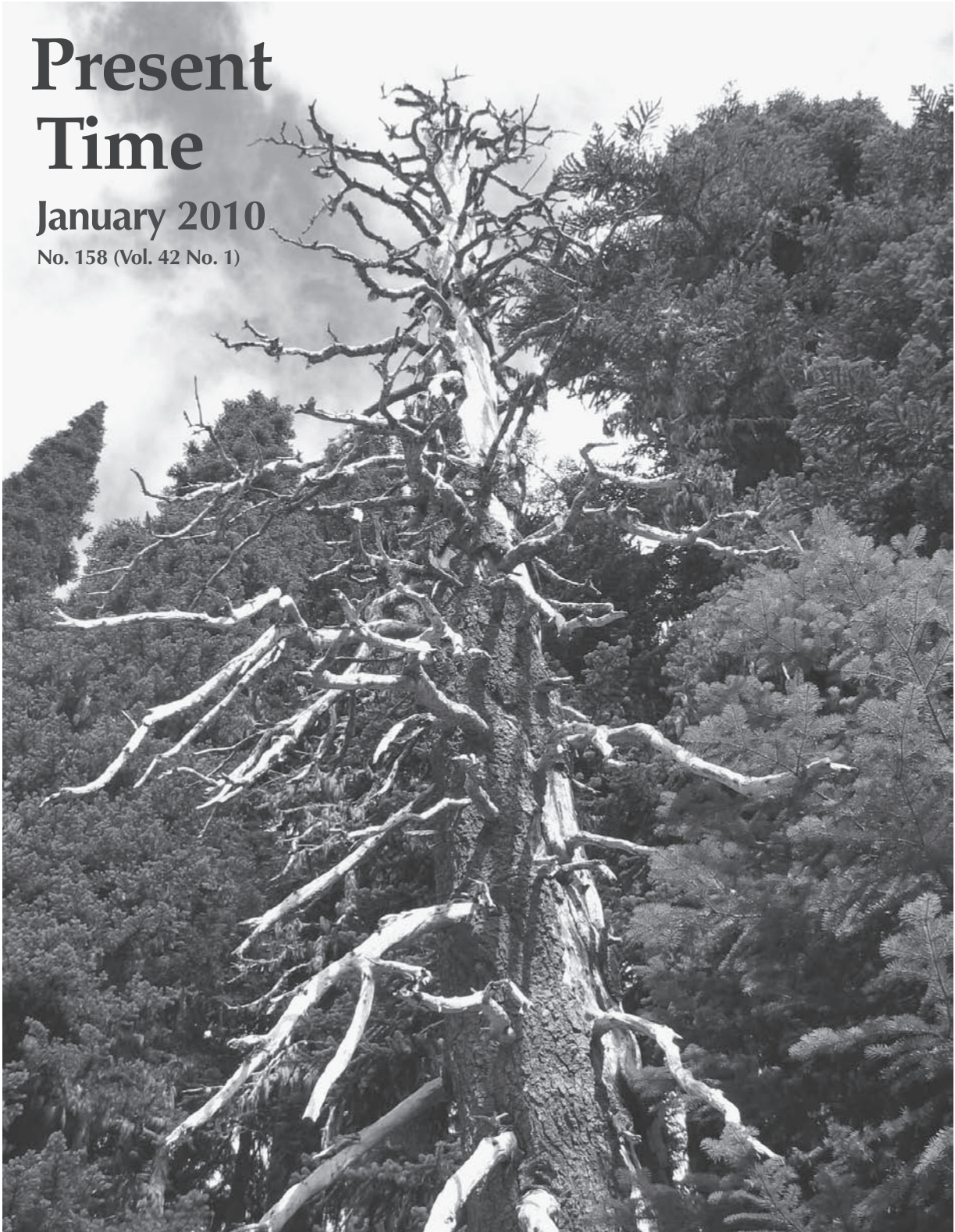


Present Time

January 2010

No. 158 (Vol. 42 No. 1)



We can have a commitment to a revolution in our minds, not just to working so that life doesn't feel so bad, but changing our lives entirely and daring other people to do the same.

Tim Jackins

This issue features reports from the recent Contemporary Women's Issues Workshop. Also noteworthy are articles about Maori liberation, RC Community building, and counseling on political views. For the April *Present Time*, we'll need articles and poems by Tuesday, February 16, and any changes to the back-pages lists by Monday, February 22. You can mail or e-mail them to us at the address below.



Lisa Kauffman, editor

719 2nd Avenue North, Seattle, Washington 98109, USA

e-mail: publications@rc.org

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Open Questions from the Pre-World Conferences

Tim Jackins¹

THE CHALLENGE OF DEVELOPING AND SUSTAINING LEADERSHIP

South Asian Pre-World Conference

Question: What are some of the challenges you see for our Communities?

Tim: There are a lot of challenges related to developing and sustaining leadership.

A leader's job is to think about everything, to collect ideas and be thinking about the entire activity. Every activity that involves more than one person works better if someone thinks about the whole thing. We each think about ourselves as we participate, but that's not quite enough. We need someone to think about the group activity as a whole. It's fine if more than one person does it, but we need at least one person playing that role. That's an important part of leadership.

Another part of leadership is to make sure that every Co-Counselor is thought about, that no one is left on his or her own.² If you are in a class, then somebody is thinking about you—about the distresses you are working on, how well it's going—and he or she will talk with you about it. Somebody will "track" you—a phrase that's often used. Somebody will keep track of you in this active way. This is useful, but not easy or simple to do. As a leader you have to have developed a lot of resource and done a lot of counseling for it to work well. To develop leadership to that extent takes time and work.

We need a core of people who are committed to making counseling work, no matter what³; who are committed to each other, who look after each other,⁴ who know when someone is having trouble and move to offer resource, who say, "It looks like you are having trouble. What's

going on?"⁵ Have a session with me." We don't leave the person alone who is having trouble. We understand that though we work on our individual distresses, this is work that we do together. Each person's struggles are all of our struggles. We all have to help each other in whatever battles we have. We do this collectively, even though we do most of it in Co-Counseling sessions. When a Community can develop a core of people who can do this for each other, then things start to happen.

To get to that point takes⁶ people having a lot of Co-Counseling sessions with each other—having two or three sessions a week. It takes people encouraging each other to work on material⁷ that's hard to work on—big, important things they are afraid of working on, like racism, sexism, and so on. It takes them challenging each other to keep growing—not just expecting each person to push himself or herself forward but challenging each other to move forward against the distresses. Once we get a core group like that, then counseling continues to develop.

Without this core of people, things are much more difficult and confusing. In some places, a small Community of people who have counseled for a long time keep⁸ counseling in the same way. They keep counseling on the same distresses. They bring in new people and counsel them in the way they have always counseled. This works to make lives better, but it doesn't often change lives in big ways. It's trying to reform things so that they don't feel so hard, versus trying to really change one's life. There has to be a commitment to a revolution in our minds—not just working so that life doesn't feel so bad, not just helping people, but changing our lives entirely and daring other people to do the same. Once we get a group that can understand and remember that, then things take off.⁹ It starts with one person getting the idea, and I don't know exactly how that happens.

continued . . .



Laurie Rhodes

¹ Tim Jackins is the International Reference Person of the Re-evaluation Counseling Communities.

² On his or her own means by himself or herself.

³ No matter what, means whatever the conditions.

⁴ Look after each other means pay attention to what is happening to each other.

⁵ Going on means happening.

⁶ In this context, takes means requires.

⁷ Material means distress.

⁸ In this context, keep means continue.

⁹ Take off means really start happening.

continued . . .

MANY DIFFERENT WAYS TO WORK ON OLD DISTRESSES

Eastern European Pre-World Conference

Question: For the last period of time I have been counseling with my attention away from distress and discharging well and not getting stuck in bad feelings like I used to.¹⁰ Are you saying that I need to go back to putting my attention on my distress and discharge there?

Tim: I thought about the way I said that, and I would now say it a bit differently. I could have said that you can't simply ignore the distress and its effect and go on.

There are many different ways to work on old distresses. For many of us, because we've had to be quiet about the way we got hurt, it is tremendously liberating to tell somebody. It's a step closer to reality than being quiet about what happened. One way of measuring how we use RC is that each step needs to be taking us closer to reality. It's possible to get lost in a distress and simply be confused, feel it all, and not be moving closer to reality. We don't want to do that. But this doesn't mean that we can't go back and fight old distresses successfully. It means that the way we were Co-Counseling on it often didn't work because it didn't provide enough contradiction.¹¹ It left us believing some helplessness. We couldn't figure out a position from which to fight well enough against the distress.

There are lots of ways to move against our distresses. Taking a stance against the effect of the distress in the present is one way—refusing to accept the limitations the distress tries to put on us. If we're afraid to do something, we don't have to look at why we're afraid, especially if it's so heavy we tend to get lost there. We can go ahead and challenge the fear in the present, where things are very different from the way they were when we got hurt. Now we're big, we have much more information, and we have allies. Doing this can make discharge easily available.

Part of the reason we get stuck when we're working on early distresses is that we tend to do it still feeling alone. The hurts happened to us when we were feeling very alone. We often need a counselor who is willing to face being as scared by their fears as we are by ours as he or she supports us in going against our fears. Otherwise it's hard not to feel alone again.

As we get better at being counselors for each other, as we develop our relationships and our commitment to each other, and as we decide that we, too, are worth fighting

for, we get better at going back and taking on¹² those early fights without being confused about them.

It's fine to use many different ways to work, but don't give up on being¹³ so powerful and having such solid allies that you can go back and conquer any distress. Distresses are distresses, and we are more powerful than they are.

PROGRESS AND CHALLENGES IN ELIMINATING SEXISM

Western European Pre-World Conference

Question: How are we progressing toward eliminating sexism in the Communities?

Tim: A tremendous amount of progress has been made since the first struggles. We continually get confused, doubt what we've done, and feel like things should be better than they are, because we know they can be better than they are. There's no basis for finding fault, and there are many things left to do.

As men, our struggle against the ways we've been hurt has in some ways confused the fight against sexism. Only in the last five years have we cleared up enough confusion and distress that we have begun to have a more accurate perspective on ourselves and more of a possibility of being good allies.

Because men haven't been very good allies to women on sexism, it can seem like something is very wrong, but it simply took a certain amount of work. We men struggled to be aware of the effects of sexism. We wished to be allies, we felt really bad, but we couldn't play a large, good role. I think that has begun to shift sharply for lots of different reasons, including the work that men have been doing. Diane Balser's¹⁴ thinking, work, and leadership have had a large impact. Her taking the step of inviting men to listen to a women's workshop on contemporary women's issues made clear to me that we had the beginnings of an organized way for men and women to actually use each other as allies. I think more will develop in that direction.

Women have done well in ridding themselves of some of the effects of sexism. It has felt confusing and discouraging, because it has seemed like there was so much left to do. I think there are big pieces of work to do, including work on women's internalized sexism. Perhaps a sizeable portion of that is the internalized sexism that women feel about each other and seldom

¹⁰ Like I used to means like I did previously.

¹¹ Contradiction to the distress

¹² In this context, taking on means engaging in.

¹³ Give up on being means stop trying to be.

¹⁴ Diane Balser is the International Liberation Reference Person for Women.

allow themselves to say. (When we've discharged enough to have control over the expression of a distress so we don't show it to each other, we can sometimes lose sight of it and its effects.)

WOMEN COUNSELING MEN

Eastern European Pre-World Conference

Question: Do you have suggestions for a woman counseling a man?

Tim: In my experience, the women who have been most successful in counseling men have been women who like men. Men could use as many counselors as they could ever find, but no one does well with a counselor who cannot like him or her. So the first thing to do, which is the same for every counselor, is to look at where one has trouble with the client.

Women, of course, have been targeted by men all their lives. Every woman knows that every man needs to work on issues of sexism. It's often hard for a man not to identify with his material, so it's important that the man's counselor be able to keep the man separate from it. No man chose to have the patterns he has. No man wishes to have the patterns he has. And no man deserves to be blamed for the patterns he has. Still, they are his patterns—and they are his responsibility now, as unjust as that feels. We are all responsible for the patterns we carry.

It doesn't help to simply tolerate a man's patterns. Neither toleration nor being upset about them works well, hardly ever. What does work is someone insisting on the man being human in spite of his patterns—that he not be bound to sexism, no matter what has happened to him.

All the ways sexism shows can be talked about. At the same time, women need to understand how isolated and discouraged men are. Men have traditionally been the ones trained to kill, to fight each other, to be manipulated as a tool of repression. The only way to make humans take on¹⁵ such roles is to make them very, very alone.

It is difficult for a man to feel that he is liked. If you tell a man you don't know well that you like him, he will brighten up. If you tell a man you know well that you like him, he will say, "I know." But for neither person does the information get in very far. It may provide a little reassurance so that he doesn't feel so bad for a moment, but it hardly ever is enough for him to use against his distress. In general, a man is not going to fight that distress because he feels far too alone to do it. Think of what happened from the happy little boy to this man. You've seen it happen, how little boys get tougher and

tougher. They talk less and less, come close less and less. This is what you have to find a way to go against as a counselor. You don't have to be sympathetic. You don't have to tolerate a man's patterns, even though he's been badly hurt. You do have to offer a picture of reality that is clearer than his in this area.

In general, a man cannot be hopeful for long¹⁶ about a relationship. He can only try for a rigid relationship. He has little or no hope that he will actually find another mind. The best he expects is to have someone who will play one of society's roles with him—who will be a friend or a lover or a wife but not really try to find him. If a man (and that includes all the men in Co-Counseling) has any idea that you are actually looking for him, he will challenge his distresses. You must remember, however, that if a man gets the idea once, it won't be there the next time you see him. It takes an ongoing, repetitive effort, but the benefits of that repeated effort are large and men can be tremendous allies.

There's something men understand about functioning in spite of distress that's interesting and can play an important role. For all of the ways men have been hurt, society has also allowed them to learn certain things, some of which it has not given women easy access to. Men have sometimes been allowed to acquire the ability to face fears, to be brave when terrified. This is a valuable thing to have access to. The willingness to fight for something that matters has been corroded in men, and confused by the obligation to work to death, but the ability to do everything one can for people one cares about is sometimes available.

The loneliness that covers it all is probably the most important thing to remember about men. The general picture of the world that's given to us men is that we are to do our best, to try as hard as we can no matter what happens, and that it's not important if we use ourselves up¹⁷ and die in the process. This is how you train people

continued . . .

¹⁶ For long means for much time.

¹⁷ Use ourselves up means use all our energy and health to where none is left.



LISA BEDINGER

¹⁵ In this context, take on means assume.

COUNSELING PRACTICE

continued . . .

to go fight and die for reasons they don't agree with. This is how you confuse people enough that they can be manipulated into being agents of oppression.

If you can remember these things, then I think you can remember men's humanness and be a counselor for them. In your own sessions, you can talk about the men in your life that you've seen suffer.

POPULATION GROWTH, AND HAVING CHILDREN

Western European Pre-World Conference

Question: I wanted to ask if you've had any thoughts on population growth and if there is any particular RC perspective or response.

Tim: For most of the existence of our species, it's been a real question whether there would be enough of us to survive or not, and fears about that are probably still being passed down. Those fears are continually reinforced in places where many of the children die. People often can't think fully about what makes sense for them and the world when they all want grandchildren.

I have great admiration for China's one-child policy—not because it wasn't hard on people, but because someone saw an approaching problem and decided to try to solve it. I attribute the rise of China as an economic power in substantial part to the one-child policy and the resources it freed. This doesn't mean that it was thoughtfully applied or that there weren't distresses being acted out with it. But somebody tried to think about population growth and make a policy. In the West we saw it only as a trampling of individuals. However, it's hard to imagine a policy for a billion people holding¹⁸ if it wasn't supported by a large number of individuals.

How do we get ourselves clear enough that we can make decisions in this area? How do we end oppression and inequity so that everyone has the chance to think about it?

Why do we want children? They are a lot of fun. They're *really* a lot of fun. It's fun being a grandparent; it's fun being around anyone's children. Children don't care if you have DNA in common or not; they care about

you and what's possible between you and them. I don't think that we individually need to have children. I myself want to have a lot of contact with children, especially in this period when we've been so hurt and had our own childhoods taken away from us, but I'm not positive we'll have the same needs forever.

When we get enough contact with children, all sorts of feelings come up. We may want more contact with them, but we're also really happy when it's over because it's restimulating. In our confused and oppressive society, raising children requires a tremendous effort. It is easily worth it,¹⁹ but that doesn't lessen the effort required. We don't understand the effort fully until we have children. We should be able to understand it before that point, but I don't know anyone who ever did.

We need to develop good enough relationships with a family that we could have someone's child with us for a week. That would be wonderful and tough and exactly what we need to experience to understand what's involved in having children. Unless we're looking after²⁰ a child (or someone else who needs us to think all the time), when we feel the pull of distress we can easily give up. Taking care of a child is different enough that we are motivated to resist our distresses. Can you stay out of your distresses entirely, except for Co-Counseling sessions, for a week? If you're going to raise a child, you want to aim at being able to do that. We also get pulled by distress to think that we need to do it perfectly, but our children can have wonderful lives without our doing things perfectly.

We have a choice about having children. We get to discharge on having a child; we get to discharge on never having a child and being afraid of being alone and forgotten in our old age. Many feelings get attached. We can have a wonderful, full life, with full contact with children, and not have our own child. (In our present society, we have to work hard to get that, but it can be done.) Or we can raise a child. We will be different for having done that, and will know things we wouldn't have known otherwise, but we will miss other opportunities. There are always more good choices than we will ever have time for. We can feel bad that we don't get to make all of the good choices, but I think that's confused. Life is simply that big, and we don't want it smaller.

¹⁸ In this context, holding means working, persisting, not being undermined.

¹⁹ Worth it means deserving of the time spent on it.

²⁰ Looking after means taking care of.



LK

Excited About Reading RC Literature

Hey all young people on this list! I recently became excited about reading RC literature. I managed to read an article by Karl Lam, in *Present Time*, about the importance of reading RC literature.¹ I then read the whole of that issue of *Present Time*. I also went on to read the whole of *The Human Side of Human Beings* that week, before becoming unexcited again.

When I got invited to the Pre-World and World Conferences, I was expected to read the *Guidelines for the Re-evaluation Counseling Communities*. As I later found out, I was also meant to read them again after the working groups made some changes—eighty-four pages of what looked extremely boring to me. That brought up feelings. I took² Co-Counseling sessions on not wanting to even go to the events because of having to read that document. After working on the feelings, I managed to think about why I didn't read a lot. I looked back to when I stopped reading. I have rarely read since I was about ten years old. It was good to look back on the silly things that happened in school to do with reading that seemed to put me off for life.³ I had a Co-Counseling session on those early feelings, and in other sessions tried to read some of the *Guidelines*.

A few weeks later I was at a workshop at which there was an especially good collection of RC literature. I bought two books, a pamphlet, and a journal. I'm excited about literature again. *Young and Powerful* No. 7 is

amazing. It's not a recent issue, but all the articles are so interesting. As a young leader in RC who is figuring out how to lead young people's support groups, share Co-Counseling with friends, and think about young people's liberation, it is helpful to find out⁴ that other people have already had to figure out these things and have done a great job. I can learn from what they have achieved and work out⁵ how it relates to my current challenges and the young people I know now. Another thing I love about *Young and Powerful* is the way that some of the articles are written. For example, Ellie Brown⁶ seems to put ideas that I recognise from RC in a way that is clearer than I've ever heard before. She writes so smartly about RC and young people's work that it is immediately understandable. A lot of the other

articles by young people are also written like that.

It is a great idea to read RC literature, especially if you are a leader, because if you have read the literature yourself you can pass on information about RC in a clear way. It is also interesting to find out what other people who have done similar things to what you are trying to do have figured out in the past.

Also, *you* can write on this list (and in other places) about what *you* have done in RC. I, and lots of other people, would love to hear what you know about young people. Your way of doing things is just as interesting as what's already been published, and would be useful to people. I hope to be reading about you soon.

Lots of love from

Liam Geary Baulch

Brockley, London, England

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

⁴ Find out means discover.

⁵ Work out means figure out, determine.

⁶ Ellie Brown is a former International Liberation Reference Person for Young Adults.



Achieving Discharge on Embarrassment



Most people are afraid, of course, of showing their deep feelings, particularly when they have been conditioned to be a strong male. A great deal of embarrassment about having feelings has been put upon men. In your case, it would probably be good for you to say that you like to be loved. In fact, if you can stand to do it, it would probably be good to say to people, "Please love me." Again, embarrassment is probably the key here. If you can dare to risk appearing foolish, risk suspending your dignity, you will probably find that you laugh hard and that most of the other difficulties begin to diminish.

Harvey Jackins*

From a letter written in 1974

* Harvey Jackins was the founder and first International Reference Person of the Re-evaluation Counseling Communities.

¹ See page 27 of the April 2009 *Present Time*. Karl Lam is the Regional Reference Person for Cambridge, Herts, Beds, Bucks, and Norfolk, in England.

² In this context, took means did.

³ Put me off for life means prevent me from doing it for my whole life.

The following four pages contain excerpts from a discussion, on the RC e-mail discussion list, about expressing and listening to political views.

Counseling About Politics

In Israel, political views are tremendously polarized. In social meetings or at family events, it is almost a national sport to discuss and argue about political views, mostly related to the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians. It is too often a conversation in which nobody really hears anyone else and that turns into heated discussion, sometimes ending with explosion, anger, and insults. Everybody is clienting at the same time, and nobody is counselor.

I believe there is no way to prevent political views from entering into Co-Counseling sessions. In my opinion, it is completely reasonable to talk about political views and activities in a session, because they are a part of who one is, and they often trigger strong emotions.

When the political opinions of the client are opposite to yours as counselor, there is always a risk of restimulation that may damage your attention. However, when you and your client's opinions are similar, or when you can still keep good attention even if they are different, what do you do when your client is lecturing about his or her political views instead of trying to discharge the hurts that may be associated with them? Do you try to direct your client to work on his or her memories connected with the subject? I suppose you do. (For example, healing from war is necessary to be able to work effectively for peace.) But how hard should you "push" your client to do that?

I would love to hear thinking and experience related to this.

Rami Ben-Moshe
Jerusalem, Israel

Successful Sessions on Political Beliefs

With a counselor who can communicate that she or he is relaxed and pleased, I can do a lot of discharging about my deeply held political beliefs. These sessions are fluent, spontaneous, loud, quick, accompanied by emphatic gestures, and sometimes eloquent. The more pleased my counselor seems, the more encouraged I am to go forward and the louder and more forceful my opinions are. There is a clean feel to it, and it is very satisfying.

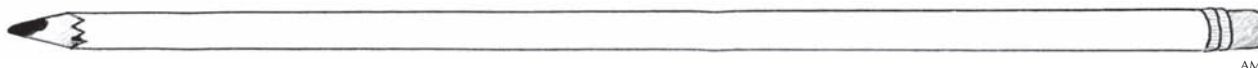
I identify what I am doing in these sessions as discharge and not simply stating political opinions, because it is alive, animated, and not dull or repetitive, and because I often arrive at fresh thoughts. I do not spend a lot of time trying to figure out exactly what I am working on, though the discharge corresponds to anger.

I think that to counsel someone effectively in this way, the counselor needs to have enough slack about the relevant political issues to be able to pay attention to opinions about them without being restimulated. Only then can he or she offer the contradiction* of a pleased, attentive listener, enjoying the person and his or her opinions.

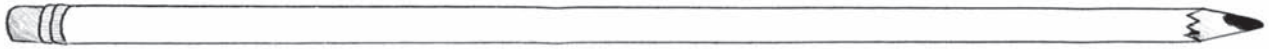
Slack about the issues is also what is needed to allow political discussions in the world to move ahead.

Glen Hauer
Berkeley, California, USA

* Contradiction to distress



AM



People Need Time to Talk

When we clearly identify as having a certain political view, people will sometimes try to discharge with us about their opposite view, seeking a contradiction*—in the same way that the more we show our hopefulness, the more people will bring their desperation to us, hoping for a contradiction because they sense we can provide it.

To be able to think freshly, people need time to talk, without being interrupted, about their views and feelings. At least at the beginning, until both talkers and listeners have

discharged a lot about their political views, directions can easily be (or be experienced as being) based on an assumption that some political views need to be discharged (in other words, are wrong) whereas others are right.



LISA KAUFFMAN

Bringing politics into our Co-Counseling sessions is a step toward rational thinking about political issues. Unlike political discussions outside of sessions, the goal is not to reach agreement, though eventually that may be the outcome (as the Co-Counseling will make space for everybody to listen better to others).

The political viewpoints of people in RC are currently rather homogenous, and it is important to remember that, as with all other identities, we seek diversity.

Tami Shamir
Shefayim, Israel

* Contradiction to their distress

Start with Loving the Person

It's mostly in the wide world that I "counsel" people who hold different political beliefs than mine. While they are sharing their views with me, I've found it helpful to remember the attitudes we want to take toward a client at all times—approval; delight; respect; confidence in him or her; relaxed, high expectations; commitment; and love.

To do the most interesting thing and move things forward, it behooves me to disarm the pattern (that is so common among us) of having to defend oneself regarding one's beliefs. Then I have a chance at hearing what is human in people's concerns or opinions: their caring about people, their wanting what's good, their feeling afraid or alone. I focus on these things rather than on the content of what they are saying, which is usually the restimulating part. It has worked well to communicate that I see their goodness even if we've reached different conclusions. When I do this, they often show what seems like a great sense of relief, and spontaneously discharge.

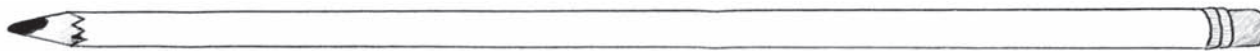
In any case, I *have* to start with loving the person in front of me and seeing his or her goodness for things to go well for *me*, for me to be in present time and notice reality and my connection to all human beings. If I don't start there, I quickly get confused and find it hard to resist the pull to argue the person out of his or her viewpoint. Communicating my acceptance of the person, apart from his or her views, makes it possible for the two of us to have each other fully and creates the openness necessary for us to come to new understandings and thinking.

Liz Knaeble
Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA



SUSAN HUTCHISON





Head for the Discharge!

People often hide their distresses behind political views. The more strident the viewpoint, the more there can be to discharge. A good direction for clients is to discharge early hurts, to go “underneath” the present-time restimulation.

In terms of counseling Jews on the Israel/Palestine conflict, some possible questions are, “Where did you first hear it was unsafe for Jews?” “What would it mean not to hurt another human being again?” “Keeping in mind that the only real security we have is in our relationships with others, what would it mean to get close enough to Palestinians to develop real alliances with them?”

Whenever we start arguing about the present situation, everyone is lost in restimulation. Head for* the discharge!

* Head for means go toward.

Ruth Atkin
Emeryville, California, USA

Discharging Strict, Opinionated Distress

My father was strict and opinionated. Here are some ways that I have counseled on my memories of and feelings about him, and on my own internalized strictness and opinionated-ness.

What has worked best for me is to imitate him—to exaggerate a monologue he might have presented to me; to explain thoroughly, patiently, and very nicely why his perspective is clearly right while other perspectives are clearly wrong. This usually brings huge gales of laughter. Sometimes I ask my counselor to be “me” in various forms—meek, or defiant, or incredulous, or agreeable. Other times I have him or her just listen with pleasure. I can usually go on and on,¹ and all sorts of things emerge.

¹ Go on and on means continue for a long time.

I have also tried saying, “I internalized some of my father’s strict and opinionated ways, and here is how they go,”² and have then expressed my own strict and opinionated distress as openly and as honestly as I can. Sometimes I have ended these sessions by saying, “No more. This stuff stops here.”

My understanding that my father was deeply good came not from working directly on that but from discharging in the ways I’ve mentioned above. Then the understanding of his goodness just appeared.

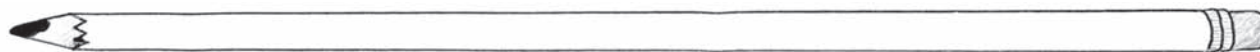
Becky Sakellariou
Athens, Greece

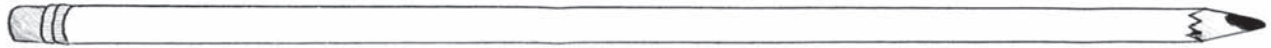
² In this context, go means operate.

Expressing Political Views I “Don’t Like”

I sometimes try to discharge by expressing political views I “don’t like.” This helps me discharge the feelings that make it hard to listen to these views. For me, it has often opened up a path of taking more into account the concerns of people who don’t share my views.

Frank van den Heuvel
Nieuwegein, Utrecht, The Netherlands





Freeing Thinking About Politics

Having the freedom as client to yell long-secretly-held political beliefs to a trusted counselor is a divine, liberating experience. Even more rewarding is listening to a client share his or her beliefs, especially if we do not agree with them.

The first thing to understand as a counselor is that it is neither our responsibility nor our right to “change” our client’s mind, which is already beautiful and intelligent, whether or not we agree with its conclusions.

In RC we don’t *tell* someone that he or she has a pattern and explain what the *correct* behavior is. Instead we seek discharge by listening to all parts of the pattern, including the political aspect.

Work on our own political beliefs

Until we’ve counseled on our own political beliefs, and how we feel about political beliefs that are contrary to our own (which for many of us in RC are those on the “right”¹), everything we “think” in this area is suspect. If during a session we have strong feelings about what a client is saying about politics, it isn’t right to seek to change his or her mind. Instead we need to have a session on the feelings we had, if we want to continue to listen to and help this person in the future.

Those of us on the “left”² (including many of us who are RCers) often stay

aloof from people with conservative ideas. We may fear that we will have to defend ourselves again, like when we were children expressing big ideas to our parents and loved ones and not finding the attention we wanted and needed.

To avoid dealing with these feelings, we may shun those on the “right” and view them as ignorant and unintelligent, thereby assuring that we don’t have a session on the feelings. However, if we work on our early associated memories, we can become more relaxed and confident in our beliefs and not be scared and defensive when we come across³ alternative ideas.

Ask questions, but don’t supply the answers

I have found it effective to ask questions but not supply the answers. For example (for USers), “Why is high school free for all, but not college?” “What would happen if you went to the doctor and didn’t have to pay for the visit?” “Is a world without war possible?”

Solicit opinions; don’t supply them

I have also pretended that I don’t already know about an issue and let the other person be the expert. This has been particularly useful in non-RC “sessions.” For example (for USers), “So, what’s this whole health care debate about? I really haven’t been studying the issue.”

“What do you like about _____?”

I’ve found it useful to ask people what they like about a political figure and then listen without comment. It can be scary to hear someone talk about what he or she likes about someone whom I feel strongly and negatively about. However, it can be rewarding for the person to share why he or she admires that person, and it helps me understand what draws people to ideas and people that I dislike and am confused by.

The long-term goals of listening

What we are trying to do is free people’s intelligence to think about politics. We are also stopping the spread of patterns through contagion. We are building one-on-one relationships with people in our daily lives who will be able to come to us to talk about politics and to discharge. They will then be less likely to pass along to their children and other loved ones anti-human and hurtful ideas. I’ve found that people will later sometimes surprise themselves by, for example, not tolerating racist conversations or sexist jokes, and then may tell me with pride how they did it.

We can use the tool of listening in our activist work. There are many good organizations and unions working for pro-human policies, and lots of lovely, tired, hard-working, hard-drinking (and smoking) activists who could benefit from having the tool of RC to help make their lives richer and their organizations more effective.

Jeremy Hobbs
Paris, France

¹ On the “right” means that are politically conservative.

² On the “left” means who are politically progressive.

³ Come across means encounter.



L'adieu à mon père, un homme de la classe ouvrière

Ces derniers temps, mon esprit a été occupé par le décès de mon père intervenu le 6 Mai dernier, après un coma d'un mois et demi. J'avais voulu poser un acte pour lui.

Depuis sept ou huit ans, mon père (sans que je le sache) avait le texte de l'engagement des hommes (reproduit ci-dessous) dans son portefeuille. A l'occasion de son inhumation au cimetière d'Aubervilliers le 13 Mai, j'ai lu ce texte à tout le monde. Je vous passe l'ouragan dans ma tête, les larmes, ma lutte pour aller au bout, cette gorge qui ne devait pas se nouer.

Avant de lire, j'ai pris la main de mon neveu; il me fallait un soutien. En lisant, je me suis senti traversé. Il fallait que j'aille au bout, pour lui; ce n'était plus moi qui importait, mes sentiments... je verrais après. J'accrochai les regards des personnes devant moi, la réalité... ne pas partir. Et puis le micro, des essais. La voix est claire, forte.

Et puis, l'engagement des hommes. Je ne sais pas pourquoi mais j'ai buté sur la dernière phrase. Mon neveu (qui avait déjà fait une séance dans le temps) a tout de suite repris. Un bel exemple de l'entraide entre hommes. Et un au revoir pour un homme de la classe ouvrière, mon papa. J'en frissonne encore.

A l'issue de la cérémonie, plusieurs personnes m'ont demandé ce petit carton que j'avais lu (j'en ai toujours sur moi, au cas où...), notamment les représentants du syndicat CGT qui étaient là (mon père avait monté le syndicat dans sa jeunesse).

LE TEXTE DE L'ENGAGEMENT DES HOMMES

"Je promets que dorénavant je serai fier d'être un homme et je chercherai à me rapprocher et à fraterniser avec les hommes de tous âges, de toutes races, de toutes nations et de toutes classes.

"Je ne permettrai aucune insulte, aucun manque de respect, ni aucun blâme envers un homme pour les blessures qu'il a reçues, et je chercherai à restituer à tous les hommes la sécurité nécessaire pour qu'ils déchargent ces cruelles blessures.

"Je lutterai pour interrompre et pour éliminer l'écrasement des hommes à travers le surmenage, la responsabilisation excessive et l'enrôlement dans les forces armées où nous avons été brutalisés et forcés à tuer ou être tués.

"Je tiendrai pour précieux le fait d'être né en tant qu'humain de sexe masculin, bon, intelligent, courageux et puissant."

Ce texte nous avait été donné lors d'un atelier animé par Xabi Odriozola au Pays Basque. Il était rédigé en basque et en castillan au départ. Je l'ai mis en français. "Il a le même format qu'une carte de crédit, et il est valable dans tout les pays" nous avait dit Xabi. Il est surtout valable dans le cœur de tous les hommes.*

Patrick Blaque
Oléac Dessus, Haute Pyrenees, France
Reproduit de la lettre d'information
de la Co-Ecoute en France

* Xabi Odriozola est la Personne de Référence pour le Pays Basque.



CHARLIE ROSENBERG

English translation of the preceding article:

Farewell to My Father, a Man of the Working Class

Lately my mind has been occupied by the death of my father, which occurred on May 6, after he spent a month and a half in a coma. I had wished to take a stand for¹ him.

For the last seven or eight years my father had been carrying the text of the Men's Commitment (printed below) in his wallet (without my knowing). On the occasion of his funeral, at the Aubervilliers Cemetery on May 13, I read that text to everybody. I won't describe the storm in my head, the tears, my struggle to go through with it,² the knot in my throat.

Before reading, I took my nephew's hand in mine; I needed support. While reading, I felt something going through me. I had to carry it all the way,³ for my father. It wasn't me that mattered anymore, nor my feelings. I would attend to them after. I made eye contact with the people in front of me, the reality, to not go away. And then the microphone, testing my voice. It was clear, strong.

And then the Men's Commitment. I don't know why, but I stumbled on the last sentence. My nephew (who had had a Co-Counseling session in the past) immediately took over.⁴ A beautiful example of men helping each other. And a farewell to a man of the working class, my daddy. I am still shivering.

After the ceremony, several people asked me for the small note card I had read from (I always carry a few, just in case⁵), including some representatives from the CGT trade union (my father had set up the local union when he was young).

THE MEN'S COMMITMENT

"I promise that, from this moment on, I will be proud to be male, and will seek closeness and brotherhood with every other man of every age, race, nation, and class.

"I will permit no slandering or disrespect or blaming of any man for the hurts which have been placed upon him, and I will seek to restore safety to all men to discharge these cruel hurts.

"I will fight to end and eliminate the burdening of men with over-fatigue, over-responsibility, and coercion into armed service in which they have been brutalized, and forced to kill or be killed.

"I will cherish my birthright of being a good, intelligent, courageous, and powerful male human."

This commitment was distributed during a workshop I attended that was led by Xabi Odriozola,⁶ in the Basque Country. It was written in Euskara (the Basque language) and Castilian. I had put it into French. It was printed on a card, the same size as a credit card, and it is valid in every country, as Xabi said. Most of all, it is valid in the hearts of all men.

Patrick Blaque

Oléac Dessus, Haute Pyrenees, France
Reprinted from the newsletter
of the RC Communities in France

¹ Take a stand for means publicly acknowledge.

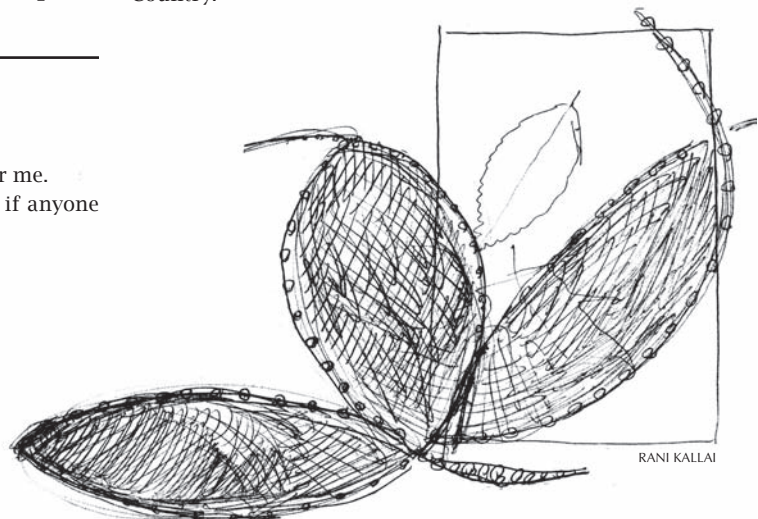
² Go through with means proceed to do it.

³ Carry it all the way means do it fully.

⁴ In this context, took over means began speaking for me.

⁵ In this context, just in case means to be prepared, if anyone should want one.

⁶ Xabi Odriozola is the Regional Reference Person for the Basque Country.



Loss, Grief, and Harvey

Dear Tim,¹

Recently I re-read the talk you gave about Harvey² at the 1999 Boston (Massachusetts, USA) Teachers' and Leaders' Workshop and was reminded of this ten-year milestone.³ Those of us who knew Harvey well still have a perspective that is different, a continuity that is important for the RC project.

Ten years ago you said, "I don't think this project can go on as well as it must until we've counseled through this loss. . . . Discharging thoroughly on this loss is important—for us personally and for what we're trying to do."

We are reminded daily of losses in Iraq, Afghanistan, and other areas of conflict. The grief about these losses can prevent us from thinking clearly about these conflicts and about our countries, families, and selves, and the basic human needs of everyone around us.

Yet here are Harvey and you, with reminders that things are hopeful—that we only lost Harvey's future thoughts, not anything of what he ever did or communicated to us. In fact, in his lectures, poems, quotes, and other writings he continues to communicate at an ever-deeper level.

Indeed, Harvey's life was a joy!

There are many more good things on the horizon after all.⁴

Randy Smith
Portland, Oregon, USA

¹ Tim Jackins

² Harvey Jackins

³ Milestone means significant point in development. The author is referring to the ten-year anniversary of Harvey Jackins' death.

⁴ After all means taking everything into account.



CORAL BAY, FLORIDA, USA • CHARLIE ROSENBERG

The only person who behaves sensibly is my tailor. He measures me anew each time he sees me.

George Bernard Shaw

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!

Counseling on Chronic Pain

I am proud and excited to report that after three challenging years I've successfully weaned myself from six pain medications (including a dangerously additive narcotic and two anti-depressants). I hope to offer a reminder of what is possible with discharge and allies, and share what I and my RC Community have figured out about physical disabilities.

I suffer from two chronic pain disorders, affecting most of my body, as well as some old sports injuries. At my lowest point I needed to go on a seven-month disability leave from work.

I am a Catholic woman and the youngest child in a large family. My patterns include being silent about my struggles; doing exactly what I'm told, no matter what the consequences are to me; never complaining; and putting everyone else's needs before my own. I've been living with pain for twenty-two years (and I'm only thirty-five!). Seven years ago, when I injured my neck at an RC workshop, I discovered the power of having allies and using the discharge process to heal. I also discovered the interconnectedness of emotional hurts and physical pain.

CHALLENGES

My primary-care doctor was adamant that I needed to take anti-depressants in order to cope with a life in chronic pain. Though I repeatedly told him why I disagreed, I took the medication for over a year because I didn't yet know I was "allowed" not to follow a doctor's instructions.

I have an ancient pattern of hoarding secrets. In RC I kept the medi-

cation a secret, because I thought I would "get in trouble." Sharing that secret, and *all* secrets, has led me to discover that I don't need to be alone with my struggles. Showing myself brings allies closer to me and gets more minds thinking together with me about my re-emergence. I went through many years in RC not letting anyone know that I was in pain. I ignored the pain in order to counsel others with my "full attention" and not draw attention to myself. I led a support group for five years while fully disregarding my physical needs. Thankfully my Community noticed and helped me see that it wasn't right for me to be enduring pain in silence and functioning on top of it.

TRIUMPHS

My biggest life-altering contradiction¹ was a Co-Counselor deciding to check in with me every day about how my body was feeling. With a chronic illness it can feel like talking about the feelings or asking for help is "too much," since the condition goes on daily and indefinitely. I had

told myself it would be okay to ask for counseling for an acute injury but not for a chronic disorder. I had thought I was supposed to be "used to it," since I'd lived with the pain for years, but in fact it's a big deal² every single day.

My RC Community has set up an accessibility committee to help me at workshops. No more dealing with pain in isolation for me! I've also surrounded myself with a team of health care providers and allies who thoroughly trust and respect my thinking and are committed to supporting me in reaching my goals. I'm on the RC Spanish translation team, and because typing is painful, the team has found ways for me to participate while respecting my physical needs and limitations.

I now lead a wide-world support group for women who have the same disorder that I do. Not only am I visible with my pain, but I ask for help on a daily basis. These are huge steps outside of my patterns.

continued . . .

¹ Contradiction to distress

² A big deal is an important matter.



LAGO DI BARREA, ITALY • JULIE ANNE FORGIONE

COUNSELING PRACTICE

continued . . .

USEFUL COUNSELING DIRECTIONS

Here are some things that have worked well for me in my counseling:

- Counselors asking or telling me “How are you feeling right now?”

“What do you need to be comfortable?”

“How can I help you?”

“Trust your mind!”

“Your well-being is the priority.”

“It’s okay to spend money on your health.”

“It’s not okay for you to be enduring pain.”

“I/we want you to be well, and it is *possible*.”

“You are completely in charge of your body and mind at all times!”

- Co-Counselors coming with me to medical appointments or counseling me while I do exercises or medical procedures at home.

- Before a medical appointment or procedure, doing a Co-Counseling session in which my counselor and I make up a story about exactly how things are going to be set up for me to feel safe and in charge.

- Having sessions in which I stand up firmly to doctors³ who think I need drugs to tolerate life with pain.

- When a particular part of my body hurts, my counselor and I putting attention on it, while I ask, “What are you trying to tell me?”

- Daily validations of my body.

- Being “greedy” and asking for absolutely everything I need, even when it feels “over the top.”⁴

- Describing out loud all my symptoms, even when they involve body parts or functions that were not talked about in my upbringing and that feel like “secrets.”

INFORMATION FOR ALLIES

What has been helpful for my allies to know?

The decision to take medications for pain was not one that I made lightly. Faced with physical crises and given the resources available, it was the best option I could think of at the time. While it’s been important for allies to support me in getting off the medications, it’s also been important that they not blame or criticize me for taking them. (People are *always* doing the best they can.)

Being an ally to someone with pain and/or disabilities can provide an excellent opportunity for the ally to counsel on his or her own related experiences and distresses (but unless the person who is disabled or in pain agrees to be the counselor, it’s best to work on these things with another counselor).

In the wide world, when people see me in pain, they often want to share their own stories of pain. It’s good when allies respect that I may not (and probably don’t) have the attention to listen. And though it might sometimes be a contradiction, it’s not always helpful when allies express sympathy with a tone of feeling sorry for me (“Oh, you poor thing! I don’t know how you handle it!”). It is more useful when

they have a session on those feelings (with another counselor) so that their attention is available and they can give me a hand.⁵

When an ally does something for a person with pain and/or a disability, it can sometimes contradict the person’s being left alone with his or her struggles and having to function on top of them. At other times it can feel like the ally is acting out of his or her own discomfort and distress. What a glorious opportunity for both people to have a mini-session and figure out what would be the best contradiction (at that moment!). I’ve found it’s best to have a three-way session.

It’s helped when people have believed me when I’ve described my symptoms. Both my conditions are disorders that on the outside have the appearance of everything being healthy and normal. I spent many years enduring pain while doctors, friends, and family members insisted that I was “just fine” and the symptoms were “in my head.” It’s been useful when my allies have learned as much as possible about what I’ve been facing. The fact that they would take that kind of interest has been a huge contradiction.

Closeness, closeness, closeness! People often have a tendency not to get close to someone in pain and/or with a disability. It can be great for people to have a mini-session about feeling awkward or scared. It also helps when people ask me if it’s okay to touch, and when and where not to.

Danielle Frías

New York, New York, USA

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

³Stand up firmly to doctors means assertively confront doctors.

⁴“Over the top” means like it’s too much.

⁵A hand means some help.

“I Choose Us”

Tim Jackins, at the Western European Pre-World Conference, June 2009

We have always struggled with relationships—long before we got into Co-Counseling. And although we understand that it doesn't make sense to act out frozen needs¹ at each other, we still feel like we want to do it.

If I have a frozen fascination attached to you, I know it doesn't work to act it out—so I don't act it out, I don't throw myself on you, I just lean. I'll use an example from mathematics. It's called an “asymptotic approach.” The way it works is this: There's this thing I'm attracted to. It's like a wall that goes on forever. I'm over here. I know I'm not going to go all the way over there. So I go halfway. It's still safe. There is still a lot of distance between here and there. So I go half of what's left² again. Then I go another half of what's left, and then half again. There's always a little bit of space left. I get close to fully acting out the distress while still being able to claim I have not done so. I haven't really challenged the distress. It feels so “nice.”

Early on in RC we became aware of people's struggles with frozen needs. Before the first fundamentals class was organized, my father³ and his staff set up the no-socializing policy⁴ in order to avoid having to continuously handle all the messes that resulted from Co-Counselors socializing. It was an arbitrary rule initially. It wasn't fully thought out for a long time.

If you've been around RC long enough, you may have heard, long ago, what my father would say when someone who was longing to have another relationship with a Co-Counselor asked him when he or she might pursue it. He would say in an off-hand⁵ manner, “After you've worked through three chronic distresses.” I don't think that was the best answer, but it slowed things down and kept many problems from happening.

What is the no-socializing policy really saying? One perspective is, “I choose the benefit of the Community instead of what I may long for. What we are trying to do,

and the relationships we have built, are more important to me than pursuing some frozen longing.” It isn't saying that we could never have additional relationships, it isn't saying that we are inherently too irrational to ever be able to do that. I don't think that's true. I think we need the policy because of where we are at this time in our struggles against distress. And also, I choose us over me. There is no shortage of wonderful possibilities for relationships in the world—I don't have to choose one that takes a chance⁶ in this way.

It's like capitalism. In capitalism we are pushed to make short-sighted, self-centered decisions. We are pushed to grasp for something that we feel is for our immediate benefit, because no one else's benefit is identified with ours and we feel like we are going to lose in the end anyway. That's similar to the frozen longing for another relationship with a Co-Counselor. I choose us. I choose the thing that is in my best long-term interest and in all of our interests. I see the job as not doing what might benefit just me but doing what will benefit all of us, so that I benefit, too. (“If you want a higher standard of living, raise everyone's standard of living.”)

Many of the struggles we have against our distresses can be seen from this perspective. What will really benefit you? Is it, for example, getting more than your share of attention? Proving you're better than someone else? Arguing with someone that you should be chosen as leader? Or is it figuring out and counseling on what gets in the way of your functioning so that people will then turn to you as a leader? Is it choosing to do part of the Community's work that nobody has taken on⁷ well yet and putting your energy into that?

We have a lot of struggles to fight through because of the distresses connected with capitalism. We are trying to build the RC Communities in spite of capitalism. We often do not remember that we're working against the isolation and the aloneness that come from our economic system.

¹ Frozen need is a term used in RC for a hurt that results when a rational need is not met in childhood. The hurt compels a person to keep trying to fill the need in the present, but the frozen need cannot be filled; it can only be discharged.

² What's left means that which remains.

³ Harvey Jackins

⁴ The no-socializing policy of the RC Communities states that Co-Counselors should not set up any relationships, other than Co-Counseling, with other Co-Counselors or with people whom they first meet in a Co-Counseling context.

⁵ Off-hand means relaxed, light.

⁶ Takes a chance means involves a risk.

⁷ In this context, taken on means undertaken.



KK

Counseling on Chemical Sensitivity

Several years ago I became sensitive to multiple chemicals. I've used Co-Counseling to decrease the reactions and to discharge the chronic patterns underlying them.

For a while I flailed around in my sessions. Then I decided to get organized. I used the direction "I now decide to get better!" and out popped many incidences of early abuse. As I work on those, it seems quite possible that they are the roots of the sensitivities.

After I have a session discharging heavy fear, I notice that I don't react as much for the next three or four days. When I'm paying attention to (and not discharging) the terror, my reactions are the worst. Having, or getting, my attention out¹ makes the reactions milder.

Once when I started to get a reaction, I thought, "I'll be damned if I'm going to let this ruin my day!" I started saying, "I now decide not to pay attention to the terror," over and over again, while putting my attention on a fresh copy of *Present Time*. I yawned and yawned. Usually my reaction is spaciness and a big headache, and it scares the heck out of me.³ This time I only noticed some vague sensations in my head that weren't bothersome. In fact, they were rather boring and soon faded away.

When I get a reaction, I say, "It sometimes happens that a woman is safe," or "I now decide not to believe the terror," or (if I can't think of anything else), "I now decide not to react." I shake and yawn and yawn. The reaction is less severe and sometimes stops.

¹ Attention out means attention on good reality, away from distress.

² I'll be damned if means there's no way.

³ Scares the heck out of me means scares me very much.

When I have a particularly bad exposure and reaction, I've noticed I get more sensitive to everything. It sure sounds like a chronic pattern.

My sensitivities started when I was exposed to a hundred percent alcohol paint primer. As the weeks went by, I reacted to more and more things. I think the initial reaction may have restimulated a chronic pattern of fear (from being anesthetized at birth and later abuse). Along with fear and physical symptoms, the pattern included being hypervigilant and very perceptive. My guess is that my body perceived more and more substances in the environment, and then the fear and the recorded head symptoms kicked in.⁴ Each time the pattern got restimulated, it got worse: more fear, more vigilance, more sensitivity. Maybe every reaction beyond the initial one has been recorded pain, discomfort, and disorientation (although these symptoms have been "real," immensely bothersome, and often debilitating).

Along with discharging early distress, I think it's important for me to talk about how being sensitive affects my daily life—about what happens, how it feels. This seems to be more difficult for counselors to listen to, but counseling on present difficulties will often ferret out additional distress to discharge.

At first my counselors had a hard time listening to me work on my sensitivities. I wasn't able to counsel them on what was getting in the way—I would just get sunk. I asked them to counsel each other on what made it hard for them to listen to me. That didn't work. Finally I decided to counsel them on any fear, as long as it didn't have anything to do with me. That worked.

⁴ Kicked in means started operating.

Even though chemical sensitivity may be dischargeable, I think it makes sense to check out medical treatments, both for symptom relief and to decrease sensitivity. There are doctors (medical doctors, naturopaths) who specialize in treating multiple chemical sensitivity. People have gotten better (though not cured) by using various natural treatments. Avoiding exposures, either alone or in conjunction with treatments, has been shown to decrease sensitivity. Of course, it is important to determine if any therapy interferes with discharge, or has some basis in distress.

Medical treatment aside, I think there's great hope for completely discharging environmental sensitivities—freeing us up for bigger lives.

Ellen Warnock
Seattle, Washington, USA

If you move . . .

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*

The Problem of Empathy

I was raised in a middle-class Catholic family, of mainly Irish heritage, in urban Melbourne (Victoria, Australia). I was taught to never be judgmental about others and to remember that there is always a good reason why people are behaving in the way they are. I was told to try to understand why a person might be acting in a particular way, no matter how hard that was for me. It is a useful perspective, and Harvey¹ did tell us that if we knew everything that someone had had to endure, we would understand that he or she was always doing her or his best.

However, a recent Jews and Allies Workshop in Sydney (New South Wales, Australia) helped bring into sharp relief² some of the problems with how I had been using this perspective and helped me realize what I had been doing around Jewish people and others who had a different background from my own. I shall call it “the problem of empathy.”

Being empathic is often described as being able to “walk in someone else’s shoes.” For me, part of this has involved relating what another person may tell or show me to things that I have also experienced. I think that many of us try to understand what someone is telling us by recalling events from our own lives.

The truth is, however, that we haven’t experienced what other people have experienced. And if we think that we understand what someone else has experienced by relating it to our own experiences, and if how he or she is acting in the world is significantly different from how we act, there can be a problem. The only interpretation we have at our disposal to explain that person’s different behaviour may be that something is not quite right in him or her. For example, he or she may be “over the top,”³ “attention-seeking,” “too loud,” “always carrying on,”⁴ or “paranoid.” In Co-Counseling, this problem of empathy has meant that I have been quite patronising to Jewish Co-Counselors, or at best have tried to jolly them out of the session⁵ they may have been trying to have.

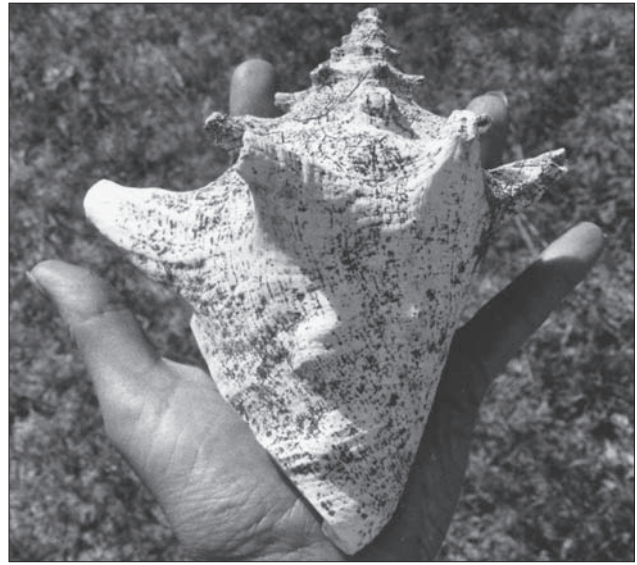
¹ Harvey Jackins

² Sharp relief means extreme clarity.

³ “Over the top” means too much.

⁴ “Carrying on” means behaving in a foolish, excited, or improper manner.

⁵ Jolly them out of the session means cheer them up so they won’t have the session.



JANA CHRISTOPHER

If I realize that I am not from the same background as my Jewish Co-Counselor and that we do not necessarily have a large pool of shared experiences, I can then put my attention on simply being counselor and, as Cherie⁶ asked us to do at the workshop, on how I can make the situation safe enough for my client to really discharge. When Cherie gave two of our Jewish leaders sessions during which they discharged heavily, I realised how far off the mark⁷ I had been.

Since the workshop, when I am counseling someone who is from a different racial, class, or religious background, I try to remember to say to myself at the beginning of the session, “I have not experienced life in the same way this person has. I cannot simply relate his or her experiences to things that have happened to me.” How someone acts in the world always reflects the particular hurts that have happened to him or her and that he or she has not yet had the opportunity to discharge—nothing more and nothing less. Hopefully I will be able to start giving my Jewish Co-Counselors the safety they need to have the sessions they deserve (the kinds of sessions they have sometimes given me).

Lisa Rasmussen

Northcote, Victoria, Australia
Reprinted from the newsletter of the
Melbourne, Victoria, RC Community

⁶ Cherie Brown, the International Liberation Reference Person for Jews and the leader of the workshop

⁷ Far off the mark means far from accurate.



The ideas and developments of RC as written about by Harvey Jackins, from 1995 until his death in 1999.

\$13 (U.S.). SEE PAGE 109 FOR ORDERING INFORMATION.

Non-Permissive Counseling of a Young Violin Student

I want to tell you about a recent violin lesson I was pleased with. A student had been avoiding, for months, practicing and playing for me her lesson music and for weeks had only been able to stand to play¹ the first few bars of her orchestra music. After ten minutes of her half-hour lesson, she would ask to play the hide-and-seek game (she hides something in the room; when I am far away from it she plays softly, and when I get closer she plays more loudly) or the note-reading game (I set out circular pieces of candy as note heads on a large music staff; when she correctly identifies the name of the note and how to play it on the violin, she gets to keep the candy).

¹ In this context, stand to play means barely tolerate playing.

One day I noticed that her eyes would start to tear up whenever I asked her to play more than the first few bars of the orchestra music, and it finally dawned on me² that she was asking for a non-permissive counseling session. So I firmly insisted that we play the whole piece.

She cried a lot! Her violin got quite wet (it's a good thing those cheap student instruments don't mind). I put my arms around her and told her that I knew how frustrating it could be to play the violin, that I'd cried many tears over it³ myself, but that I believed in her and knew that she could do it.

² Dawned on me means became clear to me.

³ Over it means about it.

Whenever the tears slowed down, I asked her to play the rest of the piece, which she eventually was able to do without needing to cry. We got through all the orchestra music and went back to learning her lesson music.

In the next lesson she was much more playful with me than she had ever been before. We enjoyed laughing and being silly together. Hurray!⁴

Eve Abraham
Kirchseeon, Germany
Reprinted from the RC e-mail
discussion list for leaders of artists

⁴ Hurray is an expression of celebration.

The Variety of Chronic Patterns

What you say about knowing your own direction, even in the middle of chronic distress, is good and encouraging, and it may very well be true. There are people whose distresses are such that they are still in touch with what they need to do and simply need encouragement from the outside in order to keep at it.¹ If this is the case for you,² great! You are lucky. (I would hold a reservation that there is possibly a chronic you haven't tackled yet that would confuse even you. But if so, we'll hit³ that when we come to it.)

It's important to realize that this is not necessarily true for everyone else. It is always a mistake to try to understand other people only from one's own experience. People are very, very different. There are people whose chronics leave them so confused that only the counselor, thinking hard and figuring accurately, can come to the correct direction. Certainly only the counselor can remember to hold to it⁴ against the confusion of those particular chronics.

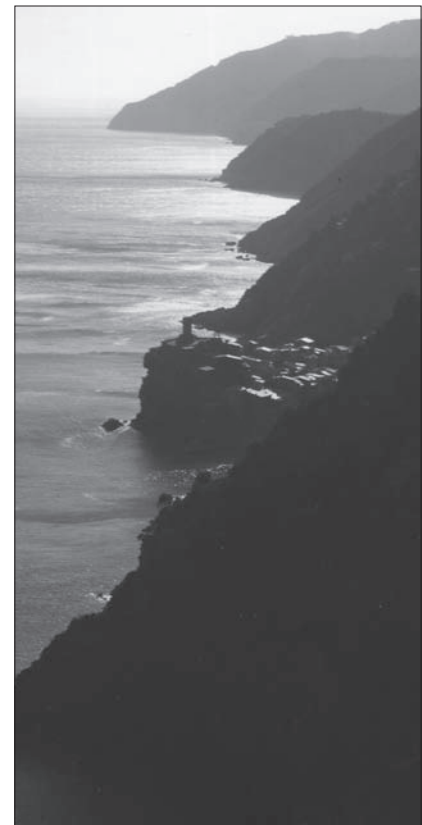
Harvey Jackins
From a letter written in 1975

¹ Keep at it means keep doing it.

² The case for you means what is true for you.

³ In this context, hit means face.

⁴ Hold to it means continue with it.



VERNAZZA, ITALY • KEN DEVENY

Using Competition to “Scorn Fear”

I am a family and parent leader, inside and outside of RC. People come to me for help with a range of problems that are really about how difficult it is to raise a family under the pressures of capitalism, with undischarged distress. One of the ways I address people’s concerns is by suggesting that parents and children play a variety of competitive games with each other.

It seems like many children’s (and parents’) struggles stem from how powerless they feel in the face of what they perceive as impossible things to achieve, or even try to achieve. As Tim¹ says, such discouragement is an early hurt. Whenever appropriate, I try to give children and their parents some perspective, and help them discharge on the discouragements. Competitive games are often a way to accomplish both.

I explain to parents that games involving physical activity (such as traditional outdoor games like basketball or soccer or some indoor games like air hockey or knock hockey) can be useful to play with children. At first the parents think these games are about winning and losing, but I explain that they can be set up so that a child feels challenged and is ultimately successful.

I encourage the parents to think about and control the tension in the game. The challenge should not be too easy (so that the child feels no joy or pride in the accomplishment) nor too overwhelming (so that the child gets discouraged and gives up trying).

¹ Tim Jackins



© BILL HORNE

Trying hard with their bodies can be a way for young people to “push through” hurts. This can strengthen their “self-esteem muscle” and give them (and older people) a chance to feel less intimidated, scared, and cautious. This practice at “scorning fear” can make them more hopeful and less likely to give up when they’re worried they might fail. It has helped tremendously with the behavior “problems” that have come my way.

Competitive games set up with children’s needs in mind are helpful in large part because they often produce plenty of discharge—laughter and trembling being the most common types I see. Many U.S. parents have an easier time being around laughter and trembling than they do crying and can relatively easily agree that these forms of release get rid of built up stress and tension. The thrill of concrete² success is also helpful to everyone. People usually have fun, get rid of some early hurt, and get their attention out. Great!

I grew up in a working-class neighborhood where we played rough a lot. The tough edges have left scars that I need to keep discharging, but having had the opportunity to win, or at least try hard in the face of adversity, has helped me to laugh fully and easily, feel hopeful, and be able to face many challenges. It has also helped me think of ways for competition to be helpful to people I care about.

Sharon Peters

Brooklyn, New York, USA

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

² In this context, concrete means real, actual.

Deeper Distresses, and Sexual Feelings

Remember that the patterned pull toward sex or sexual feelings often becomes a cover for the deep pain of isolation or loneliness, or the failure to feel cared for or liked. These deeper distresses are the ones that are likely to need contradiction, even though they are masked by a thin covering of sexual feelings.

Harvey Jackins

From *An Unbounded Future*, page 193

“Alive and Well in 2009”— Breast Cancer and Counseling

I was diagnosed with breast cancer in 1988, while living in Palo Alto, California (USA). After the initial suspicions following an examination and a mammogram, two Co-Counselors from my ongoing class went with me when I had a biopsy, and stayed with me to hear the results. They sat with me while the doctor told me I had invasive breast cancer and that he recommended immediate surgery—a modified radical mastectomy. That doctor was not particularly good at giving me the news and left me feeling like I had little chance to survive. I was glad I had Co-Counselors right there with me. We left the hospital and sat on the lawn outside where I discharged as best I could, given that I was in shock. The Co-Counselors stayed with me until I felt ready to go home.

Before the surgery I had to have a number of scans and tests, and Co-Counselors accompanied me to all of them. I was scared, and it was a great help to have them with me. One woman, whom I knew outside of Co-Counseling and who had been through something similar, took me to her doctor for a second opinion. That doctor was able to reassure me and give me better information about what was going on.¹

During the waiting time before the surgery, people in my ongoing class rallied to help me. One person took on² the job of organizer and set up a schedule of sessions, coordinating with me. I had one-

way sessions nearly every day until the surgery. All the counselors were excellent, considering they were counseling me on a scary matter about which it would be easy to get sunk. I remember one man in particular who didn't have as much fear as the others about cancer. He was great at getting me to counsel from a lighter perspective. He had me laughing and yawning. Then I was able to continue on to deeper discharge.

Before the surgery, I was asked whom I would most like to have go with me to the hospital. I named three people, any one of whom would have been okay. To my surprise, all three went with me and were there during all the preliminary procedures. I had learned from a fellow Co-Counselor, Pam Geyer,³ about how a patient is aware and stores the memories of what is going on during surgery, even under anesthesia. I told the Co-Counselors who were with me that I wanted the operating room staff to know this (I did not know if I would get the opportunity to talk to them). One of my counselors (for whom speaking up might have been difficult) found the doctor and told him of my wishes. As I was taken into the operating room, the entire staff, including the anesthesiologist and the nurses, were standing by the door and listened to my request that they be positive during the operation.

When I woke up and was taken to my room, a Co-Counselor was there waiting. Many other coun-

sultors visited me on a regular basis the entire time I was in the hospital, counseling me as best they could in that setting. According to the nurses and other visitors, I recovered with remarkable speed. Even on the day of the surgery, I was talking animatedly about what had gone on. I was in the hospital for about five days but was doing so well by the second day that I was often up visiting other patients and getting juice and water for them. I know that I rallied so quickly because of all the support and good counseling I received.

I continued to have regular sessions on the surgery and on my chemotherapy treatment, which went on for six months after the surgery. I discharged quite a bit on losing my hair, which in some ways affected me more than losing a breast. I soon went back to two-way sessions and attended several weekend RC workshops.

All the support was a tremendous contradiction to my lifelong feelings of isolation. I grew up as an only child on a farm in a rural area of Virginia (USA). My father was an immigrant from Eastern Europe and had many owning-class patterns. My mother came from a Protestant middle-class background. Both of them were distant and undemonstrative. At the time I was diagnosed with cancer, my patterns had me believing that no one cared about me or would help me if I needed it. Having those patterns so effectively contradicted helped me break out of my solitude and connect with others, and that has changed my life in many ways.

continued . . .

¹ Going on means happening.

² In this context, took on means assumed.

³ Pam Geyer is the Area Reference Person for East Houston, Texas, USA, and is the editor of *Well Being*, the RC journal about health.

COUNSELING PRACTICE

continued . . .

To those of you who read this and were a part of my support teams—thank you, thank you, thank you. You have made a huge difference in my life.

Here are some of the things I learned from my experience:

- When confronting a major illness or injury, it is helpful to have a Co-Counselor present as early as possible in the process. Having counselors with me when I heard the news about my cancer was extremely helpful.

- It is also important to be accompanied to doctors' appointments, scans, and other tests. Sometimes I had friends with me and sometimes Co-Counselors. (Of course, one has more of an opportunity to show one's real feelings with Co-Counselors.)

- Not all counselors will be able to counsel someone with complete confidence on a serious illness (especially something as restimulating as

cancer), but just the fact that they are willing to try can bring a lot of discharge. If possible, try to find some counselors who have some slack in the area.

- Counseling on a health crisis not only helps one through the immediate situation, receiving so much good attention has the potential to change many areas of one's life.

Aganita Varkentine
Seattle, Washington, USA

Drugs and Discharge

In general, we do not expect or hope for any good results from people who are trying to follow two conflicting theories. The medication your psychiatrist has prescribed interferes with your discharge and therefore with your recovery.

I can understand your unbearable conflict when you feel that help is available from Re-evaluation Counseling but authority is pressing on you from the direction of your psychiatrist. You could tell your psychiatrist to go ahead and counsel you—if he's going to medicate you, then he should take¹ the results. I'm afraid that wouldn't get through to him² though.

In general, it's a blind alley³ to attempt to Co-Counsel while under the effect of drugs. The discharge and re-evaluation process is greatly impeded by the drugs, and it seems unfair to expect it to work under conditions in which it cannot. You will also not do a good job as a counselor, because you'll be too shut down.⁴ This is why we try to draw a line.⁵ We don't want to be caught up⁶ in responsibility for something unworkable.

Your dilemma is real, however. If your psychiatrist would agree that you can cut down on⁷ the drug for a couple of days before a Co-Counseling session, then I would hope the Co-Counselors would agree to give you that much help and see if

you can't make enough progress to convince your psychiatrist to give up⁸ the drugs. People put in this dilemma often take the drugs from the doctor but then flush them down the toilet and recover through discharge, which is the only thing that has any permanent effect. But you have to decide, and I understand that you are fearful.

Harvey Jackins
From a letter written in 1972



CROOKED TREE • © SAMANTHA SANDERSON

¹ In this context, take means be responsible for.

² Get through to him means reach him.

³ A blind alley is a fruitless or mistaken course.

⁴ Shut down means numbly unaware, lacking in free attention.

⁵ Draw a line means not compromise.

⁶ Caught up means involved.

⁷ Cut down on means decrease the amount of.

Useful New Perspectives

Hi Tim,¹

It's been a while since we've been in the same room together—the workshop you led in New Hampshire (USA) was the last time—and I wanted to let you know what's new with me and how much I appreciate you. I've written letters to you every couple of months but never sent them. So I'm going to send this one, and will make an effort to write you again, because my relationship with you is important to me.

Over the past year my perspective on my life has been changing. I am beginning to understand that I can be happy with myself, that I am not alone, and that the future is hopeful. I want to thank you for your persistence in finding different ways to explain our understanding of human beings—the reality of who I am, what I can achieve, and the things I can do to take control of my life and my community and create the life I want to live.

As a white guy living outside of an organized Co-Counseling Community, in Burlington, Vermont, USA, I want to tell you that your audio recordings² continue to play a significant role in my life. I listen repeatedly to the ones that I receive in the packet for RC teachers. They give me a perspective on myself, the RC Community, and how to counsel.

After I got the audio recording *The Uses and Limitations of Reassurance in Co-Counseling*, and listened to it over and over again, my perspective about counseling began to change. I gained a new perspective on my significance and the role my early hurts have played in keeping me feeling bad about myself, isolated, and hopeless about the future. Each one of your recordings, since that time, has provided me with new insights about my significance, about fighting for myself in Co-Counseling sessions, and about the importance of



SUE EDWARDS

ending racism for myself, the people I know and care about, and the people I don't know yet. I will continue to use your audio recordings and other RC literature as a foundation for my understanding of myself and the world around me and to remind me of both fundamental RC theory and the need to be connected with theoretical advances.

Most recently I have been considering in my sessions that I could actually be good, that I could be connected to other people, and that I could follow my own thinking. What I have come up against are fears about the future. I have been discharging on my fears that if I actually begin acting on my thinking, rather than discounting it and discounting

myself, my life could change. I am discharging about changing my life and changing the world around me.

Although I have wanted to change the world and end oppression, I am beginning to notice where I have liked the world as it is, even with all the horrible things that happen. The oppressive society has seemed to benefit me. It has confused me and made me think that I benefit from the way that the world is set up right now. I am facing the fear, "What happens if I follow my thinking and transform the foundation of my life? What happens if I actually take action to end oppression and dismantle the institutions of oppression? Will I recognize myself and the world? Will I be able to keep track of³ who I am if I stop putting on the brakes⁴ in my life, if I follow my own thinking and allow myself to act as the significant person that I am?" I have come to a preliminary conclusion that I will be able to do these things, partly because I understand the reality of who I am and that I can discharge the "thoughts" and feelings that confuse me about myself.

continued . . .

¹ Tim Jackins

² Rational Island Publishers has been producing a series of quarterly CDs of talks given by Tim Jackins at recent RC workshops. For more information, see page 104 of this *Present Time*.

³ Keep track of means not lose sight of.

⁴ Putting on the brakes means holding myself back, restraining myself.

continued . . .

I also want to share with you a perspective that I heard from your father⁵—one that I will hold in my mind forever. Although I never met him, I greatly appreciate all the work he did to make Co-Counseling available to me. I appreciate the relationships he made with people I know, and people I don't know, and the role he played in making the RC project a success. The perspective he shared that I will always remember is the story of the "faces in the rock." I purchased the set of videos that present some of your father's work,⁶ and when I watch the one in which he tells that story, and

⁵ Harvey Jackins

⁶ *A Foundation of Harvey Jackins* (DVD Set 1)—a set of six DVDs of talks and demonstrations by Harvey Jackins

hear the tenderness of his tone, his steady appreciation, I think that he is right: We are the ones we have been waiting for to change the world. I think it is possible, and tears appear in my eyes, releasing another piece of the hopelessness, isolation, and insignificance that have distracted me.

Thank you for your dedication to this project. I am proud to be a part of it with you and to know that you are committed to changing your life and the lives of the people around you. I enjoy having your voice in my head, reminding me of reality in the midst of my confusion about myself. Thanks for your encouragement and for being in my life.

Garth Allen

Burlington, Vermont, USA



KK

Not Love, Perhaps

This is not Love, perhaps,
Love that lays down its life,
That many waters cannot quench,
Nor the floods drown,
But something written in lighter ink,
Said in a lower tone, something, perhaps,
especially our own.

A need, at times, to be together and talk,
And then the finding we can walk
More firmly through dark narrow places,
And meet more easily nightmare faces;

A need to reach out, sometimes, hand to hand,
And then find Earth less like an alien land;
A need for alliance to defeat
The whisperers at the corner of the street.

A need for inns on roads, islands in seas,
Halts for discoveries to be shared,
Maps checked, notes compared:
A need, at times, of each for each,
Direct as the need of throat and tongue for speech.

A.J. Tessimond

Visiting a Concentration Camp Memorial

When I was on holidays, I visited a memorial at a concentration camp site not far from the city where I was staying. I had previously been part of an RC visit to Auschwitz/Birkenau,¹ which helped me have my thinking "on" this time.

I went with a Co-Counselor with whom I had made a close connection during the RC visit. We decided which parts of the exhibition we each wanted to see and agreed to go separately when necessary—and, of course, to have mini-sessions while we were there. It was a good strategy. I was able to decide how much I could take in² with the available opportunities for discharge. It was good not to be worried about "missing something important," one of my usual preoccupations when I'm travelling to a new place.

The visit was a positive and empowering experience. I'm inspired about the difference RC can make.

Olga Lenkova
St. Petersburg, Russia

¹ Auschwitz/Birkenau is the site of a World War II Nazi concentration camp, in Poland.

² Take in means absorb.

Sexism—Forgotten, Hidden, Trivialized, Denied

A talk by Diane Balser¹ at the Contemporary Women's Issues Workshop,
near Baltimore, Maryland, USA, October 2009

Sexism, like every oppression, takes different forms depending on how an economy is structured. One can look at slave societies or feudal societies and see how sexism was built into those economic systems. Today, mostly in the Third World, there are still some institutions of semi-feudal sexism (bride burnings, female circumcision, and so on).

In advanced capitalism, sexism is more hidden. Advanced capitalist societies rely more heavily on deception. We can see this deception in the media, where what appears to be liberation is really oppression—for example, the sexualization of women. Women's issues are denied or appear trivial. Those of us who live in advanced capitalist societies are often preoccupied with what feel like personal issues, such as our appearance, that are actually the symptoms of how we've been oppressed by sexism. We are no longer owned by men, but our minds and our bodies are "owned" by corporations, and we're taught that *this* is liberation.

A PROFOUND HISTORY

As women we have a profound history. This history gets forgotten and trivialized. In the 1970s and 1980s an amazing women's movement took off² and spread around the world. We are all either beneficiaries of the gains of that movement or were activists in it. The United Nations Conference on Women in Beijing, China, in 1995, to which we brought an RC delegation, was the largest gathering

of women ever, anywhere in the world. To get an idea of what the women's movement accomplished, ask your mothers and grandmothers what their lives were like. For example, when my mother gave birth, she was alone with a strange doctor. Today, in most urban settings in the United States, your partner, a midwife, a friend—someone you choose—can be with you. You can choose where you give birth, and how. You can have a choice about drugs. These gains, which we don't notice anymore, are because of what happened in the women's movement.

We had a remarkable women's movement in Co-Counseling, spearheaded³ and backed⁴ by Harvey Jackins. Harvey understood that women's liberation was essential for revolutionary change in the world. In RC, individual women and groups of women have made remarkable gains using the tools of Co-Counseling. I, and other women here, have been privileged to lead women's liberation in Re-evaluation Counseling.

³ Spearheaded means initiated.

⁴ Backed means supported.

I don't know if the Re-evaluation Counseling Communities could have taken off if not for the women's liberation movement. The Communities have been mostly female led. A lot of us women who had been part of the women's movement came into Re-evaluation Counseling because it dealt with emotions and was not oppressive to women.

Then the women's movement "plateaued"⁵ (something that happens in all liberation movements). There was something we were not able to figure out. In RC we saw women's liberation work become peripheral and marginalized in the Communities. Each woman thought it was her fault. At the same time, in the wide world the right wing⁶ launched a major campaign against the women's movement. It affected us in Co-Counseling without our realizing it.

continued . . .

⁵ "Plateaued" means lost momentum, stopped making progress.

⁶ Right wing means politically reactionary forces.

¹ Diane Balser is the International Liberation Reference Person for Women, and was the leader of the workshop.

² Took off means expanded and flourished.



BEINN MHÒR ON MULL, IONA, SCOTLAND • JULIA CAMERON

LIBERATION

continued . . .

WOMEN ACTIVISTS USUALLY AREN'T KILLED

In other wide-world liberation movements you see the men being killed. Something dramatic happens. Such things haven't generally happened to women. When Andrea Dworkin, a Jewish woman, stood up boldly against the pornography industry, she was portrayed as an ugly woman, her body was ridiculed by both women and men, and her family was attacked. She died comparatively young. This is what they do to you if you're a female leader. You're written about in a magazine and your nose is made fun of, but they don't often assassinate you.

(Have a mini-session, and think about any time you [or another woman] were criticized, made fun of, or trivialized because you spoke up for yourself, and if in your mind you thought, "It wasn't that⁷ bad.")

⁷ In this context, that means very.

When women went after⁸ individual rights, like the right to have an abortion, even though they were attacked there was a way in which their liberation work was tolerated. It was when women went after structural changes in society that they finally got clobbered.⁹ Radical feminists had confused policies, but one thing they were clear about was that the whole system had to change and that male domination had to end. Every constituency was speaking up. Feminism was attacked for being a "white women's movement," and white women did tend to dominate, but black women were speaking up; Asian women were speaking up; working-class women, Lesbians, Native women, Jewish women, Catholics—all were speaking up. It was a tremendously diverse movement. (However,

⁸ Went after means pursued.

⁹ Clobbered means overwhelmingly defeated.

when these women tried to speak up *as females* in their own constituencies, it became hard. Each group of women had a tremendous struggle when they tried to take on¹⁰ the sexism of their own people.)

WOMEN'S MOVEMENT STALLED IN RC

When the wide-world battle against sexism went under¹¹ and the women's movement plateaued, it was much harder to do women's work in RC. Where RC had once been a powerful source of change for women, in many Areas and Regions women struggled to even get a women's support group going. Many women who had been involved in RC leadership were having families. Women leaders were not putting women's liberation forward or making it central.

¹⁰ In this context, take on means confront, deal with.

¹¹ Went under means was defeated.

Available soon:

The 2009 Guidelines for the Re-evaluation Counseling Communities

Revised and updated to

- * address new conditions in society,
- * address new developments in RC theory, practice, and organization,
- * clarify content that was confusing or incomplete.

Also rewritten and re-organized

- * with easier-to-read language
- * a clearer design.



WOMEN'S STRUGGLES ARE TRIVIALIZED

One big weapon used against us in our fight against sexism, which makes sexism so hard to work on, is the trivialization of our battles. If I am giving a talk and mention that I grew up among many Holocaust survivors, people might come up to me afterward and say, "I liked your talk, but why did you have to mention that?" but, even though they are uncomfortable, they would not deny that Jewish oppression exists. However, when I say to people that Michelle Obama¹² is being degraded every day by journalists who seem more interested in what she wears than in who she is, I get responses like, "But she's married to this great man!" He is a good guy, and this isn't about him. This is about seeing a woman mistreated in front of our eyes. It's as if no one cares. It's as if speaking up about it is wrong.

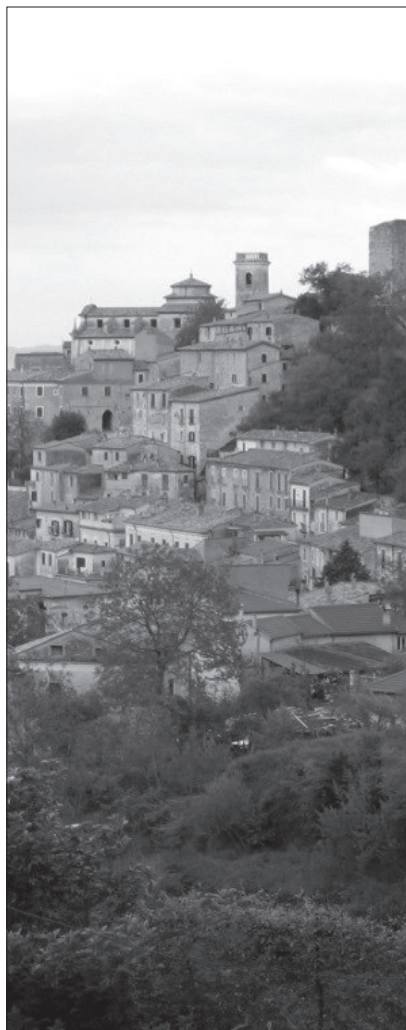
Every personal place where we struggle as a woman is made fun of, degraded, and trivialized.

For many years women have been campaigning for the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA), which states that women will have equal rights under the constitution of the United States. Lately I've heard women say that women need to drop the campaign for the ERA because health care is the major issue at the moment.

If we can't stand up and fight for ourselves and say that *we, as females, count*, then we cannot advance the battle to end sexism.

(Have a mini-session on this. Choose an issue that you feel ob-

¹² Michelle Obama is married to Barack Obama, the President of the United States.



SAN DONATO VAL COMINO, ITALY • JULIE ANNE FORGIONE

essed with, that is on your mind when you go to sleep at night, but that you feel is the most trivial issue in the world. Perhaps you haven't been able to tell anybody about it. I want you to work on it as if there is no issue that is more important.)

THE "SMALL" ISSUES ARE BIG ISSUES

We are preoccupied with what seem to be small issues, but they are actually big issues. For example, our hair. It is interesting to me that most women are preoccupied with their hair and their appearance. As a

Jew, I learned that pretty girls didn't get killed as often in the concentration camps, so I was preoccupied with wanting to be a pretty girl. I experimented with permanents¹³; I burnt my hair; I tried all sorts of things. What was I to do as a Jewish female in this country in the 1950s? Jews were struggling to assimilate, and that took a particular form for Jewish females, having to do with our hair and our body image. My mother was an observant Jew, a short, large-breasted woman who looked like my relatives in Europe, and she said to me, "Don't ever look like me. Look like your father's side of the family; be thinner and more flat-chested."

At Hebrew school we learned the story of Queen Esther, which is about the Jews' relationship to imperialism and colonialism. In the story, Ahasuerus, the (non-Jewish) leader of the colonized Jews in Persia, has an outspoken wife, Vashti. He bans and isolates her for refusing to dance naked. Then he gathers the most beautiful women in the kingdom so that he can choose a new queen. Mordechi promotes his cousin Esther, asking her not to say that she is Jewish. She wins the contest but keeps it secret that she is a Jew. She becomes queen, and later, when a decree goes out from Haman to kill all the Jewish people, she reveals that she is a Jew and pleads with Ahasuerus to save her people. The message from this story for Jewish females is "keep your mouth shut." If you look beautiful and you can pass,¹⁴ no one will know you're a Jew and you can save your people.

continued . . .

¹³ A permanent is a hair treatment that results in long-lasting curls.

¹⁴ In this context, pass means appear to be from the dominant culture.

LIBERATION

continued . . .

My generation was brought up with¹⁵ that message. It caused me some of the worst hurts of my life. The issue was, "Do I pass, or do I not pass? Do I fight to assimilate and not be identified with the oppressed peoples of the world, or do I fight for my people? Do I accommodate to what I have been taught to think of as pretty, or do I fight for my own sense of who I am?" As a Jewish female, I've had to do a tremendous amount of discharging about this "personal" issue.

¹⁵ Brought up with means raised with.

BEING FEMALE WHILE HAVING ANOTHER STRUGGLE

We need to prioritize our femaleness in the context of the other groups we are part of. Being female, when coupled with another struggle, is a tricky¹⁶ thing. The other struggle generally comes first. The women's issues come after, or last. If I go to a Jewish workshop, it seems fine to be working on being Jewish. But we also need to look at how hard it is for Jewish women to work on being female at these workshops.

¹⁶ Tricky means complicated and difficult.



SØREN HOLM

• IMPORTANT NOTE •

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I've noticed that if you're Jewish, if you're black, if you're Latina, you have nations behind you. The Jewish people fought hard for a nation (Israel). There has been what I would consider a "black nation" in the United States, and black people have been able to fight against racism as a black *nation*, not just as an ethnic minority group. Latinos/as come from nations and have national battles. I think the women's movement gets into difficulty in part because we do not and cannot have a *female nation*.

When a group has a national battle, that battle generally comes first. There is also a fear that if you look at the divisions within your nation, you will undermine the national battle. As women, we need clear policy and the safety to say, "Sexism counts¹⁷ here. If we don't fight sexism, we're not going to win the national battle." We need to figure out how to make our voices heard as females within the other oppressed groups we are part of.

I was fascinated by how much sexism Hilary Clinton had to contend with when she campaigned to be president of the United States. I was shocked that it was okay for someone in John McCain's¹⁸ campaign to call a woman who was running for president of the United States a "bitch" and have nobody say a word of protest. In general, there is a huge fuss when someone uses a derogatory term for another group; political careers can be lost. It's unbelievable that women can be called "bitches" and that no one says there is anything wrong with that, that we trivialize it, that we say it's not important.

¹⁷ Counts means matters, is important.

¹⁸ John McCain was the Republican party candidate in the 2009 U.S. presidential election.

Again, I think one reason we don't protest is because we don't have a "nation." We are not connected enough. The *Wonder Woman* comics¹⁹ are sexist in one way, but their basic notion is an important one—that a group of women growing up without men can develop huge powers and strength. In reality, women do not live separately from men. What will it take²⁰ for us to get the power we need to fight the battles we need to fight?

We go into our individual Co-Counseling sessions and try to figure out how to be powerful enough to stick up for ourselves.²¹ I'm a sixty-six-year-old woman and have worked on doing this for thirty

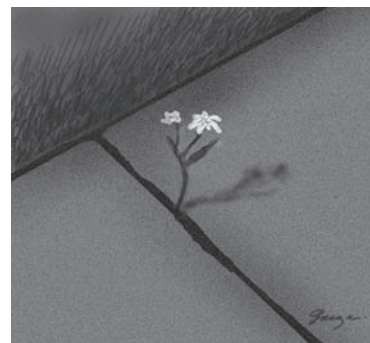
years. I've been part of the women's movement, and I *still* can't budge²² certain places where I feel defeated. Then I blame myself. That's why I organize all of you—to get enough contradiction²³ to be able to go back and fight those early battles.

I'd like you to work on sexism in your support groups. There are many ways you can work on it. You can just say the word "sexism" over and over again, whether you feel it is important or not—just say it and discharge and look at what stands in the way of making it important. Or you can focus on an issue that you know is important to you personally but that everybody has told you is silly.

BE DISCIPLINED

I want you to be disciplined. If we're going to have an "army"—and we need to have an army—we have to be disciplined for the big battles. One of the disciplines is being effective as client and as counselor.

*With appreciation to
Barbara Harwood,
Joy Kroeger-Mappes,
Ann Mackie, and
Mary Susan Yankovich,
for their help in
transcribing this talk*



BILL GARZA

¹⁹ The Wonder Woman comics portray a powerful woman.

²⁰ What will it take means what will be required.

²¹ Stick up for ourselves means resist our being oppressed.

²² Budge means move, change.

²³ Contradiction to distress

Delay Decision Until Definitive Re-evaluation

There's an old saying around RC that one shouldn't act when halfway through discharging and re-evaluating. To get partway through and then assume that a new insight is valid enough for decisive action is often to make a mistake. We have to remind married couples, for example, that they need to commit themselves to work for an extended period of time before they take some action to break up or prolong their marriage. To delay decision until one comes to a definitive point in one's discharge and re-evaluation is almost always a good idea.

Harvey Jackins
From a letter written in 1974



LK



NEIST POINT LIGHTHOUSE, ISLE OF SKYE,
SCOTLAND • TAMMY DAY

WHY MEN AT THE WORKSHOP?

*Diane Balser,¹ at the Contemporary Women's Issues Workshop,
October 2009*

There are a hundred and thirty women and fifteen men at this workshop. We're trying to create a space where women are the dominant group.

All the men are experienced male leaders who have done work on ending sexism. They are here for us to "train" them—not explicitly, but by our providing them with an opportunity to think about what they want to do to improve their own lives and to end sexism.

Our current struggle is with how society has trivialized the battle against sexism, so that even we women, who are the victims of sexism, can't remember how it affects us. If it's hard for *us* to see sexism, it's also hard for the men.

The men are sitting in the back of the room, not as a punishment but because we want to make sure we do not get distracted by their presence. Even with three hundred women, one man can take up a lot of space. Here the men will be low key.² We do not want their presence to rob us of our minds, so we have agreed on some rules:

- The men will sit in the back.
- We women will not have Co-Counseling sessions with them unless Chuck³ and I agree.
- The men will have sessions with each other.
- In classes, they will have mini-sessions with each other and we will have mini-sessions with each other.
- There will be no mixed-gender support groups.
- Contemporary women's issues groups will meet two times on Saturday. The men will come to some of them the first time, but not the second time.

These are good men who are here to work on how sexism has affected them. One of the great hurts from sexism is that we have lost each other. We need each other, as groups and as individuals. Doing the work to end sexism is about finding our brothers and sisters. Our job is to find and value each other as women, but there is no way we can do this unless we also find our brothers. And men cannot fight sexism unless they have each other.

We appreciate the men who have come. Thank you.

¹ Diane Balser is the International Liberation Reference Person for Women, and was the leader of this workshop.

² Low key means understated, not very visible.

³ Chuck Esser, the leader of the men at the workshop

Male Domination

From a talk by Diane Balsler¹ at the Contemporary Women's Issues Workshop, near Baltimore, Maryland, USA, October 2009

I want to talk about male domination. Just to have it out in the open² is a contradiction to women's distresses. Sexism and male domination may be much the same, but the feel is different. When you say "male domination," you get a more global sense. (Sexism, while still about institutions, can feel more personal, as if it is about men's individual attitudes, even though the meaning is broader than that.) Male domination also includes men dominating other men. Most men have been dominated by some other group of men—and that is what sets all men up to dominate women.

Men have dominated this planet since the beginning of class societies. There have been few if any societies in which women have dominated. I will talk more later about the myths of Jewish female domination and black female domination and what happens in oppressed groups when it appears that women are the dominant group. Similar myths exist in the ruling class whenever there is a strong ruling-class woman. In many places and cultures women have been seen as a dominant group that has destroyed men's lives. As a Jewish woman, I'm certainly familiar with the myth. It has been used in part to build up Jewish men and restore patriarchy within the Jewish world. The idea has been not to be like women of the older generation—not to be like me.

Male domination is the subjugation of women. Mick Jagger's³ song *Under My Thumb* became an impor-

tant part of the popular culture that makes male domination clear, visible, and "in-your-face." We could and should organize against this kind of "popular" culture. It would not be hard. We need to discharge on popular culture and not pretend that we in Co-Counseling have become so pure that we're not affected by it. I also want people to understand that Mick Jagger is white, not black—in reference to what has happened recently with black male music. Male domination did not start in the black community, nor did the popularization of the "let's get⁴ the woman" theme.

In all parts of the world, since slavery existed as an economic form, women have been subjugated by men. It has looked different in different classes. It started out with the owning class. I have seen some interesting movies about European owning-class women—like Marie Antoinette⁵ and Anne Boleyn,⁶ both of whom got their heads cut off. Anne Boleyn was beheaded because she did not have a boy child, because her husband was sexually compulsive, and because she wanted political power. Had she stepped down she would have saved her life, but she refused to step down. She wanted the power, and she got her head chopped off. So if any of you think that owning-class women have had it easy, go back to your history books.

It may appear that male political leaders get killed and women

leaders don't, but actually when any woman steps out of line in this context, she risks her life. Joan of Arc got burned to death because she became a commander. Once you step out of line, once you go out on the forefront and do it by yourself (which is actually the biggest issue), you are extremely vulnerable as a woman.

WOMEN'S POTENTIAL POWER

People have wondered if capitalist oppressive societies could exist without male domination. I can imagine a female-dominated society that is driven by the profit motive. It's always a possibility, until you eliminate classism, but it doesn't look like a big possibility to me. Capitalism and male domination are so thoroughly wedded at this point that it's hard to imagine a transformation in the male-female power dynamic without there also being a major blow to the oppressive society, if not its total transformation. This is why I think women are potentially one of the most revolutionary forces in the world.

I believe that the "second wave" of feminism, in the 1970s and 1980s, got squashed because it was clear what women organizing could do, and in a relatively brief period of time. I got involved with the women's movement in 1970. I was one of the beginning active feminist leaders. I helped put on one of the first women's conferences and played a role in the first big socialist feminist organization in Boston (USA). Fifteen years later,

continued . . .

¹ Diane Balsler is the International Liberation Reference Person for Women.

² Out in the open means visible.

³ Mick Jagger is the lead singer in the famous English rock band The Rolling Stones.

⁴ In this context, get means attack.

⁵ Marie Antoinette was an Archduchess of Austria, and the Queen of France and Navarre from 1774 to 1793.

⁶ Anne Boleyn was the Queen of England from 1533 to 1536, the second wife of King Henry VIII, and the mother of Queen Elizabeth I.

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continued . . .

in 1985, Wanjiku Kironyo,⁷ Barbara Love,⁸ and I met at the third international world women's conference in Nairobi, Kenya. The majority of the women there were not only from outside the United States, they were mostly black African women. We were sitting in a large auditorium, singing songs about equality, justice, and peace, and I remember just crying. It was amazing to me that fifteen years earlier I had been in a small apartment in Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA, talking with women about men and sex, and now here I was in Africa with thousands of women from all over the world who had grasped the idea of women's liberation.

There's tremendous potential for women when we're united. It's conceivable that without male domination class societies could continue to exist, but I think it's highly unlikely. If we could successfully challenge male domination, then we could transform society.

THE MECHANISM OF THE DISTRESS RECORDING

The key issue is that ruling-class men dominate the planet. The oppressive society sets them up,⁹ but they run the corporations. Male political leaders and the oppressed nations are their tools.

Male domination becomes incorporated into oppressed groups. The mechanism of the distress recording is that if you do not discharge and stand up against your own oppression, you are pulled to "escape" the feelings by taking on¹⁰

⁷ Wanjiku Kironyo is the RC Apprentice Regional Reference Person for Kenya and surrounds.

⁸ Barbara Love is the RC International Liberation Reference Person for People of African Heritage.

⁹ Sets them up means puts them in this position with little actual choice on their part; predisposes them.

¹⁰ In this context, taking on means adopting.

oppressor patterns. For instance, if white women do not discharge and stand up against sexism, they will tend to escape into the "comfort" of the few benefits they are given at the expense of women targeted by racism.

There's no group of people in which this mechanism does not operate. And of course the exploitive society uses it as the basis for its organization. The mechanism is installed by oppression, and then it is organized and manipulated by the oppression. For example, the working-class man became a "wage slave" in the factory. Then he became the boss of the woman at home, because he was paid money for his wife and children who had no money of their own. The woman did all the labor at home, working hard "twenty-four-seven"¹¹ raising children, cooking, and cleaning. That was the deal that was cut.¹² Everybody was asked to cut a deal.

¹¹ "Twenty-four-seven" means twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week.

¹² In this context, cut means agreed to.



LISA BEDINGER

MEN AND WOMEN FROM OPPRESSED GROUPS

Men of the oppressed groups end up acting out oppressive patterns at the women within their groups. Often these men are visible in a particular way and get heavily targeted by the oppressive society. One of the most targeted groups is Native men. (You destroy an entire nation in this country [USA] and expect the survivors not to be damaged?) I was honored to lead a Native women's workshop, and I worked with those brilliant Native women on being loyal to their men. Many of their men were in jail. Many had committed acts of sexual abuse or violence within and outside of the reservation. If the women stand up against them, their men go to jail. So the women are lost. Do they stand up? Do they fight for themselves? What do they do? Arab men are also heavily targeted, having been portrayed by the right wing¹³ of this country as the enemy and the destroyers of Western civilization.

I'd like to get a few owning-class white women up here to talk about the sexism of owning-class men. It's not visible. We don't see what goes on¹⁴ in their homes. We see what goes on in the black community, because it's in the news all the time.

We had a wonderful Jewish women's workshop, and it did not dawn on me¹⁵ until the last day to discharge about Jewish men. We had a whole conference in Israel, and the word sexism was never mentioned. This gives you a picture of the level of fear and terror in any oppressed population when they try to look at a major division within their group. It is my opinion that unless we look at this division between male and female, our people can't be free.

¹³ Right wing means reactionary forces.

¹⁴ Goes on means happens.

¹⁵ Dawn on me means occur to me.

YOUNG WHITE WOMEN

Young people's culture here in the United States is very sexist. The sexual objectification of young women is totally out of control. There used to be a period of time, when you were eleven, twelve, thirteen years old, when you could ride a bike, have your girlfriends, be freer to be yourself. Today sex is everywhere in the population. The objectification of young women's bodies is the norm.¹⁶ My eighteen-year-old students are shocked by what's happening to their younger sisters who are eleven or twelve years old—for example, what they're wearing.

I get a picture of what's going on by listening to my students talk about their lives and reading what they write in their journals. A third of them have been date raped—men put drugs into their drinks. There is story after story. Then I remembered that I drank (alcohol) as a young woman. I was scared of sex. I had grown up before the sexual revolution and was supposed to be a virgin until I got married. But after I left college, the message I got was that I was supposed to sleep with every guy I went out with, on the first date. My mother had been an Orthodox Jew. Can you imagine? Because I had no one to talk to, no one to discharge with, I drank—so I could not feel scared and so I could (barely) say no. Those were hard years. But now the expectation of sex is blatant and usual. It wasn't "normalized" when I was growing up.

If you travel throughout the world, you see the models of beauty. In Tokyo, Japan, for instance, all the top models are white women, and the plastic surgery industry,

which is big in Japan, is based on the idea that it is good to look like young white women.

All of us are supposed to look like young white women. I am supposed to look like a young white woman. Botox¹⁷ is a common phenomenon. You see movie stars whose faces are destroyed and distorted. Meg Ryan¹⁸ was lovely when she was a young woman. Today her face is distorted. Cosmetic surgery is being undertaken by white women in epidemic proportions. We're talking about twenty-two-year-olds, twenty-three-year-olds. They get set up.

Everything we're talking about is part of the male domination of the planet via a class society. The mechanism of an oppressed group being turned into oppressors is one of the big ways that women targeted by racism and white women are divided.

The small percentage of white women who were the wives of slave owners certainly colluded with the vicious system of slavery, but they also became targeted as the symbol of the racism in the South,¹⁹ while the men were more invisible. White women were used to target black men, who were blamed for raping white women and sent to jail or hung.

CARETAKING A PEOPLE

Most women are thoroughly trained in caretaking. However, Jewish women and black women have been trained to take care of a *people*, not just an individual man. It's a lot of work to try to take care of a people, especially when that

people is going down.²⁰ That's a big unpaid job. And then you are told that you are the oppressors of your men, that you have destroyed your sons' or your husbands' lives. You are referred to as "dominant," "pushy," and "bossy." You are damned,²¹ because you think that your job is to protect and take care, and you do whatever you need to do to do that.

Black women, Jewish women, and women from some other oppressed groups, because of this particular kind of caretaking role and because of the damage done to the men of their groups, are often portrayed as dominating and unattractive according to the standards of the dominant culture. However, black women and often Jewish women are oppressed by gender, race, anti-Jewish oppression, and often classism. They are the victims, not the oppressors. Their victimization looks different than that of women in the oppressor groups (white, Gentile, owning class, and so on).

The men of all groups, oppressed and oppressor, carry sexist recordings. The men of oppressed groups have been manipulated into rehearsing patterns of male domination. Furthermore, mainstream U.S. society has become fascinated with the patterns of men targeted by racism, targeting them in a racist way for their sexism or denying their sexism and accepting it as part of a culture.

*With appreciation to
Barbara Harwood, Joy
Kroeger-Mappes, Ann
Mackie, and Mary Susan
Yankovich for their help
in transcribing this talk*

¹⁶ The norm means what is considered normal.

¹⁷ Botox is a substance that is injected into the skin to lessen wrinkles.

¹⁸ Meg Ryan is a U.S. film actress.

¹⁹ The South means the southeastern part of the United States.

²⁰ In this context, going down means being destroyed.

²¹ Damned means you cannot win.



Appreciating the Contemporary Women's Issues Workshop



Susan Seibel, Oxford, Massachusetts, USA

This workshop seemed to be the only place in the world where women were in the same space with men, and women were the first priority. We women took up huge amounts of space. That was a tremendous contradiction to every other place I am in the world. That alone was worth the workshop.

It was important to me that men looked to each other for support. It sometimes seems that men try to feel good about themselves by “saving” women (as their counselors). This seems to me another way that women are used so that men feel good about themselves. It was a relief that this was not happening at the workshop.

Diane¹ counseled two men and asked them where they had witnessed or learned male domination. For me that was a key paradigm shift. Instead of the men focusing on where their mothers had dominated them and where they were mad at women as a result, they focused on the times they had observed or been part of male domination. I had never seen men work that way before. I think it was an important new avenue for working on sexism.

What sexism was like for me was being “squished.” It was like if you held your thumb and first finger together, the only space I had was between them—just no room to move, think, feel. This was why having so much space created for me to be predominant at the workshop was such a wonderful contradiction.²



Marion Ouphouet, Seattle, Washington, USA

I am now much less worried that working on sexism and my history with black men will be harmful to the men. And I can see that not working on these things puts me at a disadvantage in terms of having men closer, loving them bigger, and having my mind clearer, sharper, and more visible. I keep in mind Diane's encouragement to push ourselves to work where it is hard.

¹ Diane Balsler, the RC International Liberation Reference Person for Women, and the leader of the workshop

² Contradiction to distress

Gwen Brown, Wilmington, Delaware, USA

I am so proud of Diane Balsler, and all of us who have followed her lead, and all women everywhere. It really is “great to be female”! Great—not trivial!

Diane gave us an excellent historical perspective on male domination and its relationship to all the other oppressions—particularly classism, racism, and anti-Jewish oppression. I understand, in a new way, how sexism and male dominance hold these oppressions in place, how eliminating sexism is central to eliminating these other oppressions, and how we have to incorporate work on sexism into all the anti-oppression work we do.

Diane made me consider, in a new way, the issue of respect with regard to sexism. She talked about the trivialization of women's issues and of the stands we take against sexism, and how that makes it difficult for us, and others, to remember who we are and to continue to speak up and stand together to fight for what is right. Recognizing how we and our issues have been trivialized was incredibly empowering to me, and seemed to be to every woman there.

On Saturday night a number of women, and men, from many different countries shared what they had done in the wide world to eliminate sexism and male dominance. Each of their efforts was so impressive and, when taken together, made clear that the RC women's movement, led so well over the years by Diane and all the other women's leaders, had produced a huge number of wide-world leaders who had stood up to make a difference in the lives and consciousness of many women and men.

I participated in the contemporary women's issues group on the beautification industry. Everyone there worked hard on this insidious way that sexism keeps us from putting our best minds forward. It was clear that, in spite of our efforts to do otherwise, we women have been made to put way too much of our good minds into how we, and others, look. Our minds have been distracted by concerns about what we should wear, what others are wearing, how the rock and movie stars look, what is in style this year, what is “cool,”³ what shape every little and big part of our body takes. All of our lives have been diminished, and many women's lives have been completely ruined, by the effects of this oppression. It is also clear that commenting on a woman's clothes, body shape, or

³ “Cool” means in style, fashionable.

overall looks is a way to silence her voice and trivialize and defeat her political agenda. To change things we all need to take a stand every time we hear oppressive comments in this area.

On Sunday, Diane talked about what we need to do to move things forward. I particularly liked her emphasis on courage, discipline, and organization—all of which she incorporated into her leadership and the structure of the workshop.

Discharging on sexism and male dominance creates big changes in our lives. If we continue to discharge, set goals, and move, we will regain our appreciation of our significance.



Jeanette Armentano, Portland, Oregon, USA

I could cry for hours that all of us came together and worked on something that is so difficult to work on and so hard to look at—hard for good reasons!

I loved my contemporary women's issues topic group: women and politics. I discharged the feelings I have about Hillary Clinton's⁴ presidential campaign and the huge amounts of sexism that went unnoticed, or seemed less important than the racism being hurled at Barack Obama. As I said then, I cannot

⁴ Hillary Clinton was a candidate in the 2008 U.S. presidential race.

be a really effective ally in eliminating racism until I can fight for myself in the struggle to eliminate sexism.

Pat Fischer, Chapel Hill, North Carolina, USA

The workshop was for me nothing less than stunning. The whole weekend was amazing. Diane reminded us that we have to take an unequivocal stance that we and our battles are important, and that, in particular, we need to tell young women how important they are.

I was in a marvelous support group on women and the "mental health" system. I have worked on many of the core issues that got me into the "mental health" system, but I have never considered male domination to be one of them. Male domination was the context of my childhood and adolescence, of my life. And who noticed such things in my Jewish family? It was like being a fish that swims in water and can't notice the water because there is nothing else but the water. For example, we were a swiftly upwardly mobile family, and my brilliant mother was not allowed to work because it would make my father "look bad" as a provider. I was smart and got good grades, but I was often warned not to show it because then I would never have a boyfriend. And that's just the beginning.

Thank you, Diane, for your brilliant analysis of women's situation, for your insistence that we understand it, and for your unflagging affection for us as we struggle against sexism. I am thrilled to be in your gang.



JESS LIBORIO

PRICE CHANGE FOR PRESENT TIME SUBSCRIPTIONS

Due to large increases in the cost of mailing *Present Time*, especially to addresses outside the United States, we are reluctantly increasing the price of some subscriptions to *Present Time*. The increases will take effect January 2010. The price for subscriptions within the United States will remain the same. The price for subscriptions outside the United States will be as follows:

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Rational Island Publishers

Key Issues for Women

Answers to the question: What contemporary issues for women do you see as key?

- Girls having access to the resources necessary to fight to end sexism (for example, money, literacy, voting rights, political education, leadership development opportunities, time and space to organize other girls). Backing¹ girls to fight sexism. Women and girls as partners in the elimination of sexism.

- *Poverty, economic empowerment.*

- For white women, getting close to women of the non-dominant culture; and for women of the non-dominant culture, getting close to white women. For poor women and rich women, getting close to each other. I think we need to know each other to understand what the key issues are for all our different groups and how we can work on those issues *with each other.*

- Overpopulation is a key planetary issue and one in which we women are centrally placed. I talk with my daughters and their friends about the choice to have children.

- *I think there is still a sense in the United States that sexism is not as bad in this country as in others. I hear this a lot from both my women and my men friends. Thus, key to me is keeping the issue of sexism front and center in the United States, including that issues such as poverty, violence against women, and equal pay for equal work are still huge. For the planet as a whole, a key issue is learning about each other, connecting the dots of sexism around the world, and knowing that our struggles are not separate.*

- For the planet, I see the key issues as unchanged from centuries ago. Women and children make up the vast majority of the world's poorest people. That is the top issue—the lack of material resources for basic health care, housing, nutrition, and so on. The exploitation of women's labour is closely related to this. Then there is the violence enacted against women. Everything else seems to come after these things.

- In my country, middle-class women need to back poor and working-class women to show their thinking as females and to take action where they need to. Middle-class women need to not just take action in their own lives against sexism (which cannot succeed anyhow, without different women coming together).

- Worldwide, women carry enormous loads of work—paid labor, parenting, taking care of aging parents, housework, and so on. This is done at the cost of our health. It is difficult to figure out how to prioritize this work, and it is difficult to get others (co-workers, men, children) to share in it.

¹ Backing means supporting.

- *In RC I am working with several of the men who are leading. I am asking them to help me make eliminating sexism the highest priority in our lives. It is such a key issue.*

- Here in the United States, I think a key issue is becoming clearer on just what sexism is and shifting how it's discussed as a trite occurrence. Worldwide, I think the key issue is economic independence.

- *In the United States, key issues seem to me to be the viciousness of the sexism coupled with the denial that it exists; the ways that capitalism goes for² exploitation and calls it freedom (for example, the sexualization of girls and women); the beautification industry; issues rooted in racism and classism and poverty; the violence aimed at us; the internalized oppression that we put on our children, especially our girls; lack of resource; lies told to us about ourselves, including that our struggles are personal and due to personal failings.*

- I have noticed a lot of Chinese women of my generation either look "cute" (and assimilated) or "butch"³ (and "alternative"⁴). The racism seems to force us into these (among other) categories. In the back of the *Village Voice*, in New York City, are pages and pages of ads for Asian women massage parlors, escort services, lounges, and other legal kinds of prostitution. This is these women's line of work.

- In my country, England, the class system is so strong that I think the key issues for women depend on their class. I am a white Gentile owning-class woman, and the issues for women like me seem rooted in early isolation. As young ones, we rarely got to be completely connected and loved for who we were, so we are a bit "lost." I think the trick⁵ is to get each other back and reconnect with our passion. In the wider world, I think the key issue is leadership. We need to have the solidarity with each other (and the understanding of sexism) that will enable us to back powerful women leaders, including ourselves.

² Goes for means pursues.

³ Butch means masculine.

⁴ Alternative means not of the mainstream culture.

⁵ In this context, trick means answer.



STEVE THOMPSON

Struggling with Sexism

Answers to: "What aspect of sexism are you struggling with the most?"

In Kenya, Africa

In Kenya, women are expected to conform to traditions and not appear as competitive or as if they are attempting to climb higher on any ladder, be it social or economic. I am discharging on the effect that oppression has had on me and on how I can best empower the women around me, using RC, to take charge of their lives and not hold back.*

In this society and culture, poor women end up in slums where they struggle to survive. Some are forced into prostitution, when their marriages do not work. The men find "comfort" in alcohol, and most turn abusive. The women are expected to remain in their marriages. They are not welcome back at their maternal home, since dowry was paid to their parents and the men therefore "own" them.

In the education system, the family is expected to empower the male child first as opposed to the female child, because the girl will be taken away in marriage and therefore not be a good investment for the family. In some cultures, the parents start receiving dowry as soon as the girl is born. By the time she is approaching teenage years, she is given off to her suitor, without having a say in the matter. Sometimes a twelve-year-old girl will be married to a fifty-year-old spouse.

More often than not, when a woman reports a sex crime or any type of sexual harassment or sexism, she is questioned disrespectfully, with questions such as, "What were you wearing?" and blamed for it. Women shy away from reporting these incidents.

Currently young girls are in imminent danger. There is a myth that having unprotected sexual intercourse with a virgin will cure a man of AIDS. This has led to the raping of girls as young as two years old.

Wanjiku Kironyo
Nairobi, Kenya

Look to Bigger Horizons

Having given a lot of my life to activism, mopping up the debris of the war here, I wonder what my life would have been like had the attrition of violence, mostly led by men, not happened in my life. Women were left to keep families together, keep the fabric of community together, while men, for the most part, did the fighting. Our lives as women were postponed as we reared children, protected the family and community, and so on.

I am getting my life back—signing up to train as a professional photographer, finally, at age sixty-two! I am supporting my daughters from afar against the sexism and parents' oppression that come their way, supporting them to have big lives. Many Irish Catholic grandparents around here are pulled to settle,* to repeat parenting with their grandchildren when there is no apparent need. In some instances it seems like they rush to help as a substitute for undertaking the bigger challenge of finding their own dreams again.

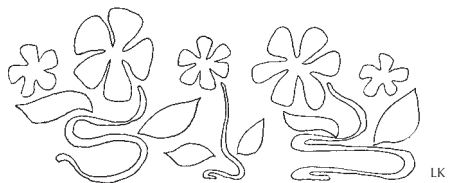
Key for women here is challenging the notion that we will go on giving a big part of our lives to child rearing and caring without considering it a choice; that we will continue serving as office girls, tea makers, minute takers, "kind" neighbours, and babysitters, and helping the men with their projects. Many of these roles have a benign content, but, especially post war, we need to challenge ourselves and men to move on. Being kind and helpful was the best we could do in a violent situation, but our "ambulance mode" response, to even mini-family crises, has to stop.

As Catholic women, worldwide, we have been overdosed with "helpfulness." We must look to bigger horizons—with all that we know about the importance of building deeper connections among people, facing discouragement and terror, and getting our vision out there. No more rushing to help out!

Sheila Fairon
Portrush, County Antrim, Northern Ireland

continued . . .

* Hold back means restrain themselves.



* In this context, settle means not expect much.

continued . . .

An African American Perspective

Personally, I struggle most with partnership and mating, as I move toward the end of my reproductive years as a large African American woman. While all women are oppressed by the institutions of motherhood and patriarchal marriage, my population of females is oppressed by being "unmarriageable" and having few opportunities to be married. This was set in motion by marriage being illegal under slavery, by ongoing public policy designed to sabotage black families, and by all of the residual internalized racism. It is compounded by the intersection of racism, sexism, and fat oppression.

As client, I try to take in the love of my Co-Counselor to contradict deep feelings of being hated and unlovable. When I can take it in, my crying shifts in tone from defeated to alive (in that unbearable, painful way!). If I can find the spot where I

can tell* that I am not the problem, all I can do is cry and face the deep irrationality of oppression.

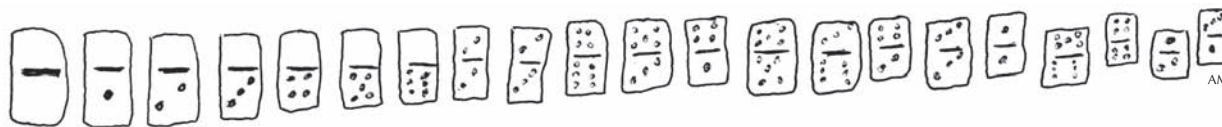
I teach poor black girls in my neighborhood in the U.S. capital, Washington, D.C. Over fifty percent of the fourth-grade girls in my city can barely read. Almost all of the three-year-olds I teach are already "behind" in early childhood vocabulary and pre-reading inventories. A lot of this is because no one sees them as worthy enough to have regular conversations with that would build these skills. When I do home visits for my girls, when brothers are present, I watch the boys dominate the family's attention. And whether boys are present or not, I watch girls get ignored and/or commanded to sit down, "pick up that toy," and so on.

* In this context, tell means see, notice.

While volumes have been written about the "crisis" in black male education, almost nothing is written about black girls and education. The corporatization of education, the standardized testing, and the oppressive environment in school are one layer of irrationality that surrounds this whole issue. The invisibility of what is occurring with black urban girls reflects the deep historical pattern of neglect of this population.

This is a relatively new phenomenon. It is not true historically that being a poor black female in the U.S. meant you did not have access to basic education. Nineteenth-century U.S. black feminists saw the education of girls as a key issue facing women.

Nikki Stewart
Washington, D.C., USA



From a Chicana and Native Woman

I'm Chicana and Native and trying to teach English in an alternative high school that is ninety-five percent Chicano/a and Native and in which the students have extremely poor reading and writing skills. The young women are the caretakers of their younger brothers and sisters. The young men are pulled by alcohol (and other addictive substances) and are fighting. It doesn't look like anyone gets much of an education. Would you rather be a caretaker or pulled by addictions? Neither is much of an option.

Most of the older women I know are retired from government jobs (after thirty to fifty years of work), with pensions. They don't have husbands, either because their husbands are dead or because they didn't marry in the first place, so mostly they don't any longer have overwhelming in-house caretaking duties. The younger women have small children, and no-paying or low-paying jobs, and are the main caretakers of their children. The young men are like my students: they struggle with addictions, keeping jobs, staying alive.

The key issues for my group of women (Mexican Americans, Chicanas, Natives) seem to be that we are poor, that we are mostly not noticed as women (seen as workers and caregivers, not women), and that our men are dying of alcoholism, drugs, and shootings. The women are trying to save the men from these internalized genocide patterns. The one resource the men seem to have is the women, but that resource is overworked and tired and heartbroken.

Sparky Griego
Santa Fe, New Mexico, USA

A Jewish Ex-Psychiatric Inmate

As a Jewish woman, the hardest thing for me has always been identifying as female, feeling feminine enough, feeling attractive (though I have discharged a lot on that and don't have as much distress in the area as I used to).

In thinking about this conference, what surfaced for me is a more hidden and less mentioned struggle: being a female ex-psychiatric inmate.

When I was twenty-one years old (in 1967), I was a "patient" for ten months on a women's ward in a "mental hospital." At the time I thought that what was "wrong" with me, and therefore why I was hospitalized, was that I wasn't beautiful or feminine enough and that I had failed as a woman. Had I not been a Jewish woman and had my Jewish female internalized oppression, I doubt I would have ended up in a "mental hospital." While on the ward, I witnessed a lot of the sexism that happens to women, which was labeled "mental illness."

A young girl of sixteen was raped by her brother-in-law, became terrified, and was given shock treatment. A woman who was being beaten by her husband and was "depressed" was committed to the hospital by her husband. A woman who had just had a baby had "post-partum depression," probably because of how sexism was making her the sole caretaker of her child. A young woman was

"depressed" because she was overweight. There were many other stories. I watched women on the ward come back from electroshock treatment and became even more terrified than I already was. At the time I was unaware that much of what I was experiencing was sexism. It all seemed like "this is the way it is" and that it was somehow our fault as women for not being okay enough.

As women we are told that we can't think. When, in addition, we are labeled by the "mental health" system, this "certifies" that we can't think and that there is something wrong with our minds. Then, to make things worse, our ability to use our minds is taken away (temporarily) with forced drugs and electroshock.

One of the key struggles of us women ex-inmates is to see ourselves as women, as like other women, as part of a group of women, not on the periphery, and to think and talk about our issues as women. People see us as having failed in the traditional roles of women by our having been locked up in "mental institutions," and we internalize that. Also, many of us lost several years of our lives while we were institutionalized and/or on psychiatric drugs, which made us actually miss the chance to decide to get married and have children.

Janet Foner

New Cumberland, Pennsylvania, USA

continued . . .

Stay in a Restimulative Situation?

The question whether one should tough out¹ a restimulative situation or retreat from it has to be answered each time in the light of that particular situation. One does not get rid of deep distresses without contradicting them, and generally what we call restimulation is being forced to feel the distress instead of being numb with it. On the other hand, there are situations that are so restimulative that one can't discharge. Then one needs to back off² and get enough slack.



XABI ODRIOZOLA

Harvey Jackins

From a letter written in 1974

¹ Tough out means persist in trying to handle.

² Back off means retreat, leave the situation.

PAT FISCHER

continued . . .



SOUTH AFRICA • ROSYLN CASSIDY

Fighting Sexism and Ageism

Seeing myself as significant and deserving to be on the planet has always been a major struggle, but particularly since I retired over a year ago. When I was born, my mother was disappointed that I was a girl and not a boy. I think the struggle of simply claiming our place in the world is basic. To cherish every little one born a girl, as a girl, would dramatically change our world. (That's true, too, of every little one born a boy.)

Ageism combined with sexism magnifies my feeling of insignificance. I'm a white, heterosexual, German- and Swedish-heritage, raised-Protestant woman. I grew up on a U.S. family farm in the 1940s and 1950s. I began working when I began walking. Working hard all my life was the way to show I was worthwhile, and retirement has brought up overwhelming feelings of worthlessness. In addition, I chose not to have children, knowing I would not be able to avoid passing on the brutality I had received as a child.

I'm sixty-seven, and the sense that there is no place for me is particularly strong. Increasingly I find myself going all out* to help and stay in close touch with friends and family members, so they will value me. The old feeling is that I will be left to die.

A large proportion of us women in the United States are now entering our sixties. Most likely we will live longer and longer. How will we live? What choices will we make? How do we deal with ageism, and work to move us all forward? How do we take care of ourselves, our minds, and our bodies? How do we assure our re-emergence? I am dealing with these issues by discharging hopelessness and reclaiming my mind.

Key planetary issues are poverty, which disproportionately hurts women in countless ways, and the deterioration of the environment. Women are seen as tied to the earth, and the denigration of both women and the environment means we need to work on these issues together, not separately. Also connected are sexual slavery and human trafficking.

Joy Kroeger-Mappes
Frostburg, Maryland, USA

A South Asian Woman

I have recently been spending a lot of time figuring out how to have relationships with men, mainly in terms of dating but also figuring out whom I want to be friends with, what I want to communicate when I think a man has not acted with integrity in our relationship (sexism), and under what conditions I want to stop having a relationship (of any kind) with a man.

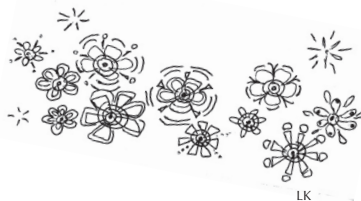
After a friend and Co-Counselor asked me who, of the two men I was dating, did I have the most fun and was I the most myself with, I realized I had met one man whom I was not trying to "figure out" and manage but whom I truly enjoyed. That had not happened for over a decade.

The pressure to assimilate is strong for upwardly mobile South Asians in the United States. There are extremely few South Asian (Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Nepali, Sri Lankan) enclaves in the United States (and probably none that are middle class, like me), so I generally live and work in places that have few to no South Asians.

I tend to struggle in my workplaces with wanting to disappear as a South Asian female, even though my workplaces are predominantly female. I have difficulty sharing my thinking, and remembering that I can take a trajectory of thinking that is different from other people's. Part of having difficulty showing my thinking in "mainstream" work spaces here in Washington, D.C. (USA), is that they tend to be African American and I feel that any mention of something South Asian would be irrelevant to the work that needs to be accomplished in these spaces (such as dealing with the extreme devaluing of the education of black and Latino/a children, as evidenced by decreasing school budgets, punitive policies for schools with students who have low test scores, and so on).

There is another Indian teacher I work closely with at my school and a Gujarati (western Indian) girl straight from Gujarat, and I find myself thinking of more words in Gujarati and Hindi (the two South Asian languages I am familiar with), taking more of a lead, singing from a place of joy, and being a little more at peace with the kind of work I'm doing in my classroom.

Sonal Sheth
Washington D.C., USA



LK

* Going all out means doing everything I can.

From Some of the Men

Who Attended the Contemporary Women's Issues Workshop, October 2009

Thank you for the crash course¹ in women's history and the history of male dominance and sexism. Like all other histories of the oppressed, what we see and read is written by the oppressor. Just knowing the truth breaks through a veil of illusion we all live under and helps in the fight against discouragement and isolation.

The tone Diane² set of this being a serious battle and of our dismantling all obstacles step by step contradicted the trivializing of sexism and male dominance. I began to realize how women's lives, thinking, and battles are trivialized. This will change how I think about my counseling of both men and women. I left the workshop feeling we are going to win.

Diane's challenge to think and write about what we have done to end sexism and male dominance stirred up feelings of insignificance and self-criticism for a number of us men ("I have done nothing"). Some of these feelings may be true, but they also create a barrier. Going back to RC learning theory, it is only by noticing what we have done and appreciating ourselves, that we learn quickly and move to larger perspectives and actions.

In preparing for the workshop in my Co-Counseling sessions, I got the largest glimpse I have ever had of how my liberation is tied to following women's leadership. How can I really fight for myself with my frozen needs³ unchallenged? One of my counselors in a session before the workshop challenged me, saying, "Your frozen needs

and the urgency you carry don't leave any space for me to care about you outside of pattern, or feel generous. They keep me taking care of you and your feelings." During the workshop Diane challenged the women to focus on each other, on how sexism had diminished their lives. I got a larger picture of how difficult that is when we men are present. For the first time I understood my sisters who became Lesbian separatists. Before, all I could do was feel deserted and like something was wrong with my being male that could never be fixed. Diane's picture of how men dominate in close relationships by taking up most of the "air time"⁴ helped me work on how desperate and urgent I become when any women gets through to me that she cares about me. I stop thinking about her and her re-emergence, in the false frozen hope that she will really be there. I start acting on the feeling of urgency that I need to say everything and do everything now.

Diane saying that we would only be fourteen or fifteen men in a sea of a hundred and thirty women, but that just our presence would feel to the women like we were a horde, helped me remember to communicate to the other men our role of being learners, and dissolving into the background. Seeing that we take up that much space in women's minds and make it that much more difficult for them to have their minds has given me many hours of discharge. I got an appreciation of what all women have to face to stay with their minds and lead, and not take care of us or put their attention on us.

Throughout the workshop some of Patty Wipfler's⁵ counseling phases kept going through my mind: "Never better or worse than, but together with." This

contradicts for me all the self-blame and superiority that can come up between us as men when we try to be allies. It also contradicts all the feelings of not being able to trust men or women in the present.

Diane's request that we men come clean⁶ and look directly at where we can't live with ourselves⁷ as men, where we have ignored the women we were with and proceeded to have sex out of our frozen needs without their real consent or their really being there, was key in focusing our discharge directly on our collusion with and acting out of sexism. I think two thirds of the men were able to have big sessions, and maybe their first sessions, on this. It seemed like the young men could work openly more easily than some of us older men, who have more layers of defensive denial providing us with a hollow semblance of feeling good about ourselves. I will remember to do this work "all in" (the poker term for risking everything without hesitation) in all our men's gatherings.

Sexism and young people's oppression are two of the most difficult oppressions to face openly because people are often living in close love relationships with people in the oppressor role. If we end male dominance, it would change everything for women and men and allow us to have the real relationships we dreamed of and expected as children.

Feelings of powerlessness in relationships are rooted in the systematically imposed assumption that sexism and male dominance are the normal way things should be. That women have to lead their relationships with men (particularly in the areas of sex and

continued . . .

¹ Crash course is a course that is quickly taught and succinct.

² Diane Balsler, the International Liberation Reference Person for Women and the leader of the workshop

³ A frozen need is a term used in RC for a hurt that results when a rational need is not met in childhood. The hurt compels a person to keep trying to fill the need in the present, but the frozen need cannot be filled; it can only be discharged.

⁴ "Air time," in this context, means space and attention.

⁵ Patty Wipfler is the International Liberation Reference Person for Parents.

⁶ Come clean means be honest.

⁷ Can't live with ourselves means can't tolerate ourselves.

LIBERATION

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living together) came through loud and clear.

The oppressive society is threatened only when the institutions that create profits for the few are threatened. It can tolerate and assimilate individual struggles for liberation but will kill when the institutions (the sex industry, the beautification industry, male dominance in the workplace and in politics) are challenged. These are the institutions of male dominance that we have to challenge, and challenging them is the cutting edge of our counseling work.

As men, we tend to feel like we personally need to make things right and protect women rather than to stay and listen until women know their own minds, and then join them in the struggle as they define it. I can only take so many people into my family in a paternalistic way and try to protect them. I probably reached my limit a long time ago. The struggle now is to build a movement.

Chuck Esser
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA

The trivialization of women was perhaps for me the most profound theme of the conference. I admit that I haven't done enough work on unearthing my attitudes, postures, and ultimately my behavior in this area. I could recognize the unconscious thoughtlessness in myself and other men in our difficulties listening to women about certain topics. Though I am generally respectful toward all people, the subtle ways in which I am able to dismiss or not really hear some things hit home for me.⁸ I wonder how much this has impeded any woman in my life from really showing herself to me.

⁸ Hit home for me means became clear to me.

Diane emphasized how sexism has usually been made the lesser issue in the lives of women who experience multiple oppressions. This was important to me as well. I left the conference with a renewed sense of urgency about working on the intersections of multiple oppressions, as well as on some clearly undischarged feelings of hopelessness.

Diane's love for people showed throughout. Her delight, pride, joy, power, love of being a woman, and love for women of all identities were inspiring. I appreciate the ways in which she put herself as a Jewish woman so clearly in the mix. The feminist Shabbat⁹ was wonderful. It was a great model of how we get to have our selves and our cultures and need not abandon one for the other.

Rudy Nickens
St. Louis, Missouri, USA

I appreciate and admire Diane for her bold leadership, for holding up to both men and women the possibility of facing and discharging the devastating effects of growing up in a male-dominated society. I loved how she integrated history, personal stories, and liberation theory into her talks. The demonstrations were courageous, thoughtful, and informative.

It was good hearing her intertwine her female and Jewish identities in her talks—not dismiss the effects of anti-Jewish oppression, not compare the two oppressions, but put them both out there clearly and boldly. I think her being open about her struggle within Jewry will help other women in their struggles within their identity groups.

⁹ Shabbat is the Jewish Sabbath. It has become a tradition at RC workshops to celebrate Shabbat on Friday evening—as a way to contradict the isolation that is part of anti-Jewish oppression.

I liked her pointing out that the elimination of sexism is crucial to the revolution.

I valued her description of the interaction of male domination and class society. I loved her saying that women are potentially the most revolutionary force in society and her stressing the importance of every ethnic group facing and discharging how class oppression perpetrates sexism and male domination in their group.

I thought her putting young adult women at the center of the workshop was brilliant.

I was struck¹⁰ right from the beginning by how the term “male domination” had a different impact on me than the word “sexism.” I think it communicates more effectively the challenges women and men face in this area, and I intend to use it more frequently both in RC and my wide-world work.

I now have a better understanding of how my mother's domination of our family was caused in large part by the sexism she endured. I now understand better my failure to recognize sexism and to stand up against it as a young person, in contrast to the battles I took on¹¹ in my family with regard to race and class. The failure was a result of the pervasiveness of sexism and my lack of connection to any contradiction to the oppression of women.

I understand better the distinction between the struggle against individual acts of sexism and the struggle for the structural changes that are necessary.

Julian Weissglass
Santa Barbara, California, USA

¹⁰ In this context, struck means startled and impressed.

¹¹ In this context, took on means engaged in.

An RC Song

Seeing Katie Kauffman's song lyrics in the recent *Present Time*¹ reminded me that at the East Coast North America Pre-World Conference I also wrote new lyrics to an old song. The tune is *Lonesome Valley*, an old spiritual. Woody Guthrie wrote new words to it in the 1930s and 1940s, to encourage people to join unions, and I've incorporated one of his verses (the last one, below).

The idea for the lyrics came from Tim Jackins' four themes at the conference: we are not alone; discouragement is always old; we don't need to feel bad about ourselves; and we can go back in sessions and "rescue" our young selves.

Chorus

We get to walk this lovely planet
We don't have to walk it by ourselves
Everyone here can walk it with us
We don't have to walk it by ourselves

Tim Jackins is our Reference Person
And a counselor, brave and true
He says we can save our young selves
It'll feel like hell,² but we can make a breakthrough³

Chorus

In the course of re-emergence
We may feel angry, we may feel sad
We may feel bored, we may feel lonely
But about ourselves we're not allowed to feel bad

Chorus

We can take a new direction
Against distress we can be bold
There may be times when we feel hopeless
But we know discouragement is always old

Chorus

Though the road be rough and rocky
And the hills be steep and high
We can sing as we go marching
And we'll win that one big union by and by

Chorus

John Braxton
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA

¹ See pages 9 and 28 of the October 2009 *Present Time*.

² Feel like hell means feel really bad.

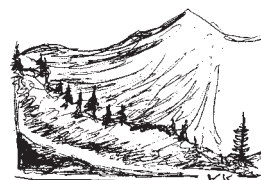
³ A breakthrough is a sudden, decisive advance.

The New International Liberation Reference Person for Young Adults

At the World Conference of the Re-evaluation Counseling Communities in August 2009, Anna van Heeswijk became the new International Liberation Reference Person for Young Adults. Anna lives in London, England; has been part of the RC Community for many years; and has taught classes, led workshops, and played an important role in spreading RC. People wishing to contact her can find her contact information in the back pages of every issue of *Present Time*, on the page that lists all the International Liberation Reference Persons (ILRPs).

Ellie Brown has been the International Liberation Reference Person for Young Adults for the past four years and has led the work well, helping young adults in RC Communities across the world discharge the distresses they are targeted with by our societies. Ellie has effectively led RC for many years in other areas as well, playing especially large roles in family work and as an Area Reference Person. She retains a particular interest in being a resource to those RCers who began RC in their pre-teen years. With my encouragement, she will continue to lead in RC in this and other ways, including leading workshops for many different RC Communities, as she has before.

Tim Jackins



KATIE KAUFFMAN



PORTUGAL • JESS LIBORIO

החלמה מפגיעות מלחמת העולם השנייה – התבוננות בזהויות סיכון

להיות מסוגלים להקשיב לאחרים, זה סימן שהחלמה שלנו עצמנו מתקדמת היטב.

בהקשר של החלמה ממלחמת העולם השנייה אנחנו (היהודים) בראש ובראשונה יהודים, אבל חשוב להתבונן גם באופן שבו המלחמה השפיעה על הזהויות האחרות שלנו: מין, גיל, זהות מינית, זהות פוליטית, גזע, מצב גופני וכו'.

אנשים שאינם יהודים עלולים להרגיש ששואת היהודים היא דומיננטית כל כך בעבודה זו, שדממה שאין מקום לפגיעה ולהחלמה שלהם עצמם. "קודם אני" הופך ל"קודם אתם/הם", וההקלטה "אפשר לחשוב מה כבר קרה" מופנית כלפי פנים ומאטה את הפרקן וההחלמה.

עבודה על זהויות המיעוט שלנו בקבוצה היא אתגר עבורנו, גם כנועצים וגם כיועצים. אנחנו עלולים להרגיש שבגלל הזהות המסוימת שלנו אנחנו לא חלק מהקבוצה; אנחנו עלולים להרגיש שאנחנו לא רוצים אנשים מסוימים בקבוצה. חשוב לזכור שזו לא המציאות, ולהחזיק את הכיוון "זו קבוצה טובה, וזו הקבוצה שלי". להראות את עצמנו בלי להתקיף או להאשים כאשר אנחנו נועצים, ולא להאמין להקלטות שאנחנו מותקפים כאשר אנחנו מקשיבים. כולנו בטוחים כאן ועכשיו ואנחנו מתקדמים בהחלמה האישית שלנו, ביחסים שלנו זה עם זה ובדרכנו להיות בעלי ברית לאנשים רבים. ברוח זו חילקנו זמן בקבוצה, וכל אחד הביא לפני הקבוצה את אחת מ"זהויות הסיכון" שלו.

ההחלטה לעבוד בכיוון הזה היא בעצם החלטה להיות בעלת ברית לכל הקבוצות. שמתי לב כמה פחדתי מכך שהייתי בטוחה שאני עומדת לטעות בגדול עם כ-10-15, ובאותו זמן הייתי בטוחה שאנחנו נקבוצה מוכנים לעשות את הצעד הזה. הזמן שחלקנו נגע לליבי והוקרתי אותו מאוד. בפעם הבאה אולי נעשה את אותו הדבר לגבי זהויות המדכא שאנחנו מעדיפים שלא להראות.

תמי שמיר
שפיים, ישראל
מתוך רשימת הדיון האלקטרונית
לחברים בקהילת היעוץ ההדדי

ג.ב. הפרדה של אנשים על פי הזהויות שלהם גם היא פגיעה של מלחמה. המסרים שאנחנו לא כמו האחרים (או שהם לא כמונו) ושאינו לנו קבוצה, מחלישים אותנו ועושים אותנו פגיעים יותר לדיכוי. כאשר אנחנו עובדים נגד הפירוד הזה, זו החלמה ממלחמה. סתירה טובה יכולה להיות אם נזכור שמלחמת העולם השנייה זימנה גם קשרים בין אנשים מקבוצות שונות – בין אם מרצון ובין אם בכפייה, ושהקשרים הללו הובילו לפעמים למעשי גבורה יוצאי דופן ולהצלת חיים.

ני שמחה לספר על מפגש נוסף שהיה לקבוצת תמיכה להחלמה מנזקי מלחמת העולם השנייה. קבוצה נפגשת כבר שנה וחצי, בתחילה כהכנה נסיעה לסדנה שג'וליאן הנחה בנושא זה בפולין ספטמבר 2008, אחר כך כדי להמשיך לפרוק 'התקרב, ועכשיו מתוך כוונה לחזור ולהשתתף סדנה של ג'וליאן במאי 2010. ביוזמתם נמיכתם של חברים בקבוצה שמזדהים הומוסקסואלים, לסביות או דו מיניים, החלטנו והגיע הזמן להתבונן יותר לעומק במגוון הזהויות ול כל אחד מאיתנו, ולהפוך בעלי ברית טובים תר אחד עבור השני.

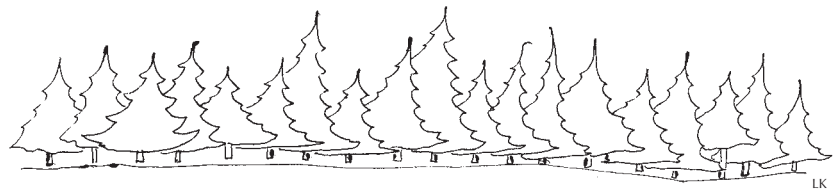
זמן מלחמת העולם השנייה, רבות מהזהויות ולנו היו כרוכות בסיכון ממשי. להיות יהודי היה סיכון. להיות מאושפז במערכת "בריאות הנפש" היה מסוכן. להיות חולה במחלה קשה היה מסוכן. להיות הומוסקסואל היה מסוכן. להיות פעיל פוליטי היה מסוכן. כל מגבלה פיזית או חושית היוותה ורם סיכון. כך גם דעות פוליטיות מסוימות. ילדים ויו בסיכון גבוה, וכך גם זקנים. הרבה פעמים חיים שלנו היו תלויים בזה שנסתיר את הזהות ולנו, ולעיתים קרובות זה לא היה אפשרי. פעמים חרות החיים שלנו היו תלויים בכך שנתנתק ממישהו בגלל הזהות ה"מסוכנת" שלו, גם אם הבנו אותו מאוד. כאשר המלחמה נגמרה, זהויות דשות נוספו למגוון הזהויות שהוגדרו כ"לא נוחות" ו"בלתי רצויות" (למשל להיות גרמנים).

תוצאה מכך, לרבים מאיתנו יש הקלטות מצוקה נושא של זהויות "בלתי רצויות" – ואנחנו מכוונים ת הקלטות האלה גם כלפי עצמנו וגם כלפי חרים. בכך אנחנו מפסידים גם חלק מעצמנו וגם שרים עם אנשים אחרים. אנחנו מעדיפים הראות זהויות מסוימות ולהסתיר אחרות. לעיתים רבות נעדיף להראות את זהויות הרוב שלנו, בהן נחנו מרגישים יותר בטוחים, ולא את אלה שבהן נחנו מיעוט בקבוצה. במקרים אחרים נרגיש נוחים יותר שלא להראות דווקא את זהויות מדכא, ולדבוק בזהות המדוכאת שלנו. באותו ופן אנחנו בוחרים אל מי להתקרב וממי להימנע קבוצה.

לק מתהליך ההחלמה מנזקי המלחמה הוא רחבה של המודעות שלנו והכרה באופן שבו בוצות אחרות נפגעו על ידי מלחמת העולם השנייה. כיהודים, עלינו לפרוק במידה מספקת על שואה כדי שנוכל להקשיב לקשיים שנחוו בזמן מלחמה על ידי אנשים בעלי צבע, הומוסקסואלים, סירים פוליטיים, חולי נפש וכו', מבלי להתבלבל 'הרגיש' קודם אני", או "אפשר לחשוב מה כבר רה".

לינו לפרוק מספיק כדי שנוכל להקשיב היטב, אבל א צריך לחכות שנפרוק "הכל". כשאנחנו מתחילים

ג'וליאן וויסגלאס הוא הרכז הבינלאומי (ICRP) ל עבודה בנושא שינויים בעולם הרחב



LK

English version of the preceding article:

Healing from World War II— Looking at Risky Identities

I am happy to share with you about a meeting we had of our Healing the Hurts of World War II support group. This group has been meeting during the past eighteen months—first to prepare for the workshop Julian¹ led in Poland in September 2008, then to keep discharging and getting closer to each other, and now with a view toward attending another of Julian's workshops in May 2010. With the initiative and encouragement of the people in the group who identify as Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual, we decided to take a further look at our various identities and become better allies to each other.

During World War II, having many of our identities involved a real risk. Being Jewish was dangerous. Being in the “mental health” system was dangerous. Being severely ill was dangerous. Being Gay was dangerous. Being an activist was dangerous. Every disability, physical or sensory, was a risk factor. So were certain political views. Being young was a risk; so was being old. Many times our lives depended on hiding our identities, and often that was not possible. Many times our lives depended on dissociating ourselves from certain people because of their risky identities, no matter how much we loved them. When the war was over, additional identities became uncomfortable or unwanted (for example, being German).

As a consequence, many of us carry distress recordings in the area of unwanted identities, and we act those out at ourselves and at others, which makes us lose parts of ourselves as well as connections with other people. We show some identities and hide others. Often we

show our majority identities, in which we feel safer, and not our minority ones. In other cases we feel safer not showing our oppressor identities and we stick with² our oppressed ones. In the same way, we choose to come close to some people and to avoid others.

Part of the healing process is expanding our awareness and recognizing how other groups were hurt by World War II. As Jews, we need to discharge enough on the Jewish Holocaust that restimulation doesn't come out as “me first” or “no big deal”³ when we hear about the hardships others experienced during the war, for example, people of color, Gay people, political prisoners, and “mental health” patients.

To listen well we need to discharge, but we don't need to wait until we've discharged it all. When we start to be able to listen, it is a sign of our own healing.

In the context of healing the hurts of World War II, we Jews are first and foremost Jews, but we also need to look at the ways the war affected any of our other identities: gender, age, sexual identity, political identity, race, physical condition, and so on.

People who are not Jews may feel that the Jewish Holocaust is so dominant in this work that there is no room for their own hurt or healing. “Me first” can become “you or they first,” and “no big deal” can be turned inward, slowing down the healing process.

Working on “minority identities” in a group can be challenging, as both clients and counselors. We may feel

that because of our identity we are not part of the group, or we may feel that we don't want some other people to be part of the group. It is important to remember that these feelings are not reality. We can keep in mind that “this is a good group, and it is mine”—showing ourselves without attacking or blaming when we client, and not believing old recordings of attacks when we listen. We are all safe here and now, and we are moving forward in our personal healing, in building our closeness within the group, and in training ourselves to be allies to many people. With that in mind we shared time,⁴ and each of us got to show one of our risky identities to the group.

Deciding to go in this direction is actually deciding to become an ally to all groups. I noticed that with everybody I was scared to make mistakes, but that I was also confident in our ability as a group to go in this direction. It was a tender and precious time that we shared. Next time we might do the same thing in relation to the oppressor identity we'd rather not show.

Tami Shamir
Shefayim, Israel

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

Postscript: The separation of people on the basis of identities is a hurt of war. The messages that we are not like others (or they are not like us), and that we don't have a group, make us weaker and more vulnerable to oppression. Working against this separation is healing from war. It is a good contradiction⁵ to remember that World War II also led to connections across identities, by choice or by force, and that these connections sometimes led to extraordinary heroic acts and to saving lives.

¹ Julian Weissglass, the International Commonality Reference Person for Wide World Change

² In this context, stick with means stay identified with.

³ “No big deal” means it's not important.

⁴ Shared time means took turns being listened to by the group.

⁵ Contradiction to distress

Having a Place to Stand

An interview of Hemaima Wiremu,¹ conducted by Alison Ehara-Brown²

Alison Ehara-Brown: Hemaima, what would you like us to know about your people?

Hemaima: *Ko Tainui te waka.*

Ko Tararua te pae maunga.

Ko Raukawa te moana.

Ko Ngati Raukawa ki te tonga te iwi.

Ko Otaki me Waitohu nga awa.

Ko Raukawa te marae.

Ko Ngati Pare me Ngati Huia nga hapu.

Ko Hemaima Carkeek Wiremu te ko ingoa.

I grew up amongst my mother's and father's peoples in Otaki, a small coastal town on the west side of the North Island of Aotearoa (Land of the Long White Cloud), also known as New Zealand. From my town it's a fifteen-minute drive to the foothills of the majestic Tararua Mountains. Two rivers, Otaki and Waitohu, border the town and meet the ocean, Raukawa Moana, at the shoreline. My tribal clans, Ngati Pare and Ngati Huia, live in this environment.

Our history and our family stories connect us to the rivers, mountains, and ocean. We call this our *turangawaewae* (our place to stand). As tribal people we forge ahead, establishing Indigenous relationships with the government through local councils. However, in the last thirty-four years we have created our own Indigenous *whare wananga* (educational Indigenous centre) and have been involved with various liberation struggles and strategies of activism. We take on³ land claims, the care of the environment, and the health and well-being of our people. Our center is based in the southern end of the North Island of Aotearoa, and our Indigenous voices are strengthened by the solid alliances we have formed over many years with other tribes and with *Pakeha* (white people) allies in our region.

In our RC Communities we are doing the ongoing work needed to end white racism, heal from internalised racism, discharge oppressor patterns, discharge genocide, be allies to young people, and achieve "mental health" liberation for everyone.

We say, "*Titiro whakamuri, kia anga whakamua,*" which means, "The future is behind us." This statement refers to the arrival of Europeans on our shores. Our ancestors knew that with their arrival, our world would be altered and that there was no stopping the wave of newcomers, although they did try. They knew that the future of their descendants would be precarious (like that of Indigenous people around the world). "*Titiro whakamuri, kia anga whakamua,*" means, "We can already predict the future of this pseudo-reality; we do not have to live it."

How I think about it is this: We have to decide now how we are going to determine our new future, shifting our perspective from acceptance of the future to shaping our future. We can read the signs and take correct action. We can be ready to lead change instead of responding to change. We can be determined to create a future based on our humanity, and we know about being human. I and many Maori realise this: You and I are it! That is you, RCers. I am pointing my finger at you!

DISCHARGING ON GENOCIDE

I have decided that I am not dying anytime soon. This means that I need to discharge on genocide. Marcie⁴ said that I have to go back and discharge on all those ones I have lost, on every painful sudden death of a loved one in my *iwi* (tribe) who died too young, and there have been a few. I am doing that work. We Maori talk about yesterday, today, and tomorrow. We have to look at the impact on our ancestors of colonisation, their resistance, and their overwhelming loss. The impact is relentless. In recent years genocide and the internalised recordings have played out⁵ in Maori communities as an increase in violence toward babies and young children. A parent, family member, or friend has beaten and sometimes killed a child.

The media whip up⁶ tension by condemning and blaming, saying that this is a "Maori problem." We know that these tragedies are the effects of poverty and disconnected families in crisis, which are a consequence of a flawed society. I am watching my people fight back and take these issues on.⁷ Maori leaders are

¹ Hemaima Wiremu is an RC leader in Otaki, Aotearoa (New Zealand).

² Alison Ehara-Brown is the editor of *Heritage*, the RC journal about Native liberation.

³ In this context, take on means assume responsibility for doing something about.

⁴ Marcie Rendon, the International Liberation Reference Person for Native Americans.

⁵ Played out means been acted out.

⁶ Whip up means foment.

⁷ Take these issues on means confront these issues.

not backing down.⁸ Communities are figuring out to adopt strategies of “Zero Tolerance to Violence.”

What I am about to share with you all next is a distress recording I hear amongst Maori RCers: “We struggle to create safe spaces to heal from our accumulated undischarged rage, despair, and grief. It feels like there is not enough time or attention to allow the rage and pain to drain away fully. This situation needs effective interruption, but we do not have the resources yet.” The last part of that sentence may be true, but with support we can change that. We need help discharging our discouragement.

Last week a child of three from my tribe was beaten to death by a friend of the family. One of her relatives is a woman to whom I taught RC and who comes regularly to my support group. She brought another relative of the child, who is not an RCer but who had heard about discharge. We took turns discharging our grief and working on genocide. I cannot and do not think that anyone can wait until our communities feel they have enough resources, or are in good enough shape,⁹ to listen to this material.¹⁰ We have to listen to each other now.

WE CAN DO THIS HEALING WORK

“There is always a safe place to do this work. We can discharge on genocide in any Community and, in particular, my Community. Always, an RCer is available who has the attention to counsel us well.” These words are the contradictions¹¹ I use when counselling Maori, and they are not something I am just saying or testing out. They represent my reality and theirs. We can do this work. We decide to do it. There is no choice. This challenge arrived on my doorstep, so I will take the lead. I will work on this, with whomever and whatever I have in front of me.

I encourage Maori to lead in their communities on discharging on colonization and genocide, and the “mental health” oppression that accompanies them. There is a thought that the people who commit the crimes must be “crazy.” They are not “crazy.” They are lost in distress. They are lost in an emptiness where their minds are hardened.

All allies are welcomed to give us a hand¹² with this work.

⁸ Backing down means retreating.

⁹ Shape means condition.

¹⁰ Material means distress.

¹¹ Contradictions to distress

¹² A hand means some help.

CHILDREN AND FAMILIES AT THE CENTER OF MY COMMUNITY

Children and family work¹³ are at the core of how I want to grow RC in Otaki and in Maori communities in Aotearoa. I have a large family—with nieces and nephews, grandnieces and grandnephews. The young parents are in a Friday parents-and-allies support group. I have a ready-made community with the people I love. This is rewarding and challenging, mostly rewarding.

I have a close many-year Co-Counselling relationship with an RCer in Melbourne, Victoria, Australia, who has built her Community around parents, allies, and family work. I have had support from her and her Community to do the same. She and I are strong allies and have had a lot of fun. It thrills us Otaki RCers to see our children get attention, and to see the parents get through their struggles to where they know that they are good parents.

GUARDIANS OF THIS LAND

All around Aotearoa, we Maori are actively involved in politics—in national and local government—for the betterment of our people and our land. We are the *Kaitiaki* (guardians) of this land and its resources. *Kaitiaki* can be broken down into “*ka*” (energy), “*iti*” (little), “*aki*” (urging). A translation would be this: an energy that activates in little ways, constantly urging and encouraging a way forward. We have a knowing of what matters. We remind our people that regardless of where they may have been born, their bloodlines connect them back to us, to their people, forever. They are of these mountains, these rivers, this ocean, and all stories of this land are their stories. What this means to me is this: My connection to this place and

continued . . .

¹³ 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.



DIANE SHISK

LIBERATION

continued . . .

my tribe Ngati Raukawa is constant. I lived many years outside of Aotearoa, and my understanding of who I am never wavered. No matter where I am in the world, I know who I am and I have a *turangawaewae* (a place to stand).

THINGS THAT ARE WONDERFUL: A STORY OF HOPE

Alison: What is wonderful and what is hard about being an Indigenous person in New Zealand? What does the internalised oppression look like in New Zealand?

Hemaima: This is wonderful: *Te hokinga mai a Waitohi*—reclaiming her *turangawaewae*. (The return of Waitohi to a place where she can stand.)

I'll tell you this story of my eldest daughter, Waitohi. It is also my story, and the story of my mother and a long line of grandmothers before her. My daughter has been living in Australia for the last four years. She finished university there; she is working and enjoying her life and has good friends. Three days after I arrived back from the RC World Conference in the United States, Waitohi arrived home from Australia. I had no idea she was coming home; it was a surprise.



AUSTRALIA • DIANE SHISK

My other daughter, Topeora, who lives an hour from me, was with her. My grandniece (whom I raise as my daughter) was excited to have her two “big sisters” home. After her first day home—visiting uncles, aunts, and cousins—Waitohi asked me to take her to the sea and then up to the Tararua Mountains. We had a conversation like this: “Waitohi,” I said, “do you know what you are actually asking?” “Yes,” she replied. “I just need to stand. I need to do it up there.” “All right then,” I answered, “tomorrow I will take you on your *hikoi* (journey).”

My three girls and I started the next morning at Otaki beach, where we went in the sea for our ritual cleansing to clear our pathway for our *hikoi* to the mountain. When my mother first made the journey to the Tararua, she was a baby on her mother’s back and it took a week. From the sea to the mountain, camping at various places by the river and fresh-water springs, they walked. I took my girls to these places. We can do this *hikoi* in a day now. As I drove, we talked about the stories their grandmother had told them about the *Patupairehe* (fairy people) who live in the Tararua Mountains and the *rongoa* (medicine) that is collected in the spring and what it is used for. A favourite story is of the *taniwha* (water serpent), an over-sized eel who lives up river and who barks at children when they cross the swing bridge. Sometimes he disguises himself as a log in the river. Because of this *taniwha* (water serpent), my father and his contemporaries never went eeling in Otaki River but rather in the smaller streams that come off the main river. And so it is today, with my brothers and their contemporaries. Myth and history merge.

I slowed down to drive my truck through a stream that flows across the road. The girls were delighted that it still looked so pretty. I was relieved that it was not in flood. It was a good indication that the road up would be clear of debris and landslides. Really, the belief is that if you start your journey well at the sea, with the right intention, of course your pathway is clear. It was! The waterfall was spectacular, and no *taniwha* (water serpent) barked at us. The tracks were clear, and the trees and other flora healthy. I knew I would be back to collect some *rongoa* (medicine) in the spring.

Waitohi walked on ahead to stand in her place; my other two girls and I held back.¹⁴ A cool breeze came up and blew across the mountain as Waitohi looked back down the valley. Taking in¹⁵ the clear water of Otaki River, the waterfall and healthy land, she reclaimed her

¹⁴ Held back means stayed behind.

¹⁵ Taking in means receiving into her mind.

turangawaewae (her place to stand). I did the exact same thing twenty years ago: I arrived back from Australia unannounced and needed to come here. I did not ask Waitohi what she had decided in her place to stand. I had no need to. My thoughts were these: Someday she will come back to live here. After all, reclaiming your *turangawaewae* (your place to stand) works both ways; the land reclaims you back, to stand for it. But first she has things to do in other places.

We drove back down the mountain to the sea, to finish our day where it started, just in time for sunset.

Earlier, on the mountain, I had told the girls how in the 1960s and 1970s their grandmother and her generation had allied with hunters, trampers,¹⁶ conservationists, and institutions like the Bird and Forest Association to save the land from a dam being built in the very place where we were standing. That had meant opening that place up to the wider public. It had meant, in my mother's words, "trusting that people will love this place as we do and appreciate its beauty and wildness." It became a national park.

Nevertheless, in 2000 to 2003, the Kapiti Council and Mayor wanted to pipe water from the Otaki River to other towns up the coast, so we had another fight on our hands.¹⁷ Fundraising, public meetings, and the tireless work of local people helped the Maori and Pakeha people put forward a convincing case to the Regional Council, which backed¹⁸ them in court proceedings, on behalf of the environment, and they prevailed. Last year with a new Council and Mayor, the notion of taking river water arose again. After many public discussions, the idea was dampened, but it has not gone away.

Having thought about this last piece all day, I said to my daughters, "It takes many people caring, and many minds being vigilantly alert, for us to have a place to stand. It takes many people being committed to one another, and caring deeply, for us to have a home and a family to return to. Many people—Maori people, friends and allies, RCers, strangers to you—have been supportive and lovingly human and have contributed to my well-being and, by association, to your well-being. I am here with you because of this.

"Many generations of people, some of whom are our ancestors, were able to think well and beyond themselves. They figured out ways to be human in



LISA KAUFFMAN

the world and left this legacy of humanity to us. Be elated that you have benefited from long and lasting human intelligence, connections, and relationships. Understand, what you have is a vast *whanau* (family), a network not only in this country but also out there in the world. I understand and know this. Do you know what I mean?" They nodded yes. So I said, "Well, enough said. Let's go home girls."

It is a wonder, and I have never lost my sense of wonder about people and the world.

It was great having my daughter do her *hiko*i and reclaim her *turangawaewae*. It is a simple act of belonging and is, in its simplicity, profound. The belonging is one of the many things that are wonderful about being an Indigenous person in Aotearoa.

Me hoki mai koe ki to maunga kia purea koe nga hou o Tawhirimatea. (Return to your mountain; be cleansed by the winds of *Tawhirimatea* [God of the Winds].)

THINGS THAT ARE HARD FOR MY PEOPLE

Hemaima: Here are a few recordings from society that Maori have internalized:

"Not another bloody¹⁹ land meeting to go to. That is all we Maori do—go to meetings and talk, talk, talk. Nothing ever is done." I hear this a lot, and sometimes I feel the weight of it and allow myself to feel tired and think that I will just send my apology and not go.

Another recording: "What do those Maori think they are doing down at the sea? Some kind of weird old-time Maori stuff. Look at their *Tohunga* (Medicine Man/Woman)—that one is a *Whaiora* (not well in the head). We should put them all away.²⁰ They are 'crazy.'"

continued . . .

¹⁶ A trumper is a hiker.

¹⁷ On our hands means that we had to engage in.

¹⁸ Backed means supported.

¹⁹ In this context, bloody is a word that adds negative emphasis.

²⁰ Put them all away means put them somewhere where they will be away from everyone else.

LIBERATION

continued . . .

On an everyday basis, we regurgitate with fervour the messages of the oppressive society. "Mental health" oppression comes down hard on Maori who participate in their cultural practices. I find it difficult to listen to and am restimulated by how the voice of oppression is so entrenched in Maori communities. Where it gets²¹ me is this: I become angry. This is not good. I know it is the oppressive society that is to blame, and not my people. I have to keep holding the perspective that my people are not the internalised oppression. There is numbness, and sometimes I sense that people are half alive. As the pressures to collude and assimilate to mainstream society affect us, we adopt oppressive recordings, which silence our Indigenous voice. Losing our unique way of perceiving the world and each other would be a great loss.

²¹ In this context, gets means affects.



STEVE BANBURY

RC THEORY IS SOUND: IT MAKES SENSE

Alison: How has RC made a difference in your liberation? What are ways you have used RC to help undo and heal from genocide and colonisation?

Hemaima: One of the greatest differences RC has made to my liberation is that my mind has more free attention. The clarity of thinking in RC about the workings of the oppressive society has given me a basis from which to de-colonise myself. The thinking and information in RC about oppression, and liberation from oppression, make me hopeful.

When I was in my fundamentals class, the lid that I had put on my feelings about colonisation and genocide lifted and things bubbled up. At times I wanted to get out and not feel that hurt. The reason I did not leave RC was that the theory is sound. It makes sense. I knew that, and even though it was painful to feel and discharge, I knew it was a supreme healing process. I did not give in²² to my restimulation.

My niece has been sitting next to me as I write. I asked her the same question that you asked me, Alison. She has been doing RC for a year. She said, "Since I started RC, I have become more aware of who I am and what I am all about. After I discharge, I notice I have more time for my children and family and my attention is good. I am not a shadow of myself. Because of this, I take time to pursue my art. Now I really know how to listen. I didn't realise that people don't truly listen to each other. Really, I haven't been listened to all my life until now."

HEALING OUR FAMILIES

Our families have internalised the oppressive messages. Oppression is in our homes. It numbs our minds and makes it hard to think well about ourselves. Our attention is not present. We cannot see or hear each other. If we listen to the genocide recordings, we can shorten our lives. This is where working on the intersection of colonisation and genocide and "mental health" oppression is crucial. I am using RC to discharge and undo the damage that was done to my family and me. My healing makes a difference to my well-being and that of those around me. The changes in my family are noticeable.

In the Maori world, if I want to teach RC in other *rohe* (tribal boundaries/areas) I will need my family with me. I know the question I will be asked: "*Kei whea to*

²² Give in means succumb.

whanau?" (Where is your family?) The answer is "*Kei konei!*" (Here, they are beside me!) I think it is smart of my Maori people to ask each other this question. We know that healing amongst the ones we love the most can have the biggest impact on our liberating each other.

I watch the layers of distress fall away. The difference between distress recordings and thinking is becoming clear. To me this is a good indication that I and we are healing from colonisation and genocide. It need not be only a fleeting moment before living in the oppressive society clouds things over again. My nieces and

my children hang with me.²³ I am their reminder, and they are my inspiration to keep on²⁴ with this work. It is a way forward.

Titiro whakamuri, kia anga whakamua.
(The future is behind us.)

Nga mihi kia koutou katoa. Na Hemaima
(Greetings to you all. Love, Hemaima)

Hemaima Wiremu
Ngati Raukawa Maori
Otaki, Aotearoa (New Zealand)
Reprinted from *Heritage* No. 4

²³ Hang with me means stay close to me, do not abandon me.

²⁴ Keep on means continue on.



PHNOM PENH, CAMBODIA • DAN KWONG

Now available!

***Heritage* No. 4**

A new issue of the RC journal about Native Liberation

Many Native Co-Counselors were interviewed to produce this journal.

Alison Ehara-Brown, editor of *Heritage*, writes,
"Lasting closeness and respect shine through
in the conversations in this issue of *Heritage*."

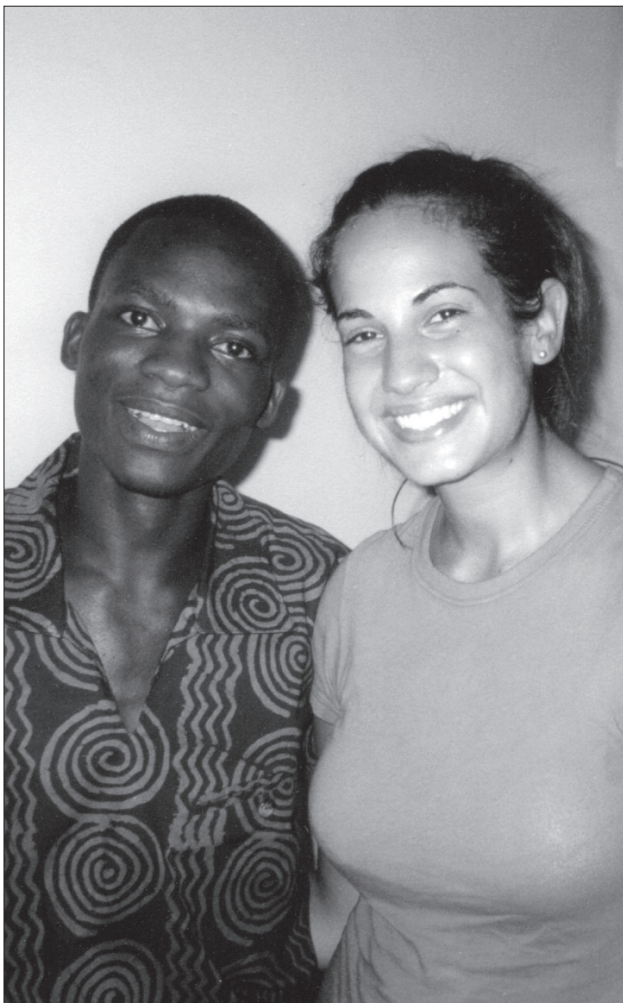
The previous issue came out in 1995.

For ordering information, see page 109.

Interrupting Violent Patterns

On your question about interrupting violent patterns, the key thing is simply to go against one's fears and interrupt them. Remember not to act fearfully, which is likely to invite the violence to be acted out toward oneself or to be increased. If one says firmly to an attacker, "No, you are not going to do that," in a tone of voice that indicates no fear of him or her, the person is pushed out of the pattern and generally can be reached.

Harvey Jackins
From a letter written in 1976



SHARON WOLF

Educational Administrators

My name is Dan Corley. I have just become the RC Information Coordinator for Educational Administrators.

I teach and am the head¹ in a third-to-eighth-grade school that I helped to start twenty-five years ago. I had taught for seven years before starting the school. The school is in the poor section of Providence, Rhode Island, USA. My children were born in that neighborhood—the fourth generation in my family to be born there.

I look forward to hearing from other educational administrators about their lives, both at work and at home. Our roles allow us to participate in important conversations within our school communities. I think that's one of the delights of being an administrator. On the other hand, our roles often put us in the position of carrying out² oppressive policies. We need to continually remind ourselves to prioritize our connections with those around us. I think that if we can keep our re-emergence and the re-emergence of our co-workers in mind, we will be able to be effective within our roles.

Please feel free to write to me about your life and your role in educational administration. If you are not an educational administrator but know of a Co-Counselor who is, please send me that person's contact information. I will introduce myself to him or her.

Dan Corley
21 Westmore Street
Providence, Rhode Island 02910, USA
Tel. +1-401-467-9709
+1-401-521-9696
e-mail: dcorley@communityprep.org

¹ The head means the overall leader.

² Carrying out means putting into practice, making happen.



. . . and then the day came when the risk to remain tight in a bud became more painful than the risk it took to blossom.

Anais Nin

Fighting Sexism, Regaining Pride

From a talk by Tim Jackins at the West Coast North America Men's Leaders' Workshop, November 2009

I want you proud to be a man. I want you proud to be a man in every aspect of it. And I want you to be a proud ally to women. I don't think there's any way for us men to be proud unless we take on¹ the battle against sexism. I don't think there's any way for us to get to be men unless women are allowed to be fully human women. The two battles are intertwined. We have been forced into the oppressor role. We have something to give up,² lots of grief to discharge about having been pushed into that role, and lots of feelings about women. These feelings are hung on³ women because women are targeted by sexism.

In any group that has been trained to be an agent of oppression, you hear over and over again that the people in the group are unhappy with the people they oppress. What a weird thing! One thing we do is blame women for not fighting effectively against sexism. We want them to do better at it, and we wait. We want them to call us on it⁴ more often (not too harshly). We wait for them to do this. We want the people who have been targeted by an oppression to lead us out of it.

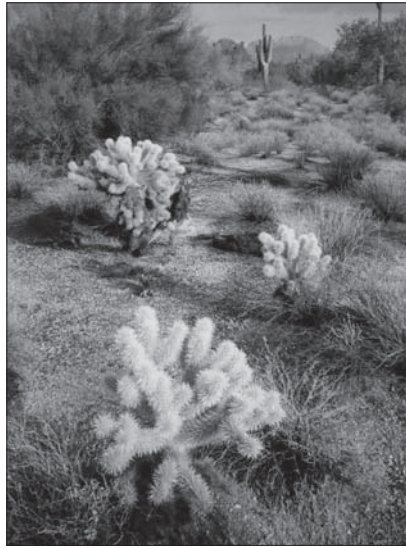
Women can push to not be quiet and to get sexism more out in the open. However, our wishing and waiting are mistaken. We act as if we can't figure it out, as if we're not involved in it enough to have information. Review your life. Start with your mother and sister, and remember how they had to handle sexism and how their lives got shrunken because of it. Recall trying to figure out how to have relationships with girls and women.

¹ In this context, take on means engage in.

² Give up means let go of.

³ Are hung on means get attached to.

⁴ Call us on it means interrupt our acting it out.



ANGELA HYLAND

Look at what you had to figure out, what you couldn't figure out, and how you just followed the cues from other people who were acting out of sexism. We're not short on⁵ information. It's just hard to look at it. We're so ashamed and defensive that it's hard.

We are the fortunate ones. We get a big chance. We get a chance to see what it means to be men. We get a

⁵ Short on means lacking in.

chance to see what it means to take on⁶ all these different challenges, to take on sexism.

We try to be allies to women. We have not been very good allies. We've been well wishers. "We wish you well. God speed."⁷ We are confused and feel bad enough that we can't consistently ask, "What has it been like this week, this day, to have sexism come at you? What did you notice? What can you stop and notice that you have trained yourself to just get through and ignore? Could you tell me what it's been like? Tell me the details. Tell me where I restimulate this in you. Tell me about those places where I see you go quiet, and tell me what has just happened when that occurs. Tell me what you want in your life. Tell me what you want in our life together." All of these things we could ask. We could open the doors.

We usually are just pleased if a woman isn't upset directly at us. We

continued . . .

⁶ In this context, take on means face and do something about.

⁷ God speed means good journey.

RC Electronic Mailing Lists

There are a number of RC electronic mailing lists for RC leaders, two of which are also open to other RCers.

(For details, see page 86.)



DIANE SHISK

LIBERATION

continued . . .

can get lost in restimulation when a woman shows how sexism has affected her. We often can't see at all how to move forward under those conditions.

This is our battle. It will greatly benefit women, but it's a battle for our own minds. We act apologetic and sheepish. We are bowed over. We are cowed by the oppression and the confusion from the distress that has come at us. It makes no sense to stick there. And there's no way out but to challenge our distresses—to decide to fight for ourselves, to decide we're worth the full fight.

You are worth a full life, and a full life is possible. You can decide to step away from all the conditioning that has you collaborating with distress that is aimed at other people—especially at women in this period.

This is our battle. We get to fight it here, with each other, amongst ourselves. We get to achieve enough clarity that we don't muffle⁸ how

hard sexism is on women, that we don't hold ourselves in a calloused form but are open to seeing how bad it is. We will have lots of sessions on this. Our feelings will become accessible. We'll learn real things. We can take our stand against sexism—independently in a way. It's our fight.

In my own struggle against some early distresses, I don't want somebody to do that struggle for me. I want somebody to watch as I do it. I want somebody aware that I am struggling to be human and fighting against these horrible things. I don't want anybody else to take care of it. It's my fight. It's my fight to be me. I want your support and assistance, I want your attention, but it's my struggle. I want to be alive fully, and I want to have the possibility of being proud to be me. I see our struggle to end sexism like that. It's ours.

We are confused by how bad we can feel. We need to give up

the frozen hope that women will make things all right for us. Many of us have frozen longings that a relationship with a woman will take care of everything and we won't feel bad anymore. Some of us have reactively given that up. It's useful to rationally decide to give it up. No woman, no collection of women, is going to make things all right in your life. Someone might be able to salve the feelings and make them not throb, which would be interesting and pleasant, but that doesn't conquer the distress. It's your battle. You have all of us behind you, you have me behind you, but it's your battle to fight.

We can do this important thing. Can you imagine seventy of us looking confident and pleased and connected with each other? Yes, it's a nice image. If we do this, if we actually get to where we feel proud of ourselves, who's going to do what to oppose us?

⁸ Muffle means obscure, hide from, soften.

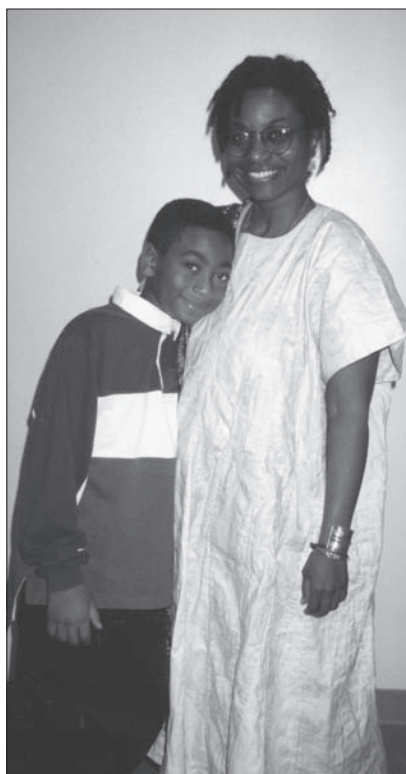
Thanks for Your Influence

Thanks for the greater depth of your permeation and influence. It's going to be a time of struggle for everybody soon, and I'm glad that some pros¹ like you are swinging their shovels² a little ahead of the rest of us.

Harvey Jackins
From a letter written in 1975

¹ In this context, pros means experts.

² In this context, swinging their shovels means doing the work.



LUKE DANIELS



Working Together to End Racism

An introduction to RC
from the perspective of
ending racism

\$2.00, plus postage and
handling

Highlights from a Working-Class Workshop

Forty-five people attended the eighth annual working-class workshop held for four English Regions.

FRIDAY EVENING

We have found that when working-class people meet up, there is only brief relief (sometimes) and then the particular distress that has disconnected each person from other working-class people kicks in (gets restimulated) and people think they don't belong, that others don't belong, and so on. It's important that each person identify and say out loud his or her "difference." One of the introduction questions was, "What is the issue that makes you feel you don't belong?"

I spoke briefly about the history of our annual working-class workshops and how they have helped us to understand working-class oppression. I talked about the restimulating news coverage of Israel and Palestine and how important it is that working-class people discharge anti-Jewish feelings. Then the Jews left to meet separately, and I sorted everyone else into three-way sessions based on their educational experience. (We have done a lot of work on how the education system has divided us up. Educational experience has proven to be an un-restimulating way to organize people into safe working groups to work on oppressor distresses.) After that we met for Shabbat.¹ Then we set up and met in support groups.

¹ Shabbat is the Jewish Sabbath. It has become a tradition at RC workshops for everyone to celebrate Shabbat on Friday evening—as a way to contradict the societal isolation of Jews.

SATURDAY MORNING

Early Saturday morning I led a white-people-ending-racism group in which I again organized people into three-way sessions based on their educational backgrounds.

In the 9:00 class I talked about the oppression of working-class people—that it is harsh, it is about lack of resources, and we are supposed to service everyone else with little regard for ourselves—and how class oppression is the reason for all the other oppressions. Our responses to class oppression can range from not questioning it to being rebellious. Both can lead to trouble—for example, to involvement in the "mental health" or prison system.

The majority of working-class people are black, Asian, or Indigenous.

Working-class people who get into RC are survivors. Discharge has allowed us to take some control of our lives.

Many of us have a survival pattern that allows us to tell ghastly stories about our lives without feeling much connection to them. We don't know that we are hurt, or the extent of it.

I said that RC could only have been started by a working-class man and that Harvey² told us many times that he wanted RC for the working class.

² Harvey Jackins

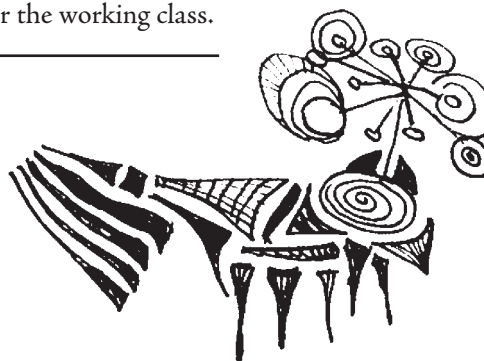
I had contacted some people before the workshop to ask them to choose a topic and be prepared to lead a group on it. Our Saturday afternoon topic groups were men taking a peek at sexism, discharging on Muslim oppression, family work for working-class parents, "mental health" oppression, and discharging a physical hurt.

SATURDAY EVENING

On Saturday evening I reviewed all the issues we had "visited" during the earlier annual working-class workshops. These included

- upward mobility (why wouldn't anyone want a better resourced life for himself or herself and his or her family?)
- the education system (a method of enforcing control and conformity)
- our intelligence
- discharging hopelessness
- discharging about speaking publicly
- becoming an expert on working-class oppression
- thinking well about ourselves
- looking after our health, and at physical hurts.

continued . . .



AITZIBER MADARIAGA

LIBERATION

continued . . .

SUNDAY MORNING

On Sunday morning I talked about our significance, and how our goal is to get our minds back and be able to present the world with a working-class perspective by means of RC. We know enough to get moving. We now need to be as efficient as possible in discharging and getting our minds back, and assisting others to do the same. We are all significant and can help set the pace.

I was pleased with the workshop.

Barbara Thompsett
Wallingford, Oxfordshire, England

The biggest thing for me at the workshop was Barbara's persistence in putting attention to the differences and difficulties among the many kinds of working-class people, rather than allowing an easy but inaccurate view of a homogenous working class to dominate.

This started in the introduction questions, during which each person was invited to talk about where he or she felt like he or she didn't belong to the working class, and carried on as Barbara made it a part of each of her classes. Attention to this bit of the oppression gave me, and I think the other people targeted by racism, much more room to be ourselves at the workshop than can sometimes be the case around white working-class RCers. Since the working class comprises the vast ma-

majority of the world's population, I think we have to assume that a vast majority of oppressive behaviour happens within the working class.

I led a people-targeted-by-racism support group twice daily. The same people came as last year, several saying that the support group was the main reason they had come to the workshop. Barbara's focus on the oppression within the working class has made this support group the best place I've had so far to move forward people-targeted-by-racism work—by building robust relationships based on having robust Co-Counselling sessions.

Karl Lam
Cambridge, Cambridgeshire, England

From the Information Coordinator for People with Chronic Illness

If you've got an illness that won't go away

E-mail, write, or phone today.

We want to know what's worked for you.

Share your thinking with us and we'll share ours too.

Chris Grayston
Information Coordinator for
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25 Thornfield Mews, Micklethwaite,
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BD16 3JH, England
Tel. +44 1274 510689
e-mail: cgthorn@tiscali.co.uk



LILLIAN ONO



TARA JONES

Hugs with Awareness and Meaning

I'm very much opposed to hugs being given without meaning. I am opposed to affection being expressed in glassy, unaware ways. I love to hug people, but it is a meaningful act on my part. It's an expression of affection to someone I know and feel like hugging.

Harvey Jackins
From a letter written in 1973

Community Building

From a talk by Tim Jackins at the Western European Pre-World Conference, 2009

The RC Communities were organized simply to get the ideas of RC out to other people and to do it in a way that some individual or individuals could take responsibility for it. We wanted to keep RC from getting confused with or mixed with other ideas. The Communities still have this as an important purpose. But it turns out that¹ the Communities have additional important reasons to exist. When you have the ideas of RC, you have a powerful tool. When you have a Co-Counselor you have an even more powerful tool. Then, as you build more people around you and have three or four Co-Counselors, it works better. When you have a weekly class to go to, it's even better. And when you have a Community with support groups and classes, it's even better than that. You can make progress in any of these situations. You can use Co-Counseling to move yourself ahead no matter how meager the resources seem. You are never helpless to make things happen. But the more resource you have around you continually, the more likely it is that you will make steady, fast, sustained progress.

Nothing creates the conditions for you to make progress more reliably than having others around you doing the same thing. The other morning when I kept you here in this room together for your Co-Counseling sessions, I did it so that you could not ignore this resource. We are used to² going off and doing things on our own, even when there is resource around. What you dare to do when you have this resource around you is different. It isn't that you can't do it, or don't do it, off and away with a single Co-Counselor, it's that it's much harder to do it consistently.

OUR COMMUNITIES ARE A CONTRADICTION TO DISTRESS

Our Communities provide the best contradiction to a whole collection of distresses, including feelings that if we dare to fight for ourselves (and we will have to, because no one else will) that ours will be a lonely struggle, that no one else will be headed in the same direction, and that no one will understand our struggle or be willing to be our ally in it. None of these things are true anymore. Although we were born into situations in which they were all too true, we have done the work to change the conditions so that they are no longer true. We often still unthinkingly have the perspective that capitalism pushes on us that we have to fight for ourselves because it doesn't matter to anyone else, but that's not true.

We are here for our benefit, and for the benefit of all humans. That is the reason we're here. We are here for each of us as a part of that, but not as a separate special interest. We are trying to figure out how to consistently function in this way, and that affects all of our relationships. It affects how we reach and don't reach for new people. It affects the growth of our Communities. We can understand a number of ideas in Co-Counseling from this perspective.

WE WANT EACH OTHER'S MINDS

What do we want? We want each other. Humans are the most important resource that exists. We want every mind. We have a project of getting RC tools to everybody. Why? Because we feel guilty? Because things are unjust? Both are true, but it's really because we want each other's minds. We want all humans to have the chance to have their own minds and other minds. In our struggle against confusion, we take limited steps, but we have a picture of this goal.

We have Communities in order to teach an accurate version of RC, but that is not the entire goal of the Communities. The goal includes trying to have people's minds with us. Re-evaluation Counseling is a large project, with a theory and techniques, but the relationships involve real people and are personal relationships. This is where we struggle now. We struggle to make our relationships close enough and personal enough that we can contradict what we grew up with. This is why I held us here yesterday together in the same room. You could hear the difference. We could have those heavy sessions because of all the people around us. What if you had this crowd back home as your Community? Why settle for less than that? How fast will we move when we get to that position?

WE WANT MORE FROM EACH OTHER

So where are we in figuring this out? And where are we in discharging the things that are in the way of our connecting well with each other? I think we're doing well, and I think we have a lot of early distress that we need to recognize and go after. I think that all of us recognize that we want more from each other. We can't yet tell³ that others also want this, we often don't know what to do about it, and we get discouraged easily, but we have managed to bring ourselves close enough together that the question keeps coming up.

continued . . .

¹ It turns out means in fact.

² In this context, used to means accustomed to.

³ In this context, tell means perceive.

continued . . .

So let me state the obvious: Everyone here wants more of you. Every single person here would love to have more of your mind accessible to him or her. Every single person would love to watch you, listen to you, and do things with you. Every single person would love to be your ally in every distress you have and would love to throw his or her entire force behind you in your battles. It is only the confusion from distress that keeps this from happening. At this point, it's the confusion that's the problem. The confusion keeps us from trying, so we don't learn anything. It's like the book we don't open: "I've had this book for years, and I still don't know anything." Some action is necessary. We have to face these difficulties in front of each other. You may have to take my word for it⁴ for a while—that you can do this. I promise it will not kill you. That is often the first worry—that one little step will be too much.

WE CAN TRY AGAIN, TOGETHER

It feels like we have to face unbearable things, and, in a sense, we do. When we were very young, we gave up⁵ when it became unbearable. We did not give up before then. Every mind goes right to the edge of where it feels like it cannot try again. We have recordings from these times that are frozen on us: "I have tried over and over, and nothing has happened. I cannot, I will not, try again." "I will make life work this way; I will stop looking in that direction because there is never a good answer." "This is the way my life will be." Such recordings are common among us. Now we can challenge them and face the "unbearable feelings," the ones we chose to never face again. The world is different now. It is objectively different. I'm not asking you to feel different. You can't, since the distresses are there, but because of the work we've done, the world is objectively different now. We can fight for that reality against all of the recordings that say, "It is still too much," "There is no point in trying," "There is no one else out there," "It's better that I go my own way."

⁴ Take my word for it means just believe me.

⁵ Gave up means became too discouraged to keep trying.



CACTUS IN ISRAEL • PAT FISCHER

It is not better that you go your own way. It was fine that you did. It got you here; we can applaud that. But you are here now, you are not back there, and this is different. This will always be different; it will never be like it was. You will never again be without people who are trying to understand. You will never again be without people remembering you. You are never going to be alone again. That is over. It is actually over, though you might not be able to tell. You can decide I'm right about this—that's one way to challenge this material.⁶ You exist in other minds, and you will always exist in other minds. You are not alone, you cannot be alone, and, to be honest about it, you haven't been alone for years.

If we face this, we can understand reality clearly enough to function together, here and now. We're trying to do it, though in some ways our efforts are still individual efforts—efforts made on the basis of the early distresses. This is not a criticism of what we had to do. It worked well enough. We are here, and we have the chance to choose again now. We can choose to go ahead and challenge the hopelessness and isolation in order to understand that we have enough allies and can face anything now.

In our Communities, what people see as attractive about us, before they see anything else, is that we appear to like each other. What if they saw how much we care about each other? What if we could provide that massive a contradiction to what happened to them? What if we do not give up on relationships because of our distresses? How well could we communicate what we want to? In the early years of RC, when talking about communicating RC, my father said that nobody would be able to hear you unless they thought that you liked them. For years I told people who were becoming RC teachers that a big part of their job was to like the people in their class until they learned to like each other—no matter what it took.⁷ People leave Co-Counseling because they run into distresses that confuse them and they haven't got a good enough connection to seek assistance.

REACHING FOR THE PEOPLE

WE CARE MOST ABOUT

Is there anyone you couldn't teach Co-Counseling to? Probably not. There are choices to be made, how much effort in which directions, but I think it's mostly our discouragement about connection that interferes with our communicating about Co-Counseling. Teaching Co-Counseling well is connected to not accepting the discouragement and feelings of defeat from past relationships. This is why there was the

⁶ Material means distress.

⁷ In this context, took means required.

goal in 2005.⁸ We wanted to face the difficulty we have had in reaching for the people we care most about. There is this collection of people with whom we have committed relationships, and we haven't known how to give them the power of RC. We feel like it would be risking the relationships to make that goal important, that we couldn't handle their restimulations, that our relationship would not survive or would be badly damaged. So if they don't immediately jump when we invite them to RC, we get uneasy and say, "Well, when you want to. I don't want to force this on you." We are, in effect, acting like it's not important enough for us to dare to face difficulties.

It is important that they get these tools. It's not as important that they become a part of the Community, though that's to their long-term benefit. Mainly they need to be able to discharge again. Their lives will be shorter and smaller if they don't, and they are the people we love most. Because of our fears, we're letting them have shorter and smaller lives. We're confused, and scared that our connection isn't strong enough. We feel scared from all the defeats in past relationships, and we allow that to limit our relationships now.

I am sure this is one place that our confusions are slowing us down. They are interfering with our individual struggles, with our connections and relationships with each other, with the solidifying of our Communities, and with our reaching out to more people with things they desperately need.

The rate of change in the world is accelerating. It would be nice if we accelerated, too. It would be fun to try to get ahead. We are coming from behind, and we have gained the crucial momentum that guarantees we will continue. However, it would be lovely, and it is my goal, to look forward to the next crisis, when things are in flux and can be changed massively, and to recognize it as an opportunity, rather than being scared and hoping it doesn't happen just yet.

LOVING OUR CO-COUNSELORS

There are many more things to say, but I want to just add two things. First, in our Co-Counseling relationships we have chosen a particular way to build connection and to love someone. The depth we can obtain in these relationships

⁸ The new goal for the RC Communities adopted by the 2005 World Conference of the Re-evaluation Counseling Communities: That the RC Community and its members put increased attention and effort into reaching a large and diverse population with the ideas and practices of RC, and into assisting them in becoming members of the RC Community.

That in order to intelligently pursue this goal, Co-Counselors have ongoing sessions on the distresses that interfere with their thoughts and actions in this area and that classes, Areas, and Regions organize gather-ins, support groups, workshops, and other events to assist Co-Counselors in this effort.

That as part of this goal, Co-Counselors target the distresses that hold them back from making a thoughtful and sustained effort to reach those with whom they already have caring and committed relationships.

is unlimited. We can love and care about anyone here as much as we do in any other relationship. In a way we get to learn how to do it here and then take it out to our other relationships. Here the effort is more clearly defined. Here we have better agreement about what we are doing and don't have to be as scared or worried, or allow the pull of distress to interfere as much.

The "blue pages"⁹ are not just about frozen longings; they're about the confusion surrounding what we do when we love someone. "I love my Co-Counselor; I'd better do something," and we fall back on¹⁰ the society's patterns about what one does if one cares about someone. You love your Co-Counselor, or you will, and that is exactly what you need to do. You need to sit there and get more and more uncomfortable as you love him or her more and more. You can face and discharge all the awkwardness and the other things you feel so that you can more and more simply love him or her and delight in his or her existence, and use that in your relationship with him or her. That's what we want to do.

STUPID TO LEAVE RC

Secondly, I don't think we will lose many of you, but we have lost people from RC. We sometimes lose very experienced people to their restimulations. They wander off. It could be you. You have some very grumpy distress material. There have been times in your life when you have held in your breath and stomped off—just to show people you were upset with them. You could do that here, too. But let me state it clearly: THAT WOULD BE STUPID. It would be very understandable, and stupid. If you ever stand against your distress anywhere, do it there. Do not lose this chance. We want you, and we need you, and you need this. No matter if you are mad at me, or everyone, you don't have a better chance if you leave. You just don't, and it would be sad to be that confused.

It would also be stupid to let someone you care about simply walk away—no matter how mad at you that person is, and no matter how scared his or her being mad makes you feel. People are vulnerable to being confused, and they shouldn't be left alone to handle it. That doesn't mean that you dedicate your life to grumpy people. It does mean that you don't forget to make efforts in their direction, and that you always leave a door open to people who don't respond quickly.

⁹ "The blue pages" refers to the policy in the Re-evaluation Counseling Communities that Co-Counselors not set up any relationship, other than Co-Counseling, with other Co-Counselors or with people whom they meet in a Co-Counseling context.

¹⁰ Fall back on means resort to.

Building RC in Sudan

I am glad I got the opportunity to know RC. Over the years I have seen the difference it has made in my dealing with the distresses that were hindering my personal growth. Seeing the strength that RC has restored in me and my family, I committed myself to reaching out to women, particularly in Sudan. A workshop led by Wanjiku Kironyo* in May 2009 saw the birth of a women's support group. It has focused on the women's goals for their lives and on dealing with the ravages of alcohol in their communities. The group now has twenty women.

This is our new initiative: introducing people to RC and getting them to go

* Wanjiku Kironyo is the Area Reference Person for Nairobi, Kenya, and the Apprentice Regional Reference Person for Kenya and Surrounds.

back to their communities and offer their community members support groups. We currently have about a hundred people who are keen on RC, four of them being teachers.

When I first got to Sudan, I had no idea where to start. The country had been nearly destroyed by years of war, and the people needed healing. Many organizations were coming to assist, but none were dealing with people's distresses from their experiences during and after the war.

One of the challenges in Sudan is the presence of many non-governmental organizations, making the cost of facilities, food, basic commodities, and transport very high. We are also faced with people coming to RC meetings

expecting allowances for attending, and we are dealing with that with sessions and group discussions on RC and finances and by using the *Guidelines* to explain the present-time reality.

Through Co-Counseling sessions, support groups, and workshops we are moving forward. Re-evaluation Counseling is helping us to appreciate ourselves and feel powerful again, and we are then able to reach out to others.

Jane Lucy Wambui Gachihi
Nairobi, Kenya



KK

Ever tried? Ever failed? No matter, try again, fail again, fail better.

Samuel Beckett

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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."

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Para ordenar, vea la página 109.

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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."

\$25 (U.S.) plus postage and handling.
To order see page 109.

RC in Tanzania

I was introduced to RC by Melphy* in the year 2000, and I have not looked back since. Re-evaluation Counseling has helped me to appreciate myself, empowered me to be a strong leader, helped me discharge about cultural restrictions, and enabled me to start RC Communities in my area.

One of the challenges we have in RC in Tanzania is language. The local language is Swahili, and therefore most classes I lead have to be in Swahili. Doing that without the written materials has been a challenge, and I am grateful for having received the translated materials.

Currently we have the following support groups: women, youth, nurses, other hospital staff, young Maasai men, judiciary professionals, community workers, and church leaders. Each Community is now starting fundamentals classes, and I am hopeful about and will continue working toward the establishment of RC in all our areas. The Communities are Arusha, Kilimanjaro, Manyara, Tanga, Iringa, and Dar es Salaam.

Joan Koisiana Kivuyo
Arusha, Tanzania

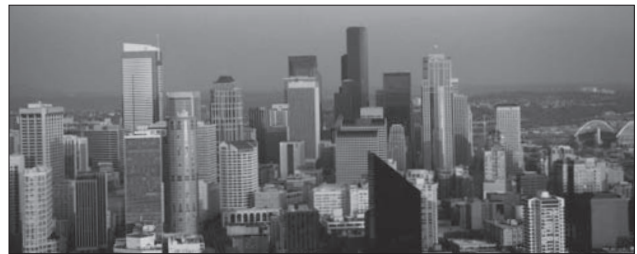
* Melphy Sakupwanya, the Regional Reference Person for Sub-Saharan Africa

“It’s Working”

You can’t believe how excited I am! After I got back from an RC workshop in Kenya, I was determined to revamp RC in my Community. The task ahead was unclear. I kept working on it and confided in a colleague. We started sharing and afterward began having Co-Counseling sessions. Five weeks later, I figured it out! We are now six in number. We have weekly classes and sessions. That was my goal.

Formerly, due to a tight work schedule, I rarely had time for RC with my colleagues. Now we have agreed to keep to the agreed-upon time. We met on May 1 at my house. One of my clients discharged. I was fulfilled! It’s inspiring and refreshing being alive to this. I’m enjoying myself, especially each time I introduce RC to a new person and anytime my clients discharge distresses. It’s good being a teacher. Indeed, it’s working.

Marshall Ifeanyi
Owerri, Imo, Nigeria



SEATTLE, WASHINGTON, USA • THERESA D'AMATO

Reaching Children and Their Parents

I’ve been in RC for the past year. I am a special-education teacher. The more Co-Counseling sessions I’ve had, the more I’ve been able to overcome the powerlessness I’ve felt due to hurts I experienced in my childhood. Now I am able to reach out to the physically and mentally challenged children I teach by listening to them with warm, loving attention. Re-evaluation Counseling opened my eyes to the fact that these special-needs children need someone’s full attention, like we all do.

Seeing the impact of RC on the children, I decided to go a step further and reach out to their parents by introducing RC to them. I had been neglecting the fact that the parents had also undergone trauma because of the stigma associated with disability. That is how my fundamentals class started.



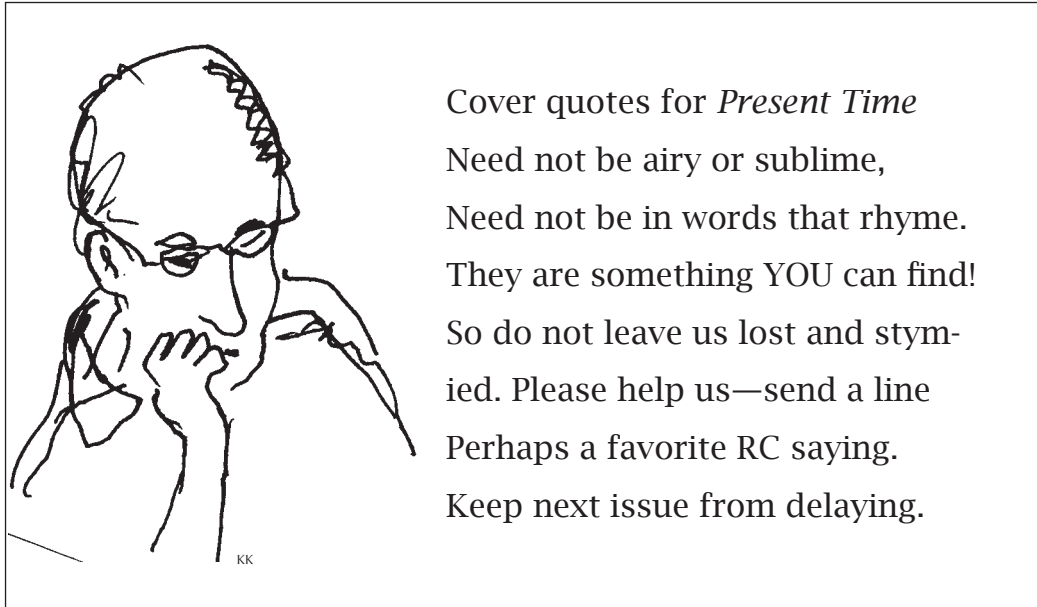
LK

I am now running a class fortnightly. As a result, the parents visit their children more often at the centre and are having special-time* sessions with them.

My main challenge has been getting my class going at the pace I want it to move. Attendance has not been consistent because of people’s busyness and responsibilities at home. We are handling that by having sessions on the importance of regular classes and sessions.

Humphrey Kasembeli
Nairobi, Kenya

* 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.



Cover quotes for *Present Time*
Need not be airy or sublime,
Need not be in words that rhyme.
They are something YOU can find!
So do not leave us lost and stym-
ied. Please help us—send a line
Perhaps a favorite RC saying.
Keep next issue from delaying.

Keeping in Contact with Young People

For several years we have been assisting young RCers to keep using RC as they move away from home—for example, to college. Stacey Leeds and Jenny Sazama are the two people overseeing this project.

We collect the names of young people who would like an RC ally to be a resource for them as they head off on their own. The ally is to stay in touch with them by phone—taking all the initiative, if necessary, for several months; listening to them; Co-Counseling with them (by phone or in person); helping them figure out how to be in contact with the local RC Community (if there is one); helping them figure out which new acquaintances might make good Co-Counselors; and more. We have a list of people who want to be allies, and we would welcome more.

Young people and allies are put in contact with each other. Sometimes they already have a relationship, and sometimes they build one afresh. More than thirty pairs have been set up. Some pairs are quickly and wonderfully useful, and some take time—but all are useful.

I would like your help with this project. We want to continue to build both the list of young people and the list of allies, and I ask your assistance in finding people to add to both lists. How about you? Or are there others in your Community whom you could talk with, so that they could consider being a part of this?

Send information to Stacey Leeds, at <leeds@snet.net> or P.O. Box 153, Eastford, Connecticut 06242, USA. If you e-mail, please put “Allies to Shifting Young People” in the subject line.

Thank you,
Tim Jackins

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 CD from 2010 is available for \$10:

- From the 2009 World Conference

The following CDs from 2009 are available as a set or separately:

- An Effective Way to Work Early
- Understanding Our Present Abilities and Challenging Past Confusions
- Deciding to Challenge the Effects of Early Distress
- Some Basics of RC Family Work

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 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

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 CD from 2004 is available for \$10:

- Perspectives on Ourselves and Our Communities



Anyone can order any of these CDs for \$10 (U.S.) each, plus shipping and handling. The entire 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, and 2009 4-CD sets are also available to anyone, for \$25 per set, while supplies last. If you are a certified RC teacher, the upcoming four CDs per 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.)

Dear RC Teacher,

We are at the end of another year of the *RC Teacher Update* CDs. You've been part of the large group of hundreds of RC teachers, new and experienced, who have been receiving these CDs, and I hope they have been helpful to you. If you wish to receive these quarterly CDs in 2010, you will need to subscribe again. I hope you will.

You can subscribe to the next 4 CDs either by sending a check for \$25 (U.S.) to Rational Island Publishers, or by paying with your credit card. To pay with a Visa or Mastercard, please go to our web site <<http://www.rationalisland.com/>> and type "2009 CD Subscription" into the "Title" field and click "Search." The web site will then take you through the steps to subscribe. If you prefer, you can also fill out the form on page 109, and mail or fax it to us. In either case, please be sure to give us your mailing address.

With love and appreciation,

Tim Jackins

Teaching RC to My Friends

Several years ago I decided to teach an RC fundamentals class for my friends.¹ I wanted to bring discharge and an understanding of distress, oppression, and internalized oppression to the people I cared most about. Re-evaluation Counseling has made my life better in countless ways, and I knew it could play that role for my friends as well.

I asked my best friend, Kate, to be my assistant. That was important. I felt like I wasn't alone. I had taught Kate RC when we were young people; I knew I could count² on her to model having sessions and discharging and to be a good counselor for me.

We decided to do an introductory night and invited both of our boyfriends and several other friends. It went well. We were surprised that everyone who came wanted to participate in a cycle of fundamentals.

That first fundamentals class met every other week for a year. Highlights included classes on appreciation and validation and on drugs, alcohol, and addiction. Several class members attended a Regional workshop last spring.

This past fall we brought in several new people and started another fundamentals cycle. Members of the previous class had all agreed they wanted to expand the group. Some, including Kate, haven't been able to

attend the second cycle because of school and work conflicts, but we still have a good group—with some more experienced and some newer people and a good mix of genders and racial, class, and religious backgrounds. All of us are young adults. My boyfriend has stepped up to play the assistant role.

CHALLENGES

There are complicated relationships among members of the group. Most of us grew up together and have known each other for many years. We have been a part of some of the best and some of the hardest things in each other's lives. We have feelings about each other's distresses and patterns. People have often fought or "gotten hooked"³ outside of class and occasionally in class. It has sometimes felt hard for us to separate the person from the distress and to think well about each other.

I sometimes feel urgent and discouraged, like we're not moving fast enough. At first people's sessions consisted only of talking. They had a hard time figuring out what to work on and how to use sessions well. I worried that the sessions weren't valuable, and it was tricky⁴ to figure out how to discharge openly in my own sessions the way I can with other Co-Counselors. Also, the class has been going on for two years now, and some of the members still haven't attended a workshop.

TRIUMPHS

Even though it's been hard for me to tell⁵ that the class has made a difference to people, they have all kept coming back, week after week. In

fact, people rarely miss a class. Even though they haven't discharged heavily in their (in-class) sessions, these sessions have been what they've liked most about the class. I've realized they may be their only chance during the week to really be listened to. I myself love listening to my friends about what's going on in their lives, and letting them listen to me.

With young-adult oppression pressuring us, it has seemed important to have a drug- and alcohol-free space where we can stretch to care about each other and have deep, meaningful relationships. It has created a sense of community and realness and given us permission to show our struggles. Coming together as a group week after week is a contradiction to the pull to couple off⁶ with one primary relationship and isolate ourselves from friends. People always seem more connected and relaxed after class. They will stay for a half hour or more after it ends to hang out⁷ and laugh together, even though it is late. I sometimes have to kick people out!⁸

I have had big sessions on how much I care about my friends, on my feelings of isolation, and on how hopeless young-adult oppression feels. The class has helped me hold on to the possibility of our having big, good lives and doing it together in connection and community. Most of my friends are not activists or even particularly progressive minded, but they are all receptive to RC theory and Co-Counseling sessions and are increasingly able to notice the ways that oppression and early hurts affect their lives. I've been reminded of how

¹ This is an example of someone taking action on the new goal set at the 2005 World Conference of the Re-evaluation Counseling Communities: that the RC Community and its members put increased attention on and effort into reaching a large and diverse population with the ideas and practices of RC, and into assisting them in becoming members of the RC Community [and] that as part of this goal, Co-Counselors target the distresses that hold them back from making a thoughtful and sustained effort to reach those with whom they already have caring and committed relationships.

² In this context, count means rely.

³ "Gotten hooked" means reacted to each other's distresses.

⁴ Tricky means complicated and difficult.

⁵ In this context, tell means notice.

⁶ Couple off means form a couple.

⁷ Hang out means spend relaxed, unstructured time.

⁸ Kick people out means require that people leave.

natural the discharge process is and how hungry people are for information about how people get hurt.

The class has helped us to think more clearly about ourselves, each other, and our various identities. It has mattered that the women have learned about sexism and internalized oppression and that the men have learned about men's oppression. It has made a difference to people to have gotten information and discharged about racism, classism, anti-Jewish oppression, and anti-Gay oppression. These oppressions affect our lives every day. I want my friends to know that all the ways that things are hard, or that they feel bad about themselves, are not their fault. I think I've done a good job of showing them that, and I know I will have many more chances to express it even more openly and deeply.

Some of my friends have started calling me for impromptu sessions outside of class, and people are discharging more in their sessions. I love being able to ask for a mini-session when we're hanging out and some feelings come up. I also feel connected to my friends who are in the class, when I see them at a social function.

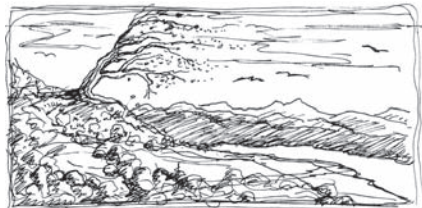
GOALS/NEXT STEPS

Everyone wants to continue with the class, including me. My goals include getting class members more connected with the young adults in our Region, helping them to have sessions outside of class, and getting them to a Regional workshop. I am also committed to teaching RC to my boyfriend's family. He and I are planning to do an introductory lecture and invite his sister and her husband, who have both expressed an interest in learning RC, and some other friends.

A longer-term goal is to do a half- or one-day workshop for everyone who's been in one of my classes. Also, Kate and her boyfriend just got engaged and some of our class members are in their wedding party. I'm considering organizing a support group so that we can think well about them and support their relationship through this next step.

Teaching this class to my friends has been for me one of the highlights of the past several years. It has contradicted powerlessness, isolation, and young-adult oppression and has given me a chance to express the love I have for the dearest people in my life. I am so looking forward to the future and to long, close relationships with all of my friends.

Jessica Whitehead
Wilmington, Delaware, USA



KATIE KAUFFMAN

**Moving Ahead from
Wherever We Have Been**

I am familiar with Buddhism, have been fairly well versed in several forms of it over my long life, and while I have great respect for it as a religion and a philosophy, it is by no means* the last bit of thinking that people need to do. What we are trying to do is to move ahead from wherever people have been before.

Harvey Jackins
From a letter written in 1993

* By no means means not in any way.

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Common Questions About RC Policies

Some questions asked in the Guidelines discussion groups at the Pre-World Conferences and answered by Diane Shisk¹

Question: Why do there have to be thirty Co-Counselors to form an Area?

Answer: We want those who are building an RC Community to have a good amount of experience in teaching RC and retaining people over time. People new to RC are often enthusiastic, and a Community can grow quickly around them. Then, after people have been discharging for a while, chronic distresses come up. These can be confusing to people, and most people need strong relationships and good counseling to help them discharge these distresses. If they don't get good sessions, they can't make and persist with a decision to stay and face the body of work they will have to do in order to be a member of the Community. People leading in the RC Community need to have gained enough experience to be able to give people a hand² with chronic material.³ Some people leave RC after many years of experience, but most people who leave do so within a few years of taking fundamentals classes because of our difficulties in helping them through this period. We can minimize the attrition by having leaders who are experienced in teaching and retaining new Co-Counselors, as evidenced by a larger number of Co-Counselors around them when the Area is formed.

A leader, who had once been effective and built a solid Community, can hit difficult times (either distress or a changed circumstance in his or her life) and be unable to function as a leader for some time. If he or she was the primary leader of the Community, and no one else is able to step in quickly and fill the leadership role, some people may drift away and the remaining people bog down in⁴ discouragement and other restimulation. When the Community starts with a large group of people, it is less likely the ongoing growth and development of the Community rest on one person.

Question: When is an Area too small to be an Area?

Answer: Once an Area has been formed (hopefully beginning with thirty to fifty Co-Counselors) and an Area Reference Person has been chosen, the Area will

not be dissolved simply because at some point there are fewer than thirty Co-Counselors in it. Building RC is a long-term process, and the International Community as a whole is still working to get a good handle on⁵ the common distresses that interfere with Community building (isolation, discouragement, relationship difficulties). Leaders may be unable to consistently function in a way that leads to Community stability or growth, and the Area may grow and shrink over time.

When a Community shrinks in size, it usually makes sense for the Community members to figure out together what the difficulties are, face and discharge on them, and work together to rebuild the Community. This may take considerable time, but facing and discharging on the difficulties will lead to permanent gains that will help ensure that the rebuilt Community doesn't struggle with the same difficulties.

In some circumstances, the Community has shrunk to such a small size that there is no one willing to play a leading role in rebuilding the Community. (Before reaching this conclusion, people should gather and have opportunities to discharge on the situation with whatever outside resource can be brought in.) Sometimes more initiative can be released by dissolving the existing Area and freeing the remaining RCers from the restimulations that have become attached to the structure of the formal Area. The individual Co-Counselors can then have the chance to start anew with their own initiatives.

At the 2009 World Conference of the RC Communities we amended the *Guidelines* to try to address this issue in a timely way: "If the growth and development of an Area has stalled, action is to be taken. The Area Reference Person and the Alternate Area Reference Person, after consultation with their Regional Reference Person, are to hold an Area membership meeting. Those attending the meeting can discharge about the struggles of the Area and discuss and choose steps to be taken to revitalize it."

Question: Why doesn't a workshop organizer get more money, considering the amount of work?

Answer: Money is not the primary reason we do anything in RC. Most of the work RC leaders (for example, Area Reference Persons, Regional Reference

¹ Diane Shisk is the Alternate International Reference Person for the Re-evaluation Counseling Communities.

² A hand means some help.

³ Material means distress.

⁴ Bog down in means become enmeshed in.

⁵ Get a good handle on means get a good understanding of.

Persons, and International Liberation Reference Persons) do to build the RC Community is unpaid, for a couple of reasons:

1) All of our funding comes from us, from RCers. We decided long ago not to be funded by outside organizations because money from them would come with requirements that would distract us from our work. Also, people who are not RCers would have some power over what we do. Thus, any money used to pay people for Community-building work comes from other RCers. For leaders or organizers to be paid more, we would either have to charge more for our activities or we would have to raise money from RCers in some other way. A large percentage of RCers are already spending what they can afford on RC activities. We don't want to set our fees so high that only middle- and owning-class people can afford to pay for RC.

2) Living as we do within capitalism, we all carry a lot of distress about money and work. Internalized oppression makes us feel as though our human value is connected to what we produce and the amount of money we are paid. In fact, much of what we do that's good and valuable is unpaid labor. If we lived in a society in which people's basic needs were met and we didn't have to work so hard to earn enough to meet our basic needs, we would likely feel fine about doing some unpaid labor. We could freely choose where to put our time. We need to discharge on the unpaid labor we do for RC so that these recordings don't confuse us about our worth or the value of RC.

3) The paid jobs in RC are those in which the activity itself generates the funds to pay the fees—in other words, classes and workshops. For organizers to be paid more, either the workshop fees would have to be increased (and we think they're high enough) or the leader would need to be paid less.

An organizer is currently paid twenty-five percent of the leader's fee, plus he or she does not pay for the workshop.

A leader's fee is paid in recognition of the time, labor, and skill needed to lead the workshop, the responsibility taken by the leader for the Community, and income the leader may have lost from regular work opportunities in order to lead the workshop. The more experienced leaders, the Reference Persons, are paid more, depending on the degree of responsibility they have taken (and the resulting experience they have gained). Leaders get paid for leading workshops if enough RCers decide the workshop will benefit them and they attend.

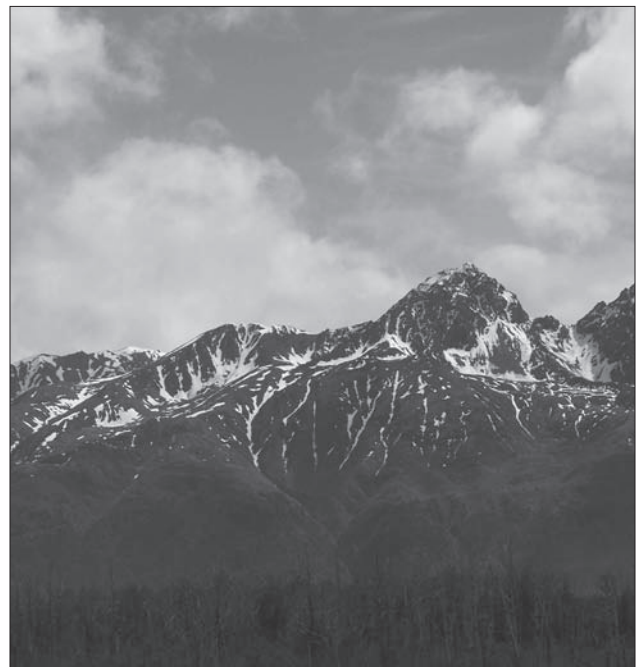
Given the above, the "split" between the organizer and the leader seems reasonable.

Question: Why doesn't the Regional Reference Person (RRP) have an Alternate and do self-estimation annually like the Area Reference Person (ARP) does?

Answer: The ARP is chosen by the local Community membership. His or her role is intimately connected with the local Community. He or she is responsible for thinking about local leadership and RC activities locally. The ARP is accountable first to the local Area, and an annual self-estimation keeps the ARP and the Area in good communication about the ARP's functioning in his or her job.

The RRP is not chosen by the local Community. The RRP is chosen by the International Reference Person (IRP) in consultation with local leadership, and the RRP's role is to represent the IRP in developing and supporting leadership across the Region. The RRP holds his or her position at the discretion of the IRP. Any "self-estimation" would happen with the IRP.

An Alternate's role is to step in if the Reference Person is unable to function. If an RRP becomes unable to function, the IRP will choose a new RRP, if someone is ready and able to play that role. If not, there will be no RRP for that Region, and the IRP himself or herself will assume the role of RRP for that Region.



ALASKA, USA • TIM JACKINS

Connection, and Care of the Environment

Soon after the care-of-the-environment workshop that Wytse Visser¹ led near Philadelphia (Pennsylvania, USA) in August, I led our Region's regular care-of-the-environment gather-in.

The underlying theme of the workshop had seemed to be *connection*, so I did several demonstrations with that theme in mind. The content of two of the demonstrations seemed similar. Both clients said how hard it was to look at what was really going on² in the world. I encouraged them to hold me close and told them that of course they couldn't look at something that hard without having someone with them. They held on tight and discharged hard.

¹ Wytse Visser is the International Commonality Reference Person for Care of the Environment.

² Going on means happening.

It made me realize that as children we all had things happening around us that were too hard to take in³ without help. Since we often didn't have help, our best survival choice was to find some way to block those things out. I'm excited about the potential for this kind of session. As we gather together enough connection to discharge on these kinds of early memories, I think we'll be more and more able to look together at what is going on today.

On another topic, we just had our annual teachers' and leaders' workshop, and I was able to introduce care of the environment in a way that was simple and sustainable. I asked the organizer to mention carpooling in his acceptance letter, to encourage people to bring handkerchiefs, and to ask if anybody was able to bring

³ Take in means allow into our minds.

compost buckets. I checked with the cook to see if she was willing to compost and if she could let participants know if some of the food was local. I brought sixteen big handkerchiefs that I had made, asked the food liaison person to remind people about the compost, took two minutes to welcome people to the Delaware River watershed, and led a meal table on care of the environment. It took hardly any time, people were appreciative, and I think it set a precedent that will be easy to replicate at other workshops. (And now we have a supply of handkerchiefs!)

Thanks to all of you who have pioneered in this work.

Pamela Haines
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA
Reprinted from the RC e-mail discussion list for leaders in the care of the environment

Patterns We Didn't Notice

What is always a surprise is how many patterns we didn't notice until the previous layer was taken care of.*

Harvey Jackins
From a letter written in 1992

* In this context, taken care of means discharged.



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, 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

The RC History Project

I am in charge of the new phase of a project called the RC History Project. I'm gathering experiences from RC leaders who were central to the functioning of their RC Communities during the 1950s, '60s, and '70s. On November 19, 2009, Bill Harkins, one of the first RC members of the Maine, USA, Community, died. Dan Nickerson, who was planning to interview Bill, wrote a lovely memorial for him. It's a good example of what we are trying to do by means of this project. Please consider it as an inspiration to either get yourself interviewed, or, if you were not leading during those years, interview someone who was.

Dvora Slavin
Seattle, Washington, USA

Bill Harkins, Pioneer RCer

An Excerpt from His Memorial

Bill, and his marriage partner Susan Gluck Harkins, were among the first members of the Co-Counseling Community as it grew and spread from Seattle. They were at Buck Creek II, one of the earliest RC workshops, and their contributions are recorded in the transcript *Rough Notes from Buck Creek I and II*. Harvey Jackins was one of the most significant influences on Bill's life. They shared most of the same goals, and Bill put into practice on a daily basis the knowledge and insight he gleaned from his relationship with Harvey and his study of Harvey's work and teaching. You could not imagine a more dedicated follower of Harvey than Bill. Whether or not people knew about Co-Counseling, they understood the effectiveness and good sense that came from Bill's knowledge and practice of RC and his commitment to leading a life based on rational principles.

Bill and Susan had learned Co-Counseling while teaching in northern Maine (USA) as part of Bill's alternate service as a Conscientious Objector during the U.S. war in Vietnam. I met Bill and Susan when I moved to Lewis-Wadhams School, an alternative boarding school in northern New York (USA), where I also met my marriage partner, Beth Edmonds.

Bill introduced "think and listens" and "mini-sessions" to our staff, which instantly transformed staff meetings and greatly improved the relationships among the staff. I asked Bill if he would listen to me for forty-five minutes each week, while I attempted to separate out my fears and indecision from my planning of classes and curriculum. He was happy to do so. He was a great listener, and it transformed my teaching.

Through my relationship with Bill I began my first RC class, and after several workshops and because of my commitment to working-class liberation, Harvey appointed me International Liberation Reference Person for Working-Class People. Some time after I became involved in RC, Beth joined an RC fundamentals class led by Bill, and within a relatively short time became Regional Reference Person for the state of Maine. So Bill was directly responsible for growing two International RC leaders.

Bill was a model of backing Jewish liberation, and liberation from disability oppression as well. He solidly supported men's liberation in the Region. His consistent work on his middle-class background made him an important ally to all oppressed groups.

When I first visited Bill and his wife, Susan, in their house, I saw upon the wall this RC scroll and quote from Harvey Jackins:

*If I could have but one wish granted,
it would be
To live in a universe like this one,
At a time like the present,
With friends like the ones I have now,
And be myself.*

I am happy that Bill fulfilled his wish in the most elegant manner imaginable.

*Lovingly submitted in honor of
the life of William Alton Harkins,
by Dan Nickerson (Freeport, Maine, USA)*

*For more information on the RC History Project, see the
October 2009 Present Time, page 50, or e-mail Dvora Slavin at <dvoraslavin@gmail.com>.*

Appreciating PRESENT TIME

I must tell you how much I enjoyed PRESENT TIME July 2009. I get so many practical ideas and clever perspectives from PRESENT TIME—I learn a lot from it.



Netsanet Amare
Woodbrook, Trinidad & Tobago

Fantastic celebration of the Guidelines! Exciting issue—so much going on around the world. Islands of knowledge, wisdom, and loving intention. Thank goodness for the Rational Island!

Pam Maccabee
Glastonbury, Connecticut, USA

I had a great time reading the October PRESENT TIME. It's a lovely treasure.



S.J. Shashikala
Bangalore, India

Such a great edition of PRESENT TIME. I'm enjoying it a lot. Love the short Harvey¹ articles and quotes. Katie,² I always get a kick³ out of seeing your drawings and doodles. And this time the bonus of a song.

Samantha Sanderson
Salt Spring Island, British Columbia, Canada

¹ Harvey Jackins
² Katie Kauffman
³ A kick means joyful fun.



Many thanks for PRESENT TIME. Every story is revolutionary. I especially loved Katie's* song, *Remembering Harvey*, based on the Joe Hill song. I often request that we sing that song at workshops. It is a great connect to the past of RC and to the past of those of us who grew up in areas where belonging to a union was central to our lives. Now Katie has updated it. The whole song is timely and important, but the following verse is going to be something I request at future workshops:

The *Guidelines* are a treasury
Of thinking that broke free
From confines built of misery
I never died said he, I never died
said he

Dreama Frisk
Arlington, Virginia, USA

* Katie Kauffman's

A New Kind of People's Journalism

The response of Co-Counselors to encouragement and editing help in their writing for *Present Time* gave promise of an entirely new kind of people's journalism.

We saw the possibility that the best thinking of large numbers of people could be elicited, communicated, and improved in the areas of these people's expertise—the detailed analysis and reporting of their own lives, their own re-emergences, their own thinking, their own oppressions, and their own struggles for liberation.

Harvey Jackins
From *The Benign Reality*, page 432



LISA KAUFFMAN

Goal 3: Care of the Environment

What Are the Distresses?

I have recently begun leading a care-of-the-environment support group. I decided to start by thinking about each of the main parts of Goal 3.¹ We have started with “discharging the distresses that have led to the continued degradation of the environment of the world.” In particular, I am interested in identifying what those distresses are. I like the clarity of Goal 3. It reminds me that those distresses might be different from the distresses that have led to “discouragement about taking the actions necessary for its restoration” (the next phrase in the goal and the next focus of our support group).

We need the widest understanding possible of the distresses at work² in order to develop a comprehensive plan of action. What follows is my current thinking about what the first set of distresses is.

ISOLATION

“I can’t tell³ that what I do affects the environment.” Isolation works in several ways to bring about the degradation of the environment. At its simplest, a person with an isolation pattern may not notice the effects on the environment of his or her choices and actions. This could be from the immediate (“I throw rubbish out my car window; it washes into a drain”) to the distant (“I buy tinned⁴ prawns and don’t notice that they’re

from Thailand, where farming them might have effects on coastal mangroves”).

GREED

“I want.” Greed is a pattern installed in at least two ways—by early hurts from deprivation and unmet needs that we didn’t recover from at the time, and by messages in society that consumption is good and will make us feel better. The societal messages “work” partly because they restimulate early distressful incidents.

Greed can have an impact on plants, animals, and ecological functions via the consumption of energy and materials, pollution from the manufacture or use of products, invasive species being spread by trade and travel, and so on. Because capitalist economic systems rely on the consumption of goods and services to maintain themselves, conventional economics has defined private consumption as an unqualified benefit to humans. We



ALISA LEMIRE BROOKS

are encouraged to act on our greedy feelings in all areas of our lives.

Identifying greed as a pattern is useful to me because it reminds me that one can’t reason with a pattern. Telling people not to be greedy won’t work.

SELFISHNESS AND ENTITLEMENT

“I know that what I do affects the environment, but I’m entitled to it.” When we have a selfish pattern, we may recognise the unfair or harmful impact of what we are doing but rationalise it by claiming that we are entitled. Racism and classism are prevalent worldwide patterns that can make us feel more deserving than other people, or that something hard about our lives entitles us. The feeling of entitlement can make us disregard the impacts of our actions on future humans.

INDIVIDUALISM

The “tragedy of the commons” is individuals gaining private benefit from using a resource that actually belongs to everyone, and sharing only a little (at least initially) in the losses that come from overuse. For example, individual fishers have a narrow self interest in catching as many fish as possible. Each of them knows that if everyone fishes without restraint, eventually (or soon) all will suffer from the collapse of the fish populations, yet each has a narrow short-term self interest in over fishing.

The earth’s atmosphere is the ultimate common resource. It is completely indivisible and shared across the earth. Each individual who adds greenhouse gases to it

continued . . .

¹ Goal 3 for the Re-evaluation Counseling Communities, as adopted by the 2001 World Conference of the RC Communities and reaffirmed by the 2005 and 2009 World Conferences: 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.

² In this context, at work means in operation.

³ In this context, tell means notice, see.

⁴ Tinned means canned.

WIDE WORLD CHANGING

continued . . .

suffers no immediate or specific consequence, yet the combined impact is large.

Identifying individualism as a pattern is useful to me because it reminds me that freeing people of the pattern will free up new and different ways to deal with these situations.

Market-style solutions assume that individuals have to be made to pay if they use common resources, but these are not the only way to solve over-use. Humans can and do act for the common good.

LACK OF CURIOSITY

Humans understand only part of how the environment of the world

works. For example, in Australia where I live, even though we are relatively well supplied with good scientists, we actually have little knowledge of the life cycle, diet, and so on, of most of our birds and mammals. About reptiles, aquatic animals, and insects, our knowledge is even less. And we have only partial knowledge of most ecological processes, such as the water cycle, the nutrient cycle, and the migration of organisms.

We humans need to continually increase our knowledge and understanding of the environment in order to improve our ability to preserve and restore it. For example, Australia has some sorry tales of non-local grass species being intro-

duced for soil conservation and then becoming serious environmental weeds a few decades later.

I think humans naturally want to notice and understand how everything in nature works. Being incurious and unobservant is a pattern. Young people's oppression ("just do what you're told, and stop questioning everything") and oppression in school can install this pattern.

Roewen Wishart

Sydney, New South Wales, Australia
Reprinted from the RC e-mail discussion list for leaders in the care of the environment



LEE CROWE

Making Good Use of *Present Time*

I received my very first copy of *Present Time*, in July 2009. I am grateful for that. I have been reading Tim's¹ article on leadership almost daily. The article is timely—it has enabled me to discharge a lot on the leadership I take in my day-to-day activities.

I recently got an invitation to speak at a management meeting. Normally I would go to the meeting, do most of the talking, and propose solutions to certain challenges the institutions were facing and ask them to implement them. I had done that before in other places, and it had not worked out so well. On this day, three minutes before I went in for the meeting, I looked at my notes and smiled and shoved them aside. I took a blank page and a pen and walked into the meeting room. With a shaky nervous smile, I looked at each manager and allowed good thoughts about him or her to flow in my mind. I did not yet have the courage to speak those thoughts out loud, but in my mind I said to each of them, "You are the best manager this institution has had. You have just what it takes² to do this job well, and I believe in your ability to do so."

After that I led them through a brainstorming session.³ I used RC skills and asked leading questions, and they came up with⁴ good, practical ideas for handling the issue we were discussing. At the end of that meeting, each person left feeling powerful, myself included. Their knowing that they own the ideas we came up with has enabled them to spearhead⁵ the implementation of those ideas. It was the best meeting I had ever led.

I am glad I have RC; I appreciate what the tool has helped me to achieve. Thank you so much for making *Present Time* available to us.

Janet W. Kabue
Nairobi, Kenya

¹ Tim Jackins'

² What it takes means what is necessary.

³ A brainstorming session is a meeting in which the participants freely share their thoughts.

⁴ Came up with means thought of.

⁵ Spearhead means lead.

Ramadan at My School

The school where I work has a majority of Muslim students and a large percentage of Muslim teachers. Because of this, Ramadan¹ has a significant impact on the school community.

I had noticed that some of the non-Muslim teachers were dramatising their racism² more noticeably, so I decided to organize a panel³ of Muslim teachers for an upcoming staff meeting. After persuading the principal (also a Muslim) to let me do this, I spoke to the teachers who would be on the panel, giving them the questions beforehand.

At the meeting I explained how doing anti-racism work requires us to learn more about each other and to support each other as colleagues across any divisions. I explained that Ramadan gave us an excellent opportunity to begin that process. I then asked the staff members to turn to the person next to them and to speak for one minute about anything that came to their minds,⁴ then swap over.⁵ After that I invited the panel to come up.

I asked each member of the panel what they loved about Ramadan, what was hard for them, and what they never wanted to hear again. They were honest, thoughtful, generous, and brave. I thanked them at the end.

¹ Ramadan is the ninth month of the Islamic year, observed as sacred with fasting practiced daily from dawn to sunset.

² Dramatising their racism means acting out their distress recordings of racism.

³ A panel is a format used in RC gatherings in which members of a particular constituency take turns sharing with the rest of the people, who are not part of that constituency, both their good and their hurtful experiences related to being a part of the constituency.

⁴ Anything that came to their minds means any thoughts that occurred to them.

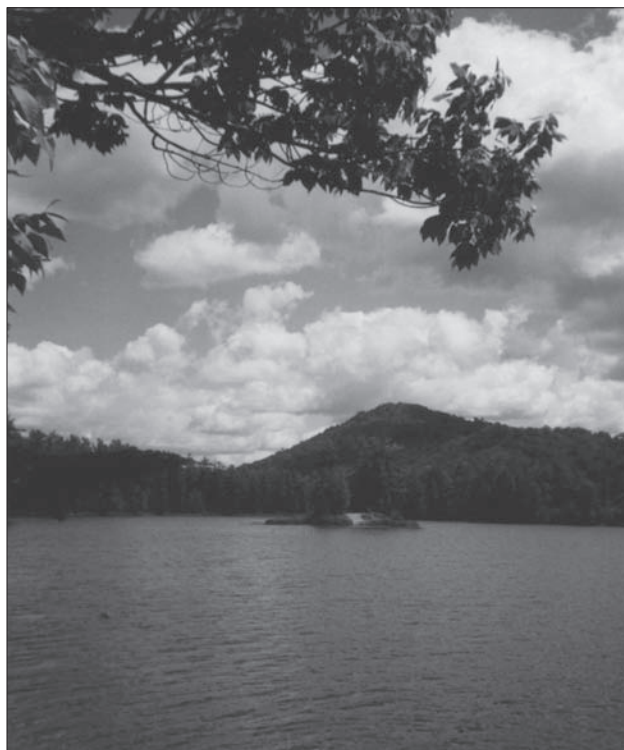
⁵ Swap over means exchange roles.

That was all that happened, but it turned the tone of the meeting around.⁶ And ever since then, Muslims and non-Muslims alike have been thanking me for the initiative.

The next day my principal asked that I run a panel at every staff meeting!

Merri Russell
Sydney, New South Wales, Australia

⁶ Turned the tone of the meeting around means significantly changed the tone of the meeting.



STEVE BANBURY

Deciding to Make Things Work

I decided when I was small that I would make things work, no matter what happened, and it has made things difficult but has certainly been an advantage to me.

Harvey Jackins
From a letter written in 1979

A Good Use for the RC Videos

I wanted to share something that has worked well in my Community to introduce the RC Black Liberation and Community Development (BLCD) project to new people. Each year there are five-day BLCD workshops—in the United States, Europe, and the Caribbean. (Every three years they are combined.) They are some of the few RC workshops to which people can come after having only a Co-Counseling session or two.

Some experienced black Co-Counselors and I recently used two RC videos to help introduce newer people to our work at BLCD. The first was *The Ending of Racism*, a video used by United to End Racism at the United Nations World Conference Against Racism in 2001. We showed the ten-minute segment during which Barbara Love, the International Liberation Reference Person for African-Heritage People, talks about how she has experienced racism, how she uses discharge to undo the hurts of racism, and what she now thinks is possible for herself and her people. (A few years ago we had used this video as part of a fundraiser for BLCD, at which we gave an introduction to Co-Counselors and their friends.)

Another time we used the video *Men's Liberation* to encourage a black working-class man to register for the workshop. We showed him a short talk by Tim Jackins and a panel during which a black working-class man talks about what it was like for him to grow up as a black man in this society. The man watching could relate to the man on the video, and I think it helped him relax a lot more about RC in general.

I am part of a Region in which there are several of us black RC leaders, so we can share our own experiences with people. However, if that is not the case in your Region, you can use these videos. (Other leaders of color also speak on the *Ending of Racism* video.)

The RC videos are a great tool for helping everyone better understand how racism affects black people and for helping us Co-Counselors understand what we will need to have attention for to make more space in RC for black people.



DIANE SHISK

Alysia Tate
Chicago, Illinois, USA
Reprinted from the e-mail discussion
list for RC Community members



KK

Here are some recent translations of RC literature:

近刊のRC文献:

Voiçi quelques traductions récentes de la littérature de Co-écoute:

女性解放のための草案

(Japanese translation of the *Women's Liberation Draft Policy*)

Humain au masculine

(French Translation of *Competition—an Inhumane Activity*)

Perry Saidman

For a complete list of all the translated literature, see pages 93 to 97 of this *Present Time*.

RC文献の全翻訳リストは93 - 97ページを参照。

Pour une liste complète de la littérature traduite,
voir les pages 93-97 de ce numéro de *Present Time*.

Appreciating *Recovery and Re-emergence* No. 6

Dear Anne Piche¹ and Janet Foner,²

I recently finished reading *Recovery and Re-emergence* No. 6, cover to cover (over the course of several months). Thank you for this powerful document—attractively put together, on good-quality paper, with a handsome cover, the double table of contents, and the easy-to-read format and type. The list of recommended readings at the end is a gold mine of more information; it is inspiring to see so many wide-world sources that bolster the RC perspective.

I'm glad that some key earlier pieces were included in this issue, specifically the draft policy on psychiatric drugs and Janet's "Getting Present and Staying that Way." These help to make the journal a self-contained guide.

The articles are powerful. I like the way the focus changes, one article after the other, from personal stories, to theory, to "how-to's."³ There is so much meat in each one. In varied voices, the authors lay out the arguments for getting off drugs, what one will encounter along the way, and how to do it. I have always struggled with this. I have always thought, "How can using RC to get off drugs be explained in a way that people can hear it?" "Who would be willing to go through this, and how would they do it?" "What

people would have the courage or the smarts⁴ to face their past hurt?" In article after article, the authors turn RC theory into simple everyday language. They give specifics about how drugs are harmful and how they diminish intelligence and quality of life. Key to me, they acknowledge again and again that it will not be easy to get off drugs, but they maintain that it is doable. They make clear that it will be a big challenge but lay out concrete steps to get there. They share what they went through and how they survived and ultimately flourished. To me, that spells inspiration and hope. As Julian Weissglass⁵ says in the final words of the last article, "Let us begin."

As a social worker, I have encountered parents and other adult caretakers who did not want to put their children on medication, who talked about how their children were "not themselves" on the drugs. I did not know what to say or how to help them. With this journal I feel inspired and hopeful, well-armed with articles that I can read over and over again to help me figure out both how to support these people and how to help our society move away from psychiatric drugs and toward the natural human healing process.

Thank you so much!

Geoffrey Barron
Washington, D.C., USA

¹ Anne Piche is the editor of *Recovery and Re-emergence* No. 6.

² Janet Foner is the International Liberation Reference Person for "Mental Health" Liberation.

³ "How to's" are practical suggestions.

⁴ Smarts means functional intelligence.

⁵ Julian Weissglass is the International Commonality Reference Person for Wide World Change.

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 \$124 (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.



Every day is a renewal,
every morning the daily
miracle. This joy you feel
is life.

Gertrude Stein

Reclaiming Ourselves

“Show me the way to go home”—anonymous graffiti on the walls of the Tule Lake Segregation Center Prison.

The Tule Lake Pilgrimage¹ happens every two years. This July a special additional year was added, with a theme of “Healing the Community.” It was the seventeenth pilgrimage. The United to End Racism (UER) delegation was invited to come and lead intergenerational discussion groups and a UER workshop.

I am filled with pride and joy when I think of the UER delegation. We were a close group of Co-Counselors who became even closer as a result of doing the project together. We had an opportunity to heal the damage of the concentration camps—for ourselves, for our families, and for our people. I came away with a renewed understanding of the beauty of our people—their kindness, their strength, their resilience, their hopefulness. We loved people openly—with sensitivity, respect, and a fierceness that in its own understated way was significant to people. We understood how to contradict the depths of humiliation, shame, rage, and grief.

As I watched the delegation at the pilgrimage, I was reminded of my older cousin who had played with me when I was a child and carried me on her back—singing to me, laughing with me. She was joyful, and saw who I was. Her kind-



JO PERRY

ness was a balm for the isolation and harshness of the racism I had already internalized. Our delegation was that kind of balm. We understood our role, and we understood the tools of RC.

We acted powerfully against internalized oppression and witnessed so much. Suddenly my eyes became wide open. I saw, in full focus, the ways my people had been hurt. I felt things I had not felt since my childhood. It helped me understand how bad my family and I have felt about ourselves. I can now tell² that this is not rooted in any part of our humanness but in the distress recordings of internalized racism. The difficulty was never me, or us.

I was raised in a family in which I was appointed to leadership roles and required to be confident. Since the pilgrimage I have struggled to trust my thinking, to know my place in the world, and have been approaching most tasks with anxiety and trepidation. These recordings are finally being revealed. So many of my people struggle with similar

ones. Every family I have talked to has some unique but similar version of them.

MY FAMILY’S EXPERIENCE

My mother’s family immigrated to the United States in about 1900 and endured much racism. During World War II my mother and her entire family were forcibly evacuated and imprisoned by the U.S. government, because of their Japanese heritage. My father’s family (also Japanese heritage) was forced to leave the west coast of the United States and move to the interior of the country to avoid being incarcerated. Members of my family in upstate New York (USA) were murdered—a World War I veteran entered their home with a shot gun, murdered my great aunt and uncle, and maimed my other aunt, who was found by her son when he returned home from school. The assailant pleaded “not guilty” in the court system and was never convicted. My surviving aunt told me that after he shot her, she said to him, “I forgive you.”

The wartime experience deeply affected my family. My immigrant great grandmother died from an overdose of medication. My aunt suffered birth trauma in a concentration camp, and the subsequent brain damage resulted in a life-long involvement with the “mental health” system. After the incarceration, our family was broken up and separated for years, by thousands of miles.

Fearing racist reprisal for “appearing too Japanese,” our family ceded much of its heritage, including our native language. I grew up in a neighborhood in Seattle, Washington (USA), where our family was terrorized. Our windows were

¹ The Tule Lake Pilgrimage is a pilgrimage, every two years, to the Tule Lake Internment Camp, in Oregon, USA, where thousands of Japanese and Okinawan heritage people were interned during World War II. United to End Racism sent a delegation to this year’s pilgrimage. For more articles on this, see pages 57 to 67 of the October 2009 *Present Time*.

² In this context, tell means perceive, see.

shot at. Police cars had to park in front of our house at night. Death threats spray-painted on the street in front of our house read, “Kill the Japs.” People would call my mother at home and threaten to kill her when they knew that my father was at work and she was alone with the children. White neighbors organized white supremacy meetings to try and drive our family out.

We survived all that due to the strength of our family, but the internalized racism took a toll: chronic diseases, shortened life spans, dependency on the “mental health” system, struggles with alcohol and drug addiction, and powerful pulls to assimilate into white culture and forsake our heritage. The family maintained a confident public stance but struggled secretly with isolation, shame, and low self esteem. We absorbed a message that being Japanese heritage made us ugly, unwanted, and deserving of mistreatment. On some level we were trying hard to be “white,” because we had internalized a feeling of “hating Japanese people.”

JAPANESE/OKINAWAN HERITAGE RC

Japanese/Okinawan-heritage RC has given me the opportunity to claim my heritage, recover relationships, fight for my mind, and listen to other people with the goal of healing the hurts of the World War II incarceration.

Things have shifted. I can now hold out the perspective that no Japanese/Okinawan American is to blame for his or her experiences and the difficult choices he or she was forced to make during and after World War II. It was the racist policies that caused our difficulties and our internalized racism.

THE WORK OF UER AT TULE LAKE

In the weeks before the pilgrimage, the UER team did phone interviews (really sessions) with many of the elders and listened to their life stories. These same elders were in the intergenerational groups that each of us facilitated. They were people who had stood up against the racism of the camps, and, as a result of their answers to the controversial “loyalty questionnaire,” been termed “disloyal” and segregated at the Tule Lake Camp. Some were tortured. Many were pushed to the point where they renounced their U.S. citizenship. They were then traded for U.S. civilians, in wartime prisoner exchanges with Japan, and shipped to Japan where they lived in the aftermath of the nuclear bombing. To listen to these genuine, kind, brave people was a gift. They allowed us to care openly for them. Often they discharged while telling their stories. They were appreciative of UER and seemed reassured by our dedication and work to end racism.

I had in my intergenerational support group two older men who had been imprisoned in Tule Lake and later sent to Japan for refusing to



ELLIE PUTNAM

go along with the loyalty questionnaire. They shared their stories with a sense of modesty, seeming to feel that their circumstances were not that significant in relation to others. As one eighty-nine-year-old gentleman told his story, he began to remember the small details of what he had witnessed during his incarceration. I could sense that to some people in the group, his story was unbearably slow and hard to listen to. However, I had appointed myself his champion, and I kept thinking, “It doesn’t matter how long this takes. Today he will get his long-overdue chance to find his mind and tell his story, and we can listen with respect and give him the appreciation and dignity he has been denied.” We sat and listened for a long time.

In my mind, just the fact that he had that opportunity made the pilgrimage a success. But there were many, many victories like it. As I led my group, I could take heart³ that in rooms all around me other UER members were supporting and encouraging similar opportunities, and all four hundred people at the pilgrimage were listening to one another and discharging together. We were taking ourselves back, winning.

THE LAND

Riding the bus to Tule Lake, through the countryside, I kept looking out the window, wondering how my mother felt as a child being shipped away to the desert. (She was sent to another camp, called Minidoka, in the state of Idaho.) Tule Lake is in a beautiful low desert area where a lake was situated millions of years ago. Nearby are mountainous outcroppings. The land is dry and covered with sage.

continued . . .

³ Take heart means be encouraged.

WIDE WORLD CHANGING

continued . . .

It is now a national park, nature preserve, and major area of bird migration. There are many farms in the area, sustained by irrigation. Surrounded by the beauty of this land, which was the home of Native peoples, and listening to the stories of camp survivors, the sorrow was overwhelming at times and the contradictions⁴ great. As I stood on the land where the Tule Lake Camp had been situated and watched people interacting, I struggled to visualize and understand how 22,000 Japanese-heritage people could have been imprisoned there. How could that happen?

On our first morning at the pilgrimage our delegation observed silence in appreciation and remembrance of the Native people whose homeland we were upon. We discussed how our story was connected to the history of Native peoples. During World War II, the Bureau of Indian Affairs was run by Dillon Meyers, who also ran the War Relocation Authority that was responsible for creating and running the concentration camps like Tule Lake. Bureau of Indian Affairs staff helped run the camps, and the policies of forced removal and evacuation used on Native peoples translated into policies for removing 120,000 Japanese- and Okinawan-heritage people to concentration camps.

CHALLENGING OUR INTERNALIZED OPPRESSION

The pilgrimage was not always easy because we were often forced to deal with the feelings we ourselves were having as we paid attention to others. We visited the remnants of the stockades and prison of Tule Lake Camp and listened to stories of former prisoners who had been severely mistreated and threatened at gun-



JAYNE SCHAUER

point in front of machine-gun firing squads. Some young men had been tortured. We learned that the Italian and German prisoners of war being housed nearby had often been treated as special guests by the white people of the town. Townspeople had baked them cakes and pies, while our people, U.S. citizens, were locked behind barbed wire. After the war the camp cemetery was desecrated. Graves were unearthed, and the dirt was stolen by local people for topsoil.

It was difficult and important to stay closely engaged while refusing to be overcome by re-stimulation. All of us on the UER team were remarkable in how we navigated that difficult path.

MOMENTS OF KINDNESS

One thing the pilgrimage organizers figured out was to invite all camp survivors to move to the front of the many long lines for meals and services. The survivors had weathered numerous indignities during years of standing in line at that very site, in blizzards, sandstorms, and blistering sun, and had waited decades for someone to acknowledge what they had endured on a personal level.

While standing in line for lunch, I found my elder friends from Seattle (Washington, USA) and

escorted them to the front. Others were doing the same. All of us in line were so pleased. We all knew it was the right thing to do. It was an opportunity to lift a weight off someone's shoulders. So many awful things had transpired at the camp, and it was a small but real way to demonstrate our love and appreciation.

In Japanese culture there is a word "enryo" that means to humbly decline, to go without a privilege—to never take the last morsel of food, never ask for anything that might deny someone else. Sometimes this has been mutated by internalized racism into denying self, and enduring. At the pilgrimage, in those long lines, we finally agreed to give up enryo. It was a happy moment. There is a phrase that was commonly used during the World War II evacuation: "Shikata ganai." It means, "It cannot be helped and must be endured." In Japanese/Okinawan RC we have had discussions and sessions about this phrase and have taken a perspective in opposition to it.

Another phrase that was common during the World War II incarceration, "kodomo no tame ni," means "for the sake of the children." Much was endured, looking to the future of the children of the community. At the pilgrimage I didn't hear that phrase once. What I witnessed was people acting for the sake of all of us, with no sense that anybody would be required to sacrifice self for others or that any generation would be left behind.

THE BUS

A highlight for me was the ten-hour bus ride from Olympia, Washington (USA) to the small town of Klamath Falls, Oregon (USA). Those of us in the UER delegation hardly knew anybody when we got on the bus, but we spread out and

⁴ Contradictions to distress

made friends. Betsy Hasegawa⁵ and I befriended a large extended family of cousins who had come to learn of their family history at Tule Lake. We held an impromptu discussion/listening group with them in the back of the bus, and one sister decided right there that after the pilgrimage she would join an RC class. One man in the family was my seat mate. We talked for several hours, and he kept mentioning the motto his father had adopted after the camp: to never try to change anybody or anything, because “you can only change yourself.” He kept coming back to that phrase, over and over. I liked him a lot. He reminded me of my brothers. I looked at him and said quietly, “I’m sorry.

⁵ Betsy Hasegawa is an RC leader in Bellingham, Washington, USA.

Your dad must have been heart-broken.” He began to cry, silently looking out the window as we drove through the desert. I wept with him. He later came up to me and told me he had met someone who had known his father in the camps, and we talked and discharged happily about that.

Throughout the pilgrimage he kept finding me to say hi and make contact. He came to the UER workshop that Jan Yoshiwara⁶ and I led and sat in the front row. He watched our team all weekend and absorbed a lot of what we were offering. His family took on⁷ visible roles during

⁶ Jan Yoshiwara is the International Liberation Reference Person for Japanese-Heritage People and was the leader of the Tule Lake UER team.

⁷ In this context, took on means assumed.

the pilgrimage, telling stories and helping with the organizing, and in some ways our team became a resource for them. On the ten-hour bus ride home, they called us to the back of the bus where they were having another impromptu discussion and asked Jan and me to talk about our perspective on some incidents of internalized racism that had occurred at the pilgrimage. A large public argument had broken out between two community leaders, and they asked us what we thought could be done to resolve it. At that moment I felt close to all fifty people on the bus. We were no longer strangers.

We’re going back again next year.

Michael Ishii
Brooklyn, New York, USA

A White Ally at Tule Lake

I was the only white ally with the United to End Racism (UER) delegation to Tule Lake.¹ It was an honor to be asked, and I had a moving and empowering experience. I have been struggling to write about it, because racism has left me as a white person with patterns of being quiet and feeling unsure of my thinking. I am writing this as one more step toward ridding myself of these patterns.

Mike Ishii² and I have been friends for over twenty years. We know each other’s families well and are committed to each other as friends as well as Co-Counselors. Knowing and loving Mike has been the cornerstone³ of my work on eliminating racism. He and I have worked for many years, in and out of Co-Counseling, on issues of racism, particularly in the Japanese American community. To truly love him, to think about and with him, I have had to work hard on my racism and internalized sexism. The two are closely tied together. I need to work on them simul-

¹ See footnote 1 on page 78.

² Mike Ishii is the Area Reference Person for the Bowery East and West Area, in New York, New York, USA.

³ Cornerstone means basis.

taneously, both to stay close to Mike and to have my own independent thinking. When Mike invited me to join the UER delegation last spring, of course I said yes. I wanted to go for him, for us, and for the UER project. It was an opportunity to back⁴ him as he reached out to his community with the resources of RC.

I saw my role as one of supporting the Japanese American RCers to be as visible as possible and of doing whatever was needed to help them conduct support groups and meet people. Whatever else I was doing, I was watching closely for when people needed mini-sessions—especially to be able to think outside of internalized oppression. That was difficult only when my internalized sexism (feeling stupid and unsure) wanted to run.⁵ I made sure that when I needed to speak up about something, I did. That was challenging. Racism can make me feel arrogant and like I know how to do things better than people of color, yet it also keeps me quiet and not speaking up when that is the right thing to do.

continued . . .

⁴ Back means support.

⁵ Run means operate.

WIDE WORLD CHANGING

continued . . .


Many on the UER team had done a large amount of family work,⁶ and that was apparent in how they juggled counseling family members, meeting and reaching out to new people, and running workshops and support groups. Their families looked to them for leadership.

⁶ 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.

The loyalty oaths and the questions that had been asked of Japanese Americans during internment had split families and communities apart, and the conference attendees were fighting (and determined) to find each other again. The UER team set the tone of the conference — people could tell their stories, feel their feelings, and find each other again. I left wanting that for everyone, everywhere.

M'Lis Bartlett
Ann Arbor, Michigan, USA

Dreamer



They say you are a dreamer
Well so am I
Always touched by the magic of what is possible or even impossible
Our expansive imaginations go wild

They say you are a freethinker
Well so am I
Questioning conventional wisdom
Considering all possibilities in or out of the box¹

They say you are a revolutionary
Well so am I
We strive for a better planet
Not ruled by war and greed

They say you are a conformer
Well so am I
Often letting consumerism and selfishness take control
The battle inside of us rages on

They say you are a worldchanger
Well so am I
Look out² oppression!
Together we're going to eliminate you and save our beautiful earth

Mari Piggott
Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada

¹ In this context, the box means what is usually done or thought.

² Look out means beware.



LK

Introducing Co-Counseling in a Catholic Parish

My Latino/a immigrant Catholic parish is involved in a movement to change how perpetrators, victims, and survivors of crime are treated. This year we are reaching out to families that have been impacted by violent crime—to listen, to learn, and to offer a safe space where discharge can happen.

I helped organize an event at church during which survivors of violent crime shared their stories. Six families (nineteen people) who had lost a family member to murder (often by gang violence) attended. A representative from each family shared how their loved one had died, who had supported the family afterward, and the support they still needed. Everyone listened with deep respect. Lots of tears flowed. A woman said that it was the first time she had felt like her struggle had been understood (her son had been murdered eight years before).



JENNIFER ROBERTS

Young people attending our Catholic school are learning conflict resolution tools and skills—for example, by taking turns listening to each other’s different points of view. And I conduct a monthly support group for mothers so that they, too, can learn these skills and use them in their homes. Their successes with their teenagers energize the group. I plan to invite some of these women to join a Co-Counseling class.

Ellie Hidalgo

Los Angeles, California, USA

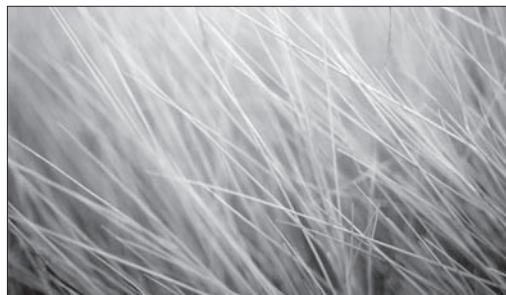
Reprinted from the RC e-mail discussion list for leaders of Catholics

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*



LAURIE RHODES

Boldly Share RC

We need to learn to take initiative in the areas where the pressures of the society encourage inaction or “letting others do it.” We need to boldly share RC with the entire world.

*Harvey Jackins
From An Unbounded Future*

Transforming a Church, with Thoughtful and Persistent Contact

We—Sara and Keith—are members of a local United Church of Christ. We have enjoyed getting closer to people who share our pro-human values, and over the past three years we have brought the powerful tools of RC to the church.

Three years ago, we taught our pastor RC in a fundamentals class. She loved it, and we continue to have Co-Counseling sessions with her.

This past spring, Keith led a four-meeting Lenten¹ series called A Sacred Conversation on Race. It was based on RC theory—that we are good, intelligent human beings who have been hurt by racism. People met in small groups and told their stories of how racism had affected their lives. Those listening were encouraged to do so with delight. People loved it. About forty-five people attended each of the four meetings—many more than in previous years.

Because the Lenten series was so successful, people wanted to use the listening format in a six-meeting summer series on inclusivity and equality. To prepare others to help lead it, Keith taught a three-week mini-RC fundamentals course. Eight people took part.²

The summer series, which just ended, was led each week by those who had taken the mini-course. In the first meeting, our pastor and the president of the church reminded the participants of the basic assumption that people are good,

¹ Lenten refers to Lent, a period of penitence and fasting during the forty days before Easter, observed by the Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, and some Protestant Churches.

² Took part means participated.

caring, and intelligent. Our pastor spoke about how the RC class had transformed her life, and she gave a clear and accurate presentation of RC theory, emphasizing the value of discharge. It was exciting to hear the two key leaders of our church give this eloquent presentation of RC.

During the summer series, we refined our use of the discharge process. People met in smaller groups of three, so that each person got ten to twelve minutes to talk. People of all ages loved having a way to share their lives and get closer to people, some of whom they had known for years. Our minister noticed that people were spending more time than usual talking with each other after church on Sundays, and she thought it was a direct result of their having used RC.

Keith is starting a fundamentals class in September, and several people from the church have expressed an interest in participating.

We talked with our minister about continuing to use the RC model in monthly gatherings after the church service. We are going to have the first of these meetings on death and dying, an issue that many people are concerned about. We plan to introduce support groups so that people can experience the safety

of constituency-based groups. We may also do some demonstrations of counseling.

Here is what we have learned:

- Persistence pays off.³
- People loved RC theory about human beings, and loved listening with delight.
- The more people experienced RC theory and practice, the more they were interested in it.
- People were attracted to us because we live “big” lives and interact lovingly with others. We were examples of RC’s benefits.
- Working together as a team helped spread our influence more quickly.
- It worked well to introduce RC to an already-organized community of people in which we were loved and respected. It accelerated the process of introducing people to RC and building the Community.

We would love to hear how others have shared RC in institutions, such as schools and churches.

*Keith Osajima
and Sara Schoonmaker
Redlands, California, USA*

³ Pays off means has good results.

A Full Life

The most precious thing we have to spend, and the thing that is most wrong to waste, I think, is living a full life. It certainly is dangerous. I have found that out^{*} for myself, but I am not sorry for any chance I ever took.

Harvey Jackins
From a letter written in 1985

^{*} Found that out means discovered that.

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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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