecedented in human history. We helped create the conditions for the election. I also believe we played a role in the hopeful, human tone of

<sup>4</sup> Barbara Love is the International Liberation Reference Person for People of African Heritage.

<sup>5</sup> Dvora Slavin is the Regional Reference Person for South King County, Washington, USA, and Hawaii, USA, and is a leader of many RC eliminating racism workshops.

<sup>6</sup> In August 2001, United to End Racism sent a delegation of Co-Counselors to the United Nations World Conference Against Racism, in Durban, South Africa.

<sup>7</sup> A Region is a subdivision of the International Re-evaluation Counseling Community, usually consisting of several Areas (local RC Communities).



GRAND CANAL, VENICE, ITALY • CARYN DAVIS

Obama's campaign. So many thousands (millions?) of people have had some contact with RC.

Today I spoke on the phone with an African-heritage friend of mine who is in Kenya working on a television production. She told me how much she misses me and that she has trained two people on her crew not to interrupt her when she needs a shoulder to cry on. She told me that she quotes me constantly, everywhere she goes. How many of us are being quoted, and by

how many people? I myself regularly quote many of you.

The U.S. population elected a man who insists on attacking policies, not other humans. It was amazing to watch fresh intelligence get so much time on television. We're not the only ones out there, but I think we played a role in what Barack and Michelle Obama<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Michelle Obama is married to President Barack Obama.

have been modeling, and what millions have been responding to.

We've seen a major crack in oppression. The upward trend has visibly sped up. What we've helped to set in motion can't be stopped. I've known for a while, in my heart of hearts, that we have already won.

*Ela Thier*

New York, New York, USA

Reprinted from the e-mail discussion list for RC Community members



IRAN • ANTHONY TASSI

## Closer to Ending Racism

With the election of Barack Obama as president of the United States, it seems that we are closer to realizing the goal of ending racism. Many tears have been shed all over the world. I've found that this presents a good opportunity to listen to people at my workplace and explain about contradictions to distress & how they make old feelings of hurt accessible to discharge. It makes sense to people.

Congratulations to all of you, to all of us. A deeply felt thank you to U.S. friends and co-workers for all you have done to make this happen. The struggle is not over and capitalism is yet to be defeated, but we have gained a different perspective. We have been empowered by the fact that so many people are together in a desire for a just and peaceful world, and have dared to act more on hope than on fear.

I think about our goal in RC of ending racism and how much I have wanted it to be reached soon and fast. I realize that we are on our way and that every step counts.\*

Susanne Langer

Copenhagen, Denmark

Reprinted from the e-mail discussion list for RC Community members

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\* Counts means matters, makes a difference.

## Thoughtful Use of the Internet

Hi Tim,<sup>1</sup>

Your interesting post (reprinted below) got me thinking about my wide-world Internet involvement.

Three years ago some parents who were having difficulties with their school systems started a public web site. I decided to participate and have been listening to people, expressing warmth, giving small amounts of information, providing a good perspective, and at times sharing my own experiences on the site. I have reminded people to use pseudonyms to protect their families.

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<sup>1</sup> Tim Jackins



YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK, CALIFORNIA, USA • THERESA D'AMATO

Occasionally I have referred folks to Patty Wipfler's organization, Hand in Hand,<sup>2</sup> or the RC web site, but mostly I and the other participants have shared difficulties and information and tried to look at our situations freshly and act as allies to our children and their schools. I think that without the resource of this web site, many of us would be struggling separately and blaming ourselves.

I think the biggest contradiction I have provided is the reminder that as parents we are doing the very best we can at every moment. I have also asked questions about people's own experiences in school and growing up.

What I'm most pleased about is that I like these folks and that my efforts to show it seem to be working. We have created a space on the Internet where people try hard not to "flame" each other,<sup>3</sup> and we've discouraged the ones who have seemed to show up<sup>4</sup> just to "stir the pot."<sup>5</sup>

We have working moms who support stay-at-home moms and stay-at-home moms who support working moms. We have home schooling parents who support parents who use "brick and mortar" schools,<sup>6</sup> and vice versa. Lately we have even been able to keep a handful of dads around. Although the majority of the participants are USers, we have parents from many English-speaking places around the world.

It has been an interesting opportunity, and I think I've played a good role in helping to create the culture of this small on-line world. A number of families whose children were in difficult situations have found situations for them that are more rewarding. These parents point to our on-line group as playing a key role.

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<sup>2</sup> Patty Wipfler is the RC International Liberation Reference Person for Parents. She also initiated and leads a wide-world parenting support organization called Hand in Hand.

<sup>3</sup> "Flame" each other means send each other hostile, abusive messages.

<sup>4</sup> Show up means begin to participate.

<sup>5</sup> "Stir the pot" means create controversy.

<sup>6</sup> A "brick and mortar" school is a school in a physical building.



Based on the feedback I've received, I'm pretty sure that we have helped about thirty parents shine during quite hard times. Probably many more have read what people have written and gotten a lot from that. Outside of the information, I know that the tone of caring has been a useful contradiction.

*Robin Goldberg*  
Southbury, Connecticut, USA

#### THE POST FROM TIM TO WHICH ROBIN WAS REFERRING

Dear RC Users of the World Wide Web,

The access to information and to communication between people that continues to develop on the World Wide Web is impressive and is providing large opportunities for people to improve their lives. As with all rapid changes, it isn't simple to keep up<sup>7</sup> it, and it can be difficult to get a clear picture of its uses and implications.

In RC, the web has given us easier access to information, easier contact with each other, and great resources for organizing everything from Co-Counseling sessions to RC workshops. Many people are even doing Co-Counseling sessions over the web. Although all these things can assist us in the work we are doing and the relationships we are developing, our agreed-upon relationship as Co-Counselors, and our working together to help others have access to RC, have not changed.

Our Co-Counseling relationships are based primarily on one-to-one contact and direct personal communications with each other, and the thinking we

do and the agreements and commitments we make are different from those in most other relationships. As our Co-Counseling relationships develop, so do the caring, commitment, and safety provided by a thoughtful measure of confidentiality. Unless we change our agreements, this confidentiality needs to be maintained—regardless of developments in electronic communication and any resulting new social structures.

A good number of RCers are using the social networks developing on the World Wide Web, such as Facebook. These are social networks, and the relationships being developed on them are social ones, quite different from the relationships we've agreed to have with each other in RC.

Although a Facebook account can make it easier to contact a Co-Counselor quickly and directly, using such an account to write about one's distresses is like trying to have a session when no one has agreed to be the counselor. And writing in an open discussion about one's own or someone else's struggles can create a trading of upsets and a lot of restimulation without the resource to allow for discharge and re-evaluation.

These kinds of open discussions also allow people not connected with or knowledgeable about RC to become confused about RC, or even try, for their own purposes, to get others upset about RC. This has already happened a couple of times.

I think RC Community members need to discharge and carefully think about the use of Facebook and other such social networks in connection with RC activities. At this point I would discourage that use.

With love and appreciation,  
*Tim Jackins*

Reprinted from the  
RC e-mail discussion lists

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<sup>7</sup> Keep up with means stay abreast of, keep informed about.

I am larger, better than I thought;  
I did not know I held so much goodness.

*Walt Whitman*  
From *Song of the Open Road*

## The Collapsing Society

The present situation is that the oppressive society cannot function much longer. It is already malfunctioning to an enormous degree. Nothing of classical economics works anymore. The system is functioning at all only on patches and temporary repairs made with dirty string and chewing gum.

The basic built-in contradiction in this oppressive capitalist society is simply that one cannot take enough purchasing power to the only regulatory structure that is allowed, the open market, to purchase the value of the goods brought there to be sold. So, successive economic crises appear with increasing intensity. The string is winding up very tight at the present time. The only possible ways to extend the system's life are by war or plundering other nations, associated with enormous borrowing against future taxation.

... We do not have to furnish the motive power or the drive to overthrow the system. That's a misleading concept. The system is heading for collapse. It's "going to hell in a bucket," and fast. All the activist can do is guide and steer the process.

Harvey Jackins  
From *The Rest of Our Lives*, page 13  
(written in 1985)



DAN NICKERSON

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## Making a Difference

Several weeks ago, while national elections were being held in Israel, I was having a Co-Counseling session and I suddenly said in a surprised voice, "There are elections here in three weeks!" which brought huge and unexpected discharge. I could then notice how I, and most people around me, weren't talking about the coming elections, were avoiding the subject as much as possible. People feel discouraged and despairing about the political situation here.

I discharged plenty after that, including in a weekly RC women's group. We didn't work in that group on the election itself, but we discharged on making decisions, speaking our minds, making our voices heard, noticing that our thinking was significant, and reclaiming our power. That helped me to think freshly about my position as a voter. I was able to stay focused and remember that I do have a choice (I don't have to vote automatically for the same party I voted for before), that I can get information and evaluate it, that I can reach out.

On election day I called a close Palestinian friend, A—, who is an Israeli citizen. She felt upset and despairing about the election. She told me that she had never before voted and was not about to vote that day. I invited her to spend the day with me. It rained heavily, so we spent most of the day in my house with our children. It was a good exercise for me to just listen to her, not try to change her mind, not "correct" her when I thought she was wrong. After she had spoken for a long time and cried for a while, she asked me whether or not I was going to vote. Just then one of my daughters came in and asked her if she had already voted. A— said,

"I've never voted before, but I think I will today." I hadn't suggested that she vote. It was another example of how discharge helps people reclaim their thinking.

As I was watching my friend and my daughter having a relaxed conversation, another soothing and encouraging insight came to me:

I carry racist recordings from when I was very young, especially from hearing the adults around me use negative phrases when referring to people who were not "exactly the same as us"—whether that was because of their skin color, ethnic identity, nationality, or class. The phrases I heard often come up in my mind now, involuntarily, when I interact with people whom I was taught were different. By now I can easily identify when this is happening, but it scares and embarrasses me and

often leads to my feeling guilty and evil, and terrible about myself. Today I realized that while I may still have these "thoughts," I have discharged enough that I can control what I say. I am able to never repeat the recordings out loud (unless I am struggling with them in a session) so it stops here!

I believe that my children will not feel pulled to rehearse these phrases as they haven't heard them in their home. While I assume that they do hear them outside, I think that not hearing such confusion at home will help them to question the oppressive comments and not internalize them so easily.

I find it hopeful that simply not rehearsing one's distresses out loud can make a significant difference.

*Orna Shuman*  
Beit Shearim (Moshav), Israel



LANCE CABLK



## Gaza and Israel

### A correspondence on the e-mail discussion list for RC Community members

*I have been discharging about the situation in Gaza and Israel. I am Arab American, and the topic is always in the forefront of my mind. I've organized topic groups to get people counseling on their hopelessness and numbness about the conflicts in the Middle East.*

*It has been good to read the postings from Israel. I stay close to my Israeli Co-Counselors who are currently living here in Seattle (Washington, USA). I also treasure my Jewish friends and make sure that they know I do not blame them for the situation in Gaza. I heard Diane Balser<sup>1</sup> talk about being pro-Israel and pro-peace, and I try to keep that perspective. I think that the U.S. news media scapegoat Israel, and target the Palestinians with racism at the same time. It is easy for me to feel helpless, especially when we are given the incorrect message that these conflicts have always existed and are inevitable. I think it is important for people all over the world to discharge on ending violence everywhere. I'd love to hear what contradictions<sup>2</sup> work for you and how you are working on these issues.*

Mary Toutonghi  
Seattle, Washington, USA

Overall, I think that any way a client can discharge about war should be encouraged.

I have my best sessions when I work on my early memories of hearing about war, or in regard to the war in Gaza my earliest memories of hearing about Israel and Palestine (or Jews and Arabs). I do not usually have good sessions on the current situation, and I have heard from others that they have a similar difficulty. Because many of us have undischarged early distress about war, I think there is not a lot of attention available to discharge on present-time events. In this way, counseling on war is similar to counseling on sexuality or racism.

Another approach that is useful for me is to make a decision; "I decide to end war," and then say whatever thoughts come to mind and discharge whatever feelings come up.

Discharging on my earliest memories having to do with war in general or with Israel/Palestine in particular

<sup>1</sup> Diane Balser is the International Liberation Reference Person for Women and a wide-world activist in a progressive Jewish organization.

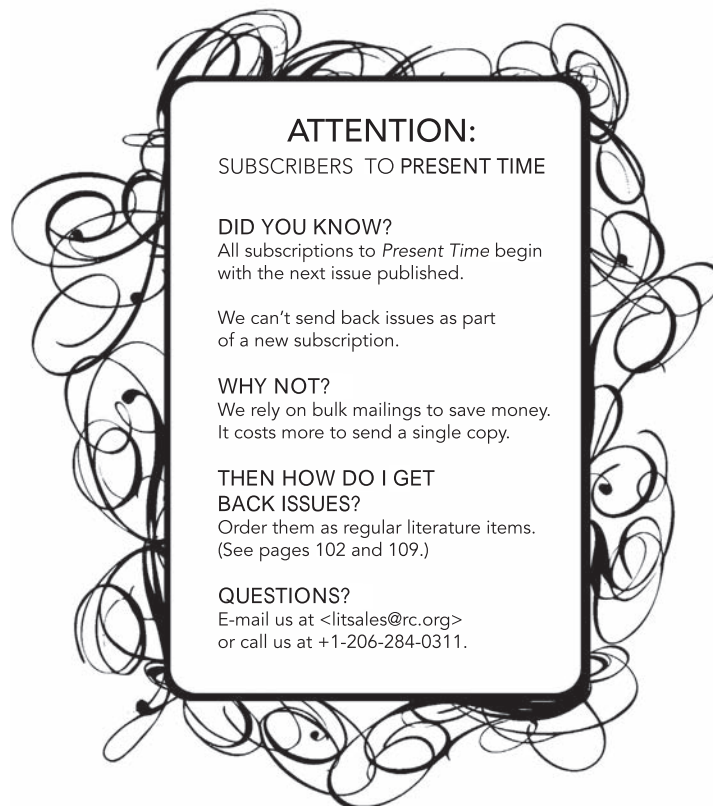
<sup>2</sup> Contradictions to distress

helps me to think better about the present situation. As a child I was never allowed to discharge my feelings or to even have my questions answered about the wars I heard about. In addition, I was confused about the strange ways my parents were acting. I think that some (many?) of their distress patterns were a result of wars that they or their parents had lived through, but they never told me that. No one ever said, "I'm acting weirdly because when I was a child I was in a bombing raid," or, "I don't have any attention for you because my father was in combat and when he came home he abused me."

I think that as more people discharge on their earliest memories of war, and the stories of their parents and grandparents, the faster we will move toward ending war. We will have a world without war.

I often have good sessions listening to or singing anti-war songs.

Julian Weissglass  
International Commonality Reference  
Person for Wide World Change  
Santa Barbara, California, USA





MARTINEZ, CALIFORNIA, USA • JULIAN WEISSGLASS

## A New Resource for Beginning Teachers of RC

Rational Island Publishers has recently published some new material to assist beginning teachers of RC fundamentals classes. It is intended especially for those teachers who are far from established RC Communities. (As RC spreads, some teachers are in places so far removed from where RC has already been that they have never had the chance to be in a fundamentals class themselves.)

This new material includes a *Fundamentals Teaching Guide and Class Outline* covering more than enough topics for a first series of fundamentals classes (twenty-six chapters, a hundred and eighty-four pages). It also includes readings on each topic for the students, readings on each topic for the teacher, and page-sized posters of related RC ideas. The teacher has permission to make copies of the readings for the students.

It is not meant to prescribe what someone is to teach in a fundamentals class, nor the order of topics, nor how a teacher is to teach. It is intended to give beginning RC teachers something solid to help them think about what they wish to teach and how they wish to share those ideas.

It is available from Rational Island Publishers for \$25.00 (U.S.) per copy, plus postage and handling. (For ordering information, see page 109.)

## All of Us Are “Geniuses”

The distress recordings have accumulated since human beings first became intelligent. The excellent characteristics of vast intelligence, good character, power, freedom of decision, cooperativeness, and all the rest have been largely obscured for humans in the mass so that we have tended to regard people who show these characteristics as elegant accidents. We speak of “geniuses.” We say this individual is a genius because he thought the way through to a general theory of relativity. This human being was a genius because he painted a beautiful painting. This human being was a genius because she unraveled the secrets of radioactivity.

Our cultures have offered us this kind of picture of humans instead of giving us the picture as we in RC now have it—that these are characteristics of all of us and that every human being has all these capacities and would exhibit all these capacities if they were not obscured by the accumulation of distress patterns.

Harvey Jackins  
From *The Longer View*,  
pages 223 to 224



LK

## Elections, Integrity, and Drugs

Not long before the U.S. presidential election, I got to hear Cherie<sup>1</sup> ask, “Where are the places you are tempted to act outside of your usual integrity?” At that moment I found many answers, and since the election I have found more—perhaps because of hope.

I keep imagining Barack Obama stepping into the White House and meeting the people who have lots of money and are accustomed to setting things up for the world as if the rest of us (non-rich humans, other species) were little toys. They might be trying to tell Obama, “Oh, the people don’t really need what they said they wanted. That was just a fad; they didn’t mean you had to take it seriously.” I think Obama needs to be able to point to us and say, “Yes they did,” and we need to be right there, listening to the conversation, ready to prove that we meant what we said when we voted and cheered for him. I think we need to be ready to go on strike at a moment’s notice; to refuse to kill this, refuse to buy that.

<sup>1</sup> Cherie Brown, the International Liberation Reference Person for Jews

At the same time I am finding my role as a physician both more oppressive and more transformable than I had realized. Now every time I hear a patient ask for a medicine to “make something easier to bear,” I hear a person asking to be excused from the big crowd of people listening at Obama’s door, ready to help him. I am vividly aware of having acted outside of my integrity whenever I’ve hid my thinking about mind-altering drugs. It is getting easier to say, “No, that medicine would get in the way of your insisting on being treated well. You need to be as angry as you are, and to show somebody.”

I used to think I could not tell my patients my thinking about mind-altering medications unless I and the local RC Community were prepared to take them on<sup>2</sup> as fundamentals students. Now it no longer seems to be all on my shoulders. I can tell people what nutritional changes might help their diseases without having to cook all their meals for them. I can tell people what

<sup>2</sup> In this context, take them on means take responsibility for them.

childhood traumas they might need to face in order to fully heal without having to figure out for them how to do that.

Since the election I have told about a dozen patients that there is nothing wrong with their brains, that they are important and worth listening to, and that I don’t agree with many of the policies of the drug companies (including their spending more on advertising than on research). I have advocated for a more fully-funded FDA<sup>3</sup> that would insist on better information about drugs. Some patients have disagreed with me, but none have indicated that I did not have a right as a doctor to express these opinions, and most have left my office looking a little relieved, slightly tearful, and about an inch taller.

*Jennifer Kreger*

Fort Bragg, California, USA  
Reprinted from the RC e-mail discussion list for leaders of Jews

<sup>3</sup> The FDA is the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, the agency in charge of regulating food and drugs sold in the United States.



JEAN-FRANÇOIS CAMSON



## Deciding to End War and Getting Close to Men

I have been a peace activist for thirty years. Three years ago I took the counseling direction to end war, and my re-emergence has sped up enormously as a result

Deciding to end war has meant figuring out how to get close to men. Getting close to men has meant doing things they like to do. Right now my South African brother is visiting me in Perth (Australia). He likes to go to war memorials and museums. Not only am I getting to know my brother in a new way, I am also learning a lot about wars in general and about World War II in particular. Last week I was in a submarine at the Maritime Museum. What I learnt at the museum was that Australia was the base for all the Allied submarines during World War II.

*I want to know everything there is to know about men's oppression. I can see that when men's oppression ends, war will end.*

Yesterday my brother and I went to a war memorial for Australians killed in one of the South African wars, the Boer War of 1902, in which the British Empire fought to subdue South Africans and secure the wealth of their country. Australia and South Africa were both colonies of England, and Australia was ordered to send men to fight in the war.

I now spend a lot of my time with my new husband and his friends, colleagues, and acquaintances. Last week two men who had been soldiers, and killed people, stayed at our house. One night one of them showed my husband his bayonet. He and my husband talked about it and what he had done with it as an Australian soldier in the U.S. war against Vietnam. I was able to stay in the room and listen. Once I've got more attention, I aim to talk to this man about his bayonet.

I want to know everything there is to know about men's oppression. I can see that when men's oppression ends, war will end.

As I learn about men's oppression, I re-emerge. I am beginning to be able to tell<sup>1</sup> that I have influence with men, that I can think, that I can choose not to dramatize

<sup>1</sup> Tell means see, notice.

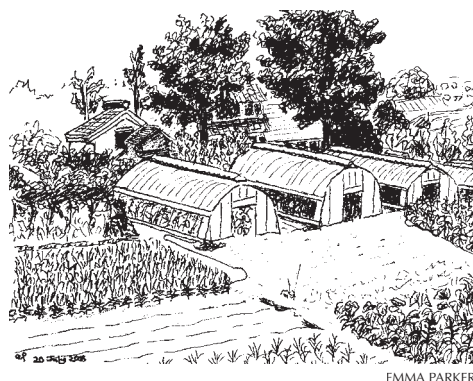
feelings of inferiority. I have sometimes been able to describe calmly to a man an example of women's oppression, or talk about capitalism and the arms trade or individual and institutionalized sexism, and tell that I am being heard. I am figuring out how to show men that I like them but be clear that sex is not an offer. I think about how I dress so as not to distract. I spend periods of time with men without feeling impatient or critical or blaming. I can be in a room with a bayonet and not lose my attention. I can climb in a submarine and be interested in how it works. I found and married a man using Harvey's<sup>2</sup> direction to make friends with a hundred men and choose one. I am also beginning to work in the mining industry, which means that I get to have more male colleagues and acquaintances.

I would say that taking the direction to end war is bringing the rewards I imagined it would.

*Roslyn Cassidy*

Perth, Western Australia, Australia  
Reprinted from the RC e-mail discussion lists for leaders of women and for leaders of wide world change

<sup>2</sup> Harvey Jackins'



## Individual Responsibility

If the people of any country had stood up to the real issues in spite of the oppression and confusion and misinformation, and insisted on a real people's policy, there would have been no World War II. In this sense I don't want to retract my position that individual responsibility extends to the farthest limits of human affairs, and even to the limits of the universe.

*Harvey Jackins*

From a letter written in 1975

## Re-emerging, Making Changes, as a U.S. State Legislator

*Two posts reprinted from the RC e-mail discussion list for leaders of women*

Tomorrow Beth Edmonds serves her last day as President of the Senate in the State of Maine, USA.

Beth is a key women's leader both in RC and in the wide world. Many years ago she took the direction of leading as big and as visibly as she could. Outside of state politics, she was an organizer of women and working people in the State of Maine, and she represented those same constituencies while campaigning for and holding elected office.

While knowing the limitations of electoral politics, Beth continually took principled positions on class, gender, race, and other issues. She reclaimed her abilities to be bold, take stands, and reach for all humans regardless of their political labels.

Well done, Beth. This is only the beginning of your life of "no limits."

*Diane Balser<sup>1</sup>*  
Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA

I want to tell you my thinking about ~~re~~reformation and revolution, ~~E~~ from inside a U.S. state government. Diane Balser has often talked about the need to win people over to a correct policy. I had understood the words but hadn't known how to do it or how fundamentally important it was.

Being in the state legislature has been good for my personal re-emergence. I am less scared, more decisive, and much more clear about the forces that are inhibiting the transformation of society. I am less scared because I have stood up to other legislators, to the governor, to lobbyists, to angry constituents, and held my point of view ~~4~~ and nothing bad has happened. Oh, people have yelled and gotten angry and written nasty things to me, or about me on blogs<sup>2</sup> or in the newspaper, but I have come to realize that actually nothing bad has happened. I've been reminded that the bad things I am afraid of already happened long ago in my past.

I am more decisive because every day in a legislature you have to vote either yes or no on many different issues. There is no ~~may~~maybe vote. And in my legislature, if you are present in the room you must vote. That has been helpful. I have not been allowed to equivocate. Many times the bill before me hasn't been perfect, and I have had to vote yes or no based on which I thought would move the issue forward.

It is clear to me now that the real obstacle to societal transformation is patterns. Harvey<sup>3</sup> knew this, and he told me this, but I now have a clearer, more profound understanding of what patterns do if undischarged and what it will take to really bring about the transformation. Most people in government are scared. Very scared. They may not know this. They are faced with all the problems of society, and they bring with them all the unresolved problems of their own lives. Then they try to set policy. I've found that one vitally important task is to listen long enough to help them separate their own issues from the ones they are facing for the whole state.

---

<sup>1</sup> Diane Balser is the International Liberation Reference Person for Women.

<sup>2</sup> A blog is a weblog, which is a public journal on the Internet.

<sup>3</sup> Harvey Jackins



LK

Tim Jackins talks about the importance of changing minds. That, of course, is what the transformation of society requires. In my youth I used to think the revolution would happen overnight. I didn't understand that for enough minds to change to bring about transformation, something else has to happen.

That something else is happening every day and everywhere. In legislative work, policies are put forward and debated both in the legislature and out in the broader communities. That debate & whether it is about tax policy, building a new bridge, or legalizing Gay marriage & begins the process of changing minds. Even without RC understandings, patterns are challenged and sometimes discharge takes place, in the form of spirited new talk, heated arguments, and the occasional tear. Mostly it looks to me as if people get less scared. With RC, these tentative beginnings of discharge can be encouraged and broadened.

The notion of winning people over to a correct policy is getting clearer to me as well. It requires putting out the policy in as rational a way as possible & leaving out our distresses about the other person, our impatience, and anything else that would keep the person from at least hearing the idea. Then it means using all of our counseling skills to help the person entertain a new point of view. These include listening; asking the innocent question; standing up to oppression, sometimes calmly and sometimes with force; discharging ourselves, so that the person knows that it's okay; providing a chance for him or her to discharge & to laugh, or talk non-repetitively, or yawn, or cry, or shake.

This is fun work. It is rewarding, since we get to make new friends, and learn new things, and discharge old fears, and live fuller lives.

These are my thoughts today, on this day of my continuing life of no limits. As I discharge more I will write more about my experiences and what I have learned. Thank you all for your support. I knew you were out there and with me.

Beth Edmonds  
Freeport, Maine, USA



ANNIE HOEKSTRA



## Discharging My Political Identity

I've been discharging my political identity as a "socialist," which loosely translated means someone who wishes to put working-class people in charge of society. I don't require the label to move forward on the goal, and holding on to it has been holding me back from being able to listen to and counsel people about ending the oppressive society. I've been stuck in defending the label and all the ideas attached to it instead of helping people think about the issues. Arguing with people's patterned political beliefs, and putting forth my own, have never gotten me far.

Many other people label themselves "Democrat" or "Republican."\* I've noticed that almost none of my "Democrat"

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\* A Democrat is someone who identifies with the Democratic Party, the more liberal of the two major U.S. political parties. A Republican is someone who identifies with the Republican Party, the more conservative of the two major U.S. political parties.

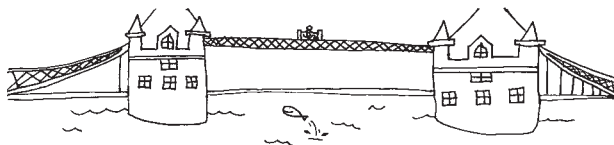
friends have any attention for "Republicans" and usually see them as hopelessly ignorant. This limits their ability to listen thoughtfully and help people work through their political ideas and beliefs.

Has anyone done similar work—discharging a political identity (while still holding on to its core values)? Has that helped you to listen and get closer to people with whom you disagree? I would love to hear from you.

*Jeremy Hobbs*

Riverside, California, USA

Reprinted from the e-mail discussion list for RC Community members



AMANDA MARTINEZ

## My Experience with Socialism in the Soviet Union

I live in Russia, which is part of what used to be the Soviet Union, a country that proclaimed itself to be socialistic and moving toward communism. My parents and grandparents also lived here for most of their lives. My and their experience have had a big effect on me.

I think we need to distinguish between the theories of socialism and communism and the reality of life in the Soviet Union, in countries dominated by it, and in countries with similar politics.

When I speak here in Russia about wide world changing (for example, how resources should be shared equally), people often get confused, as similar ideals were promoted by the Soviet government but not implemented. The gap between what was said and what was actually happening damaged my people, and now it is difficult for them to recognize and appreciate the things in the Soviet Union that were actually positive and people-oriented, such as free education and medical care.

Propaganda added to the confusion. For example, the Soviet Union, an imperialistic country, forced other countries to have pro-Soviet governments and politics (and similar economics). This was portrayed as liberating the people of those countries and making their societies fairer. The imperialistic actions were disguised, and it is still often hard to recognize them for what they were.

*Olga Lenkova*

St. Petersburg, Russia

Reprinted from the e-mail discussion list for leaders of wide world change



LK

## Moving “Care of the Environment” Forward

I'd like to share some ideas about and successes with moving forward Goal 3<sup>1</sup> in our Communities.

I'm passionate about caring for the environment and over the years have led several useful gather-ins in our Region<sup>2</sup> on the topic. Still, I have felt that the issue wasn't getting traction.<sup>3</sup> I tried an evening gather-in for RC teachers and leaders, but only a few people ended up coming. Somehow more of the leadership in the Region needed to get on board.<sup>4</sup>

To move the work forward, my Regional Reference Person<sup>5</sup> and I decided to devote one of our monthly Area Reference Persons<sup>6</sup> groups to the care of the environment. After opening up the group, he invited me to share my thinking. I shared a few thoughts (see below). Then each of us took a turn sharing things we love about the natural world, and we each discharged openly and deeply. There is something pure and innocent about our love for nature and living things, and people showed parts of themselves that nobody in the group had ever seen. We saw each other

with new eyes. Pure loves that had lived deep inside of us were revealed. It was a special time, and everybody commented on it at the end.

I think people expected to be required to wrestle with guilt and dread and despair, to be asked to take another heavy load on their shoulders and then go off and make the other people in their Areas do the same. It was so different from that. One person said he felt like he had participated in a process of producing slack<sup>7</sup> for caring about the environment and that that was what was going to lead to real change. The Area Reference Persons were eager to take the sheet of thoughts I handed out, and several were ready to teach their next classes on care of the environment. I feel like our Region turned a corner that night.

Here are my notes for the class:

- People share “goods and news” and something they love about the environment.
- Read aloud Goal 3.
- I share the following thoughts:

We can focus on what we love, ways we are connected; tap into passion. If we can't pay attention, we can't notice our connection. Create a balance of attention.<sup>8</sup> As counselors we can ask, “What do you love about the environment? What is one tiny thing you can grieve about?” and look for righteous indignation, passion, connection.

We can think of having a relationship with the environment. It's an important relationship, one that is naturally close and connected. Becoming disconnected is painful. Having a good relationship takes time and attention, and it helps to be in touch with everything we love in order to look at the things that are hard.

- Mini-session: What vision or hope do you have for your relationship with the environment? What's going well? Where are you struggling?

- People share their thoughts from the mini-session.

- More of my thoughts:

Those swampy, sticky, gray feelings of hopelessness that get attached to environmental problems are old. That the earth is in danger is a magnet for those feelings, but they were around long before we knew of the danger. They're just reaching for a place to attach and persist.

- Mini-session: “I'm scared, worried, angry, despairing, about the environment, and this reminds me of . . .”

- Mini-session: A goal you'd like to share, a gift you'd like to give yourself, support you'd like to request in relation to yourself and the environment and leadership.

- All share goals and final thoughts.

*Pamela Haines*

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA

Reprinted from the e-mail discussion

list for Area Reference Persons

<sup>1</sup> Goal 3 of the Re-evaluation Counseling Communities, as adopted by the 2001 World Conference and reaffirmed by the 2005 World Conference: That members of the Re-evaluation Counseling Communities put increased attention on discharging the distresses that have led to the continued degradation of the environment of the world and to discouragement about taking the actions necessary for its restoration.

<sup>2</sup> A Region is a subdivision of the International Re-evaluation Counseling Community, usually consisting of several Areas (local RC Communities).

<sup>3</sup> Getting traction means being successfully addressed.

<sup>4</sup> On board means involved.

<sup>5</sup> A Regional Reference Person is responsible for the continued re-emergence of both experienced and new RC leaders in a Region.

<sup>6</sup> An Area Reference Person thinks about an Area (a local RC Community) as a whole and exercises judgment as to which activities are consistent with Re-evaluation Counseling theory and policy.

<sup>7</sup> Slack is free attention, absence of distress.

<sup>8</sup> Balance of attention means the relative amounts of attention one has on distress and on present-time good reality.



NITI DANDEKAR

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Present Time  
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Seattle, Washington 98109  
USA

# Re-evaluation Counseling

Re-evaluation Counseling is a process whereby people of all ages and of all backgrounds can learn how to exchange effective help with each other in order to free themselves from the effects of past distress experiences.

Re-evaluation Counseling theory provides a model of what a human being can be like in the area of his/her interaction with other human beings and his/her environment. The theory assumes that everyone is born with tremendous intellectual potential, natural zest, and lovingness, but that these qualities have become blocked and obscured in adults as the result of accumulated distress experiences (fear, hurt, loss, pain, anger, embarrassment, etc.) which begin early in our lives.

Any young person would recover from such distress spontaneously by use of the natural process of emotional discharge (crying, trembling, raging, laughing, etc.). However, this natural process is usually interfered with by well-meaning people ("Don't cry," "Be a big boy," etc.) who erroneously equate the emotional discharge (the healing of the hurt) with the hurt itself.

When adequate emotional discharge can take place, the person is freed from the rigid pattern of behavior and feeling left by the hurt. The basic loving, cooperative, intelligent, and zestful nature is then free to operate. Such a person will tend to be more effective in looking out for his or her own interests and the interests of others, and will be more capable of acting successfully against injustice.

In recovering and using the natural discharge process, two people take turns counseling and being counseled. The one acting as the counselor listens, draws the other out, and permits, encourages, and assists emotional discharge. The one acting as client talks and discharges and re-evaluates. With experience and increased confidence and trust in each other, the process works better and better.

For more information, you can go to the web site: <http://www.rc.org/>.



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