

Present Time No. 170 (Vol. 45, No. 1) January 2013



Social transformation . . . begins inside your own heart and mind, because the battleground of human transformation is really, more than any other thing, the struggle within the human consciousness to believe and accept what is true.

John Lewis

In this first *Present Time* of 2013, you can see some of the good thinking that just keeps coming in—about care of the environment; re-emerging effectively and efficiently; leadership; language liberation; the liberation of young people, women, men, and people targeted by racism; and much more.

We'd like to hear from you! For the April issue, please send us your articles and poems by Tuesday, February 19, and any changes to the back-pages lists by Monday, February 25.

Lisa Kauffman, editor

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Toward a New Goal on the Care of the Environment

From a talk by Tim Jackins¹ at the Re-evaluation Counseling
Community Resources Staff Workshop, December 2012

All the indications are that the way the world is developing demands changes in humans' treatment of the environment. At the same time, information about the environment is increasing and being more thoroughly distributed. It's becoming possible for everyone to have an accurate sense of where we are and what is happening.

As Co-Counselors we can help lessen the effects of distress on discussions about the environment and show that it's possible to understand the situation and develop good, rational policies for improving it. We can illuminate the situation, and the background of it, and contradict enough of people's common distresses that we can help people think and move toward solutions.

It seems to me that a full, clear goal on the care of the environment would be useful to us and to most people. We have moved in that direction, but not very far yet. We have looked in that direction with an earlier goal. It's been having a good effect, good work is being done, and it would be useful to accelerate the work.

How do we figure this out? What is the issue really? What is our situation and how did we get here? How do we understand it completely enough to begin to take action and head in directions that will be the best we can figure out?

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



MAURA FALLON

Humans can take action with or without thought, and we're in this environmental position because as humans we haven't thought enough in this particular area. We've taken lots of actions that have affected the environment, and we haven't been able to think about all the unintended consequences and ramifications of those actions.

THE BEGINNING AND DEVELOPMENT OF LIFE

Life developed here on earth in the special conditions that existed at the time, including perhaps the planet being hit by a lot of meteorites. It's simply part of the structure of the universe that particular configurations of molecules are likely to develop, and that given certain conditions, they're more likely to develop. Conditions were good enough here that molecules started forming more complex

relationships, and at some point, because of the conditions and the material around it, some set of molecules developed the interesting property of producing copies of itself. It replicated itself. That was life.

In the beginning, life-forms replicated using the raw materials in their environment, and the form that existed was the only show in town.² There was only one type, and everything alive was that type. Who knows how fast that type spread, how efficient it was at replicating, but it didn't have to contend with other life-forms and it didn't use anything except raw materials.

Things had to change for this beginning to occur, and things didn't stop changing after it happened. It

continued . . .

² The only show in town means the only thing happening.

... continued

appears likely that a change in the first life-form was what created the next life-form. The next one could have been another fresh start (there could have been two independent starts, or a number of them), but odds are that once a life-form worked well, a change in that life-form was what caused a different one to occur. Then there were two life-forms. They were consuming similar things but were somewhat different from one another. We might want to say that they were competing, but our use of that word has a cultural twist to it. It's hard to use it without getting odd images in our heads. They were using the same resources.

Over time, more and more life-forms developed. Then another interesting thing happened: some organism developed whose existence depended on another organism. This doesn't necessarily mean that it ate the other organism (it may have consumed a byproduct of it), but it used conditions created in part by the other one. It probably could have functioned on its own, but it functioned better in conjunction with the other organism.

When there is a benefit like that, change tends to occur to take advantage of it. So that organism's descendants, over many generations, came to use the other organism more and more efficiently. They came to depend on it more heavily and were less able to survive without it. An interconnected web of life-forms began and became larger and larger as more life-forms came into existence and became more complex.

(Most life-forms can't live off of raw material at all. We humans can't eat dirt and get very far. We can't absorb solar energy and get much energy out of it. To have enough surface area to absorb enough solar energy to power ourselves independent of eating other organisms, we'd probably each have to be spread out over something like half an acre.)

A complex web of life developed, and it's changing all the time. New things, small changes, are always happening. We see species change, but there are many, many small changes too.

We humans can't survive without other life-forms. We have more cells of other life-forms living in and on our body than we have cells of our own. We may feel isolated, but we're crawling with life. It's all over us, all through us. Life is that interconnected.

In general the environment changes slowly—but it doesn't always. Sometimes there are big eruptions; the whole atmosphere is clouded and very little solar energy comes through for a year or more.

Sometimes a meteor hits and there's a similar effect. When researchers dig down and find a layer of the same chemical at the same depth in many places, they know that years ago a meteor hit or a volcano erupted. Life-forms that develop slowly and are interconnected can't compensate quickly, so when sudden, big changes occur, a lot of them don't survive. Evolution appears able to move faster than we once thought it did, but it can't move fast enough to handle sudden disasters.

Not so many thousands of years ago, there were apparently about five thousand people alive. One can tell by looking at DNA. Because DNA changes at a predictable rate, it's possible to calculate backward to where everyone had very similar DNA, indicating a small population. It looks as if after some disaster, perhaps an ice age, about five thousand people were left. We humans have changed just fast enough to handle the catastrophes in our environment.

But most species haven't. Many more species have existed than exist now. Many couldn't change fast



DIANE SHISK

enough to keep their species going. There have always been extinctions. The 9,993 species of birds in the world today are a small fraction of what has existed. Though it's sad to lose that complexity, extinction has always gone on.³

All species also have an impact on the environment. The larger the life-form, and the greater its numbers, the bigger its impact is. Species have spread out and enlarged their sphere of existence. They've been hampered by large bodies of water (if they've been flightless and unable to swim), mountain ranges, and other things, but when the world has changed, life-forms have spread, especially since we humans started moving and taking things with us—on the bottoms of our shoes, in our suitcases, on the hulls of our ships, and so on. Organisms now travel to places where they couldn't go to before. With our help they can traverse the places in between, where they couldn't survive.

When we humans started out we were a small collection of individuals, and in a global sense it didn't matter what we did. The rest of the world's species and the world itself could compensate for our actions. But if a species gets too numerous, it starts affecting the others. For example, the populations of a predator species and its related prey species swing back and forth. If the predators eat almost all the prey, then almost all the predators die, because they no longer have enough to eat. Then the prey come back, and then the predators come back. If it swings too far, it can run

³ Gone on means happened.

over the edge: too few prey are left to be able to come back. For a long time, our effect as humans wasn't large. We were too few and the messes we made weren't very big. We accidentally burned down forests, we did different things, but on a large scale what we did could be compensated for. In some sense we got used to that, and we didn't pay attention to the possible large-scale effects of our actions.

A MARVELOUS AND FRIGHTENED SPECIES

We're a marvelous, ingenious, inventive species that gets frozen in certain ways by distresses and then can't consistently think. Where distresses get stuck on us, our behavior changes from aware to frozen and, for example, becomes driven by feelings of scarcity and the danger of annihilation. We each have our own fears about existence, because our individual starts weren't that good, but we also carry the undischarged fears of earlier generations. If our family or our people had a history of famine, and we didn't get to discharge on it, we see the world in a certain way. We mostly didn't get to discharge, so we've been left with feelings of scarcity and competition—feelings that we need more, need more, need more.

As a species we could figure out ways of getting more. We could figure out how to exist in parts of the world that humans didn't start out in, places our ancestors didn't know how to live in. We spread across the world, and we spread more quickly than other organisms because we were able to travel across places we couldn't survive in.



HELEN PARKIN

We could adapt how we functioned, not just find another place where we could function in the same way that we had before. We learned new things in order to fit in, but our fears of scarcity also kept us from being able to rationally consider certain things, as they could seem secondary to survival or not related to it. For example, the welfare of other people could seem secondary to making sure we got more.

We spread out and became successful, and as we figured out more things, we became more numerous and did more things that had a more drastic effect on the environment. Salvation always seemed to mean more—more of us and having more command of the environment, so that we could produce more of what was reassuring to us: more food, bigger castles, bigger ships. We tried to more thoroughly dominate the things that used to dominate us.

DESTRUCTIVE SOCIETIES

We're still fighting back from a population of five thousand. We're 6.4 billion at this point, but

continued . . .

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we're still unsure because of the old distresses. Given this number of us, the rest of the world cannot compensate for our mistakes. It can't compensate anymore for what we haven't been able to think about. There are simply too many of us, and too many of us locked into distressed behavior and irrational systems that we call societies.

It isn't just our individual mistakes; it isn't just that we leave our old wrecked car, pick-up truck, and tractor behind the shed and let them rust. There are too many of us with old cars and pick-up trucks and tractors. We're far past the point where systems can compensate for us and what we leave behind. Our modes of production give off massive amounts of smoke, ash, CO₂, and other things—far more than the rest of the world can handle. Driven by our patterns of always needing more and not considering the full effects of our behavior, our modes of production are locked into our societies, as they were locked into the societies before ours.

Patterns of destructive wastefulness have been part of human societies. Societies have always destroyed people and other forms of life. But in the past there weren't as many of us, so the destruction didn't have a big effect. We have now reached the point where the patterned functioning locked into our societies has massive effects.

It seems to me that we've been against oppressive societies mainly because they were bad for people. They were bad for everything else, too, but this hadn't reached the point where it couldn't be



ANSEL ADAMS WILDERNESS, CALIFORNIA, USA • LISA VOSS

compensated for by the rest of the environment. We've clearly reached that point now.

Organized societies have always been mired in distress patterns. They operate by organizing people into groups and classes that support the functioning of the society, and some groups are given much less resource than others. Those that receive the largest share and have the most control of the resources have patterns installed on them that push them to make decisions about the resources that give them the most immediate material benefit, with little or no regard for the effect this has on other groups of people, other life-forms, the environment, or even their own long-term existence.

For example, there continues to be a drive to find more fossil fuel deposits, and new ways to exploit them, no matter what pollution and damage that causes. As long as short-range profit can be made, many people can't face that producing and

burning more fossil fuels is what's causing climate change and massive environmental damage.

Our societies are consistently destructive and short-sighted, and their most damaging effects are inflicted on the people who are already the most exploited, for example, those doing the actual work of production, those targeted by racism, those living in countries that have not yet developed economically to where they can protect themselves against the large economies of the world.

WE MUST CHANGE SOCIETY, IN THE INTEREST OF ALL LIFE-FORMS

Societies built on patterns, as ours is built on greed from distresses connected with insecurity and isolation, cannot function rationally enough to keep from damaging people and the world. We can usefully oppose and stop particular aspects of this destructive patterned

functioning, and need to. We can also stop tolerating the existence of societies based on distress.

Past efforts to change oppressive societies have involved the majority of people opposing the class that controls the resources of the society, the owning class. However, the individuals in that class are simply the agents of oppression, driven by the distress patterns installed on them by the society. And they are not the only ones with those distress patterns; everyone in the society gets hurt by those distresses being acted out and ends up with a version of the same distress.

We have known that the work to change society is not really a struggle against people of a certain class—that it is a struggle to end the effect of distresses on all of us. We are not struggling for one group of people against another. We are trying to end the grip of patterns on all people, including those who direct the society, for the benefit of all people. Portraying the way forward as a struggle against any group of people is always misleading and restimulating and is incorrect in a fundamental way.

To protect the environment from the ongoing destructive, irrational functioning of society, we need to change society—not in the interests of one group of people as opposed to another but in the interest of all life-forms. We need to change it in order to preserve an uncountable number of life-forms from the environmental effects of society's distressed functioning. This is in everyone's interest, including those whose distresses have not yet allowed them to realize it.

WE CAN MOVE

This change in society should not be delayed, since large environmental changes are happening rapidly and their consequences are difficult to predict. Some of our patterns want “proof” before they let us face the need to change, but there is little absolute proof in something as complex as our world. Human minds often decide things based on far from complete data. We may feel so insecure that we are afraid to move—even when we see clear, strong reasons to—but we can go against the pull of our patterns and make decisions to change in the best possible direction we can imagine.

We can move against our patterns of feeling inadequate, small, and passive. We can discharge the distresses installed in our childhoods that have left us with those feelings and confusions. And we can become important parts of

the ongoing efforts to interrupt the patterned mistakes that are damaging the environment.

We can move out of passivity, learn what we do not yet know, and discharge any distresses that keep us from playing the roles we want to play—as participants, communicators, supporters of existing leadership, and developers of policy and perspective.

We can do this in significant numbers, and it will bring benefits in many ways: we will move forward the work to save the environment, we will function more outside of our distress, and we will expand our communication of what we know about humans.

RCers have moved in similar, significant ways before. Two of the clearer examples are how we moved against nuclear war several decades ago and how we started United to End Racism about a decade ago. Let's do it again.



WATERCOLOR • KATIE KAUFFMAN

Choosing One's Attitude

Just remember that you can always determine what your attitude will be in an upcoming event, and often that decision can make the difference.

*Harvey Jackins**

From a letter written in 1995

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

Helpful Ways to Counsel on Climate Change

I remember a line Harvey Jackins used with Co-Counselors in the early 1980s when the nuclear arms buildup in the United States and Russia was increasingly visible. There was a general feeling of urgency, driven by fear. He would ask clients to confidently state, "It won't happen because _____" and then fill in the blank with their first thought. "It" was nuclear war and the human and environmental catastrophe that would result from it. The client's first thoughts always provided insights into what he or she needed to discharge to be able to think and act more effectively in relation to what felt like an insurmountable problem.

This effort to focus counseling attention on a major threat enabled many RCers to play decisive roles in helping to decrease the threat of nuclear war. I was active in the U.S. Nuclear Weapons Freeze Campaign. Now I work on climate change, and I've started using "It won't happen because _____" again in Co-Counseling sessions—with "it" being the human and environmental destruction that could be brought on by climate change (and unrestrained patterns of greed). I've found this approach helpful in focusing my attention on what I need to discharge.

Harvey also liked reciting poems and would use particular ones to help contradict the heavy despair and desperation many of us felt at the time. The one I remember is "God's World," a poem about the beauty of autumn by the U.S. poet Edna St. Vincent Millay. It has helped me focus my attention on what is good, beautiful, inspiring, and lasting about the natural world. Many poems and songs, in many languages, could have a similar effect. Here is the poem:

God's World

by Edna St. Vincent Millay

O WORLD, I cannot hold thee close enough!
Thy winds, thy wide grey skies!
Thy mists, that roll and rise!
Thy woods, this autumn day, that ache and sag
And all but cry with colour! That gaunt crag
To crush! To lift the lean of that black bluff!
World, World, I cannot get thee close enough!

Long have I known a glory in it all,
But never knew I this;
Here such a passion is
As stretcheth me apart,—Lord, I do fear
Thou'st made the world too beautiful this year;
My soul is all but out of me,—let fall
No burning leaf; prithee, let no bird call.

Dale Everts

Durham, North Carolina, USA

Reprinted from the RC e-mail discussion
list for leaders in the care of the environment



PERU • DIANE SHISK

Inklusgroep: Inclusive Play with Special Children

For a number of years, we have had an “inclusive play” group, *inkluisgroep*, in the Dutch RC Community. RC parents of children with special needs wanted support for their relationships with their children. They wanted to apply their experience in family work¹ to their own families, but there wasn’t enough resource for their questions at regular RC playdays.² They often gave their children long sessions at home, which led to heavy discharge for both them and their children, but such long sessions were asking too much from the attention available at regular RC playdays.

This group of parents didn’t stop. They decided to become strongly rooted in their RC Communities and to look for support with each other. They had to break through their isolation. Their focus was on the benign reality, on inclusion: everybody is included, everybody belongs!

The *inkluisgroep* started when a Dutch family-work leader, Jan Venderbos, made a commitment to think with the parents about ways to welcome their children into RC and find out what inclusion could mean in RC—what would work for the children with special needs and for their parents and allies. Our goal was to have a good time, break old patterns, and welcome each other.

We have been meeting five times a year to connect and to encourage everybody to put himself or herself in the centre. We start with a day for planning, ideas, discharge, and making practical arrangements. The second meeting is in the gymnastic hall. The parents and allies have sessions while playing all day. We put attention on the relationships among the parents and allies and on the relationships with and among the young people.

At the third meeting, the brothers and sisters of the children with special needs are in the



DIANE SHISK

center. This is their day to play with attention from the adults. It’s a chance for the parents to realize how wonderful it is to be with these children and celebrate the good time together.

The next two meetings are organized around the children with special needs. In the first years we invited all six of them at the same time, but the amount of attention per child was not enough. A few years ago we started inviting first one half and at the next meeting the other half of the children with special needs. This has guaranteed enough attention, from a parent and at least two allies, and is a good contradiction to the isolation of these children and the people around them. It also gives the parents an opportunity to be allies to each other and break through their isolation as parents.

Our group of parents is special. They are all leaders. They lead at home, in the wide world, and in RC. Their special child gets their attention weekly, sometimes daily. Some of their children play many hours a week in a home-based program staffed by volunteers or with “professional players” in a playroom. The parents set goals for their children. They work to maintain a present-time attitude. RC theory, with its perspective of the benign reality, is their framework.

Our parents and allies experience how special it is to be close to the children with special

continued . . .

¹ Family work is the application of Re-evaluation Counseling to the particular situations of young people, and families with young children. It entails young people and adults (both parents and allies) interacting in ways that allow young people to show and be themselves and to not be dominated by the adults.

² A playday is a several-hour workshop that includes time for children to do whatever safe activities they want to do, with the encouragement and appreciation of the adults present, and to discharge if they wish. It also includes discharge time for the adults.

COUNSELING PRACTICE

... continued

needs. There is still confusion, inside and outside of RC, and a lot to discharge, but the group gives us the chance to connect with each other and figure out what we can do to make RC inclusive for all children and their parents. As a result, some of our parents lead family work and help it develop in their own Areas.³ Our goal is to create a good place in RC for our special children and teens, so that we can end our *inkluisgroep*.

Our group of allies is special. All of them have made a long-term commitment to the families with whom they attend the playdays. They are an example for others, because they do this work for themselves—for their own development and discharge—and have fun doing it. They bring their attention, creativity, intelligence, and loyalty to their relationships with the young people and their families. Some allies are part of a child's home-based program. They are well informed about what the child needs. They understand the sometimes big reactions of special-needs children and are not surprised by flying materials and loud, active, forceful interactions. For them, as for the parents, connection is a strong contradiction to the desperate feeling of standing alone. Without allies, family work is impossible. This is certainly true for families with children with special needs.

During the time we have met, many of the children have become teenagers. It is a revelation (and heartbreaking) to see how they have to adapt to be part of this society. Seeing the consequences when they refuse to can make us want them to change or adapt because it looks so much easier. Figuring out what part is the oppressive society, what part is the result of an undischarged pattern, and what actually makes a person's life workable is an ongoing challenge. Unassimilated behavior asks for creativity and flexibility from all of us.

As the young people have become teens, we have provided more opportunities for them to get RC information. It is sometimes possible to Co-Counsel with them on a reciprocal basis. This doesn't work for every young person; we have to figure it out with each of them. How can we use the attention of a young person if it doesn't look like what we are used to in two-way sessions? How can they be part of Co-Counseling sessions, workshops, and classes? This is the adventure we are on: to find out.

³ An Area is a local RC Community.

The parents and allies were asked the following questions:

- What have you gained from the *inkluisgroep*?
- How have you brought the experience of this group to your own Area?

Their answers follow.



Anneke Groot
Information Coordinator for Parents
of Children Labelled as Autistic
De Enschede, the Netherlands

Rob Beckers
Coordinator for Family
Work in the Netherlands
Groningen, the Netherlands

On Our Way to a Beautiful World

What I like about the *inkluisgroep* is being with people who are full of hope and inspiration and who want to achieve more.

Raising my children at home was a lonely job. I was the main caretaker in our family. We moved twice to a new place where I had to make new contacts. I was with the children most of the time and could not organize things differently. Difficult situations occurred regularly and often came unexpectedly. Babysitters were hard to find and even harder to keep. By using RC, I could notice that I was strong and free to choose a new perspective and to do things in new ways. I could be "the leader of my home project."

When I was with "ordinary" parents, I often felt that I was the one who could not do the job, or that it looked like I was not doing it well enough because my child did not do things the way they're "supposed to be done." Other parents could pretend; I couldn't.

Playing with children makes it clear that society asks things of them that are not always logical: "Sit still." "Keep your mouth shut." "Listen." Our "special needs" children show themselves fully. They are pure and honest. This makes thinking about them easier.

In the *inkluisgroep* I see that I'm not the only one doing things differently. I am inspired by how we can make this work. I get tips and ideas, and there is room for both my questions and

my frustrations. An ongoing contradiction⁴ in this group is that what I'm doing is important, that I am changing the world.

I am also part of the parent council at the children's school, and I often speak with other parents. They like listening to me and are often inspired. I tell them about the play work we do and invite them to do the same. Most people like hearing about it. Some of them actually try it. Most are too scared to act, which surprises me every time. Why wouldn't you want this always, when you know it exists?

The most important thing I share is hope. I'm hopeful. When I share my perspective with others, they often agree that we are taking great steps on our way to a beautiful world.



Anonymous
The Netherlands

This Group Is for *Me*

When this group started, I was invited to co-lead it. I was an experienced family-work leader, but I had little experience with or information about playing with young people with special needs and what it meant to be a parent of a young person with special needs in this society. (What challenges does it bring? What feelings must be faced? Which fights are to be fought? What needs to happen to be close to a young person with special needs?) However, I said yes right away, because I wanted to learn and see where I could be of help.

I was shy and scared at first, but along the way I saw how my knowledge and playfulness as a family-work leader could be combined with the experience and understanding of the parents and allies.

One thing I saw from the beginning was the love and dedication the parents had for their children. They were determined to give them great lives and the chance to go for⁵ everything. They were determined to work together with people and organisations, to learn what they had to learn, and to stand for their children, whatever it took.

It's been important to keep in mind that this group is for *me*, for my liberation. I do it for myself. This perspective has made it easier for me to be there and has kept me thinking bigger and acting more boldly.

One thing I've learned from the young people with special needs is to be real and in present time. They don't have pretence, and they don't accept it when people are pretending while making contact. This made me uneasy at first, but when I realised what was asked of me, it was a relief. It made me realise that young people pick up⁶ pretending from an early age and are pushed to accept it from others. If I watch closely, I can see that they are more playful and open if I am not pretending.

After some years it became clear that I, too, have a son with special needs, so I stopped leading the group and started coming as a parent. It was hard for me that my son was blamed for problems at school and that I, as his father, was also blamed for them. Nobody told me to my face, but the attitude of teachers and other parents around my son and me was that they thought I wasn't a good father, that I wasn't raising my child as I should; that I had to be stricter, keep him more under control, make him conform and be "normal."

Someone in the group told me, "It doesn't matter how your child behaves; you get the whole load of oppression put on you anyway." That helped me see what the oppression looked like and that it wasn't about my son or me as his father. It also helped me be part of the group as a father of a child with special needs.

This group has been a place for me to relax—to know that my son is accepted just as he is, that people are able to think and give him a hand.⁷ It's been a place where the other adults understand how it is to be a parent of a child with special needs. I have been able to discharge on early discouragement and giving up and have learned to fight for myself more easily than I could elsewhere. It's been a place to get new thoughts, new energy, and more power to support my son and be close to him. It's helped me work together with schoolteachers, and fight with them if necessary.



Jan Venderbos
Fryslân, the Netherlands

continued . . .

⁴ Contradiction to distress

⁵ Go for means pursue.

⁶ Pick up means adopt, acquire.

⁷ A hand means some help.

Learning What Acceptance Really Means

Last night we watched the movie *Snow Cake* upstairs, while A— was having a birthday party downstairs with twenty-seven classmates. I was impressed by the movie. It presented such a hopeful perspective on accepting people the way they are that I cried deeply.

A— was a child with special needs from the moment he was born. He didn't know how to drink, so we had to feed him with a tiny spoon. He didn't like noise. We would carry him around all day long, taking turns, and even had him sleep on our laps when we were using the computer. He was a master of deep, long yawns.

In day care he had a strong preference for certain teachers. They could recognize his need for space. He would often crawl underneath the beds or hide himself in a small tent, panicking when children would come close by. He liked repetitive games. I would draw him faces and animals for hours and hours, over and over again. The only place we saw him relax was in the water; he loved taking a bath.

A— was diagnosed with autism when he was almost four years old and we realized he was not developing "normally." Thanks to Anneke and Nicolet Groot,⁸ we managed to organize a home-based program in which A— would get one-way attention on a daily basis. He was in the lead, and we followed him. By then he would not look at us anymore and was visibly scared all day long. He liked spinning objects. He did not feel cold or pain. He was attached to a certain order and would panic if something unexpected happened—for example, a fork on the "wrong" side of the plate, or a cup of the "wrong" color.

The only time he would look at us was when he was in great terror and discharging his biggest fear. I'll never forget his big eyes, wide open, begging for help. By watching him cry and sweat and re-evaluate, I learned what discharge could do. It made a big difference for him. As long as he would trust us enough to show his biggest fears, there was hope.

Writing this, I become embarrassed that this happened to my child. I feel so ashamed that I

⁸ Anneke Groot is an RC leader in De Enschede, the Netherlands. Nicolet Groot is an RC leader in Huister Heide, the Netherlands.

tend to minimize the odd behavior and pretend that we could handle the situation very well. In fact, we have. We have been able to connect with A— in a way that allows him to shake off enough of his fear to go around in our society as a "normal" teenage boy. He is happy now; the other day he mentioned that for the first time in his life he had no worries at all!

I am most grateful that we've had the opportunity to learn from A— what acceptance and trust really mean. As a five-year-old boy he told us, "You try to teach me all these things, but I am okay the way I am." As a ten-year-old he liked to perform; he sang a song titled "You Are Good the Way You Are" in front of the whole school, and several teachers were in tears. Last week he told me, "Every time you correct me, it feels as if I have to give up a small part of myself; the older I am, the less I feel like myself." For me, this is the core of "mental health" oppression.

The older he gets, the harder it gets. This is a direct effect of "mental health" oppression. The peer pressure on teenagers is enormous. We feel a great pull to pretend that we live a normal life, that everything is fine and we are dealing with it well. And as I said, we are, but it is a big deal to fight against "mental health" oppression all day long. Thanks to A— and many others, I am starting to understand it, to get a glimpse of the enormous power people have, and to shake off some fears so that I can keep perspective. This is most helpful and hopeful!



Anonymous
The Netherlands

Many Benefits for Me

What does playing in the *inkluisgroep* mean for me? Good question. I have done it for a long time. When I started playing, I did it because I was asked to be an ally for J— and his mother, W—. I wanted to do it. However, at the time I did it mostly for them and not for me. At every group meeting I was reminded that I was doing it for myself. I could feel that on the days when we were with the parents and allies. I enjoyed the playing—at least I could play how I wanted to and feel how that was.

On the days when the children were there, it felt at first like an obligation, like a "have to"

and hard work. There were continual reminders that “you are doing this for yourself.” After much discharging, I now can feel that this is for me. Playing with children, parents, allies, and myself—I am doing it for myself. Now I can more easily and quickly access my old material⁹ and discharge it during playtime and the sessions around it. Playing helps me handle my pain from more angles. I can play with or without the children.

I enjoy my own playfulness. I benefit from the close and committed group. I benefit from the great children, from experimenting with what works well for us, and from the thinking and discharging. I enjoy my own growth and that of others. I am happy that I can do RC in such a playful way, that I can feel the benign reality and feel connected with such a fine and close group.



Sanne Grijmans
Raalte, Overijssel, the Netherlands

A Larger Perspective on Inclusion and “Mental Health” Liberation

What did I gain from the *inkluisgroep*? The connection with this group has made my perspective on inclusion and “mental health” liberation much larger and broader, inside and outside RC.

With the support from the group I was able to show my son’s teachers an alternative that made visible how their “mental health” oppression worked. I was proud to let people know that I am part of a worldwide organisation that thinks about children, like my son, outside the limitations of time and money, which leads to more human conclusions about what is best for them. They learned from this perspective.

During the days we met with the *inkluisgroep*, I could get close enough to my son that he could discharge terror. It’s heavy work. At home I’m often too isolated to do it. The group is a good contradiction—sometimes just knowing it exists is enough for me to do the work at home.

Now my son is a teenager. It’s not easy for him to access the beautiful RC teen work we have in the Netherlands. We think about the best support for him and about good information for the allies. The *inkluisgroep* has this information and is a great support. In the end, we will use all this thinking and work to make RC totally inclusive.

Being in this group brings up my own oppressor material. I am the ally of my child and am targeted by oppression, but I have internalized oppression that I act out at people with special needs. We parents of children with special needs also oppress each other: “Your child is more (or less) special than mine.” It’s not easy to talk about being an oppressor, but in the group it is safe. We can discharge and fully connect with each other.

The commitment from our play leader, Rob Beckers, has made it possible for me to keep my voice and keep believing in the importance of this work. The opposition from patterns and “mental health” oppression is heavy, but the commitment is stronger than that!

The *inkluisgroep* is important for my son. That there is such a place to play makes him happy. Thanks to this group I’ve given him deep sessions on his terror. He is now more open, flexible, and sparkling than I or anyone else could have predicted.

The *inkluisgroep* has increased my passion for family work in RC. Thanks to the good support, I’m now eager to be an ally and contribute to it. My special experience will spread the work of inclusion.

Anonymous
The Netherlands



MAURA FALLON

⁹ Material means distress.

Learning to Appreciate Sessions

You never really know the baggage you carry till you encounter a place or a person that aids discharge.

I didn't approach RC with a client mindset. As far as I knew, I was okay and just wanted to help others attain their psycho-emotional equilibrium, which I regarded as my trademark.

I grew up in a "refined" environment—no tantrums, no fussing, and no unseemly displays of emotion. If something upset you, pleased you, surprised you, you expressed your feeling logically, at the appropriate time, and certainly didn't use it as an excuse to draw attention to yourself.

In the workshop that Kingsley¹ and Tochukwu² led a few weeks back, we were taught that to repress distresses is hurtful. It may cause

¹ Kingsley Ibekwe, an RC leader in Awka, Anambra State, Nigeria

² Tochukwu Udoji, an RC leader in Awka, Anambra State, Nigeria



WYOMING, USA • HOLLY JORGENSEN

us to become afraid to reach out to people or to be overly dependent on others for our self worth. It could also lead to socially hurtful behavior: violence, villainy, sadism, and so on. This is where discharge becomes imperative.

A session creates a platform from which to dig deep into yourself for a healthy response to the trauma and distresses. In sessions you express yourself in a non-judgmental atmosphere. You may be surprised to discover a recurring pattern—

avoidance, repression, outburst, whatever. And you realize that even your counselor, or possibly others in your group, have had similar experiences.

I realized that I had a fear of confrontation, and that my "equilibrium" was actually condonation.³ It's important to share sessions, so you can be healed.

Obi-Okoye Chineze
Awka, Anambra State, Nigeria

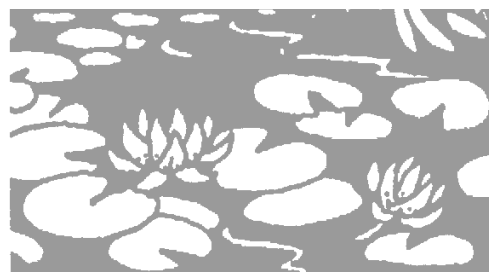
³ Condonation means implied pardon of an offense by treating the offender as if the offense had not been committed.

Permissive or Firm?

In terms of what seems to be your question—when is it rational to be permissive in your counseling, and when does it take some firm initiative on your part to interrupt the patterns—I think that is always a matter of choice. Only the growing experience of having your choices turn out to be* correct, or sometimes turn out to be incorrect, will give you the confidence to be correct almost all the time.

Harvey Jackins
From a letter written in 1995

* Turn out to be means result in being.



PAT GREGORY

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 104 and 110).

You Have to Make Up Your Mind

From a talk by Tim Jackins at the Northwest USA and Southwest
Canada Teachers' and Leaders' Workshop, September 2012

Because of the lack of understanding of who young people are at the beginning of their lives, we all end up plotting our own course. We end up having many, many defeats in our efforts to be ourselves. We have good ideas right from the beginning, things we want to try. We reach for people as far as we can, but nobody even looks back most of the time.

We are defeated. We have lots of defeats. That's all right. It's all right that we are defeated. The problem is that we never get to discharge on it so it freezes on us. You will have more defeats, I promise. We all will. That's not inherently a problem. The problem is that when we can't recover from them, we can't bounce back, we can't be as alive afterward as we were before. That's the problem.

MAKING UP YOUR MIND

As we go back and look at these early defeats, we're confused by the feelings of defeat because they feel so permanent. That's one of the confusions we have to face in deciding to clean them all up. You have to make up your mind. You think this is a good idea, you would like it to happen—but you haven't made up your mind. This is true with many things. We are intent on working on something, until we touch it. Then it isn't easy to work on. It doesn't feel good. "I feel like I should work on something else, something I know how to work on better." We take a quick detour to something we can cry about easily. We abandon the effort, because we feel like it won't be successful. We run into all the recordings of defeat, and they are so believable that it isn't simple to work on them.

What's necessary is that you keep your mind there on those distress recordings. It isn't necessary that you know what to do. You will figure that out if you can keep your mind there and if you can discharge. Just keep your mind near it. Very often a client says, "I can't do this. I can't do this. I don't know how to do this." The counselor's role is interesting. It's not quite being reassuring. We're used to being a little too reassuring sometimes, because we get scared as counselor. We want it to be better quickly. We hunt for positive directions, positive tones—not because clients need them for discharging but because we need them as counselor, because we're getting worried we're in deeper water than we know how to handle.

RESOLVING WHAT HAPPENED

It's related to what I said this morning: "It was that bad." Your early life, those defeats, were that bad and that hard on you. The distinction I'm trying to make is that we can look directly at how hard it was and grieve about it, without simply allowing ourselves to slip into suffering it as if it were still real. You are going back to resolve what happened by discharging the rest of it.

You're not going back to change it. You can't change it. You don't need to change it. But something was not allowed to happen, and because of that, because you didn't get to discharge, your perspective froze. All of the feelings are still in there. You are continually misguided by those undischarged feelings and the distorted perspectives. I think the accurate picture is, you can beat all of that. All of it can be gotten rid of, every single bit of it, to where it doesn't pull at your attention ever again. But to attain that, you have to make up your mind.

You have to make up your mind that you're willing to try, no matter what it feels like and no matter what the results are. I'm not worried about the results. I just don't want to reassure you about them because that will lead you to try to find a way not to face how bad it was. You can face it. With these people around you, with this collective resource, you can face anything.

Now is nothing like when it happened. This is the crucial distinction. We are confused into feeling that it is now the way it was. It feels the way it felt. Is it the way it was? No. You are not small. You are

continued . . .

COUNSELING PRACTICE

... continued

not without allies. You are not without people who understand what's going on.¹ You are not. You have everything that was missing then.

It's also important to realize that you understand the discharge process now. You didn't understand it when you were small. You used it spontaneously, but you didn't understand what it was; you couldn't think about it and use your mind to push for it to work. You understand it now. That's a tremendously powerful tool. You get to think your own thoughts and set your own perspectives. You tried to do that then, but you didn't have an overview of what the struggles were. Now you do. Now is so different from when those things fell on you. That's part of what makes facing and discharging the hurts possible.

YOU ARE WORTH IT

You have to decide that you are worth it. Are you worth it? Are you? (*Unsure sounds*) I actually don't want you to answer, but I want you to ask yourself the question. The challenge is for you to actually think about it now, not just listen so you can think about it later. It's to take this opportunity, with this much resource behind you, to push your mind to think that thought: "Am I worth it?"

What does your mind run into if you try to see if you are worth it? What are all the old battles you didn't get to fight through that have you shrugging, "I'm okay. It's all right like this. I can keep going like this." What are all the old battles? Those are the things you have to face.

Now you get to face them, but not secretly and silently in your head like you always have. You get to face them out here with your Co-Counselors, with all of this resource around you, and defy the recordings, defy that sense that you are not worth it.

You are worth it. Every single human being is worth it. I know you are worth it. If you have doubts about it, I have none. I have no doubt at all. Every one of us is worth the struggle, with all of us behind each of us. RC is set up that way. You have a session. You get to be client. You have the universe behind you for that half hour. It is not in competition with anything else. It's not taking away from anyone else. It is your time, simply for you.

It's in all of our interests for you to dare to take on² the fight as fully as you can and as out in the open as you can. You are simply worth it. But you have to decide that before you go into battle. Once you get there, the fog of restimulation is too thick to figure things out. You have to know, before the effort is made, that you are worth fighting for.

¹ Going on means happening.

² Take on means undertake.



ISRAEL • RANDI FREUNDLICH

After

After the storm passes,
Seeming to walk on air,
She begins spinning a new web.
Oh! To be so persistent!

Sojourner Truth
Seattle, Washington, USA

Reclaiming Singing, and Ourselves

At a recent RC workshop in Washington, USA, I led a topic group called “Sing and Discharge—Reclaiming Our Full Humanness,” as a way for people to work on their relationship to music and singing.

Singing can put our attention on being powerful, visible, and big and in so doing help us discharge embarrassment, humiliation, shame, fear, and ways that we have given up on parts of our creativity (intelligence) and humanness.

Singing is a way to pay attention to the benign reality and reclaim our hope, joy, and full humanness. It can help us notice and take pride in our culture, language, and people. (Oppression functions to wipe out non-dominant cultures, including their music.)

Singing has played a huge role in every culture. Songs are often a part of everyday life—from waking songs to working songs to protest songs. The power of singing has been used throughout history in revolutions and other wide world change. Singing brings people together, creates solidarity, inspires hope, and reinforces commitment to a goal or action.

As leaders in RC we need to be big and powerful, with our voices and presence and thinking. Singing with the attention of a group lets us try out being visible and big. Harvey¹ knew about the power of singing and insisted that people sing in front of workshops. It was an example of “I can!” and putting attention on the benign reality.

Singing can contradict any way that we feel bad about ourselves, stupid, or incompetent. Many of us in North America have been told that we are not “talented” or able to sing. In fact, there is no such thing as being “tone deaf” or “unable to carry a tune.” Like anything new or unfamiliar, we can learn how to use our voices and pursue more skill at singing, at any point in our lives.

Singing in front of people is also a way to work on feelings of arrogance and being “better” than others (a version of oppressor material²). We can notice how



NANCY LEMON

we hope to “impress” others or be “special,” how we’ve been hurt into believing that we are “better” or “the best.”

I started the topic group with a short talk about this topic (see above!). We then divided up the time and each person had a turn to sing and discharge. I invited people to stand up front with me for their turns (more of a contradiction,³ I thought).

We were twelve people of various ages and class backgrounds—USers and Canadians, white folks and people of the global majority. People used their turns in a variety of ways. Many worked on embarrassment and fear. Some worked on internalized musicians’ oppression—how comparison and competition had played out⁴ in their families. During people’s turns the group as a whole also discharged a lot.

It was clear how much we all loved music and wanted to reclaim that joyous part of our lives. It was also striking how powerfully each person took the direction to sing, or think about singing, and then discharge—as in Harvey’s “think, act, discharge” direction. The energy was high: lots of laughter, closeness, and connection.

Below are reports from some of the other group members.

Heather Hay
International Liberation
Reference Person for Musicians
Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada

continued . . .

¹ Harvey Jackins

² Material means distress.

³ Contradiction to distress

⁴ Played out means been acted out.

COUNSELING PRACTICE

... continued

My experience in the group affirmed for me how deeply singing is connected with our essential humanity. Being witnessed in that place of exquisite vulnerability touched people to the core. Singing is a powerful and empowering route to discharging early hurts about being heard. It's also a wonderful way to notice and share the joy of being alive.

Shasta Martinuk
Bowen Island, British Columbia, Canada

It is incredibly useful, I think, to live our lives in the direction of reality. And for someone like me, who got hurt in ways that had made it impossible for me to sing in front of people without lots of humiliation coming up, it is really important to do this work.

The group provided a powerful contradiction to my distress. It was also great to see others experiment with using their minds in a fully human way. There is something about singing and solidarity—music has been so important in every social movement.

 *Margaret Butler*
Portland, Oregon, USA

The best part for me was the permission to sing whatever I wanted, knowing that I would have complete, approving attention from everyone there. It was a contradiction, like being listened to without judgment in the first few Co-Counseling sessions I had forty years ago. I found that I was more relaxed and bold at the next workshop, where I sang a few oldies!

 *Lang Marsh*
Seattle, Washington, USA

I noticed how cooperative everyone was. It also seemed as if each individual was right at the point of feeling while also having a heck of a good time.⁵ I sure was!

I had fun watching people's faces. I was intrigued by the smiles and how relaxed people looked. They were embarrassed, yet their faces were so soft.

Cheryl Banks
Seattle, Washington, USA

⁵ A heck of a good time means a very good time.

I had never before, in twenty years of Co-Counseling, seen thinking, acting, and discharging work together so quickly. I continue to use my session in the group as a model for how to approach other parts of my life.



Anonymous
USA

Singing with loving attention was a unique experience—different from performing and certainly different from singing alone. I had more of myself and was able to notice how I actually felt about singing, which was that I really wanted it.

The feeling I most noticed people having was eagerness, even when they were discharging humiliation. Later that night I spent over an hour singing with a couple of other Co-Counselors. We had a great time. It made us really happy.

Since the workshop I have been using singing more in my ongoing RC class, to get our attention out and to help us get closer. We laugh a lot, and it brings a lot of warmth to our class.



Marnie Valenti
Seattle, Washington, USA

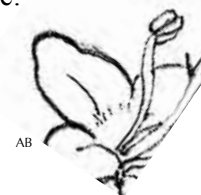
I loved the chance to think about music and to do some discharging on the damage from the past. I continued singing and discharging on the drive home.



Caroline Wildflower
Port Townsend, Washington, USA

Out of all the discharging I did over the weekend, the discharging in the singing group was the most profound.

After I came home and was lying in bed, I started thinking about the group and decided to experiment and sing out loud. As I lay there singing, my son heard me and excitedly burst into my room asking, "Are you singing?" He had never heard me do that before.



Xanne Sarka
Shoreline, Washington, USA

Re-evaluating a Violent Recording*

I have recently revisited the incident that installed my “homicidal distress pattern,” the one that I remembered in the 1980s at an RC workshop. I told my Co-Counselor that I intended to revisit the incident, and before I knew it emotion was flowing. I felt like running to the kitchen to open a drawer and secure a paring knife. I begged my mother to kill my father, screaming, “Kill him! Kill him!”

Upon discharging, I suddenly realized that as a child I had thought that killing my father was the only way to stop him from doing what appeared to be trying to kill my brother by pounding his small hind end with a hairbrush. I cried hard thinking about my misinterpretation

of what had been happening. (My mother had herself been screaming, “Stop! Stop!”)

Two days ago, I wept over this incident that cut us all off from one another and left me with feelings of rage and fear and the desire to kill my father, which eventually generalized to “killing people would feel good and fulfilling.” It also left me with a hatred of my mother for not killing my father when my brother was being beaten. My good and kind father, who gave up alcohol and later decided not to divorce my good and loving mom (because I was so upset when he told me he intended to), was left with a daughter who didn’t know that she was trying to ignore him.

To think that, with stormy tears, we all could have been reunited and gifted with full lives lived together with love and joy. Yes, if only my parents could have discharged their fears of not being loved, and my brother and I the fears installed during that incident—fears that, no doubt in more ways than we could imagine, changed our lives forever.

But I cannot complain. The detours I’ve taken have led me to discoveries of gold ore that needs only careful mining, ore that someday will be ready for loving and thoughtful distribution.

Pam Maccabee
Glastonbury, Connecticut, USA

* Distress recording

Past and Present Require Different Attitudes

The moment of present time is a sharp division between the past and the present. There is no implication from our conclusion that guilt or blame does not belong on any past action of ours that the present and future do not expect a sharp change from us continually. I think the forgiving of the past is completely positive as long as it isn’t allowed to leak over into permission to do badly in the future.

Harvey Jackins
From a letter written in 1995



HELEN PARKIN

Better without Anaesthesia

In 2002 I had my two dental amalgams replaced with mercury-free fillings. I requested no anaesthetic, but my dentist would not discuss it. Afterward I walked around the city aimlessly, only realising when the anaesthetic wore off that I had been lost in a drugged state.

I had almost all my baby teeth, and four adult teeth, extracted during pre-teenage orthodontic treatment. Because of the extractions I had many dental anaesthetics as a young person. I never liked them, but the effect in 2002 was the worst ever.

Last year, erosion of several teeth meant that I needed three new fillings. I called to ask if they could be done without an anaesthetic. It took two more calls to get agreement on that. On the third call I was told, in a tone of voice that suggested it wasn't a "big deal" at all, that my dentist had other patients who had also requested no anaesthetic. It was as if repeating my request reassured the staff that I was determined enough to do it, and then they assured me that I wasn't alone.

When I arrived at the front desk, the dental nurse confirmed my request for no anaesthetic. During the drilling she regularly checked in with me to make sure I was okay. This was far more checking with me than had happened during any of my dental work with anaesthesia.

The drilling brought a cool, localized pain. As soon as the drilling stopped, the pain stopped too. I had no drug hangover and no strange numb feeling in my face. I was so happy to be able to get on with my day. I was also delighted that my dentist was catching the same lift* down. I was able to show him how happy and relieved I was to experience the ease of dental work without anaesthesia.

Susan Moss
Preston, Victoria, Australia

* A lift is an elevator.



NANCY LEMON



KATHY TAYLOR

The 2013 Pre-World Conferences and World Conference

*Here are the dates for the Pre-World
and World Conferences, coming up in 2013:*

January 18 to 21
West Coast North America
Pre-World Conference

January 31 to February 3
South Asia Pre-World Conference

February 28 to March 3
Latin America Pre-World Conference

March 15 to 18
East Asia Pre-World Conference

March 21 to 24
Australia/New Zealand
Pre-World Conference

April 4 to 7
Central/Southern North America
Pre-World Conference

May 2 to 5
Africa Pre-World Conference

May 31 to June 3
Eastern/Central Europe and
Middle East Pre-World Conference

June 6 to 9
Northern/Western Europe
Pre-World Conference

June 20 to 23
East Coast North America/Caribbean
Pre-World Conference

August 7 to 11
World Conference

Counseling Men on Sexual Compulsions

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

Dear Sisters,

Below is a question from an RC women's liberation leader. I would encourage those of you who have counseled men on sexual compulsions to write about your thoughts and experiences. Work in this area is certainly central to challenging sexism and male domination.



Diane Balsler
International Liberation
Reference Person for Women
Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts, USA

I have questions about counselling men on sexual compulsions and would appreciate hearing from sisters about any thoughts they may have from their experience.

I work in the wide world with sex offenders, and the approach (without discharge) is to have the men take full responsibility for not running¹ the behavior—by identifying and managing triggers and opportunities to offend.

One man would text me with a code word for running his compulsion of being unfaithful. I basically said, "You can't do it, unless you are willing to tell your partner or end the relationship." He hasn't come back to me since. I was open with him about doing my own discharging on any moral indignation I might feel, or on "excusing" him because I loved him and didn't want to upset him. Tricky.

Particularly tricky is the man who is attracted to female children, as he wants to marry and have his own children.

It has been put to me by a male Co-Counsellor that I shouldn't feel pressure to undertake any counselling (such as this) for which I don't have enough attention, and that I shouldn't think that I have to develop attention as an ally. He wonders if this work might be better undertaken by male counsellors. I am open to that, but I also think that if men are able to bring this material² to women, that is a good thing and we may have some valuable thinking to offer. I would be grateful for your thoughts.

Anonymous
Australia



ARIZONA, USA • LISA VOSS

Not long ago I taught my RC ongoing class on the topic of pornography and masturbation addictions. It so happened that the three men in my class were present that night and none of the women were there, except me. I proceeded on the assumption that all three men had an addiction to both pornography and masturbation, which proved to be true, to varying degrees. For me it was easier to take the subject on³ in a group rather than one-on-one.

Two of the men were able to laugh a lot about the content of the images and their rigid interest in them. All I needed to do was cheerfully repeat their first thoughts on the topic, with blanks in certain places, for example, "I sure love to look at blanks, especially blanky-blanks!" By avoiding describing the actual content, I had attention for listening and they had a balance of attention⁴ for discharging.

One of the men, X—, had worked on sexism much more than the other two. He was able to cry hard while imagining the actual woman involved in the pornography he had recently viewed and apologizing to her for participating in her oppression and the overall system of oppression that had put her in that situation. I could have listened to that for hours!

All three men reported that after the sessions they were less pulled to pornography and masturbation. X— completely quit masturbating and viewing pornography for at least a few months, though I haven't checked in lately to see how it's going. I was pleased with what I was able to accomplish in one evening.



Anonymous
USA

continued . . .

³ Take this subject on means do something with this subject.

⁴ A balance of attention means enough attention on the good reality outside of the distress.

¹ Running means acting out.

² Material means distress.



WASHINGTON, USA • ALISA LEMIRE BROOKS

... continued

I have a long-time male Co-Counselor who brought this material to me in sessions. I tried several things, which he reports weren't effective, yet he stopped the behavior. So go figure.

These are things I tried as counselor:

1. Listening in detail to his fascinations. This drew out longings, much like work on draining a crush. The longings led to early experiences of being rejected and humiliated by women he was romantically interested in. We spent a lot of time on his early adolescence when he was first interested in women, as well as on earlier sexual memories.

2. Offering to watch the Internet porn with him. That elicited a lot of discharge, but he never took me up on⁵ the offer. It was a real offer. I had hoped to interrupt the frozenness that he reported experiencing while he watched. I wanted to chat with him about it while he was doing it.

3. Counseling on his current sexual relationship with his wife. He went into some detail about that, but there were things he never felt completely safe saying to me.

4. Repeatedly reminding him of his goodness and showing my appreciation for his dedication to his own re-emergence path.

He stated that he didn't particularly like watching pornography. It wasn't sexually arousing for him. It mostly just occupied a lot of his thoughts and took him away from other things that he wanted to put his mind to.

Things I did as a client during this time: (1) I kept working on my early sexual memories, and related threads; (2) I spent time on the ways his material was getting to me.⁶

Hope this is useful.



Anonymous
USA

⁵ Took me up on means accepted.

⁶ Getting to me means bothering me.

In 1981 I quit watching television because I could tell⁷ that the commercials were a pull on my distress about sex and the cop⁸ shows were a pull on my distress about violence.

Years ago a male Co-Counselor brought me a box of his pornography with the agreement that I stash it in my basement until he asked for it back. I didn't look in the box; I stashed it in my basement and he had some sessions about my having his stash. At some point, lots of sessions later, the box got thrown out and he never asked to look in it or get it back.

Also years ago, I worked as a sex addictions counselor in the first-ever treatment program for sex addicts. Before that, I worked for a number of years with youth sex offenders. As counselors we learned real fast to "read"⁹ which clients were "getting off"¹⁰ by telling their sexual stories and exploits. As counselors in this wide-world setting, we learned the big difference between clients who were telling their story to discharge the hurt and those who were telling their story to rehearse the sexual feelings. In the latter case, a part of the clients' restimulation was having someone listen—it was a version of exposing. Sex offenders will tell you, if you ever get them to a place of being honest, that they get a tremendous rush and feeling of power when they're being abusive, or viewing porn,¹¹ or re-telling their stories. I don't think we would advocate following alcoholics into a bar and giving them aware attention while they drank themselves into a stupor.

I describe these experiences as a way of talking about the idea of paying attention to anyone working on pornography—in particular, the idea that paying "relaxed" attention to anyone viewing pornography could be a good idea. I don't think it's possible to view pornography and not have it restimulate our own

⁷ Tell means perceive.

⁸ Cop means police.

⁹ "Read" means discern.

¹⁰ "Getting off" means feeling sexual feelings.

¹¹ Pornography



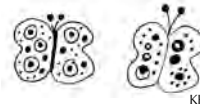
GLOUCESTER, MASSACHUSETTS, USA • TIM JACKINS

material—no matter how much we have discharged. I question the idea that pornography is even something to be relaxed about, and working in that direction seems like a confusion to me. By claiming to be relaxed about it, I think we are actually clienting, saying, “Look at how good I am; I can give you attention here.”

Patty Wipfler (former International Liberation Reference Person for Parents) says, “Don’t give the child a cookie; give them a session.” I think we need to follow this line of reasoning with pornography. “Needing” or “wanting” to view pornography is not about the pornography, it’s about a hurt. I think what’s needed isn’t that we be more relaxed about pornography but that we be more visibly opposed to it, more certain that “wanting” to view it is a rehearsal of a hurt and something to contradict, to reach for the human through, not something to re-enact with attention.

Recently I pulled up a porn site and was angry at folks who want to think that this is something to be “relaxed” about. I think that the current uproar in the wide world about Elizabeth Hurley’s bikinis for little girls (the sexualization of young girls in advertisements in the print media) and about the picture on the cover of a recent *Vogue* magazine (which mimics a man choking a woman) are legitimate. To me, the outrage is more legitimate than taking a position of being “relaxed” in response. Would we advocate being relaxed about child porn? Or giving someone relaxed attention while he or she beat his or her partner or child? Okay—that got me laughing.

Anonymous
USA



An Inherent Process, and RC Theory

The discharge and re-evaluation process, which we call Re-evaluation Counseling, operates spontaneously whenever a human being can find an opportunity. . . . At the World Conference, in relation to working with young people, Tim¹ said, “What we call Co-Counseling is not something we invented, but our approximation of a natural process.” This is important to remember. We mislead ourselves if we talk about this profound, inherent process as if it were a cute little gizmo² we invented.

The discharge and re-evaluation process is inhibited and interfered with by the distress patterns themselves, many of which are systematically installed by the society for the purposes of oppression. The theory of Re-evaluation Counseling (now we are talking about the *theory*) greatly enhances and expedites the use of this natural process. The theory is, essentially, the understanding that we’ve arrived at, the clearer picture of reality that we’ve exhumed from underneath the pseudo-reality with which it has been covered. To have this understanding greatly enhances and expedites the use of the natural process. To learn and use the theory and practice of RC is powerful for working people. Even temporary, superficial exposure to it has resulted in profound changes for many people.

Harvey Jackins
From “The Working Class, the World, and RC”
on page 485 of *The Benign Reality*

¹ Tim Jackins

² Gizmo means an object interesting for its novelty rather than its practical use.

Recovering from the Hurts of Circumcision

I was circumcised in infancy, and that frightening experience laid the foundation for my feeling that I was not cherished as a male and that it didn't matter if something hurtful happened to me. Since I was not expected to feel pain, for many years I denied that it was a big deal. I have intuitively known, however, that being circumcised was a significant event.

I was born at South Side Hospital, on Long Island, in New York (USA), on September 2, 1945. Fathers were excluded from deliveries. My baby book notations show that my mother was given intravenous pentobarbital and ether inhalation. Both of these drugs go directly into mothers' and babies' bloodstreams, depressing respiration. They also pass into breast milk and may harm a nursing baby.

Mothers at the time routinely stayed in the hospital for five to seven days. No breastfeeding or bonding was initiated for me on day one. I regurgitated from being fed cow's milk supplemented by infant formula. Short-lived breastfeeding began on the second day and was scheduled for every four hours. This lack of spontaneity interrupted the bonding process.

Six days after birth I was circumcised. It was the practice to strap a screaming infant to a board and use no anesthetic. Being left to cry on my own until exhaustion and the night terrors that accompanied my sleep left me believing that my parents had abandoned and rejected me.

Instead of someone holding me, connecting with me, reassuring me, and listening to me cry, my crying was likely interrupted by a caregiver who rocked, distracted, and possibly shook me. Propping my bottle instead of holding me

while I was feeding was another disconnection. My parents' urgent and preoccupied middle-class parenting style further interrupted bonding.

The crying I attempted in later years in response to other hurts was also shut off. This interruption of healing set me up for patterns of "hanging on tight"—especially muscle tensions in my chest, shoulders, neck, and face. And I can stand at a toilet and be tense enough that I can't urinate.

Lack of maternal/paternal-infant bonding, along with cultural role modeling and the brutalization of men, prevent men from connecting with other people and from being in touch with and able to release feelings. This is exacerbated by institutions that oppress men, such as schools, religion, the sports industries, the workplace, the armed services, and the alcohol, tobacco, pharmaceutical, and illegal drug industries. By the time a male grows into adulthood, he finds it difficult to attend to a female partner's needs and connect with his children, leading to an unfair burden on women.

Recently I had a particularly memorable Co-Counseling session. I found myself imploring my female counselor—with loud, wailing cries—to promise never to mutilate her baby, might she have one. I remembered the helplessness, confusion, and rage I experienced while being cut and left writhing in pain. It became vivid and unmistakable that circumcision was the seed for life-long caution, despair, desperation, and fear of abandonment. (I cry as I write this.)

The session confirmed my suspicion that circumcision was the essential betrayal that led to

my not feeling close to my mother. Though I dared not express it, I felt angry at her—and also tormented, because I knew we both loved each other.

Circumcision and the prevention of emotional release were the foundation of other distress patterns: I shut down in school, causing learning difficulties; I was often harsh with and cut off from my siblings; I mistreated our cat, and wild animals; I did not feel sure of who I was or how to share my real self; I comforted myself in isolation, with food, sugar, hobbies, music, sex, and other distractions; I felt ashamed that many things about me seemed wrong.

Trust and showing affection have been difficult. I also have trouble sleeping. I stay up late to avoid the inevitable night horrors. A nightmare that began in infancy takes the form of a hideous face moving toward me as if from outer space. Perhaps it is the face of the doctor who performed the circumcision.

That monster face appeared recently—a template over the face of my female counselor—but this time it looked benign and harmless, providing me the re-evaluation epiphany that I was mistaken about people being capable of changing into monsters. An intense feeling of vulnerability can now be replaced by a new decision, and emotional discharge. I will no longer have to stop looking out at the eyes of my counselor in an attempt to protect myself.

After twenty-nine years of persisting in RC I am now better able to process my feelings, which is why trauma in infancy is coming out of occlusion.

Dick Mansfield
Tacoma, Washington, USA

My Relationships

I consider myself successful in my relationships, because while I have many that are messy or not as close as I would like, there are very few that I have given up on. And most of my relationships improve year after year. Partly that is because of a decision I made (and try to remember) that I will use every contact with people as an opportunity to move our relationship forward.

I have learned from the years (and years!) of discharging and putting attention on relationships that once I have gotten close to someone, my early material¹ or my oppressor material will, sooner or later, come up in the relationship disguised as a problem in the relationship, or a problem with the other person. And I have learned that I can never believe the feelings of that material. Never.

Fortunately I'm smarter than my material. I can, and do (at least eventually, after sessions) discharge my way to a repeated decision not to withdraw from the relationship. I am committed to doing the work necessary to reclaim the depth of the relationship that was once present. (I am guided by Harvey's² wisdom that we always only love people more and more, that anything else is the effect of distress on us.)

The feelings during the hard times are confusing; there is no indication whatsoever

¹ Material means distress.

² Harvey Jackins'



COSTA RICA • THERESA D'AMATO

from my feelings that the relationship is a good one for me or that the person I once loved is still an excellent person. And I can't count on my sessions to resolve the bad feelings quickly enough to keep me wanting to be in the relationship. I have to decide to be fully guided by my intelligence and what I know about the person, about human beings, about oppression, and about my material. During the hard, restimulated times, I have to repeatedly state to the person my intention and caring, because otherwise he or she is confused by my lack of warmth and irritated attitude. And I have to discharge over and over on the early incidents, to root out and resolve the early hurt.

But it works.

Diane Shisk
Seattle, Washington, USA



When You Know You Have a Crew



So many cool¹ things happen after RC class. My teacher once said that class isn't meant for big discharge necessarily but to get our minds aligned, and that seems to be what happened today. When I got home I apologized to my landlady—after having avoided it for a while. I could tell that I had a crew with me, which is what allowed me to do it.

My landlady happens to be Jewish, and I happen to be working on discharging about the Holocaust. After being in class, and being able to tell² that I had a Community, I was able to listen to her well. I ended up crying while listening to her stories of brutality, and also incredible human zest and courage.

Look what's possible when you know you have a crew with you!

Benjamin Altman
Brooklyn, New York, USA

¹ Cool means wonderful, great.

² Tell means notice.

Our First Family Workshop

Recently my partner and I took our two children to our first family workshop. Wow, what fun it was! Within half an hour of our arrival our lodge became more and more animated. Balls came bouncing out of nowhere, noodles¹ fell from the sky, pillows flew from every direction. Mats were laid out on the floors, couches were pushed to the side, and from every corner of every room we could hear the squeals of gleeful children—dashing, chasing, beating, mauling, clambering, and otherwise playing with the adults. Before I knew it, I was engaged in a mad² game of tag. Then I was squished into the mat until I could see my own nose in profile. Then, lest I get up, a powerful tornado of a child collided into me from the back and knocked me back down, growling joyfully at his victory. To my delight I recognized the growl—that one was my own son.

What might have seemed like madness³ to an outsider I

¹ Noodles are long foam cylinders used for keeping people afloat in a pool.

² In this context, mad means wild, chaotic.

³ In this context, madness means insanity.

understood as important work for the children—and for the adults, both parents and allies. So much oppression of being told, “No. Sit down, stay put, don’t hit, don’t yell,” was finally being overturned as the young people got to be victorious and express themselves—their frustration, energy, joy, rage. The parents and allies felt a tremendous release from having to be the enforcers who police their young. They could finally participate joyfully and be present for and with their young ones.

The workshop as a whole was a powerful contradiction to the isolation and helplessness we parents can feel when dealing with our children. Often we are made to believe that we are on our own, that parenting is secondary to careers and professional growth, that we just have to grit our teeth and try to make it through. But being at the workshop, seeing the other families there, and especially having the support of the allies effectively contradicted that

fallacy. We were *not* alone. We were together, there for one another. Some allies came from distant places—they drove the many hours from Houston, Texas, or flew in from Colorado (USA)—and their presence was invaluable.

One thing Chuck Esser⁴ said that really struck me because of its simplicity was, “We should really try to be more happy.” We parents get so preoccupied with the “maintenance of life” that we forget to live it. We “maintain” our children—feed, bathe, clothe, educate them while forgetting to *be with them* and be happy doing it. I left the workshop not only refreshed and reunited with my children but also challenged to ease up on the maintenance and enjoy the present moments with those who are closest to me.

Anya Ezhevskaya

Houston, Texas, USA

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

⁴ Chuck Esser is the International Commonality Reference Person for Family Work and was the leader of the workshop.

Changing Your Perspective

First you decide that it is possible for people in general to change their perspective, to change how they perceive reality.

Then you decide that *you* have that capacity, that you yourself can change how you think about and look at reality.

And then you decide that you are going to change your perspective—in the direction of your choice.

Tim Jackins

A Young Girl Recovers from Sexual Abuse

In May of last year, my three-year-old daughter was sexually abused by an adult. Both my husband and I had worked hard to create a safe, thoughtful, intentional environment for her—but despite our best efforts she had that experience.

My daughter was raised in RC and had access to discharge from the time she was born. She was openhearted, friendly, confident, and sociable; loved play; and often sang to herself when she woke up in the mornings. After the abuse she was angry and scared and insisted on wearing many layers of clothes, even in the middle of a heat wave. She didn't want to leave the apartment to go play with other children and stopped singing to herself in the mornings.

In order to stay thinking while helping her recover, I had to have many Co-Counseling sessions. I was able to move from feeling guilty and self-blaming to realizing that, as long as we live in a male-dominated sexist society, little girls can't escape sexual violence. I realized that my role as a mother was not to raise her in a bubble¹ but rather to give her the tools to be able to notice this form of violence, name it, ask for help, not go quiet and secretive, and, most important, discharge the effects.

In my sessions I looked at my own chain of memories of sexual violence. I worked on discouragement, and how female bodies are good and not the cause of women's oppression. I also practiced my tone of voice and choice of wording, so that I could go back to my daughter and use a tone that was benign and genuine when reminding her of her power, the goodness of her body, the goodness of people around her, and the fact that no one would want to hurt a female child unless he had been hurt himself and didn't get a chance to have the kinds of sessions she was having.

I had to work hard to contradict the secrecy and feelings of irrelevance about sexual exploitation that had been installed on me as a female. When my daughter told me what had happened, my first "thought" was that we should keep it quiet and not tell anyone. My second was that it was not important. I had powerful sessions at a women's workshop contradicting these recordings.²

¹ In a bubble means completely protected.

² Distress recordings



LANCE CABLIK

My husband and I did hours and hours of daily special time³ with our daughter. We gave her opportunities to show everything, as we played and played and played, and followed her lead.

I also set up a number of special times with her close female RC allies. When they came over to play, my daughter liked them to help her fight the "grumpy guy" (she assigned me that role), who did not go down easily. Of course she and her allies won every time. The "grumpy guy" (who embodied male domination, classism, sexism, and young people's oppression) was squished, thrown around, beaten, and walked all over, and my daughter and her allies walked away laughing victoriously.

I also created opportunities for her allies to talk about times when someone had touched them intimately without their permission and how it made them feel. My goal was to contradict secrecy patterns and offer my daughter a model of being open about negative sexual experiences.

continued . . .

³ 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.

COUNSELING PRACTICE

... continued

I told my daughter that I would go back with her to her school (where the event happened) and confront the person who had abused her. She cried and cried about how she was never going back there again. I cried with her, while insisting that she might want to consider going back, that the person who had acted out his distress was not going to win—that she was. My goal was not to get her to actually go back but to give her an opportunity to confront the struggle in her mind and discharge the isolation, fears, and feelings of powerlessness and wanting to give up. One day she did decide to go back to school to see her friends, whom she had missed. I stayed there with her the whole time.

It took her a few months, with lots of help from her parents and allies, to bounce back from the experience.⁴ A few weeks ago my husband and I noticed she was singing to herself again one morning, and her voice was music to our ears. Last week we noticed that her joy in play was back.



Anonymous
USA

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

⁴ Bounce back from the experience means recover enough from the experience to be herself again.

Preparing to Lead the RC Community

I started RC in Washington, D.C. (USA), in 1979. I loved it immediately and took every opportunity to take classes, go to workshops, and start leading. Within the first two years, I decided I wanted to build RC in my home state of Texas, so I moved back there in 1981. There was little RC in Texas at that time. In my first Co-Counseling session there (with one of the two Co-Counselors in Austin), as I was introducing myself and talking about RC, I discharged about how important RC was to me and how I had decided to put it in the center of my life. As the session developed, I made a decision not only to build RC locally but to develop my leadership so that if ever the RC Communities needed someone to replace Harvey,¹ I would be in shape² to do his job. That decision has been at the center of my life and my RC leadership ever since. It's meant that I have taken whatever challenge comes my way, whatever opportunity arises, to develop my leadership. I've taken whatever initiative I could figure out to lead well in the RC Community.

It's been a great decision; I've experienced and learned so much because of it. I'd love to hear from others of you who have decided to get yourselves in shape to be able to lead the RC Community. What impact has that decision had on your leadership and your life? If you haven't made such a decision, I'd encourage you to consider it in some Co-Counseling sessions and let me know how that goes for you. You can write to me at dshisk@earthlink.net.



Diane Shisk
Alternate International Reference
Person for the RC Communities
Seattle, Washington, USA

¹ Harvey Jackins

² Shape means condition.



HELEN PARKIN

New Appreciation for *Present Time*

Hi Diane,¹

I just felt a strong urge to communicate something to you. Ever since you asked me to take on² referencing our Region,³ I have felt a push to really take on RC fully. I've decided to go ahead and do things I was afraid to do, like leading a workshop outside my own little Community.

A part of this push has been to read *Present Time*. (I have to admit that in the past I often didn't read it at all.) I am not a fast reader. I read something, and then read it again to make sure I got it, and then I think about it. It takes me a while, but I've decided that is okay, that I have all the time in the world to read a whole journal. I read it for myself, not for my class or for making the world a better place. (That was my past focus.) I read every word from the point of view of "How does this apply to my current struggles, my re-emergence, and my developing into leadership?"

I don't plan my classes in the same way as I used to. I am finding myself trusting my own mind to lead well, with the support of *Present Time*. Whatever I have digested and made my own guides the class. It is going well.

Before my last class I had just taken several days to read your article at the beginning of the October *Present Time*.⁴ I picked



GUDRUN ONKELS

it up while I was eating a meal, or when I was tired and taking a short break, or at night before falling asleep. If I woke up and found I was not quickly going back to sleep, I read a bit more of it. In the class I talked some about the article, but really I talked about my spin on it⁵ and what I thought it meant for me and for each of us in the class. I counseled people on slowing down as client—not heading quickly into their material⁶ but sitting still with their counselor and working toward real connection, not moving forward until they could let their counselor see the little person inside. We were all so moved by what we were able to show of ourselves!

But there is more! I have been working for a long time on the hurts of my early childhood and on not being able to pull my mind out of the victim position. Today I had a re-evaluation. I had been reading several articles in the July *Present Time*, and when I was on the treadmill watching a sci-fi⁷ movie, this awareness popped full-blown into my mind: "The

job my parents did in raising me and my siblings was nothing short of genius. One generation ahead of them, our family's very existence was in jeopardy. My father's mother was left in the Ozark Mountains, as a small child, to starve and die. My father grew up in a log cabin in the mountains, harvesting wild plants to feed himself and his siblings. A lot of his energy was spent killing snakes that came up through the planks of the floor, nailing newspaper to the walls to keep out the wind, and fighting off a vicious stepfather. When he was twelve, he ran away from home and learned to fend for himself. He had little formal education and only one set of clothing. My mother was one of four children, all with different fathers; her mother was a single parent. Raised poor, struggling with no role models to turn to, my mother and father stayed together, loved each other, raised six children, and modeled integrity, honesty, and kindness. Having no money to finance it, they encouraged us all to attend college. As a result, two of my brothers are medical doctors, one has a doctorate in

continued . . .

¹ Diane Shisk, the Alternate International Reference Person

² Take on means undertake.

³ A Region is a subdivision of the International Re-evaluation Counseling Community, usually consisting of several Areas (local RC Communities).

⁴ "Figuring Out Fighting for Ourselves," by Diane Shisk, on page 3 of the October 2012 *Present Time*

⁵ Spin on it means interpretation of it.

⁶ Material means distress.

⁷ Science fiction

COUNSELING PRACTICE

... continued

Counselor Education, and a sister is the CEO⁸ of a pharmaceutical company. It could have been so much worse for us. We were lucky to have parents who fought to give us a life they couldn't even dream of. They just knew things had to be better than what they had seen, and they had faith that things could turn out well⁹ for us."

I can be so proud of them and grateful that I had them. They were amazing, and I owe my successes to their great modeling. It will be interesting to see how my sessions go in light of this awareness.

I thank *Present Time* for the continual picture of reality that I can always count on, and I thank you for listening to all this.

Dorothy Marcy
Fayetteville, Arkansas, USA

⁸ Chief Executive Officer

⁹ Turn out well means result in being good.



MARION OUPHOUET

Young People and Violent Games

The following is a reply to a posting, on the RC e-mail discussion list for leaders of parents, about young people participating in laser tag¹ and other games involving violence.

I am a fifty-six-year-old white Ashkenazi Jewish mom of an almost ten-year-old African American Jewish daughter. A couple of years ago, a close male friend and classmate of my daughter invited her to a laser-tag birthday party. She was interested in finding out about laser tag, but mainly she loves playing with her friends.

I discussed it with her dad, an African American Protestant veteran, and we agreed that she could go if one of us stayed close to her in the laser-tag game and also thought about the whole situation. It went okay, and she is no longer interested in laser tag—except on the infrequent occasion when a friend invites her to come and play it. Then I go and play it with them, and involve other parents.

She has been interested in guns and periodically will ask to buy one. We have only allowed water guns. In general, we have worked to follow and support her interests, including encouraging her to explore what are considered both boys' and girls' toys. Many of the "boys'" toys, even if they are not actual guns, have the same themes as the gun-type games.

¹ Laster tag is a game in which players score points by tagging targets with infrared rays emitted by a hand-held device.

Cartoons, TV shows, movies, and video and on-line games have scary themes of violence, killing, and domination. Some we avoid, some we set a limit on, and others she gets to watch or play. I stay close, try to notice what is going on,² play with her, and offer sessions. She asks questions.

I think it is useful to set limits around this stuff. My daughter has had some sessions resulting from those limits. It is important to notice how scary many things are. Some of them we have tried to shield her from. We talk about how deeply hurt everyone is and how the pull to do scary stuff often comes out of the hope that someone will notice, move in and stop it, and offer a session.

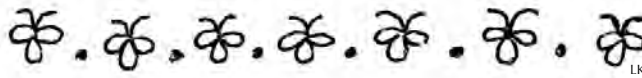
We have had conversations about how society hurts boys to “prepare” them to go to war. We’ve talked about fighting in terms of struggles to end oppression and the difference between violence and force. We have talked about how violence has affected her dad and me, and our relationships with each other, with her, and as a family. She has had sessions on this and challenges us about it. I think it’s important that we talk about not just what happens in the society but how it affects our relationships.

We also talk as a family about TV as an addictive marketing device that pushes unhealthy, unnecessary products and takes people’s attention off of life, connection, and tackling challenges. When our daughter does watch TV, I stay close and my husband and I talk about and answer the questions she raises and look for opportunities for us all to laugh about what we see. We have played games that let us laugh hard about the stereotypes based on oppression.

We try to have age-relevant, thoughtful conversations about these kinds of issues as they come up in our daughter’s life, or as she raises them. Opportunities continuously present themselves.

She explores children’s games on the Internet. I always do it with her. Sometimes she wants to do it for special time.³ She plays some of the games with friends who get on the Internet at the same time. All this is in the context of systems based on white male domination and exploitation and how these games can isolate children from their parents and each other. As parents we need to get in there, before they turn on the games, and play with our children and move closer to them. We need to keep figuring out how to contradict young people’s oppression and help them be connected to each other.

In our parents’ support groups we can discharge on raising boys and girls in the context of sexism, male domination, and racism. We can take our struggles with male domination and racism into our sessions and support groups and keep going back after⁴ our children. In family work⁵ we can help create boys’ groups and girls’ groups, so that children have a gang that stands together against sexism, male domination, and men’s oppression. We need to continue to build family work with ending racism at the center and have playdays⁶ and workshops led by and for families of the global majority.



Jennifer Wexler
Hyde Park, Massachusetts, USA

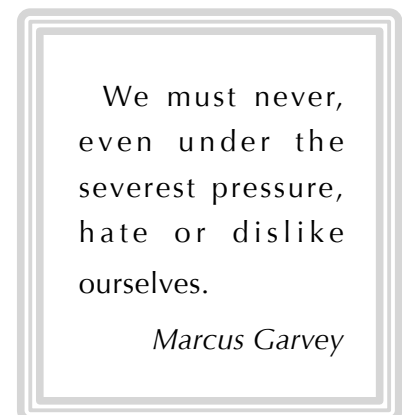
² Going on means happening.

³ 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.

⁴ Going back after means going back and reaching for.

⁵ Family work is the application of Re-evaluation Counseling to the particular situations of young people, and families with young children. It entails young people and adults (both parents and allies) interacting in ways that allow young people to show and be themselves, and not be dominated by the adults.

⁶ A playday is a several-hour workshop that includes time for children to do whatever safe activities they want to do, with the encouragement and appreciation of the adults present, and to discharge if they wish. It also includes discharge time for the adults.



We must never,
even under the
severest pressure,
hate or dislike
ourselves.

Marcus Garvey

Important RC Resources!

New DVD:

Moving Toward Liberation

**Twenty-nine (!)
International Liberation
Reference Persons
and Commonality
Reference Persons
report on their work.**

\$20, plus postage and handling

Short Talks by Tim Jackins, on CD

Rational Island Publishers has been producing a series of CDs of talks given by Tim Jackins at recent RC 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*.

For a complete list of all the CDs produced up until now, see page 106 of this *Present Time*.

Anyone can order any of the CDs for \$10 (U.S.) each, plus shipping and handling.

The entire 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, and 2012 four-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, and mailed out quarterly, for \$25 a year. You can order up to three years at a time.

Web special: The 12-CD set for 2006, 2007, and 2008, and the 12-CD set for 2009, 2010, and 2011, are each available for \$40 per set—if you order them on the RC web site <<http://www.rc.org>>.

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—from issue No. 1 to the present—
are now available!

Only \$100,* plus postage and handling.
A valuable resource for every RCer.

Offer good until April 1, 2013.

*The cover price is over \$400.

Making Good Use of Tim's Talks

I listened to CD #32 today. It was great listening to it, knowing that many other RCers were going to be able to listen to the same things. It created for me a common bond amongst us all.

I especially liked getting a fuller sense of RC's historical development, from Tim talking about the origins of the no-socializing policy.* It was reassuring to hear how the thinking about the policy has changed and become more robust and precise.

I keep the *RC Teacher Update* CDs in my car and listen to them frequently. Listening to them as I drive to an RC class I'm going to teach helps point my attention in a powerful way toward giving other people good attention.

Bill Keegan
Post Mills, Vermont, USA

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

Dear Tim,

I've listened to two of your talks from 2006 and 2008, "Fighting for Ourselves" and "The Uses and Limitations of Reassurance," for the past two years and almost daily for the past two months. They help me keep a strong perspective on myself and the fight forward that we need to and can undertake.



Benjamin Altman
Brooklyn, New York, USA

For ordering information, see page 110.

Eliminate the Effects of Racism by the End of the Century?

Inspired by Global Majority Men, a recent workshop led by Rudy Nickens

“There is no chance that we can eliminate the effects of racism in people’s lives by the end of this century if we are not simultaneously taking on¹ sexism and male domination!” These were the insightful words of Rudy Nickens² as he led men of the global majority in a recent historical workshop—the first workshop of global majority men in RC.

Rudy explained how sexism and male domination are intertwined with racism. We good men, targeted by racism, have passed it on to women in the form of male domination and sexism. Like other men, we act as agents of this oppression, usually unintentionally and without awareness. This is true of heterosexual, Gay, and Bisexual men alike.

It’s an oppression fueled by violence, the threat of violence, and the false notion that we are somehow better. Even if we believe that we don’t participate in actual violence toward women, we learn behaviors that remind women of a potential for violence—a certain tone of voice, a confrontational gaze, a certain posturing, and so on. When we stop to remember that most women are people targeted by racism, we might see why their complete liberation needs to be central in RC and in the wide world.

In general, we men have quite a ways to go in becoming real allies

¹ Taking on means confronting and doing something about.

² Rudy Nickens is the Regional Reference Person for Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, and Nebraska, USA.

for women. Even in RC, women still have no reason to fully trust that we can think well as their allies. Most of us have only gotten as far as remembering that we are inherently good while realizing that we’ve been hurt, dominated as young people, and set up to continue the oppressive cycle, despite our best efforts to the contrary.



I can’t help reflecting on the effect that male domination and sexism have had on my mother. After all, she was the first woman in my life. She saw her mother get physically dominated by her father and vowed, “I’ll be damned if a man ever does that to me!” Consequently, she has often been on guard, noticing if she is being dominated by the man in front of her. Often when she has noticed a man’s attempt to dominate her, she has been openly angry about it or has retaliated. I’m so proud of her insistence and courage in remembering her powerfulness in the face of this oppression. I realize that unfortunately she still carries around a lot of anger, hopelessness, and the understandable inability to trust men fully.

Though she might see me as an exception, I know that I, too, have

acted as an agent of oppression, even in her direction. It often felt in the moment that I had no other option. For example, when she and I talked or debated about heated issues, usually on the phone, and I strongly felt that my point of view was the “right” one, I sometimes made it nearly impossible for her to interrupt me. After being interrupted by her numerous times in mid-sentence, I tried to be diplomatic and polite but finally allowed my voice to deepen as I spoke continuously with a slight edge—just enough to dominate the space without appearing to be too confrontational. That rendered her silent, and I was then able to make my point.

I must uncomfortably acknowledge that what I did was oppressive to my mom. The ultimate enforcer of sexism is violence and the threat of violence, and even though I didn’t physically threaten my mom, and probably couldn’t have if I tried, my vocal tone restimulated the fear that sexism had put into her. If it had been a conversation with my father or any other man, I question whether I would have used my voice in the same way.

Now back to the workshop: Rudy was preparing us to receive an ethnically diverse panel of four women who would visit later that day. Each of them would share her story of male domination with this workshop of all men. Rudy painted a vivid picture of how the daily lives of all women in this oppressive society have been affected by sexism.

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It was deeply moving, horrifying, and hopeful to see and hear these women. Counseled by Rudy, and with the high level attention from the men at the workshop, they were able to have big, perhaps life-changing sessions. It was heartwarming to notice the looks on the men's faces as we all listened with our hearts and minds. The women trusted us enough to show their rage, terror, brilliance, and courage. After they left, I had the feeling that something extraordinary had just occurred. I could tell³ that each of us men wanted the liberation of these women, and other women. We might even have

³ Tell means notice.

come to realize that our liberation is deeply connected to theirs.

Rudy urged us, as men of the global majority moving forward the dismantling of sexism and male domination, to take the lead in making this project more central in RC. We have got to step up to this task! We have to change our liberation models to include a comprehensive effort toward dismantling sexism. We should take into account each of our cultures and traditions as they relate to sexism but remember that whether we're from China, Ghana, or the United States, sexism is still sexism.

We can't expect women to counsel us here, but we will need to follow their lead. Simultaneously, we will

need to seriously look at our early experiences of being dominated by other males. We'll have to face that head on, as humiliating as it may feel. My beloved men: remember that if it hadn't been done to us, we wouldn't have it to pass on to women.

We global majority men have an advantage here of solid relationships with global majority women, from having fought racism together for so long. For us, this project of dismantling sexism and male domination has the added incentive of simultaneously eliminating racism. And we simply won't achieve one without the other.

Gregory Lipscomb
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA

"We Get to Be Here"

Our descendants will look back to our time with two kinds of wonder. (They will come and ask us about it, if we solve the immortality question fast enough.) First, they will wonder that we could endure the difficulty of our lives. They will be amazed at our heroism, that we managed to function so well under the tremendous burden of our distress, that we managed to get re-emergence going against this waterfall of restimulated distress that rained upon us all our lives.

The other wonder will be kind of an envious one. They will look back wistfully and think, "Oh, to have been Great Grandma, who lived in that period when the sun finally came up, when humanity finally found itself." They will think of us as the most fortunate of beings in that sense—that we got to be there when things changed. They will enjoy all the goodness, but they will, I'm sure, think that they miss a certain vividness from the contrast. They will think back to us with honor and respect, but also with envy.

This is our opportunity. We get to be here during the big change. We get to take part in it. Our descendants will tell their grandchildren with great pride, "Your ancestors did something." Pride in family is not a negative thing. It's been misused, but it is not a negative thing.

Harvey Jackins
From page 6 of *The Benign Reality*



PUNE, INDIA • TIM JACKINS

Language Liberation, and Individual Re-emergence

Since I accepted the job of International Liberation Reference Person for Languages and Interpreting, I have been working on language liberation more directly. And I have noticed that unless someone points to where we can discharge on language liberation, it can be hard to find our way to it.

I start from the premise that both you and I want to change society. I do not doubt that you want this as much as I do. As you work to change society, you will find yourself in relationships with a number of people. This is just fine.

"Being a significant part of the lives of other human beings on their path toward unlimited re-emergence is logical, safe, and necessary for you."

At the beginning they will be people of your own heritage, status, style, and so on. But as you discharge and re-emerge, your mind will ask you to reach more and more people, and different kinds of people. And more and more people will want to have you as their reference. I think this is the way RC works. The more aware we are of people and the ways they have been oppressed, the easier it becomes to reach them and help bring about a revolution in their minds.

NO LIMITS FOR OUR MINDS

My mind always surprises me. When I think I am reaching a new level of development or taking a new step, my mind is already on the next step, waiting for me. It is telling me, "Come on, Xabi, one more step forward; I am already here; prepare yourself." The capacity to break limits—old and new ones—and re-emerge seems to me to be inherent and unlimited.

There will come a time when you will need to express yourself in front of people who are different from you but who like you because they have been told about you or have been influenced by your modeling of a logical human and by how you use RC. Very likely you will need to be familiar with some words in languages you do not yet know.



RANDI FREUNDLICH

This is right and necessary. We shouldn't expect to free the world only through our own unique language. That would fall short.

Your mind wants everything from you. It wants you to continuously engage in more and more relationships. It wants you to keep taking new steps of complexity with other minds as a way to grow and re-emerge without limits. Your mind will never take a rest, think it's had enough, or give you a recess. This is something we need to assume: no limits for our minds, ever, in any way. A mind does not want to return to the limits it accepted before getting new ideas. It loves spreading out.

So it will be helpful for you to have a command of some words that may open doors (minds) for you. You could learn to say things like "Hello," "Have a nice day," "You are right," "You are good," "How clever you all are!" "I think that is a good idea," "See you soon," "I like you," in languages different from your own. You will also need to understand some sentences from other languages.

Your mind is not made to function and develop only in your own language; that would be a limited space for it. You cannot avoid other minds falling in love with yours—that will happen—and those other minds will need unlimited possibilities from your mind, as examples of what human beings are capable of. Being a significant part of the lives of

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other human beings on their path toward unlimited re-emergence is logical, safe, and necessary for you. Probably you will become an interpreter, and that is one of the best things that could happen to you.

Some ideas for you, as a future interpreter, are described below. There are many more. The main ones will come from your own mind as you do this work. Most basically, you will need to discharge about language, from all possible angles, and about everything that may be connected with it.

LANGUAGE IS CONNECTED WITH EVERYTHING

Language is connected with everything we hear, read, think, or say—that is, almost everything that is going on.¹ Language is connected with our experiences of being alive and in contact with other minds when we first come into this world and as we grow up.

Almost all of us have been influenced by some, if not all, of the following: the education system (oppressive in almost all countries), classism, racism, sexism, anti-Jewish oppression, young people's oppression, genocide, nationalism, imperialism, colonialism, the "mental health" system. These phenomena impose and perpetuate a set of values and assumptions that are not accurate or logical, and they use languages to disseminate them. So the more you review and discharge on these phenomena from the point of view of language, the more you will free your mind and find your own self.

I am offering you here some angles from which you could discharge and make your way to your own re-emergence by means of language liberation.

OPPRESSION FROM THE EDUCATION SYSTEM

The oppression in the education system has made you believe wrong information about languages (and about a lot of other topics). The following contradicts some of that wrong information:

All languages are perfect, right, complete, accurate, and the rich result of deeply intelligent mental processes. They are made by human minds as they try to communicate their view of themselves and the world so that they can stay connected and united while going through the challenges of life.

¹ Going on means happening.

When you discharge from this perspective, you experience the reality that *all languages are of equal and vital importance*.

NEW WORDS ARE WAITING FOR YOU

You can discharge about words you have always hated, and still hate. You can discharge on the sounds, spelling, and writing of any languages that (because of oppression) you dislike, fear, exclude, or feel are "forbidden" or do not belong to you—languages that when you hear them you disconnect from the people who speak them and give up on believing that you can make deep contact with those people.

Words you never use are waiting for you. Other words that you use too often—cuss words,² for instance—may be obstructing your ability to learn new words and expressions that seem to belong to other people.

CLASSISM AND RACISM

Perhaps you use some "high level" words or expressions that you can hide behind to keep you from making connections with certain kinds of people. The oppressive system would like to keep us each enclosed within our particular class as a way to prevent us from uniting with others.

Certain words and expressions are misused to classify people according to their ethnic group, skin color, hair type, size of eyes, height. Some languages are considered inferior because the people who speak them are from ethnic groups that have been looked down upon, rejected, and undervalued due to prejudices and false ideas.

IMPERIALISM, COLONIALISM, GENOCIDE

Imperialism, capitalism, colonialism, nationalism, and genocide play a role similar to racism. They separate people by perpetuating lies about them, for the purpose of bringing economic profit to the ruling class that dominates and exploits them. We are taught that some countries can accumulate all they wish while others should be exploited to profit the affluent ones. Some countries are eliminated. Their resources are taken from them. Their people are not considered worthy of existence, because "they do not contribute" to the world of the ruling class but instead "cause problems"—economic problems, health problems, political problems, ethnic problems. Sometimes a group of people is eliminated (genocide), because they stand in the way of the theft of their resources.

² Cuss words are profanity.

The languages of some countries are targeted because the countries do not fit into the oppressive mainstream. Their languages may be considered "difficult," or as serving no good or useful purpose, along with the cultures and customs of the people who speak them. This has happened to the languages of countries that did not follow the standard path of capitalism, such as Russia and China. Their languages have been viewed as "difficult." My own language, Basque, is in this group.

We now know that there is no such thing as a "difficult language." It is more accurate to say that difficult conditions have been imposed on certain cultures by imperialism, colonialism, and capitalism.

All of the above is reflected in language and the symbolism that surrounds it. With few opportunities to discharge, people have been conditioned to "think" and feel oppressive things about many cultures and languages.

SEXISM

If we have not discharged on language and sexism, we may find ourselves discriminating against another group of people. We need to be aware of how we are using language, so we do not dismiss women or people with other sexual identities.

In my Region³ some RC activities need to be interpreted from Basque to Spanish, or sometimes to French or English. In Spanish there are endings to indicate gender (feminine or masculine). When you say, "We all are good," you must say it with both gender endings: "Todas/os somos buenas/os." This makes the interpreting (and the translating) slow and sometimes repetitive.

Some years ago I decided that when I led classes, workshops, and support groups, theory interpreted into Spanish would be interpreted only into the feminine, to make women and their situation visible and to shorten the time of the interpreting. Doing this may help us become aware of how our sexism is attached to the language and how it collaborates with the exclusion of women. Why was it easy for almost all the women in my Region to accept this but it was not so easy, at the beginning, for some men?

YOUNG PEOPLE'S OPPRESSION

The way we adults use language can be oppressive to young people. In Basque culture, we think that



BRIAN LAVENDEL

some words belong only to young people; we adults don't use them because it can look like we want to be younger than we are. Other words aren't supposed to be used in front of young people because "they will not understand." Some abilities, such as being able to "reason" or having "mind-autonomy," are assigned only to people of certain ages; and some words, linguistic concepts, and pieces of information are not taught to people of certain ages, which causes separation, ranking, and oppression.

"MENTAL HEALTH" OPPRESSION

Something similar can happen with the vocabulary used to describe "mental health" issues. We may describe people as having a "mental disability" if they have more or deeper distress than is "normal." This is oppressive. Instead we can use words that name things as they actually are, for example, "people who have been given less human attention" or "people who have been especially prevented from discharging." We can help each other be aware of what has happened to each other instead of using words the oppressive system has chosen for us that reinforce our oppressions and oppressive labeling.

LINKED CONCEPTS

Most of us unwarily link in our minds pairs of concepts like languages and flags, languages and faces, languages and clothes, languages and income levels, languages and maps, languages and nations, languages and colors, languages and

continued . . .

³ A Region is a subdivision of the International RC Community, usually consisting of several Areas (local RC Communities).

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developmental levels. All of us who have grown up in capitalist societies have been conditioned to do this.

You can pick one of the pairs above and see how the terms are linked in your mind. For instance, take languages and faces. Think for a while, with your eyes closed, about a language. Pronounce any word from that language, or imagine that someone who knows it is speaking it, and let the images come.

You can try this with any pair—for instance, languages and maps. Because of Basque internalized oppression, some of my native Basque friends think that a map using our Basque language is less accurate than the same map using terms of one of the oppressor languages (French or Spanish), so they prefer to buy the latter map. Basque language has been oppressed, persecuted, and made to seem rude⁴ and only to be used on the farm, so Basque people can hardly imagine a broad and unlimited field for it and, as a consequence, for their Basque identity.

Let's take languages and colors. Close your eyes, think about a language or someone who is speaking it, and see if any color comes to your mind.

We are all infected with this kind of conditioning, and most of the time we are not aware of it.

NO LONGER A TOOL FOR OPPRESSION

I hope these ideas can help us notice where we need to do more work on our distresses from the point of view of language liberation. I hope they

⁴ In this context, rude means primitive, uncivilized.



LYNDALL KATZ

can help us get closer to demolishing barriers that we were not very aware of, so that languages are no longer an excuse and a tool for separating us and installing and transmitting oppression and wrong ideas about people.

Thank you for reading.



Xabi Odriozola
International Commonality
Reference Person for
Languages and Interpreting
Donostia, Basque Country

NEW!

Resources for Language Liberation on the RC Web Site

The RC web site now includes new resources to support our language liberation work. They have replaced the pamphlet *Language and Liberation*. The revised and updated resources include articles about language liberation and interpreting at workshops. You will find them on the web site under the new Language Liberation section as well as in the section on Translations and Workshop Organizing.

The new postings include:

- Guidelines for Translation of RC Theory and Literature
- The Job of the Translations Coordinator
- How to Publish Translations
- Being a Translator
- When to Use Interpreting at Workshops
- Being an Interpreter at Workshops
- Language Liberation Is Crucial
- Rethinking Community, and Interpreting and Translations
- Language Liberation, and Individual Re-emergence
- Excerpts from *Present Time* on Language Liberation

Drugs and Alcohol, Genocide and Colonization

Latinos/as,

Today, while walking in my neighborhood, I came across some discarded used injection needles. I decided to pick them up, as I always do, and take them to a safe container for disposal. Unfortunately, this is something that's happened for a number of years. It got me thinking that we are continuing to face an onslaught of drug use in our communities. Drugs, and alcohol, have been a part of our everyday lives. They are one way that our internalized genocide and oppression show up.

Drugs and alcohol have devastated our families and the lives of our neighbors and have held our communities back from creating the conditions whereby progressive change can take place. I have wondered how this has been possible. And I have thought that there has always been an overlapping of oppression, including "mental health" oppression (we are denied

any opportunity to notice our feelings and discharge) and the oppression of the legal and illegal drug and alcohol industries, and the systemic misinformation from the Catholic Church (for example, "good" and "bad" people, hell, endemic misinformation about sex).

I suspect that somehow we drink or "do drugs" as a kind of warped act of defiance (a reactionary cultural pattern). Some famous people, mostly artists, have fallen into this trap, for example, Jose Alfredo Jimenez, the famous Mexican composer, and Hector Lavoe, the incredible Puerto Rican singer.

I can only assume that this pseudo-reality that we have adjusted our lives to is due to the fact that our colonization has been incredibly violent, including the mental colonization that has forced us to accept tragedy and to cut ourselves off from one another. Of course this is something we

have all been forced to deny, from an early age.

I have made it a policy to not keep alcohol in our house—ever since I began to understand its effects, and due to Co-Counseling. I've seen this as a significant personal victory. Yet alcohol is so intertwined with our culture that it is almost impossible to avoid or ignore, and some drugs are seen as "acceptable" and even "part of our cultural practice."

What are your thoughts, your experiences, coming from your cultural background?

Hasta la victoria, siempre en el camino hacia la liberación humana. (Until victory, always on the road to human liberation.)

Lorenzo Garcia

International Liberation Reference

Person for Chicanos/as

Albuquerque, New Mexico, USA

Reprinted from the RC e-mail discussion list for leaders of Latinos/as and Chicanos/as

Standing Against Addictions, and Oppression

Hi Lorenzo,

You wrote a while back about addictions and how they affect our communities.¹ I have been thinking about it ever since, but it has been a struggle to sit down and write my own story. I am sorry about the delay. I do think this is an important issue, not only for our individual re-emergence but for our liberation as a group.

Here are some of my experiences with an addiction and how I've worked on it in RC:

I started drinking and doing drugs when I was fourteen. In high school I was surrounded by peers who drank heavily and did drugs regularly. I had access to Co-Counseling as well as close relationships with people who had made a commitment not to drink or do drugs and who held out the same expectation for me. However, these resources were not enough of a wedge against the tremendous pull to drink and do drugs. This pull was due to the weight of several oppressions—namely young people's oppression, racism, genocide, classism, and sexism—and how I had internalized them.

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¹ See previous article.

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Here are some of the ways I experienced these oppressions: life felt miserable and unbearable; I didn't feel like I was in charge of my life or could choose what I wanted; I didn't feel like I was allowed to be as close to people as I wanted; I felt alone; I didn't think I mattered; I didn't want to feel; I felt expendable; I didn't feel like I deserved to exist; I was physically and sexually objectified; I was humiliated; I did not want to be different, stand out, or draw attention to myself.

I continued to drink regularly throughout my teenage and early young adult years. Although I continued to Co-Counsel on where internalized oppression had left me confused about myself, I struggled to work openly on my addictions. I was defensive and secretive about them, because I was scared of being judged and criticized. I also didn't trust that anyone could help. I think this is a big way that assimilation and internalized genocide play out² for us as a people. We keep many of our struggles hidden to protect ourselves from attack, but that leaves us with no place to work on them and alone with the struggle. When my family and Co-Counselors pushed me to stop drinking, I would go away and get quiet. I wanted to lead in RC and knew that I couldn't do it honestly without giving up the addiction, but that wasn't enough for me to fully decide to give it up.

To stop drinking, discharging on the feelings also wasn't enough. I had to set up my life to directly contradict the oppressions that left me vulnerable to feeling like I didn't matter and that living was misery. That primarily meant changing my paid work and deciding that certain relationships didn't make sense for me anymore. I became a teacher, and although I still struggled to remember that my existence mattered, as a teacher of young children I was able to decide to fight for myself on behalf of the children. But that wasn't enough long-term. It was a useful contradiction³ that gave me the space to stop drinking, but I had to push myself to keep discharging and deciding that my existence mattered enough to give up the addiction for myself.

Once I stopped drinking, it was easier to remember what was actually true about me, but giving up the addiction was a long battle. It was important to have the time and space to use my own mind to fight that battle. It was also important to have people in close with me who held out the perspective that I mattered and was not alone. It did not work when people acted desperate, impatient, or judgmental about my struggles. In order to contradict the distress and discharge it fully, I needed to know that I was in charge and that nothing was wrong with me.

I think that discharging on and deciding to give up our addictions will look different for each of us. I also think that the ways that racism and genocide have left us hidden and secretive make it tricky to work openly and honestly on this stuff. In order to create the space to do it, we must stand against the addictions, and the oppressions that leave us vulnerable to them. We must fight for communicating and remembering how much each human mind matters—without acting out our fears, urgencies, desperation, or disappointment.

Micaela Morse

Oakland, California, USA

Reprinted from the RC e-mail discussion list
for leaders of Latinos/as and Chicanos/as

² Play out means manifest.

³ Contradiction to distress



MAURA FALLON

Gay Identity

Tim Jackins, answering a question at the Northwest USA and Southwest Canada Teachers' and Leaders' Workshop, September 2012

F—: My question is about discharging on Gay identity within RC. It seems like now there may be a shift toward the July 2010 article you wrote,¹ and I just wanted to ask you about that.

Tim: Let's see. Is it a shift? I'm not sure it's a shift. In this area (and it's certainly not the only one) everyone in the whole society struggles, and it is difficult to lay out any idea and not have it restimulate almost everybody. If you talk about gender or sex or anything at all related, it almost doesn't matter what you say; for a certain length of time there will be agitation and upset and things needing to be discharged.

YOU ARE UNIQUE

Our position on identity is that you are a unique creature. There's never been anybody like you, and there is never going to be. In an ideal world, you would have the resource, slack, and support from the very beginning to figure out who you are, including what you want or don't want with sex and related things. You would end up figuring out your own relationships. They would not be like anyone else's and wouldn't constitute an "identity."

We don't get that chance in this society. We start out with little information. We also don't start out as sexual creatures. We become them twelve, fourteen, sixteen years later. Unfortunately, by the time we become sexual creatures, when we'd be interested in finding out what that means, we've gone through twelve, fourteen, sixteen years of other people's distresses connected to sex. We've become so encrusted with the distresses that have been acted out around us, and at us, that we don't get the chance to figure out anything about sex very cleanly for ourselves.

THE "GAY POLICY"

My father² tried to look at this, and what he wrote about it became known as the "Gay Policy," which



DIANE SHISK

was a mistaken title, but once it was out there it didn't matter. He was writing in a certain context: As people fight against oppression, they don't always take well-thought-out positions that are free from distress. They can take an irrational position against another irrational position ("Mine's better than yours," "We're better than you are," "We're right; you're wrong") and it can get frozen. A battle was then going on³ to declare that some particular sexual orientation or sexual behavior was "rational," and my father was unwilling to do that. A lot of people, well meaning and not having discharged much in the area, wanted to go along with any position taken by oppressed people, even if it was rigid and reactive.

You probably didn't know my father. My father never took a liberal position. He did his best thinking—and he said it out loud, no matter what fire it might draw. To step away from that was to sell out.⁴ It's okay if you're wrong, but it's not all right to abandon your thinking. If you are wrong, it will be proven in practice. That's just fine.

continued . . .

¹ "Human Connections, and Sex," on page 3 of the July 2010 *Present Time* (Issue No. 160)

² Harvey Jackins

³ Going on means happening.

⁴ Sell out means abandon principle.

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He was being pressured. What he was sure of—which may never have gotten out, or stayed out, clearly—was that nobody thinks well yet in the area of sex. It doesn't matter what you identify as (Gay, heterosexual, or whatever); you've got work to do in the area because it wasn't your mind that made your decisions. He felt he needed to take a tough position, because of the times and the battles and because of his experiences counseling many, many people in this area. Things got frozen there for a long time, because of the amount of hurt we all carry in this area and our difficulty discharging it.

PUSHING PEOPLE TO QUESTION THINGS

What I tried to do in my article was state a broader view, connecting sexual identity with our struggles related to connection and other things. I think it is our most accurate description at this point.

In RC we're not trying to determine what your decisions are; we care that you make your decisions using your mind and not your distress patterns or a reaction to the oppression in society. We have complete faith that human minds can think and figure things out, if they're not isolated and hurt. Helping minds do that is our job. We use the discharge process to free each of our minds from the effects of distress.

In doing that job, we have to push everybody to question things. What can we say about sex? For a lot of people, a reactive attachment to sex functions as the only hint of reassurance in their life. It's how they hang on. Without it, they wouldn't know where to turn. This doesn't work. It doesn't contradict the distress enough that they discharge and get through it. But to tell somebody, "That might be patterned and you might have to challenge that," is not easy. People don't hear it well. They hear it best from a Co-Counselor they have counseled with every week for twenty years, but it's still a tough thing. We've all been hurt so badly in the areas of relationships and sex that saying, "You need to look at this," even if it's "We need to look at this," hasn't gone down⁵ well. (*Laughter*)

Most people in RC would still like to avoid the question entirely. But to do that weakens us in important ways. If we cannot face the areas in which society has hurt us all, then how are we going to get out of the hurts? We have to fight battles. We have to take positions that don't simply keep people comfortable within their distresses but rather urge

⁵ Gone down means been accepted.

and push them into the discomfort of looking at how badly they've been hurt. It isn't about telling people how they should behave. That's not the intent in RC on any front. It's about pushing people to question the places where they've gotten frozen in distress.

IDENTITIES TEMPORARY

One other thing is about identity. If you have an identity—and we all do—you're not that identity. It's a temporary state. We have identities because of distresses. The distresses lock a label on us, in our heads and in other people's heads. That's a struggle. We need to look at what we identify as, be proud of it, work on it, and get over it.⁶ Sometimes we get stuck in defensively being proud of it; we can't face finishing the job.

We are human, with all of our wonderful differences. Each one of us is the perfect example of the rest of us. Any person is a perfect example of us. That's where we're headed. To get stuck and be confused by the battles we have to fight to get there is probably unavoidable and something we have to go through, but it's unfortunate.

⁶ In RC we have developed a three-step process to work on identity, to counsel and discharge, that allows us to know and be proud of people like ourselves without becoming limited by the distresses that are connected with the identifications. The steps are (1) to proudly claim the identification and have sessions on being proud of the group, on every way in which we associate ourselves with it, and on the feelings brought up by claiming the identity; (2) to discharge on the difficulties we have with the identity and any ways the group is restimulating to us; and (3) to discard the attachment to the identity, and every way we associate ourselves with it and limit ourselves by it, and continue to grow in our own unique way, while not losing the knowledge and abilities we gained from claiming the identity and from our relationships with the people in the group.

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I'm a Little Teapot

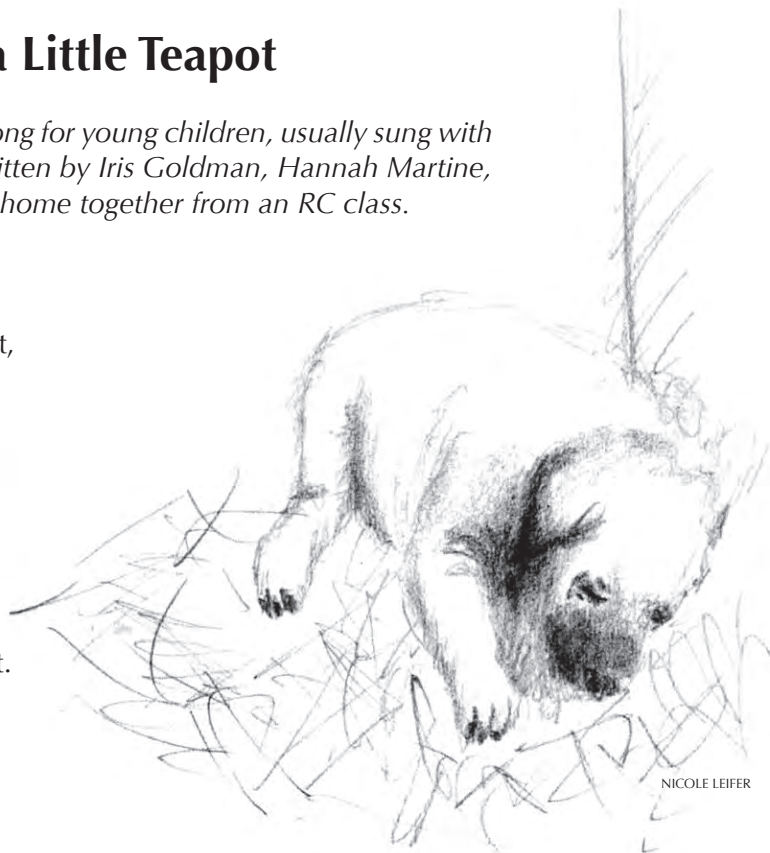
The first stanza of this song is a common song for young children, usually sung with body movement. The other stanzas were written by Iris Goldman, Hannah Martine, and me, Steve Cloud Morse, while we rode home together from an RC class.

I'm a little teapot, short and stout.
Here is my handle, here is my spout.
When I get all steamed up, hear me shout,
"Tip me over and pour me out."

I'm a little teapot, short and stout.
Here is my handle, here is my spout.
When I get all steamed up, let me shout.
Give me a session and attention out.*

I'm a Co-Counselor, full of zest.
I go for what's human, I go for what's best.
After I wake up and get dressed,
I work hard, I play hard, and then I rest.

Nourished by benign reality
I am hopeful that one day we
Will get our minds back and we'll be
A completely intelligent humanity.



* Attention out means attention off distress, on present-time benign reality.



TIDE FLATS IN WASHINGTON, USA (WATERCOLOR) • KATIE KAUFFMAN

Degrees Not Important

I don't think the degree you get makes any difference except to satisfy some technical requirement. It's the people who are your instructors that make the enormous difference.

I started RC without finishing my bachelor's degree and when I got it didn't use it at all. I did wear my Phi Beta Kappa key* very prominently in the first few years, but it was a tribute to my own insecurity and I don't know that it ever made any difference to anybody who saw it.

Boldness, an air of confidence, and a warm, confident voice are worth five PhDs.

Harvey Jackins
From a letter written in 1997

* A Phi Beta Kappa key is the symbol of the Phi Beta Kappa Society, an academic honor society.



Eliminating Racism in Sweden



Forty-seven Co-Counselors (ten people targeted by racism and thirty-six white people) gathered for a weekend in Stockholm, Sweden, at an eliminating racism workshop, determined to take charge in eliminating racism.

It was lovely to see the closeness and enthusiasm in the group. Barbara Love,* the leader of the workshop, put out so elegantly that we know we are heading toward liberation and that this makes us able to be here now. We do not have to wait. It is possible to take charge *now* to end racism. We can “make it so.” By discharging, discharging, discharging, we get rid of feeling bad about ourselves so that we can get the lives we want, which include a world without racism. Hurray!

Barbara reminded us over and over again that no matter how strong the feeling may be in present time, giving up was an early decision. There is no reason to rely on a decision I made a long time ago. I can trust my mind to make new decisions here and now. Wow!

Thinking about my vision of a world without racism was a struggle for me, but I will discharge until I get there. I am not going silent. Silence is my enemy. And there is time; the urgency I feel in my life can be discharged.

Sujata Maini
Stockholm, Sweden

Barbara had us work on early feelings of discouragement that often stand in the way of liberation,

* Barbara Love is the International Liberation Reference Person for African Heritage People.

of a future without racism. The touch of the other people still lingers on. It’s a powerful contradiction to the separation I experienced in the delivery clinic where I was born, in Finland in the 1960s.

Katri Hirvonen Nurmi
Helsinki, Finland

Barbara outlined why we need to work on early hurts that stop us from building on our vision for the world. She explained how racism was part of everything around us. It was never our fault; the world was just set up in a racist and divided way. Hope!

Anneka Knutsson
Branno, Sweden

Barbara said, “Act as if racism has already ended.” For me this means that when I feel there is something I cannot do, I ignore the feeling and do it anyway. If there had been no racism, I would never have hesitated. I would have asked for help and discharged. So that is what I try to do now.

If there had been no racism, I would have always felt close to other people targeted by racism, so I try to act as if I feel close until

I finally believe it, until I finally see the benign reality.

Maryam Vardeh
Göteborg, Sweden

Racism seems to be an important part of internalized white working-class oppression. Ending racism is therefore a way for white working-class people to get united. The united white working class will unite with all working-class people targeted by racism. This united working class will be unstoppable.

Eric Hartig
Stockholm, Sweden

After the weekend I feel so happy and relieved that I am not alone to “fix it” (free the world and end racism). A lot of hopelessness has disappeared.

I am also very, very happy that RC has spread and is active among African-heritage people. Love, love, and more love to all black people who are Co-Counseling, and to wonderful Barbara, who is leading the work with so much elegance, strength, and humour.

Kristina Aspeqvist
Spanga, Sweden

Having looked the beast of the past in the eye, having asked and received forgiveness and having made amends, let us shut the door on the past not in order to forget it but in order not to allow it to imprison us.

Archbishop Desmond Tutu

Basic Understandings from the Work on Women's Liberation

Since the RC Contemporary Women's Issues Workshop in the United States in June 2012, we have put together some of the basic understandings that have come from the work done thus far on women freeing themselves from sexism and male domination.

A critical goal for all of us is to advance the work on sexism and male domination to where each woman makes facing these oppressions central to her own life and to all women's lives, to where each of us never gives up until sexism and male domination are eliminated, and to where eliminating them is central to RC and to all organized activities of which we are a part.

Every woman is just the right woman to take on¹ her own liberation as a woman, to fight for herself, and to fight for all women. Our liberation as women also includes fighting for men to free themselves from their oppression as men and from their oppressor role in the system of male domination and sexism. Both women and men have work to do in this battle.

Although women's liberation continues both inside and outside of RC, for several decades the ideas of feminism have been under attack in the wide world, and in RC we have felt the effects of that. We have described these effects as a "plateauing" of our work together. Since the Contemporary Women's Issues Workshop in 2009, we have worked on the ways that, particularly in the West, women's liberation has been portrayed as irrelevant to the contemporary world. "Sexism is dead, or at least not particularly important" has been one of the widespread confusions.

It is crucial to challenge such myths. The following are some basic understandings that can assist us in doing that:

1. Everyone's biology is fine—biology is not the problem.

"*I am fully female in every fiber!*" is a direction that Harvey² gave us females many years ago. Each female's biology is fine, and each woman deserves to feel pleased and good. Men's biology is also fine. In fact, human biology is fine, including where there may be gender ambiguity.

¹ Take on means do something about.

² Harvey Jackins



SUE EDWARDS

2. Biology is the pretext for, not the cause of, oppression.

The oppressive society spins off ideas to justify oppression. In the case of male domination and sexism, an idea pervasive since the beginning of class- and male-dominated societies is that biology is the cause of and reason for the social, economic, and political inequalities that exist between women and men; that women's subordination and male dominance are inherent rather than caused by oppressive institutions. Also related to biological determinism, women have internalized the oppressive myth (connected to racism, anti-Jewish oppression, Gay oppression, and other oppressions) that some women are more female than others. Our policy is clear: every woman is a *real woman*, and a real woman is completely *human*.

In pre-class societies, the first and most basic division between humans was between females and males, because of women's and men's two different roles in reproduction. Interestingly, given that women were the child-bearers, men were more dispensable than women—fewer men were needed for procreation, as men's role was to provide sperm. This was one of the reasons men were used as warriors and women played a large role in agriculture.

Later, with the development of class societies, women's and men's separate roles in reproduction

continued . . .

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became a pretext for oppression. The division between males and females became exploitative. This went along with the exploitation of workers and the control of wealth by a few, which are intrinsic to *class* but not pre-class societies.

3. Male domination and sexism are central to class societies.

Male domination and sexism are the oldest primary props of class societies. From the earliest to the present ones, almost all class societies have been male dominated. The forms this domination has taken have varied as the societies have evolved through slavery, feudalism, and different stages of capitalism, but male domination has been critical to each type of class society.

Male domination and sexism overlap and are both systematic. Sexism is the system in which men are the agents of female oppression. Male domination is the larger system, integral to class and every other oppression, in which almost everyone is oppressed by a dominant group of a few owning-class men.

The difference between sexism and male domination is subtle. For example, a young man can carry sexist distresses aimed at all women, including older women, but not be dominant with regard to older women.

4. Male domination, assumed to be inherent in societies, has rarely been challenged in totality.

While one can imagine the ending of many other oppressions, there has not yet been a major vision of a society without sexism and male domination (with the exception of a possible one-time Amazon nation, or projections by some feminists). This is because of the following:

- a) The divisions of labor between men and women, and the oppression for which these divisions are the pretext, have been assumed to be natural, therefore making them almost universal.
- b) With sexism and male domination (as with young people's oppression), the oppressed and the oppressor are deeply, personally connected. Women have brothers, fathers, and husbands, and male cousins, friends, lovers, and so on. Among the deepest, most personal connections women and men have are the connections with each other.



The latter can be an advantage in terms of women winning men over as allies. However, it also makes it extremely hard to face the depth of the oppressed and oppressor patterns operating in close male-female relationships. The most blatant example of this is the sexual exploitation of women within intimate relationships. Also, few have understood or acknowledged the exploitative reality of reproduction and child raising. Reproduction and the raising of children have been seen as a natural role for women and not even considered work. The control of this labor has been, and still is, in the hands of men. The value of this labor is taken from women, and there is nothing natural about that. "Caretaking" remains one of the biggest oppressive limitations in women's lives, despite the good things involved in it. In oppressive societies, reproduction has been used to limit women's lives and as a punishment: women "pay the price" for having children—in terms of money, status, and more.

We cannot emphasize enough that *the oppressive society assumes that it is natural for men to dominate and women to be subservient*. It is like the air we breathe.

5. No one escapes the oppression.



Today there is a lot of mythology saying that sexism no longer exists—that unlike their mothers' generation, a lot of younger women today no longer have to fight the oppression; that they have narrowly escaped, or are much less oppressed than their mothers. Another myth is that Western women are "lucky," that it is the women in other parts of the world—the Middle East, Latin America, Eastern Europe—who have to fight this gruesome oppression.

The oppressive society "likes" to convey the idea that women are "free": that today's institutions, including the sex industries and the beautification industries, are no longer sexist. The reality is that every female faces sexism and male domination. *No one* escapes. *No one*.

Sexism and male domination may look different depending on the generation and the part of the world, but they have not ended. And no matter who he is or what oppressions he faces, no man escapes the oppressor end of sexism.

6. Most women face multiple oppressions.

Women are oppressed as women and then usually face at least one other oppression, for example, racism, anti-Jewish oppression, colonialism, genocide, Gay oppression, class oppression, disability oppression, "mental health" oppression.

In each oppressed group the centrality of sexism is often denied. Women face the challenge of how to keep sexism in the forefront while also confronting the other oppression.

7. Women have been divided.



The earliest divide among women was between enslaved women and women of the owning class. Both groups were oppressed by sexism and male domination, but the enslaved women did domestic work for the owning-class women, as well as general slave work. The division among women between an oppressor and an oppressed has continued in a variety of forms up to the present. In the contemporary stage of capitalism, racism is the key divide. Throughout the world, racism permeates all the institutions of sexism, and overlaps with colonialism, poverty, and genocide. Women in oppressor groups, while being oppressed by sexism, can resist looking at their oppressor distresses.

Today age is a major divide among women. Young and young-adult women are targets of sexual objectification and exploitation within the sex industries, the beautification industries, the media, and the advertising industries—often with a focus on body image or size, the new “women’s diseases” (anorexia, bulimia), or the normalization, or glamorization as “freedom,” of exploitative sexual practices.

Middle-aged and older women are set up as agents of oppression of younger women. However, they themselves are oppressed by ageism and sexism. Race is important in the age divide. The symbol of the “preferred and desirable woman” is generally young, *white*, and *blonde*.

8. Men are also targets of male domination.

Male domination includes men being dominated by other men, often their fathers. Society tends to blame mothers or other strong women for men’s problems, but the real cause of their problems is often male domination.

Men targeted by racism are oppressed by the white world (women and men) and are also *dominated* by white men.

9. Men of oppressed groups are often stigmatized.

The oppressive society often stigmatizes the sexism of men of oppressed groups—Arab men, black men,

working-class men, and so forth—by portraying them as *the* symbols of sexism and male domination. At the same time, the ultimate power of white owning-class men is disregarded, along with the accepted forms of sexism and male domination they exhibit.

10. Sexism is caused by societal institutions.

Men are the *agents* of female oppression. Sexism, like all other oppressions, is *caused* and perpetuated by societal institutions and related mechanisms of oppression. (See the women’s policy statement and program printed in *Sisters* No. 12.) Several institutions are the primary institutions of sexism. These include marriage, the beautification industries, the sex industries, child-raising and other women’s work (paid and unpaid), and institutions related to reproduction. Sexism also permeates many other institutions, such as politics, education, and the media.

Women and men need to discharge on their histories with these institutions—including the associated misinformation, expectations, and cultural norms (for example, “women should be married,” “having children is the most important job for women,” “some women are prettier than others,” “politics is for men”) that they have internalized.

11. We must address sexual exploitation.

The sexual exploitation of women has always been intrinsic to male-dominated class societies, up to the present. This has included sexual violence in wars; sexual violence (rape, abuse) in marriage, in families, and on the street; prostitution; and sexual harassment in the workforce.

Today—in pornography, the media, the sex industries, and the world of entertainment (all of which make billions of dollars each year)—sexual exploitation is visible, universally accepted, and considered normal.

The sexual exploitation of women is a key issue to address as we challenge sexism and male domination. In the Western world, the idea that women are sexually “free,” as opposed to sexually exploited, brings in untold profits, subjugates women in new and more deceptive ways, and viciously distorts all human relationships. It is certainly an explicit sign of a collapsing society.



Diane Balsler
International Liberation
Reference Person for Women
Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts, USA

Basic RC Theory Is “Mental Health” Liberation Theory

The following are excerpts from a letter that Janet Foner, the International Liberation Reference Person for “Mental Health” Liberation, sent to her constituency in October 2012:

In recent years I have thought more about how basic RC theory is “mental health” liberation theory.

One way basic RC theory contradicts “mental health” oppression is with the assumption that all humans are intelligent by nature. A corollary to that is that one has to have a mind with which to be intelligent. Therefore, one cannot lose one’s mind. Part of why “mental health” oppression feels so scary is that it threatens the very core of who we are as humans.

Another assumption we hold dear in RC is that discharge and re-evaluation allow us to reclaim our intelligence more and more fully—that is, reclaim better and better functioning of our minds. A corollary to that is that we are in charge of our minds and can continue to use them better and better. “Mental health” oppression says that “mental health” system survivors, especially ex-psychiatric inmates, are unable to use their minds—or worse, have no minds. This is clearly out of sync* with RC theory and experience. In fact, we “mental health” system survivors in RC are living contradictions to the false ideas of “mental health” oppression. Think about the implications of taking that seriously. What a powerful position we are in!

As economic conditions worsen in the world around us, many

people are struggling to stay alive. The confused theories of the “mental health” system are spread more widely as more and more people desperately seek help by taking psychiatric drugs. Some people, especially young people, are forced to take these drugs. Although we may feel tempted to sink into restimulation, it is also possible to see the situation as hopeful in that the widespread use of psychiatric drugs has made many more people aware of “mental health” oppression; it is no longer as hidden as it once was.

In 1950 Harvey Jackins began understanding the discharge process from trying to help an acquaintance stay out of the “mental hospital.” As he continued experimenting and developing RC theory, he counseled many “mental patients.” He wanted to find out if they were different from other people. Of course, he found that they discharged, re-evaluated, and recovered their intelligence just like everyone else. (See *Rough Notes from Buck Creek I* for Harvey’s description of this.) Over the last thirty-three years of “mental health” liberation work in RC, we have gained a lot of knowledge and experience and developed a strong core of leaders.

Given the widespread effects of “mental health” oppression and how most people equate discharge with distress, and profuse discharge with “mental illness,” it makes sense for us RCers to continue to develop slack for this subject. By discharging on our feelings and experiences related to “mental health” oppression, we can become relaxed enough about people’s “mental health” oppression distresses to be able to listen well to them. This will make it easier to teach people RC. It will also lessen our feelings that RC is “weird,” embarrassing, “on the fringe” of society, and so on.

We can develop “mental health” liberation “muscle” by leading the RCers around us on “mental health” liberation issues that affect everyone. These include the proliferation of psychiatric drugs, the fear of discharging deeply, and the fear of “going crazy.” Once we have done more of that, we will be even more ready to do significant wide-world-change work.

It’s fun leading “mental health” liberation. We are creating a new society. We are making things happen that we want to have happen.

New Cumberland, Pennsylvania, USA

Correction:

In the October 2012 *Present Time*, we did not acknowledge that “David Nijinsky,” the Assistant International Liberation Reference Person for Gay Men, co-wrote the article, “Thinking About Transgender People,” on page 44.

* Synchrony

A Mixed-Class Group on Ending Classism

I have been discharging and thinking about classism for many years. I lead middle-class liberation in western Canada, and when I go to workshops, I often lead topic tables or other groups for middle-class people.

Recently I decided that I wanted to shake things up for myself, so I led a topic group called “Ending Classism” at the September 2012 Northwest USA and Southwest Canada Teachers’ and Leaders’ Workshop. I wanted to share thinking with Co-Counsellors from other class backgrounds, especially raised-poor and working-class people.

I began the group by asking, “What is a struggle you have from class oppression that you would love to be rid of?” People’s answers included the following:

Raised-poor people: “Hopelessness.” “Not knowing how to fit in.”

Working-class people: “Not knowing how the system works.”

Middle-class people: “Feeling numb.” “Perfectionism.” “Fear of poverty.” “Having to pretend.”

Owning-class people: “Greed.” “Isolation.” “Separateness.”

Then I asked what they thought needed to be done and/or discharged to advance the work to end classism and how we could support working-class and raised-poor leadership in that work.

Raised-poor and working-class people: “You need to know that everything is going to be okay. I was raised poor, and everything was okay. We didn’t always have enough food, but everything was okay.” (This was said in such a loving tone, I felt like we were being told that we didn’t need to be so full of anxiety about the collapse of capitalism.) “RC needs to have more attention for drug and alcohol addictions in order to get more raised-poor and working-class people into RC.” “It is so hard to figure out how the economic system works and how it benefits the class system, for example, who to talk to, to get things; how to talk to them properly; and how to look like you fit

in with the middle class.” “Middle- and owning-class people need to discharge about their knowledge and privilege.” “I have been mystified by how the system works. It’s hard. I have felt stupid about this. I spent lots of time thinking about how to feed my child. We need to be willing to listen to young people, because they see through classism in a way that adults don’t. We need their leadership. Young people’s liberation is an important part of this.”

Middle-class people: “It is terrifying how people in power can’t think. This pushes on hopelessness, a sense that it is all rigged; that we are on the wrong side, are not part of the club, don’t know the code. There are feelings of desperation; we are told that we need to get enough learning to survive. Mitt Romney¹ is scary—he embodies the way some owning-class Protestants have been hurt; they look almost unreachable, though I know this isn’t true.” “We middle-class people can be clueless. We need more opportunities for different classes to meet, to break down separation. It’s good to think about what

continued . . .

¹ Mitt Romney ran against President Obama in the 2012 U.S. presidential election.



AMANDA MARTINEZ

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... continued

it would be like without classes. It would be good for youth to meet across class lines, to cut through segregation in neighbourhoods, jobs.” “I want ending classism to have a bigger presence in RC. I want middle-class people to really show themselves and their struggles. We get so much misinformation as young people that we end up confused about class oppression. I think we need more middle-class support groups and workshops. This will help middle-class people feel more connected. If we really knew that we had each other and were close to each other, it would be easier to get behind² working-class leadership to end classism. We need to keep discharging about our internalized oppression, about our relationships with people from other class backgrounds, and about ending class oppression, which includes discharging on our privilege and what comforts we don’t want to give up! We need to keep talking to each other across class lines. The International Liberation Reference People for the different class constituencies have been talking to each other—it is very hopeful!”

At this point one of the raised-poor Co-Counsellors (whom I will call X—) suggested telling people about the Co-Counselling relationship she and I had—what we had figured out together. X— and I had been Co-Counselling for several years but could tell³ that classism was getting in the way of our being completely close. We decided to ask an experienced Co-Counsellor to do a relationship session with us. The person we chose was someone we both trusted, and the fact that she was raised-poor made it safe for X—. She stood outside our relationship and counselled each of us with love and intelligence, so that we were both able to discharge well about how classism was affecting us. Directions I remember were X— saying, “You privileged bitch!” at the end of all her statements to me (which brought her great laughter) and me stopping apologizing all the time (which brought me lots of tears). That session happened several years ago but has stayed with us both and created a positive change. We got to express how much we loved each other and say what was hard.

Owning-class people: *The first person talked about the need to discharge oppressor material⁴ and have*

² Get behind means support.

³ Tell means perceive.

⁴ Material means distress.

relationships. Others talked about coming out and revealing the money and power that they and other owning-class people had. More responses: “Our worlds are so narrow.” “There is no good class to be in; everyone is mistreated. No one is lucky. As with sexism, you have to beat people to get them to be oppressors. My mother was raised-poor with owning-class patterns, and she wanted to get back to being owning-class all her life. She dressed me funny,⁵ and there was an aloofness about her. We were given messages that we were better than others, that we had to know the right people. Our Prime Minister is the weirdest guy. He doesn’t think well, his thinking is twisted. If we knew that no class was good, we wouldn’t aspire to upward mobility.” “I hate identifying in RC as owning-class. Owning-class people are terrified. It is hard for us to believe that security is in relationships. My sister is wealthy, and when I visit her I feel bad about myself—about how I don’t have as much as she does. We are all scared, we are nice, we don’t talk about things of substance. We are good people, but we are confused. People are pulled to not like us. I have a nephew who can’t think very well; he is isolated and has no closeness.”

After we had all spoken, I asked the raised-poor and working-class people if they had anything to add. Their additional thoughts were “All oppressions are tied to classism,” and “All classes have something to give each other.”

In the closing circle everyone talked about how good it was to be in a mixed group thinking about ending classism. We left feeling hopeful and connected to each other.

Phyllis Beardsley
Vernon, British Columbia, Canada
Reprinted from the e-mail discussion
list for RC Community members

⁵ In this context, funny means strange.

Don’t get impatient. Either listen people out or, if that takes too long, change the subject with a compliment.

Harvey Jackins
From a letter written in 1975

Key Issues for Allies Ending the Oppression of Jews

A handout at an Allies to Jewish Liberation Workshop in June 2012

The following are some key issues and actions for us as allies to Jews:

- Having our own thinking
- Being solid in our sense of our own goodness, worth, significance, and capacity to act boldly against anti-Jewish oppression and Jewish internalized oppression; being able to assist Jews to have each other and resisting any pull to be preferred over a Jew
- Being open about and full of our passion for Jewish liberation, ready to take on¹ anti-Jewish oppression in the wide world whenever possible—at churches and workplaces, in organisations, and elsewhere
- Discharging on the history of anti-Jewish oppression and the struggle for Jewish liberation; facing “the worst of the worst”
- Understanding when something is an example of anti-Jewish oppression and when it is not
- Uniting across all our divisions as Gentiles—in particular, ending the separation between people targeted by racism and white people (such a united force deals a serious blow to oppression and destabilises anti-Jewish oppression)
- Being aware of the oppressions among the Jewish people—racism, and so on
- Facing our own oppressor patterns—the feelings that our group, religion, class, is superior; noticing when we attach frozen needs² to Jews and when we set Jews up³; facing our “bystander” and “collaboration” material⁴
- Being active and proactive in the face of Jewish internalised oppression; fighting any pull to be quiet and timid
- Developing a picture of and discharging on where we as Gentiles (and in any other of our identities) play a middle-agent role⁵



WHIDBEY ISLAND, WASHINGTON, USA • LISA KAUFFMAN

continued . . .

¹ Take on means confront and do something about.

² Frozen need is a term used in RC for a hurt that results when a rational need is not met in childhood. The hurt compels the person to keep trying to fill the need in the present, but the frozen need cannot be filled; it can only be discharged.

³ Set Jews up means put Jews in a position to be attacked, disliked, and so on.

⁴ Material means distress recordings.

⁵ A middle-agent role is a role in which someone acts as the agent of those who are in control of an oppressive society.

LIBERATION

... continued

- Working on our insecurities and our fears of getting things wrong and being told off⁶; working on humiliation
- Staying connected to Jews and not pulling back or “disappearing,” no matter what
- Working on trust and fear in order to create the slack to counsel our Jewish loves in these areas
- Working on liking Jews and showing love openly and fully
- Working directly on anti-Jewish attitudes and feelings
- Letting all issues matter fully
- Acting with courage and integrity, and expecting that of each other and of Jews
- Developing the flexibility to draw an attack to us and away from a Jew, or to stand close by and assist a Jew who is being attacked
- Informing ourselves; taking initiative, while eagerly following Cherie’s⁷ and Diane’s⁸ leadership
- Having fun.

In summary: Reach for our biggest selves. Face fully our significance and the importance of reaching for increasing clarity about contemporary Jewish issues. Have this matter to us and show it, so that we stand shoulder to shoulder with Jews, understanding that Jewish liberation is our liberation—period.⁹ It is in our interests, and it is important that we face this.

Dorann van Heeswijk
London, England

⁶ Told off means forcefully criticized.

⁷ Cherie Brown is the International Liberation Reference Person for Jews.

⁸ Diane Balser is the International Liberation Reference Person for Women and is a leader of Jewish liberation.

⁹ In this context, period means that’s all there is to say; that is the final word.



Working Together to End Racism

A pamphlet introducing RC from the perspective of ending racism

\$2.00 (U.S.), plus postage and handling

Ordering information on page 110

A Better Approach?

I would suggest that when you feel you have spotted someone else’s patterns, you keep in mind, as one of the first things to consider, the possibility that something is projecting itself from the back of your head. Sometimes this approach leads to insights and progress much more rapidly than assigning the difficulty elsewhere.

Harvey Jackins
From a letter written in 1975

Women and Physical Power

From a talk by Diane Shisk at the West Coast USA Women and Physical Power and Health Workshop, September 2012

We are here at this Women and Physical Power and Health Workshop to get our bodies back and at the same time get our minds back. So much of our minds, and every aspect of our lives, is tied up by sexism and male domination: how we feel about ourselves; what we think about; the choices we make; our vision for ourselves and our society; our relationships with other women, and with children and men—everything. We can't have our minds, we can't be ourselves, we can't have the lives we want, without facing the way sexism and male domination play out in the society and in our lives—and without deciding to end them, both in our lives and in society. To do this work we have to make it central in our lives and in the RC Communities.

SEXISM AND MALE DOMINATION

Sexism is the systematic, institutionalized mistreatment of women in which men are the agents. Male domination is the larger system (integral to class and every oppression) in which almost everyone is oppressed by a dominant group of a few owning-class men. Boys, men targeted by racism, working-class men, Gay men, are all dominated by owning-class men and their agents, and all men dominate women. Male domination is systemic in our societies.

The trivialization of women and of women's oppression has made it difficult for us women to keep prioritizing our own liberation. In our struggle to do that, an important step has been to understand and identify male domination. This broader context for sexism has helped us notice how big and ongoing the oppression has been.

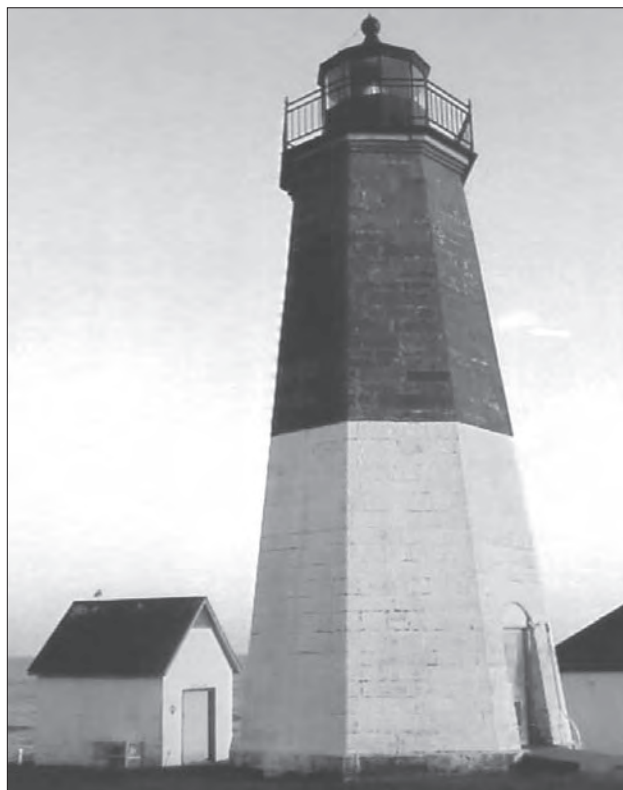
At this workshop we are going to look at one particular slice of how sexism and male domination play out. Our relationship to our bodies, physical activity, physical challenges, and our health has been impacted in a major way by sexism and male domination. We get to redefine our physical life

and our relationship to our bodies in terms of what makes sense for us as women, not what is dictated by and “works” for a male-dominated society.

FEMALE BIOLOGY IS GREAT

We are physical beings. We have bodies that let us interact physically with the world—by moving and playing, doing physical work, being sexual with another person, growing life inside of us, and nursing young ones. Female biology, in all its manifestations, is great. There is nothing wrong with it. It is not limiting in any way. Any feelings we have that our biology is not just right are based on hurts we've experienced. Our biology has been the excuse for our oppression. That we can give birth to children has been used as the excuse to limit our lives, our role in society, and our picture of ourselves.

continued . . .



RHODE ISLAND, USA • STEVE BANBURY

LIBERATION

... continued

One lie is that our bodies are not as sturdy as men's, that we are somehow fragile in our biology (as well as less developed intellectually). This has been used to define many physical activities as men's activities and to discourage women from taking them on.¹

Men's distresses and male domination shape what is considered attractive and desirable in women: slender bodies with breasts and hips that are just so; being submissive and attentive to men, sexually available, and ready to bear men's children. We may know intellectually this doesn't make sense, we may fight back against it, but the messages are internalized and they affect our perspective on ourselves, other women, and our relationship to physical activity. For many women, of all ages, the major motivations for physical activity have been losing weight and looking sexy. We can use this workshop as a space in which to be honest about and discharge on these motivations.

RECLAIMING PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

When I was young, being active physically was not a big part of the identity of most girls and women. To the extent that we girls expressed interest and competency in physical activity, our female identity was questioned (and we internalized that questioning). Active girls were called tomboys, Lesbian, not fully female, and in this way were isolated from other women and from men. A lot of us who grew up playing sports and valuing physical strength and activity have work to do to reclaim being "fully female in every fiber." For most women of my generation, being active wasn't an option. These women must fight to have an active life and to be active enough to be healthy.

As I've aged I've noticed that many of us who had slack for physical activity when we were young (many of us were athletes) struggle with staying active as we grow older. The sexism piles up. There's mothers' oppression. Racism and classism wear us down and make us feel like taking care of ourselves means lying on the couch. The oppression of older women says we can't stay strong and fit.

¹ Taking them on means undertaking them.

Physical activity is more available to girls and young women today. However, even though some battles against sexism and male domination have been won for this generation, the victories have been limited. Girls and young women can be physically competent, but not if they would physically best a man. They may be encouraged by men to be active, but with the intent that they be good companions for the men, participate in their activities without slowing them down, or be fit so that they are more "attractive" and sexually enticing. Many sports, despite legal rulings to the contrary, remain "men's games," and women who would join in are attacked, isolated, or forced out. Although more women are visible in sports today, women's sports are almost completely male dominated. As women's teams have gotten more attention and funding, coaching them has become more attractive to male coaches (higher salaries, more recognition). Sexism and Gay oppression have been at the root of many attacks on female coaches, and men have taken over many of the now more lucrative coaching positions.

Those of you who struggle with physical activity will have to work on all the sexism that came at you and made you lose interest in sports and doing fun physical things. You will need to discharge your way to knowing that you have a strong and good body; that you are fully female as you learn to play football, build muscle, become good at wrestling; that you'll still be attractive to men (or learn to counsel them on their distresses that confuse them about how attractive you are).

Being made to doubt that we or our sisters are "real women" is a part of internalized sexism that divides us in big ways. It's unacceptable. Every one of us is fully female and gets to redefine her relationship to physical activity on women's terms. We each get to claim as a woman's activity every activity and every way we use our bodies, and be proud of it—whether it be jump rope and four-square (great games) or baseball, basketball, and football (great games).

There aren't sporty people and non-sporty people, or coordinated people and non-coordinated people, except in the realm of distress recordings. Any woman can decide to become excellent at any

activity and do the physical and discharge work (including the work on sexism) to make it happen (though modifications may need to be made for disabilities).

Because sports and most physical activities are considered to be in the male domain, most of our moms (who were our main caretakers and models) didn't spend hours with us teaching us how to throw a ball, or run fast, or climb trees, or build forts, or wrestle—in part because, due to sexism and male domination, they were so busy cooking, and cleaning, and caretaking, and working outside the home. Most of our dads didn't teach us these things either. Their sexism wouldn't let them prioritize their daughters in this way, or see that the world of physical activity shouldn't only be men's dominion; or they were so oppressed by other oppressions, and male domination, that they had no time or energy to be with their children.

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

So you get to be physical, you get to enjoy this part of life. Why is this important?

- It is a huge contradiction to sexism. As we push ourselves in this direction, we come up against all the limiting lies about who we are and what we get to be and we discharge our way to knowing that we get to be strong, fight back, and develop our bodies so that we can do what we want as physical people.

- It's an important way to work on sexual exploitation—on the way that our bodies have been claimed by men as theirs. Men have defined what a “good” woman's body is. Our bodies have been for them to look at, touch, control, and use to meet what they consider to be their needs—how and when they want, without regard for us. We get to have our bodies back, be in touch with them, appreciate them, know they are good, and be able to think about and care well for them.

- It's part of being human to move, be strong, play, and enjoy being physical. It's fun; it can make us happy and enjoy life more. It's a way to be with people and build relationships, and strike back against capitalism and how we're always working.

- We won't live a long, healthy life if we're not physical. A sedentary lifestyle is a major contributor (along with poor nutrition) to many of the health conditions that kill us when we're way too young or disable us when we get older.

- Pushing ourselves physically can contradict heavy early distresses of feeling small, powerless, defeated, and discouraged. It can be a metaphor for fighting for ourselves, with others close by, in a safe environment. It can give us access to big material.²

ALL WOMEN AFFECTED

We all fight multiple oppressions, and they shape how we experience sexism and male domination. But within each oppression, sexism and male domination play a damaging role in terms of our relationship to our bodies, physical activity, and health. Every group of women is dominated by men. Sexism limits all women's lives.

Seattle, Washington, USA

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

² Material means hurts.

I'd Have to Discharge

My oppressive behaviour usually comes cloaked in various disguises; it is defended by justifications and motivated by feelings of victimhood.

I wonder about this. Is it because I learned that I could get away with oppressive behaviour and have more power that way?

What would happen if I decided never to act on those feelings again? I'd have to let someone know about the victim feeling. I'd have to lose my isolation and decide to discharge.

Stephen Costello

Thornbury, Victoria, Australia

Excerpted from the newsletter of the Melbourne, Victoria, Australia, RC Community

White Australians Take On¹ Racism

The following are some highlights from an Eliminating White Racism Workshop led by Anne Barton, in Melbourne, Victoria, Australia, in September 2012:

It is *enormously* hopeful to me that we do this fun, joyful, loving, revolutionary activity together, loving ourselves wholeheartedly as white Australians and claiming all our oppressor material without defence.

Karen Rosauer
St. Kilda East, Victoria, Australia

Anne did not flinch from giving us the full picture of the harshness of the white history that has made us furious and disempowered. She insisted that we work from the oppressor position in every session and fully claim our Australianness and fury.

Being white and privileged has given us many advantages. It has also made us stupid and unable to think and act in a real, human way. Giving up my defensiveness and working on my oppressor material will loosen me up and increase my chances of acting fully human.



Christine Marnane
Kew, Victoria, Australia

I got to see and live out my own fight, which has a lot to do with claiming my oppressor patterns and loving myself at the same time. I saw my progress at the creativity event. I was far less driven to perform, be clever, be the best. It's enough to just show up, support the intention, contribute, be spontaneous.

Natalie Krasnostein
Melbourne, Victoria, Australia

Anne helped me see how much of an identity whiteness is and that it informs all my other identities. Some identities are more obvious, some less, but all need to see the light of day and be discharged with loving attention.



Yehudit Koadlow
Caulfield, Victoria, Australia

Anne told us some Australian history that helped me understand why we white Australians are so hard on ourselves and one another. She pointed us toward each other and our true generosity. I melted. It feels awkward, but the delicious and effective me is unfolding. We can do this, together.

Vicky Grosser
Geelong, Victoria, Australia

Eliminating white racism is a job for white people. With eighty-eight years (until 2100) to complete this task, and Anne's powerful leadership, I am sure we can achieve it. Anne always reminds me (with such warmth, and love for white people) that indulging in victim feelings is a useless, oppressive waste of time.

Stephen Costello
Thornbury, Victoria, Australia

On Saturday morning my first thought upon waking was about all the ways I act like an idiot. I could see that my clumsy, self-absorbed behaviours are how I was conditioned to be white.

It never occurred to me that not facing my whiteness is a privilege. My unawareness is my racism! I have discharged a bunch, using every session to work on deep, early hurts. I have decided

to give up acting like a victim, because it is oppressive—both to me and to those around me. I couldn't look at these things without Anne's love, delight in me, and consistency in doing this work.



Cynthia Johnston
Frankston, Victoria, Australia

My women counsellors stayed with me and invited me to have my feelings of fury; then they asked me what I thought. Wow! What an enormous contradiction to how I was trained as a white person to not have feelings that "rock the boat" that keeps white privilege, and the whole oppressive system, afloat. I am still full of furious feelings, *and* I am hopeful. I want to talk out in the world about white privilege and continue to counsel on giving it up.

Rachel Steinmann
Brunswick East, Victoria, Australia

Anne is relaxed and joyous about claiming her white privilege and welcomes us to be the same. I can



HELEN PARKIN

¹ Take on means confront and do something about.



LASSEN VOLCANIC NATIONAL PARK, CALIFORNIA, USA • LISA VOSS

keep discharging my restimulation, and that is all I need to do with it!

Victoria Kemp
Thornbury, Victoria, Australia

My patterns deserve nothing but contempt. They carry no weight and no validity. The moment I see myself defending them, I stop.

David Le Page
Brighton, Victoria, Australia

Anne offered us a perspective to hold for the duration of the workshop: to “embrace” the oppressor role of the white Australian identity. My discharge went much better from that perspective. I got to own up to the oppressor that I normally try so hard to suppress. The simple acknowledgement of that hidden part, without any defensiveness, allowed me to see a way forward with my liberation.

Bartley McGowen
Port Melbourne, Victoria, Australia

The workshop helped me realise that arrogance is at the core of white racism. This arrogance covers up a vast ignorance of how the world functions. It is handy—without it we white people would have to acknowledge the ignorance, and who could tell the consequences?! The lack of insight about the nature of white people’s hurt was necessary to our upbringing. We couldn’t have gotten to this place of being oppressors if we’d been cognizant of what we were doing. But

the past is fixed. The next step, doing something about it, is the fun task.

Dennis Wollersheim
Rosanna, Victoria, Australia

Thanks, Anne, for your invitation to spend the weekend identifying as white Australians and discharging from an oppressor perspective. It helped me acknowledge my privileged position of sitting on the fence, criticizing white Australia, and opting out of feeling responsible. My re-evaluation from the workshop is that my looks, how I speak, and how I act are all exactly fair dinkum,² true-blue,³ hundred-percent kosher white Australian.

Yacov Salomon
Bondi, New South Wales, Australia

Anne “invited” everyone who was not born in Australia to identify as fully white Australian. That gave me so much room to clear up early hurts about where I was born and where I belong.

Bruce Clezy
Northcote, Victoria, Australia

I enjoyed the challenge of working on my oppressor material for the *whole* workshop—exquisitely excruciating and a fast track to re-emergence. It occurs to me that occupying the position of victim somehow “justifies” my oppressive behaviour. Thank you, Anne, for your high expectations of me.

² Fair dinkum means authentic.

³ True-blue means genuine.

Tony Smith

Melbourne, Victoria, Australia

Here are the things I learnt:

1) I don’t have a neutral skin colour or no skin colour, I have a white skin colour. It is just as much a colour as black, brown, or red.

2) One of the ways we people of whiteness keep taking up all the room in this world is by feeling like we are victims. Shyness is oppressive, silence and not speaking up are oppressive. Feeling bad about ourselves keeps others so busy trying to soothe us that they have no time to think about their own hurts and discharge them.

3) White Australian patterns include keeping silent, staying distant, not showing our enthusiasm, squashing other people’s enthusiasm, and being passive-aggressive and quick to anger internally. Good contradictions to these patterns include speaking up, getting close, showing our enthusiasm, sharing our ideas, and taking risks.

4) We need to keep showing up⁴—and stay as long as is needed in spite of our feelings, then stay a little longer.

Carmela Salomon
Bondi, New South Wales, Australia

Being “not quite Australian” was sold to me as something

continued . . .

⁴ Showing up means being present with people.



GERMANY • LYNDA KATZ

... continued

better than being a hundred percent Australian, but I know now that it isn't and that it has kept me from close relationships. Anne's direction to client from the position of oppressor was a new way to get a hold on old hurts. I am Australian, and this is home.

Kelsey
Melbourne, Victoria, Australia

Many white folk have thought for some time that it would be good for us white people to work on being white, yet we have been curiously silent on the topic. It is no wonder that we keep quiet about it. I heard Anne say that societal power comes from keeping our whiteness "invisible." Thanks so much, Anne—I am now a feisty Aussie battler. I will be loud and proud, put my thinking out there, and keep thinking about being *white*.

Lisa Rasmussen
Northcote, Victoria, Australia

Claiming the Australian identity



KATIE KAUFFMAN

right at the beginning of the workshop left no room for me to dramatize "not belonging." Instead I stuck my nose right into how privileged I am.

It is good that I have had the opportunities I've had. It is oppressive to pretend otherwise.

I got to rage about the white patterns having been forced on me. This means that the fury will leak out less in my everyday life.

The task of ending white racism and its effect on the lives of the majority of humans in our world can seem daunting. But a workshop like this shows contempt for hopelessness and discouragement. We have the tools, we have the leader, and we have each other. Exciting!

Roslyn Cassidy
Fremantle, West Australia, Australia

Supermarket Song

Let the little ones cry
Let the little ones rage
They will still need to feel
 what hurts
When they come to our age

So now they need some smiles
And now they need some hugs
So their healing feelings
Never get bottled up

Let the little ones cry
Let the little ones rage
We all need to not be alone
 when we hurt
At every age

Hey, I know that it's hard
Wasn't like that for you
Hard to help your little ones do
What you couldn't do

So take yourself some time
We can make it right
Say, "Listen to me tell
What my own life was like."

Let everybody cry
Let everybody rage
We still need to feel what hurts
When we come to our age

So now we need some smiles
And now we need some hugs
So our healing feelings
Don't have to stay bottled up

Let the little ones cry
Let the little ones rage
They will still need to feel
 what hurts
When they come to our age

Let everybody cry
Let everybody rage
We all need to not be alone
 when we hurt
At every age

Let the little ones cry . . .

Russell Hayes
Lexington, Kentucky, USA

Being Open About Difficulties in Leadership

I have noticed that the culture of leadership in our Communities has changed over the last period such that far fewer Reference Persons are leading in isolation from the people around them. It was never intended that leaders should function on their own without much consultation or engagement with others. However, in the early decades of RC many of our Reference Persons functioned like that. Given the heavy isolation and separation installed by oppression and early hurts, I don't think anything else was possible. It wasn't possible until we as a Community discharged a significant amount on our early separation and isolation.

Many of Harvey's¹ writings on leadership show his intent that leaders not function on their own:

Groups can have more than one leader but must have at least one.

The role of the leader is to elicit the thinking of the members of the group and make proposals, not to do the thinking for the group.

The central function of leadership is to organize other intelligences to act jointly with one's own for common goals.

Part of good leadership is developing all people's leadership.

(from Chapter 10 of The List)

However, some common distress recordings have interfered with us as leaders engaging with others in a meaningful and ongoing way:

- Feelings of not being smart or confident in our thinking have led us to stay away from situations in which others could question our thinking.

- Feelings of isolation and separation have led to our not having any idea that we are functioning solo.

- Feeling criticized and attacked anytime someone doesn't agree with our thinking has made it hard for us to distinguish between criticism and a discussion of different possibilities.

- Feelings of competition have led us to compare ourselves with others (especially if we're working closely with them) and feel compelled to win or dominate rather than want to work cooperatively or follow someone else's lead.



PARIS, FRANCE • ALAN EPSTEIN

- Feelings of always needing to be the center of attention have made it hard to bring other minds in close to ours and support others' leadership.

LEADERS WORKING MORE COLLABORATIVELY

In many places, Co-Counselors have been working steadily on early loss of connection, and their leadership reflects that work. They are more connected to each other. Some of them have done enough work that the distress doesn't have a big hold on them (or they can at least identify and maintain a correct perspective against it). Communities have taken stands against attacks and implemented Guideline O (on handling attacks, criticism, disagreement, and upset) of the *Guidelines for the Re-evaluation Counseling Communities*. Leaders are figuring out how to lead with their minds engaged with other minds. They are seeking out and considering others' thinking to a greater extent than in years past and struggling through differences in thinking and experience to come to solutions that work better for their Communities.

Here are some specific examples I've seen recently:

- An Area² Reference Person working for a year with his leaders' group to reach agreement on how to restructure the classes in his Area

- A white Regional³ Reference Person working together with a team of Regional leaders of people

continued . . .

² An Area is a local RC Community.

³ A Region is a subdivision of the International Re-evaluation Counseling Community, usually consisting of several Areas.

¹ Harvey Jackins'

TEACHING, LEADING, COMMUNITY BUILDING

... continued

targeted by racism to collaboratively lead a teachers' and leaders' workshop and develop a Regional plan to move forward the work on racism

- Tim⁴ developing a group of young leaders who would support the International Liberation Reference Person for Young People, and a group of men leaders who would work together to support each other's leadership

- Liberation Reference Persons and Regional Reference Persons developing "gangs" of upcoming leaders who would support the Reference Persons and build strong relationships with each other and the people they were leading

- Leaders having more meetings and conference calls, in conjunction with workshops, to increase communication and contact.

That leaders are working more collaboratively to build the RC Community is a significant advance. And we have achieved it at a time when the dominant society is splintering us more and more from one another and attacking every liberation movement, every pro-human effort for change, every challenge to the profit motive, every move toward unity. While we have more work to do, we are more united than we've ever been; we have each other and we have each other's backs⁵ in ways that we've fought hard to achieve. We can be pleased with this.

BRINGING DIFFICULTIES OUT IN THE OPEN

I think all the work we've done has laid the groundwork for us to be able to acknowledge and more effectively address another struggle in our referencing: how once we become Reference Persons we often struggle to talk openly about our difficulties. And when we can't talk openly about them, it's harder to give each other a hand⁶ with them. We do have "self-estimation" for Area Reference Persons, Alternate Area Reference Persons, the International Reference Person, and the Alternate International Reference Person, and we changed the *Guidelines* in 2009 to require that Area Reference Persons and their Alternates do self-estimations annually, but self-estimations are not required for anyone else and people struggle to use the format. As Reference Persons, many of us have been loathe to say we can't do something, or can't do it well. There's an unspoken myth that because we have the tool of RC and are a Reference Person, we should

⁴ Tim Jackins

⁵ We have each other's backs means we are protecting and supporting each other.

⁶ A hand means some help.



BETH CRUISE

be able to do everything (or at least everything we'd like to do in our referencing job)—that if we can't do something, it's our distress, and that to say we can't do it is to surrender to a pattern. I think we'll do better if we acknowledge that there are things we can't yet do (while continuing to do the work to move the distress that limits us). We'll have to work on all the ways we feel defensive and criticized; those recordings⁷ serve no useful purpose and often keep people away from us.

This doesn't mean that we won't ever be able to do the things we can't do yet, or that we're not trying as hard as we can to do them now. It simply means that each of us has a list of human attributes and skills that we are discharging and deciding our way to recovering, and that if we can openly acknowledge we can't do something, it's easier for people to counsel us there. We might also be able to see who can function where we can't and ask that person for help.

Instead of seeing what we can't do yet as a weakness in our leadership, we can see it as an opportunity to develop more leadership and learn how to work with others more collaboratively, using all of our strengths. A Reference Person shouldn't be replaced because he or she can't do something (as though we could find someone who could do everything). Instead people could work closely with the Reference Person to get the job done.

Most of us don't know very well how to collaborate openly in leadership. We've had to work hard on our distresses about leadership to be able to fully take up⁸ the role of leader, and not co-lead or lead by committee,

⁷ Distress recordings

⁸ Take up means adopt.

and all of the distresses I mentioned earlier still affect us. However, I know it is possible to work more closely together—to stay close and help each other fight out of the material⁹ that's had us struggling in leadership, and also help each other do the things we can't yet do ourselves. I think we'll find greater unity with open communication, counseling, and discharge and by experimenting with working together more closely to lead our Communities.

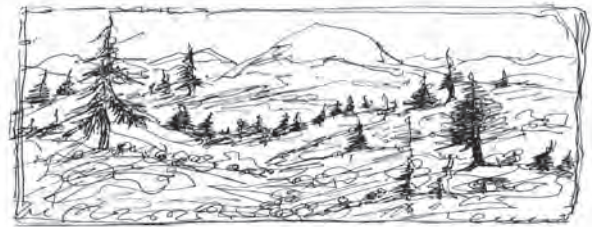
One way we often do collaborate well in leadership is in supporting our Reference Persons. We notice what they can't do, or can't do well, and we help them with it. This has played a good role, but I think it will work even better (in the long run) if we talk openly about what we see and the role we are playing as support people. A lot of us do the supporting without talking to the Reference Persons about it and addressing their struggle. Sometimes they aren't aware of the difficulty or are defensive about looking at it. If we simply take care of the problem, they never have to face and discharge on it. It may be painful for us, and the Reference Persons, to talk to them about the difficulty and how we'd like to counsel them on it and help them with it, but we will all move forward more if we do this.

Talking to leaders about their difficulties and where they need help can run perilously close to criticizing them and telling them they have a pattern, and a lot of us have distresses that make us want to criticize leaders and point out their patterns, so how are we going to do this? First, it doesn't make sense to do it if we don't already have a strong relationship with the Reference Person. We can trust that those who

are close to the Reference Person, who have a strong relationship from which to counsel him or her, can play this role or with help grow into playing this role. We can get close to those people and be a resource for them. We can also model having close Co-Counseling relationships with the people around us and supporting leaders well. We can read and discharge our way to understanding Guideline O on attacks, criticism, disagreement, and upset, and help others understand it too. If we have solid relationships with our leaders, we can ask them how they'd like to hear our thinking about their struggles, or we can talk to them about how the leaders' group might work toward being more open about leaders' difficulties and the assistance that is needed for the Area, Region, constituency, or leader to flourish.

While being out in the open about leadership struggles can open the door to patterned behavior that can be restimulating to and hard on a leader, with thought and discharge it can be done well. If we use our theory, and discharge on the mistakes we make toward others and others make toward us, I think it will bring big benefits.

Diane Shisk
Alternate International Reference
Person for the RC Communities
Seattle, Washington, USA



KATIE KAUFFMAN

⁹ Material means distress.

Think Freshly About the Job of Leadership

I hope you will do some completely fresh thinking about the job of leadership and not in any way assume that the example you have had in any of the Areas¹ is necessarily the way that an Area should function. Look over the *Guidelines*² with new eyes and think for yourself what would be the way to build a really strong, aware, alert, sharp Community in which people are recovering all their intelligence at great speed and in loving cooperation with each other.

Harvey Jackins
From a letter written in 1975

¹ An Area is a local RC Community.

² The *Guidelines for the Re-evaluation Counseling Communities*—the policies for the RC Communities

Will(ow)ing Weeps

The weeping willow wails for me and you
And for herself and for the world
Tears of pain and grief
And tears of joy

Drooping, bending, yielding, succumbing
Swaying and singing in the wind
Exerting, reaching, stretching, grounding
Standing still and tall in the quiet

Opening herself to the world
The light, the wind, the air, the rain, the sun
But enveloping herself around us at the same time,
Offering shade and cool, a swing, a soft mound,
a house of sorts

And in the storm the willow weeps
The wind wails
The water wettens
The way widens

An opening for me and you and the world
To come under the canopy of the willow
Not alone—stoic and stone, separate and unknowing
But with—searching, moving, will(ow)ing all kinds
of weeps



Rachel Mackson-Landsberg
New York City, New York, USA



MACHU PICCHU, PERU • DIANE SHISK

Community Membership

We're not going to pursue people anymore to ask them to come into the RC Community. We're going to communicate RC to lots of people, and lots of people are going to take fundamentals classes (under the name of RC and under fifty-seven other titles, as has been happening all along), but they will come into the Community only when they're ready to take responsibility for carrying out the functions of the Community. It's not going to be a free-for-all arena. We've wasted too much time with that kind of attempted functioning.

Harvey Jackins
From "The Working Class, the World, and RC,"
on page 490 of *The Benign Reality*

My First One-Day Workshop

On Sunday, August 19, 2012, I led my first one-day workshop.

To find my best thinking I often say to myself, "What would Barbara Love¹ do?" The idea to do an Albany Area² BLCD³ popped into my mind.

I asked a newer black Co-Counselor to organize the workshop. She happily accepted her first organizer job in RC. She and I had several Co-Counseling sessions and met weekly to think about the workshop. We stayed in touch with all the African heritage folks in our Area. We solicited help from our white allies.

The morning of the workshop the organizer and I arrived early along with two white Co-Counselors who'd agreed to help set up. It was a perfect contradiction⁴ to ask for and actually get help from white people. Upbeat music was playing as Co-Counselors arrived. Some danced their way to the registration table.

I felt exhilarated as we moved to the meeting space. I started the class by singing, "How could anyone ever tell you, you are anything less than beautiful? How could anyone ever tell you, you are less than whole? How could anyone fail to notice that your loving is a miracle? How deeply you're connected to my soul."⁵ Several Co-Counselors joined in, and we sang the song four times. At the end everyone was smiling at each other.

Introductions followed a mini-session. I recommended that we get so close that we have no secrets between us. We played a game in which we learned a lot about each other while having fun.

I posted and read the Commitment for Black Persons⁶ and used it as a guide for how we

could strive to live our lives. I reminded us all that any thoughts we had that were opposed to the commitment were likely internalized racism and were not our fault. I talked about using the commitment in sessions and keeping a copy of it to read every day as a reminder. I counseled a couple of people in front of the group using the commitment.

Then everyone put his or her name in a hat. We each picked a name and gave an appreciation to that person. We ended the morning singing together.

It was a beautiful day, so we ate lunch together outside. If you'd seen us, you might have thought we were a happy family, enjoying each other's company.

After the afternoon sessions we gathered and people shared about how the sessions had worked. All the comments were favorable. I suggested we commit to having regular sessions with each other. I said that it was only racism and internalized racism that prevented us from doing that.

We played hula hoops, double-Dutch jump rope, Bananagrams, and dominoes. Some of us taught each other these games. We were loud and laughed a lot. A good time was had by all. Never in our wildest dreams could we have believed that ten grown black people would be playing like this on a Sunday afternoon.

Class started back up with a song we had learned at BLCD. Then I asked, "How many people grew up getting lots of appreciations?" Sadly, no one raised a hand. I asked them all to appreciate themselves completely without any reservations. We struggled through several rounds. In many instances the appreciations were about what they did for others. I counseled several people on why self-appreciation is so difficult for black people.

All of my thinking and openly caring was a result of the many hours of excellent counseling I received from my crew of close Co-Counselors, who are able to think well about me and my vision for a black RC Community.

My butterfly is breaking out of its cocoon!

Josephine Grimes
Albany, New York, USA

¹ Barbara Love is the International Liberation Reference Person for African Heritage People.

² An Area is a local RC Community.

³ BLCD stands for Black Liberation and Community Development. Every year there is either an International BLCD workshop (led by Barbara Love) or several Regional BLCD workshops (led by other black RC leaders).

⁴ Contradiction to distress

⁵ A song written by Libby Roderick, a Co-Counselor

⁶ The RC commitment for black persons: For the complete liberation of my beautiful, wise, strong, and courageous black people, I solemnly promise I will always remember our/my own goodness and strength. I will fight against every division that tends to separate us from each other and from other people. I will settle for nothing less than complete liberation, complete equality, complete opportunity, and complete respect for everyone.

“A Wonderful Day” in Abagana

What a wonderful day!
What looking-forward-to's!
What great expectations!
What excitement!

At the recent RC meeting in Abagana (Nigeria), we started with introductions, which included our names, what was good about the day, and what RC had done for us. Then, because some among us were new to RC, we reminded ourselves of the tenets of RC, such as listening attentively to our clients and not giving advice but instead helping them discharge painful emotion.

After turns in small groups, we decided to share what we had learnt from RC. People's comments included the following: RC helped me to have focus and be a good listener, which wasn't the case previously. • RC helped me to welcome people's views, whereas previously I didn't see much good in *everybody's* views.

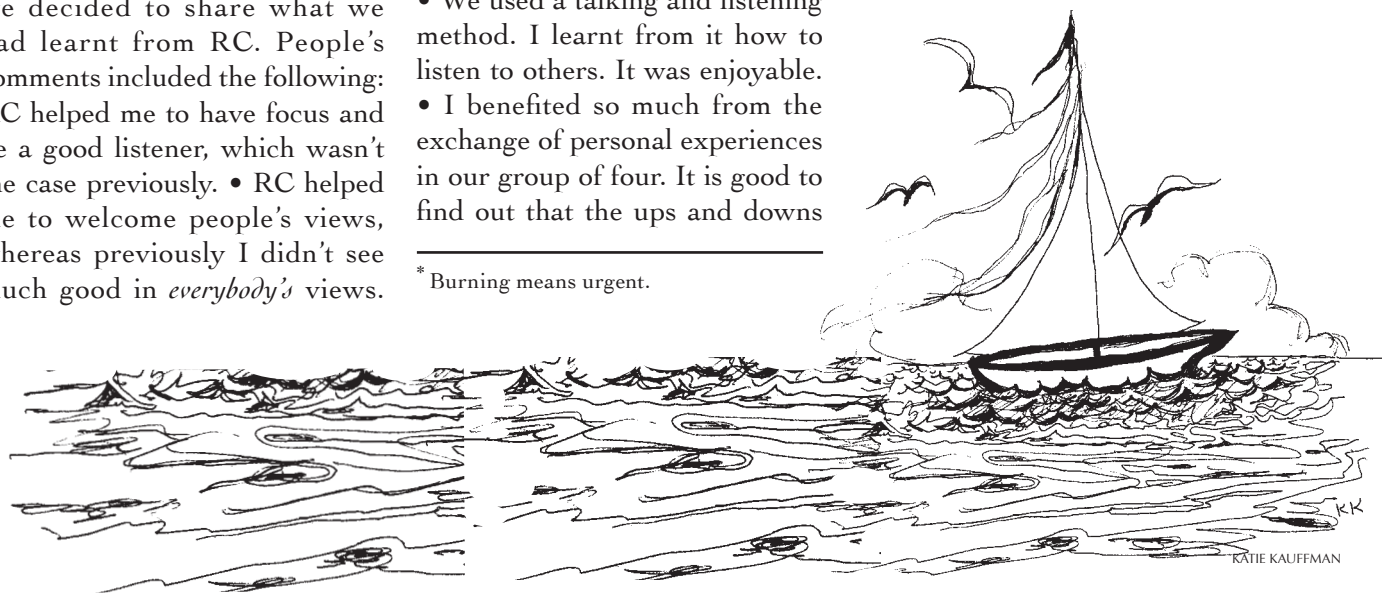
• Today was special in that we discussed burning* issues in our society and also shared joyful experiences. I am very happy. Thanks. • Everybody in my group had a good experience to share. • RC gladdened my heart. It helped people to share views and relieve immediate problems. • I got a lot of knowledge; I wish we could meet every month. • RC enabled my group to share experiences. These experiences encouraged others. • It was a happy reunion—motivating and stimulating, a time of good relationships and emotional relief. • Sadness and joy were shared with each other. • We used a talking and listening method. I learnt from it how to listen to others. It was enjoyable. • I benefited so much from the exchange of personal experiences in our group of four. It is good to find out that the ups and downs

* Burning means urgent.

of life affect everyone. • I learnt that people should be given the opportunity to make decisions themselves. There was happiness and joy in sharing. • I appreciate the way we rubbed minds together, forgetting about work and other things that give tension. • An RC meeting should be organized every term. • I felt a lot of relief after sharing a misfortune with my colleagues.

At 2:00 PM we appreciated one another, which brought the meeting to a close.

Princess Chinwe Agwuna
Abagana, Nigeria



People Living in Poverty

The main reason it's hard to reach people who are currently living in poverty is, of course, the poverty. The conditions of living impose an enormous amount of work and discouragement on them, and make it hard at any time for them to contact or be contacted by other people, have transportation to meetings, be able to pay for workshops or classes (or food or clothing). Yet they are the people we must include in RC to be very effective, and they will wind up* leading the rest of us.

Harvey Jackins
From a letter written in 1995

* Wind up means end up.

Getting Classism Out of RC, Co-Counseling In

I have referred to Re-evaluation Counseling as the best organization in the world, and I'm not one to gloss over our mistakes to date. As RCers we try to aim high and not let fear or false comfort govern our decisions. That ends up making RC a unique organization, and overall the best one people have come up with¹ to date.

It's also a specific organization—not geared to interact in the political realm, pop culture, or Internet environment, but to improve the quality and quantity of Co-Counseling so that individuals can cause great ripples in many human endeavors.

I think we must continually consider this unique strength while not overestimating the limits of our group.

I can't think of any time that humanity was not at a crossroads, whether it was 1990 or six thousand years ago, but what we face today is significantly different than at any other time. There should be real doubts about our practical ability to maintain even the level of rationality and material comfort we have had in the last few decades. There should be real concerns about losing a billion lives. Bill McKibben² refers to Eearth³ as not the same planet as the Earth we grew up on, in terms of climate and ecosystems. The windows of opportunity, for keeping what's going well and greatly improving what's not, keep getting shorter and smaller.

What could a quiet, in-the-background RC (similar to what we have now) provide to the world at this crossroads? Could we quadruple the number of RC teachers and Co-Counselors each year? (If not, it'd be interesting to hear a rational reason as to why not.) That's one direction to consider.

What could a more visible RC provide? Individually, we've tended to look at ourselves as the catalysts for the kinds of revolutions of values needed—and for the dignified, non-violent, workable, playful, emotional social revolutions that every person truly wants. But, as a group, what good risks should be taken, keeping in mind that all types of social and physical tipping points may soon be unleashed if no group of well-prepared leaders steps to the front by next month? Should we be running people for prime minister or president, for instance—to name a path that would be highly visible and sharply divergent from our current one—and increasing Co-Counselors a hundred-fold as part of

that path? This question of a more visible RC deserves a lot of thought. There are many specific forms it could take.

Either way we look, I think that one obstacle will get in the way, if permitted. That's the pattern of one-way counseling, of offering a session but not being eager to Co-Counsel with just about anyone we see at a workshop or class. While there are occasions for one-way counseling, one-way-counseling patterns are simply part of classism, similar to what we see from professionals in the workplace. They can be stepped out of at any time by recognizing the value of each person as a Co-Counselor—especially anyone we encounter in RC, especially anyone who might be viewed as “not ready” at that moment.

Anyone who does not step firmly away from the temptation to look at another as someone who “needs my counseling,” rather than as a great Co-Counselor with tons of distress, “just like me,” will not be able to discharge key parts of classism. If that's not glaringly obvious, we don't understand oppression yet.

Of course, RC literature has many reminders. Harvey⁴ knew what he was doing. The second paragraph of the *Guidelines* says that our primary activity is that of Co-Counseling; our basic role with each other is to exchange counseling. You can start with the *Guidelines*, but it's maybe the weakest place to start. They come from human experience. The natural, built-in viewpoint is that people are attractive. The patterns aren't, no question there, but if a person seems to you totally buried under patterns, you know that it just means that you have no attention at that moment—and she should probably counsel you first. If you find yourself at a workshop you're leading with twenty-five participants and you're eager to counsel only with six—or worse, two—you know you're struggling against heavy classism. Going ahead and assuming you're at least as stuck as everyone around you (probably more at that moment) is a victory over classism and unjust societies. However you feel, you'll be surging ahead by eagerly going after⁵ Co-Counseling with any of us who may seem unready.

The trends external to RC are much bigger and more complicated, but this internal problem of underestimating people is completely under our control. If tackled quickly, which merely means getting the joy of more varied Co-Counseling, my sense is that the big questions I raised will indeed be handled well. If, as a group, we largely stay stuck in this popular form of classism, the world will suffer far more than necessary.

Jim Shackelford
Bloomington, Indiana, USA

¹ Come up with means created.

² Bill McKibben is a U.S. environmentalist, author, and journalist who has written and organized extensively on the issue of global warming.

³ Eearth is a term used by Bill McKibben to describe the new planet we live on as a result of global warming.

⁴ Harvey Jackins

⁵ Going after means pursuing.

Adjusting for Voluntarily Poor People?

A new member of our Community is asking for cheaper ways of attending workshops. He is an artist who has decided to prioritize his artistry, and time with his children, over earning money “by entering the capitalist wheel.” He would prefer that he pay by working, that we cook our own food, that comfortable things like a bed or cooked food be options that people pay extra for, and so on. Both he and I have feelings to discharge. Meanwhile I’d be interested in hearing how others of you have dealt with similar requests in your Areas.¹ I guess one way of putting it is how to include people who make radically different choices, without making it hard for less radical people.

Fredrik Eklöf
Oxie, Sweden

¹ An Area is a local RC Community.

I am interested in this, although I have never had this exact question.

We do have people who barter for classes, and we have left that up to² our individual teachers. The question of bartering for workshops is different. We are trying to build community. As we do that, we need to think about what is necessary for the whole Community. If people get to opt out of paying, they are not contributing to the whole Community. We continue to try to build a diverse Community. As we do that, we find that there is a greater need for outreach funds.³ We cannot send money to Seattle⁴ for outreach for support

² Up to means at the discretion of.

³ Outreach funds, for making RC available to people who have limited financial resources and are from groups that are under-represented in the RC Communities, consist of a certain percentage of the income from RC classes and workshops.

⁴ Seattle, Washington, USA—the location of Re-evaluation Counseling Community Resources, where the outreach funds are kept

of the Community if people are not contributing in money.

I have been encouraging people in my Area to counsel on budgeting more for RC. Most people (although probably not the person you describe) spend money on movies, music, vacations, going out to eat, and other extras. Co-Counseling, in my view, is not an extra—it is essential. And participating in Co-Counseling includes supporting the International Community as well as our local Area. It is a matter of making re-emergence a priority. I say this with love, and in the hopes of encouraging discharge and communication.

Judy Tilsen
St. Paul, Minnesota, USA

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



Keeping in Contact with Young People

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

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

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

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

Send information to Megan Lynes, at <meganlynes@gmail.com> or Zero Brattle Drive, Apt. 4, Arlington, Massachusetts 02474, USA. If you e-mail, please put “Allies to Shifting Young People” in the subject line.

Thank you,
Tim Jackins

The Collapsing Society—Harvey's Perspective in 1986

*Harvey Jackins, at the Peace and Disarmament Activists' Workshop
in Boston, Massachusetts, USA, July 1986*

Question: You said earlier that we're in the last stages of decline and collapse.

Harvey: This society is in the last stages of collapse, yes.

Question: What are the indicators of that, and what is going to happen, in your view, when that collapse actually happens?

Harvey: The collapse is happening. Remember *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*? What did the author say about how the Roman Empire, the slave society, collapsed?

Answer: A lot of people draw parallels between what was happening then and what's happening now. The same sort of signs.



BRIAN LAVENDEL

Harvey: The same sort of signs, yeah. The economic system is completely untenable. You cannot solve pollution. You cannot have clean water. You cannot have clean air. It cannot be done anymore in the context of this society. You cannot have safe schools. It's just a few years since grade school teachers had safe, comfortable lives. Now second-graders pack knives and kill their teachers. The degree of addiction to destructive drugs is enormous and spiraling rapidly. You cannot have clean streets. You cannot repair the streets. Drive the streets of Boston! (*Laughter*) You cannot have improvement in employment. They've all become impossible without the complete change in society. The values of the old, collapsing society still persist: profit above all; fast profit above all other profit.

Read about the degradation of Roman society before it failed—the terrible things that were done to children, and so on. I'm old enough that in my youth I used to come to New York City and walk around Times Square for hours, for the enjoyment of that wonderful place where people from all over the world would come. Times Square was a wonderful place. Now it's a place where little children are placed on sale—boys and girls the social workers can't do anything about, the church workers can't do anything about, the priests can't do anything about—that's just the way it is. It's impossible to correct.

There are innumerable indications that this society is in the last stages of collapse. The objective situation is ripe, ripe, ripe for a new society. Subjectively, our minds are still caught up in fear and confusion and patterns of all kinds.

In the 1930s when we leftists¹ were organizing the unemployed and getting together big demonstrations, taking over City Hall, and so on, we had much more of a program available to the public than there is now.

continued . . .

¹ Leftists are people who are politically progressive.

TEACHING, LEADING, COMMUNITY BUILDING

... continued

Question: When you say "collapse," is collapse chaos? Barbarism?

Harvey: I think the future society will largely be an enormous number of topic groups. I think we'll have an administrative staff. There are good people who know how to administer; they can't make the present system work, but they're good administrators. I suspect we'll be governing ourselves in a huge democracy through the use of electronics. I suspect that when there's a problem, the equivalent of the mayor or the governor or the president or the block warden will ask who would like to form a topic group to come up with² a solution. And the people who are interested in doing it will meet and come back with a report. All of us will put in ten minutes a day in front of our television with a voting button on it, and the report will either be accepted or rejected. If rejected, they'll call for a new topic group that will go out and come back with a better solution.

We'll be governing ourselves by being informed and voting on issues that are of concern to us, pretty much³ the way we run things in RC. We take very few votes in RC. We get working consensus much of the time. The people who are interested get together and work on the problem and write a report, and the rest of us accept it and go off about⁴ our business. I think that's what the decent society is going to be a lot like.

Question: Do you see a way that the transformation to a rational society could happen without the mass violence?

Harvey: Sure. If you just do everything I'm telling you to at this workshop. (*Laughter*) Really. If you will immediately begin to seriously build your world community in the ways I outlined this morning, you can start to do it. It will work. All you have to do is give up your damn patterns and make good decisions and keep making them. I think that rather than have the French Revolution, or Liberty leading the people with her big flag and bare breasts on top of the barricades . . . I don't think that will be the way it works. (*Laughter*)

If we do this job right, it seems to me it's perfectly possible for somebody to pass a note around the factory in the forenoon: "Gather in the lunch room at noon; the issue is whether we take over the factory and move to a worker-owned society or not. Please attend." (*Laughter*) People come in and you say, "You've all read the note. Will all those in favor please raise their hands?" All raise them except one guy who says, "I'm gonna⁵ start a club for feudalism. I want to go back to feudalism." Everybody laughs real hard and he sits and grins sheepishly and the convener says, "It's obvious the consensus is such that the factory is now owned by us. Who will be a delegate to discuss with the other factories how we coordinate production?" "Well, I'm busy, but I'll go." (*Laughter*)

That's perfectly possible. But whether it happens or whether (*Harvey describes the loss of life in World Wars I and II and the possibility of nuclear holocaust*)—those are our choices. We can have that easy lunch-hour takeover, if we use the knowledge we have now. That I'm sure of.

² Come up with means think of.

³ Pretty much means mostly.

⁴ Go about means continue with.

⁵ Gonna means going to.

Your Importance

If you could only sense how important you are to the lives of those you meet; how important you can be to the people you may never even dream of. There is something of yourself that you leave at every meeting with another person.

Fred Rogers

Teaching RC on a College Campus

I have been teaching two RC fundamentals classes on a college campus every spring semester for the past five years. About a hundred students have taken the course, some two or three times. Because the classes have proved to be an effective way to get the basics of Co-Counseling to young adults from many different backgrounds, I thought I would write about how they came about, with the hope of encouraging RC Communities to look to academic institutions in their midst as possible places in which to attract young adults to RC. I've divided the report into two segments. This one will focus on getting the classes going. The second will talk about what has worked well in the course itself.*

Getting to teach RC in academia can be challenging. In a few places it has been accepted and openly taught as an academic subject, but more often it has been viewed as unscholarly and unscientific—and, in programs that train “mental health” professionals, even dangerous! I encountered this attitude in my psychology graduate program, clinical internship, and twenty-three-year career at a research-focused university. In my first year at that university, when I incorporated information about RC into a graduate seminar for clinical psychology doctoral students, several of the students wrote letters complaining about my not teaching real psychology and urged that I not be reappointed. So I learned to mask my enthusiasm and to present RC in a limited form, as one of several humanistic personality theories or expressive approaches to counseling. Each year though, Rational Island Publishers could count on my bulk order of *The Human Side of Human Beings*, which I included as required reading for every course I could fit it into.

After retiring and moving from New England to northern

California (USA), I was eager to devote more time to teaching RC. A chance circumstance—I was looking to get library privileges at a local university—led me to the chair of the psychology department. We made a good connection over lunch, and she invited me to teach a course or two in her department, on any subject I wanted. I said there was only one course I was interested in teaching and proceeded to tell her about RC. To my surprise, she said it would be fine. I decided that rather than simply offer a course for psychology majors, I would see what student groups on campus might find it particularly useful or appealing.



After speaking with various administrators, I found my way to the director of a peer mentor program, which trained and then paid students to staff a center where anyone could drop in for help with the daily challenges of academic life. Calling my course “Seminar in Advanced Listening Skills,” I described it to him as an opportunity for students to learn how to listen and support their peers, learn how to deal with others’ emotional upsets, and become confident in handling challenging new situations. He was immediately enthusiastic, since these were not skills that were emphasized in his program’s trainings. The advantage for me

was that I wouldn’t need to do any screening, as the students were all committed to helping others and had been selected for his program based on their motivation, maturity, and strong academic performance. I made brief presentations in his training classes and supervision groups, reaching about seventy-five students, forty-three of whom applied to take the course.

Five years down the road, here are some of the ways I’ve figured out to develop and expand the program:

COURSE STRUCTURE

Although each year I have been paid to teach only one course, I decided to divide it into two sections of twelve students each. Eight or ten has also worked well, but fourteen proved to be too many, given that the class period is only an hour and fifteen minutes long. The classes have met once a week, throughout a fifteen-week semester, for one unit of credit. After the first year, some uncertainties about my health led me to invite Ruth Jacobsen, a lecturer in the social work department and also an RC teacher, to teach the course with me. We taught it together for three years. This year, because Ruth’s schedule didn’t allow it, I invited Rita Duarte Herrera, an educator and Community RC teacher, to be the co-teacher. The psychology department has been accommodating in granting appointments to non-psychologists, as long as they have a master’s degree in an area that seems relevant to the course. Co-teaching has been a wonderful experience. Someone can be there if one of us is sick or out of town, it feels more creative and supportive than teaching alone, and of course it’s much richer for the students. In addition, a student who took the course twice has served in the last two years as an assistant.

continued . . .

* Came about means came into existence.

... continued

RECRUITING

For the first three years, almost all the students came from the peer mentor program. But then, because the program's funding was cut, the pool became much smaller and I had to look elsewhere. In addition, some of the students who had taken the course more than once wanted it to be more widely available in the university and began to talk about building a young adult RC Community there. So I met with the directors of other peer helping programs (such as academic tutors and freshman orientation leaders), knowing that students in those programs would have gone through screening and training and would be motivated to improve their helping skills. I talked as well with faculty and supervisors in professional training programs (undergraduate and graduate) such as nursing and nutritional counseling, giving them fliers to post and give out to their students. Two lecturers in psychology who also supervised peer programs got excited about the course and let me come and speak to their classes about it. In addition, Ruth got the word out to her students in social work, and each year an increasing number of them applied to take the class.

With program directors, the name of the course is immediately appealing—they invariably agree that students need to learn to listen better. I've found it most effective to focus with them on how the class will increase students' ability to help others, only mentioning in passing any possible personal benefits. I don't talk about the nature of human beings, the benefits of discharge, or people freeing themselves from the effects of past distress experiences.

With student groups, I'm more freewheeling and try to generate excitement. I start off by appreciating them for their commitment to helping others and to making a difference in the world. If they are part of a

peer helping program, I tell them that I know they've been selected for it because of their outstanding leadership potential. Then I explain that the reason I'm offering the course, even though I'm retired, is because it includes the most useful information I've ever come across and that if they end up taking the course, it could change their lives. I provide details of how it will enhance their helping skills. I describe how they will come to understand better why people feel and act as they do and will know useful things to do if someone bursts into tears, is overwhelmed with anxiety, or is furiously angry (I provide scenarios to make it more dramatic).



Then I segue into explaining how the understanding and skills they will learn for helping others may also be applied to themselves. I tell them that they will most likely increase their self-confidence, and effectiveness in their studies and employment, and deal more effectively with stress, recover more easily from upsets and painful life events, and improve their relationships with friends and family members. Finally, I tell them that the course will help them understand and deal with oppressive behavior, such as sexism and racism. I don't emphasize anything that might sound "therapeutic," as some of them may be wary of self-exploration and re-visiting and discharging old hurts. The message I give is a practical one: that the course will provide useful knowledge and skills for helping others and may be applied to themselves if they wish.

Because the students often have full course loads and one or two jobs as well, the prospect of adding even a one-credit course is not appealing. I sell it by explaining that it meets only once a week, there are no papers or exams, and the small amount of reading I provide is optional. All they have to do to get credit is come to class, have a once-a-week session with a partner to practice what they've learned, and hand in a log sheet each week to show that they've done the session. If students are present who have already taken the course, I invite them to share what was useful for them. They often say that they had more time as a result of it, because they were less stressed and could manage their work more effectively. They also talk about the specialness of the group—that it became a safe, cohesive place where they got to feel close to everyone. One peer program director chimed in that she had taken a course like this (it was an RC class) when she was a student and that it transformed her life.

I then invite questions, and hand out applications that ask for contact information, whether they are in a peer helping program, and how they heard about the class. I offer several possible class times on two different days and ask them to indicate which they could definitely do, which they might be able to do, and which they definitely could not do. This allows me to select the times that can accommodate the most students and to also have more options about the make-up of the two classes, so that students don't end up being the only person in the class from a particular ethnic background.

I use several approaches to try to determine whether students will be dependable class members who will benefit from the experience. I trust that those in peer helping programs have been sufficiently pre-screened, though I do ask the program directors if there are any problems that might get in their way. I also admit any

students who have been referred by a previous class member, on the assumption that they are likely to know what they're getting into. For students who come via posted notices or my visits to psychology classes, I speak with the faculty members and program directors to determine whether they know the students well enough to be confident of their reliability and emotional stability. For all other applicants, I require a brief interview.

This screening approach is the best I've been able to figure out, given time constraints and my wish to make RC widely available. But, in fact, I'm often not able to predict from my initial impressions who will make good use of the class and perhaps continue with RC. Sometimes those who have seemed the most distressed at the outset have ended up transforming their lives. A number of students have sat there in terror or confusion throughout the semester and yet signed up to take the course again the following year. One such young man took it three years running, and another is now an emerging RC Community leader who has recruited a half dozen people for the course. Interviews have been useful for letting students know more about what to expect, particularly that people may show strong emotions, so that they may decide that the course is not for them. This past year in an interview I was able to help a severely distressed young woman decide to opt out. (I connected her with the college counseling center.) The final screening takes place during the first two weeks of the semester; we jump right in with RC fundamentals, and by the end of the second class a few people generally drop out. They give various reasons, like work schedules or a required course they have to take instead, but I tend to assume they've decided that the course isn't for them. If I have a waiting list, new people get added in to replace them.



KATHY TAYLOR

LINKING UP WITH THE RC COMMUNITY

Getting students to make the transition to a Community RC class has been a challenge. We have tried a number of things, including half-day and day-long workshops on campus for current and former students, led by us or the Area Reference Person, with other RC leaders attending and leading support groups. Students have loved the workshops, and a class led by a Community teacher resulted from one of them, but when it came to the actual class meetings, the attendance was sparse. Possibly we have now turned a corner. This year's end-of-semester workshop had good attendance and high energy, with a number of students indicating they wanted to keep having sessions and become part of the RC Community. Four students from previous years recently contacted me about joining a Community class, and four others have been assisting in RC classes in different Communities. They are all eager to promote young adult involvement in RC.

SUMMING UP

Although we teach RC, our classes differ from Community classes in terms of the goals and expectations. We make it clear from the outset that our aim is to teach listening and helping skills, and RC theory and techniques are presented within that context. We definitely encourage discharge as a means of healing from past hurts, but we respect that some students may not wish to delve into their own feelings. All of the students end up with an understanding of

the nature of human beings, the counseling process, and societal oppression. They feel a connection with other class members and have a more positive view of themselves, and most of them do choose to work on old hurts. But a few of them don't. Our acceptance of this makes it possible for everyone to feel successful, and some of those who don't work on their feelings surprise us by showing up the next year to take the course again, because they got a glimpse of something more to be gained. Usually the second (or third) time around, the discharge comes.

Unlike many RC Communities, we have access to a wonderfully diverse body of potential participants, many of whom are children of immigrants or immigrants themselves. Some have been migrant farmworkers, or lived in war zones, or been homeless, while others have been raised in privilege.

The main point I hope to make is that getting to teach RC in an academic setting is often not difficult, and doing it can be rewarding. Up until now we've been paid, but in the coming year, because of university-wide cutbacks, we will teach the classes on a volunteer basis. This may be a useful approach for RC teachers wanting to start a class in a college setting. In this time of austerity and cutbacks, a proposal for free services might be an offer that is hard to refuse.

Phyllis Bronstein
Los Altos Hills, California, USA

Appreciating RC Literature

I have appreciated for many decades PRESENT TIME and the other RC literature—the sharing of theory, experience, encouragement, and inspiration from so many familiar and unfamiliar people around the world—starting with PRESENT TIME No. 11, printed on pastel paper and tied with yarn (I may have done that later, I don't know). I am grateful to everyone who has shared, and all who have supported and assisted in the sharing.



Russell Hayes
Lexington, Kentucky, USA

Loving this current (October 2012) PRESENT TIME. Really full.



Diane Balser
Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts, USA

[Regarding the lists in the back of PRESENT TIME:] Thank you for the brilliant work you do in keeping such clean communications available to everyone.

Heather Nicholson
Totnes, Devon, England

I am always so excited when the latest PRESENT TIME lands in my letterbox, because it's great to hear what is happening in the rest of the International Communities, and the articles are really helpful and inspiring. I also love seeing when people I know have written an article.



Josie Thomas-Samways
Plymouth, Devon, England

PRESENT TIME is so well organized, starting with counseling practice, going to community building, and so on. It makes a huge difference to have a cohesive, organized journal with accurate information about humans and what's possible in our benign reality. It allows me daily to remember and act on my inherent power. I read it on the train, where I can sometimes forget what's true about us humans; it's an especially powerful tool and contradiction* in those places.



Benjamin Altman
Brooklyn, New York, USA

* Contradiction to distress



CORA LAKE, WASHINGTON, USA • LISA VOSS

The following two articles are from a discussion, on the RC e-mail discussion list for leaders of wide world change, that took place before the recent U.S. presidential election.

Racism and the U.S. Presidential Election

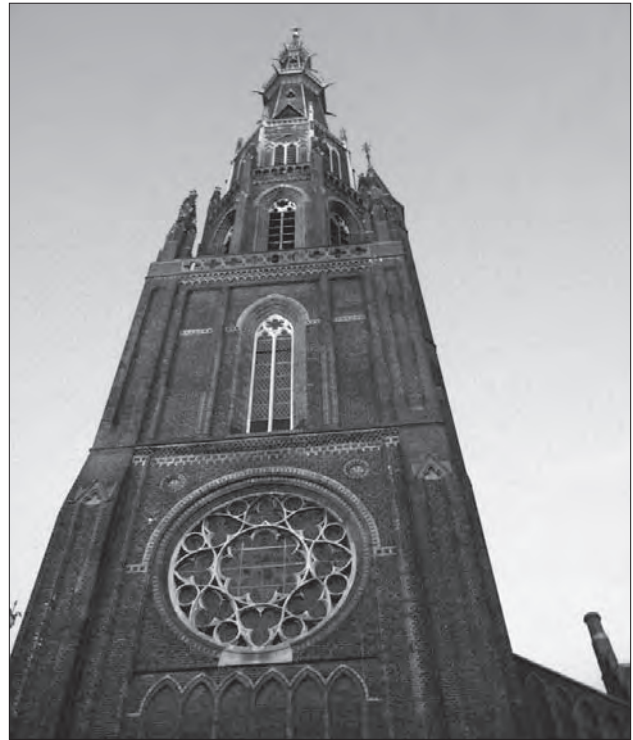
I believe that racism, particularly toward African Americans, is the most important issue in this U.S. presidential election. We need to pay attention to it, and we can't let our feelings be manipulated to where we don't speak out clearly. We need to discharge and find ways to integrate RC into our discussions outside of RC.

Elections in any country of the world do not, and cannot, do what they are allegedly supposed to do. They are not really about substantive policy decisions, having real discussions, or giving people a voice. Within capitalism and the present collapsing economy, elections are not a route to real change (a widespread confusion in the election four years ago). However, they can be and often are big opportunities to listen to people, raise issues, and provide fresh perspectives.

The presidential debate the other night was difficult to watch, and afterward the commentaries were even more difficult. Jon Stewart (a Jewish political television satirist) was the only person I saw who exposed the racism toward the President.

Given the nature of capitalism, I don't think that any president of the United States could do better than Barack Obama (which does not mean that one cannot understand and expose the limitations of the job). The attacks on President Obama from the predominantly white, Gentile, male-dominated right wing* and white, Gentile, male-dominated media are overtly racist. After the debate people were impressed by how Romney broke the debate rules, stepped over the moderator, and explicitly lied over and over again about his positions. Many people (particularly white commentators) were critical of how President Obama did not "fight back." However, no one talks about how Obama has to deal with the racist stereotype of the "angry, violent black man" or how Michelle Obama was criticized four years ago for being an "angry black woman" with the threat that she would cause her husband to lose the presidency.

The right-wing media is calling the President "the worst president in the history of the United States." Everyone knows that he is the first and only African American president. One only needs to remember the white male U.S.



THE NETHERLANDS • TIM JACKINS

presidents who condoned slavery (several had slaves), who supported the genocide of Native peoples, who were against women's right to vote, who stopped European Jews from coming into the United States during World War II, who bombed Japan with nuclear weapons.

ANTI-JEWISH OPPRESSION

Anti-Jewish oppression has also entered into the election. The right wing has claimed that President Obama is not a friend of Israel, the subtext being that a black man could not be a friend of the Jewish people. This is an attempt to drive a wedge between African Americans and Jews. Of the wealthy billionaires who support the Republican party, the few who are Jewish are the ones who are made visible. This makes it appear that Romney's major sources of funding, beyond himself, are wealthy Jews, thus blaming Jews for bad policies that target working-class people and the peoples of the Middle East.

Diane Balseer
Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts, USA

continued . . .

* Right wing means politically reactionary forces.



... continued

A Growing Solidarity Between Black and Latino/a People

Yesterday I spent the day listening to neighbors and community leaders in my Mexican-Chicano/a-Salvadoran-Latino/a neighborhood talk about the presidential debate of the day before.

Racism and classism were on the minds of many. One Mexican immigrant woman said to me in Spanish, “Mitt Romney¹ was so aggressive and disrespectful toward the President. He acted the way I expect white men to act when they have the power of wealth.” She said that she would rather vote for a president who valued humility and simplicity—how she saw Barack Obama—than someone with the aggressiveness of Romney.

Given how racism plays out,² this poor Mexican immigrant woman’s perspective on the value of humility would never be voiced or even considered in the media. The white establishment gets to decide who “won” the debate. The white owning-class perspective is considered normal.

I see the election as an opportunity for Co-Counselors to listen to people broadly, especially people targeted by racism whose viewpoints will not be voiced in most of the mainstream media.

On another note, on Monday President Obama is traveling to Keene, California (USA), to dedicate a national monument honoring the late farm worker and labor leader Cesar Chavez. I am organizing two vans from my community to travel for two and a half hours to witness this historic event at which the pioneering liberation work of a Chicano man will be recognized nationally by our first black president.

Every person I’ve invited has said yes, even though we have to leave at 4:00 AM. Mexican-Chicana-Salvadoran-Latina mothers, grandmothers, and workers have said they will do whatever they have to do to clear out their Monday commitments in order to be there. I hope the day proves to be an opportunity for us black and Latino/a people and our allies to continue building bridges toward one another in spite of the layers of oppression that have divided us.

Later

The President’s dedication of the Cesar Chavez National Monument was an extraordinary experience. It

¹ Mitt Romney ran against Barack Obama in the November 2012 U.S. presidential election.

² Plays out means is acted out.

brought together Mexican-American/Latino/a people, black people, and white people—a diverse group of over six thousand. There were many highlights but two in particular for me. One was President Obama’s genuine and profound admiration for the work of Cesar Chavez, and his movement, to organize poor migrant Latino/a farm workers for better wages and working conditions. He expressed his admiration for the labor leader’s determination, courage, hopefulness, and belief in people.

Another was when I turned around to take a picture of a community leader who was part of my group and saw that she, a Mexican immigrant woman, was seated next to two black women who were wearing t-shirts with photos on them of Cesar Chavez and President Obama. When I told the women how much I liked their t-shirts and asked them where they’d gotten them, they smiled and said they’d designed them themselves for that special occasion. It moved me to see those two black women claiming Cesar Chavez as one of their heroes, alongside our president, and to see thousands of Latinos/as claiming and backing³ our first black president as their leader (even as the mainstream media continued to criticize his performance during the first debate and cast doubt on his re-election). I saw the day as a hopeful sign of a growing solidarity between black and Latino/a people.

Ellie Hidalgo
Los Angeles, California, USA

³ Backing means supporting.



BRIAN LAVENDEL



ALAN EPSTEIN

The Re-emergence of Humanity

We have survived, exist in great numbers, have vast information and technology, and, at last, understand the source of our own irrationalities and have the tools to correct them.

We are in the process of re-emerging into the warm light of reality, relating warmly and caringly to all other forms of life, rejoicing in each other everywhere, and being eager for more knowledge and a wider role in the Universe.

We will surely continue this process to completion, not only for ourselves, for the honor of our ancestors and the well-being of our descendants, for the care of all living things, but also for properly preparing to meet and enjoy the other intelligences that we confidently anticipate meeting in the wider Universe and for the Universe as a whole.

The Universe is designed for, and awaits with eagerness, a fully re-emerged, fully human humanity.

Harvey Jackins

Reprinted from *The Benign Reality*, page 674

Complete Index to *Present Time* Available On-Line

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Thanks very much!
Rational Island Publishers

United to End Racism at the Tule Lake Pilgrimage, July 2012

Here is a report on the United to End Racism project at the Tule Lake Pilgrimage¹ of July 2012:

WE WERE READY

Because the twelve members of our United to End Racism (UER) team were spread across the United States, in the months leading up to the pilgrimage we had six conference calls. We discharged together about the Japanese/Okinawan incarceration and how at the pilgrimage we would be listening to wartime stories, making friends on the buses, and talking to new people about RC.

We each had jobs for the project, before and during the pilgrimage, and we worked in teams on all of them so that no one was working alone. By the time we met as a full team at the pilgrimage, we were well connected.

WE ENLISTED ALLIES

I asked all the people on the team to consider organizing a local support group for themselves. We were going to be counselors for four-hundred people, days and evenings for four days straight, so I thought an hour or two of one-way discharge time from our beloved allies at home was warranted.

I am especially proud of the people in my local Community in Olympia, Washington, USA. They not only counseled me but organized logistics for the day-long workshop for the northwest half of our UER team; prepared my house for the workshop, and sleepover; and brought us delicious home-cooked meals. They also picked

¹ The Tule Lake Pilgrimage is a bi-annual pilgrimage to the Tule Lake Internment Camp, in Oregon, USA, where 18,700 people of Japanese and Okinawan heritage were interned by the U.S. government during World War II. For more about United to End Racism's participation in the pilgrimages, see pages 57 to 67 of *Present Time* No. 157 (October 2009).

people up from the train station, drove us all to the pilgrimage bus, picked us up upon our return, and organized a Community report-back.

WHAT WE DID

We did many things to prepare for and execute our UER project, but here are some of the key roles people played:

Karen Young organized us to listen to more than fifty elders, eighty to ninety-five years old, who had been incarcerated at Tule Lake Segregation Center during the war. We were preparing them to be able to tell their stories to their families and friends during the intergenerational discussion groups. We looked for them during the pilgrimage, sat with them on the bus, and ate meals with them. Then we facilitated the discussion groups they were in. Because of the connections we built, many of them came to our UER workshop.

Betsy Hasegawa, Scot Barg, and Shelley Macy thoughtfully organized 375 people into twenty-four discussion groups, keeping families and friends together and making sure that no one was the only person of his or her constituency in a group.

Lois Yoshishige led a training for all twenty-four discussion group facilitators. In ninety minutes she taught basic RC theory about listening and discharge to people who had never before facilitated a group. One person got scared and wanted to withdraw from being a facilitator but by the end of the training decided she was ready to help people listen to each other and cry. Two of the facilitators want to take a fundamentals class back home.

Along with the facilitators we trained, we led some of the intergenerational discussion groups. In earlier years, before our UER project, some pilgrimage participants had complained of headaches and exhaustion after

the groups. They had been recalling hard experiences without discharging. Now people cry, hug each other, take group pictures, and report that the discussion groups are the highlight of the pilgrimage. Discharge and connection make a huge difference!

Alix Mariko Webb organized our Listening Table. It was a huge success. We worked in shifts and posted a question each day aimed at getting people to show what they were experiencing at the pilgrimage. People lined up, waiting to be listened to by someone on our team. We gave them literature about RC, UER, and internalized racism.

M'Lis Bartlett and Sue Yoshiwara led a discharge group for RCers at the pilgrimage who were not members of our UER team. They all came, every day.

Because the pilgrimage involves a lot of sitting and listening to adults talking, Carolyn Kameya organized activities for young people. The young people made a huge mural of the Tule Lake camp, and M'Lis and Shelley made friends with their parents. We were lucky to have so many family workers² on our team!

I led an RC workshop at the pilgrimage on "eliminating the effects of racism through peer counseling." Most of the people who attended were elders, and there were a lot more men than women. Some of the elders came with family members; one woman came with her daughter and granddaughter.

I talked about my own family's experience with the incarceration

² Family work is the application of Re-evaluation Counseling to the particular situations of young people, and families with young children. It entails young people and adults (both parents and allies) interacting in ways that allow young people to show and be themselves, and to not be dominated by the adults.

and the effects of it on my parents and on me (even though I was born after the war), as a way of describing internalized racism. A lot of people were nodding their heads. I did a sweet demonstration with a Japanese American man in his seventies who cried about being at Tule Lake as a child and the racism he experienced as a boy growing up. I held his hand and explained that that kind of contact can help people feel safe and cared about. The minute he sat down, hands shot up from three other men in the room. I called on one of them, and he jumped out of his seat, came up to the front of the room, grabbed my hand, and talked about what happened to him as a boy. After he sat down, the other two men each stood up and said something to the group about racism. It was our team's excellent attention and relationship building that made all that possible.

Mike Ishii and Sue Yoshiwara kept us organized as a team and got us registered and transported to our many bus departure points. Keith Osajima and Paul Ehara wrote wonderful daily reports.

**WE ARE MAKING
A DIFFERENCE
FOR OUR PEOPLE**

Our impact is growing over time. I can see a cumulative effect over the last three pilgrimages. It is just like building any relationship—you connect and show yourself, over and over, and each time you appreciate the other person more and get closer. We have been building relationships with the Tule Lake organizing committee and with the pilgrimage participants, many of whom return year after year. We are no longer strangers and have built trust and more interest in our UER perspective.

One of my highlights of the pilgrimages has been teaching four hundred people during the opening



THE BRIDGE AT LA CONNER (WASHINGTON, USA)—WATERCOLOR • KATIE KAUFFMAN

program how to listen to each other. In 2009, at our first UER project at the pilgrimage, Lois and I had to work hard to convince the person in charge of the program to give me five minutes to teach people how to do a mini-session. This year, the same person was in charge and she gave us an incredibly warm introduction. She told the audience that the United to End Racism team got the credit for making the intergenerational discussion groups a highlight of the pilgrimage and said that I would be leading an exercise in listening to each other with respect, as an example of what we would experience during the discussion groups. She did not say a thing about a time limit. After my brief explanation, the room was filled with smiling counselors and eager clients. Some remembered the mini-session from the last pilgrimage and started it before I finished the explanation. Everyone in the room looked more relaxed after exchanging only two minutes each way.

The members of the Tule Lake Committee are all Asian American activists. Lois and I have promoted hugs at the committee meetings and appreciations for the good work of committee members. They now routinely appreciate each other, there is less tension among them, and they

listen to each other's opinions more respectfully.

Because people see the value we bring and the potential for healing we represent, we have received requests to send UER teams to the other two pilgrimages on the west coast: Manzanar in southern California, and Minidoka in Idaho. We are working to get the leaders of these pilgrimages into RC classes.

**MOVING OUR OWN
RE-EMERGENCE FORWARD**

Because of our involvement in the pilgrimages, we have been challenging ourselves to show ourselves more, act on our significance, and gather allies around us. We are each more confident as leaders and as spokespersons for RC. We have unquestionable evidence that we matter. We know that we are doing something big and making a difference for our people. What a privilege it is to share our precious tools and knowledge with so many people we care about.

*Jan Yoshiwara
International Liberation
Reference Person for
Japanese Heritage People
Olympia, Washington, USA*

We Are Making a Difference

Coming home from the Tule Lake Pilgrimage,* I am exhausted yet thrilled about what we on the UER team accomplished.

Prior to the pilgrimage we called all the former incarcerated who would be attending, to listen to them tell us what they remembered from their experience in the camps. We listened through the “oh, it wasn’t so bad” and the “it was so long ago, I don’t remember anything” to get to their stories, and spent up to an hour with each person. We organized it so that the UER team member who called would be on the same bus as the former incarcerated, to have another opportunity to connect.

I led an intergenerational discussion group that included five former incarcerated. They talked about their camp experiences, and then the others in the group had an opportunity to acknowledge their feelings (and discharge) about hearing the stories. We did several three-way sessions, called “triads,” to keep people’s attention fresh. One man, after leaving in 1945, had never wanted to come back to Tule Lake and only returned because his grandson wanted to learn about that part of his grandfather’s life. Another person was a bomb survivor from Hiroshima, Japan. Another was born in one of the horse stalls that Japanese Americans had to live in before the camps were built. Another was only feet away when his friend was shot and killed by a guard. Everyone in the group had an opportunity to discharge his or her feelings. At the end of three hours, we felt so close that we didn’t want to leave. People hugged, shared phone numbers, took photos, and hugged some more.

The UER team also had a listening table where we shared RC literature and posted questions like, “What brought you to the pilgrimage?” and “How has the pilgrimage been going for you so far?” We listened and listened and listened.

We are making a difference. One incarcerated said he was so inspired by the RC program that now when he talks to people he lets them talk first and he just listens. On my bus on the ride home, almost everyone mentioned the intergenerational discussion groups as

* See previous article.



MARTIN URBEL

a highlight of the pilgrimage. Several people thanked me for the good work RCers did.

Our presence is becoming more and more prominent. We wore Tule Lake UER t-shirts and got a reputation for being people with good attention. We “blue-shirt people” were sought out when people had a story to tell or needed help in some other way.

Sue Yoshiwara
Albany, California, USA



If you move . . .

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

Thank you,
Rational Island Publishers



Every Japanese American Family Has These Stories

I attended the Tule Lake Pilgrimage¹ with my long-time friend M'Lis Bartlett, who was one of two allies on the United to End Racism team. M'Lis is close to my family and has figured out how to support us and contradict the ways that racism and the wartime incarceration have affected us.

On the bus to Tule Lake, the bus monitor asked everyone to help fold origami paper cranes for a memorial ceremony at the pilgrimage. M'Lis and I noticed an elder sitting across from us by himself. M'Lis scooted across the row, introduced herself, and sat with him. The two of them started folding cranes together, and we learned that he had been a boy in Tule Lake. They formed an alliance of good-natured teasing at my expense, and pretty² soon we were all laughing heartily. (I thought to myself how fortunate I was to have done RC family work.³) I was the bumbling fool who would mess up the origami over and over again while they kept trying to show me the "correct" way to do it. I kept handing M'Lis more paper to fold

¹ See previous two articles.

² Pretty means quite.

³ Family work is the application of Re-evaluation Counseling to the particular situations of young people, and families with young children. It entails young people and adults (both parents and allies) interacting in ways that allow young people to show and be themselves and not be dominated by the adults.

into cranes, and they kept making fun of me as I joked about how I needed to see them fold another.

The man recounted beautiful stories about holding on to his humanity as a young person imprisoned in the camp and shared poignant memories of his amazing father. I was struck by how he had retained his joyfulness and curiosity about life. I felt like I was talking to all the men of my family.

When we visited the camp jail where many Japanese American men had been imprisoned, M'Lis and I nonchalantly followed along with our friend as he cried quietly while walking through the cells and reading the graffiti the prisoners had written on the walls. We would end up standing next to him for a moment or two, until his embarrassment caused him to move along in the crowd. We were crying, too.

Our friend eagerly attended the UER workshop and later admitted to us that he knew that we were following him at the jail and letting him cry. He said he had no idea how transformative the pilgrimage would be and that he now wanted to heal himself.

On the day after I got home, my brother called from the hospital to tell our family that my mother's youngest sister was in

the emergency room dying. She had Parkinson's disease and had survived multiple strokes. My sister and I rushed to the hospital, and got there in time to be with her before she died.

Our aunt had been born in the Minidoka concentration camp⁴ and had sustained brain damage at birth, due to poor medical care. She had lived her entire life with that, and would have likely died early on as a homeless person had not my family cared for her. I told her how well she had done, apologized for how hard her life had been, and told her how proud we were of her and that I loved her. We held her as she died.

It felt like a continuation of the pilgrimage. Every Japanese American family I know has these kinds of stories and struggles as part of the legacy of incarceration.

My aunt was born in a concentration camp where she was sentenced to a life of disability and oppression. I think it was fitting that she died on July 4th, Independence Day in the United States—a day celebrating liberty and justice for all people.

Mike Ishii

Sunnyside, New York, USA

⁴ The Minidoka concentration camp, in Idaho, USA, was one of the ten U.S. concentration camps in which Japanese Americans were interned during World War II.



Capitalism Has Failed



Poverty, environmental degradation, unemployment, social deterioration—all have been addressed at one time or another within capitalism but never remedied. For all but a handful, capitalism has also failed even in its own definition of personal success.

Tim Jackins

Prioritising Action

I'm currently reading a book called *Active Hope*, by Joanna Macey and Chris Johnstone. The central idea is that to carry on with things as they are, "business as usual," would be disastrous for every aspect of future life on earth, but that there are already many signs that a "Great Turning" is beginning toward "a life-sustaining society committed to the recovery of our world" and that there are three dimensions to the necessary changes.

The first dimension is "Holding Actions," the second is "Life-Sustaining Systems and Practices," and the third is "Shift in Consciousness." I am using this framework to think about my own contributions to turning things around.

"Holding Actions" are actions that hold back and slow down, by any means possible, the damage being done by "business as usual." After taking part in a Greenpeace¹ action aimed at stopping drilling in the Arctic by Shell Oil, I have joined my local Greenpeace group and will take the non-violent direct-action training they provide. I sign petitions on-line; they are sometimes successful.

"Life-Sustaining Systems and Practices" are about lifestyle and biodiversity. I am taking my holidays on these islands (not flying), using my bike or public transport, eating organically when possible. I'm looking more at food miles, for instance buying English apples rather than apples from the other hemisphere. I'm experimenting with reducing my use of water. The lump sum I received as retirement income is in a bank that invests only in projects that are socially and environmentally beneficial. I also take part in local projects that promote biodiversity and in Trees for Life, which is restoring the Caledonian forest in Scotland.

"Shift in Consciousness" is happening in lots of places, but how are we going to achieve the seismic shift that's needed? I don't believe climate change is an isolated issue. There needs to be a huge shift from the assumption that what we need is economic growth, and that the earth and its people are to be exploited, to a spirit of cooperation, sharing of the earth's resources, and justice for all.

I was delighted to see Madeleine Para's "Call to Action on Climate Change" in the July 2012 *Present Time*. I agree with every word of it. I'm using my own sessions more effectively to discharge on all these issues. However, when I've led evenings in my local Area² on care of the environment, I've found that the level of awareness is low. (Misinformation and lack of information in the wide world don't help.) This restimulates my urgency patterns, but as Madeleine says, there's also lots of evidence that the situation really is urgent.

My latest decision is to prioritise action (even over RC workshops, when there's a clash) and to use my sessions to discharge my way toward being braver and more effective in my actions and in making connections with people. I would love to hear from others how they achieve a balance between the actual urgency of the situation and unhelpful "urgency patterns."

Morag Carmichael

London, England

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

¹ Greenpeace is an international organization working to save the environment.

² An Area is a local RC Community.

FIVE-YEAR SUBSCRIPTION TO *PRESENT TIME*

Rational Island Publishers is offering a five-year subscription to *Present Time*, at the request of many people who would like to not have to re-subscribe every one or two years. The cost is \$84 in the United States, outside of Washington State; \$92 in Washington State; and \$124 (U.S.) outside the United States. (A couple of dollars have been added to partially cover the anticipated increase in costs over the next five years.) To order a *Present Time* subscription, see page 111 of this issue.

Discharging, and Focusing on Progress

I was happy to read Morag's posting¹ and am glad that my article in *Present Time* was helpful. The question of how to handle the combination of the real urgency and our undischarged past distresses is a good one.

I discharge a lot in sessions on my fears and grief about what's happening to the earth. When I see the signs of old distress recordings entering into my session, I switch to earlier work.² The more I can discharge the fear and grief, from either the early stuff or the present situation, the more I can stay relaxed with other people.

Outside of sessions my commitment is to keep planting seeds with people everywhere I go, water them when I can, and then make sure that I pay attention to when there is progress. I search out every hopeful thing I can and hang on to it. Most of my hope comes from the increasing number of excellent relationships I have with other activists. I also limit how much time I spend reading discouraging blogs³ to just enough to stay current on the science and politics.

I do a topic table, called "Global Warming 101," at every RC workshop I go to, to introduce people to the subject. You are right that the level of awareness is low. RCers are not really that different from any other group. But I am optimistic that awareness will grow.

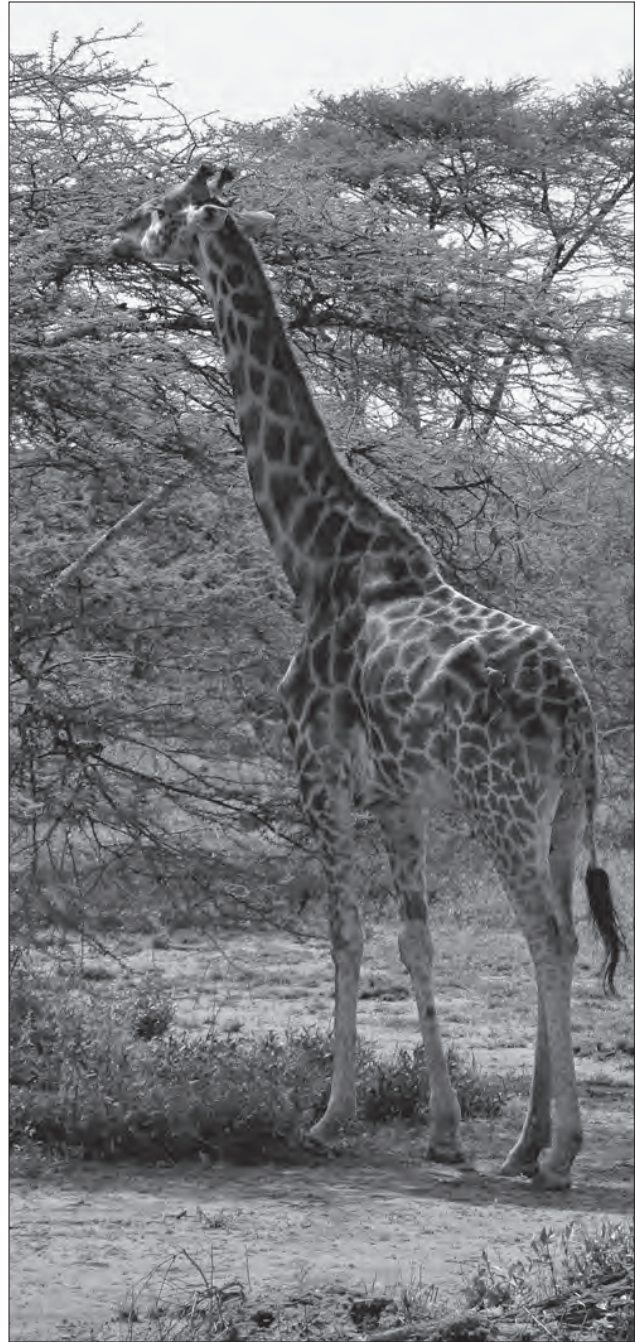
We can do this together.

Madeleine Para
Madison, Wisconsin, USA
Reprinted from the e-mail discussion
list for RC Community members

¹ See previous article.

² Earlier work means working on earlier hurts.

³ A blog (web log) is a web site on the Internet containing the writer's or group of writers' own experiences, observations, opinions, and so on.



MAURA FALLON

The Pace of Political Change

I am not as sure as you are that it will be a long time before there is political change in this country. I think that what we do with individuals is going to decide how long it is.

Harvey Jackins
From a letter written in 1975

Care of the Environment, and Building Relationships

*From a discussion on the RC e-mail discussion list
for leaders in the care of the environment*

Thank you, Sarah,¹ for sharing your thoughts on urgency and communication about climate change. I noticed that after you sent your e-mail, the care-of-the-environment list was quiet. When I thought about why that might be, I wondered if your analysis scared us—perhaps because you were asking us to question our assumption that what we need to do is communicate more information to more people more quickly; that as soon as people know what we know, they will see the light and get on board—in other words, that if we can only get people to see the truth of climate change, we will be able to change society.

Communicating more information has not proven to be effective in changing environmental policies, at least not when it is so readily overcome by profit-driven societies. Not to mention that we activists get discouraged and burnt out²—especially, though not only, those of us who don't have the tools of RC. Here is my question for all of us: If giving people more information is not the most effective way to move forward in saving the environment, what is?

If it's building relationships and connection and facilitating discharge, how do we do that? How do we build the solid, committed, permanent relationships we need, especially those that reach across lines of oppression and privilege (such as class, gender, and race)? What successes have you had? What have you been doing, and what do you want to do? Let me also add, what would it mean to do this for *you*?

Brian Lavendel
Madison, Wisconsin, USA

¹ Sarah Trainor, a Co-Counselor in Fairbanks, Alaska, USA

² Burnt out means exhausted.



TOGO • MARION OUPHOUET

Traducción al español de la publicación anterior:

Gracias, Sarah,* por compartir tus pensamientos sobre urgencia y comunicación del tema cambio climático. Me di cuenta de que después de que enviste el correo electrónico, la lista sobre cuidado del medio ambiente ha estado tranquila. Cuando pensaba en a qué podría deberse, me preguntaba si es que tu análisis nos asustó—quizás porque nos estabas pidiendo que nos cuestionásemos nuestra suposición de que lo que tenemos que hacer es comunicar más información a más gente más rápidamente; que tan pronto como la gente conoce lo que nosotras sabemos, verán la luz y se subirán a bordo—en otras palabras, que si podemos tan solo conseguir que la gente vea la verdad del cambio climático, seremos capaces de cambiar la sociedad.

Comunicar más información no ha demostrado ser eficaz en el cambio de las políticas ambientales, al menos no cuando es tan fácilmente superado

*Sarah Trainor, una persona escucha in Fairbanks, Alaska, EEUU

por sociedades cuyo fin es la ganancia económica. Por no mencionar que como activistas caemos en el desánimo y nos quemamos—especialmente, pero no sólo, quienes no cuentan con las herramientas de RC. Esta es la pregunta que hago a todos y todas nosotras: si aumentar la información no es la forma más eficaz para avanzar en lo que respecta a salvar el medio ambiente, entonces, ¿cuál es la manera?

Si se trata de la construcción de relaciones, la conexión y facilitar el desahogo, ¿cómo hacemos eso? ¿Cómo construimos las relaciones sólidas, comprometidas y permanentes que necesitaremos, especialmente esas que atraviesan las líneas de la opresión y los privilegios (del tipo clase, género y raza)? ¿Cuáles han sido tus éxitos? ¿Qué has estado haciendo y qué deseas hacer? Y permíteme añadir: ¿qué significaría hacer esto para *tú*?

Brian Lavendel
Madison, Wisconsin, EEUU
Traducido por Brian Lavendel
y Juan Manuel Feito

Thanks, Brian, for asking about building relationships as a way to move forward with work on climate change.³

I don't believe that lack of information about the problem is the critical bottleneck⁴ in mobilizing people to stop climate change. I think it is numbness, powerlessness, and despair. I try to address this in a variety of ways:

1. Sharing information that is framed in terms of hopeful signs, and models of people working together to solve common problems and build alternatives. I have a policy of never sharing just bad news. In my monthly e-mail column and blog, I make a point of writing about four things in the world that genuinely make me hopeful (not always easy, but a great personal discipline).

2. Focusing on what people love, as a way to break through numbness and despair. I look for opportunities to talk about my love of the earth, to open up spaces in which others can notice and share their love as well. Several of us who share a cabin in a conservative rural area were concerned about local natural gas drilling (fracking) and were looking for a local environmental group to support. We chose a watershed group that gets people out to the river in any way it can—with the belief that once people build a connection with the river and get in touch with their love for it, they will be more able to notice threats to it and act in its defense.

3. Finding ways that people can work together. The Transition Initiative is a great model of communities getting together to plan for increased local resilience in the face of energy descent. The projects they start with may seem modest, but people just getting together and building local connections is a strong and hopeful



NEW ZEALAND • ELLIE PUTNAM

first step. I'm excited about gathering together friends and neighbors to learn skills in mending and repairing. I've done it once, and who knows what might grow from that small step?

4. Inviting people to reclaim economics from the experts. An economic system based on greed and continued growth is at the root of our environmental problems, yet few people feel they are competent to talk about economics. I've appreciated Julian's⁵ leadership here—his idea of inviting people to discuss the possibility of an economic system not based on greed. I've encouraged people to bring their values to discussions about economics and claim their right to know what an economy based on meeting human needs would look like.

5. Offering counseling (or just plain listening) to people who are taking leadership—either environmental activists or influential leaders in the community. A person in my Area⁶ has chosen to offer weekly time⁷ to a prominent local environmental activist.

The problem of climate change is too big to be addressed with a single strategy. Many people need to be mobilized in many ways.

I think we need to discharge our fears of not succeeding and acknowledge that acting on distress-laden urgency is not likely to be effective. We need to be willing to look at the broad range of possibilities available to us, stay in touch with what we love, take some risks, and stretch to believe that we can be significant.

Pamela Haines
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA



Power does not
need to be taken,
it can be created.

*Marcos of the
Zapatistas*

³ See previous page.

⁴ Bottleneck means hindrance to progress.

⁵ Julian Weissglass, the International Commonality Reference Person for Wide World Change

⁶ An Area is a local RC Community.

⁷ In this context, time means attention.

An Evening on Care of the Environment

At an RC care-of-the-environment evening last week, I divided our time into three parts:

1. *Noticing our present-time love for and connection to the environment (as a contradiction to disconnection, numbness, and hopelessness)*

We did a round of sharing about the things we love, then did a mini-session, in which we made sure to bring along our little boy and girl selves and our childhood loves and connection.

2. *Loss and grieving*

I believe there are at least three strands in any current environmental loss: the current loss (a new hurt), the unawareness or lack of caring from others, and the roots of our current feelings in early losses and lack of connection (environmentally-related or otherwise).

We did a round of sharing on environmental losses and then discharged, in small groups, on loss

(environmental or other), bringing with us our little girl and boy selves.

3. *Discharging fear*

Someone asked if fear about environmental issues is ever current or if it is all restimulated fear from the past, with environmental issues serving as a powerful magnet for it. Maybe present issues are simply interesting challenges.

We did a round of turns on things we're scared of about the environment and then discharged in the whole group on our early fears (environmental or other), keeping our little boy and girl selves in the center.

It was a simple format, and it seemed to work well.

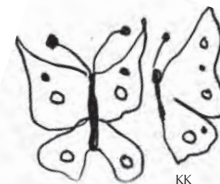
Pamela Haines

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



The Peace Movement in 1986

Harvey Jackins, at the Peace and Disarmament Activists' Workshop in Boston, Massachusetts, USA, July 1986



Question: Would you assess the present status of the peace movement and what you see going on¹ there?

Harvey: Off the top of my head?² Well, crucial opportunities, overwhelming need for effective organization, domination by fear and timidity, and insufficient goals. *Marvelous* people working in it. Tremendous effort being put out. That's my impression.

What seems to be missing, and what we're trying to do something about here, is a clear-cut policy, at all levels, for the actual ending of all nuclear arms—having a goal in mind that we're going to

achieve, instead of just hoping that something happens.

I think the overall view has been lacking. I don't think the various peace issues can be understood in isolation; you have to see what's happening in society as a whole. You have to see the war danger and the nuclear danger as arising out of the general collapse of the oppressive society. The same forces that give rise to³ the nuclear danger have to be dealt with by everybody in the oppressive society.

The organized working class, weak as it is at the present time in the United States and Britain, is not dead and it's coming back. This is the force that must be mobilized. I think the

general peace movement is skipping that. It's going after⁴ the people who are easier to involve instead of seeing that ending the threat of nuclear war becomes the center of the labor movement's policies and that the labor movement gets help from the peace forces to get its own house in order and to start winning battles on wages and working conditions. That has been almost completely neglected until now.

The movement also needs the precious knowledge that has finally emerged in RC about how to organize, how to be a strong individual, how to take charge of everything, how to use organizational forms, and how to have a happy life while achieving decisive victories.

¹ Going on means happening.

² Off the top of my head means my thoughts without deliberation.

³ Give rise to means create.

⁴ Going after means pursuing.

A Student Takes Charge

I am a twenty-four-year-old Co-Counselor from Adelaide, South Australia, studying for a bachelor of music in jazz performance in voice. I decided to speak up about some issues I had with the way the program was being run. I sent an e-mail to one of my university lecturers. This led to my leading a support group for the students, who are struggling with the shackles of the university system. It's going well.

Here is what I wrote (as excerpted and edited):

One of the greatest pieces of advice I ever got in my life was from my mom. Someone had invaded my space, my being, and was doing something against me, and my mom advised me to not take it, to fight back, and to not worry about what anyone else thought. As a result of my mom's advice, I took control of that situation.

Now, many years later, I feel like I have been turned into a product, by a huge corporation (the university) that I can't escape and that has its hands all over me. The environment is poisonous. The students who display the most talent get more attention, while those who don't are hung out to dry.¹ The competition, ego, and fear are rife and paralyzing. I'm sorry, but no sane person can learn under these conditions. Please note: This is not an attack on you! It's the system I have my quarrel with.

I came into this course not having any knowledge of jazz theory or the tasks that lay ahead of me. I have learnt so much and may have grown, but at what cost? I am drowning. I have no time to even scratch myself, let alone lead what people call a life outside of this place.

Let's just take it easy, and keep the pressure off and the love on. I want to share with you what my jazz course would be like:

- * I would have listening classes dedicated purely to sharing and talking about music—to keep the interaction and the freshness of this art alive by exploring what is so wonderful about it with teachers and peers.

- * Many teachers would be assigned to a class so that no student would be left on her or his own and no teacher would be left alone with a class full of stressed out and needy students.

- * I would have transcribing classes.²

continued . . .



YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK, CALIFORNIA, USA • LISA VOSS

¹ Hung out to dry means abandoned.

² Transcribing classes are classes in which people transcribe a person's jazz improvisation.

WIDE WORLD CHANGING

... continued

* I would have classes based on each student's ability, and end the separation of singers and drummers from the other musicians.

* There would be appreciation—from each person; and to each person, from his or her peers.

* There would be artists' liberation classes. We can stop the oppression directed at artists, much of which comes from ourselves.

* We would have teacher support groups—safe and confidential places for teachers to go and talk so that they could think more clearly around the students.

* Students would have designated practice times, so that those who were not motivated, or good with time management, could have attention from teachers who could help them; this would be ground breaking.

* Only half the classes that are currently taught would be operating. The rest would be designated as practice times—with other people (!) so that people wouldn't always be in rooms by themselves.

* There would be jam sessions with all different kinds of musicians—mixing and matching instrumentalists. The only way to improve is to work with people who challenge you.

* In classes, we would take five-minute breaks every now and then and play games, to get the students interacting with the teacher and each other, and to keep the blood flowing to the brain. (Four-hour non-stop classes are unfair to the teacher, too!)

People complain about the course. It's time for a change. We young people are the future. We need allies. We need support and time to digest and feel good about what we are doing and the industry and art that we love.

D—, you are a rare human being. And being a teacher may be the most important role one can have, aside from being a parent. Some of these students look up to you as a father or a brother. You are a remarkable teacher. Your love, passion, and dedication to the art *and* the students are astounding. You are what a teacher should really be. So—thank you! You are doing a *wonderful* job! Thank you for listening.

I hope things can change for future students, and also affect the industry as the graduates leave every year. Let's keep this beautiful art alive and breathing!

Lauren Henderson
Adelaide, South Australia, Australia

Some Challenges from Harvey

I do have some challenges for you, and they involve rising to your full stature, speaking out clearly to the whole world around you, and laying your expectations on your entire generation, your family, and your associates to be models of no limits for anyone.

Harvey Jackins
From a letter written in 1997

The RC Web Site

There is a web site for Re-evaluation Counseling at <<http://www.rc.org/>>. At this site you will have easy access to a large amount of information about Re-evaluation Counseling, including:

- RC theory (basic theory, including an introduction to RC, *The Art of Listening*, and the RC postulates)
- An introductory talk (in audio) by Harvey Jackins (1986)
- RC practice (how to start RC, what to do in a session, counseling techniques, how to lead support groups)
- Policies, forms, and the *Guidelines for the Re-evaluation Counseling Communities*, 2009 edition
- Articles by RC leaders and Community members (quotes and selected articles from *Present Time* and other RC journals)
- Translations of articles into many languages and information on language liberation
- Resources for workshop organizers
- Rational Island Publishers (contact information and literature ordering)
- Ordering RC publications on the web: <www.rationalisland.com>
- An on-line fundamentals of Co-Counseling class
- Outlines for teaching fundamentals classes, in English and Spanish
- An ever-growing collection of back issues of *Present Time* (currently 1974-1995)
- An index to all issues of *Present Time*
- "Today's Thought"—a short daily thought from a Re-evaluation Counseling perspective
- International Reference Person Perspectives

How to Contact Us On-Line

- The International RC Community: ircc@rc.org
- United to End Racism: uer@rc.org
- Rational Island Publishers (orders, and billing questions): litsales@rc.org (or order on our web site at www.rationalisland.com)
- Re-evaluation Counseling Community Resources (Intensives and office matters only): rcoffice@rc.org
- Automatic response e-mail about RC: info@rc.org
- For sending photos: photos@rc.org
- Reference Person for the Internet, Tim Jackins: ircc@rc.org

On-Line Fundamentals Class

An on-line fundamentals of Co-Counseling class is available for people who are interested in learning more about RC.

Active participation in the class is reserved for those who do not have fundamentals classes in their geographical region. Learning Re-evaluation Counseling via e-mail is much more difficult than learning it in a regular class and requires a higher level of commitment to the learning process and to regular Co-Counseling sessions.

If you are already participating in a regular RC class, or are an RC teacher, you may still have access to the articles used in the on-line class by enrolling in the class as an inactive member. Please note, however, that all of the materials used are already published and available in printed issues of *Present Time* and other Rational Island Publishers publications. The on-line class organizes these materials, making them more easily accessible.

Please see the RC web site at <<http://www.rc.org/class/fundamentals/>> for more information about how to sign up for either active or inactive membership in the on-line fundamentals class.

United to End Racism

United to End Racism (UER), an ongoing program of the Re-evaluation Counseling Communities, is on the web at <<http://www.rc.org/uer>>. The e-mail address for UER is <uer@rc.org>.

United to End Racism is working with other groups involved in eliminating racism, and sharing with them the theory and practice of Re-evaluation Counseling.

continued . . .