



# Present Time

## April 2010

No. 159 (Vol. 42 No. 2)

We have the capacity to create initiatives that will break through our previous levels of thinking, not only in math and physics and poetry and music, but in every area of human activity. Creating and taking initiatives is the essence of thinking.

*Harvey Jackins*

Co-Counselors around the world keep applying their thinking to more and more areas of life. Young people's liberation, physical contact, time and technology, colonization and genocide, building RC in Kenya and Peru, are just a few of the subjects written about in this *Present Time*. For the July issue, please send us your articles and poems by Monday, May 17, and any changes to the backpages lists by Monday, May 24. We look forward to hearing from you!



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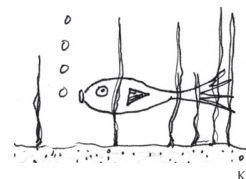
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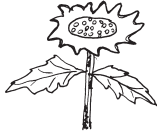
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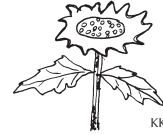
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## The Importance of Physical Contact

*From a talk by Tim Jackins<sup>1</sup> at the Young Leaders' Workshop  
in Denmark, April 2009*



One of the things I want to talk about is physical contact. All of us need to be in physical contact with other people, far more than we ever get to be. You can see how much contact children want. They want to be held, they want you to pick them up. They'll wrap themselves around your leg and hang on. They want to feel you next to them. And as long as they are babies, it's okay with society. The older they get, the more they're supposed to be independent and physically separate. This usually happens faster with boys than with girls. It's partly because of sexism—you can be a cute little girl longer than you can be a cute little boy. Boys are supposed to be little men very soon, which means that they don't have much physical contact, so they give up on feeling people close to them. But people actually want to be close forever. It's taken away from us. We don't outgrow it.

There are a lot of distresses that get attached to being physically close—sexual distress, among other things—and so we become scared and yet fascinated. Are you fascinated with sex? (*Someone from group, "No!"*) A loud liar. (*Group laughing*) This frozen fascination makes us unable to think well about sex, or closeness, and some of us get very confused in the area and are not safe to be with. Being close to people can get dangerous.

You know how awkward you can feel about being close to someone. Here at the workshop it is as good as it gets for us. Back home, where there are no RCers around, who do you get to lean against without their wondering about you or thinking you have some odd expectations?

People simply need the contact with each other. We learn about each other from simply leaning against each other. We learn things that can't easily be communicated in words. It's like our play wrestling. When we roughhouse<sup>2</sup> and tumble with people, we know them in a different way. We get a different idea of where they can think and how safe they are.

All of us are looking for people to be close to, whom we can relax with—people who are safe enough that we don't have to stand guard but can just relax and lean into them and enjoy being alive together. So, you need to be leaning into each other. Now. Lean. Yeah, crowd in, both sides, crowd in. Can you notice the way people feel? Shut your eyes and just relax and feel them there. (*Laughter*)

All of us need to have our arms around people and be close to them, often. Grandchildren will come in the morning and climb into their grandparents' bed and want to get in close. Sometimes they will doze off, and sometimes they will just lie there and think and are very relaxed. Then in fifteen or twenty minutes they'll get an idea and want to get up and go do it. But there is nothing worried or urgent. It's just safe to be alive together. Everybody is interested in this, though our distresses can get in the way.

Some people will seem safer than others. And some people are safer than others, just because of distresses. But it isn't about there being one special person. We're sometimes told that there will be one person it will be safe to be with, and that someday we will find that person. And if we wear each other out, then we'll find someone else. But this isn't about there being a special person, it's about having the chance to be human together.

In RC workshops you get a chance to actually relax and just be together. So you need to lie in a pile, tangled with each other as much as you can, for the next two days, because I don't think you'll have much of a chance after this for a while. It does make a difference. This is closer to the way we'd like to be with each other than we're usually allowed. It will make a difference in the way you can see each other as Co-Counselors, too.

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

<sup>2</sup> Roughhouse means engage in rough, boisterous play.

## Rapid Change in a Family Conflict

Often on Shabbat (the Jewish Sabbath) my family has time together and more free attention than usual. It's a wonderful time for feelings to bubble up. One day a few weeks ago we had a big family fight and an even bigger resolution.

My five-year-old son, A—, was playing roughly and was asked to stop. Then he hit my partner in the face. My partner got annoyed and hit him back. At that point I was verbally undermining my partner. My daughter, K— (seven-years-old), was cursing my partner with me. Most of us were crying. That continued for some time.

Then we decided to do a "truth and reconciliation commission."<sup>1</sup> We all sat on the bed and took turns listening to each other. My partner was first. He said he really didn't want to hit A—; he just lost control when he got hit in the face. He apologised.

A— was next. He was looking at my partner but leaning against me. He started talking about a dog that was inside of him and made him do things he didn't want to do. The dog was curled up in his belly and crept out of his hands and feet. We asked the dog some questions, and he answered. As he was speaking, my son was crying and crying. It was his first time discharging just from talking in a permissive session (a relief!). He was speaking expressively and was delighted with himself. We all felt close.

My daughter, K—, didn't say much. She was still upset and hadn't yet had any resolution.

Then it was my turn. I was upset. My partner asked me the golden question—what did this remind me of? I started crying and telling them that my dad used to be harsh with my brother. I would feel like it was unfair, and like intervening, but I couldn't do anything. It felt dangerous and like it was up to me to do something.<sup>2</sup> K— identified with that and cried some more tears. Then she piped up<sup>3</sup> and asked, "Was your mum the superhero like you are?" At the time I was chuffed (pleased) that she saw that in me. Little did I know. . . .

A few weeks later we had another big fight. It was a similar situation. This time A— was the first to apologise, on his own initiative, to his dad, for swearing at him. Then my partner apologised for getting angry. Then I apologised

for undermining my partner. I emphasised to the children that their dad couldn't really hurt them, that they were safe, and said I was sorry if I had scared them because I had been scared. It was a "leap of faith" for me—that they were not in danger from their dad, even if I felt like they were and even if he gave them a smack.

I think this brought great relief to K—, because she had felt like she needed to protect her brother. But even when A— was resolved with his dad, K— was still angry and her brother was angry at her and telling her to "mind her own business." She was taking responsibility for him and then being blamed for it. A lot of her feeling like she needed to protect him had been fuelled by my treating the situation as dangerous, by my restimulated fear.

At that point K— said, "Well, that means that I don't have to be a superhero." "Yes my darling, you are so right, that is so good," I said with deep joy and pleasure. As soon as I was willing and able to shift my perspective to seeing there was no present danger and no need for superheroes, she was right behind me.<sup>4</sup> She picked it up<sup>5</sup> straight away.<sup>6</sup> I was touched.<sup>7</sup> It is that direct! Our shifts in thinking are picked up immediately.

When she had first used the superhero motif in relation to me, I was complimented. However, as soon as she re-evaluated about not needing to be a superhero, I could see the whole superhero motif dissolve in the discharging of the old hurts.

Tonight my partner came home with a new intention of bringing more gentleness into his parenting. This was very different from his rigidly justifying his position of "enforcing discipline" on our "unruly" children.

Things move in the most beautifully mysterious and wonderful ways, and they turn around at the blink of an eyelid and the shedding of a distress.

L—  
Australia

<sup>4</sup> Right behind me means in full support of me.

<sup>5</sup> In this context, picked it up means perceived it.

<sup>6</sup> Straight away means immediately.

<sup>7</sup> Touched means affected emotionally in a positive way.

<sup>1</sup> "Truth and reconciliation commission" refers to a court-like body assembled in South Africa after the abolition of apartheid. People come before the commission and admit to ways they hurt people under apartheid.

<sup>2</sup> It was up to me to do something means I was the only one capable of doing something.

<sup>3</sup> Piped up means began to speak.



LK



## Giving Our Regional Reference Person an Intensive

*In Norway we have a small RC Community (about twenty active persons) and we live scattered around the country. The core group meets as a support group twice a year for a long weekend. This year the topic of our meeting was different from earlier times. This is a description of how we gave our Regional Reference Person twelve hours of one-way time in such a way that all the six counsellors derived significant benefit from it themselves. The story is told by the participants, as seen from different angles.*

### ANNE HELGEDAGSRUD WAS THE CLIENT

To me this was a very special experience. Brita Helleborg took initiative and organized, along with five other RC leaders, an extended weekend of intensive counselling for me. The week before, they had a telephone conference and sessions and read literature on leadership to prepare themselves. They travelled to Bergen from different parts of Norway by plane and train and stayed in my house.

I had twelve hours of one-way counselling during the weekend. A well-thought-of schedule directed the process. Every half hour a freshly discharged, deadly<sup>1</sup>-committed counsellor appeared. They all stretched beyond their own patterns to counsel me; some discharged while they were counselling. Halfway through, it felt like being in a twelve-hour washing machine. My eyes were swollen, and my limbs were hurting from fighting and pushing. I laughed hard as my counsellors acted out challenges in my life with lots of acting talent. Toward the end our connections deepened. My

<sup>1</sup> In this context, deadly means determinedly, fiercely.

isolation patterns were strangled by a tsunami of affection and serious commitment.

Amongst other things, my counsellors challenged my careful, polite, timid patterns. The world after the intensive has had a different flavor. I almost bumped my car twice. I scolded a Co-Counsellor. Nothing to be proud of. But my actions not being filtered through the usual pattern of carefulness has been like getting used to walking around with bigger shoes (actually, myself taking up<sup>2</sup> a larger space). I had a department meeting at work and put things right and stopped nonsense like I never had done before. My colleagues stared with awe. And guess what? I enjoyed it.

My deepest gratitude and love to Brita, Simon, Karolina, Solveig Irene, Sissel, and Karl.

### One week after the intensive

The effect lasts! My interaction with the world is different.

A couple of times this week people have put pressure on me to have things their way. Instead of fighting furiously from a position of

being pushed into a corner, I have been calm and confident and found solutions workable for both parties.

My interactions with friends and colleagues have been more active this week. I joke more and initiate more fun than I did before.

I have ordered a trial subscription to a radical newspaper.

I am less fearful and cautious. I enjoy more.

### BRITA HELLEBORG WAS THE LEADER AND A COUNSELLOR

I was leading the weekend, and I gained at least as much as Anne did from having to go farther than my patterns usually allow me. I tried to apply my best thinking, even if it felt very uncomfortable. I feel much more confident after the weekend than I did last week.

One of the things I did was choose Simon as my assistant. When I was thinking about whom to choose, my first thought was not to choose Simon, who is an English middle-class man. (I'm a Norwegian working-class woman.) But I decided to ask him anyway, since it was only our patterns that stood in the way as he

*continued . . .*



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## COUNSELING PRACTICE

... continued

was the most experienced counsellor available. That was a success, and we got to discharge some of the restimulations between us and are feeling closer after the weekend.

This year we have a project in which my task is to support Anne to establish RC in Bergen. Simon is supporting me in this. Every week since December 2008, Anne and I have shared an hour and a half, on Skype,<sup>3</sup> about growing RC in Bergen. The progress has been good, but challenging some of the patterns has felt difficult. When we were planning the core group meeting, I got the idea to ask the others to help me give Anne an intensive. I saw this as a good thing for all of us.

I asked Anne if she would be willing to create a list of patterns: "Which patterns do I need to get rid of in order to be in the front of establishing an active RC Area in Bergen?"

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<sup>3</sup> Skype is a software application that allows users to make phone calls over the Internet.



JO ANNE GARRETT

I listened to her start creating a list, and after a few days we received in the mail a description of eight core patterns. All of us participants were challenged to discharge on the list and identify which patterns were easy for us to handle and which we expected to be more of a challenge. It was good to see that our combined strengths covered all the patterns.

We tried to meet on Skype before the intensive but had technical problems, so we ended up sharing time<sup>4</sup> in pairs on the telephone.

My thinking behind the preparation and the schedule I suggested was as follows:

- \* I was aiming at being completely respectful toward Anne and asking permission from her for everything I suggested before I asked the others. At the same time, I was trying to be ruthless with the patterns.
- \* I wanted to encourage a feeling of being in this together and used a support group format at the beginning and the end of the intensive.
- \* The common goal of giving Anne the sessions she needed to be able to establish a thriving RC Area around herself was important and challenging. Having that common goal, our individual patterns would not be able to play such an important role as they sometimes do.
- \* We needed to take this task seriously to be able to succeed and to challenge our own patterns in a big way.
- \* Our common goal would bring our core group even closer than before, making us much stronger than seven individuals.

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<sup>4</sup> Sharing time means exchanging listening.

\* Giving Anne sessions on the patterns that had inhibited her ability to establish a thriving RC Area around her would, at the same time, make us discharge our own patterns that had inhibited the growth of the RC Area around us. To make use of these gains, we ended the weekend with a Wygelian meeting.<sup>5</sup>

\* I was looking for a way to separate the patterns from Anne, the person—both for Anne and for the counsellors. I asked Anne to list the patterns restraining her, and we discharged on giving counselling on those patterns, both before the weekend and in sessions preparing to be the counsellor.

\* It is not comfortable to get rid of chronic patterns, for the client or the counsellor. To address this we had the best mix of counsellors available for everyone by rotating so that everyone got to counsel with all the others.

\* I wanted to have a schedule so strict that the patterns had little chance of being acted out, and breaks long enough that people could feel that they had ample time to do what they needed to.

\* The first morning all the counsellors met in a group. We took turns reading the list of patterns. The person reading discharged on how it might feel

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<sup>5</sup> A Wygelian meeting is a meeting of a group of leaders and potential leaders of a particular constituency in which each person takes a turn doing the following: (1) reporting on what he or she has been doing in the last period, with regard to the constituency, (2) saying what he or she thinks is the current situation facing the constituency, from his or her viewpoint, (3) sharing what he or she proposes to do as a leader in the next period, and (4) discharging on what is getting in the way of his or her leadership.

to be the counsellor on those patterns. The purpose was to clarify the difference between the person and the patterns and at the same time be inspired by each other's thoughts.

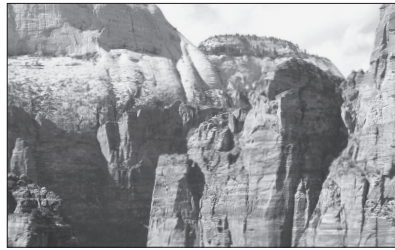
\* When we were sharing time, we mainly discharged on giving time to Anne on her patterns. That turned out to be efficient, since the discharge was great and our thinking improved. I think a reason for the powerful discharge was the important task at hand.<sup>6</sup>

**SIMON JAMES-EIDE WAS THE ASSISTANT LEADER AND A COUNSELLOR**

This was the longest and most well prepared intensive I had been a part of, and the one that I got the most out of, too.

We were asked which distresses we would be most effective counsellors for and which we would struggle with. I found that useful. Right from the start I was expected to be realistic about my own strengths and current limitations. It also made clearer to me which of my own distresses I was going to need to work on in order to be of more use to Anne. The Skype meeting two weeks before the intensive, followed up by two-way sessions, meant that when I arrived at Anne's in Bergen I was ready for action as soon as I walked in the door.

When it came to giving time,<sup>7</sup> I found it useful that each of us was first the assistant counsellor for half an hour before we took over the role of main counsellor. That allowed us to learn from the successes and mistakes of the previous counsellor and continue using his or her successful contradictions.<sup>8</sup> In



BOB ROMERO

addition, having discharge time both right before and straight after giving time to Anne meant that we were fresh when we went into action and could clean up any restimulations immediately after we were finished being counsellor.

It was helpful and encouraging that right from the start Brita set the tone: we were to be ruthless and merciless with Anne's patterns whilst being gentle and loving with Anne. My good connection with Anne meant that I could risk being much more direct and challenging than I normally am as counsellor. Anne and I were both clear that it was patterns I was out to<sup>9</sup> mash, not Anne the person. I enjoyed taking the gloves off and not pulling any punches.<sup>10</sup> I was most definitely not reassuring!

Brita's thorough planning and organizing before and throughout the weekend was simply excellent. It was detailed, structured, and well considered. This allowed us to keep a clear focus on the job at hand.

**KAROLINA WESTLING WAS A COUNSELLOR**

Giving our leader an intensive was a great idea; it brought us much closer. And to be honored with the opportunity to make a difference to one I look up to<sup>11</sup> made a great difference to me.

After this weekend I have begun to take charge, especially in matters concerning the traffic situation at the school where my children go. I have started to act instead of being passive. I am more courageous and determined to make things right! This is probably because I had to stretch way beyond the limits I'm accustomed to in order to dare to give Anne as effective and loving attention as possible. It seemed more important to go against my own patterns in order to make a difference for our leader than to let the patterns lead.

**KARL BRUUN WAS A COUNSELLOR**

I started my counselling by being close and loving. It was easy to do that, but after a while I wondered how to give better contradictions so Anne could discharge on the patterns she had told us about beforehand.

In the next session I tried to be mean against the patterns, and I pushed Anne across the limit where she asked me to stop. It didn't lead to where I thought it might, but I thought it could have an effect later on. After the session I felt terrible. I discharged on being strong (enough) as a man and at the same time caring, and especially on the feeling of being mean to a woman and that nobody would like me afterward.

Later on I discovered it was much better to establish a safe and loving relationship and to reassure Anne that whatever direction she went, we would follow her and love her. Then we could move into the contradiction that worked for her. In the thirty minutes of time I gave her, it would sometimes be most effective to give love and closeness for maybe twenty-five minutes and the contradiction for five minutes. After those sessions I discharged a lot on my own restimulations.

*continued . . .*

<sup>6</sup> At hand means before us.

<sup>7</sup> Giving time means giving counselling time.

<sup>8</sup> Contradictions to distress

<sup>9</sup> Out to means intending to.

<sup>10</sup> Taking the gloves off and not pulling any punches means not being polite and careful and not holding back.

<sup>11</sup> Look up to means admire.



## COUNSELING PRACTICE

... continued

It surprised me how much time I got in the schedule for my own discharge and how I got restimulated and discharged on important patterns. So my conclusion is that it was very helpful for me to contribute to my leader's intensive.

### **SISSEL HANSEN WAS A COUNSELLOR**

Through a unique setup we managed to give our leader an intensive she will never forget and at the same time give good sessions to the rest of us.

In our own sessions we focused on how to stretch ourselves beyond the limitations set by our patterns, in order to be as good counsellors as possible for our leader. We had to discharge our own patterns that limited us.

Because we all know our leader well and love her, it was possible to go directly and deeply into the patterns she wanted to work on.

Very important to that success, and breakthrough on many of our held-in-common patterns, was

- The great effort Brita made to make it happen and the brilliant insight she had into what was needed
- The intensive being organized in such a way that we always got support for our work as counsellors
- The love between us and that we all were dedicated to working on this
- The possibility of discharging the distresses that come up among us
- That the leader was willing to lay her patterns in our hands.

### **PRACTICAL DETAILS FROM BRITA HELLEBORG**

The timetable was two hours of intensive then an hour-and-a-half break for meals, rest, moving our bodies, and so on. I focused on changing the counsellor for Anne on the hour or the half hour, even if the previous session had started late. We synchronised our watches at the start.

On both Friday and Saturday we had three periods of intensive, each with a group of four counsellors. In each period, two people were counselling Anne. One of them was the main counsellor, and the other was a support counsellor preparing to be the main counsellor after thirty minutes. The two others in the group had a session in that half hour. The two counsellors not in the group had a two-hour-long session. In this way everyone got a long session each day.

## **Holding the Whole Picture in One's Mind**

It is nice to have your letter with your confession that getting a good look<sup>1</sup> at the RC Community discouraged you. I am pleased, because of course every other time<sup>2</sup> I look at the RC Community, I am discouraged too. It seems to me that it should go so much faster, that people should grow and achieve, since it's so easy to do when they do it right . . . but then with the alternate looks I take at it, people *are* doing it, and then I'm reassured and sometimes enthused again.

I have written about this somewhere, about how hard it is to hold the whole picture in one's mind at once—the positive side and the negative side of it—and that if I could manage to do that, instead of jumping back and forth in my attitude from one to the other, I think I would be very powerful. I continue to try.

On the one hand,<sup>3</sup> there are always a bunch of whining, mixed-up, vacillating Co-Counselors, as you say. And on the other hand, there is X— going ahead against incredible difficulties, there is Y— stepping clean out<sup>4</sup> of her terror to enthuse and inspire people, and there is Z— giving real political leadership that she thinks up<sup>5</sup> herself.

So let's see if you can integrate the two pictures before I do. And then we will go even faster than we are going now, which really isn't too bad.

*Harvey Jackins*<sup>6</sup>

From a letter written in 1987

<sup>1</sup> Getting a good look means looking carefully.

<sup>2</sup> In this context, every other time means alternating times.

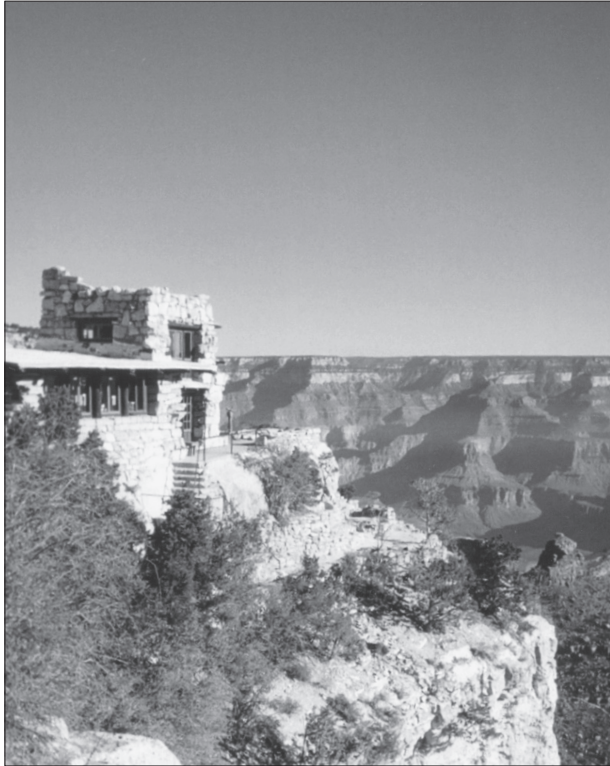
<sup>3</sup> On the one hand means from one perspective.

<sup>4</sup> Clean out means all the way out.

<sup>5</sup> Thinks up means thinks of.

<sup>6</sup> Harvey Jackins was the founder and first International Reference Person of the Re-evaluation Counseling Communities.





GRAND CANYON, ARIZONA, USA • VICTOR NICASSIO

## RC Teachers, Communicate Anew

We have just begun an RC e-mail discussion list for RC teachers. This list will provide excellent opportunities for RC teachers to share their knowledge and perspectives about communicating RC. Members of the list will be able to ask questions, check their judgment, and share their experiences with many hundreds of other RC teachers.

If you are an RC teacher, please consider joining this list, soon.

To join, you need to be a certified RC teacher and (if English is your first language) have a subscription to *Present Time*. Then you simply need to e-mail us at <ircc@rc.org> with your current e-mail address, phone number, and home address, so that we can update our records.

*Tim Jackins  
and Diane Shisk*



## You live—a poem of love

Because someone bore the pain  
Walked the mile  
Tread down the dark channels of impossibilities  
Spoke into the nothingness  
Brought fire into the wilderness  
You live.

Because someone denied the negative  
Negated the tragedies  
Wove gold from the straw of dreams  
Taught the wind to obey  
Fought disaster every day  
You live.

Because someone chose to say yes  
Erected a wall of care  
Paid the price of eternity  
Silenced the voices of doom  
Destiny secreted within a womb  
You live.

Because someone stood in line  
Ran the race  
Filled the voids with laughter  
Sprinkled wisdom amidst the tears  
Sang the songs of freedom  
You live.

Because someone dared to love  
Wrote your name  
Within the rainbows of tomorrow  
Placed the stars within your reach  
Celebrated your every challenge  
You live.

Because someone cherished the truth  
Gathered the roots  
Rehearsed the reasons why you could be  
Deposited hope within your soul  
Spoke knowledge into your being  
You live.

*Rodney D. Coates*  
Miami University, Oxford, Ohio, USA

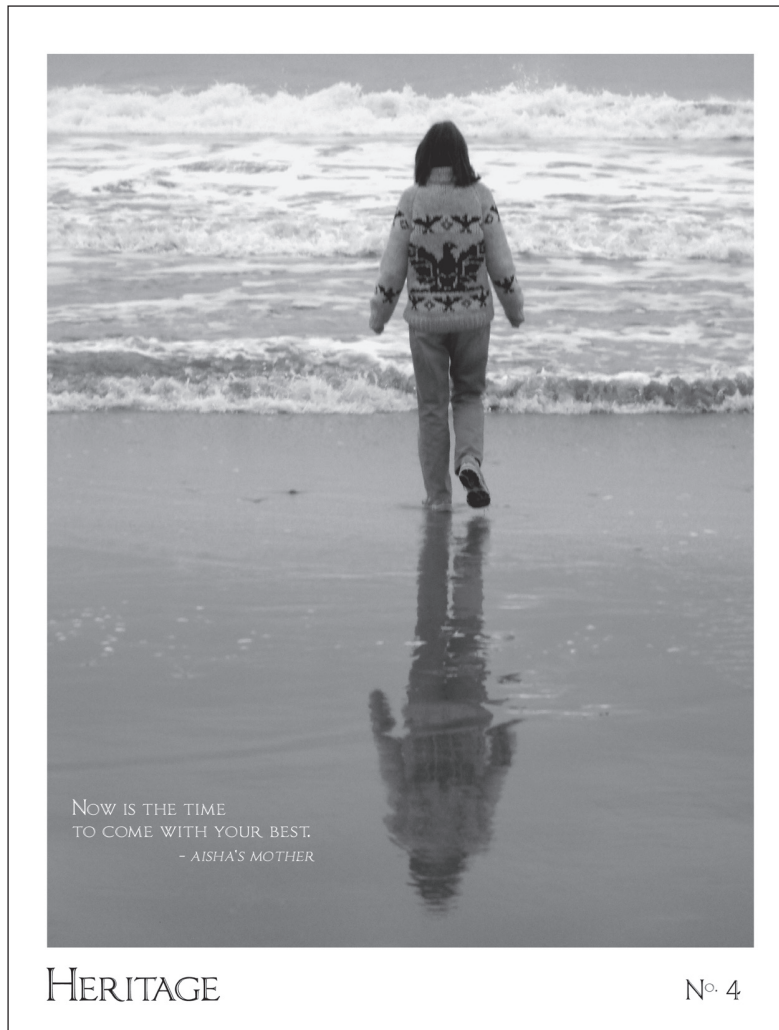
Don't miss . . .

## **Heritage No. 4!**

**The new issue of the RC journal  
about Native liberation  
(the first since 1995)**

- A hundred and twenty-eight pages filled with interviews of Native people from many tribes
- The Draft Liberation Policy for Indigenous People
- Beautiful photos
- Sharing about reclaiming language, victories with families, wide-world Native liberation, counseling on genocide, and much, much more

*For ordering information, see page 109.*







## The Word "Fight" and Its Use in RC



*A letter written by Patty Wipfler,  
the International Liberation Reference Person for Parents, in response to a question*

Dear X—,

Thanks for your thinking here. I agree that when we use the word "fight," we need to think whether a less confrontational framework would work to express what we mean.

However, there are many times and places when fight is exactly what is meant, in an almost literal sense, and I don't think we can escape, with good and loving intentions, the need to use all our strength and grit. Inside Co-Counseling sessions, we sometimes need to fight to contradict fear or to counter a client's chronic pattern with an unwelcome direction. Outside of sessions, it can and does take a fight to gain a more re-emergent situation in an oppressive situation.

Inside sessions, a fight is sometimes the only way to effectively counter fear. In working with children, for instance, I have learned over the years that there's almost no way for a child to discharge heavy fear other than to feel deeply threatened and to fight his or her counselor. Children thrash, writhe, hit, kick, bite, scratch, head-butt, and pinch while discharging fear. To people who don't have a deep understanding of RC, it looks like a long, drawn-out fight, for sure. And often it starts as a fight—a child will aggressively attack an adult or another child, throw things, or slam furniture to the ground. Not pretty. But for the child, the choice is either to lead a limited existence or to fight hard.

With an adult who is thinking and understands how to help, this "fight" is actually a partnership. The child is offloading fear, and the adult is providing safety, thinking, and enough resistance that the child can reach the depths of fear, panic, and terror in the arms of the adult. It *is* a fight. And it is necessary. Without this all-out<sup>1</sup> struggle, the fear stays lodged within. I am not sure about us grown-ups, but I would venture to guess that we remain far too passive in our sessions with one another. When it looks more like a fight, as in physical counseling, a deeper layer of fear can discharge because the client is spending more of his or her energy countering early helplessness and less of it reassuring the counselor.

<sup>1</sup> All-out means fully engaged in.

And in a protracted struggle with reactionary forces (think civil rights movement, for instance, or a parent's efforts to get adequate services for a special-needs child in the current economic environment) fight is exactly the right word, in my view. Yes, there's work to do. Yes, it's important to remember that people are good even though you are opposing them in the middle of the fight. But a fight it is.

What is confusing is the fact that, in a fight against someone or some system that is unthinking, there are so many options for initiative and not all of the initiatives that will work will look like a fight. The effort to befriend people, the effort to listen, the effort to stay principled, the effort to stand up without knocking others over—all these can be excellent fight tactics. Externally you wouldn't necessarily see a fight. But inside the person who is taking initiative, getting sessions, scorning helplessness and hopelessness, you would see a fight. A good one.

To keep working, and keep thinking, as clients in our sessions, I think we need to reach for that part of ourselves that *wants* to fight what's wrong out there, the part that never had a parent hold us while we battled our fears until they discharged. Underneath our energy for a good fight is a valuable resource—the energy and will that it takes to persist and keep thinking.

One of the directions I think Tim<sup>2</sup> models so well is reaching for the attitude, "I love a good battle." It allows us to discharge at a level that "doing work on" just doesn't touch. Maybe children who've had the privilege of many good, hard, battling sessions wouldn't need to gather themselves in that way to counter fear, but I am quite sure we're not there yet.

Thanks for putting your thinking forward. It makes sense to question our mental framework again and again—I do agree!

Palo Alto, California, USA

<sup>2</sup> Tim Jackins



LK

The following four pages contain excerpts from a discussion, on the e-mail discussion list for RC Community members, about time, tasks, and technology.

## Reclaiming Time in the “Information Age”

A while back I was reflecting on how much busier we all are, especially in relation to the 1970s, '80s, and '90s. I remember having much more time to do things. The pace was slower. It was easy to set aside time for several Co-Counseling sessions a week and to be with friends. (I still do, but making the time seems more difficult.) I usually attribute the increased busyness to the tight economic times and the ongoing collapse of the economic system. These are factors, but not the only ones.

In a Co-Counseling session it occurred to me that there was more relaxed time before the “information age,” which now has us spending hours each day on the computer, on cell phones or iPhones, texting, and using all the other technological advances that weren't available in previous decades. It may not seem obvious, but I think this has made a huge difference in our lives and helps to explain why so many people are under a lot of stress.

I sit down at the computer to see what e-mail has come in. Often I get distracted two or three times and start one thing, respond to another, check a web page, and so on. At some point I realize that I haven't yet finished the first task.

I'm now discharging and beginning to think about how to reorganize my time. I'm trying to make reading and organizing my e-mails more efficient. I'm prioritizing getting together with friends at the expense of maybe not getting everything done. I'm planning to start a log of each task I start at the computer so that I can keep track of what I'm doing. I'm also going to (try to) limit the amount of time I spend at the computer in one sitting.

I'd like to hear others' thinking about this and what they've figured out about how to do things smarter and in a more relaxed and efficient way.

*Pam Geyer*  
Bellaire, Texas, USA



STEVE BANBURY

## Leave Room for the “Big Rocks”

I, too, have noticed a difference between available time now and what was available in the 1970s and '80s.

The information age has given us many more choices and ways to connect. I remember growing up in a small Southern U.S. town where the pace of life was slow and choices were limited. If you wanted to get a new pair of blue jeans, you had two choices, not twenty. The development of capitalism has given us more choices, many of them redundant and wasteful. The society is deeper into collapse now, too. This is not only restimulating, it also means we have to deal with the effects. I notice that there are many more opportunities to be distracted by the above.

Someone told me about a non-RC workshop on time management. The presenter began by filling a

jar with large rocks. He held it up and asked the participants if the jar was full. They said no. Then he added small pebbles to the jar and



HELEN PARKIN

asked if it was full. Some said yes, others no. He then added sand and asked if it was full. All said yes. He then added water, and everyone laughed and agreed that it was finally full.

He asked people what they had learned. They replied that there was more room for things in the jar than they had thought possible. He said yes, that was true, but that if you didn't put the big rocks in first then other smaller things could fill up the jar and there would be no room for the big rocks.

I try to remember to ask myself at the beginning of each day, “Okay, what are the big rocks that need to go in the jar first, and what can I let go of?” I take time to discharge the pull to put the sand and water in the jar first.

*Henry Hall*  
Tallahassee, Florida, USA

## Time on the Internet Mostly Wasted?

I read a book that suggested that our time on the Internet is mostly wasted. The author suggested establishing policies of checking e-mail only once a day and going on the Internet only if there is information one absolutely needs.

I tried this and found that I suddenly had more time available than I knew what to do with. I was able to catch up on some long neglected projects. I had more time for leisure as well. It turned out<sup>1</sup> that I could do

just fine without the information on the web sites and listserves I had been trying to keep up with.<sup>2</sup>

I know for me there is something addictive about using information technology. It probably goes back to a childhood in which television substituted for friends and family.

*Glenn Johnson*  
Greenfield, Massachusetts, USA

<sup>1</sup> Turned out means resulted.

<sup>2</sup> Keep up with means keep abreast of.



LK





ROME, ITALY • PHYLLIS KESSLER

## Discharging About Time

Thank you, Pam, for bringing up this thought-provoking topic. With so many more items (including checking e-mails, listening to voice mails, and looking at various web sites) on my list of things to do each day, my patterns of urgency and “scarcity” (of time) are almost always up.<sup>1</sup> At the end of the day I often wonder, “Where did my day go?” and worry, “How will I get everything done tomorrow?”

I have been able to discharge on this with two contrasting directions. The first is, “I have way too much time on my hands!”<sup>2</sup> which usually leads to laughter and sometimes tears as I think of how great it would be to actually have (or be able to allow myself) free time.

The second direction is, “I’m trapped—this is unfair!” which usually causes me to rage or sometimes cry, due to feeling overwhelmed. Recently I’ve tried (with difficulty!) to move away from dwelling on feeling victimized and discharge on the feelings of being trapped as a child in a family with a lot of distresses and critical patterns and in the birth canal during my difficult birth.

Terri D’Amato  
Landenberg, Pennsylvania, USA

<sup>1</sup> In this context, up means active.

<sup>2</sup> On my hands means at my disposal.

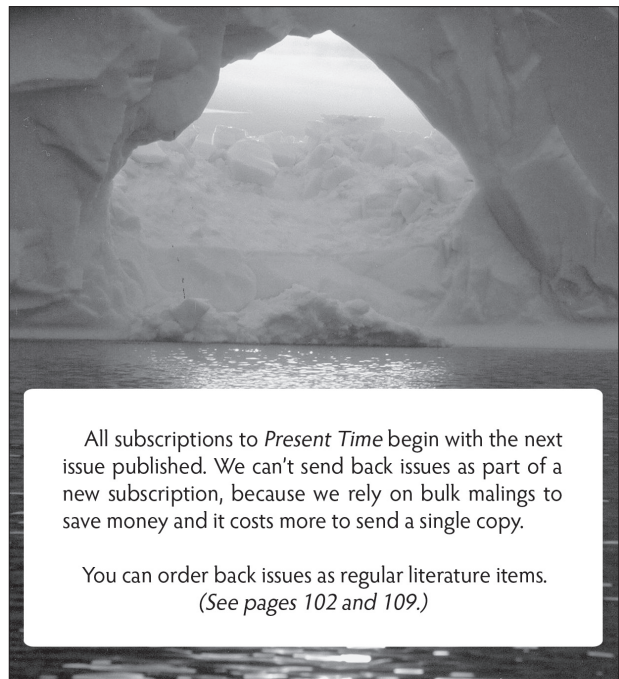
## The Same Supply of Moments

“You have exactly the same supply of moments each day that everyone else has, so there must be enough of them. You have all there is. There is nothing that needs to be done that can’t be done.”

Harvey Jackins  
From *The Rest of Our Lives*, page 3



KK



All subscriptions to *Present Time* begin with the next issue published. We can’t send back issues as part of a new subscription, because we rely on bulk mailings to save money and it costs more to send a single copy.

You can order back issues as regular literature items.  
(See pages 102 and 109.)

SWEDEN • LEENA BJORKLAND

## Re-evaluating Television and Other Technology

I have spent the last year teaching young children. As a result, I now spend significantly less time on the computer, using the telephone, and so on. I cannot believe how much more I accomplish when I spend my days in face-to-face contact with other humans rather than communicating through technology. I also sleep better, eat better, and have an overall better quality of life.

Several years ago at an RC women's conference I led a topic group on television. We worked on early memories of television.

Several things were clear:

- It is important to make lots of space for clients to show their excitement about their memories of television, especially their favorite programs and characters.
- Pulls to watch television often come from heavy feelings of boredom, isolation, and loneliness.
- We could discharge for a *long time* on our memories of television, and doing so would probably move many distresses related to reality and closeness.

Everyone who came to that group was born in the 1970s and grew up watching color television. I would imagine that discharging on early experiences of radio, black and white television, color television, digital television, and the Internet would require different kinds of contradictions\*—because each technology has built into it (is designed from) a different perspective on the nature of reality.

Nikki Stewart  
Washington, D.C., USA

\* Contradictions to distress

## Finding Contradictions to Busyness Distress

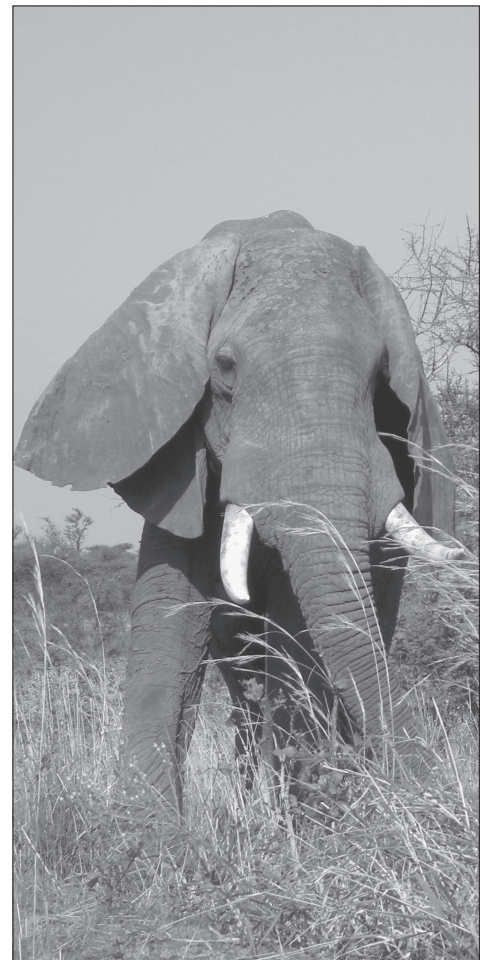
I live a busy life. For some years I've discharged regularly on this, using directions people have suggested on this list. I'm now finding it most useful to discharge while remembering when I had lots of time and no obligations. Many memories are back in my childhood, before I was ten years old, when I was playing around our apartment building.

As a policy and for practical reasons, I read my e-mail once a day, mostly early in the morning or late in the evening. Once busy with e-mail, there is always more than I can deal with in the hour or two I want to spend on it, so I tend to go on longer, with some urgency to hurry and finish it all. Recently, early in the morning, I decided to stop after forty-five minutes instead of the sixty I had in mind. I went to work fifteen minutes earlier than planned, and all that day I had a feeling of having more than enough time. After that experience, I have found it easier to organize my own contradictions.\*

Another useful thing is to ride my bike to Co-Counseling sessions, shopping, and so on, instead of using my car, even if it takes a lot longer to get where I'm going. I stay more relaxed, and it is better for me, and the environment.

Brigitte Theeuwes  
Nijmegen, Gelderland, The Netherlands

\* Contradictions to distress



TIM ESSER-HAINES

## Ending an Addiction to Pornography

This year I gave up an addiction to pornography that spanned more than forty years. I had discharged on this addiction and battled against it for many years before making a decision to end it. The decision I made included a resolve to fight off the effects of the pornography industry as well as a commitment to removing my early sexual distress.

The pornography industry is huge, and the people who work in it know about people's particular sexual distresses. Internet pornography uses search engines<sup>1</sup> that are very specific, leading a person to thousands of web sites with millions of pictures in his or her category of distress. Internet pornography is free, easy to keep secret, accessible in the privacy of one's own home or some other private space, and, "thanks" to more and more powerful technology, instantaneously available. It is also well-crafted to provoke one's heaviest sexual feelings, as well as being heart-poundingly scary.

Pornography exploits the natural drive to procreate and the way sex feels good to the individual human being. It compels the viewer to surrender control of his or her thinking and to give up<sup>2</sup> taking charge of when to act on sexual feelings and when not to. It restimulates early feelings of victimization along with the desire to act those feelings out at others. Pornography is not really about sex; it uses sex as a vehicle for aggression. Many of the fantasies involved in pornography are about submission and domination, or even sexual abuse and rape.

As I worked on giving up pornography, I also needed parallel sessions on being a perpetrator. (My being a perpetrator was by no means limited to times when I acted out sexual feelings at people. It included times when I was mean or bad-tempered toward my family, people at work, RC Community members, drivers in other cars, telephone marketers, and so on.) When I first started having those sessions, I felt like I was the person who was getting hurt. But as I worked more on the



CAMPS BAY, CAPE TOWN, SOUTH AFRICA • MYRNA CHARRY

feelings, I realized I was acting out childhood victimization at others, especially early sexual distress. This is subsiding and becoming easier to discharge as the impact of a lifetime of pornography wears off.

There are millions of pornography addicts in the United States alone. Through restimulation, pornography can trigger chemical reactions in one's physiology and, like mind-altering drugs, can create a feeling of intoxication. Unlike mind-altering drugs, it is free to the portion of the population with access to computers and the worldwide web. It is also everywhere—not just in the

sex industry. Beer advertisements, children's fashion, popular movies, teen novels, billboards, cake design, tee shirts, gallery shows, contemporary music, tabloids and comics, all reflect the general trend toward pornography. Drugs affect people for a long time after they use them, but pornographic images stay in people's minds for the rest of their lives, and remain "radioactive"<sup>3</sup> until they discharge enough about them. Our society offers a cheap "high"<sup>4</sup> in exchange for submission to the sexual imagery that triggers restimulation of early abuse.

In my family, like in many families in the 1950s and the first part of the 1960s, sexuality was a repressed topic. Violence, child abuse, affairs, and incest were kept hidden from other family members and especially from people outside of the family. We were able to go from immigrant status to middle class in two generations by hiding our difficulties and showing our strengths. Family members had secrets, and my older relatives probably died without ever telling theirs. I can only assume I was not the first family member to have sexual compulsions, but when no one tells you their secrets, you feel like you are the only one. You never learn that your distress has persisted for many generations and is actually fading. It is not surprising I gravitated toward an addiction that involves secrecy.

<sup>1</sup> A search engine is computer software used to search data for specified information.

<sup>2</sup> In this context, give up means abandon.

<sup>3</sup> "Radioactive" means highly charged.

<sup>4</sup> "High" means pleasant-feeling intoxication.



Even when a pornography addiction is concealed, the person who is addicted feels stigmatized because the society does not allow the addiction to be shown in public the way smoking and drinking can be. A layer of shame is added to an already complicated compulsion, and the addicted person is not inclined to share it even in a Co-Counseling session.

Encouraged by the work on early sexual memories that was going on<sup>5</sup> in my RC Region, I dared myself to talk about and discharge on pornography. It was helpful to work on it openly, even if I was not able to end the addiction. At lots of RC workshops, especially men's workshops, I led topic groups for men discharging on sexual compulsions. In these groups I tried to be honest about my struggle and invited other men to tell their secrets while noticing how that felt. Sometimes we had large groups of men, and each of us took a short turn in front of the whole group because everyone wanted to stay together and see for himself how widespread this hurt was. During one meeting I had to take client time in front of the group after each man took his turn; otherwise I would never have kept my attention out enough to counsel everyone. Each time I was client I asked the group, "Am I the only one?" or "Is mine worse than yours?" I was reassured when the other men shook their heads no and laughed.

I tried to stop using pornography a few times. Initially I quit by using willpower, but that backfired badly.<sup>6</sup> I used willpower because I became urgent about how disapproving I felt about myself. It wasn't really a decision, and it wasn't really for me. I tried a twelve-step program<sup>7</sup> for sex addicts, but without discharge the members of the group were unable to maintain a useful perspective. (I had turned away from RC because I felt alone with the addiction and didn't believe that discharge and close alliances would help.) A few years ago I quit the addiction again, but my job was too restimulating and I went back to pornography to seek comfort within feelings of self-pity. Eventually I learned to stop feeling bad about myself for practicing the addiction, but there was still a chronic layer of feeling bad due to the fact that I had not quit. If I could have discharged easily every time I resisted pornography,

*I think the reason one leaves a chronic pattern behind is simply because it is more interesting to live another way.*

I would have ended the addiction years ago. But addictions are built on being shut down,<sup>8</sup> and that is what you get to face<sup>9</sup> when you stop, and that is what you have to feel when you are done masturbating to pornography.

I realized I needed a better life. I began discharging about replacing the addiction with a life that truly made me feel good about myself. As I envisioned the details of that life, I gradually began taking my first steps toward it. I tried doing things that had always scared me, and

I used RC to report back about my attempts. New opportunities were offered to me by people outside of RC, like leading meetings or forming friendships with wide-world leaders, and I could see there would be no room<sup>10</sup> for my addiction.

I discharged about how I could no longer afford the restimulation and bad feelings brought on by a hidden sexual obsession.

One beautiful morning last summer I woke up and decided I would not do the addiction that day.

*continued . . .*

<sup>8</sup> Shut down means numbed by distress.  
<sup>9</sup> Face means confront.  
<sup>10</sup> Room means time or space.



ARIZONA, USA • LISA VOSS

<sup>5</sup> Going on means occurring.  
<sup>6</sup> Backfired badly means made things much worse than before.  
<sup>7</sup> A twelve-step program is a program and guiding principles for recovery from addiction, compulsion, or other behavioral problems.

## COUNSELING PRACTICE

... continued

An imaginary door opened, and I stepped through and closed it without looking back. I realized that the door might not be available again for a while and that I needed to act and then discharge with my Co-Counselors. I sensed I could make the same decision every day of my life and that it would not be too hard for me in any one moment. In that moment, while standing in front of my computer, I decided to never use pornography again. I had no idea when I woke up that that would be the day. Looking back on that morning, it was as if I had unconsciously snuck up on<sup>11</sup> the addiction and ambushed it.

It has been important to know that I can fight off the oppressive effects of society. I tell myself now that society cannot control me this way ever again. I want the life of a revolutionary, and I want to know what it truly means to live in the world as a Co-Counselor. As an RC teacher I want to invite others to make similar decisions, to take on<sup>12</sup> the seemingly impossible. The only way to find out what life can be like without an addiction is to quit. In the end I became curious to know what life would be like ten, twenty, or thirty years after quitting a chronic addiction. I think the reason

one leaves a chronic pattern behind is simply because it is more interesting to live another way.

I continue to need big sessions about the addiction and the early sexual hurts that fueled it. I will continue to call groups for men discharging on sexual compulsions. Given the extent of abuse in my childhood, I have a list of compulsions I need to work on, but the ending of pornography is certainly a milestone in the continuum of the sessions I need to have and a giant shock to my early sexual distress.

The decision to quit has just started having an effect. In my new life I'm closer to my daughter and we spend more time together than ever before. I'm nicer to my wife and more helpful around the house. I have a dream about the kind of work I want to do, and even if I'm far from that dream, I'm happy knowing I've found my calling.<sup>13</sup> I take better care of my health, and I get more done than ever before. I can't wait<sup>14</sup> to enjoy all of the benefits of a life without a pornography addiction.

*Anonymous*  
USA

<sup>11</sup> Snuck up on means stealthily approached.

<sup>12</sup> In this context, take on means confront and do something about.

<sup>13</sup> My calling means what I really want to do with my life.

<sup>14</sup> Can't wait means am very eager.

### **A Recent Introduction to RC**

(CD 13)

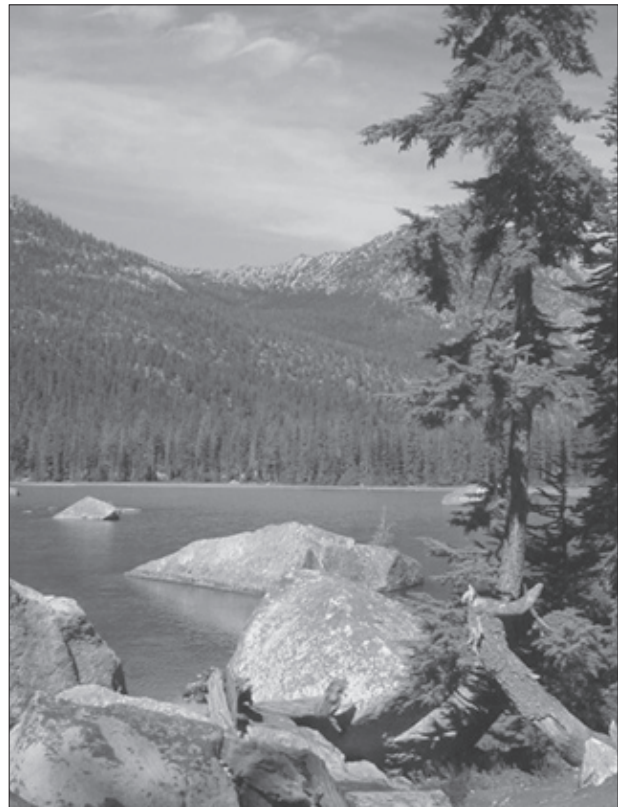
Every other month, Tim Jackins gives a public introduction to RC at Re-evaluation Counseling Community Resources, in Seattle, Washington, USA. One of his goals in giving these talks is to give them freshly each time, speaking directly to the audience. This is a CD of one of his introductory talks.

\$10 (U.S.), plus shipping and handling.  
To order, see page 109.

*(This is one of the RC Teacher Updates,  
listed on page 104.)*



KK



BARBARA BORING

## Medication

In the newly revised Guidelines for the Re-evaluation Counseling Communities, Guideline G.2. talks about how our irrational society manipulates us via sex, money, and medication. I'd like to expand upon how we are manipulated by means of medication.

Drug companies produce health-related products, but their primary goal is to make money. In the past, drug companies used good scientific research to find cures for diseases. However, starting about twenty-five years ago, their main focus shifted from research to marketing. When they started directly advertising to consumers on television and elsewhere, their sales and profits skyrocketed.<sup>1</sup>

In recent years, many of the "new" drugs the drug companies have introduced are simply combinations of two older drugs. These "new" drugs can be patented and consequently sold for a higher price during the life of the patent, which in the United States is seventeen years.

Also, drug companies are always looking for new uses for existing drugs. Selling old drugs for new uses increases sales and profits without the significant expenditure on research needed to develop genuinely new drugs.

These marketing strategies are based on a business model, which has profit as the main goal, and on the unexamined assumption that the less uncomfortable life is, the better.

I am not arguing in favor of discomfort or pain, but as RCers we know that feelings of all kinds

<sup>1</sup> Skyrocketed means rapidly and abruptly increased.

are often restimulations of old hurts, including old illnesses and injuries. It is in this context that Guideline G.2. directs us to discharge the distresses surrounding our use of medication. It does not guide us to stop taking medications that are essential to our survival or to the controlling of serious physical illnesses.

Guideline G.2. encourages us to look at and discharge about taking medication for anything. Does it make sense to take pain killers for aches and pains? Does it make sense to take medication for sleep? Does it make sense to take medication for a variety of ailments?

The Guideline also encourages us to discharge about the serious conditions some of us have, such as diabetes, coronary artery disease, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, seizures, or asthma. All of these conditions may become less severe after we discharge the restimulations that are causing them or are at least tangled up with them. Some of them may go away completely after thorough discharge of the related distress.

When we discharge, we also become more resistant to illnesses, more able to recover from injury or surgery, and more likely to make healthy choices about work, rest, diet, and exercise.

We don't know how much disease would remain if we were re-emerged from our distresses, society was rational, and the planet was in good shape.<sup>2</sup> Until then, because some illnesses progress faster than we've been able to discharge them, certain medications are life saving or essential to our daily functioning. For now at least, many conditions require medication or other forms of medical care.

The intent of Guideline G.2. is to encourage us to discharge the distresses related to our health and the use of medication so that we can think rationally in these areas.

*Joe Gallagher, M.D.  
International Liberation  
Reference Person for Physicians  
Watsonville, California, USA*

<sup>2</sup> Shape means condition.



JAPAN • DIANE SHISK



## Experimenting with Family Work

My husband and I have both been in RC, and part of our current RC Community, for over a decade. Before the birth of our second child, we met with our Area Reference Person and Alternate Area Reference Person to discharge and then create a plan to provide resource for our family around the time of our new baby's arrival. We modeled the plan on a project done by another Community in a similar situation. We had decided that having extra resource at this time could make a big difference for all of us, especially for our four-and-a-half-year-old daughter. We were delighted with the idea of helping the two siblings have the best shot possible<sup>1</sup> at a good start to their relationship.

With the help of our organizer, who is my regular Co-Counselor, we set things up so that for the two weeks following the birth two Co-Counselors would come over each evening to give one-way time to both my husband and me. While one counselor was giving time to one of us, the other would be spending time with the other parent who was with the newborn. My sister, who is also a Co-Counselor and was going to be in town for a month as support, agreed to spend most of the evenings with our daughter—part of it doing “special time.”<sup>2</sup> The point was for us as parents to be well discharged and have better attention for our children, and for our children to take whatever sessions they needed during this transition time.

We appointed my husband as leader of the project, and he started each evening by having us all check in as a group. During this time he let the counselors know of any specific needs our family had. My sister had a mini-session at the beginning of the evening and again at the end, and the counselors had a mini-session in between giving time to my husband and to me. At the end of each evening the counselors did a short session together before going home. My brother, who lives with us, spent a few evenings with our daughter and my husband's regular Co-Counselor, who is our daughter's main RC ally, and gave our daughter special time a few times, to give my sister some breaks.

Over the two weeks, I discharged well in my sessions. I got to work on having a boy and what it had been like for me as a baby, but mostly on feelings about loving our daughter and how much things were going to change, how precious

our four and a half years alone together had been, and how good it had felt to give her my undivided and best attention. Our daughter got to have a few significant sessions with my husband and me, usually after the counselors had gone home. She flourished with all her time with my sister, and this strengthened their relationship. Our newborn soon got used to our attention and seemed to learn how to use it well. He began taking a session every evening for one to three hours, usually after our daughter had gone to sleep. My husband and I would alternate who was his main counselor, but both of us, and sometimes my sister as well, would be paying attention to him in those late evening hours. The sessions went on consistently for a month.

Fortunately our son had a quick and easy birth, at home in our bedroom, into my husband's loving hands. He was welcomed tenderly and lovingly by his sister. Minutes later all four of us were in the birth tub getting to know each other. Our daughter has never shown confusion about our son's presence in our family and so far has seen him as just another person she gets to love. She is tender and loving and fiercely protective of him. And she is still excellent at demanding our attention. Since having a second child, my husband and I are both working like dogs<sup>3</sup> but also doing a great job remembering that we are in this together and doing the best we can at each moment. We have been doing well at being each other's allies. Having the excellent resource from our family and our RC Community helped make all of this a reality.

*Brook Broughton*  
San Francisco, California, USA

<sup>3</sup> Working like dogs means working very hard.

<sup>1</sup> Best shot possible means best chance possible.

<sup>2</sup> “Special time” is an activity, developed in RC family work, during which an adult puts a young person in full charge of their mutual relationship, as far as the young person can think. For a specific period of time, the adult lets the young person know that he or she is willing to do anything the young person wants to do. The adult focuses his or her entire attention on the young person and follows his or her lead, whether the young person tells, or simply shows, the adult what she or he wants to do.



PRAGUE, CZECH REPUBLIC • PAT FISCHER

## Cycling with Attention LK

I've been exploring cycling with attention<sup>1</sup> here in the San Francisco Bay (California, USA) area. I've invited Co-Counselors to join me in riding their bikes to and/or from RC workshops.

So far we've all been experienced cyclists. Riding in a group has been powerful. We've met up<sup>2</sup> at locations along the way for mini-sessions and water breaks. For a couple of workshops, as great as the workshops were, my highlight was our group bike ride. Riding up a long hill and then downhill, to either of our two main workshop sites, we have an incredible nighttime view of San Francisco and the Golden Gate Bridge. There is also a flatter route through a long tunnel, where it is great fun to yell and make noise.

At the workshops, I've led topic tables on places to bike, how people have been hurt cycling, and the fear that keeps some people from acting on their desire to ride more often. People want to ride for a variety of reasons—for everyday errands, to get to work or school, to be with family, for recreation, for health and exercise, to save money, to care for the environment and address global climate change, and for the pure fun of riding a bike.

I've brought my tandem (two-person) bicycle to workshops for people to try. So far no new cyclists have taken me up on<sup>3</sup> my offer to ride on the back of the tandem to the workshop site, but I think it is only a matter of time until someone will.

<sup>1</sup> With attention means with other people's attention.

<sup>2</sup> Met up means gotten together.

<sup>3</sup> Taken me up on means accepted.

In workshop play breaks, I've organized ways for people to learn to ride or to try out being on a bike, with the attention of a counselor.

So far, most of the riders to and from the workshops have been men and most of the people attending the topic tables and the bicycle play breaks have been women. In the wide world, I educate people about cycling and there have always been more women in my classes than men. I think bicycling contributed to the nineteenth- and twentieth-century women's liberation movements. I am certain it will be part of creating a fun, sustainable,

and just economy and society in this century for everyone, regardless of his or her constituency.

My vision is that the San Francisco Bay Community will be known for people cycling to workshops. I imagine that workshop leaders, too, will ride part or all of the way and arrive refreshed and ready to lead. After that—the rest of the United States, and the world!

*Jason Serafino-Agar*  
San Francisco and Berkeley,  
California, USA

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



CAROL DEVENIR

He learned, among other things, that teaching was the most rigorous form of learning. He learned to learn more from his students than they did from him; like so many other things, it was the reverse of what it seemed to be, and colleges existed to bring together groups of young people to teach some chosen few of their elders the things that they knew about life, that the old teachers had been in danger of forgetting.

*K.S. Robinson*  
From *The Years of Rice and Salt*, 2002

## "I Have a Friend Who . . ."

In my work with men I have found a useful tool that seems to allow them to discharge more easily on topics that would otherwise feel too difficult to work on. It also seems to allow them to admit to feelings and thoughts they feel are forbidden or shameful.

It's like this: The client has a friend who has some thoughts or feelings that the friend is unable to talk about, so the friend has asked the client to talk about them for him. Both the client and the counselor know that the client is really talking about himself, but neither of them say this directly. Instead, both client and counselor refer to the friend throughout.

"What would your friend say about X?"

"Oh, he would probably say . . ."

I have a hunch that it works so well because the distress can be talked about as separate from the individual. The client does not need to "own" the distress.

I have used this tool as a way to help men talk about their lives, and their dreams and fantasies, more openly.

*Client:* "I have this friend who dreams about XYZ."

*Counselor:* "XYZ? Would you ever dream of that?"

*Client:* "Me? No, I'd never dream of anything like that! But he does. Can you believe it?!"

*Counselor:* "Yeah, you're too smart to go around dreaming XYZ. You'd never do that. So what happens in this dream of his?"

———\*———

*Client:* "I have a friend who did \_\_\_\_\_. I can't imagine how he could come up with<sup>1</sup> an idea like that."

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<sup>1</sup> Come up with means think of.



JIM MADDRY

*Counselor:* "Just incredible!"

*Client:* "Well, I certainly wouldn't do anything like that. But he did!"

*Counselor:* "No, you'd never dream of doing anything like that! Absolutely not. But tell me more about what your friend did."

A light, playful, warm, and delighted tone from me as counselor, and agreeing how

the client is too smart or too good to do or think such a thing—"thank goodness you're not like that!"—seem to help the client not get lost in shame. If the client starts talking about himself, it has been useful to check whether it is really his friend he is talking about—"that was your friend who thought that, right?"

It's led to lots of laughter, shaking, sweating, and bursts of sobbing.

I have also used this approach to give appreciations to men who otherwise have difficulty in hearing direct appreciations. A light and understated tone has worked well.

"I have this friend. He's a bit shy, so he asked me to tell you that he thinks you are the kind of man he admires. I think he likes you. A lot. But he wouldn't tell that to your face, because it would be far too embarrassing. So I'm passing it on to you for him. He mentioned something about your warm smile and your humour, too. He was stumbling for words—he's not very good at this sort of thing."

As counselor it is challenging to find the right tone, the right angle, and the right amount of cheekiness.<sup>2</sup> When I've used this tool in support groups, it's also been important to make sure that the client tells the story *for himself*, so he gets to discharge, and not as a way to entertain the rest of the group. This is not about clowning<sup>3</sup> or trying to be funny, but I've had a lot of fun with it.

*Simon James-Eide*  
Oslo, Norway

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<sup>2</sup> Cheekiness is insolent boldness, flaunted self-assurance.

<sup>3</sup> Clowning means acting like a clown.



## Thinking About Goal 2

*Emily Bloch*  
*International Liberation Reference*  
*Person for Young People*

At the 2001 World Conference, the Re-evaluation Counseling Communities adopted a goal (Goal 2) of making RC and the RC Communities accessible to young people. The goal was reaffirmed by the 2005 and 2009 World Conferences. Specifically, the goal is “that the Re-evaluation Counseling Community put new and increased efforts into making Re-evaluation Counseling and the Re-evaluation Counseling Communities accessible to young people.”

In the eight years since the goal was created, we have made a lot of progress. More Communities have started the work that is necessary for them to think well about young people in their Communities. There are more family classes and young people’s classes than ever before. It is clear to me, from the thoughtful and committed young people and their allies I have met, that progress is being made.

Each Community is different and will face different challenges, but there are a number of things that will be useful for all Communities to work on and think about when trying to make RC more accessible to young people. Four of these are (1) adults working on the oppression of young people and what happened to them as young people;

(2) putting young people at the center and thoughtfully supporting young people’s leadership; (3) building family work<sup>1</sup> and young people’s classes and recognizing the importance of young people’s work in moving the Community forward; (4) talking about and using the words “young people’s oppression” and “young people’s liberation.”

### **ADULTS WORKING ON YOUNG PEOPLE’S OPPRESSION AND WHAT HAPPENED TO THEM AS YOUNG PEOPLE**

Young people’s oppression happens when adults cannot remember that young people are fully human and that their ideas, aspirations, and thinking are valuable. At one time all of us were young. All of us have experienced young people’s oppression. It is important that we work on what our lives were like when we were young. Our own oppressor attitudes

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

are a reflection of the hurts we acquired as young people. These hurts confuse us and make us not have attention to think about young people. Young people’s oppression is so ingrained in society that we often do not even notice it. One useful way to work is to notice where young people’s oppression exists in our lives. Working on young people’s oppression and building relationships with young people are two of the most effective ways to work on how we were hurt when we were young and to recover our full thinking.

### **PUTTING YOUNG PEOPLE AT THE CENTER AND THOUGHTFULLY SUPPORTING YOUNG PEOPLE’S LEADERSHIP**

As we get better at bringing young people into RC Communities, it continues to be important to make young people central in those Communities. This often starts with allies helping young people set up Co-Counseling sessions and join a class. Supporting the leadership of young people means supporting them to take small and manageable steps toward leadership. When young people are active in the Community, it pushes all RCers to work on the ways they were hurt as

*continued . . .*



RAMI BEN-MOSHE

## LIBERATION

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young ones. Each Community needs to build a team of committed young people and allies who can support and think about young people's leadership. The leadership of young people goes well when it is not a side project of one or two committed individuals but there is support from the local RC Community.

### **BUILDING FAMILY WORK AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S CLASSES; RECOGNIZING HOW IMPORTANT YOUNG PEOPLE'S WORK IS IN MOVING A COMMUNITY FORWARD**

Some young people are introduced to Co-Counseling through family work. Family work is an important

part of making RC accessible to young people. Young people's classes and workshops are for young people (experienced in family work or new to RC) who are interested in learning two-way counseling (Co-Counseling); they work best when they are supported by strong adult allies who are committed to young people's liberation.

Young people have important roles to play in all RC Communities. Young people have had fewer years of accumulating hurts than adults. This means that they can remember some things that many adults have forgotten, for example, the importance of play and closeness. In addition, the presence of young

people forces everyone to work on his or her own internalized young people's oppression, which moves the whole Community forward. Building family work and young people's work puts an RC Community on a fast-track to re-emergence.

### **TALKING ABOUT AND USING THE WORDS "YOUNG PEOPLE'S OPPRESSION" AND "YOUNG PEOPLE'S LIBERATION"**

Often when we are talking about or leading young people's work, we do not say the words "young people's oppression" and "young people's liberation." Young people's oppression is so much a part of our daily lives that we often assume there is no alternative. For example, oppressive practices in schools are generally seen as rational, and necessary to prepare young people to become responsible adults. Because young people's oppression is often hidden, young people can feel like things are hard and like adults treat them poorly because they (the young people) are bad or have personal failings. Hearing adults talk about young people's oppression can help young people understand why they are not being thought about well. Naming it and talking about it can help everyone to recognize it as oppression and are an important contradiction.<sup>2</sup> When we young people talk and think about young people's oppression, it helps us claim our liberation movement. When we talk about young people's liberation, we acknowledge that we are working together in an ongoing movement to end young people's oppression. Young people's liberation is an essential part of all liberation movements.

Brookline, Massachusetts, USA



SARAH BRODBAR-NEMZER

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<sup>2</sup> Contradiction to distress

## Being Allies to Young People

*A letter from Jenny Sazama, the International Liberation Reference Person for Allies to Young People, to her constituents*

Here is some thinking I've been doing about being allies to young people. I hope it will inspire you and get you thinking with me about moving young people's liberation forward.

### WHO WE ARE

We are youth workers, parents, teachers, childcare providers, friends, aunts, uncles, neighbors. We are everyone who has decided to have some kind of caring relationship with a young person.

We know how to have fun. We know how to laugh hard. We know how to love well. We're good at hanging out.<sup>1</sup> We're good dancers. We have big hearts. We haven't forgotten important things about being young. We're liberation fighters.

### OUR JOB

Our job is one of the most important jobs in the world. It requires us to be real and ourselves. Our job is

To stay close to young people and let them know that we are on their side,

To slow down and listen,

To remember how to do things at their pace, their way,

To hold on to a big and correct perspective on the world,

To hold out hope that things are possible and that people are good.

Our job is to communicate to young people that they can make a difference and can change the things they see around them, and to back<sup>2</sup> them to do it. To do that we need to do our own work to know that we can make a difference.

Our job is to become experts at young people's liberation and not just want young people to have better lives.

### ORGANIZING TO END YOUNG PEOPLE'S OPPRESSION

What we're trying to do is organize to end young people's oppression. Whenever we do this, even the slightest bit, young people get a much bigger picture of the world and a

<sup>1</sup> Hanging out means spending relaxed, unstructured time.

<sup>2</sup> Back means support.

much more powerful picture of themselves and each other. This is what we're after.<sup>3</sup>

It's a mistake to teach young people Co-Counseling or be allies to them only so they can have better lives. What we need to do is go back and remember the battles that we've fought. When we were younger, all of us were revolutionary fighters and fought against young people's oppression every day. We fought every day for what was right in our lives, and in our families and schools. Sometimes we were able to say it outright, sometimes it was in our minds, and sometimes it was in how we treated people.

Young people are born with an innate sense of what's right, and we haven't lost that. **Young people fight for it every day, and that is revolutionary.**

### NOT BEING QUIET ABOUT WHAT WE KNOW

We know a lot. Young people need to hear it from us, and adults need to hear it from us. It's good to use the words "young people's oppression." We need to talk about the oppression and explain what we know. We need to point it out to adults when we see them oppressing young people and help young people get angry about it.

### WHAT IS YOUNG PEOPLE'S OPPRESSION?

Young people are oppressed because of their age. The oppression is based on disrespect. The excuse for treating young people with disrespect is their assumed lack of experience or knowledge and their physical weakness. How the oppression shows up<sup>4</sup> includes the following:

Young people are systematically invalidated and lied to.

They are denied any voice.

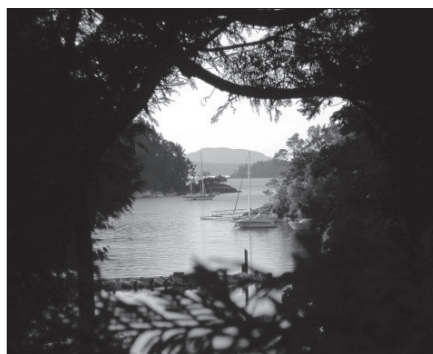
They are not given respectful attention—"Not now, dear; I don't have time."

They are physically abused.

They are denied accurate information—"Don't worry about it; you won't understand anyway"—and misinformed.

They are denied any power.

*continued . . .*



EDWARD ELBERS

<sup>3</sup> What we're after means what we're trying to do.

<sup>4</sup> Shows up means presents itself.



## LIBERATION

... continued

They are economically dependent.

They lack rights. Parents have the right to do lots of things without young people's consent. Parents have complete legal control.

There is a lack of high expectations. It is constantly wearing on young people that we don't notice the efforts they are making toward each other and toward us, and that we think they are cute.

### **FOLLOWING YOUNG PEOPLE'S LEAD**

Young people are brilliant. They are far ahead of us in many ways. If we were to discharge whatever we needed to be able to really pay attention to them, we would notice how brilliantly their minds are functioning all the time. They are our leaders.

It is our job as adults to provide information and guidance and help with things that young people don't understand yet. But this doesn't mean that we're not involving their minds.

We're not allies just for young people's own good. This is a two-way thing. Often, if we pay attention, we are learning more from them than they are from us.

Often our attention goes to how young people are hard on each other. We need to notice how they talk to each other when they want to tell each other stories or give each other information. It is often a model for us of how humans should treat each other.

### **THE HEARTBREAK OF BECOMING AN OPPRESSOR**

Adults are the only group in which everyone goes from being a member of the oppressed group to being the oppressor. There is a huge heartbreak for all of us in leaving being young people and in being unawaresly expected to just become part of adult society.

It's a basic requirement of adult society that we take part<sup>5</sup> in being oppressive to young people. This is considered normal and given no consideration, no attention. It's actually a huge heartbreak for all of us.

What happens is that we start to forget all the things we were passionate about or angry about when we were

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<sup>5</sup> Take part means participate.



LINDA O. KRAMER

younger. We forget what it was like to be young. We start feeling distant from what young people are going through and become irritated and un-understanding of their difficulties.

### **LOOKING EAGERLY AT OUR OPPRESSOR MATERIAL**

Oppressor material<sup>6</sup> is lonely. Anything that makes us feel better than or harsh toward another group isolates us. We care so much about young people that we often want to figure out how to be better allies because it's good for them, but getting rid of the oppressor material will bring us closer to everybody.

Just by being an adult in our society we act as an oppressor—even if we never have contact with young people. We participate in a society that keeps young people down. Young people's oppression is no one's fault. However, adults are put in the position of being the agents of young people's oppression. We all feel horrible about the hard ways we treat young people. But we are not bad. It is great to be an adult.

I've been assisting us adults to look openly at all the oppressive messages that run around in our heads—some of which we know are oppressive; some of which we feel justified in, even though we know they are oppressive; and some of which we have been unaware of. For example, we may still feel justified in "disciplining" a young person for "being bad."

None of us know how to say no and help young people set limits against their distresses without sounding like the young people are bad.

The lack of resources available to us parents and teachers fuels and amplifies our oppressor material. If we are tired and alone with young people for a long period of time, without discharge, we are a lot more likely to run<sup>7</sup> hard things at them than we are if there's help around.

Let's have fun with this, admit it openly, and get rid of it. We're not only doing this for young people. It's for us.

### **LIKING BEING ADULTS**

I think the world would be a very different place if we liked being adults. I think young people need this from us. We spend our whole childhoods being mistreated by, feeling angry at, feeling trapped by, adults. Then we wake up one morning, and we look in the mirror, and we realize we are one. But we haven't discharged all the feelings about adults, so it makes it hard to feel like we like ourselves, or like or trust other adults.

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<sup>6</sup> Material means distress.

<sup>7</sup> Run means act out.

What if we were to care as passionately about other adults and ourselves as we do about young people?

What if we didn't wait for adults to look at us as openly as young people do, to remember that we love them—to not get thrown off<sup>8</sup> by the way they show their struggles?

What if we were to get up in the morning and look in the mirror and like ourselves, just like we were able to do more often when we were younger? It's still us. It's still you.

It's great to be an adult. It's great to be exactly the age that we are.

We all learn so much from each other, and I learn so much from you. I'd love to hear what you've been thinking. Let me know any reactions you have to my thoughts or any other thoughts you've been having. I would also love to know about projects you've been taking on,<sup>9</sup> any way you've been an ally to a young person, or ways that you're having fun or struggling with it.

<sup>8</sup> Thrown off means distracted, diverted.

Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts, USA

<sup>9</sup> In this context, taking on means undertaking.

## Native Liberation, Colonization, and Genocide

I am excited that so many people are discharging and trying to think well about Native liberation, colonization, and genocide, as well as about racism. Without talking and discharging, things won't move! I think everyone has been confused about Native liberation, how the oppression of Native people works, and, in particular, what that means in relation to other groups of people targeted by racism.

I think about these issues because we face them in our Filipino/a and Pacific Islander workshops. I led a workshop last year on discharging the effects of colonization, militarization, imperialism, racism, and attempted genocide. (It was a great workshop and not as heavy<sup>1</sup> as the title sounds.) I have been learning by working on these issues wherever I can—doing topic tables, talking to other leaders, leading workshops, and so on. I want us all to reclaim our thinking about them.

This matters to me because I have Native heritage from the North American continent (Cherokee and Osage) and Ilocano heritage (one of the Indigenous heritages of the Philippines). People in my constituencies have experienced

genocide and colonization from different angles. For example, there is a huge range of ways Filipinos/as look and feelings they have about who is the right<sup>2</sup> one. There are Filipinos/as with African heritage (one of our roots) and light-skinned "mestizos" who clearly show the Spanish colonization of the Philippines. I'm trying to think about liberating all of my people. It is clear that I can't move things forward without looking at, in addition to skin color, feelings about who is "fully" Filipino/a, who speaks the right language, who looks the right way, who is good enough. With my people, skin color alone doesn't tell the whole story. I have to take into consideration something bigger in order to think about our liberation.

I think of colonization as the taking over and the taking of a people—their land, their culture, their language, and all of the other resources they have, including the people themselves (attempting to get their minds)—and ultimately the "genociding" of the people if they get in the way of the conquest. The people are another resource to use, use up, and destroy if necessary. Colonization is the maximum manifestation of classism (greed,

the taking of resources) and racism (the targeting of people based on skin color) and can (maybe always does?) include militarization, imperialism, and genocide.

Colonization as a policy, as a set of patterns, pre-dates what we think of today as racism. Over time, racism developed as another justification for colonization. There are few groups of people who have not been colonized at some point. Many countries without dark-skinned people are colonized (such as Ireland), but certainly in most currently colonized countries racism has played a role.

I have been getting Filipinos/as, Pacific Islanders, and other people to discharge on colonization and attempted genocide, and their relationship to them. Not surprisingly, a lot of discharging needs to be done. Many of us in RC, including people targeted by racism who have been affected by colonization, have almost never done any sessions on colonization and genocide. I counseled someone who had grown up in Africa under heavy colonialism and then lived in the United States and been in RC for years, and she had never had a session about colonization. No one had ever asked.

<sup>1</sup> In this context, heavy means solemn, serious.

<sup>2</sup> In this context, right means legitimate.

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## LIBERATION

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It's hard to get people to discharge on genocide and colonization. Especially for those whose people were colonized, it is a lot like working on early sexual memories. There isn't yet a lot of free attention around it. At the beginning it can feel heavy and overwhelming, so people aren't always eager. Once they get a little attention for it, however, things do shift and begin to make sense. People even get hopeful!

I think being in the United States, on the North American continent, we have to work on and understand what has happened to the people who were Indigenous to this land. Colonization, with attempted or actual genocide at its core, laid the groundwork for everything that came after it, including the enslavement of African-heritage people. (And, of course, it was the colonization of Africa that set up the slave trade to begin with.)

These are complex issues. Each group (each person?) will have a unique relationship to colonization and genocide, based on its own

history. Most of us haven't worked on these issues—including non-Indigenous-heritage people who are targeted by racism. Anyone living today on the North American continent has benefited materially from the genocide of Native people and the enslavement of African-heritage people. We all have to look at our own histories.

People often say, "This is a country of immigrants." That expression is exactly what colonization is about. It excludes and makes invisible a whole group of people who are *not* immigrants, who are native to this land. We are a country on land that has been inhabited by people for tens of thousands of years. *Some* of us have immigrant ancestry or are ourselves more recent immigrants (often because of colonialism and imperialism in our home countries).

Genocide is an important part of colonization. The attempt to kill and silence all the people of a land is a centuries-old patterned act that terrorizes whole groups for generations. People have an

easier time saying and thinking about the word *colonization*. The word *genocide* is overwhelming for both the killers and the attempted-to-be-killed. Even *racism* can feel easier to say and think about. We have to discharge and reclaim our thinking about people who have been targeted with attempted genocide, to know how the genocide shows up<sup>3</sup> now in them and in their communities, including how they run it<sup>4</sup> at themselves and each other.

In order to think about Native people in the present, we all need to look at and understand what genocide is, how it has been carried out, and what the current effects of it are. The genocide continues, internally and externally.

*Teresa Enrico*  
International Liberation Reference  
Person for Filipino/a-Heritage People  
Cherokee, Osage, and Ilocano  
Portland, Oregon, USA

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<sup>3</sup> Shows up means appears.

<sup>4</sup> Run it means act it out.

## Palestinians as Indigenous People

The chance to discharge with other Indigenous people has helped me see my people more clearly. Palestinians are Indigenous people who are dealing with genocide. This reality has been dawning on me slowly\* during the last few years. I have increasingly felt parallels with what Native Americans have experienced.

My people have lived for centuries on the same land. They have been conquered and colonized many times and have absorbed the cultures and peoples that have come to their shores. Little by little, Palestinian Arabs' land and resources have been taken away, all under the eyes of the rest of the world. Palestinians have been brutalized, imprisoned, killed. The agricultural lands, water sources, and homes of my people have been taken or destroyed. Newly-built homes are torn down at a moment's notice. Those who leave are not allowed to return; families are separated by visa laws and a wall.

In spite of the atrocities against us Palestinians, in our homeland and in the diaspora, we maintain our hope, dignity, and sense of connectedness. We keep our culture alive and thrive where we have been transplanted. We defy the common myth that Palestinians are violent, as we struggle in non-violent ways, in dialogue with peace-minded Jews, while rebuilding our lives.

*Joy Totah Hilden*  
Berkeley, California, USA

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\* This reality has been dawning on me slowly means I have slowly been beginning to understand this reality.



Courses  
(a song)



When the world was new and I was young  
On every shore the sirens sung  
I alternated every wail  
With trying the universe to inhale  
The world was new and I was young  
I tasted life with lips and tongue  
    And through assorted joy and strife  
I have not lost my taste for life

Both trash and treasure I was fed  
I had to filter what was said  
From the muddle I withdrew  
Tried to swallow only what was true  
From trash and treasure I was fed  
I contrived a haven in my head  
    And through assorted joy and strife  
I have not lost my taste for life



While I was apprenticing to stand  
"More! Now!" was my demand  
I couldn't bear to ever wait  
Nor get sufficient on my plate  
When I was apprenticing to stand  
I reached for life with every hand  
    And through assorted joy and strife  
I have not lost my taste for life

I found a quiet advocate  
I had been told to keep shut  
More than all facts that I could learn  
It was important to discern  
Hear my quiet advocate  
And heed the wisdom of my gut  
    And through assorted joy and strife  
I have not lost my taste for life

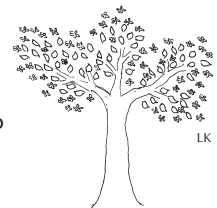


Soon as I could, I ran to greet  
Adventures that wouldn't come to me  
Why ever walk when I could run  
It all looked to me like fun  
Soon as I could, I ran to greet  
Pursuing life on dancing feet  
    And through assorted joy and strife  
I have not lost my taste for life

My body, it is truly smart  
I've come to value every part  
It reminds me it is best  
To accept only what I can digest  
My body, it is truly smart  
Every portion feeds my heart  
    And through assorted joy and strife  
I have not lost my taste for life

Every feeling I took in  
My defense was much too thin  
I longed to be liked and treated well  
But fault and blame around me fell  
Every feeling I took in  
As if I were all nerves and skin  
    And through assorted joy and strife  
I have not lost my taste for life

Through all assorted joy and strife  
As this amusing world is rife  
To my surprise, I continue  
To love and learn and grow and do  
Through all assorted joy and strife  
I have not lost my taste for life  
    Through all assorted joy and strife  
I have not lost my taste for life



© Russell Hayes  
Lexington, Kentucky, USA

## The Oppression of Large Women

Large women's liberation is the work in RC that is closest to my heart. I think the key to being an ally in the next period is wrapping one's mind around the oppression of large women as the intersection of two different oppressions: fat oppression and sexism. One is the systematic mistreatment of humans of large body size, and the other is the systematic mistreatment of women. As when other oppressions (racism, anti-Jewish oppression, and so on) intersect with sexism, there is a multiplied effect when sexism and fat oppression are combined.

All women are *threatened* with fat oppression, but not all women are *targeted* with it. A parallel is the way that all boys are threatened with Gay oppression. All males get teased, are called sissies, and are *threatened* with what will occur if they don't conform to the sexist expectations of manhood, but that is completely different from the actual *targeting* that men who are Gay, or perceived to be Gay, experience.

The threat of fat oppression is a major tool of sexism in the current period. This is what confuses thin women about the oppression of large women. The threat of fat oppression keeps all women scared of getting too big, of existing outside of the sexist desires of men, and of having their minds free to think about the world rather than being preoccupied with their physical appearance.

As a large woman who has weighed over two hundred pounds since adolescence, I want to share some ways I am targeted—not threatened, but targeted—with fat oppression in my daily life:

- Last summer three flight attendants removed me from an airplane because they believed, after

looking at me while I was standing, that I would not fit in the plane's seat with the armrest down. I physically forced my way back on the plane, took a seat, and forced down the armrest in order not to miss my trip.

- A group of thin women at my job semi-secretly mock me, making fat jokes with a particular focus on how I smell. One member of that group, convinced that she was smarter and more qualified than I am, was furious that I was promoted above her this past fall. She attacked me daily and organized to get me kicked out of my position of leadership. I fought back and continued to lead well, and her attack was unsuccessful.

- I spent years seeking medical assistance for a debilitated ankle, the result of a childhood injury. I was repeatedly denied care by doctors who told me that my ankle problem was my fault for being fat. One doctor referred me to another doctor to get my stomach stapled. Through discharge, I kept trying to get medical help and eventually found a doctor who identified the actual problem in my ankle and performed a surgery that improved my ability to walk.

- When working as an independent contractor, I tried to purchase health insurance and was denied because of my weight.

- On my most recent birthday, a dear friend treated me to a theater production of *The Color Purple*. About a fourth of the play was a fat joke about a large female character's sexuality. I listened to the audience laugh and jeer, as the mere idea of a large woman being sexually attractive to her husband was seen as comedy.

I would love to see my thin female allies do more work on the following:

- Taking responsibility for recordings<sup>2</sup> of disgust. Society encourages people to attach early recordings of disgust to us large women and believe that the recordings are really about us in the present. This is often the justification for our mistreatment. I'd like to see thin women take more responsibility for discharging the early origins of these recordings (often early sexual hurts) and take principled stands against targeting large women with them.

- Taking a stand against recordings of wanting to be taken care of, served, protected, which often attach to large women. A dynamic tends to play out<sup>3</sup> between thin women and large women in which a thin woman expects a large woman to be her confidant and caretaker. I have also noticed a lot of anger and jealousy when a large woman gets or has things that a thin woman does not. The anger and jealousy seem to be based on some sort of silent agreement that the thin woman should have more, be doing better, and have a better life (this is the lie of all oppressor roles).

- Developing the courage to stand up to fat oppression and the targeting of large women. This includes interrupting fat jokes, interrupting attacks on large women, and being pleased when large women get access to all of the wonderful things life has to offer.

Nikki Stewart

Washington, D.C., USA

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

<sup>1</sup> Kicked out of means removed from.

<sup>2</sup> Distress recordings

<sup>3</sup> Play out means be acted out.

# Teaching RC to Teachers

From a discussion on the RC e-mail discussion list for leaders of educational change

*I have been asked to teach an RC fundamentals class to the staff at the primary school where I have been doing a project. I am trying to figure out whether it makes sense to teach only the staff, or to have them join with another RC class. If anyone has thoughts or experiences related to this, please share.*



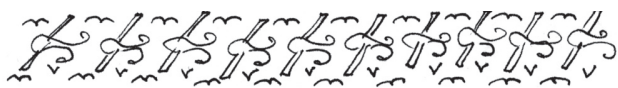
Marilyn Robb  
International Liberation Reference  
Person for Educational Change  
Tacarigua, Trinidad & Tobago

Two recent experiences have me leaning toward mixing people from different groups. I taught a short series of RC classes to staff members at a school where I was the retiring principal. They wanted to know more about RC and were game<sup>1</sup> to try it. However, they were less interested in becoming RC Community members. The class went well. One person joined an RC class in the Community, and I strengthened my relationships with the other participants but they never seemed to step out of their pre-existing relationships into a full relationship as Co-Counselors. It was more difficult to get them to put aside old barriers, power dynamics, and their view of appropriate social distance than it has been with people in other fundamentals classes I've taught.

I'm now teaching a fundamentals class that is a mix of personal friends and folks whom I've met only through RC. This is going much better. My relationship with my friends is enhanced by the presence of others with whom I have only RC relationships. Things also go to a new level more quickly and easily, and it's easier to teach about the no-socializing policy.<sup>2</sup>

I'd love to know how this might be different in different cultural contexts.

Russ Vernon-Jones  
Amherst, Massachusetts, USA



I have taught several fundamentals classes made up entirely of<sup>3</sup> teachers from my school. Only one or two people ever became active in the RC Community. The classes worked well in moving our relationships forward and bringing RC insights more solidly into the school.

<sup>1</sup> Game means willing.  
<sup>2</sup> The RC no-socializing policy 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.  
<sup>3</sup> Made up entirely of means consisting entirely of.

However, they didn't grow the RC Community or give people a network of Co-Counselors. I would agree that a mixed class would be better.

Debo Powers  
Tallahassee, Florida, USA



I have been sharing RC insights with school staff for twelve years. I have noticed the same things mentioned by Russ and Debo. The everyday professional relationships make it hard to create enough safety. It seems harder for people to share personal feelings.

I have also been meeting in a support group every month for six years with a group of politicians. I've succeeded in creating safety in that group. The difference is that they don't work together on a daily basis outside of our group. They also had friend-based respect, trust, and warm feelings toward

*continued . . .*



ANDY VERNON-JONES



## LIBERATION

... continued

each other from the start. They have moved only slowly from political issues to personal issues. I've been patient, gently nodding them in that direction with small lectures and my own example.

I'd like to invite teachers from different schools to join an RC class. Interest in the class, trust in the leader, and not having conflicting relationships might do the trick<sup>4</sup> and make it work. I would probably start out by calling it a "Reflection Group for Teachers" and frame it as<sup>5</sup> "professional development," "stress ventilation," or "pedagogical leadership training." Writing about it, I get tempted to see if I can pull it off.<sup>6</sup>

Fredrik Eklöf  
Malmo, Sweden



Some years ago I introduced Co-Counseling to forty teachers. They were interested but didn't want to obligate themselves to anything. Several times I invited colleagues to RC introductory evenings, but they never showed up.<sup>7</sup>

I am able to sneak Co-Counseling techniques into meetings (rounds with equal speaking time, "news and goods") when they aren't declared to be Co-Counseling.

For two years I've been building personal relationships with some of the teachers at my school. I,

<sup>4</sup> Do the trick means do exactly what needs to be done.

<sup>5</sup> Frame it as means describe it as.

<sup>6</sup> Pull it off means make it happen.

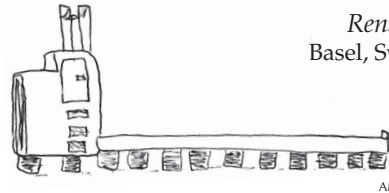
<sup>7</sup> Showed up means came.

along with other colleagues, was invited to someone's sixtieth birthday. The same gang is going dancing from time to time and has held more birthday parties. I also went skiing with some colleagues and was invited to a colleague's house for dinner.

Doing such things with colleagues might not be unusual for some of you, but in Switzerland it isn't normal behavior. People usually just meet at school; their private lives are private.

Why do I tell you this? It is clear to me that the only way to bring people into Co-Counseling in a committed way is through personal relationships. People have to see me and what I'm struggling with to trust me and trust what's important to me.

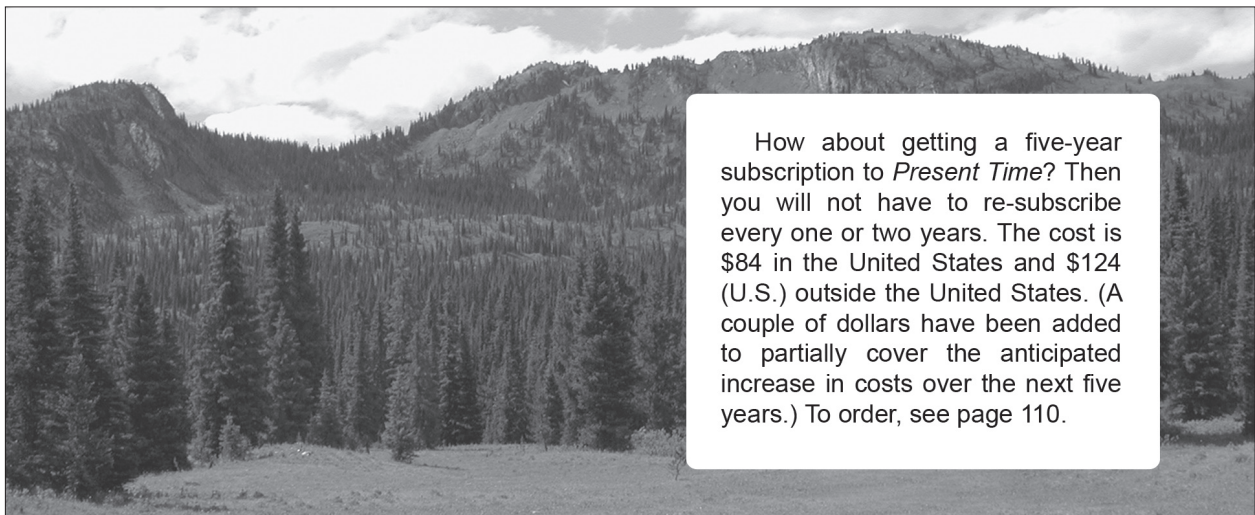
I will socialize more with the teachers at my school, and—who knows?—one day they might show up for an introductory talk!



Renate Müller  
Basel, Switzerland

*I agree with the thinking. I met today with seven staff members who are interested, and we agreed to have an RC class over a weekend. I'll also invite other new people, and maybe my RC ongoing class members can participate all day on Saturday. We'll see how it goes. Thanks for sharing your thoughts.*

Marilyn Robb



How about getting a five-year subscription to *Present Time*? Then you will 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, see page 110.

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## Persisting Against Classism



Eleven years ago I started a second-hand store<sup>1</sup> in a poor, mixed-race neighborhood. It's shown me up close the details of classism that I and the other people in the neighborhood deal with on a daily basis.

When I think about classism, I think in terms of two aspects:

1) having to work too much and too hard to get less than what we really need in return, and

2) competing with one another over the things we need that are scarce because of our class position.

The first part, the institutional oppression, has been easier to understand and in some ways easier to deal with. I can get things that have been thrown away (or might be) in neighborhoods or suburbs that are better off,<sup>2</sup> take them to a poorer neighborhood, fix and clean them up, and offer them to people at fair prices. Of course, making enough money at this is always difficult. I get paid four times as much to throw things in the landfill<sup>3</sup> as I do to salvage them and get them to people for reuse. So I do both things, in order to make enough money to keep my store going.

The city has a much lower standard for my neighborhood than for others. Services provided in other areas are generally not available here, or are available to a lesser extent. Trash pick-up, street maintenance, business loans, access to government representatives, all

are below the standard of what is provided to other neighborhoods. It took me two years to get the city to put a garbage can on our corner. When they did, people treated me like a hero.

The good side is that officials pretty much<sup>4</sup> leave me alone and let me do what I want. This works well for the neighborhood. Unfortunately, they also leave alone businesses that operate in harmful and illegal ways.

I have struggled with people's internalized oppression—the ways they compete with and direct mistreatment at one another, both physically and verbally. Violence, stealing, vandalism, littering, and graffiti happen daily and are widespread. It's a challenge to prevent (or limit the amount of) their happening to me, without my acting in oppressive ways. I've learned to accept that some of these things are going to happen to me, and to not react in extreme ways, not let them get me down.<sup>5</sup>

Verbal mistreatment seems less hurtful than physical mistreatment. However, when I realize it's creating a constant state of disrespect, I can see how destructive it is. I realized several years ago that a major way I could support the community was to maintain an attitude of respect toward people who often get criticized and rejected. During my first couple of years in the store, one of my regular customers was an old woman who would stop in<sup>6</sup> and tell my helper and me the stories of how she had managed the challenges of her day. She'd tell us how she had dealt with riding the bus, going to the bank or the

drug store, getting a free lunch at the church or some old bread at the bakery—all with a sense of challenge and good spiritedness, and an underlying outrage. One day after she had left, my helper said, "I don't know why you let her come in here. She's dirty, she smells, she's obnoxious, and she never stops talking. And not only that, she never buys anything for more than a quarter."<sup>7</sup> My response helped clarify for me part of why it is important for us to be doing what we are doing. I said, "Among all the things she does and the people she has to deal with during her day, this is probably the only place she goes where she gets treated like a human being."

I've been at this<sup>8</sup> for almost twelve years now. Often it seems like a lot of people are mad at me, but I have enough people who appreciate me that it keeps me going. Last year there was a period of time when somebody was breaking into cars at night, right in front of my store. For a few weeks, every time I came to the store I saw more broken glass in the street. One day I was sweeping up the glass, and one of the guys who is always wasted<sup>9</sup> (on drugs) and hanging out<sup>10</sup> on the street came by. I made a comment about all the break-ins and said that I had to remember not to park in that area over night. He said, "Oh, you don't have to worry. You're good to people. It won't happen to you."

*Ken von Geldern*

Albany, New York, USA

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

<sup>1</sup> A second-hand store is a store that sells used goods.

<sup>2</sup> Better off means wealthier.

<sup>3</sup> A landfill is a place where garbage is buried between layers of earth, to build up low-lying land.

<sup>4</sup> Pretty much means mostly.

<sup>5</sup> Get me down means make me unhappy.

<sup>6</sup> Stop in means come in.

<sup>7</sup> A quarter is a quarter of a U.S. dollar, or twenty-five cents.

<sup>8</sup> At this means doing this.

<sup>9</sup> Wasted means intoxicated.

<sup>10</sup> In this context, hanging out means spending unstructured time.

## Women's Internalized Oppression, and Racism

*From a talk by Diane Balser<sup>1</sup> at the  
Northwest USA Women's Liberation Workshop, May 2009*

From the beginning of sexism, groups of women have oppressed other groups of women (what we call women's internalized oppression).

Owning-class women were the first group of women to be oppressed as females. (Other women were exploited in early class societies but not necessarily as females.) The enslavement of owning-class women, as females, has a long history.

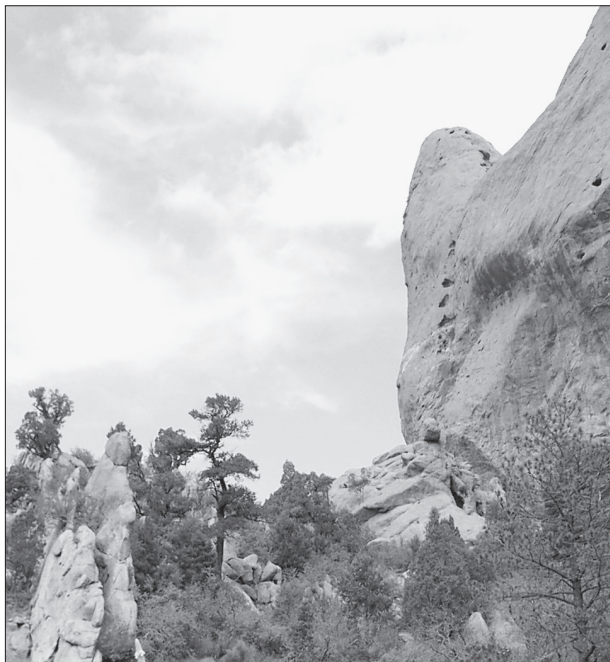
In Europe and probably elsewhere, owning-class women were expected to do two things: bear sons and be decorations. They were oppressed as females and then used to oppress other women. For example, in the United States, black women were forced to raise the children of the slave owner and his wife. White men also often raped black women. White women knew about this but couldn't do anything about it. This history continues to cause conflict, tension, and division.

### PATTERNS PERSIST

There's a widespread notion that sexism no longer exists, similar to the idea that there is no more racism. The message is that the histories of these oppressions no longer play a

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<sup>1</sup> Diane Balser is the International Liberation Reference Person for Women and was the leader of the workshop.



GARDEN OF THE GODS, COLORADO SPRINGS, COLORADO, USA • KIRSTEN JOHNSON

role in our lives. However, they do. They play a big role in the distresses we carry and how we act them out.

In the Western world today, marriage as a legal institution does not carry the force of ownership or patriarchy that it once did. However, many women still feel it's their job to serve men. The patterns are still there.

When I was growing up, most women domestics—women who work for other women—were African American. Today only a small percentage are black women; most of the domestic jobs are now held by women from countries outside the United States. But still the patterns and feelings from the earlier period persist. Women are still divided by that history. Women targeted by racism feel its effects on a daily basis. White women feel it less. Those in the oppressor role become numb in a particular way.

It has been harder for women targeted by racism to grasp sexism as their issue because the conveyors of racism have often been white women—women who now ask them to be their sisters in a common struggle.

### GLOBAL CAPITALISM AND WHITE WOMEN

In terms of global capitalism, white women have become targets of as well as accomplices in sexism. The lives of young white women have been hit hard by sexism. At the same time, pictures of young white women are spread throughout the world, on billboards and in other advertisements, conditioning people to think that this is how young women are supposed to look and be.

Iran has the highest percentage of plastic surgery done on noses of almost any country in the world. The image of white women, the stereotype, has been absorbed into the culture to that extent. My boss where I teach women's studies is Iranian. She does a lot of women's liberation work in Iran. She showed us videos of Iranian beauty and modeling contests. In the state-controlled contests the women wear beautiful veils, but the same groups of women have private secret shows in their own homes in which they are unveiled, are made up like Western white women, and wear Western clothing. These women live double lives. The freer life, the better life, is seen as the one imitating the white Western world. There's a heavy interaction between racism and gender.

The women's movement plateaued at the same time that global capitalism was expanding. People became major consumers. The beautification industry expanded hugely. The sex industries and pornography became mainstream



throughout the world. Women targeted by racism have been deeply affected and heavily victimized by these institutions. So have white women, but they have also been forced into an oppressive role in relation to women targeted by racism.

**FIGHTING FOR OURSELVES AS WOMEN**

If we don't stand up and fight our own oppression, we're vulnerable to becoming oppressors. It works that way with young people: the oldest child can't stand up to<sup>2</sup> the adults, so he or she takes it out on<sup>3</sup> the second child, and so on. That's what happens with white women.

In general, we stopped fighting for ourselves as women. It felt easier to give in to<sup>4</sup> the oppression—for example, to become consumers of the beautification industry. We allowed the sexual objectification of our daughters. We lowered or abandoned our values and standards in regard to sex. In just a twenty-year period, many frightening things became widely accepted. One can see it most clearly in the lives of younger women. We older women are often horrified. I have asked in Co-Counseling sessions, "Where have I been? What was I doing while this beautification industry went wild? What was I thinking about?"

Almost any way that a white woman accepts sexism will turn into racism. Consider the notion of "looks." Once we agree that there's a way to be prettier than another woman, we've accepted something oppressive.

*(mini-session)*

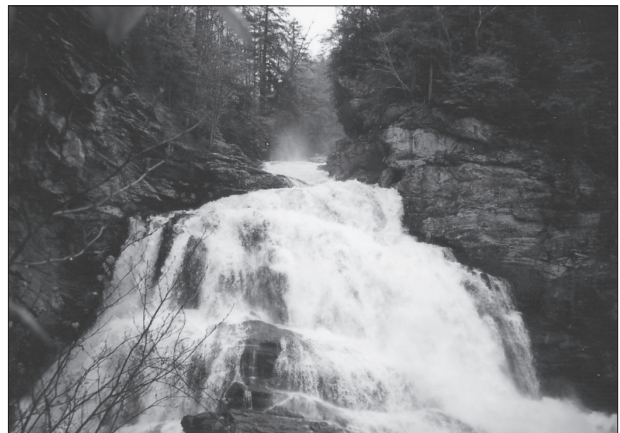
<sup>2</sup> Stand up to means effectively oppose the actions of.  
<sup>3</sup> Takes it out on means acts out the oppression on.  
<sup>4</sup> Give in to means succumb to, stop resisting.

**WOMEN OPPRESS WOMEN**

It's hard to discharge on sexism for at least a couple of reasons. For one thing, most of us have bought<sup>5</sup> the lie that sexism no longer exists. Another reason is that women oppress women and we haven't been able to figure out how to face and discharge this.

That we women receive sexist messages from other women is a heavy hurt. We have resentment about it. We're angry. We're angry at each other. We're angry at our mothers. We may love our mothers and love our sisters, but we also are angry and feel betrayed. That feeling of betrayal, and our not being able to discharge it, shows. It keeps us isolated and disconnected from each other—not able to fight sexism, or racism, or any of the other oppressions together.

<sup>5</sup> In this context, bought means believed and accepted.



LORI JOUBERT

**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 pros<sup>1</sup> like you are swinging their shovels<sup>2</sup> a little ahead of the rest of us.

*Harvey Jackins*  
From a letter written in 1975

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<sup>1</sup> In this context, pros means experts.  
<sup>2</sup> In this context, swinging their shovels means doing the work.

LK



JAYNE SCHAUER

### Some Basics of RC Family Work (CD 20)

An overview of RC family work,\* given by Tim Jackins at the African Pre-World Conference in July 2009. An excellent introduction for people new to family work and a fresh review for experienced Co-Counselors.

(This CD is part of the RC Teacher Update series.)

\$10 (U.S.)  
plus shipping and handling  
To order, see page 109

\* 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.

## "The Perfect Piece of Literature": *Working Together to End Racism*

I had lunch recently with an Indigenous friend. He asked me what the class was that I was going to on a Saturday afternoon, so I told him about RC. After we said goodbye, I remembered too late that I had in my bag the perfect piece of literature to give a smart person who asks about RC and who just might have an interest in RC's work on racism: *Working Together to End Racism: Healing from the Damage Caused by Racism*, by Tim Jackins and others.

This pamphlet outlines what we in RC know about the damage done by racism and the work of healing from that damage. It is like a map to a world all people know in their hearts is possible.

The pamphlet is divided into eight sections. The first five are

- \* The Damage Inflicted by Institutionalized Racism and Its Agents
- \* A Second Form of Damage Caused by Racism: Internalized Racism
- \* Healing from the Damage Inflicted by Racism and Internalized Racism
- \* A Third Form of Damage Caused by Racism: the Effect of Racism on White People
- \* White People as Allies to People Targeted by Racism.

These sections describe, in simple language and in only sixteen pages, a vicious and confusing oppression, and what to do about it.

The sixth section is about United to End Racism—two pages on eliminating racism using the understandings, support, and tools of RC.

The seventh section is titled The Basic Tool of United to End Racism: Re-evaluation Counseling. With a focus on racism, it explains basic RC theory about distresses, oppression, and discharge.

The final section is How to Begin Re-evaluation Counseling. A person could read this and use it to begin swapping time.<sup>1</sup> It provides enough RC theory, and information about the structure of sessions and support groups, to make a big difference in someone's life. (Of course, if the person had *you* to talk to about it, things would go even better.)

The glossary at the end explains some key terms used in the pamphlet.

*Working Together to End Racism*, with its modest two-tone cover, is a treasure for all RCers and in particular for those of us who are taking up<sup>2</sup> the challenge to eliminate racism. Like all RC literature, it is an invaluable tool for keeping our heads above the brush pile of our distresses and restimulations. Re-reading it to write this review, I was struck by<sup>3</sup> the diamond-like quality of its contents, their purity and sharpness, and how they were packed sweetly into a tiny volume.

Anne Barton  
Melbourne, Victoria, Australia  
Reprinted from the newsletter of the  
Melbourne, Victoria, RC Community

<sup>1</sup> Swapping time means taking turns listening with another person.

<sup>2</sup> In this context, taking up means taking action in response to.

<sup>3</sup> Struck by means astonished and impressed by.

## My Picture of Young Adult Oppression and Liberation

For four years I was the International Liberation Reference Person (ILRP) for Young Adults. I had the chance to build relationships with young adults in many places in the world, counsel people on oppression, and work together with people for liberation. It was a wonderful project—one that I grew from tremendously. I am writing now to share with all of you my current picture of young adult oppression and liberation.

As young people, we come to the world ready for connection, learning, and leadership. Because the adults around us are hurt, we don't get the connection we expect. We are isolated even from our families, and are further cut off from connection with people outside of our families, including people of different skin colors, class backgrounds, religions, and so on. On top of that, we are given misinformation about the world. We question oppressions like racism, classism, sexism, and anti-Jewish oppression but are told that we are stupid and only questioning them because we "don't understand the way the world works." This is part of a pervasive disrespect for our minds and our full humanness.

In important ways we take leadership, giving adults around us chances to get close, play, learn, face big feelings, consider that different things are possible, and regain hope. In many ways, however, our leadership is undermined. We are given few chances to take charge in our lives and mostly must conform to the expectations of our parents and the other adults around us, because we depend on them to meet our basic needs. Although we have a natural process for healing from these hurts, we are largely cut off from being able to use it.

All the while, adulthood is held out as a great escape. We are told that someday, when we become adults, we will get to have someone (albeit just one someone) to be close to; that someday, when we become adults, we will understand things; and that someday, when we become adults, our lives will matter and we will get to make our own choices and do the things we want to do.

Then one day we become adults! And we live happily ever after. Well, okay—maybe not quite so happily ever after. Some things do change. We are treated with more respect. But we still face huge disrespect as young adults. We have more control over our relationships, but we haven't gotten to discharge our distresses about closeness. We are now told to give up to a large extent on most of our relationships, including with our family and friends, and to focus on finding one relationship with an opposite-sex marriage partner who will meet all of our needs for closeness (the real ones, and the irrational ones frozen from when we didn't get closeness when we were younger). We have access to good information, but we haven't gotten to discharge our distresses about learning. We mostly still feel like we're not smart enough, like

someone else knows better than we do. We're faced with many new things to learn and figure out, usually without good support to do that. We have control over our lives, but mostly we can't tell<sup>1</sup> that this is true. We haven't gotten to discharge the fears for our survival laid in when we depended on hurt adults to meet our needs, and the oppressive society takes advantage of these survival fears. It sends us a big message: "You're not there yet. You haven't made it<sup>2</sup> yet. You're still in danger of not making it. Watch out, or you'll be left behind. If you want there to be a place for you in this world, you have to. . . ."

And then there's a list of all the things we have to do in order to "make it"—a list that basically describes all the ways we have to fit into the roles we've been trained to play in the oppressive system, including roles of racism, classism, sexism, anti-Jewish oppression, and so on. On top of this, the economic exploitation of young adults presents challenges for making a living,<sup>3</sup> and the society continues to tell us,

*continued . . .*

<sup>1</sup> In this context, tell means notice, see.

<sup>2</sup> Made it means succeeded.

<sup>3</sup> Making a living means earning enough money to sustain ourselves.



AARON GALLOWAY



## LIBERATION

... continued

"Move faster . . . faster . . . faster . . . . Work harder . . . harder . . . harder . . . . You should be taking advantage of more opportunities . . . . More . . . more . . . faster . . . . You're still at risk of not making it."

Having lived with young people's oppression for so many years, we feel desperate to "get out." The oppressive society holds out irrational paths for us to follow and promises that if we follow them, we will get out. In particular, it holds out confusing ideas about how we can have power—for example, by getting rich; gaining status, prestige, and recognition; and controlling people. Because when we were young we were treated as if we were not powerful, this can be very confusing.

When we don't have access to the discharge and support we need, we struggle to have broad, full, close relationships; to remember our intelligence and think well about the challenges we face; to recognize that we have control over our lives; and to figure out how to act with true power. We often feel pulled to give up on<sup>4</sup> our relationships, dreams, and goals and settle for limited lives. We become worried, discouraged, and hopeless. We find it difficult to play and have fun. Often we numb ourselves with drugs, alcohol, food, sex, pornography, television, video games, and other addictions. When we feel things about the oppression or show our struggles, we are told to try on a new identity or take a different path to "success." In a growing number of cases we are given psychiatric drugs.

Young adult liberation depends on our being given full access to discharge, opportunities for close relationships, contradictions to where we can't tell that we're smart,

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<sup>4</sup> Give up on means abandon.

accurate information about the world, and support to act with true power and take leadership to change the oppressive society. As ILRP, my liberation program for young adults focused on this. Several things were particularly useful:

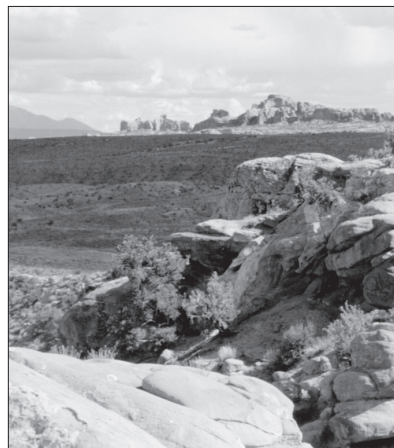
**Focusing on young people's oppression.** Young adults often struggle to look at young people's oppression and to be part of the young people's liberation movement. After facing that oppression for twenty-one years, we are so ready to be done with it. However, young people's oppression plays a critical role in our oppression as young adults. Young adult liberation depends on young adults discharging on young people's oppression.

**Focusing on our relationships with each other.** Young adults are pushed to give up on full relationships. It becomes harder to tell that we want each other and to openly show caring. It is easy to give up on each other, particularly in the places where we feel bad about how we, or others, have compromised in the face of the oppressive society. It is a key contradiction<sup>5</sup> to fight for each other in the places where we've given up and to go after<sup>6</sup> deep, close relationships with each other.

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<sup>5</sup> Contradiction to distress

<sup>6</sup> Go after means pursue.



TARA JONES

**Focusing on ending racism.** Racism is a huge oppression that confuses all of us. We have lost battles to keep from being hurt by it and from playing prescribed roles within the economic and social structure, so we tend to feel discouraged. Taking steps to end racism challenges our chronic distresses and moves our lives forward, and the battles we win as we fight for each other in the context of ending racism give us hope.

**Focusing on sexism and Gay oppression.** The ways young adults are pushed to take on<sup>7</sup> prescribed roles in sexism are pivotal to how oppression comes in and solidifies during our young adult years. Gay oppression is used to hold sexism in place. Those who identify as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, or Queer face Gay oppression directly and end up terrified but also knowing that more is possible than the limited roles and relationships offered by sexism. Those who identify as straight face a threat of Gay oppression that often leads to their settling.<sup>8</sup> Work on the intersection of sexism and Gay oppression has been important to our having big lives.

**Focusing on steps to leadership in RC.** Re-evaluation Counseling offers great chances for young adults to act with true power and take leadership to change the oppressive society. It has been important to work with young adults on (1) getting regular Co-Counseling sessions; (2) learning RC fundamentals; (3) becoming solid RC Community members; (4) building strong relationships with older adult RC leaders; and (5) taking steps toward leadership, including organizing events, assisting with classes, leading support groups at workshops, and then teaching RC and building Communities.

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<sup>7</sup> In this context, take on means adopt.

<sup>8</sup> Settling means not trying to reach their full potential for a big life.

The following ideas about RC have been useful:

- 1) We are living our lives now (not just in the future, which is what the society tells us), and if we want RC in our lives, we get to have it now;
- 2) Re-evaluation Counseling can be central to our having the meaningful lives we want, and we can set up our lives to have it at the center, long term;
- 3) The oppressive society does not make space for liberation, and it won't intentionally make space for RC, yet we can create that space;
- 4) Although we feel overwhelmed by everything we're supposed to do as young adults, the basics are simple. If we find a job that allows us to meet our basic needs and not be frozen with terror about money, and if

we go to an RC class and have a Co-Counseling session each week, we will figure out the rest; and

- 5) We've made it. We can't always tell, but that doesn't take away from the fact that we've made it. We didn't stick with<sup>9</sup> RC by accident, and the oppressive society did not tell us to stick with it. We've held on to our minds enough that we are here now. I'm so proud of us for that. We have battles left to fight, but that's okay. What are left are the exciting battles—ones we want

to take on,<sup>10</sup> ones we'll take on together. I'm looking forward to what's next for us.

As I am now too old for the young adult ILRP job, a new ILRP, Anna Van Heeswijk, will be carrying the work forward. I will still be backing<sup>11</sup> the work. I will be sticking with all of you young adults I've come to know and love. I will be fighting the remaining battles together with you. I will never leave your side, and I will never stop fighting. You can count<sup>12</sup> on that.

*Ellie Brown*  
Wilmington, Delaware, USA

<sup>9</sup> In this context, stick with means stay committed to.

<sup>10</sup> In this context, take on means engage in.

<sup>11</sup> Backing means supporting.

<sup>12</sup> In this context, count means rely.



CATOCTIN STATE PARK, MARYLAND, USA • KEN DEVENY

## An Arab American at the World Conference

One of my goals at the 2009 World Conference of the RC Communities was to make contact with people who share my Middle Eastern heritage. After a little checking before the conference, it looked like I might be the only Arab (some Mizrachi people<sup>1</sup> would be attending, but I wasn't sure if they considered themselves Arabs). I decided to do whatever I could to connect with delegates of any Middle Eastern heritage, identity, or cultural background and to make that group one of my home bases. That decision led to a powerful experience of unity and alliance building.

During introductions on the first evening, I particularly noticed the Middle Easterners, mainly from Israel, and wondered how I would go about<sup>2</sup> making contact with them. The next morning the conference divided into small groups to discharge on nationalism. My group was led by Michal Noy, a Mizrachi Jew and the Regional

Reference Person for Israel, whom I had last seen over twenty years before. It was a pleasure to be with her again and to discharge on taking pride in being Arab American, with her full encouragement. Soon I met Varda,<sup>3</sup> Merchi,<sup>4</sup> Lotahn,<sup>5</sup> and Sara<sup>6</sup> and spent several meals and break times with them, listening to their experiences of reaching out to Arabs in Israel and sharing my experiences with people of color in the United States.

Later my support group met, and I was pleased that it was led by an Iranian Co-Counselor, Azi Khalili.<sup>7</sup> I knew that wasn't an accident, and it felt good that someone had been thinking about me. I was able to discharge deeply in that group.

*continued . . .*

<sup>1</sup> Mizrachi people are Mizrachi Jews, who are descendants of Jews from the Middle East, North Africa, Central Asia, and the Caucasus and who often identify as people targeted by racism.

<sup>2</sup> Go about means proceed with.

<sup>3</sup> Varda Zakay, an RC leader in Givat Ella, Israel

<sup>4</sup> Merchi Shukroon Lior, an RC leader in Kiboch Tooval, Israel

<sup>5</sup> Lotahn Raz, an RC leader in Jerusalem, Israel

<sup>6</sup> Sara Kallai, the Area Reference Person for part of Jerusalem, Israel

<sup>7</sup> Azi Khalili is the Area Reference Person for Brooklyn Gardens, New York City, New York, USA.

## LIBERATION

... continued

When Diane Balser<sup>8</sup> asked me if I would participate in Shabbat<sup>9</sup> on Friday evening, I was ready. During dinner Diane, Azi, Merchi, and I met (with two of Azi's family members present) to talk about and plan our parts of Shabbat. It was good to hear Diane's reminder of how important the liberation of Middle Eastern peoples is in the world today.

Friday evening at Shabbat, Diane made some opening comments that set a good tone. Then Azi (Iranian-born, with one Jewish grandparent) spoke about her heritage and cited several moving passages from the Qur'an<sup>10</sup> that spoke positively about relations with Jews. I (Lebanese Arab and Italian from the United States) went next and was able to share my thoughts about our unity as Arabs and Jews. Then Merchi (Mizrachi from Israel) spoke from her perspective as an Israeli and Mizrachi. After everyone had a mini-session, Cherie<sup>11</sup> and a group of mainly Ashkenazi Jews<sup>12</sup> from around the world shared their perspectives on Shabbat. Then we spoke the traditional words over the challah<sup>13</sup> and grape juice.

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<sup>8</sup> Diane Balser is the International Liberation Reference Person for Women and is also Jewish.

<sup>9</sup> Shabbat is the Jewish Sabbath. For many years it has been a tradition at RC workshops for the whole workshop to celebrate Shabbat on Friday evenings, as a way to contradict the isolation of Jews that is part of anti-Jewish oppression.

<sup>10</sup> The Qur'an is a book of sacred writings believed by Muslims to be revelations given to the prophet Muhammad, by Allah.

<sup>11</sup> Cherie Brown, the International Liberation Reference Person for Jews

<sup>12</sup> Ashkenazi Jews are Jews of Central and Eastern European descent.

<sup>13</sup> Challah is a type of bread traditionally eaten by Jews on the Sabbath.



KEN FELDMAN

The following is what I remember saying (with a little editing):

"I have been an Arab ally at Shabbats for many years. It has been good to be an ally to Jews. It has also helped me become more aware of myself as an Arab and supported my re-emergence in that area.

"Recently I've been thinking about it in a new way. As an Arab, I am a person of Semitic heritage, and when I'm participating in Shabbat, I am observing a Semitic tradition in a Semitic language. It makes sense to me that Jews and Arabs do this together. I appreciate the inclusive way in which we planned this Shabbat. I think that in general when people of Middle Eastern heritage are at an RC event, it makes sense to include them in the planning of Shabbat, so that Shabbat can be a contradiction to distress for everyone. It can be a time to take a break from the conflicts and distresses of the world and just enjoy each other.

"One of the questions that came up when we were planning the Shabbat was, 'How can we share RC with Arabs more widely?' My first thought, from my North American perspective, is that some of us Arabs in RC hold back because we feel too assimilated or not Arab enough due to our being mixed heritage or not speaking much of the language. I think we need encouragement to remember we can play a role. We can be a step toward reaching the Arab population that is less assimilated, as well as being valuable just for being us. *Shukran*.<sup>14</sup> Thank you."

Afterward I felt closer to people than ever, and people seemed to feel closer to me. On Sunday morning I led a discharge group for Jews and Arabs, and there were four of us: two Mizrachi Jews from Israel, an Ashkenazi Jew from England, and me. It was good to discharge together. While it is important to have the safety of doing separate work, I think that working together occasionally can provide deep contradictions to distress, which we can take back to our Arab and Jewish groups.

One thing I learned from all this is that it is possible as an Arab to decide to think as a counselor, wherever I am. While no Arab should be put in the counselor role without her or his agreement or be pressured to take it on,<sup>15</sup> it is a powerful option. One more thing I gained from my experience at the World Conference is a fresh awareness: "It is great to be Arab!"

*Victor George Nicassio*  
Los Angeles, California, USA

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<sup>14</sup> Shukran means thank you, in Arabic.

<sup>15</sup> In this context, take it on means adopt it.



## Identifying and Discharging White Patterns

In RC we have done a lot to identify and discharge the patterns of many constituencies, but not much has been written about white patterns. We have done a great deal of work on guilt, but to really discharge oppressor patterns of racism, we need to identify and consistently discharge specific white patterns. Marcie Rendon, the International Liberation Reference Person for Native Americans, has recommended that Natives who were raised white pick one of these white patterns and discharge on it, then go on to the next.

The list below of white patterns was collected at the first Natives Raised in the White Community Workshop. It is not definitive. It is only a start. Each of the patterns listed is obviously impacted by the unique experience of each white person, including the other constituencies that he or she is part of. The religion, class, region, time period, and so on, in which a white person was raised affect the development of his or her white patterns.

### DISCHARGING BOTH SIDES OF A PATTERN

Remember that many of our patterns can have a flip side that appears to be the opposite. We take in both parts of a hurtful event—being powerless and hurt, and being “powerful” and rigidly in control. When we are discharging one side of a pattern, sometimes just when it looks like it is being cleaned up, the other side pops up to be cleaned out.

One reason it gets hard for white people to pay attention to oppressor patterns of racism is that along with the oppressor patterns, a feeling of being victimized may have gotten laid in. Here’s an example: A young white person sees a person targeted by racism being treated badly as a result of race. Along with acquiring entitlement and

abusive oppressor patterns, he or she may feel powerless or overwhelmed or fearful. This does not mean that the young white person is actually being *oppressed* but that victimized feelings from witnessing the abuse of the target group member are being internalized.

This is one reason we hear claims of “reverse racism.” White people can get confused by having feelings of powerlessness while still being in a position of societal power. We need to stay clear that white people are not being oppressed by racism. Although they may sometimes be mistreated or misinformed by individual people who are targeted by racism, Western societies have been set up to support white control of the major institutions, and these institutions (and the people within them) *systematically* mistreat and spread misinformation about people targeted by racism.

### HISTORICAL AND ECONOMIC BASIS FOR WHITE PATTERNS

In Europe, monarchies developed out of the competition between feudal lords, and then these monarchies led to increasing competition. The resulting societies were hierarchical, with only a handful of people in control and the majority having few civil liberties and living in poverty. This was the “Age of Exploration,” when European

explorers started traveling the globe and the colonial period began. With colonization came the genocide and slavery of Indigenous peoples and the trans-Atlantic African slave trade.

To get white people to support genocide and slavery, they had to be conditioned to treat each other badly. They had to be conditioned to support class bias and religious bias, as well as racism. Later, as capitalism and industrialization developed, white people’s mistreatment of other white people in Europe, and of people targeted by racism throughout the world, became entrenched in social practice, justified in religious and philosophical tracts, and codified in law.

Industrial capitalism needs both raw resources and cheap labor, which it exploits internationally. To gain access to the land and resources of Indigenous people, it must destroy their rights to them; at times this is done by genocide. Europeans, and later white Americans, had to become numb to the poverty, racism, and genocide.

Because today’s capitalism is successful only as long as new consumer markets are opening up, people are manipulated into consuming more than they need.

*continued . . .*



CROATIA • ELENA MOSES

## LIBERATION

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### **A LIST OF WHITE PATTERNS**

Below is a partial list of our white patterns, which have developed from our history (described above). The good news is that people are different from their patterns. Patterns can be discharged.

#### *Relationships with others*

- We white people often have patterns of treating other people badly.
- We can be judgmental: good versus bad, winners versus losers.
- We can be harsh with ourselves and with others, and very impatient.
- We can have strong isolation patterns and experience loneliness even in groups.
- We often feel disconnected from ourselves and from others.
- As children we are often controlled, and may ignore and disrespect our elders.
- We may demand exact equal exchange of money while not being able to be reciprocal on many other levels.

#### *Trying to look good; taking more than we need*

- We often have patterns of trying to look good, look right, follow the rules, and fit in. Or we may have patterns that go toward the opposite, that lead us to try to stand out, be totally unique, or discard all norms.<sup>1</sup>
- We often consume more than we really need. We sometimes have an inflated sense of our needs or can't tell<sup>2</sup> the difference between a desire and a need.
- Sometimes we carry the other end of a politeness pattern and are

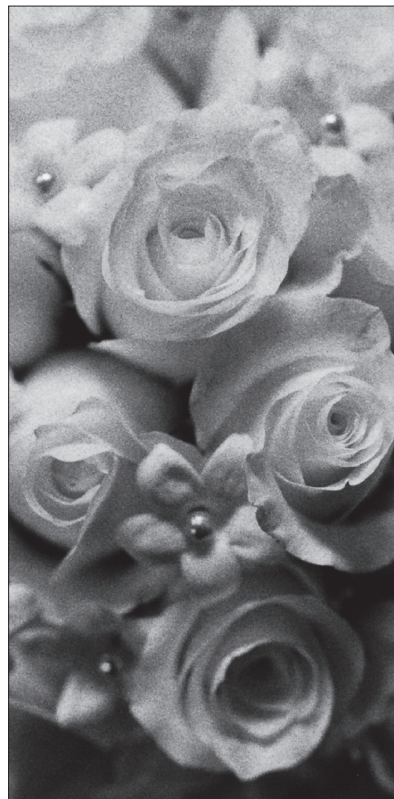
<sup>1</sup> All norms means all that is considered normal.

<sup>2</sup> In this context, tell means discern.

rude and loud and take up a lot of space.

#### *Self-absorption*

- Many of us wear patterns of self-absorption and individualism. We may give more weight to personal concerns than to larger group concerns and everyone's welfare.
- Many of us have feelings of superiority.
- We may believe that we know the answer, that we are right or correct. We may have patterns of self-righteousness.
- Many of us wear patterns of ambition and greed.
- We have a history of militarism and violence, and we may have patterns related to that.
- We can have domination patterns and take control of situations that don't need to be controlled.



LAURIE RHODES

#### *Work patterns*

- Many of us wear patterns of being constantly busy.
- We may believe that our work determines our worth.
- We may forget that human connections are more important than work.
- We may have patterns of rigidity regarding time, obsession with promptness, or be totally irresponsible and expect others to wait for us.

#### *Fear and denial*

- We often deny white identity and are unable to see white patterns. We may get angry at the suggestion that white people have patterns.
- Many of us have patterns of being tense and "tightly wound."

#### *Fear of quiet*

- We may take up lots of space—physically, emotionally, spiritually—and presume that we deserve to be the center of attention.
- We may talk a lot, but our chattering may not have much meaningful content and may feel rude to others.
- We may tend to interrupt and have difficulty listening.

Fortunately, these are patterns, and underneath we are all beautiful, caring, big-hearted, amazing human beings. Just being aware of these patterns and looking at them have led to huge amounts of liberating discharge for those of us who have done so. It is our hope that this list may help others get going on discharging these patterns, so that we can all get closer and be more human with each other.

Nola Hadley Torres  
Union City, California, USA

## A Man Looks at Sexism

Hello all,

I am looking forward to our being together and seeing what we can build as a team of men working together to eliminate sexism.<sup>1</sup> Here are my responses to Chuck's<sup>2</sup> questions:

1. *What has been most successful in your Co-Counseling on sexism?*

The most significant sessions I have had on sexism have been on very early hurts and confusions related to my connection to my mom and about her abilities and intentions. For most of my life I carried with me the feeling that I had been "taking care of" my mother my whole life and that most of how I had internalized the institution of sexism had been an overlay on top of that. In the past year and a half I have had many sessions on my pre-birth, birth, and time right after birth in which I have been able to see clearly what a warrior my mom was on my behalf, how brave and strong she was, how in many ways she saved my life. Getting a clearer picture of this early spot has given me a new perspective on everything that has happened to me since then and has made working on sexism easier and less confusing.

Other things that have been useful include

- Discharging on witnessing the effects of sexism on females close to me (my mom, my sister)
- Discharging on what I "love" about sexism, as a way to get the material<sup>3</sup> out in the open<sup>4</sup>
- Discharging on fighting for my daughter to have a life free from sexism and on what that requires of me and other men.

2. *What have you figured out about supporting the women close to you in their working on sexism directly and looking at internalized oppression?*

I am a bit horrified at how often I have to relearn that I really have to listen to women, that I don't already know what they are thinking, that their experiences are valid, important, significant, and so on. Whenever I can remember these things, I think I become a better counselor

<sup>1</sup> The author is writing to the other men who were invited to the October 2009 Contemporary Women's Issues Workshop, led by Diane Balsler, the International Liberation Reference Person for Women.

<sup>2</sup> Chuck Esser, the leader of the men at the Contemporary Women's Issues Workshop

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

<sup>4</sup> In the open means where it can be seen.

on sexism because I am really listening. It has been helpful to make it explicit to women that I understand that sexism is real, that it has an ongoing terrible effect on women's lives, and that I will stand with them against it. The discharging I did at the last Contemporary Women's Issues Workshop helped tremendously. I was able to understand that sexism wasn't caused by my own personal failings and that it couldn't be ended by my own (rigid, scared?) attempts to "un-sexist" myself. That gave me more room to really want to listen to women about the effects of sexism on their lives. Working against sexism has become less and less about me and my failings and more and more about working together to fight something larger than any of us. I am able to say, "No, let's not accept this limitation," and I've learned that I have to be prepared for the woman to get angry at me, to tell me I don't understand how hard it is (which might be true). I've also learned that when she does this, I still need to push in the direction of not accepting whatever limit the internalized oppression has put on her sense of herself.

I find this the easiest to do with my daughter (who is nearly eight years old). I am learning from my experience with her how to be more light-hearted as a counselor in moving against internalized sexism. That it may feel like death, torture, abuse, for a woman to face this set of feelings doesn't mean that as men we need to try to feel the same way.

3. *What have you figured out in the world outside of RC about being active in eliminating male domination?*

Women often if not usually have better thoughts than men do. It's been interesting to notice this and to figure out how to assist women's ideas to come to the forefront.

*continued . . .*



UTAH, USA • ANNE MACKIE



## LIBERATION

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Often I have found that I can play a good role from the background, working to provide some support to a woman so that she can put her thoughts forward.

Sometimes there is a need to forcefully interrupt men who are playing a bad role. Like most men, I still am not confident enough in myself to know that I can do this as often, or as fully, as I would like. Oftentimes I have attached a lot of early distress to the men around me that makes me feel like they need to be handled forcefully. (I think I'm mad about the mistreatment I have received, or witnessed, at the hands of men.) Once again, a light touch often goes a long way. Many men are eager to jump out of the oppressor role if someone can guide them to a different path. I've noticed this with my father. I can pretty easily now make him laugh when he dominates a conversation or doesn't listen to the women around him, and this will allow him to suddenly adopt a more human position.

I don't know if I have figured out very much about the institutions of women's oppression and how to move successfully against the terrible impact they have on women's lives. I think that we, as a group of guys, probably still need to discharge on the words "male domination" so that we can think for ourselves and have an increasingly accurate picture of sexism, our role in it, and our goodness.

*4. How have you stayed close to other men and used them as counselor while working on male domination?*

In regard to counseling on patterns of male domination, I have not, in general, been able to stay close to or use other men. In the years when George Bush was president of the United States, I noticed that many of us tried to work on patterns of male domination by discharging about what an "asshole"<sup>5</sup> he was. I never thought that was very effective.

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<sup>5</sup> "Asshole" is a derogatory term.



EMMA PARKER

I think it mostly served the purpose of reinforcing our feelings of being better than those "other" asshole men rather than moving us toward facing the hard issues. I led a men's support group once using the scroll with Harvey's<sup>6</sup> quote on it, "I am a good guy; I am one of the good guys; and the bad guys are good guys, too," and learned that we men don't have a lot of attention yet as counselors to think about patterns of male domination.

My brother and I have been able to discharge together some on how we were put in the role of mistreating our younger sister. In those sessions I have been able to face a little bit some of the foundational hurts that allowed me to mistreat females in that way.

Working on my early material with other men, bringing other men in close to me while I work on deep separations and longings, have helped to forge some of the sense of brotherhood between me and them that I need to be able to stand against patterns of male domination.

*5. What issues in your counseling on this are still unresolved?*

As a client I am still struggling to understand how some of my early hurts were manipulated to make me willing to "accept" moving into the oppressor role. I have only recently started to understand this in regard to sex. I know more fully now how my longings for closeness and connection were systematically suppressed and can face some of the exact details of how sex was offered to me as a "best you can hope for" substitute. It has been helpful to me to be able to work precisely on this spot. I do not have such an understanding of other aspects of my oppressor patterns: feeling like I'm smarter than females, being surprised at how hurt women are by my actions, and so on.

I also do not think I have a good handle<sup>7</sup> as a client on where men's oppression and sexism have separated me from other guys. Who's better? Who's worse? Who's going to attack me for siding with women against sexism? How unmanly do I feel when I do this work, and who's going to think he is better than me because of it? I think I need a group to work on this set of feelings with, and I don't have that group around me yet.

It is still hard for me to set up situations in which I really get to hear, in a deep way, about the effect of sexism on a woman's life, and situations in which I can discharge on what it is like to face that reality.

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<sup>6</sup> Harvey Jackins'

<sup>7</sup> Handle means grasp, grip.

6. *If you came to the previous Contemporary Women's Issues Workshop, in what areas did you struggle and what contradictions<sup>8</sup> did you find most useful?*

The most useful contradiction, by far, was when we men were all able to discharge together about what it was like to try to really face the effects of sexism on women, particularly women whom we know and love. Those sessions were very meaningful to me and have given me a deeper sense of my connection with other men as we go forward with this work. They also have allowed me to be less forgetful about sexism, to be able to hold a clearer picture in my mind, on a daily basis, of this oppression.

The other huge contradiction for me was finally being able to face the magnitude of sexism and realizing it is not something I can solve by myself, by making myself personally a better man. We will not eliminate sexism by fighting all by ourselves. It has to be a group effort. It is going to take millions of men, standing by millions of women, for us to win. I realized this largely from watching the numerous demonstrations Diane did with experienced women leaders. One after the other, the women worked on terrible experiences, which had happened usually in their late teens and early twenties, in which men (often whom they were very close to) had acted out sexual or violent distresses at them. The women had almost never worked on these incidents, although the resulting hurts

had dramatically changed the course of their lives for the worse. Seeing those sessions and having a chance to discharge about them with other guys allowed me to focus less on becoming less sexist and more on trying to figure out what the real battle is and fighting there.

One of the main struggles for me at the workshop was with racism. I was painfully aware of how differently the work on sexism seemed to go for the white men and for the men targeted by racism, but I wasn't able to make enough close contact with the men targeted by racism to be able to contradict how divided I felt we were. I think one of the functions of sexism is to divide men targeted by racism from white men. I was not prepared for that and didn't feel like I managed to reach through it very effectively.

In a broader way, I struggled with being a white middle-class heterosexual Protestant man in my attempts to stay close to the men who had targeted identities (for example, Jewish, working class). I think we men do not know each other well enough in terms of how our multiple identities have shaped our responses to sexism. I, at least, need more discharge in this area. I think we need to find ways to connect and hear about each other's lives so that we can be a more unified front in our shared battle.

Love to you all, and particular thanks to Chuck for taking the lead in this area,

*Chris Austill*  
Somerville, Massachusetts, USA

<sup>8</sup> Contradictions to distress



## Learning Something Important

I was in the kitchen with my sister and my girlfriend. Both of them lead in RC. My sister was talking about her undergraduate days at university, when she was doing a physics degree. She talked about how hard it was to be there as a woman doing that subject at that time (over twenty years ago).

At one point she was working in a lab with a couple of women lab partners. They had carefully built some equipment for an experiment. While they were out of the lab, some male students deliberately destroyed what they had built. When my sister confronted them, the young men admitted they had done it and said that they didn't know why. Another incident: In a mechanical engineering workshop the lecturer told the women they shouldn't be there. When my sister went to the head of the department and told him what had happened, he wasn't interested and just sat there impassively until she left.

*continued . . .*

AM



## LIBERATION

... continued

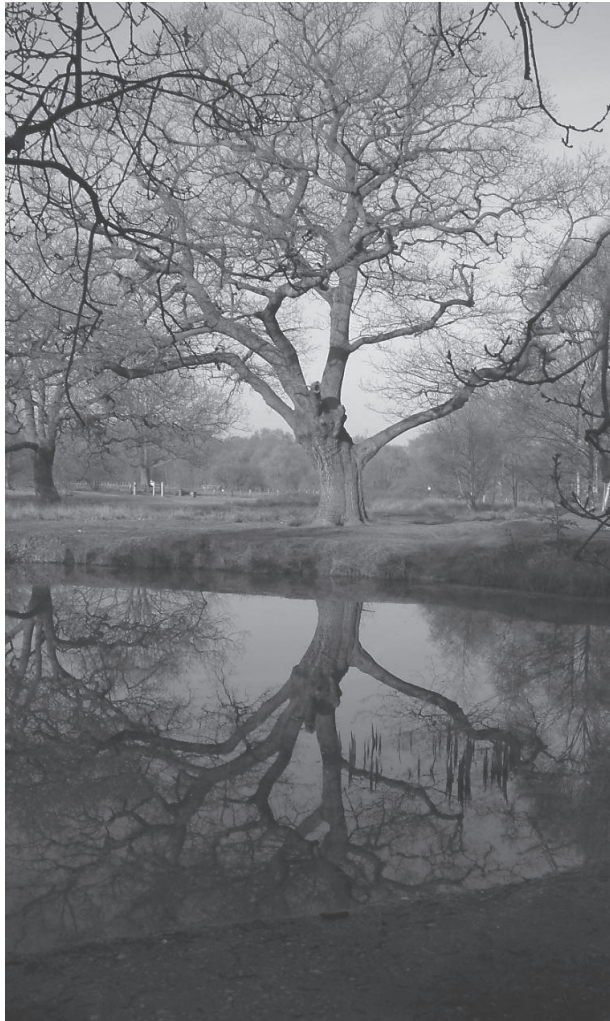
I was agitated and couldn't bear to listen anymore. I told my sister she should have talked to the head of the department in a more powerful way. I kept talking to her as if she had failed to do something. All the while, some bit of my mind could see I was getting something wrong, but I carried on.\* After a while my sister got angry and smashed a bowl she was carrying on the floor—something I'd never seen her do before.

Then my girlfriend stepped in and told me I was wrong and to listen to my sister. I refused for quite a while, still arguing that I was right (with a bit of my mind still knowing I was wrong). My girlfriend very capably insisted I was wrong. Eventually I could see there was nowhere else to go and I had to admit I was completely wrong. I immediately started crying hard.

Every time I relate this incident to anyone (male or female), I cry easily and it feels like the tears have a big pressure behind them. I know I'm in the process of learning something important.

*Karl Lam*  
Cambridge, England

\* Carried on means continued.



ALAN SPRUNG

## Facing How Women Have Been Hurt

It looks like it is too upsetting for most of us men to look at the degree to which women have been hurt. We can end up yelling at women or trying to cajole or "coach" them into handling sexism differently rather than listening and then having a session on our own heartbreak about what we have heard.

I have worked with a group of men on what their lives would have been like if their moms had never been hurt by sexism, and what it was like to watch their moms and sisters, and other women close to them, be hurt by sexism—how sexism has hurt the women most important to them in their lives.

It is clear how important women have been in our lives. They have held out the possibility of our being fully human. They have been key role models. We have admired them and wanted to be strong in the ways that they can be strong. Many of us have seemed unable to stand<sup>1</sup> where they are "weak," which is often where sexism has gotten to them.<sup>2</sup> As a men's leader I do whatever I can to rub guys' noses in<sup>3</sup> how sexism has damaged the lives and possibilities of the people most important to them in the world.

*David Jernigan*  
Baltimore, Maryland, USA

<sup>1</sup> In this context, stand means tolerate.

<sup>2</sup> Gotten to them means affected them.

<sup>3</sup> Rub guys' noses in means make guys notice.



## Sexism, Anti-Jewish Oppression, Intertwined

My work on sexism and men's oppression has been intertwined with work on anti-Jewish oppression. As a Jewish guy, my conditioning as a male was tied up with sexism. Importantly, I saw my mom being hammered<sup>1</sup> as a Jewish woman, by both sexism and anti-Jewish oppression. My best Co-Counseling sessions on sexism have been about my mom's mistreatment and the implications of that for her and her life, as well as for me as her son.

I've had sessions in which I've imagined counseling my mom when she was a young or young-adult woman and encouraging her to fight for herself. I have also imagined bringing an outside perspective into our family that would have let her know that

horrible oppressions were at work<sup>2</sup> and things were not her fault. This contradicts the ways in which Jewish women are made to feel particularly bad about themselves and to blame themselves for how they've been made to feel wrong or like they're "too much" or a "wreck."

I'm still restimulated by the vicious effects of anti-Jewish oppression and sexism on my beloved Jewish sisters, particularly my mom. I have been extremely protective of my mom and other Jewish women, which has made it hard for me to share openly about my early life. I can also run<sup>3</sup> sexism by reactively trying to protect Jewish women.

<sup>2</sup> At work means operating.

<sup>3</sup> Run means act out.

I have tried hard to encourage the women close to me to trust their thinking, to say what they think, to demand things, to take up space. In RC, when I have a good, solid relationship with a woman, I've been able to offer myself as a man who can stay with her as she has thoughts and feelings, particularly about me. I try to get out of her way so that she can decide how to use her voice and take up space on her terms.

Keeping guys close to me when I'm working on male domination has been a struggle. Jewish oppression makes me feel like I'm out on my own,<sup>4</sup> where nobody is with me and nobody is trustworthy.

*Yonah Camacho Diamond*  
Oakland, California, USA

<sup>4</sup> Out on my own means all by myself, alone.

<sup>1</sup> Hammered means heavily mistreated.



### *Involved in eliminating racism?*

#### **Join an e-mail discussion list for RC Community members involved in eliminating racism!**

You can exchange thinking about, and share experiences of, using RC to end racism.

If interested, e-mail Tim Jackins and Diane Shisk at <uer@rc.org>. Tell them of your interest and include a short description of your eliminating-racism activities. Also ask your Area Reference Person or Regional Reference Person to e-mail them with his or her support of your membership.

TEXAS, USA • RICHARD K. DAVIDSON

## LIBERATION

# Men and Their Mums: Undoing Sexism

Recently we Melbourne (Victoria, Australia) RCers, both men and women, have been working hard to “reclaim” our mothers. At our Community workshop last year, Louisa<sup>1</sup> spent the Saturday evening class encouraging us to discharge about our mums, recognizing their full humanity. She spoke eloquently and at length of how, because of the sexist society, each of our mothers had given up on a part of her life to become a wife and a mother. It was not a free decision, as society offers few rational choices for women. That was a turning point for me in working on my sexism. I have spent many sessions since, talking and discharging about my mum and how much I love her. I have learned much about myself, men, and the nature of sexism.

I had always found it difficult to see how my mum was oppressed. I had thought the difficulty was because of our owning-class heritage, but Louisa suggested it had everything to do with sexism. We men, she pointed out, no matter what class we come from, have real difficulty seeing our mothers as being oppressed. This is because we are so dependent for survival on our mums. We start out so close to them, so inextricably linked—for warmth, nourishment, and human contact—that we cannot bear to think of them suffering as a result. To contemplate that the woman we loved the most was suffering at the hands of sexism can call into question our very existence. It can restimulate profound early feelings of dread, loss, grief, horror, anger, guilt, longing, regret, separation, anxiety, abandonment, neglect, hunger, perhaps even death. No wonder we men don’t want to look at it. No wonder we don’t want to look at sexism!

Now that I understand this dynamic a little and have begun to discharge, old memories keep flooding back of my mum being caught in unbearable and intolerable situations. Recently I was clienting about a derogatory comment my dad used to make from time to time about my mum’s physical appearance. He used to tease her in front of my brother and me; not often, not obviously, but enough for me to learn what was going on.<sup>2</sup> My mum would laugh in an embarrassed way. We would laugh in an oppressive way. The jokes were at someone else’s expense. My memories of these times are of warmth, togetherness, laughing, and fun, even though someone was being humiliated and ridiculed. Realizing this has taught me that happy memories and good feelings can also contain oppressive behaviour and are therefore worth fully discharging about, just as much as painful ones.

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

<sup>1</sup> Louisa Flander, the Area Reference Person for Melbourne, Victoria, Australia

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



MACHU PICCHU, PERU • DIANE SHISK

The world will freely  
offer itself to you to be  
unmasked. It has no choice;  
it will roll in ecstasy at your  
feet.

*Franz Kafka*

## Open Questions from the 2009 Pre-World Conferences

*Answered by Tim Jackins*

### LATIN AMERICAN PRE-WORLD CONFERENCE

*Question:* What is the correct way to naturalize RC?

*Tim:* There is not one right way of doing it. Let me talk about it a little. Often when we think about naturalizing RC, we think of taking RC ideas and using them in a non-RC group. Some of us think of taking a little piece of RC and sneaking it in—like doing “news and goods” at every meeting. You can add RC ideas almost anywhere, and there are many different ways to do it. One of the best ways is for you to be an example. It may feel a little dangerous, but for you to act outside the patterns of a group is very useful. It allows people to question their own patterns.

I taught mathematics in a college for almost thirty years, and I introduced some RC ideas with the faculty and used them in my classes. The first day of each class I would have people stand up and introduce themselves. One of the questions I asked was, “How good are you in math?” and about half of the class always said that they were the “stupid kid.” It was useful for half the class to hear that. I would also ask them who their worst math teacher was, and why. Sometimes it was one of my colleagues, and sometimes it was their second-grade teacher. I would let them talk about having difficulties. Anything that lets people listen to each other is using a big part of what we know.

I couldn't do too much in my classes; I still had to teach mathematics. But in other groups you may have more leeway and be able to introduce more and more pieces of RC. It often works best to introduce it to one or two people first, and do a little practice with them, so that you have allies when you introduce it to the group.

Someone in the group may become restimulated. This doesn't mean that you're wrong, but you have to be ready to handle the restimulation. When the person says, “That's a stupid idea,” you can say, “Yes, I know. I'm sorry, but I want to do it anyway,” and they have nothing to argue about. You agree that it's stupid, and

it lets you try the idea. Once people get to see what it is, they think differently.

Sometimes you introduce a little of RC just to make a group work better, or not be so restimulating. In some groups you can introduce more and more and more. You can introduce a lot of RC, but it isn't the same as RC. You're just trying to make the group work better, you're not trying to go on and have people counsel with each other. The group has a different purpose.

What many people have done is to notice who uses RC best in the group, and ask them to have longer sessions and start teaching them more of RC, separately, and then at some point invite them to join an RC class. So naturalizing can do two things: it can help the functioning of any group, and it can help you find people who want to get into RC. Don't be in a hurry about it. Don't get defensive about it. It's much better to shrug and say, “Yes, I know, it's a stupid idea, but I want to try it anyway. I'm sorry. It's my fault, but humor me.” You can go a long way that way.

*continued . . .*



GIJÓN, SPAIN • JOE M. RODRIGUEZ



... continued

## WESTERN EUROPEAN PRE-WORLD CONFERENCE

*Question:* Earlier today you talked about the *Guidelines*.<sup>1</sup> What I understood, and I may have been misunderstanding, is that they are not meant as strictly as they are written.

*Tim:* They are meant the way they are written. The *Guidelines* are not a liberal document. The tone of them is not, "This is the best we've done, and we hope it's helpful to you, so use them if you think it's okay." Rather the tone is that this is the best thinking of the best minds we've been able to find. Do not dismiss them. You will face circumstances we have not yet faced, and you will need to use your own experience to think out the next step, but do not lightly dismiss the experience of these minds.

The *Guidelines* are a strong statement, but they are not meant to limit your thinking. They exist to make sure you do think. They may sound stiff. Those of us who find comfort in liberalism can get a little scared around someone saying, "THIS IS CORRECT." And the *Guidelines* say, "This is what has been correct in our experience." So it's an interesting struggle. They sound tough, and they are. If we're scared, they sound rigid. They are not, but a lot of thought is required.

*Question:* When you are trying to encourage people to take leadership other than organizing or assisting in a fundamentals class, should you always suggest that they teach a fundamentals class, or can they lead a support group? And when you have an ongoing class or support group, does it make sense to have one person lead it consistently or can you rotate the leadership from class to class?

*Tim:* First question: We know that everyone can lead. And we know that the only things that keep people from being good leaders are distresses. We all have things to work on so that we can become good leaders, and we do need to have worked on them enough that we don't get too confused by them. Still,

<sup>1</sup>The *Guidelines for the Re-evaluation Counseling Communities*

it almost always works better to do things before we feel we are ready. Of course, sometimes it turns out<sup>2</sup> that we actually weren't ready, but most of the time it was our fears, and we discharge them much faster because we are making the effort against them in present time.

One important thing about teaching a fundamentals class is that nobody has done the work with these people before you—these are your people. To lead somebody else's people is a different challenge. To lead a support group of people whom someone else has taught isn't the same challenge at all.

In our experience, people are pushed much harder when they know that they are the one who is going to lead. They may have an assistant and some experienced people in the class, but they are the leader. People seem to face the struggles of leading better in that situation. They are leading people who have decided to follow them, not leading someone else's people. An important part of leadership is functioning well enough with people that they decide you are their leader. It is one thing to assume the position of a leader, and it's another to function in such a way that people consider you their leader.

When I was teaching mathematics in college, I would essentially try to destroy the teacher's position (as defined by the distresses in my students' minds) and then figure out how I could help the students learn and how they could use me. I didn't want to step into the patterned role they were all used to following. I wanted to demonstrate to each one of them that I could be useful.

You can provide wonderful leadership for people. It's something most of us have not been allowed to experiment with very much outside of RC. We want you to look at it fully.

Second question: When you have a group for more than a single meeting, it functions far better if someone takes on<sup>3</sup> the responsibility of thinking about

<sup>2</sup> It turns out means the result is.

<sup>3</sup> In this context, takes on means assumes.



TAMMY DAY

the group long term. Reference Persons in RC take responsibility for thinking about the members of some size of group. They can lead various activities, but their role is thinking about the group. If you have a group that meets on an ongoing basis, it will work much better if someone is thinking about it long term, not just “next week is mine.” This doesn’t mean that different people can’t lead big parts of it each week, but you want at least one mind to have agreed to be thinking through the whole thing. It works even better if more than one mind is thinking about it. The others don’t have to claim it publicly, but to have more than one mind involved works even better.

*Question:* What’s the best process for correcting leadership?

*Tim:* What do we do when a leader makes an error? It depends on how restimulating the mistake is and how broad its effects are, but you want to find a way to do two things: end and counteract the bad effects of the mistake, and reach the mind that made the mistake so that it can discharge enough not to make it again. People do not intentionally make mistakes, and they make fewer, and correct them sooner, when they are having sessions consistently (which some RC leaders sometimes aren’t doing; they get stranded alone). When people are having sessions, someone has access to their minds.

The person who recognizes the error, sees the mistake the leader has made, gets to have sessions on it—without naming the leader, to avoid acting out the restimulated feelings and restimulating his or her Co-Counselor. The person needs to discharge any fears he or she has about directly approaching the leader and figure out how to talk about the difficulty. Then he or she needs to talk directly to the leader and see what happens.

Sometimes leaders appreciate it right away. Sometimes they get defensive, and sometimes they just feel hurt. You need to be ready to be their counselor and not be harsh with them. The mistake and the distress behind it are not things that they chose. You also need to have at least one idea of something better that could have been done. There will be sessions to do, support to give, and hopefully that will be enough to get things moving, but it isn’t always. Some of us get very attached to our bad

decisions. I wish that a certain number of years of counseling would guarantee that all mistakes are over, but I’ve seen people with twenty-five years of counseling get confused enough to make a mistake and insist that it stay that way.

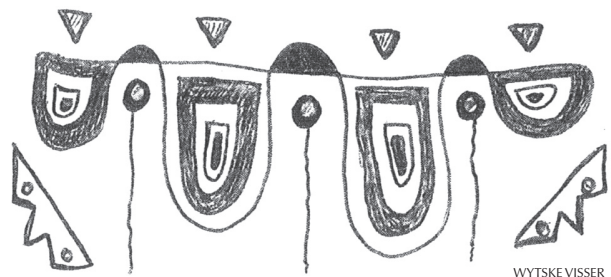
If local intervention doesn’t work, then you go up a notch to the next level of leadership. With particular mistakes, there are specific things you can do. With someone’s long-term struggles, you cannot simply command the person to be different. (“You should be happier with your people.”) A lot of work and discharge has to go on.<sup>4</sup>

Sometimes the problem works its way up to me. Several leaders have been removed from their positions after many people put in good amounts of counseling time. Sometimes leaving the position helps them to do the discharging they need to do. Sometimes I can push by saying, “You have to take this action next week.” There will still be months of counseling involved, but the Community needs them to change a decision sooner than that.

Then, of course, there’s me. When I make mistakes the same thing happens, except there’s no one to appeal to except the World Conference. People do try to help me with the places I struggle. It is always better to reach for someone before he or she makes the mistake.

Most of the mistakes we see being made don’t surprise us. We were just hoping the person wouldn’t do that. We knew that he or she had trouble there, but we didn’t act fast enough. We want every person to keep moving forward, including our leaders, but the habits surrounding leadership, from outside our Community, are to leave the leader alone and then be really upset when he or she makes a mistake. This is still a confusion we fight.

<sup>4</sup> Go on means happen, occur.



WYTSKE VISSER

## Ordinary Days on Planet Earth

The light from the sun  
travels to earth every day  
soaks into the ground,  
the dirt,  
the water,  
the rocks,

and the plants burst upwards  
in a multitude of colors

and the animals grow  
and change  
and evolve,  
wandering over the land  
and in the sea

and the people  
are simply starlight  
with brains and hands

they create marvelous art and music

they solve incredible problems  
with knowledge, ingenuity  
and vast imaginations

they invent technology  
to communicate with each other  
and transform the lives  
of billions

and though they  
don't always know it,  
they are  
striving striving striving

to be good,  
and kind  
to one another.

*Jim DuBois*  
Northampton, Massachusetts, USA



XABI ODRIZOLA

## Information Coordinator for Health and Well-being

I'm Pam Geyer, and I'm the new Information Coordinator for Health and Well-being.

My goal is to make taking care of our bodies a priority so that we can do the work we want to do so our lives go better and better. Our minds and bodies work together, and when they are both working well, we can think and function better.

I want to hear from you!

What have you figured out about how to stay healthy? What have you noticed about how you function differently when you are well and when you are ill? How does your well-being affect the work you do or want to do in your life? How are you working on your physical self, especially in maintaining or recovering well-being? What counseling techniques have worked for you? What re-evaluations and fresh thinking have you had? What still stands in your way?

If you have specific questions, I welcome you to contact me. My e-mail address is <pgeyer@medcetera.com>. My phone number is +1-713-666-7300 (U.S.).

There is also an RC e-mail discussion list for leaders on disability, chronic illness, and health. See the back of *Present Time* for how to sign up. I encourage you to write to that list. It can help with isolation to be in touch with each other.

*Pam Geyer*  
Bellaire, Texas, USA



BALBOA PARK, SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA, USA • BILL GARZA



## Appreciating a Translation Group

A letter from Chen Pingjun, the Regional Reference Person for the Chinese Mainland, to the members of the Chinese translation group

Dear translation group members,

Please allow me to send congratulations and many thanks to all of you for what you have done, and would have done, in translating RC literature for our Chinese RCers during the past year.

I believe that we as a group have done no fewer than twenty-one pieces, long and short ones, plus parts of the *Guidelines*. Two long pieces have been made into pamphlets: 摈弃不切实际的期待与“失望” (*Give Up False Expectations and “Disappointment,”* by Harvey Jackins) and 对再评价咨询的介绍 (*A Recent Introduction to RC*, by Tim Jackins).

It is great that we group members in Beijing were able to convene last Sunday afternoon to celebrate what we have accomplished and discharge the feelings that have prevented us from being proud of ourselves and enjoying the pleasure of doing translations.

We tried the direction, “I am good. I need not do anything to prove it.” That may mean that we need not be perfect in translating English to Chinese to feel we are good enough—because we already are.

We decided we need not blame ourselves for making mistakes or



SEATTLE, WASHINGTON, USA • JOHN O'NEILL

failing to present the Chinese sentences satisfactorily. We know we already did our best. And learning from mistakes or failures is one of the best ways to learn, while enjoying learning is the nature of human beings. We would not allow the patterns from old hurts to prevent us from having fun doing the translations.

We decided that we need not feel bad if we somehow cannot finish a piece as soon as we had hoped.

We decided we would often remind ourselves that we do RC, and do something for RC, simply because we believe RC is good and we enjoy doing it and sharing it with other people. Re-evaluation Counseling is for us to

enjoy, not to burden ourselves with. So we would approach translation work as only fun—not as a job, duty, or burden. If we cannot find fun in it, we would stop and allow ourselves to discharge. If it still appears to be a burden, we would happily pass the “burden” back to Chen Pingjun without feeling bad.

We decided that all the completed translations would be the by-product of our group work, and that the more important product should be our re-emergence from the patterns that prevent us from having fun learning and cooperating.

To make better use of our resources and better our cooperation, I have agreed to be the Translation Coordinator for the translation of RC literature into Chinese, as requested by Truus Jansen who is in charge of the translation work for Rational Island Publishers. I hope that will allow me more chances to support and encourage all of you in enjoying being in this group!

So please remember to let me know your ideas. How would you enjoy more being in this group? What kind of pieces would you like to do or not like to do? When?

Best wishes for your 2010!

Chen Pingjun  
Beijing, China



ZOE COHEN



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.*



## A Gather-in on the Tule Lake Pilgrimage



LK

Yesterday I held a gather-in for my Region on the United to End Racism (UER) project at the Tule Lake Pilgrimage.<sup>1</sup> About twenty Co-Counselors attended. Some of the white participants had met at the same location an hour earlier to discharge on racism.

I gave some background to and context for the circumstances of Japanese Americans during World War II. I started with the internment and some of the conditions (issei<sup>2</sup> barred from becoming naturalized citizens, not being allowed to own property, and so on). What happens when a group is robbed of power and fiercely targeted at the same time? It's so easy for people in the group to turn on<sup>3</sup> each other. Then the confusion of questions 27 and 28<sup>4</sup> on the loyalty questionnaire intensified the situation. It's impossible to talk about the Japanese American community without talking about internalized oppression. I emphasized that whatever choices people made were valid in that impossible situation. Whatever the choices were, they were what people could figure out—compliance or resistance, renunciant,<sup>5</sup> no-no,<sup>6</sup> draftee.<sup>7</sup>

The RCers had lots of questions. It looked like the details let the information become real—become something they could relate to a person they knew or to their own experience. We talked about resettlement and its legacy for Japanese Americans, including those born after the camps.

For RC to be effective in eliminating racism, we need to be aware of not just these but of all of our stories. They are all connected. I shared a sentence I like in which Ron Takaki<sup>8</sup> talks about the expanding economy in the nineteenth-century United States: “Irish immigrants worked in New England factories manufacturing textiles from cotton cultivated by enslaved blacks on lands taken from Indians and Mexicans, and settlers moved west on railroads built by the Irish and Chinese.” I don't think we can challenge the hard stuff with each other if we only maintain a surface, polite connection. A deeper understanding of context, of where we've come from, is necessary.

Then we talked about the Tule Lake Pilgrimages, the involvement of individual RCers over the years, and the decision to have a UER project this year. People were intrigued by the UER work. They wanted details about bringing RC into an already functioning group and specifics of how the intergenerational discussion groups were set up and run. I felt like I was watching light bulbs go on in their heads as they thought about integrating RC more openly into projects they were currently working on or considering.

It was a good afternoon. We faced racism and discharged and learned about history that is ordinarily kept from us. People left excited about new possibilities in their own lives.

*Carolyn Kameya*  
San Jose, California, USA

<sup>1</sup> The Tule Lake Pilgrimage is a pilgrimage, every two years, to the Tule Lake Internment Camp in California, USA, where thousands of Japanese and Okinawan heritage people were interned during World War II. United to End Racism sent a delegation to last year's pilgrimage. For more information on this, see pages 57 to 67 of the October 2009 *Present Time* and pages 78 to 82 of the January 2010 *Present Time*.

<sup>2</sup> Issei is a Japanese term for first-generation immigrants from Japan to other countries.

<sup>3</sup> In this context, turn on means direct mistreatment at.

<sup>4</sup> Question 27: Are you willing to serve in the armed forces of the United States on combat duty, wherever ordered?

Question 28: Will you swear unqualified allegiance to the United States, and faithfully defend the United States from any or all attack by foreign or domestic forces, and forswear any form of allegiance or obedience to the Japanese Emperor or any other foreign government, power or organization?

<sup>5</sup> A renunciant was a U.S. citizen who gave up his or her U.S. citizenship, usually under pressure and duress.

<sup>6</sup> A no-no was a person who answered no to questions 27 and 28 on the loyalty questionnaire.

<sup>7</sup> A draftee was someone who answered yes to questions 27 and 28 and was drafted into the U.S. Army, which had a segregated unit for Japanese Americans.

<sup>8</sup> Ron Takaki was a Japanese American historian and ethnographer whose work led to the creation of the ethnic studies program at the University of California, in Berkeley, California, USA, where he was a professor.



## Reconnecting with Mumias RCers

Wanjiku<sup>1</sup> requested that I support her in ensuring that RC grow in Kenya. I gladly agreed, because it is encouraging seeing the difference RC is making in our society.

I began by organizing introductory workshops. After the workshops I started fundamentals classes in two areas and support groups in the high schools. I am working with young people, especially in high school, because I have realized the importance of using RC as one makes decisions about one's life, present and future. People, especially youth, are facing many challenges in the developing world. Re-evaluation Counseling empowers us by helping us understand who we are and what our goals are. We are then able to be more focused in all aspects of life.

On 6 July, 2008, we held our first workshop at St. Mary's Girls' High School in Mumias. Mumias is a small town in Kenya located about nine hours by bus from Nairobi. After that introductory workshop we left the school some RC literature, which they have been using in their RC meetings in the school. We have been in touch with Ms. Owiti, the teacher who has been facilitating the RC meetings with the students. We agreed that there was a need for a follow-up workshop and more RC materials. The students were showing a lot of interest and had introduced RC to their peers in a neighboring school, Shitoto Girls' High School. After consultations with the school administration, we invited the students from the second school, and their teacher, to a November workshop.

On 7 November, 2009, Samuel,<sup>2</sup> Humphrey,<sup>3</sup> and I travelled to Mumias to facilitate the workshop. It was a long and tiring journey, but we knew that at the end of it was a warm RC family waiting to receive us. (That's one of the things about the RC family—distance does not separate us.) It was encouraging to see how seriously and well the first school had embraced RC.

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<sup>1</sup> Wanjiku Kironyo, the Area Reference Person for Nairobi, Kenya, and the Apprentice Regional Reference Person for Kenya and Surrounds

<sup>2</sup> Samuel Kiriro Wairimu, an RC teacher in Nairobi, Kenya

<sup>3</sup> Humphrey Kasembeli, an RC teacher in Nairobi, Kenya

The students from the new school came early for the workshop so that we could have an RC introductory session with them before the host school students joined us. That worked out well. By the time the rest of the group arrived, we felt that we were on the same page.<sup>4</sup> We reviewed RC theory and had Co-Counseling sessions, topic-group discussions, a question-and-answer session, and lots of play. We also put aside some time to answer questions the students had from reading RC materials and doing sessions.

One of the main challenges we faced from the outset was that the school administration had changed since we were there last. The people in the new administration were not familiar with RC, and we needed their authorization in order to hold the workshop. The students had been having regular sessions out in the open fields, and the first time the administrators saw them sitting two by two and holding hands, they became apprehensive, which is understandable because so many schools in the country are experiencing difficulties from cults, social unrest, and the resulting hysteria. What's worse, some of these schools have been responding by calling upon "healers," who are outsiders who come and disrupt the school.

The head teacher attended part of the workshop. During the appreciations she said that now she understood what RC was. Having seen her girls participating with so much confidence and enthusiasm, we now had her full support. She appreciated the larger RC Community for supporting the school by committing to the development of Co-Counseling there.

I feel encouraged that the future leaders of Africa—the youth, from all over the country—are slowly becoming a part of the RC Community and transitioning to responsible leadership.

The fact that Mumias is far from Nairobi city, where RC has taken a strong hold, is a challenge. It will take a bit more time to develop RC teachers there and strengthen RC in that area. The school does not have access to the Internet, making regular communication almost impossible. This needs to

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<sup>4</sup> On the same page means understanding things in the same way.



JENNIFER BERRY

be given deeper thought, and we are thinking about the best way forward.

**HIGHLIGHTS OF THE WORKSHOP**

Here are some highlights of the workshop:

*Topic-group discussions.* The students chose the following topics: leadership, relationships, and the roles of the modern woman in society. Their presentations were moving. There was so much power, self-assurance, and conviction in each point they raised.

*Question-and-answer session.* Each question asked showed that the students had been reading the RC material, practicing Co-Counseling, and envisioning RC as part of their present life and future. We appreciated the straightforwardness with which the questions were asked.

*Play.* I was fighting the feeling that we should be doing “something more important” than playing at a workshop. I fought that conditioning by actively participating, taking off my shoes, and giving it my all<sup>5</sup> out on the field. We all enjoyed ourselves.

<sup>5</sup> Giving it my all means putting my whole self into it.

*Closing circle.* A student talked of how when she had joined the school she was shy, withdrawn, and could not possibly stand in front of people; how her mind would just go blank and she wouldn’t be able to speak. She had then joined the RC group and started having Co-Counseling sessions. She is now confident and out there,<sup>6</sup> and despite this being her first year in school, when students are normally expected to be shy and quiet, she is having a good time being loud, outspoken, and her true self.

To Samuel and Humphrey: I appreciate you for being so committed to the RC Community’s growth. Getting time off<sup>7</sup> to travel to this workshop was not easy. Thank you for being a part of this family. To the St. Mary’s community: Thank you for hosting us so warmly, for embracing RC, for being a part of us.

Janet W. Kabue  
Nairobi, Kenya

<sup>6</sup> Out there means fully showing herself.

<sup>7</sup> Time off means time away from work.



**Better Decisions About the Future**



I have been in RC for the past five years. I grew up in an informal settlement where youth face many challenges, and I am grateful I got to know about RC when I was in the process of making decisions about my life.

Re-evaluation Counseling helped me realize that people take advantage of young people who have not had a chance at education, and exploit and oppress them in every way possible. I made a personal commitment to reach out to young people by means of RC fundamentals classes every Sunday, support groups, and my interaction with them at my workplace. I am seeing the impact of this on my community. The young people are re-emerging with confidence, self-esteem, and self-appreciation, and they are able to make better decisions about their futures.

My main motivation is how RC has changed my life. I have been able to make sound decisions about my future, and I am now reaching out to people in my community.

Samuel Kiriro Wairimu  
Nairobi, Kenya





## Recovering Reading



*In my traveling around the world, I've noticed that many Co-Counselors still are not reading RC literature. Seven years ago, Tim<sup>1</sup> asked me to lead some workshops on recovering an interest in and the ability to read. I sent out an e-mail to all the Regional Reference Persons about this and led one workshop in the Midwest of the United States in 2005. I am planning to lead another one there this year.*

*I think reading the literature is important for world change and for building strong RC Communities. The distress recordings related to reading and, more generally, discouragement about learning are slowing people's progress in understanding our theory and growing our Communities.*



Julian Weissglass  
International Commonality Reference  
Person for Wide World Change  
Santa Barbara, California, USA

Dear Julian,

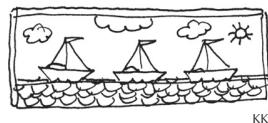
In our preparing for a recent workshop, I suggested doing something on reading RC literature. A handicap here is that most of the literature is in English and not translated, but it's also true that the translated literature could be read more widely. We have a lot of feelings about reading.

<sup>1</sup> Tim Jackins

We brought literature to the workshop. On Saturday afternoon people had a mini-session on reading. Then each person chose a piece of literature. He or she was asked to be ready to give a short report after dinner on what was most important in what he or she had read.

We had silence for half an hour, to read, and then had another mini-session. After dinner we all reported briefly on what was most important in what we had read. The impact was interesting. People were touched by what they had read and liked reporting on it.

I chose to read about building close relationships in RC and about the no-socializing policy,<sup>2</sup> and reported back on that. This turned out to be<sup>3</sup> supportive to two Co-Counselors who like each other very much. They are having four-way sessions with me and my husband to learn about mutual restimulations. They both are dedicated to RC and are so glad to be discharging instead of socializing.



Annie Hoekstra  
Regional Reference Person  
for Fryslân, The Netherlands  
Leeuwarden, Fryslân,  
The Netherlands

<sup>2</sup> The RC no-socializing policy 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.

<sup>3</sup> Turned out to be means resulted in being.



### **STOP!**

**GO! NOW!** to the lists in the back of this Present Time.

**LOOK!** at these lists. (It won't take more than ten minutes.)

**LET US KNOW!** if you find any inaccuracies.

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

**MUCH APPRECIATION!**

*Rational Island Publishers*

JANA CHRISTOPHER



## My Relationship with the *Guidelines* and How I Learned to Love Them and Make Them Mine

I have been doing RC for more than thirty-three years. I have been a certified RC teacher for more than thirty-one years, an Area Reference Person for ten years, and the Regional Reference Person for Denmark for more than ten years. And here is my confession: It has taken me more than twenty-five years to understand how precious the *Guidelines*<sup>1</sup> are.

I have always liked them when I read them, but it has felt like an insurmountable job to translate them into Danish and I have felt uncomfortable giving them to new Co-Counselors because of restimulations about the language and layout and probably other things as well. When presenting the *Guidelines* to new Co-Counselors, I have done it by explaining the content of the most important parts (on leadership, drugs, no-socializing, “mental health,” the goals). In smaller groups and in leaders’ classes we have read and discussed specific sections, but the *Guidelines* have never been a central piece of literature for us. Now, since I have been involved in the process of making the language as easy and understandable as possible so that it can convey the precise content as best as possible, my own process has been greatly facilitated. It has also been important that I have not been on my own,<sup>2</sup> that I have been in groups, locally as well as at the conferences, that have worked together.

Because of the preparations for the 2009 Pre-World and World Conferences, and because of how

the work on the *Guidelines* was organized at the conferences, I felt that for the first time I got<sup>3</sup> them, really got them. In our Community we had *Guidelines* meetings before the conferences in which we used our questions to think about the *Guidelines* in common. Working on the language, and discussing the meaning together with others, made me realize that *the value of the Guidelines comes with the work we do on them*. They have a value in themselves, but it only becomes clear when we do the work—when we read, discharge about, think about, and discuss them.

So, when I returned home from the World Conference I decided that we would make the *Guidelines* central for all of us in our Community and also that we would have them translated into Danish within a year. This meant that I would dedicate a good part of every RC activity, from August of 2009 until the spring of 2010, to working on, thinking about, and discharging on the *Guidelines*.

I have led a support group, two one-day workshops, and an e-mail discussion group on the *Guidelines*. I have also had one-to-one meetings with our Area Reference Person and with other leaders.

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



HUNGARY • MOLNÁR GABRIELLA

What we have done at the workshops, gatherings, and meetings is this:

First I have talked about the process of working on the *Guidelines*, what it has taken to get to where we have the final (so far!) product. I have talked about how the text that we see now is the result of lots of people’s thinking and discharging. I have shown people copies of the *Guidelines* from back to 1977 so that they have been able to literally see how the *Guidelines* have evolved and therefore more easily understand that they are under constant discussion and thinking, that they are not a permanently fixed product, that they develop because we are in the process of getting more and more of our minds back. People have been excited to have their development illustrated so concretely. It has made it clearer that we are part of and can take an active part in that development.

After my presentation, we have read parts of the *Guidelines* out loud. We have used the sections that were printed in the October 2009 *Present Time* and taken mini-sessions on what feelings have come up. Then we’ve had rounds on what we’ve found particularly interesting, puzzling, provoking, enlightening, or whatever. Then we’ve done more mini-sessions; then read additional sections.

We have used the Preface to set the tone. We could see that we would understand the *Guidelines* in slightly different ways and pay attention to slightly different aspects of them and that our understanding would reflect where we had chronic struggles. Some of our restimulations have been related to school, being told to

*continued . . .*

<sup>1</sup> The *Guidelines for the Re-evaluation Counseling Communities*

<sup>2</sup> On my own means doing it by myself.

## TEACHING, LEADING, COMMUNITY BUILDING

... continued

do or think specific things, feelings of being stupid, fear of authority, and doing something wrong. They have been different from person to person, which has exposed them as restimulations rather than reality. It has been important to get a chance to discharge and not sit on what has come up, which is what usually happened in school.

Some people have been relieved that the *Guidelines* are not fixed answers to situations, not “the law.” This has shown how much we hate to be told what to do. Liberalism<sup>4</sup> could creep in here and there in our understanding. However, because the Preface states that the *Guidelines*

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<sup>4</sup> In this context, liberalism means over-emphasizing individual freedom and shunning constraints, including those that are necessary to promote the common good.

are most useful where we have the biggest struggles against our distresses, it has become clear how they function as contradictions to distresses. Seen in this perspective, *the Guidelines are a tool for our individual re-emergence, as well as providing us with the organizational framework for our project.*

At my leaders’ workshop a few weeks ago someone offered to be in charge of translating the *Guidelines*. She will distribute sections to the people who have offered to be on the translation team and will organize the work so that some of it is done in small groups. Some people without the language skills have offered to be support persons for those translating.

One of my personal struggles has been getting the literature, including the *Guidelines*, translated into Danish. Since doing RC has made me better and better at English, both spoken and written, and since most Danes learn English in school (and lots of the television we see is from the United States or England), it has seemed not that necessary to translate the literature. Translation is still a struggle, but it dawns on me<sup>5</sup> that I am not alone and that translating may not be a burden, that it can be seen as a gift and a chance to take another big step in one’s own re-emergence, particularly when it is done together with other people.

Susanne Langer  
Copenhagen, Denmark

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<sup>5</sup> Dawns on me means occurs to me.

## Short Talks by Tim Jackins, on CD

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

*The following CDs from 2010 are available for \$10 each:*

- From the 2009 World Conference
- Deciding to Challenge Our Earliest Hurts

*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.)

## Un taller de Co-Escucha en Cusco, Perú

### *An RC Workshop in Cusco, Peru*

Esta noche mi barrio, Larapa (en Cusco, Peru), está tranquilo y hace un poco de frío. Los perros no ladran tan bulliciosa y agresivamente como a veces lo hacen, y la temperatura ha bajado bastante (aunque estamos entrando supuestamente al "verano"), pero mi corazón y mente están llenos del calor humano, emoción, alegría y gratitud. ¡Tuvimos nuestro primer taller de Co-Escucha en Cusco el fin de semana pasado, tal vez fue el primer taller de co-escuchas activos/as en todo Perú!

*Tonight my neighborhood, Larapa (in Cusco, Peru), is chilly and quiet. The dogs aren't barking as loudly and aggressively as they sometimes do, and the temperature has dropped substantially (although we are supposedly entering "summer"); but my heart and mind are filled with warmth and excitement, joy and gratitude. We had our first RC workshop in Cusco this past weekend, perhaps the first workshop of active RCers in Peru ever!*

Liderado por Yolanda Provoste-Fuentes, quien vino de Argentina vía Chile en camino a Santa Cruz, California, EEUU, el taller empezó el sábado en la mañana y terminó el domingo en la tarde. El sábado fue para "mi" grupo, una clase combinada de fundamentales y continuación, más un par de personas que habían hecho una clase de fundamentales conmigo hace años, y el domingo fue una introducción para gente nueva que había sido invitada por los y las participantes del sábado. Catorce nuevas personas llegaron: hermanas, primas, amigos, alumnos y alumnas, etcétera.

*Led by Yolanda Provoste-Fuentes, who came through Cusco on her way back from Argentina via Chile to Santa Cruz, California, USA, the workshop began on Saturday morning and went until Sunday afternoon. Saturday was for "my" group, a fundamentals/ongoing class plus a couple of other people who had been in one of my fundamentals classes years ago. Sunday was an introduction for new people invited by the Saturday group. Fourteen new people showed up<sup>1</sup>—sisters, cousins, friends, students, and so on.*

Nuestro pequeño e íntimo grupo tenía la química y el número perfecto para el local hermosísimo, Monte Aguila en Saylla, ubicado a cuarenta y cinco

minutos del centro de Cusco. Incluso la mesa donde compartimos nuestros alimentos tenía espacio precisamente para doce personas. ¡Con Oliver, mi hijo de tres años, éramos exactamente una docena!

*Our small, intimate group was the perfect size for both the stunningly beautiful location, Monte Aguila in Saylla, located forty-five minutes from the center of Cusco, and our group's dynamics. Even the table where we shared our meals fit exactly twelve people. With my three-year-old son, Oliver, we were exactly a dozen!*

Todo el fin de semana fluyó de la misma manera. No importaba para nada que a las 3:00 de la tarde estuviéramos ya tres horas atrasados en el horario que habíamos planeado. Yolanda estuvo relajada, graciosa, juguetona, cariñosa, y brillante. Su obvio deleite con cada persona era claro y penetrante, e hizo posible que todas ellas desahogaran fuertemente. Aprendimos tanto a cada nivel: teóricamente, prácticamente, emocionalmente, y al nivel de "reevaluación." Yo estuve muy orgullosa de mi grupo, chiquito pero fuerte y comprometido, nuevo (la mayoría con menos de un año de experiencia) pero brillante y apasionado.

*The entire weekend flowed in the same way. It didn't matter that by 3:00 PM we were three hours behind the schedule we had set out to follow. Yolanda was relaxed, funny, brilliant, caring, and playful. Her delight in every person was clear and unwavering and made it possible for everyone to discharge hard. We learned so much on every level: theoretically, practically, emotionally, and on the "re-evaluating" level. I was proud of my group—small but strong and*

*continued . . .*



JO PERRY

<sup>1</sup> Showed up means came, attended.



## TEACHING, LEADING, COMMUNITY BUILDING

... continued

*committed, mostly new to RC (less than a year of experience) but brilliant and passionate.*

Algunos momentos destacados: trabajar sobre la opresión de jóvenes durante la primera hora del taller, jugar al "quitamedias," ver a mi hijo saltando feliz encima de una montaña de cojines donde abajo había varias personas, jugar a las sillas musicales, y ver todo el desahogo intenso en todos los momentos de comer.

*Some highlights: Working on young people's oppression within the first hour of the workshop, sock wrestling, seeing my son delightedly jumping on top of the mountain of pillows that had various people underneath, playing musical chairs, seeing all the intense discharge going on<sup>2</sup> at meals.*

La noche de "cultura compartida" fue muy conmovedora para mí, y también fue muy espontánea. Cuando expliqué qué era "cultura compartida" dije simplemente que era una oportunidad para compartir algo personal de ellos y ellas mismos/as, una oportunidad de arriesgarse en un ambiente completamente seguro y de apoyo. Resultó una noche de emociones tan profundas para mí. Estuve tan conmovida por la confianza que mostraron todos con el grupo y me sentí verdaderamente bendecida de ser parte de eso. Compartimos canciones de cuna y otras canciones; poemas, partes de un diario, y danza improvisacional.

*The culture sharing was moving and spontaneous. I explained that it was an opportunity for people to share something personal, to take a risk in a supportive environment. The resulting evening was one of powerful emotions for me. I was moved and touched by each person's trust in the group and felt blessed to be part of it. We shared lullabies and other songs; poems, diary entries, and improvisational dance.*

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

Change will not come if we wait for some other person or some other time. We are the ones we've been waiting for. We are the change that we seek.

Barack Obama

Yo desahogué mucho aquella noche en mi última sesión del día, pensando en cómo mi sueño de crear una Comunidad de RC en Cusco está aparentemente realizándose. Gracias a Yolanda, Diane,<sup>3</sup> Tim,<sup>4</sup> y Mike<sup>5</sup> por su apoyo para hacer el taller posible. Gracias a mi hermana, Hao Li Tai Loh, y a mi mamá, Tai, las dos co-escuchas, por su apoyo constante a mí, especialmente como madre. A pesar de estar miles de kilómetros lejos, su apoyo y amor para mí me hace sentir que están a mi lado siempre.

*I discharged hard on how my dream of creating an RC Community here in Cusco seems to be coming true. Thank you to Yolanda, Diane,<sup>3</sup> Tim,<sup>4</sup> and Mike<sup>5</sup> for helping to make the workshop possible. Thank you to my sister, Hao Li Tai Loh, and my mother, Tai, also Co-Counselors, for their constant support of me, especially as a mother. Despite being thousands of miles away, their love and support always make me feel as if they are right next to me.*

Gracias a mi grupo aquí en Cusco, que ahora siento que tengo una "base de hogar" que está apoyándome bajo todas las circunstancias. Cusco es una ciudad pequeña e íntima. Yo sé que ya estamos cambiando un poquito el montón de opresión que existe junto con las montañas magníficas de los Andes.

*Thanks to my group here in Cusco. I feel like I have a real home base now that is backing<sup>6</sup> me under all circumstances. Cusco is a small, intimate city. I know that all of us are already making a difference in beginning to chip away at the mountain of oppression that coexists alongside the magnificent mountains of the Andes.*

Amy Tai

Cusco, Peru

*Traducido del inglés al castellano por Amy Tai*  
Translated from English to Spanish by Amy Tai

<sup>3</sup> Diane Shisk, Persona de referencia alternativa internacional para las comunidades de RC

<sup>3</sup> *Diane Shisk, the Alternate International Reference Person for the RC Communities*

<sup>4</sup> Tim Jackins, Persona de referencia internacional para las comunidades de RC

<sup>4</sup> *Tim Jackins, the International Reference Person for the RC Communities*

<sup>5</sup> Mike Markovits, el presidente de la fundación de Re-evaluación

<sup>5</sup> *Mike Markovits, the president of the Re-evaluation Foundation*

<sup>6</sup> *Backing means supporting.*



AM

## Backing Young People and Young Adults

(by taking full charge of Goal 2)

At the East Coast North America Pre-World Conference last June, I attended the topic group Young People, Young Adults, and Allies Working on Goal 2.<sup>1</sup> It was led by Emily Bloch,<sup>2</sup> supported by Ellie Brown.<sup>3</sup>

As a French Canadian, when I'm using English as a second language I usually get tired by evening. But on that evening, seeing those two women leading was enough for me to decide to make Goal 2 central to my life. As I was watching and

listening to their tone of voice, their body language, their connection to each other, the light in their eyes, and their commitment to RC, I thought, "This is the kind of leadership we all need—that the planet needs! All children and young adults should have the chance to get this."

Working fully on Goal 2 includes doing family work<sup>4</sup> more often and reading about it. Family workshops challenge most of our chronics<sup>5</sup> and help us re-emerge fast.

Emily and Ellie encouraged us adults to work on young people's oppression and our early hurts as young people so that we can counsel

young people well and fully back<sup>6</sup> them. Fully backing them means leaving them space to lead (topic tables, topic groups, workshops, and so on) and discharging to where we can take them seriously and trust their thinking.

I realized that Goal 2 won't be achieved if we don't commit to working on it on a regular basis. We made progress on Goal 1, eliminating racism, because the entire RC Community decided to work on it. We were systematically requested to do so—in classes and at workshops and conferences. I think we need to do the same now with Goal 2: systematically request that people work on it. How about some workshops on eliminating young people's oppression?

Emily and Ellie: I will follow you anytime!

*Anne-Marie Bellemare*  
Montreal, Quebec, Canada

<sup>1</sup> Goal 2 of the Re-evaluation Counseling Communities, as adopted by the 2001 World Conference and reaffirmed by the 2005 and 2009 World Conferences, states, "That the Re-evaluation Counseling Community put new and increased efforts into making Re-evaluation Counseling and the Re-evaluation Counseling Communities accessible to young people."

<sup>2</sup> Emily Bloch is the new International Liberation Reference Person for Young People.

<sup>3</sup> Ellie Brown is a former International Liberation Reference Person for Young Adults. (A new International Liberation Reference Person for Young Adults, Anna Van Heeswijk, was announced at the August 2009 World Conference.)

<sup>4</sup> Family work consists of RC gatherings of young people and adult allies, including parents, in which the focus is on young people and counseling young people in the context of play. These gatherings are designed to empower young people, to give them a setting in which they largely determine what happens (in contrast to the usual adult-young person dynamic). The focus is not on "Co-Counseling," as it is in the usual adult RC.

<sup>5</sup> Chronic patterns

<sup>6</sup> Back means support.

## Don't Borrow Games

In my opinion, the game that you did not enjoy was a mistake. I think it was a good example of why Co-Counselors should refrain from mixing in any techniques from other attitudes.

The game you mention is a familiar one in encounter and sensitivity groups and fits their theory and practice in the sense that if most people enjoy it, they don't worry about the minority. But in Re-evaluation Counseling we should worry about everyone.

If Re-evaluation Counselors develop their own games and techniques, they think about them as they do. If they borrow them, they tend to use them without thought, and situations develop like the one you mention.

*Harvey Jackins*

From a letter written in 1972



MIKE ISHII

## "Today's Thought"



Dear RC users of electronic media,

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

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



With love and appreciation,  
*Tim Jackins*



ALISA LEMIRE BROOKS

### For Safari

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

### For Mozilla Firefox

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

### For Internet Explorer

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





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JO PERRY

**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.



*Thanks to the volunteers who made this possible!*

*(To order, see page 109.)*

## Teenage Girls and the Re-evaluation Foundation

Dear Foundation Board Members:

I want to give you a quick update on the girls' group I have been leading, which the Re-evaluation Foundation<sup>1</sup> supported for a number of years.

The group began seven years ago in Philadelphia (Pennsylvania, USA). It started with eight twelve- and thirteen-year-old girls, all in seventh grade. One of the moms had approached me about helping her daughter and her friends figure out school better, so I started a "homework club," based in a local public school. (I had taught the mother some basic Co-Counseling.) After a first meeting with the young people, it was clear to both her and me that homework was not what was making things hard for these young women. They needed much more attention.

We met once a week during the school year, for five years. For a couple of years the mom assisted me, and then other Co-Counselors came and helped out. I sometimes taught the group on my own,<sup>2</sup> too. At first we met in the school cafeteria after the school day was over. We built a nice relationship with the school principal who was delighted to get some help with a notoriously rowdy group of girls.

The group was mixed in terms of race, class, and religion and eventually boiled down to<sup>3</sup> three to six regular participants. In the last year just two of them attended each week. Through it all the entire group of young women stayed close to one another, despite the many significant differences in their backgrounds.

I used Foundation grant money to pay for dinner every week for the girls (we ate a lot of pizza over the years!), for transportation expenses, and eventually to cover the cost of renting a space for us to meet in.

Fast-forward to the present: The group didn't meet for two years (I have a two-year-old child). A few of the young women, now eighteen or nineteen years old, are in college. Others are working. Last week four of them took me up on<sup>4</sup> an offer to meet again. I had hung out<sup>5</sup> with them one evening, and we could all tell<sup>6</sup> how much we loved and missed each other.

---

<sup>1</sup> The Re-evaluation Foundation is a separate, non-profit corporation that raises and disperses money for the purpose of helping disseminate the ideas, skills, and leadership training of RC to people whose circumstances limit their access to RC.

<sup>2</sup> On my own means by myself.

<sup>3</sup> Boiled down to means ended up having.

<sup>4</sup> Took me up on means accepted.

<sup>5</sup> Hung out means spent relaxed, unstructured time.

<sup>6</sup> In this context, tell means notice.



CHARLIE ROSENBERG

We have now met weekly for two weeks and will meet again for two weeks more and then once a month throughout the rest of the school semester. One young woman traveled most of the day to get home from college to see us. Another is home temporarily and plans to travel once a month from New York just to be in the group. Both times we have met, all the young women have worked hard on issues related to being young, female, poor, black, white, or Jewish.

And here is the best part: Two of the original gang are teaching other young people Co-Counseling! One of them is a first-year student in a college in New York City (New York, USA). As part of a "listening class" she taught for one of her college classes, she paired all the students up and had them take turns listening to each other. At the end of the semester the students voted hers the best class of the year. Next semester she will be working once a week at an after-school program in a working-class Latino/a and black community and plans to teach her sixth-graders Co-Counseling in a weekly class, just like what she had with me. She would also like to be connected to the RC Community in New York, so I will work on that with her.

The other young woman was a big surprise, as she had a life full of significant challenges and seemed to have the least attention. She decided to go after<sup>7</sup> her fifteen-year-old sister and help her cry a lot about some extremely painful experiences she'd had the previous summer. The sister had told no one about the experiences, but her older sister had noticed that something big had happened.

The little sister joined us in class last night and was a complete natural.<sup>8</sup> She used her fifteen minutes well,

---

<sup>7</sup> Go after means reach out to.

<sup>8</sup> In this context, a complete natural means very naturally and easily able to do RC.

worked on huge early issues related to being raised poor and black, and wants to join the class for the rest of the semester.

This group of young women has tremendous safety with each other and uses it well. They tell me they know of no other young women who have stayed as close to each other as they have managed to do over the past seven years. They are in each other's lives on a daily basis. All of them are in and out of each other's homes. They have stayed close and supported each other through sexual assault, school challenges, falling in love, jail time, handling drugs and alcohol, dealing with parents, having babies, facing poverty, and so on. They credit the class for the closeness and relationships they have been able to hold

on to. Having an adult who is clearly on their side, who listens to and respects them and cheers them on (even from two years' distance!), and having RC tools, have made a huge impact.

It will take some deft thinking on my part, but my guess is that one day we may have two or three, if not more, of these brilliant young women solidly in our RC Community. That's my goal. Achieving it will have been worth every ounce of the work that they and I have done.

Thanks so much for helping make RC accessible to these young women.

*Hanne Weedon*  
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA

## Fighting Distress to Be an RC Teacher

I was raised in a rural community in Maine, USA, and still live there. I'm fighting my way through distress to be an RC teacher.

I have realized that I was a scared, scared boy (I have had some help realizing this). I've decided many times that I have to scorn the fear and do what I want to do and what makes sense to me.

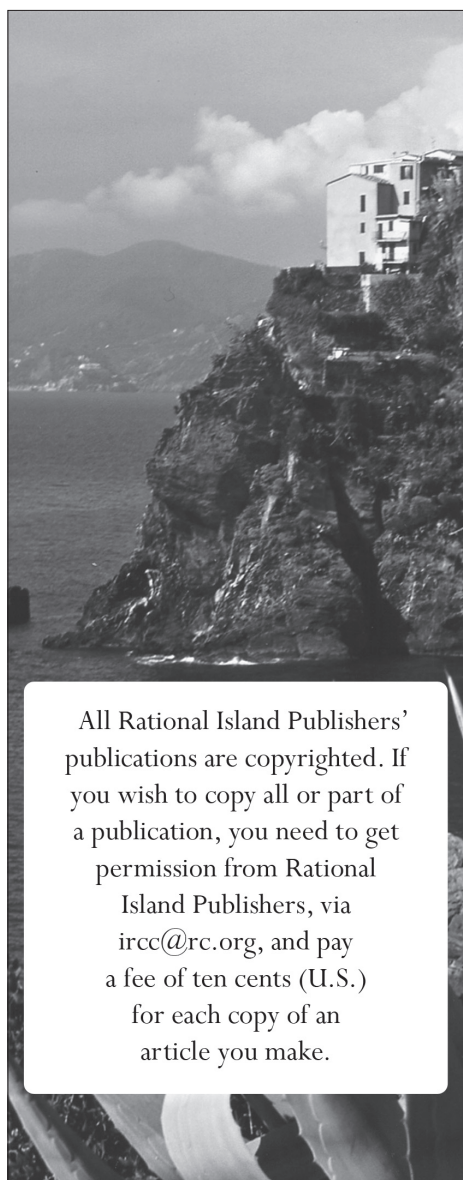
As a boy I wasn't often encouraged to show myself and my feelings. In fact, there were a few times when it probably would have been dangerous for me to do that. So I made the good decision to wait until later. Now, when I am moving in the direction of teaching RC, I often feel as if I am "coming out." I feel like I could be shunned or killed for being a man who has feelings. It's been good to recognize this as coming from early hurts. In the present, when I tell a friend about RC, I am at worst only in danger of him or her getting upset and ending his or her relationship with me. Tough, but not life-threatening.

When I got a good look at the way my fear of death was keeping me quiet about RC with the people I care about, I took a bold step (with help) and decided to do an introductory talk on RC every month in 2009. I decided I would invite ten people to each one, starting with the people closest to me. By the end of the year there would be a hundred and twenty people who knew I was an RC teacher and a man who had feelings. I figured that would be enough people to sufficiently contradict my fears.

I did not make the decision with any awareness that people might actually want to learn RC from me. Some folks teased me (tenderly) about that: "*Of course* they would want to learn RC from you! Who wouldn't?"

Moving in this direction seems to be having a wide-ranging good effect on my life.

*Michael Newsom*  
South Paris, Maine, USA  
Reprinted from the e-mail discussion  
list for RC Community members



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MANAROLA RIOMAGGIORE, ITALY • KEN DEVENEY



## Teaching RC to Somali Friends

I am a sixty-three-year-old white English woman. Two years ago I became friends with a Somali woman, M—, who lives a five-minute walk from my house. Through her I met other Somali women and ended up teaching a small Co-Counselling class for her and three women from her community. The class is a by-product of my friendship with her, and depends on it. It happened like this:

Three years ago I retired from my university job, partly so that I could put more time and energy into RC Community building. I also wanted to broaden my connections, to have more people from other cultures in my life. For this reason I went to a non-RC workshop for dialogue between Muslim and non-Muslim women. That's where I met my friend. We were chatting over lunch, I was asking her something about her family back in Somalia, and she wept a little. I realised that she lived nearby and that we could easily be friends. I felt a moment's reluctance or fear, but I put it down<sup>1</sup> to racism and ignored it. It was clear that we liked each other.

M— and I went to each other's houses and got to know each other over a period of a few weeks. Then she invited me to a conversation club at the local school, run by a teacher and a clergywoman. The club brings together Somali and British women, and its main aim, from the point of view of the white leaders, is integration. I came

<sup>1</sup> Put it down means attributed it.

with a different agenda: friendship and eliminating white racism. I have kept attending, but increasingly my friendship with some of the Somali women has not been centred on the club but on things we do outside it.

Meanwhile, in RC, I had assisted Iman Awadh, an Iraqi RC leader who lives in London (England), in topic groups on making RC a good place for Muslims. I was moved by her passion. It is hard to be a Muslim in RC, and I didn't want her to have to remain in such a small minority. I once taught RC to a group of South Asian women and still have a dear Pakistani friend from those days. She and I Co-Counsel sometimes, but I no longer try to get her into the Community. I know she couldn't tolerate the way women and men hold hands, and she would find some of the topics of women's support groups restimulating. I don't know the answer yet, but I'm sure there is at least one elegant solution. The Communities need people of Muslim religion or background; and—like all humans—they need knowledge of the discharge process.

About nine months after I had met my Somali friends, they became very upset about the killing and bereavement in their country and about the internalised oppression being acted out by some Somali teenage boys. It was at that point that I suggested teaching them RC. Together we organised a big fundraiser for Somalia. They also invited me to a meeting they were having with a Somali social worker from London at which

they let me give an introduction to RC, which I suggested might help them think about how to assist the troubled boys and their own sons. Looking back, I'm not sure I should have taken the time of the meeting to do that. I kept having to guess what made sense. Somali generosity and politeness are striking and are not exactly the same as the English versions. Sometimes I realise that I haven't understood people's real wishes and that they have been too polite to tell me.

Whether it was the right time to do it or not, the leader of the local Somali women's community had a good session at that introduction, and she never forgot it. As a result, we now have a small Co-Counselling class. There are four Somali women and two (sometimes three) white European women. Nuccia Zanesi Foulkes, an RC leader and my assistant, is Italian, so the two of us are from the two countries that colonised Somalia. I have called on several other local women leaders to have sessions with the students, because in a small refugee community it is hard to keep roles separate and to trust confidentiality.

We have been meeting every two weeks, whenever we can. We do not meet in Ramadan or over Christmas, so there tend to be breaks. Sometimes only two of the Somali women attend. Sometimes they cannot come on time. For them, with their family and religious commitments, the class represents a big commitment of time spent on themselves.



RUTH NOONAN

Christien van den Anker has been running<sup>2</sup> naturalised RC workshops for Muslim and non-Muslim women. I have been to a few of them, and I managed on one occasion to get two of my Somali friends to come with me. I know they got a lot out of it because of the things they told me about themselves afterward. They also enjoyed the day out together, which had taken a lot of organising back home (on Saturdays and Sundays children attend cultural and religious schools and do homework for English classes, and household chores). They were the only ones among the Muslim women there who covered their heads, wore traditional dress, and were not fluent in English, and that was not so easy for them. For that reason, I decided not to invite non-Somali students to our little daytime class. I think doing Co-Counselling itself is restimulating enough.

Before our class got properly underway, one of the members got worried about whether RC was compatible with Islam. An Egyptian friend of hers had suggested that RC didn't recognise the need to accept with patience whatever life brings and to thank God even for hard things. We managed to sort this out. I suggested that RC could help us know what we should accept and what we shouldn't. Iman came down from London to meet the group. They all speak Arabic (as well as Somali). They enjoyed meeting Iman and were much reassured.

We are really feeling our way with this class. The white women involved meet from time to time to work on oppressor material,<sup>3</sup> and I find that I need to do it regularly in Co-Counselling sessions. In the classes we take time to discuss Somali culture and language and to translate key terms. I have learnt a lot. During a discussion of oppression and internalised oppression, I asked how they would refer to what colonisers



JENNIFER ROBERTS

do to the colonised. They said, "They steal your mind." It makes me shake even now to take this in.<sup>4</sup> We had long discussions about the words for injury, distress, and hurts and about their different meanings. We have talked about what kinds of discharge are permitted and not permitted in Somali culture, and with whom.

When the Somali students seem to resist a concept or something we do, I have to enquire carefully what the basis of this resistance is. It might be of religious importance, or it might be more superficially rooted. I have to remember what colonisers do. In contrast, I am simply offering my friends the tool of RC because I believe it will be of great value. They are the ones who will judge.

My friends have made it clear to me that they are more religious in some ways in Britain than they were in Somalia. The racism and poverty here are sometimes so difficult that they feel they could hardly bear it if they did not have the comfort, discipline, and teachings of religion. I have much to discharge about all this, and I do, but in the meantime my commitment is to respect their decisions and to never try to manipulate them in this area.

One of the hardest things for them is to listen to each other. If in opening mini-sessions some white English Co-Counselling students are working on current difficulties, it might be hard

for their counsellors to listen to, but often it would be obvious to them that the bad feelings are someone else's restimulation. With their country in a state of civil war, Somalis have so much pain to hold in that it spills out even in five-minute minis. They watch Somali TV every day. They are likely to know people back home who are being injured or killed. Once their client has finished a session, they often ask questions or comment. So the first person is client, then the second person's session refers to what the first person said, and then they all want to comment and have sessions of their own. It's hard for them to put attention on what is behind what's being said, to notice early distress, or to comment on the counselling, because the content of the session is so restimulating.

I've decided to keep on encouraging them to think about the session as a session, however hard that is. They are from a country at war and hope one day to return and contribute to healing their country. They need RC. The best thing I can do is to keep offering it in a rigorous way, even when that is hard for them. When we have solved the obstacles in the way of their having regular (rather than occasional) Co-Counselling sessions between classes, I imagine this will become easier.

Some of our cultural differences can be challenging. For instance, more than once, after we have had an opening circle followed by a five-minute-each mini-session, the hostess for that particular class has rushed into the kitchen and returned with a tray laden with sweets, biscuits, dates, and hot and cold drinks. We have now established that we have only water till after the class is over (it lasts two hours). But this goes against the grain,<sup>5</sup> so I have had to explain the reason. After the class we always have some refreshments together.

*continued...*

<sup>2</sup> Running means conducting.

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

<sup>4</sup> Take this in means mentally absorb this.

<sup>5</sup> Goes against the grain means is uncomfortably counter to what they normally do.

... continued

In Somalia, even more than in Europe, it is rude to look someone in the eyes. We have had several discussions and some fun exploring this by asking the Somali students to counsel each other with the counsellor looking at the client. They have found it reassuring that the client does not have to look in the counsellor's eyes unless she wants to, and they have understood that a client might peep out quickly to see if the counsellor is really listening and to have a few seconds of eye contact.

One student remarked that she thought that the refusal to give advice in Co-Counselling was quite cruel. If she was in distress, she wanted advice. I said that advice is fine but that Co-Counselling is something else, something valuable in a different way. She took the point,<sup>6</sup> even though it still felt strange to her.

In Somalia it is rude for some people to be downstairs eating pancakes while others are upstairs having a session, as

<sup>6</sup> Took the point means accepted the idea.

happened in my house not long ago. At least I now get told some of these things. Immigrants, especially refugees, are always having to make concessions to the dominant culture. It must be exhausting, and I don't want the class to be like that. When I ask if we can move the furniture so we are sitting closer, I try to imagine how it might feel to have a white Englishwoman come into their house and tell them to move their furniture. But I still do it, because it is necessary to the class. In fact, the culture of RC is not the culture of my country either. The key thing seems to be to give reasons for anything we ask the students to do and to discuss the reasons thoroughly, sometimes with translation—comparing what is considered right in Somalia, in Britain, and in RC.

So we muddle along, and Nuccia and I learn a lot. It is clear that this class is made possible by my friendship with these Somali women. If it were not for that friendship, they would never trust me enough to take part<sup>7</sup> in this process. And the friendship happens outside the class. At Christmas two of my friends came 'round with samosas and other things they had cooked, as well as cards. Our friendship is crucial. But on the other hand, if it were not for the Co-Counsellors from our Area,<sup>8</sup> it would not be possible to run the class. I could not impose the structure on which the class depends. It's already hard outside of the classes for me to keep my role as counsellor separate enough from my role as friend. The presence of one or two other women with whom my Somali friends do not have a social relationship demonstrates what a Co-Counselling relationship is, and how one can have close trusting relationships with someone who is not in one's life in any other role.

Caroline New  
Bristol, England

<sup>7</sup> Take part means participate.

<sup>8</sup> An Area is a local RC Community.

**Now Available ...**

***The RC Teacher No. 29!***

*The RC Teacher No. 29* complements Issue No. 28, published in 2009. Together the two issues update *The New Kind of Communicator* and are invaluable tools for all RC teachers.

*The RC Teacher No. 29* contains 128 pages on teaching ongoing classes, building the RC Community, leadership development, using RC literature, and organizing and leading RC workshops, and includes sections on Goal 2 (young people), Goal 3 (care of the environment), and Goal 4 (growth). [A section on Goal 1 (ending racism) appeared in *The RC Teacher No. 28*.]

Throughout the issue are articles on the many ways RC leaders are working to build and diversify our Communities, develop and support leadership, and focus on our goals as they teach.

*The RC Teacher No. 28* included the following sections: Teaching Fundamentals, RC Policies, RC Community Goals, Our Work on Racism, Techniques, and Counseling with Attention Away from Distress.

Whether you plan to teach RC in a class setting or one-to-one, are getting ready to lead a workshop or would like to be ready to tell your friends and family about RC, you want to have both of these issues of *The RC Teacher* in your RC library.

Each issue is \$3.00 (U.S.), plus shipping and handling.

To order, see page 109.



## A Regional Report

For the 2009 World Conference of the Re-evaluation Counseling Communities, RC leaders around the world were asked to write a short report on RC in their localities. A number of these appeared in the October 2009 Present Time (on pages 33 to 47). Here is another:

The Boston, Massachusetts, USA, Region has eight Areas<sup>1</sup> and one unorganized Community. There are twenty-five to forty active Co-Counselors per Area. About a fourth of the Co-Counselors in the Region are people targeted by racism.

We have focused on deepening the level of counseling and clienting. We have used the contradiction<sup>2</sup> of our connections, closeness, and relationships to break through isolation. And we have encouraged people to fight for themselves against submission to oppression and oppressor material.<sup>3</sup>

Since our recent Pre-World Conference, more of our friends, partners, and family members, including people targeted by racism, some of them immigrants, have been attending fundamentals classes. At least six fundamentals classes and some ongoing classes are predominantly or all people targeted by racism; one of them is all young people targeted by racism.

People are choosing one key support group as part of building a home base in which they can fight for themselves and as a wedge against and contradiction to oppression. There are many Area-based support groups, and almost every Area has an ending-white-racism group.

For the past four years, yearly Regional workshops have created an environment in which people can discharge on racism and the hurts that get in their way of sharing RC with those closest to them. Workshop attendance has been limited to sixty-eight participants, to ensure that there are nearly equal numbers of white people and people targeted by racism. At the workshops we work within constituency groups and also meet in support groups to which each person targeted by racism brings a white partner of his or her choosing.

People have been discharging heavy distresses that show up<sup>4</sup> as isolation and/or addictions. They have also been working on hurts and confusions related to sex and gender identity, and learning how these distresses have

evolved and changed with each generation. We successfully assisted an RC leader to discharge some chronic material that had caused that leader to hide some damaging behaviors.

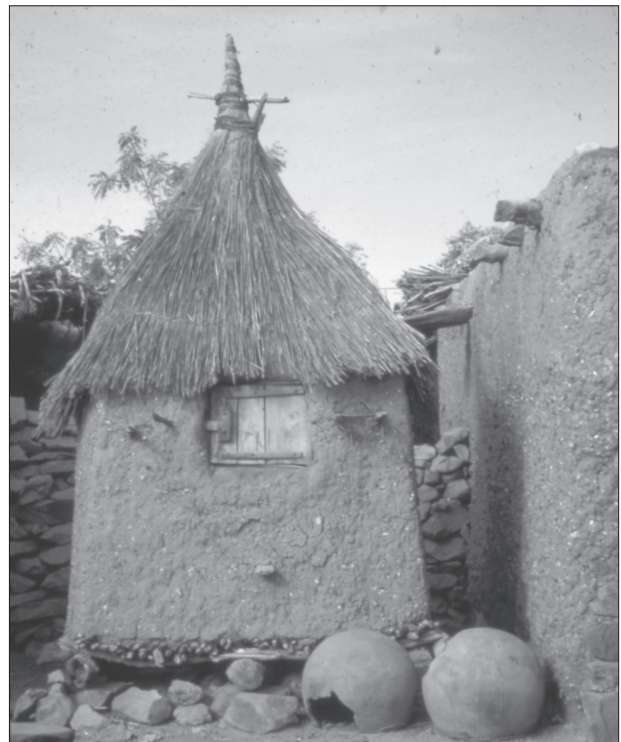
We have encouraged growth and contradicted isolation by pairing up the eight Area Reference Persons and Alternate Area Reference Persons into foursomes that meet annually using a Wygelian leaders' meeting<sup>5</sup> format. They discharge on distresses connected to leading and expanding their Areas, share problems and challenges, learn from each other, and track<sup>6</sup> and reference each other.



Jennifer Wexler  
Regional Reference Person for  
Boston and Southeast Massachusetts, USA  
Boston, Massachusetts, USA

<sup>5</sup> A Wygelian leaders' meeting is a meeting of a group of leaders and potential leaders of a particular constituency in which each person takes a turn doing the following: (1) reporting on what he or she has been doing in the last period with regard to the constituency, (2) saying what he or she thinks is the current situation facing the constituency, from his or her viewpoint, (3) sharing what he or she proposes to do as a leader in the next period, and (4) discharging on what is getting in the way of his or her leadership.

<sup>6</sup> In this context, track means maintain helpful contact with.



MALI • JOHN FEHRINGER

<sup>1</sup> An Area is a local RC Community.

<sup>2</sup> Contradiction to distress

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

<sup>4</sup> In this context, show up means manifest.

# Appreciating PRESENT TIME

PRESENT TIME is beautiful. It seems like you can read my thoughts and questions, and magically you always include an excerpt or letter *exactly* relevant to me and my issues!

Sara Kallai  
Jerusalem, Israel



KK

I have received PRESENT TIME yesterday. What a powerful tree! I always like the cover photos of PRESENT TIME, but this issues's one is dynamic! I can feel the universe.

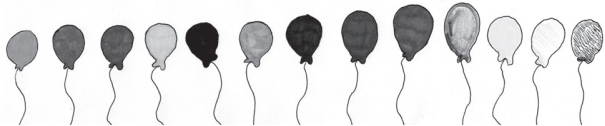
Wako Ono  
Sapporo-City, Hokkaido, Japan



LK

*It's mid-January, and there is no better way to wade into 2010 than the January PRESENT TIME. "Solid" is the word that comes to mind. I was particularly awakened by the lead article on open questions about leadership, old distresses, sexism, and men and women. It was an excellent way to start the morning, while the blustery wind, warm marine breeze, and solid rain reminded me of our benign reality, as well as Goal 3.<sup>1</sup> Such a good read. Thanks to all the publications crew for our excellent and cheerful PRESENT TIME.*

Randy Smith  
Portland, Oregon, USA



AM

Thank you for publishing Diane Balser's<sup>2</sup> talks from the Contemporary Women's Issues Workshop last fall. I was hoping they would appear in print, since I didn't go to the workshop. Everything from the workshop was inspiring. Thank you also for continuing to include snippets of Harvey's<sup>3</sup> thinking. I go back to those quotes time and again.

Maggie La Ware  
Ames, Iowa, USA

<sup>1</sup> Goal 3, one of the goals adopted by the 2001 World Conference of the Re-evaluation Counseling Communities and reaffirmed by subsequent World Conferences, reads, "That members of the Re-evaluation Counseling Community put increased attention on discharging the distresses that have led to the continued degradation of the environment of the world and to discouragement about taking the actions necessary for its restoration."

<sup>2</sup> Diane Balser is the International Liberation Reference Person for Women.

<sup>3</sup> Harvey Jackins'

Thank you all for creating and sending out the wonderful PRESENT TIME, full of people's fresh thoughts.

Hiroko AiAi Yokoyama  
Tokyo, Japan



KK

PRESENT TIME is a match for the profoundly simple practice of Co-Counseling and simply profound ideas about human nature, the healing of the mind from all past hurts and conditioning, and the potential of human consciousness and our relationship with THE KIND, FRIENDLY UNIVERSE.

I, personally, fall far short of my personal potential, and I am therefore lucky to be part of a movement that reminds us of the reasons for this (for all of us), that urges us to never give up the patient and determined removal of all obstacles to full functioning, that provides a clear and easily understood road map to healing that is filled with love, and that focuses on warm, respectful (and often loving) relating. . . to one another, to all forms of life, and perhaps to Creation itself. Attention as it is exchanged deeply with all forms of life is surely the key that unlocks the doors to our future, our being inhabitants of Earth.

Pam Maccabee  
Glastonbury, Connecticut, USA



LK

Thanks for PRESENT TIME. I love the inspiring quotes and the stories of how ordinary good people not so different from me are thinking about the world in new ways and making differences, large and small.

Heather MacLeod  
Oakland, California, USA



LK

Thanks for all the wonderful Rational Island publications.

Anne Barton  
Melbourne, Victoria, Australia



NANCY FAULSTICH

## Focusing Our Efforts

*From a letter written by Julian Weissglass, the International Commonality Reference Person for Wide World Change, to his constituency*

Dear Wide World Changers,

I have been reading lately about the origins and development of the universe. It has increased my awe for the world we live in, my delight in the existence of humanity, and my gratitude for all the people who have helped me learn, discharge, and think better. In addition, April 2009 was the thirty-ninth anniversary of my joining RC. Re-evaluation Counseling has given me the opportunity to recover my mind, to get to know many of you, and to learn from and with you. It is good to be engaged in reclaiming our full humanness. I am extremely grateful.

### MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Progress is being made in the world amidst the setbacks, which is how progress happens. Only distress recordings of discouragement and hopelessness lead us to focus on the setbacks and prevent us from seeing progress. We RCers have made and continue to make a difference in the world. We are spreading important ideas and organizing people around correct policies and progressive programs.

Capitalism continues to reveal itself as unworkable, corrupt, and exploitative, and this has given us marvelous opportunities to be effective. There are always opportunities for engaging people's minds and giving them attention so

that they can think more clearly. We know how to set goals to influence change, how to discharge on the obstacles in our way, and how to reclaim power and lead.

We know that advice, criticism, and haranguing do not work. Neither do complaining and clienting.<sup>1</sup> Asking good questions, offering small amounts of information, and listening do make a difference. We can have positive interactions with every person we meet. We can help people think more clearly about their lives, their families, and their communities.



SUE EDWARDS

### FOCUSING OUR EFFORTS

One of the obstacles to transforming society is that not enough people (and certainly not enough political leaders) have a vision of workable alternatives

<sup>1</sup> In this context, clienting means thoughtlessly taking someone's attention for oneself without having received his or her permission.

to the current economic system. Political leaders get scared when the flaws of capitalism become more apparent, and they do their best to fix the symptoms rather than changing the system. I encourage you to focus on the following: communicating to as many people as possible that humanity can organize a society that is based on caring and respect for human beings and our environment, on cooperation rather than profit and competition, and on what is best for human beings and the planet rather than fear, greed, or anger.

The changes we want will come sooner the more people there are who have access to discharge. It will help if we can bring more activists into our RC Communities. (Non-activists may need to do some discharging so that they can welcome activists and counsel them well.) It will help if we can get better at communicating about RC by discharging timidity, fear, and embarrassment about what we do in RC. (You have probably discharged about this already; I encourage you to do some more. It will help you in many areas of your life.) You might also want to discharge on RC being a revolutionary movement. Harvey<sup>2</sup> wrote, "The revolution is surely needed more than it ever was before. . . so if you are in RC

*continued . . .*

<sup>2</sup> Harvey Jackins



## WIDE WORLD CHANGING

... continued

hoping only that you'll feel a little better, I'm sorry, but you're really a revolutionary."

Wide-world-change workshops and support groups are important. We know that groups that come together with a purpose and commitment are powerful. They contradict our isolation and facilitate our learning from each other. Now that I am retiring from my job at the university (see below), I will be more available to lead workshops and am willing to do so even for small groups. I want wide-world-change work to go well in all of our Communities. It is important for the future of humanity.

### AN EXPERIMENT

At workshops I have asked Co-Counselors to try an experiment: to ask a friend or relative, not in RC and not an activist, "Do you think it is possible to have a world based on caring and respect for human beings and our environment rather than on profit, and on cooperation rather than competition?" and if the answer is yes, to ask him or her how we can get there, and if it is no, to ask why not. And in either case to remember to listen rather than get into a discussion! People who have done this have reported interesting and productive results. Doing this will increase the number of people who have considered the possibility of transforming society. I think these focused interactions can spread and have a powerful impact. Another possible question is, "Do you think it is possible to have a world without war?"



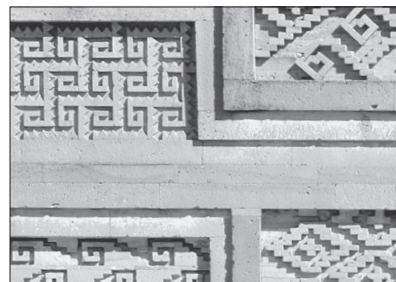
JOHN FEHRINGER

### YOU ARE NOT ALONE

Most of us are greatly challenged by the interlocking distress patterns of discouragement and hopelessness, which are the result of early experiences in which we could not do what we wanted to do and at the same time felt alone in our struggles. When these patterns take over,<sup>3</sup> we are pulled to give in<sup>4</sup> to powerlessness recordings and let other people or institutions control our lives. Whenever we believe that we are alone and cannot make a difference, we have in our minds an inaccurate picture of reality.

<sup>3</sup> Take over means assume control.

<sup>4</sup> Give in means succumb.



OAXACA, MEXICO • MARTIN URBEL

The truth is that humans working together can have the world we want and deserve—perhaps not immediately, but we can do it.

In Co-Counseling sessions and support groups, let's discharge on recovering our hope, connections, and power, so that we know we are making a difference in the world and are not alone.

### YOUNG PEOPLE AND YOUNG ADULTS

We need to support young people and young adults to lead wide world change, both in the RC Communities and in the wide world. This is of crucial importance to our project. To do this well we adults need to discharge on our experiences as young people and young adults. We need to recover from our disappointments and regrets about not getting support. We need to discharge on making alliances with young people and young adults. Some of us will need to become engaged in educational change—changing schools so that they support young people and nurture their thinking rather than oppress them. Fighting for the liberation of young people and young adults will also require working for "mental health" liberation, since the suppression of discharge is a major component of the oppression of young people and in many countries there is widespread drugging of young people without their consent. I have written about this in "Why are we drugging our children?" which was published in a U.S. education newspaper and is available on the web at <http://ncee.education.ucsb.edu/articles/articleinEducationWeekforWeb.pdf>.

**HEALING FROM WAR**

I've now led several workshops on healing from war. I continue to learn from these workshops about the long-lasting effects of wars, including wars that occurred many generations ago. I've learned about the challenges that people from different countries face as they try to work together. I've learned that discharging the hurts from war often gives people access to early hurts that have been difficult to discharge. I've learned that we need to get better at counseling combat veterans and civilians who have directly endured the horrors of war, and how challenging it is to get good attention to discharge about war.

At a workshop in Japan we did important work on healing from World War II. People discharged about the U.S. bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and its effects on people with disabilities and on young people and young adults. It was wonderful getting to know the Japanese Community and to see their dedication to cleaning up the distresses from World War II. I was impressed by how they have fully included disabled people in their Community and by the caring and love they have for each other.

A workshop in Maryland, USA, showed how important it is for USers to discharge the distress recordings from the Civil War/War Between the States and on the



ALASKA, USA • MARTI HAYMAKER

oppression of Southerners<sup>5</sup> in the United States.

A hundred and ten people attended the fourth Healing from World War II Workshop in Poland in September 2008, and seventy people went to Auschwitz<sup>6</sup> and Birkenau.<sup>7</sup> We continue to learn a lot at these workshops. In order to keep the numbers to around eighty-five people and to give more people the opportunity to attend, we are scheduling the workshop every year. The next Healing from World War II Workshop will take place

<sup>5</sup> Southerners are people from the states in the United States that seceded from the union during the U.S. Civil War.

<sup>6</sup> Auschwitz was a network of concentration and extermination camps built and operated in occupied Poland by Nazi Germany during World War II.

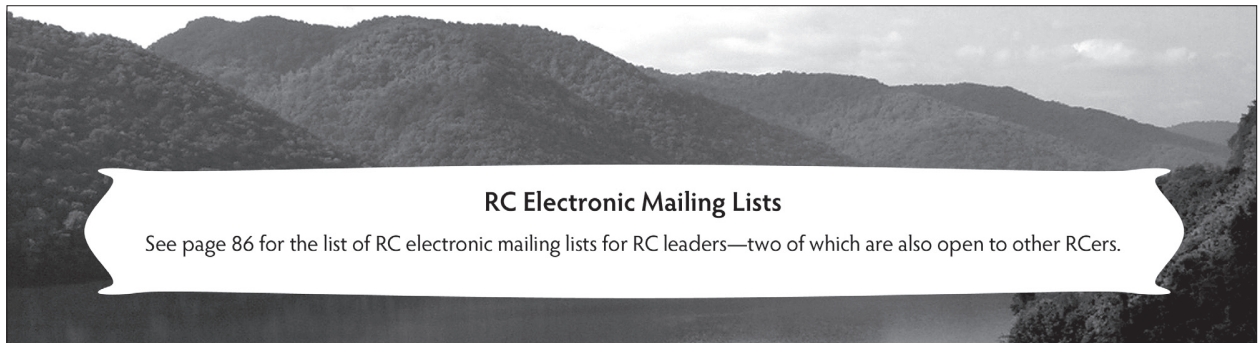
<sup>7</sup> Birkenau was the largest of the Auschwitz concentration camps.

May 12 to 16, 2010. The Auschwitz visit/workshop will be May 9 to 11.

Language liberation is hugely important for bringing about<sup>8</sup> wide world change and for our International RC Community to achieve its goals. This becomes increasingly evident at every International workshop I lead. We have to ensure that everyone's language is respected and that, as much as possible, everyone can understand the workshop leader and each other. Discharging about language oppression has become an increasingly important part of the Healing from War workshops. We are getting better at language liberation.

Santa Barbara, California, USA

<sup>8</sup> Bringing about means bringing into existence.



**RC Electronic Mailing Lists**

See page 86 for the list of RC electronic mailing lists for RC leaders—two of which are also open to other RCers.

SU EDWARDS

## Muslim Children Learning About Jews

Hello all my comrades!

Today I had a great time talking with a bunch of eleven-year-old non-Jewish children about Shavuot.<sup>1</sup> (I am Jewish.) They are pupils in an elementary school, where a friend of mine is a teacher.

A few years ago my friend invited me to come and talk about Pesach (the Jewish festival celebrating the Jews' exodus from Egypt and the start of peoplehood and the Jewish religion). I discovered that I loved doing that, and that I was good at it, too—and, very importantly, the children loved it. An important detail is that the majority of the children in the school are Muslims, so it has become an ongoing project that I call “Building Bridges Between Jews and Muslims.”

The children in the class I worked with today have become my friends in many ways. I spend an afternoon a week at the school as a volunteer, giving a hand<sup>2</sup> with whatever subject needs some extra attention. Most of it is one-on-one work, so the children get quality time while they learn. And then, off and on, when a Jewish holiday comes along, we talk about that in class. The mix<sup>3</sup> is powerful.

One day last year I introduced what I called a “speaking out game,” in small one-gender groups. The rules were confidentiality and no referring.<sup>4</sup> (Sound familiar?) Well, they loved it; they drank it up.

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<sup>1</sup> Shavuot is a Jewish holiday that commemorates the anniversary of the day G'd gave the Torah to Moses and the Israelites.

<sup>2</sup> A hand means help.

<sup>3</sup> The mix means the combination.

<sup>4</sup> No referring means no referring back to what someone has said in his or her turn to speak.



SUSAN FREUNDLICH

So today I told them the story of the travel through the desert and the giving of the Torah,<sup>5</sup> and about the Golden Calf,<sup>6</sup> the breaking of the Tablets,<sup>7</sup> and the second chance the Jewish people got at receiving the Torah. I told them that in Judaism you are allowed to *argue* with G'd<sup>8</sup> (I love that about our religion), and I told them about manna<sup>9</sup> and how the change from slavery to freedom needed a forty-year break.<sup>10</sup>

Then we had questions.

One was, “Do the Jewish people have a special way to hold their hands when they pray?” Answer: No.

Another: “What happens when you see Jewish people put a little piece of paper in a wall?”

Answer: This is done at the Western Wall—the last bit that remains of the Temple that once stood in Jerusalem, which until two thousand years ago was the center of the Jewish religion. The Temple was destroyed by the Roman Empire. The idea of the pieces of paper is that you can write a note to G'd that way! You write a prayer, or a question, or a request, and the idea is that G'd pays special attention to it because the Wall is a special and holy place.

Another question: “Are there any special Jewish clothes?”

Answer: No, although sometimes you see Orthodox Jewish men wearing black hats and long black coats. That is what many people in Eastern Europe wore a few hundred years ago, but in a way you could say that they are Jewish clothes.

Only while writing this did I realize that I could have told them about our kipa (small round hat that men wear to signify

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<sup>5</sup> The travel through the desert and the giving of the Torah refer to the story of Shavuot, as told in the Bible, in which the Jewish people, after escaping from Egypt (the Exodus), travelled through the Sinai Desert for forty years. At one point during these years, G'd calls the leader of the people, Moses, up to Mount Sinai and gives him the Torah—the law, the agreements G'd wanted to make with the Jewish people.

<sup>6</sup> The Golden Calf was a cult idol made for the Israelites during Moses' absence, when he went up to Mount Sinai.

<sup>7</sup> The breaking of the Tablets refers to when Moses smashed the Tablets inscribed with the Ten Commandments.

<sup>8</sup> The name of G'd is spelled this way because in Judaism it is forbidden to say or write G'd's name in full. I do this in order to be respectful toward Orthodox Jews. (*the author*)

<sup>9</sup> Manna is the name of a food that was eaten by the Israelites during their travels in the desert.

<sup>10</sup> The forty-year break was the forty-year period during which the Jewish people wandered through the Sinai Desert, giving them time to develop from a group of slaves into a free people on the way to their own country and their own responsibility to build that country in a just way.



respect for G'd) or tallit (prayer shawl). A bit of terror got in my way probably.

We ended with a round of "What did you like?" and there were loads of replies like, "I like the way in which you give us information," or "You are good at telling stories."

I find it so hopeful!

Even though I feel terrified all over again every time I prepare such a talk, once I sit down with the children and see those interested eyes and serious faces, I remember—no, I suddenly have never forgotten—that human beings are wonderful and that although separation and oppression may be able to wreak terrible destruction, on another level they are just so much hot air<sup>11</sup>—they are NOTHING!

At some point one girl asked something about Anne Frank.<sup>12</sup> I answered briefly, then said that I got sad from talking about the war so I wanted to go back to the Jewish culture and religion. The children nodded and seemed to understand.

Then a bit later I said, "I've remembered something I want to tell you that is connected to what happened in the war: that

the Jewish people were oppressed in a terrible way then, and also many earlier times over the centuries, and that what we are doing here now is a way of healing that injustice. What we are doing now together, what *you* all are doing now, is in a way very ordinary but at the same time is something very special!"

I looked at one of the girls who I always get on with<sup>13</sup> especially well and got a huge smile from her. Basically I was telling them that they are excellent allies, and I think it reached them, at least in part.

The next step is that I want to bring up<sup>14</sup> *all* the oppressions that the people in the class (including their teacher of this year, who is a Hindu woman from Suriname) are targeted by and see if I can get across<sup>15</sup> a notion of mutual ally-ship—and how powerful it is, for *yourself*, to stand up against an oppression that someone *else* is targeted by.

I love this project . . . and telling you all about it!

Love and hugs,

*Gitka Hamburger*  
Amsterdam, The Netherlands

<sup>11</sup> Hot air means nonsense, something that is presented as if it were a big thing but that in reality is nothing, not important at all.

<sup>12</sup> Anne Frank was a Jewish German girl who gained international fame posthumously following the publication of her diary that documented her experiences in hiding during the German occupation of The Netherlands during World War II.

<sup>13</sup> Get on with means relate to.

<sup>14</sup> Bring up means talk about.

<sup>15</sup> Get across means successfully communicate.

## How Can People's Political Movements Get Started?

An article by Harvey Jackins, reprinted from the April 1996 *Present Time*

What do you think would happen if you went to a bold, enterprising friend of yours who has shown an interest in improving the way our society functions and asked her or him if he or she would like to be a candidate for office in the upcoming election?

I'm sure you would want to listen carefully to everything he or she said and be as skillful as you knew how to in assisting your friend to discharge. But at some point (possibly right away), I imagine you would say that you thought the society wasn't working well (considering all the unemployment and hard times and violence and unfairness that people

have to contend with). You might say that you didn't think the publicized candidates for office and their campaigns seemed to offer much help or hope for ordinary people. You might say that these candidates and campaigners seemed to be blaming poor people for being poor; trying to arouse prejudice against people of color, Gay people, young people, people on welfare, recent immigrants, and so on.



KK

As for a campaign, given your friend's lack of political experience and lack of public name-familiarity, I imagine you might say that if he or she found some way of raising the real issues, he or she could quickly become well known through the attacks that the other candidates would make on him or her. Your friend might then ask you what you thought the real issues were. At this point I think you would be pleased that you had thought about this question and had a list of issues ready to propose.

I don't know how you would title such a list, but it could possibly

*continued . . .*

## WIDE WORLD CHANGING

... continued

be something like “Things in This Wonderful Country of Ours that Could Stand to Be Changed or Improved.” Such a list might begin with

- 1) Every adult should be guaranteed a job at a living wage.
- 2) Everyone should have prepaid health care as a right.
- 3) No one should be discriminated against or oppressed because of his or her gender; race, color, or ethnic origin; age; disability; sexual orientation; religion or lack thereof; class background (raised poor, working class, middle class, owning class).
- 4) Loans from bankers, guaranteed by the government, should be available to support any person to acquire all the education he or she is determined to complete as long as he or she does well in school.

Your friend is sure to quickly ask you where the money for the above programs would come from.

You might answer, “Through taxes and any necessary borrowing by the government.” Then your friend will ask, “How can you justify the government continuing to borrow when the national debt is already so high?” And you might answer, “The

national debt became so high in order to transfer billions and billions of dollars during the Nixon, Reagan, and Bush administrations to the already over-wealthy owning-class people and the corporations they control. The economy has only been kept functioning, however poorly, at least since World War II, by increases in the national debt.”

You might go on to say that the society has never encouraged any objection to increasing the national debt in order to increase the wealth of those who are already wealthy, or to pay immense sums of money for armaments that are not needed and should never be used, or to transfer the basic resources of the country more and more into monopoly hands.

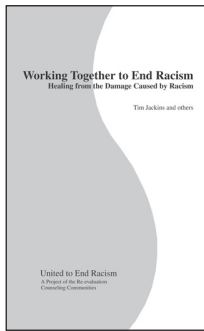
You might say that present propaganda in election campaigns against increasing the national debt is being used only as an excuse to cut down on welfare, health care for everyone, and taking proper care to preserve the environment. The national debt is a debt owed by the government only to the extremely wealthy people and the banks that they control. This money that the government “owes” to these extremely wealthy people and the banks that they control is money that the current economic system has

robbed from working people and put in the control of owning-class people and their system.

Suppose that your friend (or perhaps several friends) came to think it was a “neat idea” to find out how far people would support such a program. Suppose you helped take up a collection to pay his or her (or their) filing fees. Do you think you could figure out some good meetings, write some good leaflets, work out some good ways of talking to the people you meet when you take the leaflets door-to-door? Could you interest some of the people you talk to in having an ongoing “rational politics” committee to plan for the next election based on what you learned in this first one?

Suppose one of your candidates got elected. Do you think he or she would be relieved if the committee met with her or him and after discussion agreed that everyone would keep publicizing the program? That the candidate would not be expected to play the usual kind of politics but would instead be surrounded by others who are doing that?

What do you think would be good, far-sighted ways of starting a popular political movement that might be kept uncontaminated and effective for the people?



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HEIDI CHAPPELOW

## An Information Coordinator for Elected Officials

I am the new Information Coordinator for Current and Former Elected Officials. I encourage anybody who has served or is serving the public in an elected capacity to contact me so that we may share our experiences of running a campaign, taking office, and serving.

We elected officials are in visible positions of leadership. As such, people routinely attack us and target us with distresses in relation to the jobs we are doing. Everyone has feelings about elected officials, including elected officials!

Serving the public is an honor and a privilege. We must think about the common good. We have to put ourselves out<sup>1</sup> in unique ways. Some of us actively try to shift public policy in our jurisdictions and use our positions for improving the situation. Others of us may become sidetracked<sup>2</sup> by the status and power of our positions.

Because we have chosen to work within the existing system in order to change it, we are reformers of society. Although much good can come from reforming societal structures, I encourage us to articulate how we can *transform* society by working from within.

I encourage *everyone* to consider discharging on the following:

1) What are your first thoughts about politicians? Do the terms “corruption” and “greed” come up? If so, why?

2) Who have been your finest models of elected officials?

3) How have you discharged on the hope or disappointment that you have attached to elected officials or candidates for office?

4) How have you thought about supporting your elected leaders?

If you are an elected official, in addition to the above I suggest you discharge on the following and write to me about your experiences:

1) What was it like running a campaign? Did you incorporate RC into your campaign in any way?

2) What have you learned in office?

<sup>1</sup> Put ourselves out means extend ourselves, make an effort.

<sup>2</sup> Sidetracked means distracted and taken off course.

3) What has worn you down?<sup>3</sup>

4) What are you most proud of in your public service?

5) How have you communicated RC theory to your constituents?

I served on my city council for ten years and have just been chosen to serve as mayor for the third time. My city has over ten thousand residents, and candidates for office all run<sup>4</sup> at large (not representing districts). Terms are for four years, and I am in my third term.

I invite anybody elected to a school board; special district (such as a regional park district, transit agency, or municipal water or utility district); city council; or county, state/province, or national office to write me. I can be reached at <RAtkin1@aol.com>.

I will distribute a newsletter of our thoughts to those of you who write me. Thanks!

Ruth Atkin  
USA

<sup>3</sup> Worn you down means caused you to be tired and discouraged.

<sup>4</sup> In this context, run means conduct a campaign for election.



LYNDALL KATZ

I'm very clear that the whole world loves me. I just don't expect them to realize it yet.

Byron Katie

SK



## We Can Struggle, and Keep Thinking

The following article describes some of the realities of the current economic situation as seen by a factory worker in the United States of America. It asks questions about our ability to keep the worst effects of capitalism clearly in our minds and still keep thinking.

I remember something from Mao<sup>1</sup> that Harvey<sup>2</sup> quoted. It was something like, "All is in chaos; the situation is excellent."

As an organizer of workers and an organizer of organizers, my experience is that times of collapse, in addition to being quite destructive, offer great opportunities. I would say this is true of the current situation, in which internal contradictions are showing themselves more and more clearly. This can be helpful, if people are not completely destroyed by it.

I remember a quote from the *New Yorker* magazine following the fall of the Berlin wall: "The collapse of the Berlin Wall may come to show most clearly not the failures of communism but the failures of capitalism."

<sup>1</sup> Mao Zedong

<sup>2</sup> Harvey Jackins

What I like about being a factory worker is that we have a very direct experience of capitalism. Here is my and my co-workers' current situation as factory workers in the United States:

Every day we watch the company's web orders online,<sup>3</sup> because we know that our employment for the next day depends on what the orders are today. They are scheduling our work day by day now, and we do not know if we will work the next day or not.

Many people are without health insurance, and their lives will be shortened due to the lack of health care available to them. Many are in a position where, if they cannot find work, they may lose their homes or their ability to pay rent. Or they may lose their cars, which they need to hold a job because we have no public transportation where I live. I have two friends who are in bankruptcy proceedings and other friends who are not able to afford food that will let them eat in a healthy manner. I know several people who have injured

<sup>3</sup> Online means on the Internet.

themselves on or off the job and therefore may not be able to find work.

On my current health insurance plan I have to pay the first \$5,000 of each year's medical costs. This is about a third of my income, and it does affect what care I seek. Sometimes I decide to "wait and see if the problem goes away." I do this with my car sometimes, but I don't think it is a good plan for the human body.

At their next meeting, our state legislature will face a revenue shortfall equal to the entire payroll of all state employees, so there will be more job cuts, which of course will result in less state revenue, since personal income tax is the most significant contributor. Three bridges in the areas where I travel are being shut down due to lack of maintenance, which is affecting people's ability to get to work.

Comparatively, on a world scale, I am fortunate to live in a place that is not experiencing the worst effects of capitalism in the current period. I have enough food, a place to live, and so far in the community around me violence is only evident in random acts of domestic violence or drug-related burglaries. I have not yet been directly affected. (However, I recently read that at this time, statistically, one is more likely to be shot to death in the United States than in Afghanistan.) At my annual RC working-class leaders' workshop here in the United States, it is not uncommon to hear that members of people's families have been shot or incarcerated over the past year.



ANGELA HYLAND

I think we have to ask ourselves a few questions:

- How able are we to “see” and stay in touch with the reality of the most damaging effects of capitalism?
- To what extent can we watch or read news from the world, keep our vision large, and still keep thinking?
- To what extent can we actually notice the damaging effects on ourselves of the current situation and keep up with<sup>4</sup> the discharge?

I would like to refer people to my article in the July 2009 *Present Time*, pages 28 to 31, “Fighting on All Fronts.” One effect of capitalism is that I cannot publish my thoughts under my own name. It is likely I would lose my job should my employer Google my name<sup>5</sup> and find some of the things I have written. On Page 41 of the same issue of *Present Time* there is also

<sup>4</sup> Keep up with means do enough of.  
<sup>5</sup> Google my name means search the Internet for anything connected to my name.

a nice short quote by Harvey titled, “Capitalism Not Workable.”<sup>6</sup>

An interesting (long) book in English is *Collapse*, by Jared Diamond. It describes studies of societies that have faced collapse due to environmental contradictions. Some of these societies have survived, and some have not. The author writes from an environmental perspective about what he thinks that societies—past, present, and future—need(ed) to be able to do to survive.

The situation is not hopeless; it is not easy either. I personally feel that a little discomfort and struggle

<sup>6</sup> “If people weren’t patterned, capitalism still would not work—because of its basic built-in contradictions, which every class system has and has fallen because of. With capitalism, the essential contradiction is that in order to allow profit, there is never enough money in the open market to purchase the goods that are brought there for sale. As a result, economic crises repeat time after time and become worse in the process. Since there is no essential rational reason why one person should live off the work of another, the sentimental attachment to capitalism that most people feel is, in any case, a little hard to justify.”—Harvey Jackins, from a letter written in 1976

during this period are a good thing. An inability to live on the edge of our fear may be the most limiting factor in our usefulness during the coming period. I feel in solidarity with and close to anyone who struggles. If we keep our RC Communities strong, we should be able to manage to struggle and keep thinking. And we will be an enormous help to those around us.

The way I describe our situation in my workshops is, “We should all be building now the rational relationships and structures (including the RC Communities) within the current collapsing society that will be there to replace it as the oppressive structures crumble.”

Con cariño en la lucha  
 (with love in the struggle),

Factory Worker  
 USA

Reprinted from the RC e-mail discussion lists for RC Community members and for leaders of wide world change



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MARTI HAYMAKER

## A Challenging and Exciting Period

The material conditions for people in northern California, USA, which is a relatively wealthy part of the world, are getting much harder, and it seems like this is going to continue. At the same time, we are in an exciting period that points toward another world that is not based on oppression and exploitation.

There are communities in northern California where thirty percent of the homes have been foreclosed and abandoned or are being squatted in<sup>1</sup> by people who would otherwise be homeless. Here in San Francisco, the waiting list for shelters and adequate housing has increased five-fold. The local university has raised its tuition thirty percent in one year, and at the local state university, faculty salaries have been cut by ten percent. All state employees are now required to take unpaid leave, or work unpaid for several days a month.

The city of San Francisco is short fifty-three million dollars for a six-month period, which means big cutbacks in social services. Non-profit organizations, which provide much of the infrastructure for social services in this region, are looking toward 2011 as a financially devastating year for their budgets. For a relatively wealthy region of the world, these are the beginnings of big changes.

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<sup>1</sup> Squatted in means lived in without rent being paid.



ANDY VERNON-JONES

It seems like in the United States the private equity industry (which invests in successful businesses and then intentionally runs them into bankruptcy); credit and other debt industries; the continual funding of war; and a second wave of foreclosures are likely to cause another big economic decline in the near future. All this is understandable in terms of the structure of capitalism—a system that requires the owning class to continually make and accumulate more profit. In order to meet this requirement, the owning-class decision makers need to make increasingly risky investment decisions and increasingly exploit labor. Capitalism doesn't have a plan for its long-term survival as a system.

For me, in the broader sense, there is something exciting about this time—about what is possible in terms of another global economic system that is not based on exploitation and oppression, in which everyone gets a chance at a decent life—something that has never occurred during the reign of capitalism. I am excited about the change, and the process of change.

At the same time, the day-to-day material challenges (making enough money for health care, nutritious food, a place to live) are requiring me and others I know to work on chronic recorded feelings of discouragement. These recordings can make it hard for me to think in the present circumstances. Going back to my early life and fighting for myself has been important. It has helped me get some leverage on being able to take on<sup>2</sup> bigger challenges in my life and not be so susceptible to blaming people for the challenges I face. In the end I think it is helping me stay close to people, and get closer as things get harder. Two of my big goals during this period are to fight for myself and to not turn on,<sup>3</sup> blame, or mistreat people as things get more challenging economically.

*Chris Selig*  
San Francisco, California, USA  
Reprinted from the RC e-mail discussion  
list for leaders of wide world change

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

<sup>3</sup> Turn on means become an adversary of.



## The Plights of All Workers Are Related

The plights of workers everywhere are related. To get an accurate picture, it's necessary to look squarely at things.

The erosion of the gains that U.S. workers fought for in the last few generations—the rights to organize, to health care, to decent wages and pensions, and so on—is entirely linked to the horrendous conditions for workers in the South (also referred to as Third World countries). By exploiting the people of these countries, the owners of large factories and corporations are able to make the huge profits they need in order to compete with other giant corporations. In many countries in the South, workers have few protections or rights. It is often unlawful to organize, and the consequence of doing so can be death (“disappearance”). There are sweatshops in which workers are basically slaves, and other terrible conditions.

When corporations go elsewhere and exploit our fellow workers around the world, things get worse for us U.S. workers. Because we no longer produce much here, we are laid off, factories close, and those of us who are still employed have less leverage for keeping our benefits and rights as workers. The plight of workers in the South is completely related to things getting tougher here in the North. The entire global economy is set up in the context of a collapsing capitalist society.

We have to look at how devastating things are for people around the world and at the hardship of people around us. In order to see the situation clearly, we have to recognize that we are under attack. Then we need to discharge to be able to think.

I am finding it helpful to decide to be hopeful—something Tim Jackins talks about. It's a decision that goes against the chronic distresses that have me, and others, seeing the world through the lens of our early hurts—hurts that occurred when things were looking dire for ourselves and we were powerless, as little ones, to change the situation. Mostly I can only get a glimpse outside the hopelessness, but it is enough to secure some discharge, and it seems to clear my mind enough that I can start to approach things from an informed, connected-to-all-people viewpoint.

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list for leaders of wide world change



## What Do You Imagine, After Capitalism?

For many years I have heard and read Harvey's<sup>1</sup> assertion that capitalism is collapsing from its own internal contradictions. I have respected his point of view but have always been unable to picture what would actually happen, except for scary possibilities like everyone going around shooting each other

or (add your own worst fears here).

Today I was reading about “resilience,” which is a part of systems theory.<sup>2</sup> The authors pointed out that as a system collapses (goes beyond a threshold

into a new and different state of organization), there is access to resource (knowledge, money, biomass, and so on) that has been tied up in the old structures of the ecosystem or society.

As the system breaks down, this resource becomes available to new or different groups of organisms or people. An example is when a

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<sup>1</sup> Harvey Jackins'

<sup>2</sup> Systems theory is an interdisciplinary theory about the nature of complex systems in nature, society, and science.

... continued

forest of tall trees dies because it no longer has enough resilience to survive changing conditions. The carbon and other minerals that have been stored in the tree trunks for many years now become available to termites and beetles and become rich soil for a new, different ecosystem to grow in.

In a similar way, as capitalism breaks down, most of the vast resources that have been stored in the corporations, banks, and stock markets will not just disappear but will become available to be used in different forms—whether or not we are creative enough to invent humane ways of organizing them.

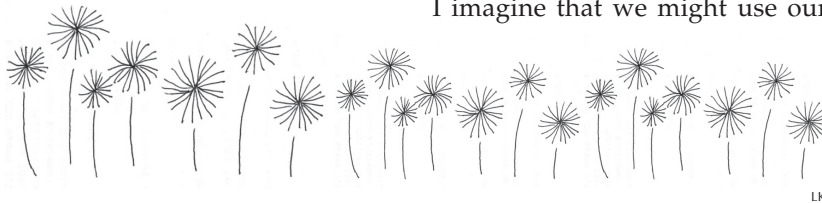
I find this exciting and hopeful. I imagine that we might use our

intelligence and caring to help shape the way a new society or human ecosystem will arise out of the old one.

I would love to hear your ideas and points of view. What good and interesting world do you imagine being possible after capitalism?

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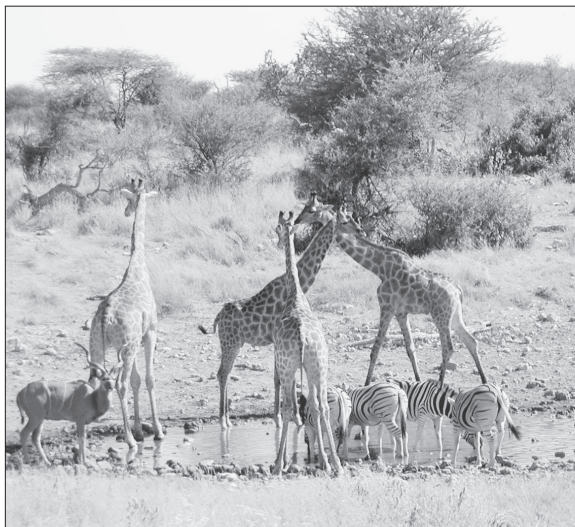


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## Opening Up My View of the World

Recently I set an achievable goal for myself of raising funds for the Re-evaluation Foundation (the non-profit foundation that provides seed money for projects<sup>1</sup> that help spread RC to groups that haven't yet been reached). I wanted to seek contributions from people who were not Co-Counselors.

At a workshop topic table last spring, Pat Fischer, who is a member of the Foundation's board, suggested that we approach first the people we were close to, who already knew how deep our commitment to RC was, and who had undoubtedly seen its benefits in us many times over.<sup>2</sup> I decided that I would talk to my parents and my best friend before the end of the calendar year about including RC in the groups they give money to. (I was raised middle and owning class, and my best friend is middle class.)



MARTIN URBEL

Yesterday I was talking to my friend on the phone and decided to ask her, as a strategic first step, what non-profit groups she had given money to in the past and how she had thought about that. She answered my questions and then asked me the same. It was interesting for both of us, because it was something we had never talked about before in nearly forty years of friendship. I was reminded of how quickly just aiming ourselves in a good direction, whether or not we reach our goal (though I will definitely still ask her to contribute to the Foundation), can open up our view of the world and bring us closer to other people.

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

<sup>1</sup> Seed money for projects means money to help get projects started.

<sup>2</sup> Many times over means many, many times.