

Present Time No. 168 (Vol. 44, No. 3) July 2012



We can decide to try again where we gave up. We can decide to win this time.
To do that, we have to understand that things are different now than they were before.

Tim Jackins

Discussions on criticism, parenting, political demonstrations, and the effects of racism and male domination; articles by Tim Jackins on leadership, physical pain, and the transformation of society; a good look at Francophone liberation—just a sample of the rich mixture that is this *Present Time*.

We hope you'll contribute to the October issue! Please send articles and poems to us by Monday, August 20, and any changes to the back-pages lists by Monday, August 27.

Lisa Kauffman, editor

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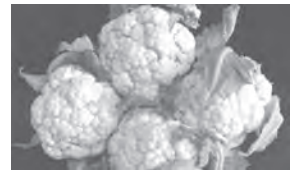


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Feeling the Pain of Physical Injuries

Tim Jackins,¹ at a leaders' workshop in England, January 2012

When you suffer physical damage,² you should hurt. It is part of the way your body works. It's not a mistake. Pain is part of the way we function. It's part of a lot of different systems, and it helps our bodies respond to damage.

We're so afraid of pain. There's nothing wrong with it. It does not drive you "crazy." I don't think pain itself can kill you. I think the pain you feel, you need to feel. Sorry.

It's not an accident, it's not a mistake. It's part of what developed through evolution, part of notifying your body that it needs to send resources for healing. The pain needs to be there. And you need to discharge on it, and paying attention to it helps you to do that. You need to not be stoic about it. It's there to get your attention. It's not there to be ignored. What works is to pay a lot of attention to it and to say what it's like. Get someone else's attention on it, too—and don't muffle it, don't try to cover it up. Look at what happened and keep your mind there.

What comes up are all the undischarged feelings about physical pain. Almost none of the feelings are about the present-day injury. They're about old hurts that have waited and waited for you to come back and discharge them. The whole string of restimulations comes up, which is confusing because a little bit of damage can hurt all out of proportion. You need to understand that you are bringing up all the old pain from undischarged times. Just go ahead and look at the pain and discharge on it.

You will have grief or fear, depending on what happened earlier in your life and how your parents handled your early physical hurts. If your folks were really scared and you fell down and there was a little blood, they panicked, and you will have lots of fear and that's what you'll work on.

If it's a bruise, somebody needs to keep your attention on it because your tendency will be to put your attention somewhere else as fast as you can. You need to pay attention to the damage—not cover it up, not spray it with something, not ignore it, not do all the things society pushes you to do—and you won't want to notice, so usually somebody has to help you. This is your counselor's job. Somebody has to touch it enough that you feel the damage. The point is not to deepen the bruise, although everybody feels like they're being tortured. The point is to notice the damage that has been done.

Your counselor needs to have a certain level of awareness and not be too timid or too insistent so that both of you can pay attention to the injury and you can discharge on it. There is big confusion about pain because we are all so scared about it, aided by

capitalism's enormous drug industry. Physical pain just hurts. That's all it does. It doesn't hurt forever. It just hurts. Anything that interferes with your being able to pay attention to it and discharge on it slows down the process of healing and appears to put in distress recordings. The injury gets stuck in your head as well as being slow to heal.

You often have to argue with your dental or medical professionals because they are scared of pain, too, and there is confusion about treating pain and curing people. It's similar to the idea that stopping someone from crying stops the distress. Numbing pain is simply a mistake, and they have no way of correcting it without understanding distress recordings and discharge, so you have to fight. It can be fun, and you don't always win but you *can* win.

I've fought with several dentists about having an anesthetic. They've all been insistent, and I've had to talk each one out of it—except when I moved back to Seattle (Washington, USA), where I had the dentist my father³ had so the battle had been fought already. He still asks, but he gives up quickly. He can't imagine doing without an anesthetic himself. His explanation is that my family has a very high pain threshold. He says that each time, to every assistant.

If you've never had dental work without a painkiller, you should do it at least once. (Have a lot of sessions beforehand, so you don't terrify the dentist.) It will hurt. Then it's done, and it's over. It's literally entirely over. That's it. You are not confused. It isn't aching or numb. Something resolves

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GREENSBORO, NORTH CAROLINA, USA • LESLIE KAUSCH

¹ Tim Jackins is the International Reference Person for the RC Communities.

² Tim is referring to new physical damage. For discharging well on chronic physical conditions, attention generally needs to be taken off the physical symptoms and put on the emotional feelings connected with the physical damage.

³ Harvey Jackins, the founder and first International Reference Person of the Re-evaluation Counseling Communities

COUNSELING PRACTICE

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very nicely. Facing the reality of what's happening, including the damage, is useful. Anything that hides the reality from you makes it harder in some way.

When things hurt, restimulation does occur (unless we have discharged a lot), but that is all it is. You can still

think yourself out of the restimulation and not leave your attention on it.

What I do in the dentist's chair is look at how the pain feels. I try to focus my mind right on where it hurts. I try to see what it really is, so that I'm not lost in the restimulation of a thousand things that happened

before. I try to look right at the reality of it. Many times after I have gone to the dentist and looked right at it in this way, the world is clearer to me. It's interesting to watch that happen. I don't know of anything bad that could happen from doing this, so I'm going to persist with it.



The following five articles are from a discussion, on the e-mail discussion list for RC Community members, about criticism.



Reflections on Criticism

Criticism is a widespread pattern that many of us acquired early in our lives. It was there in the homes where we grew up, it was there in the education systems we went through, it is there in our work lives. Wherever we go, we are being graded and evaluated. Even in RC we are criticized (although nicely and warmly) for not working enough on this and not discharging enough on that.

It is sometimes believed that criticism is good for us, that it urges us to improve ourselves. But, as with all hurts, we soon start hurting others in the same way we were hurt. And we may believe we are hurting them for their own good.

Back in my fundamentals class I learned that appreciations contradict criticism. However, for some people the pattern of criticizing has developed an interesting way to defend itself: it devalues the person who offers an appreciation, or it questions his or her integrity.

I had one RC student who used to say to me that I only appreciated her because "that's what you do in RC," implying that I didn't really mean what I said. That made me think of a way to counsel on criticism: I ask my client to imagine a person whose appreciations he or she would believe, and I ask him or her to elaborate on what qualities and identities that person would have. While this question has not produced spectacular discharge, it has made my clients stop and think. One student imagined an elderly woman, much like the fairy godmother in *Cinderella*.¹ Another imagined a successful man who had "made it"² in the capitalistic world. They would believe appreciations coming from those imaginary persons.

I would be interested to read about what other Co-Counselors have found useful in helping their clients detoxify their lives from the criticism that poisons them.

Yohai Ben-Ami
Ra'anana, Israel



¹ *Cinderella* is a children's fairy tale.

² "Made it" means succeeded.

Warmth and Kindness Important

I have a lot of Protestant and middle- and working-class patterns, and criticism runs pretty strong* in my family. One time when I was criticizing myself during a session, my Co-Counselor said something like, "Criticism has never really worked that well in the past." She said it with kind eyes and a very warm voice, and I understood what she was saying to me. A warm voice and facial expression are important. Otherwise it could feel like another criticism.

Betsy Hobkirk
Knoxville, Tennessee, USA

* Runs pretty strong means is acted out quite strongly.

Re-emerging from “Superiority”

I grew up in a Midwest USA, Protestant, middle-class family, as the youngest of seven children. What we lacked in emotional intelligence we overdid in intellectual intelligence. We learned to take every opportunity to criticize each other—for example, if a word was used incorrectly (“who” versus “whom”) or mispronounced. Blame and fault were big themes.

Being taught that criticism was an appropriate (if not primary) way to interact with people set me up* to not be liked as a child. (People don't like to be criticized!) Once in sixth grade, without thinking, I corrected my teacher when she was putting a list of words we were learning to spell on the board and she misspelled one. Oops. I can still remember the displeased look on her face. (I laugh about it now.)

* Set me up means predisposed me.

I felt a lot of pressure to always be right, without fault, and perfect. I learned to believe that others were inferior if they weren't as “smart” as I was. This was the source of a great deal of isolation for me. The truth was that I didn't feel superior at all—I felt like something was wrong with me at my very core. My perfectionism was a very ineffective strategy for feeling better about myself. It actually hurt me much more than it helped. I used to completely discount appreciations I received because I didn't think I deserved them.

One of the most effective things my primary Co-Counselor has done for me is to say—with a warm, friendly tone—things like, “What's it like being superior?” or “Ahhhh, isn't it nice being better than everyone else?” Embarrassment and disgust roll off of me as I laugh and laugh. I giggle even as I write this.

When receiving a compliment, acknowledgment, or appreciation, I have tried to hold eye contact, smile (even if it requires effort), and say “thank you,” and then stop talking (say nothing to diminish the appreciation).

Jay Edgar
Madison, Wisconsin, USA

Liberating to Contradict Criticism

I have been critical of my mother since I was about eight years old. After she passed away three years ago, I gradually started discharging on all the good and nice things about her. It was hard at first, but now it comes easily. It has been liberating and has moved me closer to other women.

Annette Rappleyea
Redwood City, California, USA



Victory Over Blame

I love the thinking in RC about blame and criticism. I've often heard Mary Hodgson¹ say, “Blame is an outdated concept.” And I love the Harvey² quote, “Every single human being, when the entire situation is taken into account, has always, at every moment of the past, done the very best that he or she could do, and so deserves neither blame nor reproach from anyone,

¹ Mary Hodgson is an RC leader in Seattle, Washington, USA.

² Harvey Jackins

including self. This, in particular, is true of you.”

I think of blame and criticism as intimately tied to oppression and liberation. When we blame and criticize, we are forgetting the gorgeous human being in front of us, confusing that person with his or her pattern, and are thus less effective in our efforts, social change and otherwise. Blame and criticism are part of the fabric of anti-Jewish oppression. I've come to think that when I blame or criticize anyone, regardless of whether

he or she is Jewish or not, I'm feeding the mechanisms of anti-Jewish oppression.

I'd like to share a success I had with contradicting my own blame distresses. Several months ago, as I was leaving an allies-to-Jews support group, I checked my e-mail on my phone. My ex-boyfriend had responded to an e-mail I'd sent him, saying that he didn't want to be in contact with me. That put me out of

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COUNSELING PRACTICE

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sorts.³ I was upset and feeling rejected and bad. Part of me felt justified going off in my mind about what was wrong with him. My mind was full of chatter about his faults. When I got home, I told my roommate about the e-mail I'd received. She isn't always the most sympathetic listener, and she said something to the effect of, "Well, now you know he doesn't want to be in contact. Move on." That rubbed me the wrong way,⁴ and then my mind was full of chatter criticizing her, for her insensitivity and probably other things I don't remember. I know I couldn't think and needed a mini-session. Luckily I found one, with a Co-Counselor who had also had something upsetting happen to her that evening.

In the past, the feelings of wanting to blame and criticize someone, fueled by how bad I felt about myself, would have been so powerful and gripping

³ Out of sorts means in a bad mood.

⁴ Rubbed me the wrong way means had a negative effect on me.

that it would have been hard to put my mind on anything else. (This is a family pattern. My father has a heavy blame pattern. He would often lash out violently at me, blaming me for his upsets then later blaming me for his physical assaults: "If you hadn't done X—, I wouldn't have become enraged and hit you.") But my Co-Counselor had had a rough evening, was new to Co-Counseling, and is a woman targeted by racism (I'm white). I thought for a moment about an attention-off-distress commitment I'd been working on for many months, which was basically like taking my mind to the gym, working to point it at reality.

I decided it made sense to listen to my Co-Counselor first and that I could put my feelings aside for the fifteen minutes we had agreed to trade. When it came to my turn, I decided to discharge and use her attention differently than I often would have in the past. In the past I would have had the awareness that I needed a mini, that my brain was

stuck in a distress, but I would have used the time to complain about what was wrong with the other person and how I felt "wronged" in the present. With my new attention gained by systematically discharging on reality, I wanted to put my mind there and not waste it in distress. I also had gained more ability to love and fight for myself.

I said to my counselor something like, "My feeling bad has nothing to do with my ex-boyfriend and roommate. I feel bad because of what happened to me when I was a baby that made me feel so worthless. And I know what to do about that." I went on to love, love, love that little baby—to care about her and not accept any place where I felt bad. Wow! I had never been able to shift my mind out of blame quite like that. I remember feeling very powerful. Though both my ex-boyfriend and roommate aren't Jewish, I also felt like I'd put a dent in my anti-Jewish oppressor distress.

Emily Cunningham
Seattle, Washington, USA



SANDRA CARTER

Sure, hurts will come, and oftener when we venture.
The crucial option lies in how we meet them.
Avoiding all the damage that we can,
We face what did occur un-numbered, unflinching,
Call loving, skilled awareness to our aid
To feel and discharge all the recent blows
Plus all the old ones that the new have rankled
And, turning insight on the gaps thus opened,
Reclaim vast areas of our lost potential.

Harvey Jackins
From page 11 of *Zest Is Best*

The Safety to Discharge Rage and Terror

In January of 2010 I experienced for the first time something called Discharging Rage and Terror. It was led by Granville Braxton¹ at the Black Men's Liberation Workshop led by Rudy Nickens.² Each morning at 7:00 people were doing this work, and I decided to check it out, even though I am not an early-morning person. Also, I didn't see myself as harboring feelings as intense as rage and terror. Mostly I was just curious.

At first I paced the floor outside the room, feeling pretty³ scared at hearing the loud, emotional vocalizations. Suddenly it struck a chord within: Could I actually fight that hard for myself? It occurred to me that just maybe I could, that this might actually be a safe place to show my deepest of feelings, not hold back. Both humbled and hopeful, I went inside. I was still scared but decided to be courageous.

I was met with such loving faces beaming at me that I can hardly describe it. Desmond Reich⁴ offered some brilliant thinking about getting the most out of being a Rage and Terror client. The gist of it was that while pushing hard against the team of counselors I should remember to maintain eye contact with my main counselor, vocalize fully, keep a relaxed jaw, and support the sound from my gut.

There I was, about to aim my rage and terror at a team of loving fellow black men. That was already a huge contradiction

to the way I got targeted as a young person. As I looked out into the men's faces, I realized that it was what I had always wanted. I could actually tell⁵ that they were fighting with me, not against me; that they were committed to staying with me, wanting me to win; and that they wouldn't let me give up. When my mere two minutes were over (it seemed much longer), a counselor with water in hand took me off to the side to continue discharging and cool down.

For the rest of that day I felt exhilarated, with an open mind and heart. I had better access to discharge and bigger sessions. I couldn't remember a time in my adult life when I'd felt so inspired to fight for myself.

People I've talked to who have experienced Rage and Terror work in a nurturing environment similar to the above have told a similar story. They've described a life-changing experience; it has changed their Co-Counseling forever.

Because rage and terror are arguably the most explosive of human emotions, the conditions for discharging them should include good counseling resource in a safe and nurturing environment. I have begun leading a monthly Men Discharging Rage and Terror support group and have found it useful to spend some time building safety, trust, and closeness among the participants and to allow adequate time for discharge and for attention-out⁶ after a session.

Gregory Lipscomb
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA

¹ Granville Braxton is an RC leader in Charlottesville, Virginia, USA.

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

³ Pretty means quite.

⁴ Desmond Reich is an RC leader in Studio City, California, USA.

⁵ Tell means perceive.

⁶ Attention-out means people getting their attention out onto reality.

IMPORTANT NOTE

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YUKO HIBINO

Outwitting a Difficulty in Discharging

I have lately (with help from my Co-Counselors) come up with¹ an efficient way of going for² an early distress that I have had difficulty working on for most of my time in RC (seventeen years).

My father killed himself when I was six years old. This doesn't affect my life today in a way that makes me go to it spontaneously. The only times I've been able to work well on it have been with experienced counselors who make me stick to the topic and who I feel are at least as confident as I am (otherwise I feel a need to be "responsible and sensible" and censor myself).

What I do now is this: Instead of trying to go for my feelings about my dad and his death, I go for the feeling that there's no point in working on it. My counselor tells me to work on my dad, and I argue, "No, there's no point." It seemed superficial, patterned, and "childish" the first

time, but it makes me angry. I shout at my counselor that there's no point—and then I cry.

It works best when the counselor doesn't reason with me but just says, "Yes, there is." Sometimes I have told counselors to not reason with me. Now I've learnt that I don't need to tell them. They will reason less the fiercer I sound in my rejection.

The beauty of it is this: I am quite capable, confident, independent, and not needy. The patterned parts of this get manifested in my refusal to work on my dad ("no, there's no point"), but the refusal also gets at the core of the distress—there *is* no point in the sense that nothing I do will bring him back. So while I start out saying no to working on my dad, I end up crying and raging about the horrible fact that I can't get him back—which is exactly what I need to do.

I'm thinking this could be a general technique for people with difficulties discharging, men in particular. I think many of us men

carry this feeling: "There's no point, no meaning, no sense, in taking on³ my deepest hurts. What difference would it make?" The background is probably that we were not allowed or supported to deal with or even acknowledge the feelings when we were young. So we gave up. That makes it hard for us to get to the discharge.

Trying to work on the deep hurts and not succeeding in discharging can reinforce the feeling that there's no point, and make it even harder. But maybe fighting with the counselor over whether it's worthwhile or not to work on them will trick our patterns and let us discharge.

What's your experience? Does this work for you? Have you found other ways of overcoming difficulties in discharging?

Fredrik Eklöf
Oxie, Sweden

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

¹ Come up with means thought of.

² Going for means pursuing.

³ Taking on means confronting and doing something about.



KEIRAN REICHERT

Unibertsoari egin diezaiokedan ekarpenik adimentsuena, nire buruaren aldeko borroka osoa burutzea dut.

The most intelligent contribution I can offer to the universe is to carry out the complete fight for my whole self.

Xabi Odrizola
Donostia, Euskal Herria/Basque Country
Translated from Basque to English by the author

Using One's Real Nature as a Contradiction

You can use your real nature, your unpatterned intelligent functioning nature, as a contradiction for all the patterns that surround you. It takes hard, hard work—you have to stay with it through grief, fear, embarrassment, anger, and boredom—but with a counselor insisting on you being this thorough, you get to the point where just saying a statement like "I am (*name*)" leads to automatic discharge in an ongoing way.

Harvey Jackins
From a letter written in 1998

The Basics Are Powerful

As a working-class man, your listening to my thinking and letting me know that you “want to hear all about it” and that you have the utmost faith I will eventually figure it all out is, in and of itself, the best contradiction¹ you could offer. Going back to the basics—remaining pleased, connected, and hopeful, while saying little or nothing—is most powerful for me.

Even experienced counselors often have a hard time with particular patterns. Protestants often have a hard time with Jewish patterns. Middle-class people often have a hard time with working-class patterns. (When I first started Co-Counseling, I had little attention for young-adult patterns, likely due to my not having fully discharged the hurts from that period of my life.) When their attention is short, counselors often want to take charge of a session in an attempt to stop what they don’t have attention for and quickly produce discharge by contradicting a pattern in the strongest way possible.

¹ Contradiction to distress



Even though a client may discharge heavily this way, I don’t think it is always the best course of action, for several reasons: (1) It’s too easy for a counselor’s oppressor material² to leak out. The direction offered may include mainstream values that the client doesn’t share, and the client may be confused enough to believe that because there was discharge, the proper way forward is to assimilate. (2) Any pattern that says, “I’m unable to trust my own thinking,” is not contradicted. (3) What a client works on at the beginning of a session may not be what he or she most needs to work on. Given a little time, other more relevant material may come up. A counselor providing a direction too early may limit the full evolution of the client’s thinking, which may be beyond the counselor’s ability to understand or predict.

As counselors we already practice not giving advice. Maybe we should also practice making sure that the client usually chooses his or her own directions, or at least build a strong relationship so that choosing directions is a team effort.

Dave Ratzlow
Brooklyn, New York, USA
Reprinted from the e-mail discussion
list for RC Community members

² Material means distress.

I Can Recover from Anything

Last weekend I attended the Women in Their Thirties Workshop, led by Diane Balser¹ and Ellie Brown.² It was a momentous workshop for me.

I was part of a support group of women seeking closer relationships with men, and I realized that so much of my ability to get close to men has been affected by three huge

fears that can be summarized as (1) fear of getting pregnant, (2) fear of being raped, and (3) fear of being emotionally hurt.

I also realized that I do not have to fear being hurt in any way anymore. Why? Not because I can’t get hurt. Not because I won’t get hurt. But because I can recover from absolutely anything. I am strong enough (not strong enough not to get hurt, but strong enough to recover), I have enough back-up,³

and I can figure out how to get help to heal any wound.

I can recover from anything because I understand discharge, contradictions,⁴ commitments, and so on, and I’m not letting them go from my life—ever, period. And because I have developed relationships with enough people, including enough women, to let me recover from, I repeat, absolutely anything.

Yara Alma-Bonilla
San Juan, Puerto Rico

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

² Ellie Brown is a former International Liberation Reference Person for Young Adults.

³ Back-up means support.

⁴ Contradictions to distress

Human Connection

Reports on a recent workshop in Melbourne, Victoria, Australia

From the Human Connections Workshop¹ I learned that the most important thing in any session is to notice that another person is there with me. This means not starting to speak until I can look the person in the eye without looking away. It also means stopping speaking, and going back to reconnecting, if at any point I have stopped noticing the person. Talking about my material² while ignoring my counselor has not worked well for me, and I am ready to give it up.

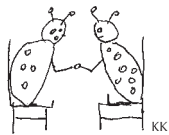
There is a difference between discharging and dramatizing old fears and confusions. When I discharge, I am being moved by noticing some element of benign present-time reality that I had previously been confused about. When I dramatise, I am rehearsing an untruth about reality. Dramatisation makes me more confused about what is real. It makes me feel worse and more distant from other people.



Carmela Salomon
Sydney, New South Wales, Australia

I went back to the basics of what happens when I sit down with one of my Co-Counsellors to have a session, and I realised that far too often I launch into my session without noticing that I have another human being in front of me who is prepared to listen—with a full, open heart—to me, the person behind the pattern. If I truly took on board³ that fact, it would be transformative for me.

There is also value in taking time as counselor at the beginning of a session to notice the humanness of my client.



Bartley McGowan
Frankston, Victoria, Australia

Tony highlighted for me how crucial human relationships are in getting a purchase⁴ on our

patterns—given the social structure we are living in daily. We cannot move out of old habits of mind, or effect meaningful change, without relationships, strong support to take directions, and courage to move on our own and others' behalf.



Christine Marnane
Kew, Victoria, Australia

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

The Space that We Inhabit

The space that creates more space
A tower reaching to the heavens
Hallways leading to unknown places
Skylights merging the outside with that which is within
The expansive spaciousness of knowing that anything is possible

The space that invites us in to take note
A simple solid arch, curved and graceful
Smooth to the touch
Cold, quiet and still
Allowing us to be in the moment that is without time

The space that sings with joy
A spiral staircase with dreams from childhood dangling from each step
Swings in the backyard laughing out loud with the wind
Cupboards in the kitchen waiting for cookies to be made
Fun and adventure at every turn

The space that envelops and cradles
The hearth that emanates warmth and safety
Soft blankets and pillows for nesting and entangled limbs
Puzzle pieces on a table that fit together perfectly
Feeling at home, curled up in your arms

Anonymous
New York City, New York, USA

¹ An RC workshop in Melbourne, Victoria, Australia, in December 2011, led by Tony Smith, an RC leader in Melbourne

² Material means distress.

³ Took on board means incorporated, absorbed.

⁴ Purchase means firm hold.

*The next eight articles were taken from
a discussion on the RC e-mail discussion list for leaders of parents.*

Good Parents, Needing Support

I lead the parents in our Region,* and I am pleased with the work we have been doing. The level of safety has greatly increased, and parents are beginning to be more open about the times when they lose their temper with their children and act out the mean things that were done to themselves when they were children. Some of these parents have many years of RC and are shocked at their own behavior. We are clear that they are not to blame, that they are *good* parents operating in a system that does not provide enough support for a tough job.

I am pleased that these struggles are coming out in the open more, so that we can figure out how to get people good sessions and help them set up support for their handling things while they are cleaning up the underlying early hurts. Some good sessions are happening, not only on early hurts but also on the internalized oppression between parents, and between parents and their non-parent allies. I'd love to hear from others of you about what your RC Communities are figuring out in this area.

Jerry Ann Yoder
Yarmouth, Maine, USA

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

Support from Other Parents Essential

I'm so glad you brought up this topic.¹ I hope lots of people write and share their challenges with and questions about these hard struggles we have.

As RC parents we learn RC theory and then want to live up to it, but often we are not able to do so as quickly as we would like and end up blaming ourselves and not telling anyone how hard this job is. It's easy to underestimate how much we need to discharge to keep thinking as our children grow and bring us unexpected situations and distresses. They are up against a lot in this oppressive society, and we are too. And we love them so much that of course our hardest feelings and their hardest feelings come up with each other.

I was shocked by my own behavior, especially when my daughter was a pre-teen and teenager. She would often say things that hurt my feelings, and I would get really mad at her for that. In fact, I was the safest place for her to show the hard stuff, and she was doing just what she needed to do. (Eventually I got pretty² relaxed with it and could sometimes say things that would make her and me laugh.)

Thankfully I led a parents' support group in which I could listen to other parents going through similar struggles and get good counseling. We laughed together a lot. What a relief it was to listen to parents paint the picture of day-to-day life! It's so messy! We had a range of RC experience, but none of us was immune to hard stuff with our children. We confronted problems we never imagined would come to us and had to look at our hardest chronics.³

continued . . .

³ Chronic patterns



HELEN PARKIN

¹ See previous article.

² Pretty means quite.

... continued

We also faced our restimulations with our partners that were hard to talk about. We had to discharge on these, too, since they were tied to the challenges of parenting and the well-being of our families. (Usually we'd do this thoughtfully, working on the related early distresses if our partners had relationships with people in the group, or were actually in the group.)

I often had to have three sessions a week, discharging mostly on being a mother, in order to stay on a rational course and not go down the wrong road with my daughter. Given that I had to work through a chronic, particularly when she was a teen, it took some time to gain perspective on what I was doing wrong and how I needed to change it. Then once I gained perspective, my will to do the right thing wasn't enough. I needed to keep discharging to hold that perspective.

Sometimes I thought I didn't need that extra session only to find my feelings getting the better of me⁴ and my acting in some way that alienated my daughter instead of bringing her closer to me. Eventually I realized that I needed to commit to doing several sessions a week, whether I felt I needed them or not, for several years, until I got a good handle on my stuff.⁵

⁴ Getting the better of me means prevailing over me, winning.

⁵ Stuff means distress.

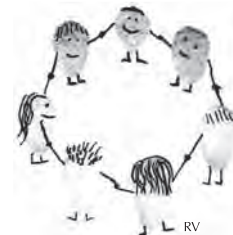
I also regularly called other parents for mini-sessions. Several parents had children who were close in age to my daughter, and they were particularly helpful. My counselors were able to see my patterns, and how I ran them⁶ at my daughter, and were able to gently and lovingly offer contradictions⁷ so that I would let go of the patterns. As parents we did this for each other. It was often humiliating to have people see me struggle, and I had to get through that, too, so that I could use the resource that was available to me.

It was all worth it. My daughter and I are doing well together. She is going to a college that is a few miles from my house, and she is in my RC class. I talk on the phone with her and see her often. Of course there are some hard places left to work through, but that's okay. And I've worked through so much chronic stuff that I'm a much happier person.

Marya Axner
Somerville, Massachusetts, USA

⁶ Ran them means acted them out.

⁷ Contradictions to the distress



With More Resource, Things Would Be Different

I haven't met a parent yet (in RC or in my work as a parent educator) who hasn't struggled in some way with being mean to his or her children.

In our parents' support group (led by the excellent Randi Wolfe*) these things have been helpful to me:

- Discharging shame and embarrassment
- Discharging terror and fear
- Remembering that I am good and having empathy for myself

* Randi Wolfe is an RC leader in Pasadena, California, USA.

when I make mistakes or cross the line

- Seeing my anger as a way to get to many other emotions—for me, explosive anger is a sign of grief, frustration, disappointment, discouragement, exhaustion, and a lack of connection and replenishment

- Having lots of physical sessions—lots of pushing and pillow crushing.

The isolation and exhaustion of parents' oppression (along with the overlap of other oppressions and living in the dominant paradigm) can lead us all to doing things that are not

what we are aspiring to do. I can't underscore this enough—if parents had more resource, things would be dramatically different.

Sometimes I can't client on this stuff with other parents, especially if the situations or personalities are too similar to mine. I've got a couple of strong parent allies I can turn to. Knowing that people don't have children of their own makes it easier for me to not worry that they might collude with me, or be thinking about their own situation. Also, these allies have connections with my family, so I know that they won't believe my confusion and frustration.

Ben Wright
Los Angeles, California, USA

Work on “My Earliest Memory of Hurting Someone”

A quick thought here: spend the initial five minutes of a session on noticing one’s goodness; then move on to discharging on “my earliest memory of hurting someone” (no reassurance or consolation allowed by the counselor, and the client doesn’t get to run the justification recording for why he or she hurt someone); and then the last five minutes on the parents’ commitment.* I am working on this with the intention of cleaning up my oppressor patterns.

Marcie Rendon
Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA

* The RC parents’ commitment: I promise to remember always that I am a good parent, that I always have done the best I could, that I have passed on to my child/ren as few of the hurts that I endured as a child as I could possibly manage, and that someday I’ll get a little rest.

We Each Have a Unique Battle

My experience as a new mom of a one-year-old is not so much of acting out violence and upset at my child. Rather, since the moment I became pregnant, the violence and upset of my childhood have been turned inward. This has resulted in big health struggles that have interfered in big ways with my ability to parent. It has been challenging for me and my whole family and is a hard situation that I’d change tomorrow if I knew how.

It seems to me that the early horrors of our childhoods will wreak havoc in our lives and families—outwardly, inwardly, or both—until they are discharged.

Being a parent seems to push everybody against his or her hardest material.* Before I became a parent, I knew this theoretically and tried to imagine and discharge about what it would mean for me. But I hadn’t faced the material I’m having to face now, so I couldn’t really imagine it. I counseled other parents on the things that parenting pushed them up against, but those were their hardest things, not mine.

We all get pushed up against our hardest stuff, but each person’s hardest stuff is unique. We all have unique battles based on what our childhoods were like and the oppressions we face.

Anonymous
USA

* Material means distress.



LANCE CABLK

Giving My Son a Way to Take Charge

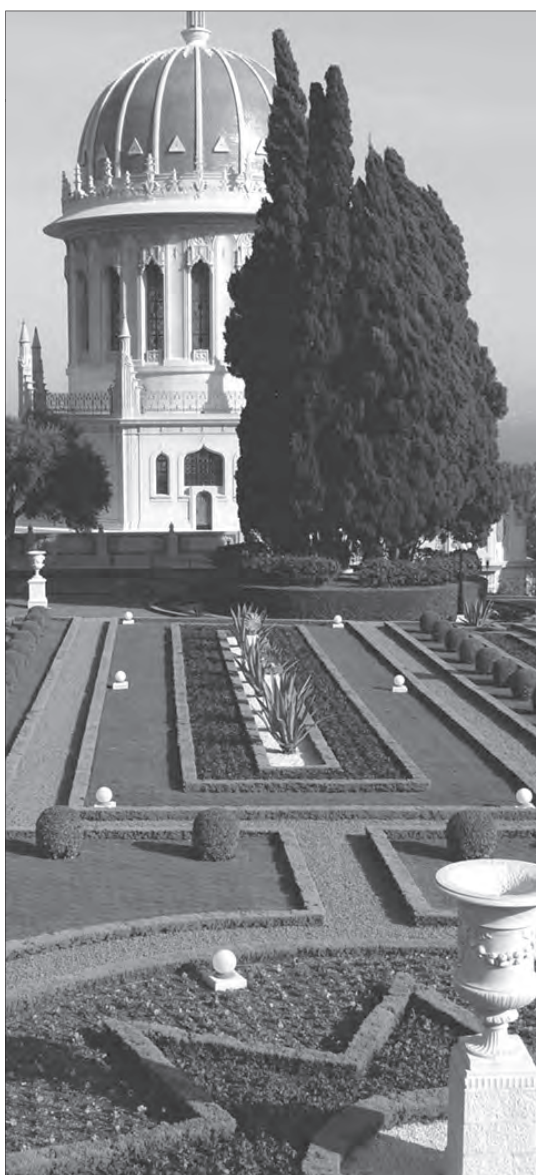
This is an awesome* issue to bring up with parents. I'm guessing that almost all parents struggle with this.

Something I did, which I got from *Present Time*, was to give my son a way to take charge. When he thought I was being mean to him, he would look at a list of phone numbers we had posted in the house and call a Co-Counselor. It was often not easy to hear him call from the other room, "Mommy, X— is on the phone for you!" but it always shifted the situation.

Leslie Kausch

Greensboro, North Carolina, USA

* In this context, awesome means terrific.



ISRAEL • RANDI FREUNDLICH

Humiliating, but a Relief

It has been interesting raising a child with RC. One time when my son C— was seven, I got restimulated about something and pulled his hair (immediately after which I apologized and told him that it wasn't okay). I had taught all my close friends RC. A week later C— was on a bike ride with my partner, and they stopped at the home of one of my friends. I called to check on them, and I heard my friend and C— in the background yelling what sounded like, "Don't pull my hair!" I said, "What is going on!?" and my partner said, "Oh, C— is telling us about how you pulled his hair."

Talk about humiliating²! I was their RC teacher, and my son was going to them for support. But I also had a sense of relief that I had support from people I knew loved me, and that C— had a safe place to discharge his hair-pulling experience. A group of five Co-Counselors had been coming over to do special time³ with C— since he was four years old, and the friend he was sharing with was one of these.

L—
USA

¹ Going on means happening.

² Talk about humiliating means how humiliating.

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.

I Lost the Impulse to Hit

I thought for many years that the impulse to hit my children would *never* leave. I was able to not act on it, but it came up regularly when I was frustrated, angry, tired, or otherwise restimulated about some interaction with my children. I was hit frequently as a young person and told that if I tried to defend myself I would “get more.” So there was a “double whammy” so to speak.

Several things helped me to discharge the feeling (it does not come up anymore; though I still get restimulated, I never have the urge to hit):

- Bringing it out into the open and finally talking about it—admitting that I felt the urge to hit my children and declaring that I never wanted to feel that way again
- Fighting for myself; the counselor giving me permission to yell, “Stop it!” or “You cannot do this to me!” and when I would go limp insisting that I not give up
- Remembering precious memories of my children, picturing myself holding them tenderly as babies or tucking them into bed at night; telling my counselor

details about those moments so that I would have the memories close to the top of my head when the not-so-pleasant feelings arose during conflicts with my children

- Because roughhousing could be challenging for me when my older son got extra rough, we would build a pillow fort around me, and my husband would playfully “defend me” against my son, with pillows. The idea that someone could help me, defend me, care about me, helped shift the restimulation. We are all big fans of roughhousing now.

I am currently working on the feelings of terror, defenselessness, and anger left by the violence I experienced as a young person. Even though I work with families and understand the impact violence has on people, I am inclined to minimize or gloss over the impact it had on me. One of my counselors has insisted that I work on it in every session for a year. Just thinking of that direction does a lot for me—I laugh and laugh.

Kirsten Nottleson
Austin, Texas, USA

Correction

In the April 2012 *Present Time*, on page 73 and also in the table of contents, we misspelled the last name of the author of the article “From a Russian Immigrant.” The correct spelling is Chislenko. Our apologies.



Perspectives on RC from an Introductory Lecture

Recently I invited a close friend to join me at an introductory lecture on Re-evaluation Counseling. The RC teacher was creative and thoughtful and did an excellent job of providing a detailed overview of the RC project. One thing he said stood out to me: “Talking about RC can be a bit challenging, because it is not just one thing.” He went on to explain that it could be thought about on three levels:

Re-evaluation Counseling is a body of theory developed via the observations and analyses of many people over

many years. This theory is contained in books, journals, and pamphlets as well as communicated via “best practices” shared by Co-Counseling leaders at workshops and the individual perspectives, counseling practices, and counseling relationships of millions of people around the world. However, RC is not *just* a theory

It is also a “living tool,” constantly refining itself, which humans can use to access their natural healing processes and free themselves from the effects of accumulated distress recordings.

And finally, Re-evaluation Counseling is a Community of people, around the planet, that have agreed to a one-point program of using Co-Counseling (taking turns listening to one another) to re-emerge from their distresses and help other members of the Community do the same.

Ian Granick
Brooklyn, New York, USA



A Decision About Abortion

When I was dating men in my mid to late thirties, I realized that before I became sexually active with a man I wanted to take a direction regarding whether or not I would terminate a pregnancy. I hoped to avoid the restimulation that would follow if I became pregnant and to be more in the driver's seat of a heterosexual sexual relationship.

Even though my partner and I would be using contraception, I knew that abstinence was the only foolproof* way to prevent pregnancy. After thinking and discharging, I concluded that if I became pregnant I would not terminate the pregnancy. With that decision, along with facing my responsibility to not

bring a life into existence without planning to do so, I could more easily feel power in my reproductive life.

It was empowering to discuss the decision as part of getting to know a partner at that time. He happened to agree with it. Since we weren't sure if we would become life partners, and did not want to be parents, the decision helped us take the necessary steps for consistent birth control. Our intimate relationship became less complicated. We could face the fact of potential pregnancy and not narrow our minds or hearts toward each other because of fear of pregnancy.

* Foolproof means without chance of failure.

Caryn Davis
Staten Island, New York, USA

Every Co-Counseling session increases very strongly our odds of having a good life.

Tim Jackins
From "Surviving in This Irrational System,"
in *Present Time* No. 166, January 2012



My Thirty-Something Story of Reproductive Health



I'm a heterosexual thirty-something female¹ who grew up middle-class in the United States, without much knowledge of what it meant to be mixed-heritage, since I look white. And, above all, even before I was conceived, I was Catholic.

I discharged for ten years on getting married—five years before meeting my partner and five years after meeting him. In retrospect, I

should also have been discharging on whether or not to become a parent, but that didn't occur to me.

I had no idea how quickly, once I got married, the pressure would hit to become a mother. I got pressure from colleagues, relatives, friends, and my partner. I knew I was not ready to be a mother, but my Catholic upbringing, and fears about talking freely about sex and sharing openly what seemed "sacred" and "private," made it difficult to create space for discharge, be

open about my struggles, and think clearly about sex, birth control, and contemplating parenthood.

All of that changed at a women leaders' workshop, when in the midst of a group of women joking about sex on Saturday night I told my working-class Jewish leader what was really going on²: that although I was afraid of getting pregnant, I was also afraid of disappointing my husband, so we were dabbling

¹ Thirty-something female means female in her thirties.

² Going on means happening.

with having unprotected sex. Her response was hard to hear but truly changed my life.

She explained that I was choosing my fears over my integrity, that my fear of losing my partner was outweighing my commitment to doing the right thing and making hard choices, and that this lack of integrity made it hard for her to trust me as a leader.

I cried hard and felt ashamed, but I also felt relieved and freed. She had named the thing I hadn't been able to put my finger on, and she loved me enough to take the risk to tell me. Her direction for me was "I promise to take full responsibility for not getting pregnant, and I will not get pregnant until I'm ready." She said, "This is not just a direction for sessions. This is a promise you have to make—to me and to yourself. If you want my support, you have to do this." I knew getting pregnant would be devastating. But getting pregnant without her backing³? Unbearable. I told her I would sleep on it.

The next morning she gave me time⁴ in front of the group, and I knew I had to make the promise fully. I've kept it ever since.

When I say that being challenged in this way changed my life, I'm not exaggerating. For one thing, it has made me step up and take leadership in my relationship with my husband—something I had done only inconsistently until then. This has required discharging steadily on sexism and internalized sexism, but now I know that he's not going anywhere. He may have a fit,⁵ feel disappointed, disagree, and pout, but he's not going to leave. He may

³ Backing means support.

⁴ Gave me time means gave me a counseling session.

⁵ Have a fit means get very upset.

withdraw emotionally when he's upset, something that is hard on me because of my early material,⁶ but that has more to do with his response to men's oppression than with a lack of love for me. I also know now that even if he decided to leave, I'd be okay.

I have been working on my feelings about parenthood and have begun leading a monthly support group for people discharging on whether or not to become a parent. I've been able to consider the possibility of not having children, and my partner is now able to consider that as well (something he wasn't willing to consider before). At this point we're leaning toward not having children.

⁶ Material means distress.

Working on my feelings connected to birth control has helped me move a huge chunk of terror, and it keeps me focused on where I might compromise my integrity (for example, by having unprotected sex without making a decision about becoming a parent).

I use the directions "I've made a decision," or "It sometimes happens that a Catholic woman makes a decision," or "I'm trying something different." They contradict how heavy I feel about all this and have helped me separate the old stuff from reality. For working on patriarchy and terror, I take the direction "Patriarchy sucks!"⁷ I've

continued . . .

⁷ Sucks means is awful.



ALISA LEMIRE BROOKS

COUNSELING PRACTICE

... continued

been working on the sexism in the medical system and the unstated assumption that the responsibility for birth control should fall primarily on women's shoulders. I also try to remember that my partner is not the enemy, that he's on my side, and that we're in this together.

Working on using birth control and on considering not being a mother has opened up a big space to work on my early fears of going to hell. It's been helpful to work in light ways and with counselors who don't share these fears (Jewish counselors, in particular). I still haven't gotten to Joanne's⁸ assertion of "no heaven, no hell," but I'm on my way.

I've worked on my fears about the witch trials in the United States and Europe. I've worked on how "mental health" oppression, sexism, and parents' oppression hit both of my grandmothers. I've worked on all kinds of feelings related to

⁸ Joanne Bray, the International Liberation Reference Person for Catholics



MARTIN URBEL

abortion. I've used directions such as "It sometimes happens that a Catholic woman chooses not to be a mother," occasionally adding "and she doesn't get killed for it." Sometimes I throw in "and she has a great life."

I've used directions that contradict shame and allow me to work on pride in myself, my mind, and my decisions: "I'm so in love with my husband—and I love having sex with him!" and "I am choosing not to be a mother right now" (chest out, head held high). Given my strong Catholic roots, it's helped to draw on "the sacred." I imagine that I am surrounded by Mary, the

angels, and all the saints and that they're all cheering me on. (One counselor told me, "Jesus called and told me to tell you you're to have lots of great sex tonight.") I've also had light sessions on the Immaculate Conception and imagining Mary applauding me for deciding not to be a mother.

Working on not having children brings up big feelings that something is wrong with me, my partner, and our partnership. I'm pulled to look to my partner for reassurance against these feelings, which he can't convincingly provide, so I just keep taking them into sessions. It continues to surprise me how deep the recordings⁹ are. I know there's an early piece of this that's specific to my being Catholic, and I look forward to moving through it!

Anonymous
USA

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

⁹ Distress recordings

Traducción al español del artículo anterior:

El relato de mi salud reproductiva a los treinta y pico de años

Soy una mujer heterosexual de treinta y pico de años. Crecí en la clase media en EEUU sin mucho conocimiento de lo que significaba ser de herencia mezclada debido a que parezco ser blanca. Y sobre todo—antes de haber sido concebida—fui católica.

Desahogué sobre casarme por diez años—durante los cinco años antes de conocer a mi pareja y durante los cinco años después de conocerlo. En retrospectiva, debería haber estado desahogando acerca de sí o no ser madre como parte del trabajo del desahogo acerca del matrimonio, pero no se me ocurrió.

No tenía la menor idea de cuán rápidamente la presión de ser madre me caería encima una vez que me casara—la presión provenía de colegas, de mis padres, de las

amistades, y de mi pareja. Sabía absolutamente que yo no estaba lista para ser madre pero con mi educación católica, y los temores acerca de hablar libremente acerca de sexo, compartiendo abiertamente lo que a mi me parecía "sagrado" y "privado," se me hacía difícil crear el espacio para desahogar, ser abierta acerca de mis luchas, y pensar con claridad acerca de sexo, el control de la natalidad y contemplar la maternidad.

Todo esto cambió en el taller de mujeres líderes cuando, en medio de un grupo de mujeres haciendo bromas acerca de sexo el sábado por la noche, le conté a mi líder judía, de clase trabajadora, lo que me pasaba realmente—que aunque tuviera miedo de quedar embarazada, estaba también atemorizada de decepcionar a mi marido así que nos dejábamos a la suerte teniendo sexo sin protección.

Fue difícil escuchar su respuesta pero sinceramente cambió mi vida.

Me explicó que yo estaba optando por los temores sobre la integridad, que el temor de perder a mi pareja me pesaba más que mi compromiso a hacer lo correcto o tomar las decisiones difíciles, y que esta falta de integridad se le hacía difícil para ella fiarse de mí como líder.

Lloré muchísimo y me sentí avergonzada, pero también me sentí aliviada y liberada. Había señalado la cosa en la cuál yo no había podido poner el dedo. Y me quería lo bastante para arriesgarse a decírmelo. Su dirección para mí fue, “Prometo tomar la responsabilidad plena para no quedarme embarazada. Y no me quedaré embarazada hasta que esté lista.” Y dijo, “Esto no es solamente una dirección para sesiones. Esto es una promesa que tienes que cumplir—conmigo y con ti misma. Si quieres mi apoyo, tienes que hacer esto.” Supe que quedarme embarazada sería devastador, ¿pero quedarme embarazada sin su apoyo? Intolerable. Le dije que consultaría con la almohada.

Me dio tiempo¹ delante del grupo a la mañana siguiente y supe que tenía que cumplir con la promesa completamente y me he mantenido fiel a esa promesa desde entonces.

Cuando digo que lo de haber sido desafiada de esa forma cambió mi vida, no exagero. De un modo, me hizo ascender y tomar el liderazgo en mi relación con mi marido, algo que sólo había hecho de forma inconsistente hasta entonces. Y eso ha requerido que me desahogue seguido sobre el sexismo y el sexismo internalizado. Pero ahora sé que él no se va a ir—puede hacer berrinches,² sentirse decepcionado, no acordar y hacer muecas—pero él no se irá a ningún lado. Puede que se retire emocionalmente cuando se sienta trastornado, algo que es realmente duro para mí a causa de mi material³ temprano, pero esto tiene más que ver con su reacción a la opresión de hombres que a una falta de amor para mí. Yo también sé ahora que incluso si decidiera irse, yo estaría bien.

He trabajado sobre mis sentimientos acerca de la maternidad y empecé por dirigir un grupo mensual de apoyo para personas desahogando en decidir sí y no llegar a ser madres y padres. He podido considerar la posibilidad de no tener hijas o hijos—y mi esposo ahora puede considerarla también (la cual no estuvo dispuesto a considerar antes). En este momento, nos inclinamos hacia no ser madre y padre.

¹ Me dio tiempo quiere decir me dio una sesión.

² Hacer berrinches quiere decir sentir irritación o desconsuelo.

³ Material quiere decir angustias.

Trabajando en mis sentimientos y en los temores conectados al control de la natalidad me ha ayudado a mover un pedazo inmenso de terror y me mantiene concentrada en dónde quizás ceda mi integridad (por ejemplo, tener sexo sin protección sin haber tomado la decisión acerca de llegar a ser madre).

Utilizo las direcciones “He tomado una decisión,” o “Sucede a veces que una mujer católica toma una decisión,” o “Estoy tratando algo diferente.” Estas frases moderadas contradicen lo pesado que se siente acerca de ello y me han ayudado separar lo antiguo de la realidad. Para trabajar en el patriarcado y el terror, uso la dirección, “¡El patriarcado es un desastre!” He estado trabajando sobre el sexismo que existe en el sistema de salud y en la suposición tácita que la responsabilidad para el control de la natalidad cae principalmente a las mujeres. También trato de recordar que mi esposo no es el enemigo, que está de mi lado, y que en esto estamos los dos juntos.

Hacer el trabajo alrededor de utilizar el control de la natalidad y considerar no ser madre ha abierto un espacio grande para trabajar en mis temores tempranos de ir al infierno. Ha sido útil trabajar de maneras ligeras y de trabajar con escuchas que no comparten estos temores (escuchas criadas en la religión judía, en particular). Yo todavía no he llegado a la afirmación de Joanne⁴ de “ningún cielo, ningún infierno,” pero voy en camino.

He trabajado en mis temores acerca de los juicios de brujería en EEUU y Europa. He trabajado en la opresión de la “salud mental,” el sexismo y la opresión de madres y padres debido a que estas opresiones asediaron a mis dos abuelas. He trabajado en todo tipo de sentimientos relacionado con el aborto. He utilizado direcciones como “Sucede a veces

continuado . . .

⁴ Joanne Bray, la Persona de Referencia Internacional para la Liberación de Personas Católicas



PHOTO COURTESY OF AMANDA MARTINEZ

COUNSELING PRACTICE

... *continuado*

que una mujer católica escoge no ser madre,” agregando a veces “y no la han matado debido a eso.” A veces añado “y lleva una vida estupenda.”

He utilizado direcciones que contradicen la vergüenza y me permiten trabajar en el orgullo de mi misma, en mi mente, y en mis decisiones: “¡Estoy tan enamorada de mi marido—y adoro acostarme con él!” y “Escojo no ser madre en este momento” (con el pecho fuera, la cabeza en alto). Dadas mis raíces profundas del catolicismo, me ha ayudado utilizar “el sagrado” en sesión. Me hago la imagen de que estoy rodeada por María, por los ángeles y todos los santos, y en todo me vitorean. (Una vez me dieron la dirección “Jesús llamó y dijo que te dijera que has de tener mucho sexo espectacular esta noche.”) También he tenido sesiones ligeras acerca de La Purísima Concepción e imaginarme a María que me aplaude al decidir no ser madre.



NINA EICHNER

Trabajar sobre no ser madre hace que surgen sentimientos fuertes: que algo va mal conmigo, con mi pareja, y con nuestra relación. Me hace que busque en él un consuelo contra estos sentimientos—lo cual él no puede proporcionar de forma convincente, entonces acabo de nuevo llevando estos sentimientos a mis sesiones. Me siguen sorprendiendo qué cuán profundas son estas grabaciones⁵. Sé que hay un pedazo temprano en esto que es específicamente debido a que soy católico—¡y tengo las ganas de seguir avanzando por este camino!

Anónima

EEUU

Traducido por Pamela Carreón

Reimpreso de la lista de discusión de correo electrónico de RC para líderes de católicos/as

⁵ Grabaciones de angustias

The next four articles, about counseling a pregnant woman, were taken from a discussion on the RC e-mail discussion list for leaders of parents.

• Counseling a • Pregnant Woman

Dear parents,

I am Co-Counseling with a woman in her thirties who is a few months into an unplanned pregnancy. In her sessions she is working some on “How did this happen?” and discharging feelings that she has made a mistake.

She plans to have the baby, and I would love to hear your thinking on how I can help her discharge everything she needs to for her and her child to have the best possible start together.

I’m also wondering if I should encourage her to spend some time in each session noticing what’s good about being pregnant and what she’s looking forward to about being a mom.

Anonymous

• Insights from a Parents' Liberation Workshop •

Hi, Co-Counselor of a pregnant woman!* Your ideas all sound good. One thing I can add is an insight from a parents' liberation workshop:

There are four main aspects of parents' oppression—guilt, isolation, confusion, and exhaustion.

- Guilt can be discharged completely, just like any other distress.

- So can confusion, with the help of frequently re-reading good theory.

- Exhaustion has a recorded component that is important to discharge and a real-time component that makes it critical for parents to build a good support system so that they can get some sleep.

- Isolation is a distress that requires some special strategizing. A parent sitting and telling a counselor about her or his present and past isolation generally does not allow the parent to discharge the isolation rapidly enough to support the building of a big enough support team. The discharge happens much faster when the parent forces herself or himself to go against the feelings and ask all kinds of people for help. Ideally the young person who is about to be born should have at least six adults who are ready, willing, and at least partly trained to be significant allies, involved preferably on a daily to weekly basis. Having an ample support system greatly improves the chances that the parent will have sessions regularly after the baby is born. Not

having an ample support system may mean that the parent doesn't get regular sleep, discharge, or time to read theory and therefore that all the confusion and guilt and exhaustion become overwhelming.

You may wish to ask the parent to think about the above and consider prioritizing the building and training of a set of allies from outside of RC and using a bunch of her session time to discharge anything that's in her way of asking for help, reading and sharing the literature about parents' and young people's oppression, and setting up her life to put herself and her baby in charge and in the center.

Jennifer Kreger
Fort Bragg, California, USA

* See previous article.

• She Still Gets to Make a Decision •

What a great question.¹ I am enjoying the responses here and would add one thing.

While it is definitely true that your Co-Counselor should discharge lots on the decision to have the baby and welcome it wholeheartedly into her life, she also should continue to discharge on the other end of it. Having a baby is not compulsory for any woman, but most of us have been conditioned to feel like it is. This is especially intense when one is already pregnant and the parenting has begun.

This woman still has options. She can put the child up for adoption, for example. The fact that she is pregnant does not and should not prevent her from getting to make the choice—fully, for herself—about whether or not to be a mom. Diane Balser² has pushed us women on this over and over, and correctly so. Every one of us can and should discharge plentifully on both ends of the decision, because the distresses that have been installed on us in this area are so thick.

I would encourage your Co-Counselor to be thoughtful about how she discharges on it, given that her child will be there with her while she does the sessions. But *not* working on not wanting to have a child, and not looking at the option of not raising the child, will also communicate hard things to the baby. Mom's conflicts and ambivalence will get communicated one way or another, and it may as well be with discharge and re-evaluation.

I think this will require that her counselors be insistent that there are options, that her life is her own, and that she *still* gets to make a decision—and a thoroughly discharged one. Then if she decides to raise the child she will do so more wholeheartedly; if she decides not to, she will give the child a life with caregivers who have chosen that role. Either way, she will have had the chance to discharge on male domination, mothers' oppression, and early material.³

Amy Walsh
Providence, Rhode Island, USA

¹ See article by Anonymous on page 20.

² Diane Balser is the International Liberation Reference Person for Women.

³ Material means distress.

• An Eye on Winning •

It is good your Co-Counselor is able to discharge fully about her doubts, regrets, and reservations.¹ I have been thinking about how it is always useful, when possible, to discharge with attention on benign reality, and how this is especially true when a young person is in earshot² (or in this case, in physical contact).

I don't know what would allow her to continue discharging hard and deeply while focusing on her inherent valuing and cherishing of this young one. Perhaps raging about how unjust it is that the world is set up so that women have to make choices no one should ever have to make, or how the support that every parent deserves is not available. I am guessing that anything that lets her line herself and the young one up against oppression, with an eye on *winning*, and them both getting to have wonderful lives, might be powerful. Having said that, I believe that her having the space to discharge fully is most important. Whatever is confusing for the young one he or she can discharge later.

I am glad she has you thinking about her and with her.

Eileen Nemzer
Toronto, Ontario, Canada

¹ See article by Anonymous on page 20.

² Earshot means the range within which sound can be heard by the unaided ear.

“Meaning” and Connection

An insight came to me in one of my recent Co-Counseling sessions on despair. We all seek “meaning” in our lives—in our work, our art, our close relationships. For many people occasional feelings of pointlessness surface: “What is the use? Who cares?” In my session I saw that the search for meaning is about connection. When something “means” something, it is part of a greater whole; it is connected.

There are hundreds of books and theories about “meaning.” From an RC vantage point, I’m suggesting that the “search for meaning” is a quest to break the chronic isolation patterns imposed by early abuse and unmet needs. It is a desire to realize that everything is connected. I think that when we find something meaningful, we have been able to re-frame it, via a glimpse through the chronic isolation recordings,¹ as connected to ourselves and others.

I am alerted that when the “pointlessness” feelings surface, I am seeking a session, and that connection is the contradiction.²

Marsha Saxton
El Cerrito, California, USA
From a letter written to Harvey Jackins in 1998

¹ Distress recordings

² Contradiction to the distress



A Tool for Discharging Oppressor Distress

At a recent eliminating-white-racism workshop in Cheshunt (Hertfordshire, England), Dvora¹ talked about Marcie Rendon’s² direction to us white people to work on where we have benefited from the genocide of Indigenous people. It gave me permission and a tool to discharge on something I’d been carrying since my late pre-teens—when I began to have some idea of what happened in Ireland, what my people had done and been complicit in. I was born in 1959, and young Protestants at that time weren’t

taught Irish history. I had to piece things together like a jigsaw puzzle.

After discharging, I hit on the idea that I owe everything to the genocide of Indigenous people. If my ancestors hadn’t come to Ireland, I don’t think I would exist.

This brings a lot of discharge for me—so far mostly of terror and grief. Nothing I’ve discharged on in a long time has given me hope the way this does. It’s exciting to me that cleaning up the Protestant oppressor part of my Irish identity goes hand in hand with cleaning up my racism.

David Morris
Bristol, Gloucestershire, England
Reprinted from the RC e-mail discussion list for leaders of Irish-heritage people

¹ Dvora Slavin, the Regional Reference Person for South King County, Washington, and Hawaii, USA, and the leader of the workshop

² Marcie Rendon is the International Liberation Reference Person for Native Americans.

A Personal Playday

We did a playday¹ centered on one adult person in our Community. We asked the person (the client) to list all the childhood games and activities in which she'd felt successful. Then we took that information and built the day around it. We set a time period of four hours.

¹ 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. In this case, the playday was centered around an adult client.

The client was put in charge of all the day's activities. She taught everyone how to play all the games. We jumped rope, hula-hooped, punch-balled, and stoop-balled. She taught us a song in Ladino, her first language. She also read a storybook to us, to celebrate her having learned to speak English as a second language between kindergarten and first grade.

We had a schedule for the day but remained flexible. The client decided when to move on to another activity or

a mini-session. (For the client, the minis were one-way.)

One of the contradictions² for the client was noticing how many people had thought well about her and that she was not alone on her journey toward re-emergence. All of us had fun, while living in the moment and creating closer connections.

Marion Farina
West Orange, New Jersey, USA

² Contradictions to distress



COSTA RICA • THERESA D'AMATO

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; \$91.50 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 110 of this issue.

The Nature of the Upward Trend

The upward trend is real. Over and over the high points in human existence are when one has struggled to the limits of one's ability and still not won and then the upward trend appears with the additional support that turns imminent defeat into victory. I think this happens over and over. I think it's the nature of the upward trend in the universe.

Harvey Jackins
From a letter written in 1982

Many Sessions on a Big Decision

It took a lot of discharge to decide to become a parent. I was always sure that I did not want to have a child, because I did not like children and wanted to have nothing to do with them. When I met my husband, I told him that if he was looking for someone to have children with, I was not the woman for him.

When I turned forty I decided that, even though I was already five hundred percent sure that I did not want children, it would be smart to examine my decision in Co-Counseling sessions. To my surprise, I realized that the reason I did not want children was that I was an attempted “abortee” and that as the youngest of eight children I had a very hard time as a child. I was constantly criticized and ostracized and never felt wanted. My sisters wanted nothing to do with me and told me that they wished my mom had successfully aborted me. I realized that my dislike of and distaste for children was rooted in these early hurts.

Discharging on these hurts helped me to finally decide to become the mom of a beautiful and wonderful boy that my husband and I adopted from China four and a half years ago. I adore my son. He is my shining star. He has taught me

so much about what our inherent humanness really looks like.

After we got him I thought we were done. It never occurred to me that we would adopt another child. But when he was about five, I found myself missing when he was two and three years old and I began eyeing other little children with interest and a tinge of longing. Then I bumped into¹ a friend whose youngest child had turned sixteen and I found out that he and his wife had just adopted an eight-year-old from China. At the same time, my son began asking repeatedly for a little sister or brother.

I started discharging to figure out what made sense—focusing on whether or not my motivation for having another child was rational and looking at all of the challenges it would bring. After many sessions I consulted Tim Jackins. He suggested I do another twenty sessions before deciding.

Following his suggestion was great. I don’t think I had ever before put that kind of focused attention on any issue. It gave me the opportunity to not gloss over anything, to pay attention to and discharge on all the thoughts and feelings that came up around the possibility of having another child.

I knew I was terrified, but I was surprised at some of the other feelings that came up. One of the strongest was of not having enough time with my son. I loved and adored him so much and enjoyed his every stage and age. I wished that I could slow down his growth, because all too soon he was on to another stage.

After discharging on the feeling that I could not get enough of him, I realized that I had more than enough love to go around and that I was ready to have another unique, wonderful human being in my life. However, the terror and uncertainty of what that would mean, as well as Catholic guilt that made me feel selfish for wanting something for myself, made it easier for me to embrace my son’s desire to have a sibling and my husband’s desire for him to have one. (Since we are older parents, adopting another child would mean that our son would not be alone in the world when we died.) Thanks to discharge, I was able to get a sense that this project could be for me, and for my re-emergence.

Fears and feelings of inadequacy came up with a vengeance. Could I do this? Did I have enough attention to deal with two children, and support my husband to be a good ally to them? I imagined the worst scenarios, including my son coming to me and saying, “Mama, I changed my mind. I only want you and Daddy. I don’t want a little brother,” or the two brothers tearing each other’s eyes out,² or their being mad at each other and neither wanting to give in, or their not liking each other and not getting along,³ or the stress being too much for me to handle and my oppressive attitudes toward young people coming up full tilt.⁴ What if the little boy we adopted was not as healthy as he seemed to be and needed lots of medical care and other support services? My worst fear was, what if the addition of another child totally disrupted and



MAURA FALLON

¹ Bumped into means unexpectedly made contact with.

² Tearing each other’s eyes out means fighting with each other physically.

³ Getting along means coexisting harmoniously.

⁴ Full tilt means at high speed.

upset the wonderful relationships we already had?

I worked on whether another child would mean having to give up on wide-world activism. After the sessions, I knew I would always be an activist. I worked on whether I wanted to put a large amount of my resource into parenting another child. Did I have what it took to keep my attention out and to keep thinking about and reaching for both the children and my husband?

It was great to have the space to discharge on all of this and figure out how I could respond. I am amazed at how smart our minds are at exposing distresses and how well they can figure things out when there is space for discharge.

After twenty sessions I was able to figure out several things. I figured out that we would need to do structured special time⁵ if we had two children. With one child it had been difficult to do structured special time, because all of the time I spent with him felt like special time.

I also began figuring out how to better support my husband to be an ally to the children. He is willing but is often unaware of what it takes to have the kind of attention our son can really use. I was able to get him to agree to have regular Co-Counseling sessions with me in addition to his other regular sessions.

⁵ 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.

It has been hard to put my mind on my husband's re-emergence. I tend to be critical and impatient. This whole process has helped me focus on figuring out how to better think about him, even if the motivation has been my need to have another parent whom I can rely on to be a good counselor for the children. Thinking about my husband is something I have neglected. Our having a commitment to spend time listening to and supporting each other is a big step forward for us.

I am also clear that for me to take on⁶ another child I will need to have other resources in addition to my husband and make sure that I get adequate discharge time. When my son first came, it felt impossible to take long sessions so I arranged for daily ten-minute phone mini-sessions. About a year ago I figured out how to include a face-to-face session every two weeks and then every week. Since doing the twenty

⁶ Take on means take responsibility for.

sessions I have figured out that it is possible to have the sessions I need and also that I can take a leave of absence from some other activities.

We have decided to move in the direction of adoption. It will take at least six months to finish all the paperwork and then another several months to receive the final approval to go and get the child. My son is excited and asks almost daily when we are going to get his brother. He envisions his brother sleeping right next to him every night. I am continuing to figure out how to prepare him for his brother's arrival, which I hope will be soon.

As Tim said, "discharge, decide, and continue the discharge," and that is exactly what I intend to do. There is no other way.

I want to thank all my wonderful counselors for their loving and thoughtful support.

Cheng Imm Tan
Boston, Massachusetts, USA



MARION OUPHOUET

Treasure Curiosity

I treasure, wherever I find it, the huge desire to know everything—the basic human curiosity that gets so sealed off in so many people but is crucial for growth.

Harvey Jackins
From *The Rest of Our Lives*, page 290

The Liberation of the Middle Class

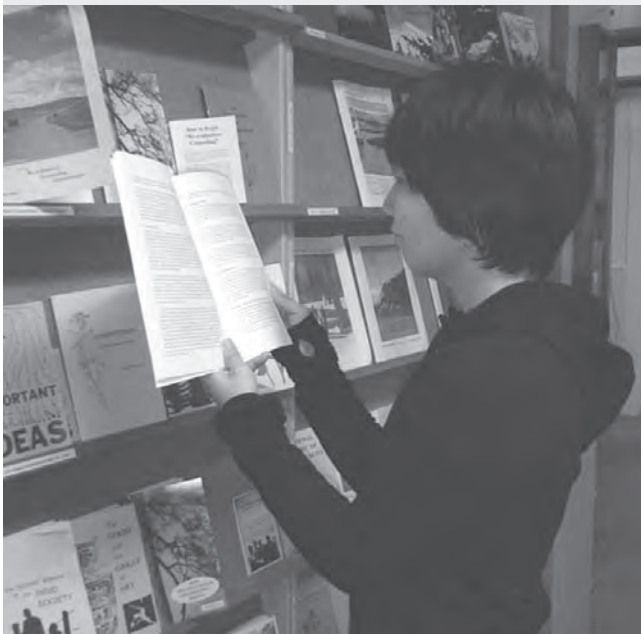
CD #1002

A CD of a talk by Seán Ruth,
the International Liberation Reference Person
for Middle-Class People

Seán Ruth, the International Liberation Reference Person for Middle-Class People, presents clear, candid information about middle-class oppression and liberation. He emphasizes that the middle class has been systematically separated from the working class, not through fault of its own but because of a damaging oppression. With kindness and humor, he maps out a perspective on middle-class people that offers hope for directly challenging the effects of the oppression and moving toward the necessary transformation of society.

This is a useful talk for anyone, of any class background, interested in understanding the ways that classism divides us from each other.

\$10.00 (U.S.), plus postage and handling



Ruah Hadashah No. 11

This *Ruah Hadashah* is full of items to help Jews, and allies to Jews, meet the challenges of the next period. Each article can be used to guide us toward powerful counseling and powerful action. The articles are packed with new thoughts about how to discharge the hurts of anti-Jewish oppression that keep Jews from loving themselves, loving each other, and reaching out to every potential ally.

Discharging on anti-Jewish oppression goes hand in hand with the goal of eliminating white racism, another central theme of this *Ruah Hadashah*. Each topic relates to the others, reflecting a hopeful cohesiveness and strength.

Marya Axner, Editor
Somerville, Massachusetts, USA

\$4.00 (U.S.), plus postage and handling



The RC Teacher No. 30

A sample of the articles:

- "I've Learned to Teach the Students, Not the Topic"
- What Should You Teach in a Fundamentals Class?
- Moving Forward at Our Own Slow Pace
- Thinking About African American Men
- Taking the Plunge to Teach About Racism
- The *Guidelines* Exist to Make Sure You Think
- The Challenge of Developing and Sustaining Leadership
- The Value of Leading from Behind

\$4.00 (U.S.), plus postage and handling



For ordering information, see page 109.



Leadership

From a talk by Tim Jackins at a leaders' day
before an open workshop, in Pune, India, in March 2012

Leadership in RC is different from leadership anywhere else. I think we understand what it means to lead. Others are stuck in trying to coerce people, trying to make them do things. The essence of leading is to get others' minds with you, not get them doing things against what they think. It is listening to people well enough that you understand their thinking, and counseling people (and yourself) well enough that they follow your thinking and not their restimulations. That's the battle all of us have—telling¹ the difference between our restimulations and our best thinking. In the rest of the world, the difference between restimulated feelings and best thinking is not understood, so people act on both.

Most leadership in the world forces people to do things against their interests, for the benefit of some ruling party or ruling class. Leadership is carried out for the material benefit of those relatively few people. (It doesn't benefit them in a human sense, but it brings them more material resources.) In RC we're trying to lead for the benefit of everyone. We're trying to figure out what lets us move ahead together rather than having an individual get ahead. The way I think of it is if we want things better for ourselves, we have to figure out how to make them better for all of us instead of trying to escape difficulties and make them better just for us.

We are all confused about leadership and restimulated by it because we have been mistreated by leaders and misled about what leadership is. In many places no one wants to be the leader. It's just too restimulating. No one wants to be in a position to have other people restimulated about him

or her. You know that happens. If you lead a little bit, people's distresses about leadership attach to you: "I feel bad, and it's your fault." There's no understanding, or even a memory, that they have felt bad that way for years and years before they met you. They feel bad now, and it's your fault. And of course, it's not. It comes from distresses in the past, some of them connected with leadership, and you happen to be the leader. It's an accident really. It isn't about you or your leadership. You may have difficulties, but their being upset is something else.

In some Communities it's hard to get people to lead at all until they have a lot of Co-Counseling sessions about leadership. People need to start having sessions on their distresses about leadership soon after they get into RC. As they work on these distresses, they begin to understand their feelings instead of naively believing them, feeling like they have to act on them, or simply going away. It is in people's interest to discharge on leadership, because if they don't, then they can't use leadership. They get confused about it. They can't use you, your knowledge, and your support. They can't use the opportunity you give them.

If they work on their confusions, they can see you more clearly and remember that you are thinking about them, even when you ask them to do things that are hard for them because of their distresses. You can be a good permissive counselor and help people work on things they bring up and ask for help with, but some of their distresses require more than that. They require your active encouragement in contradicting them. If people are confused about

leadership, they can't use your push. They can't remember why you're pushing. "You're pushing me. It must be wrong. It must be wrong for me." It's not. In the places where we can't think, where our distresses are heavy, we can use someone pushing us, because we can't push ourselves. But it's confusing unless we can trust the person.

Sometimes people will trust you because they had a good session with you, and that's enough. But sometimes it's not, or you didn't get to have that session. So you want people to be able to clear the path themselves by discharging about leadership. To help them do that, you, too, have to discharge about leadership. You have to counsel on all the bad leaders you've had, all the people who've forced you to do things—parents, teachers, and others. The distresses left by them will attach to your Co-Counseling leaders and confuse you about them. They will confuse you about me. No matter how well I do things, I still restimulate some people. They feel like I am pushing them in a way that is not good for them or is too hard.

The relationship we have with each other in RC is one of equals. Everybody is a Co-Counselor. Everybody continues having sessions and growing together. People who lead take on² special activities, but that doesn't make them different. As many of you have said, leading makes you move faster through your material³; you make progress more quickly. But all of us are making progress as best we can. Leading just gives a person a little speed. It doesn't change our basic relationship.

continued . . .

¹ Telling means perceiving.

² Take on means undertake.

³ Material means distress.

... continued

Another aspect of leadership is the relationships among leaders. It's important not to lead in isolation. We tend to do that because we *can* do it and because we know how things should be done. It often feels harder to have someone help us than to do it ourselves. We face certain distresses when we don't just do it alone, or order someone else to do it. We can lead by relating to each other and agreeing on the work. Maybe one of us leads and the other agrees to follow, but that's an agreement we make; it's not automatic. We may agree to do it for a moment, a day, or a month, but it's an agreement we make about our relationship: "I will follow your judgment on this."

It's confusing to be following people who we think are making mistakes. We need to have sessions on where we think they are wrong, and then try to help them have sessions on the place where we think they aren't thinking. And we need to do that not by being critical of them, but by asking the right questions and getting their mind to think about it with support.

We need to build relationships among us as leaders in which we can do that. We want to be more and more open about ourselves and our thinking. We don't want to hide our thinking from each other. ("I don't like what you said, but I'll keep quiet about it.") If we don't like someone's thinking, we can have a session on it. If we still think there's a problem, then we need to be able to share our thinking with that person and see that both of us counsel on whatever it is that doesn't let us agree.

In RC we think that there is no inherent conflict between people; that everything that looks like a conflict comes out of distress; that if we can share our thinking and our information, and counsel on the distresses, we can come to any degree of agreement that we're willing to work for. It may take a lot of sessions,

but we think this is true. Everything we've done supports this.

Leading a group is not about whose idea wins or who has the best ideas but *what* is the best idea. We want all the minds involved. Every mind thinks a little differently, sees things a little differently, because it's had a different life, it knows different things. What we're doing is not so dangerous that we have to have precisely the right idea the first time, every time. We have enough support, enough safety, enough understanding, that we can try different ideas and see if they work. Sometimes we need to try ideas we think are wrong, we need to support the ideas being tried.

We learn how to lead by taking initiative, by taking responsibility for a group, and by learning how to support other leaders. Someone needs to be the person responsible. In a class it's the teacher; in an Area⁴ it's the Area Reference Person; in a Region⁵ it's the Regional Reference Person; in the world, it's me. That's the way we've set things up so that a decision can be made when it needs to be made.

All of the leaders need the thinking and support of everyone around

⁴ An Area is a local RC Community.

⁵ A Region is a subdivision of the International RC Community, usually consisting of several Areas (local RC Communities).

them. They need the other minds engaged, not quietly following. Everyone needs to be part of the whole process and support the leader. Then the leader gets to decide what the group will try next, using everyone's ideas.

We may think the decision is wrong, but it's important that we try it anyway. We can't prove something is wrong by not trying it. That doesn't prove anything. We also can't prove something is wrong by not trying very hard. The way we prove something is wrong is by trying hard to make it work. Then it will show if it's wrong. If everyone tries hard to make it work, and it doesn't—well, then it was a mistake. That's good proof. We can't blame anyone. We all tried to make it work, and it didn't; we need to think again. That's the way we would like to be able to make decisions: all of us thinking, a decision being made, all of us supporting it, and then testing it by putting it into practice. We don't know beforehand if we're right. We know we're right if it works. That's our test—looking at reality.



Organizing Other Intelligences

Full flowering of an intelligence and complete re-emergence from distress seem to imply mastering the skills of organizing other intelligences to work with one's own.

Harvey Jackins
From *The Rest of Our Lives*, page 257

A Fundamentals Workshop on Racism

On a weekend in February of this year, I led a workshop for our Area¹ and a few surrounding people who don't have a Community around them. I wanted to give the newer people a taste of fundamentals theory with eliminating racism laced right in from the beginning so that it didn't seem tagged on as an extra thing we do in RC. The workshop was held at my house, in Fayetteville, Arkansas (USA), and the two black women who came from surrounding areas stayed at my house. I was pleased with how the workshop went and will try to capture the flavor of it.

A couple of weeks before the workshop I started talking about it to my black women's class and to Regina in Memphis² and Alma in Dumas.³ My hope was to make the environment friendly to black folk, and I asked them lots of questions about what would create safety for them. Having it at my house, with a black woman leading, was a good start, but we talked about every little detail—things that would reflect our culture, not the culture of white middle-class USers. We made a list of the foods we like to eat, the music we like, the games we like to play, and so on. I knew it was only a small start, but we did our best thinking about how to design a workshop that was ours.

I think if I did that again, I would have the organizer present with us, listening to us talk about our culture and how we would like a workshop to be. I reported to the organizer everything that came out of those talks, and she did her best to organize around our ideas.

I didn't want the black people in the kitchen cooking. (Out of thirteen participants, four of us were black women.) The three support groups took turns in the kitchen, and it was a challenge to communicate to the white middle-class people (who may not have grown up working regularly in a kitchen) how to prepare the food we wanted. That worked out well, but I can see now how we could do better with it.

Because the workshop happened right after the death of Whitney Houston,⁴ I started the first evening

by playing some of her songs, and we sang and danced. I then talked about racism and the role it played in her death. I quoted something I heard years ago from Rudy Nickens⁵: that the selling of drugs in the black community is racism, and the taking of drugs by black people is internalized racism. (That gave me an opportunity to define those terms right away.) I then talked about the importance of connection and closeness in community building and the role that racism plays in separating us. I talked about RC's goal internationally of ending racism and told them that I am being groomed to lead our Region⁶ as a Regional Reference Person and how that plays into⁷ our goal of eliminating racism in our Region. We will move from being referenced by a white raised-working-class woman (Diane Shisk) to being referenced by a black woman who is an elder and was raised poor. It won't look the same. Being led by a black woman will make a huge difference in our efforts to end racism.

We then did introductions, with each person telling a three-minute life story. That moved us in close, and we went from there to support groups and Shabbat.⁸

continued . . .

⁵ Rudy Nickens is the Regional Reference Person for Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, and Nebraska, USA, and is African American.

⁶ A Region is a subdivision of the International Re-evaluation Counseling Community, usually consisting of several Areas (local RC Communities).

⁷ Plays into means relates to.

⁸ It is a tradition at RC workshops to hold a Shabbat (Jewish Sabbath) ceremony on Friday evening, as a way of contradicting anti-Jewish oppression.



SIERRA NATIONAL FOREST, CLOVIS, CALIFORNIA, USA • NANCY LEMON

¹ An Area is a local RC Community.

² Regina Morton, a Co-Counselor in Memphis, Tennessee, USA

³ Alma Burt, an RC leader in Dumas, Arkansas, USA

⁴ Whitney Houston was a famous African American recording artist, actress, producer, and model, who died on February 11, 2012, of drug-related causes.

... continued

On Saturday I explained that we were figuring out how to move from a white middle-class workshop structure to one that makes more room for people of African heritage, and that we might be shifting things throughout the weekend as I continued to stay in touch with how things were going for the other three black women.

I explained that we of African heritage live and breathe for the most part in white middle-class culture and that we have developed a sixth sense because of it; we have learned to be barometers of white people's functioning. We notice constantly their facial expressions, body postures, tones of voice, words, behaviors, and then adjust to keep ourselves safe. We do this just like we breathe; we don't bring it to conscious awareness. We are like the thermostat in your home that keeps the temperature constant. It is always reading the air space and adjusting to keep you comfortable; you don't have to think about it. Living with white people and adjusting constantly takes a lot of our energy. The effect of it is that we are tired and do not know how to rest. It is one of the factors that leads us to addictive substances. Alcohol, sugar, drugs, hold out the promise of relaxation for us. They allow us to temporarily put our guard down.

I said that at the workshop we would be trying to create an atmosphere in which those of us who are African heritage would not have to be on guard but could rest. That would mean that we would stop "shifting gears," we would make an effort to bring that activity that we are so good at to consciousness and interrupt it. The white people would then have to shift gears. They would have to become more conscious of the comfort level of us black people and make a greater effort in our direction.

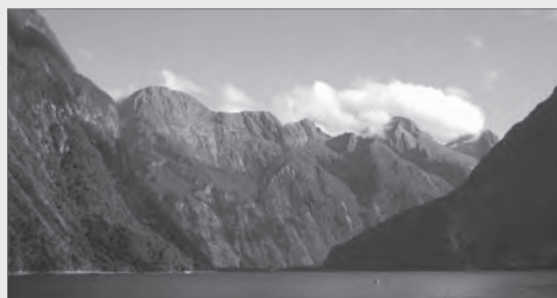
Shifting gears has become natural and second-nature for us but would be a challenge for the white Co-Counselors. I explained: "You will feel and look awkward, which is excellent session material.⁹ You will get to push yourselves into that discomfort. You may feel like you are not welcome or are intruding as you move in close with us. (If you are not feeling these things, consider the possibility that you are not contradicting the material.) It will bring up feelings for us, too, to have white people moving in that close, and we will need to take those feelings to sessions."

⁹ Material means distress.

I reviewed for the new people what we know about having sessions on racism, why white people should have those sessions with other white people, and the value of white people listening to African heritage people talk about their experiences of racism. I also talked about the value of working on the early hurts from our being separated from people who didn't look like us.

After a day of meals, sessions, support groups, and outdoor play, we met again for an evening class and I did a panel with the black women on the effects of racism in their lives. On Sunday, after a talk about the effects of racism on white people, I worked with a white person on racism. People ended the workshop with a renewed commitment to the RC project, to ending racism, and to me.

Dorothy Marcy
Fayetteville, Arkansas, USA



NEW ZEALAND • ELLIE PUTNAM

Three Summer Haiku

Tuxedo-print cat
crouches tense behind the fern
threatening its play.*

Daylilies open
like paintbrushes stiffened
with orange and red.

Unseen yellow legs
propel the cormorant's glide:
black body, grey sea.

Susan Whitlock
Atlanta, Georgia, USA

* One would usually think of a predator threatening its "prey," but this well-fed house cat is most likely just playing.



SANDRA CARTER

Touched by a Workshop in Colombia

I'm Joao from Nicaragua, and I just finished my first RC workshop, with Laura* in Colombia. I have to say it was amazing how much I learned, how much it worked for me. I'm willing to create a group of young people like me to develop, practice, and live RC the best we can in Nicaragua.

I was looking for something that would give me hopes, and I found it.

I don't have enough words to express this, but I can say that I'm not the only young person who was touched by this amazing workshop. Ahh, I cannot omit how wonderful was Laura leading our workshop.

Joao López
Managua, Nicaragua

* Laura Aguilar, an RC leader in Mexico City, Mexico, and the leader of the workshop

Hearing Assistive Devices

Since September 2004, Re-evaluation Counseling Community Resources (RCCR) has been renting out hearing assistive devices for use at RC workshops and other RC events. They work only in the United States and Canada. (Other countries use different radio frequencies.)

We've received good reports from people who have used the devices. No matter where they are sitting in the audience, people are able to clearly hear the speakers in the front of the room.

The leader/speaker wears a microphone and transmitter, and the people with impaired hearing wear headsets attached to pocket-sized receivers.

Can Also Be Used for Interpreting

For workshops with participants who speak a language other than the workshop leader, a Hearing Helper set can be used for interpreting. The interpreter wears a microphone and transmitter. The listener wears a headset and receiver. The interpreter may sit anywhere in the room, often to the side or in the back. This allows him or her to speak with full voice and the listeners to hear the interpretation clearly.

Organizers of events may rent a set for \$60 (U.S.). A standard set includes one microphone/transmitter and two receivers with headsets. Depending on availability, additional receivers/headsets may be added to accommodate up to eight people.

Due to increased demand, organizers who wish to rent this equipment will need to notify us at Re-evaluation Counseling Community Resources at least three weeks before the event (earlier requests are given priority) to be sure of availability and to allow for shipping time. The equipment must be returned to us within two days of the event so that it will be available to others.

For more information and to check availability, e-mail us at <rcoffice@rc.org> (put Hearing Helper in the subject line). Please include the title of the event, the event dates, the organizer's name and e-mail address, and how many people with low hearing you need to accommodate.

Re-evaluation Counseling Community Resources

A Support Group on the Japanese Nuclear Disaster

On March 12, 2012, one year to the day after the horrific earthquake, tsunami, and triple nuclear meltdown (or melt-out as it is now being called), we held a day-long support group entitled “Kyushu and the Nuclear Disaster.”

Kyushu, in southwestern Japan, is over eight-hundred kilometers from Fukushima.¹ Mostly by virtue of its location and fortunate wind direction, this mostly agricultural island has thus far been spared direct contamination of air, water, and food. It has become a refuge for almost a thousand people who have fled areas of highly toxic contamination.

However, we have on this island two huge nuclear power plants (presently turned off for “testing”). Genkai is a “sister-reactor,” in age and model-type, to Fukushima numbers 1 and 2. It is situated just a little over thirty kilometers from Fukuoka, the fourth most populous city in Japan. We regularly have earthquakes here and had one just yesterday.

It seemed to me that in spite of all that has happened and has been revealed, or maybe because of it, the impetus to look at, feel, and discharge on the nuclear disaster had somehow been pushed aside. Although Diane² and Yuko³ came to Kyushu and led a stupendous one-day workshop on the disaster, and information on the accident and the still bleeding Fukushima

reactors has increased, people in the Community here seemed to be focused elsewhere.

The one-year anniversary seemed like a perfect vehicle for discharge. Just the previous day the Japanese government had admitted that it knew of the meltdowns on the day of the disaster but had hidden the information for months. This and other revelations made us ripe for some good sessions!

Six of us, four women and two men, participated in the support group. We discharged on when we first became aware of nuclear weapons and power plants. We then played a game—we became outer-space aliens viewing Japan on March 11, 2011. This brought a lot of laughter. Returning to inner-space we had long paired sessions about the day of the Fukushima disasters and the explosions reported in the media.

A lunch break followed, with time for “creativity”—an enactment of the meltdown using pretzels for zirconium encased plutonium pellets. After we “melted down” the “rods,” we ate a lot of pretzels. Understanding the mechanism of the accident helped us to feel more empowered.

After lunch we discharged on the toxic contamination in the food chain, concentrating on high radiation levels detected in water, cow’s milk, mother’s milk, and powdered baby formula. We were

then clear enough to speak for two minutes each about the good things that had happened over the year. One that stood out for many of us was the beautiful generosity of Co-Counselors around the world offering us one-way sessions. Thank you for being there for us!

At 2:46 PM we all held hands and wept together as the city sirens and temple bells rang out. It was beautiful to be together with Co-Counselors to honor those thousands who had been killed or lost or were still in great suffering.

Lastly we envisioned a Japan, and a world, with no more nuclear power plants. Many folks spoke of how in the future, with nuclear power abandoned as anti-survival and inhuman, we would talk with pride to our great-grand “young people” about how we had been able to pull back from the precipice just in time; how we had made the rational choice, as liberated beings, and embraced safe, sustainable, sane sources of energy.

It was a beautiful day.

As of this writing, the Japanese government is still committed to nuclear energy and wants to scatter contaminated earthquake and tsunami debris throughout all of Japan in an effort to “help” with the recovery of Tohoku. So we will keep discharging, as there is still a lot of work to do!

Leah Matsui
Kumamoto, Japan

¹ Fukushima is a prefecture of Japan, located in the Tohoku region of the island of Honshu, in which a nuclear power plant disaster occurred during the March 2011 earthquake.

² Diane Shisk, the Alternate International Reference Person

³ Yuko Hibino, a Japanese Co-Counseling leader living in Seattle, Washington, USA



Learning RC in Lagos, Nigeria

I arrived at the RC workshop at the University of Lagos, in Lagos, Nigeria, on May 19, 2012, in the heavy pouring rain.

Mrs. Chioma Okonkwo delivered a comprehensive lecture. Mrs. Onii Nwangwu Stevenson also commented to make the points well understood. The following is some of what was considered:

- Early in life we encounter experiences of distress, often from the distress patterns of the adults in whose charge we are. They can be pain, sedation, acute discomfort, and so on. They can also be emotional distresses—for example, loss, fright, frustration, ridicule, boredom.

- When we are hurt physically or emotionally, our flexible human intelligence stops functioning. Our ability to see things as they are exactly and to contrive new responses to all new situations is slowed down or becomes inoperative.

- In reality, nobody was born a traitor, nobody was born a sadist, nobody was born a terrorist. Everybody was born an intelligent human. Everybody was born good.

- A session is an act of taking turns. When we talk about the distress patterns, discharge occurs.

- Restimulation is a sign that we still need to have a series of sessions so that we will be able to totally take charge.

- In RC we don't give advice; we ask questions. We believe that everybody has the solution to his or her problems. We are patient and listen without interruption. We don't criticize people for their actions.

Thanks to the RCers who made me know what is called RC.

Sean Presto
Lagos, Lagos State, Nigeria



Complete Index to *Present Time* Available On-Line

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

RC Literature, Wonderful Classes

I am elated and excited. I had three wonderful classes since I received the RC books.* The classes were very participatory.

Members studied the books on their own before the classes. We had both group and one-on-one sessions. Members who came feeling heavy left feeling light. We had a wonderful time with a lot of discharge. Attendance improved—twelve attendees. I look forward to more of these interesting classes.

Joy Ikebaku
Obosi, Anambra State, Nigeria

* Ten copies of each of the basic RC books were sent to all the active RC teachers in Africa to use as a lending library for their classes. The project was funded by the Re-evaluation Foundation.



SEATTLE, WASHINGTON, USA • DIANE SHISK

Do Things Before We Feel Ready

We all have things to work on so that we can become good leaders, and we do need to have worked on them enough that we don't get too confused by them. Still, it almost always works better to do things before we feel we are ready. Of course, sometimes it turns out* that we actually weren't ready, but most of the time it was our fears, and we discharge them much faster because we are making the effort against them in present time.

Tim Jackins

From *The RC Teacher* No. 30, page 117

* It turns out means the result is.

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 109



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

February 7 to 10
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

A Men's Liberation Workshop for New Co-Counselors

Some time ago we scheduled our annual Regional Men's Liberation Workshop for early this June. As it got closer, I realized that several fundamentals classes would be finishing at about that time.

Often RC classes do not continue in the summer. People have noticed that without regular RC activities, we sometimes lose new people before the next classes begin. This can be especially true of men, since they have more difficulty with isolation. For this and other reasons, I thought it would be good to organize the workshop so that men from the fundamentals classes could get together.

Often men in a class or workshop of mostly women feel inadequate as Co-Counselors, because of their difficulties with discharge. I wanted the men to have a picture of what RC looked like with people with their particular sets of patterns and strengths.

I also thought it would be good to get experienced and new men together—to address more directly their common problems within RC and in the rest of their lives. I wanted to give the new men the most full picture of the men's Community and RC that I could.

Our Regional Men's Liberation Workshop was to begin on Friday and end in the mid-afternoon on Sunday. The teachers of the new men thought it would be difficult for them to commit to a weekend workshop—due to their being fathers of small children and because their relationship to RC was not yet a full commitment. So we altered the schedule to incorporate a one-day Introduction to Men's Liberation Workshop, beginning at

10:00 AM on Saturday and ending at 5:00 PM.

The annual workshop takes place at my house. It is good for us men to have the workshop there. We are close to each other of necessity—we can't be in the room without touching someone. Also, we love cooking our own food and doing all of the cleaning and other domestic chores. (Work is a good way for men to be close. It is much safer than trying to make awkward conversation.) We sleep close together. Unlike in much of the rest of the world, in many U.S. cultures living this physically close is unusual—which illustrates and explains the origins of some of our oppressor patterns. Living so closely together is a good contradiction to those patterns. It also keeps the workshop at a low cost.

The new men had been to an RC class, so they knew what a class and a session were, but I wanted them to see the full range of ways RC is used. We had a tightly packed schedule, with introductions; a class; a break for volleyball; support groups; lunch; a class; topic groups; another short class on men and women and sexism and male domination; and farewells.

We invented "Human Net Volleyball," because I have only a small open space outside my house and no real net. Men holding hands were the "net." When we

rotated positions, men from each team rotated into and out of the "net," facing the same direction as their team. The "net" often found a way to play in the game in creative ways, using heads, hands, legs, and feet, so there was lots of laughter. There were no rules other than trying to keep the ball in the air as much as possible.

We used a very light child's inflatable ball, so that even when people hit it hard it couldn't hurt anyone, break windows, or destroy gardens. It also made it impossible for the game to be very competitive in the usual sense. It accommodated the men with disabilities and allowed all the men to show the full range of their athletic abilities without taking up more space than anyone else.

The volleyball game, and the rest of the workshop, provided a solid picture of what the world will look like without the oppression of men, and showed how we can get there. It was very hopeful, as was mentioned by everyone in the farewells.

I encourage men everywhere to experiment with organizational forms that will accommodate the needs of men new to the Community, so that we can hold on to more and more of them.

Dan Nickerson
Freeport, Maine, USA



LYNDALL KATZ

Sustaining All Life

The RC journal about the care of the environment

"I have asked people what difference it made having that connection (with nature) in their lives, and they have told me it saved their lives. Nature doesn't judge us; it recharges us. Try this direction: 'The earth is alive and wants us.' This is a powerful contradiction to isolation."

— Wytse Visser (page 4)

"The first issue of *Sustaining All Life*, our journal about caring for the environment, is now available. Please consider getting a copy (or many). We have many things to do in this field and much discouragement and isolation to overcome. This journal will help us do that."

— Tim Jackins

A small sample of the articles:

Relaxed Leading, Jan Venderbos

Me, Sparrows, and Saving the Planet (poem),
Micheline Mason

Questioning Patterns that Lead to Overuse,
Marcie Rendon

Discharging Entitlement Patterns, Susan Kammerzell
Making a Decision About Global Warming,
Madeleine Para

A Household Conservation Project, Glen Hauer

Some Angles on Discharging on the Environment,
Shashi Raman

On Class Societies, Racism, and Ending All Oppressions,
Wytse Visser

Sexism and Care of the Environment, Beth Cruise

A Young Person Talks About the Environment,
Mari Piggott

\$4.00 (U.S.), plus postage and handling



KATIE KAUFFMAN



TIM JACKINS

A new edition of

A New Kind of Communicator

The fifth edition of *A New Kind of Communicator* (a collection of key articles on teaching, for RC teachers) was printed eighteen years ago. Since then Re-evaluation Counseling has continued to grow and develop. RC ideas have spread, and we are better at communicating them. RC Communities continue to multiply and develop worldwide.

The sixth edition of *A New Kind of Communicator* includes four of Harvey's* articles from previous editions as well as fourteen new articles describing what we have learned since those earlier editions were published.

I am confident that you will find this new edition both enjoyable and helpful.

Tim Jackins

\$5.00 (U.S.), plus postage and handling

* Harvey Jackins'



KK

Ordering information on page 109

Atelier de libération francophone

Le texte qui suit regroupe différents rapports sur l'atelier de libération des francophones, dirigé par Anne-Marie Bellemare¹ en juin 2011 au Québec, Canada.

Depuis plusieurs générations, la survie de la langue française et de mon peuple—les Canadiens-Français—a été un enjeu important dans ma famille.

Une langue, c'est beaucoup plus que des mots. C'est une culture qui s'enracine dans des siècles d'histoire. Des histoires de peuples, de personnes avec leurs réalités bénignes et leurs blessures. La libération des langues est intimement liée à celle de notre culture, de notre identité et d'intimité profonde. Elle est aussi directement reliée aux premiers souvenirs sexuels (PSS) et à plusieurs de nos besoins gelés² ou chroniques. Dès notre conception, les enregistrements se font dans une langue en particulier et dans un contexte d'opprimé-oppresseur.

L'oppression des langues est également étroitement liée à une multitude d'oppressions, dont l'adultisme, le colonialisme, le classisme, le racisme et la santé mentale. Cette oppression est souvent invisible et vicieuse et peut engendrer confusion, doute et honte sur notre bonté inhérente. Plusieurs peuples et personnes portent d'ailleurs ce profond désespoir et message tordu que "moi et mon peuple sommes mieux morts que vivants".

Le travail de libération des langues et du français en particulier est devenu un enjeu important pour plusieurs Co-écoutant-e-s d'Amérique du Nord. À cause de notre contexte, nous devons travailler ce thème à la fois comme opprimé et oppresseur. Il est d'ailleurs parfois complexe de travailler sur l'élimination du racisme à cause de nos sentiments confus et complexes en lien avec notre identité culturelle et linguistique comme minorité. Par contre, avec la direction offerte par Tim³ sur "Ne plus jamais se sentir mal par rapport à soi-même", il est clairement apparu qu'il était essentiel de se libérer soi-même au niveau culturel et linguistique et de réclamer fièrement qui nous étions pour réellement et rigoureusement attaquer le travail sur l'élimination du racisme.

¹ Anne-Marie Bellemare est une dirigeante de la Co-écoute à Montréal, Québec, Canada.

² "Besoin gelé" est un terme utilisé dans la Co-écoute pour désigner une blessure résultant de la non-satisfaction d'un besoin rationnel dans l'enfance. La blessure pousse la personne à tenter de satisfaire ce besoin dans le présent, mais le besoin gelé ne peut pas être satisfait; il peut seulement être déchargé.

³ Tim Jackins

En juin 2011, j'ai animé un atelier de libération pour les francophones d'Amérique du Nord. Plus de 26 personnes de différents héritages francophones sont venues du Québec, Ontario, France, Haïti, côte est des États-Unis et Louisiane. Neuf alliés sont venus des États-Unis et du Canada.

Cet atelier a été un puissant outil de rapprochement, de connaissance mutuelle et de libération. Une classe sur la libération des autochtones a aussi été organisée afin de permettre aux francophones de réclamer leur propre version du génocide (et non uniquement celle des anglophones) et de prendre la décision de mettre la libération des autochtones au cœur de notre réémergence collective.



Anne-Marie Bellemare
Montréal, Québec, Canada

Anne-Marie et moi avons travaillé ensemble pendant plus que 3 ans pour réaliser cet atelier. Les francophones d'Amérique du Nord sont si isolés qu'il fallait se mettre ensemble pour avancer.

Je suis Cadienne⁴ de la Louisiane, aux États-Unis. Même si je parle et écris couramment le français depuis des années, être dans un atelier avec le français comme langue dominante a été une expérience profonde.

suite ...

⁴ Les Cadiens sont un peuple francophone de Louisiane (É-U), descendu en partie des immigrants en provenance de l'Acadie, la grande région de la Nouvelle-Écosse actuelle (Canada).



WYTSKE VISSER

LIBERATION

... suite

Le français était la langue maternelle de 7 de mes 8 arrières-grands-parents. Je suis la seule qui parle français maintenant dans toute la famille. L'oppression était tellement forte que mon arrière-grand-mère maternelle et moi n'avons jamais pensé à nous parler en français. Quand elle était mourante, à 97 ans, elle a recommencé à parler français à l'hôpital. Les gens ne se rendaient pas compte qu'elle parlait en français; ils pensaient qu'elle souffrait de démence.

À la Nouvelle-Orléans (Louisiane, États-Unis), les gens n'étaient pas gentils envers les francophones, les Cadiens. Ils les trouvaient bêtes et incapables de bien parler l'anglais ou le français, en partie parce que les Cadiens étaient francophones, de la campagne et pauvres.

Les parents du côté de ma mère appelaient les Cadiens des 'coonass'—un mot péjoratif pour les Cadiens de la Louisiane et de l'est du Texas aux E-U. À la Nouvelle-Orléans, on appelait les Cadiens et les noirs des bougalies⁵. Les frères de mon père me demandaient pourquoi j'étais fière d'être bougalie. C'était difficile pour eux que je sois visible en tant que francophone.

Je suis états-unienne. Le message d'oppression que je reçois, c'est que je n'ai pas le droit d'avoir ces sentiments. Ça m'a pris 10 ans de décharge avant de prendre pleinement conscience que cette oppression existe.

C'est un vrai miracle que le français existe encore aux États-Unis. Après la déségrégation des écoles aux États-Unis, on a été mis avec les gens d'héritage africain. Je suis convaincue que c'est pourquoi j'ai été capable de prendre cette décision de réclamer mon français.

⁵ Le terme "bougalie" provient probablement de l'expression "bougre à louer". Il a été associé aux Francophones migrant de la campagne vers la ville de même qu'aux Noirs habitant en ville.



LESLIE KAUSCH

Les États-Unis sont d'héritage britannique. Les colons britanniques se sont empressés de s'identifier comme américains puisque ça faisait trop de peine de faire une guerre contre son propre peuple. Alors, le fait d'être britannique, ainsi que le conflit entre les Français et les Britanniques, se perdait dans la guerre et la création d'un nouveau pays. Alors effectivement l'oppression des francophones était rendue invisible et institutionnalisée, ainsi que d'autres oppressions telle que le racisme contre les Premières Nations (les Amérindiens).

L'oppression nous fait croire qu'on est blanc ou noir, que les blancs sont tous pareils et les noirs sont tous pareils. C'est vraiment difficile pour nous de penser à l'oppression des autres blancs. On se dit: « comparé au racisme, de quoi il se plaint? »

La libération des francophones en Amérique du nord est intimement liée la libération catholique, car la majorité des francophones sont catholiques. Puis, à cause de la colonisation, il y a des francophones en Amérique du Nord qui sont d'héritage africain et amérindien, ainsi que d'héritage européen.

Mes ancêtres Acadiens et Mi'kmaq (Première Nation), avaient des relations étroites, même s'ils ont été éloignés par le génocide. Les francophones en Louisiane, y compris ma famille, sont devenus les oppresseurs des Amérindiens et du monde d'héritage africain. Ils étaient aussi impliqués dans l'asservissement des Africains. En même temps, une grande partie de la culture cadienne est africaine par le sang et la culture.

C'était plus qu'un atelier pour moi. C'est comme si j'étais enfin dans un endroit où je pouvais respirer.



Elaine Clement
Lafayette, Louisiane, Etats-Unis

Depuis l'atelier, j'ai plus de confiance quand je m'exprime en français louisianais. L'anglais était la langue principale de mon enfance à cause de l'assimilation. Il m'arrive maintenant de décharger plus fort qu'avant, sur du matériel plus ancien, quand je fais des séances en français.

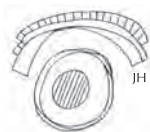


Jolene Adam
Lafayette, Louisiane, Etats-Unis

Ma mère a grandi en Louisiane. Sa grand-mère ne parlait que le français, mais on n'a jamais enseigné à ma mère à le parler.

J'ai beaucoup aimé que les gens à l'atelier parlent français de différentes manières et je me suis senti bien de parler français (ce n'est pas habituel pour moi). J'ai eu la sensation

de revenir chez moi, à un endroit que je n'ai jamais connu. Je découvre maintenant de nouvelles possibilités.



Dennis LeFils
Tallahassee, Floride, Etats-Unis

Le fait d'être accueilli en tant qu'être humain 'normal' et autant que Cadien a été (et reste encore) une véritable contradiction à mon oppression intériorisée. Une grande partie de la détresse que nous portons en tant que francophones vient de la colonisation qui a dominé l'histoire de l'Amérique du Nord depuis l'arrivée des premiers Européens. Certains de nos ancêtres, ainsi que les terres qu'ils habitaient, ont été perdus par la "mère patrie". Certaines terres ont été données à un autre pays et même vendues (la Louisiane à l'Espagne, puis aux États-Unis). Les gens ont été classés en différents groupes de gagnants et de perdants. Les descendants des gens qui se sont retrouvés gagnants dans le "jeu" de la colonisation se considèrent "normaux", capables, meilleurs, etc. Et aux descendants de ceux qui ont perdu dans ce "jeu", on leur dit qu'ils ne sont pas "normaux", qu'ils ne sont pas aussi capables, qu'ils sont inférieurs.



Bob Romero
Houston, Texas, Etats-Unis

Lorsque nous avons traversé la frontière, mon frère et moi, j'ai soudain pris conscience du paysage et compris que nous entrions sur la terre de nos ancêtres, qui ont quitté le Canada durant une crise économique, dans l'espoir de trouver des emplois dans les usines aux États-Unis.

À l'atelier, je me suis d'abord sentie dans le rôle de l'opresseur, parce que les francophones qui voulaient parler avec moi en français ont dû le faire en anglais. Des fois, des alliés traduisaient. J'ai plus tard compris que par rapport à la langue, je n'étais pas dans le rôle de l'opresseur. J'ai dû faire face à l'humiliation. J'ai eu à lutter à cause de mon habileté limitée à parler français parce qu'on m'avait fait quelque chose, de manière systématique, à cause de l'oppression de la langue. L'atelier a été le premier endroit où j'ai vraiment appris ce qu'était l'oppression de la langue, qui est vicieuse, une forme de violence. Arracher une langue à un peuple enlève le pouvoir aux gens, les diminue, rend leur vie plus petite. Ils perdent une part importante de leur essence, de leur peuple et leur culture. Cela a été particulièrement vrai dans ma propre vie.

Anne-Marie nous a rappelé que ça nous aide beaucoup de décharger dans notre première langue parce que



WASHINGTON, USA • ELLIE PUTNAM

beaucoup de nos blessures se sont produites dans cette langue. J'ai vécu plusieurs de mes premières relations, conversations, victoires, défaites et traumatismes en français.

J'ai maintenant une passion, celle de réclamer mon héritage français et ma langue. Je veux aussi fournir aux autres une information exacte au sujet du peuple francophone. Une nuit, j'ai même rêvé en français et plusieurs phrases françaises sont revenues à mon esprit!



Marie-Claire Roy
Falmouth, Maine, Etats-Unis

Je me suis rendue compte que je ne suis pas la seule à avoir de la difficulté à réclamer ma langue et mon héritage—c'est le résultat de l'oppression, pas un échec personnel.



Anne Piche
Peterborough, New Hampshire, États-Unis

Dans ma ville, les gens sont surtout anglophones. Après l'atelier, j'ai commencé à m'adresser en français aux étrangers, dans la rue ou dans les commerces. C'était surprenant de voir à quel point certains faisaient l'effort de me répondre en français, même si c'était laborieux.

Antoine Beaudet
Ottawa, Ontario, Canada

suite ...

LIBERATION

... suite

J'ai été élevée en français uniquement. Toute ma famille, même ma famille éloignée, parlait français et ils sont fiers d'être francophones. J'ai été à l'école primaire et secondaire en français et je n'ai jamais remis mon héritage en question. Pourtant, avec le temps, j'ai oublié que ça faisait partie de moi.



Christine Delay

Toronto, Ontario, Canada

Cet atelier a été un défi constant pour moi, pour mes automatismes et mon cerveau. Je n'ai pu faire autrement que décharger tout le temps. Je n'ai pas voulu quitter l'atelier, ce qui est rare pour moi.



Jennifer Ferrari

Toronto, Ontario, Canada

Dès le tour des présentations le vendredi soir, les larmes se sont mises à couler à flot. Certains luttaiement pour trouver les mots en français pour dire au groupe qui ils sont. D'autres s'excusaient de ne plus maîtriser une langue qui pourtant leur était si précieuse. C'est comme si je voyais dans leur combat celui que mes ancêtres ont dû mener contre l'assimilation, contre les automatismes de ceux qui voulaient voir disparaître notre langue et notre culture de ce continent. Nous menons la même bataille.

Dans notre histoire, les Français ont perdu la guerre contre les Anglais.⁶ Les francophones du Canada ont alors été la cible de l'oppression de la langue. Ils étaient principalement de classe ouvrière, exploités par ceux qui détenaient le pouvoir et l'argent. Comme les anglophones imposaient que les conversations se tiennent en anglais, les francophones se sentaient diminués, vulnérables, moins intelligents. Ils ont intériorisé une faible estime de soi. La langue, cette merveille qui permet aux humains de communiquer entre eux, peut aussi être utilisée comme une arme pour maintenir un peuple dans un état de soumission.

⁶ En 1760 les troupes de la colonie française de la Nouvelle-France ont perdu la guerre contre les troupes des colonies britanniques. Les Anglo-saxons y réfèrent souvent comme "la guerre contre les Français et des Indiens" alors que les Canadiens français l'appellent "la guerre de la conquête." En 1763 le territoire a été intégré aux colonies britanniques.



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De nos jours, les francophones, après de dures luttes, ont pris leur place au Canada, principalement au Québec. Mais il arrive encore souvent que des anglophones nous imposent leur langue. Ils font comme si c'était la chose la plus naturelle du monde. Ils s'adressent à nous en anglais sans même nous demander si on le parle. La moindre des choses serait de nous demander la permission et de s'excuser.

Il est difficile pour moi d'être relax par rapport à la langue. Quand je travaille en séance, c'est comme si je touchais à ma propre survie. La décharge m'aide à faire la distinction entre ma survie et la survie de ma culture. Mais il reste encore du chemin à faire.

L'oppression de la langue m'empêche de bien penser au racisme. Par exemple, de nombreux immigrants au Québec se tournent vers l'anglais plutôt que le français. C'est très restimulant. Je me sens vite menacé et j'ai de la difficulté à me rapprocher d'eux. À mesure que je décharge sur ce sujet, j'y arrive de mieux en mieux. Aujourd'hui, une de mes meilleures amies est justement une immigrante qui ne parle pas français. Je me rapproche d'une plus grande partie de l'humanité. Je comprends mieux aussi comment le français a été utilisé pour opprimer d'autres peuples, en Afrique par exemple.



Benoit G.

Montréal, Québec, Canada

Je suis née dans une famille de classe ouvrière ascendante, d'origine catholique. Ma mère était la seule à parler anglais. On ne m'a jamais initiée à ma culture, même si elle était partout autour de moi. Enfant, je refusais de regarder la télé en français. Je pensais qu'elle était médiocre comparée à la télé des États-Unis. Ma mère m'a appris l'anglais presque en même temps que le français. Je suis allée à l'école en anglais de la maternelle à l'université. J'ai regardé la télé en anglais avec mon père et ma grand-mère, même s'ils ne comprenaient pas l'anglais. On m'a élevée avec le message que l'anglais était plus important que le français, qu'il me garantirait un meilleur avenir et un emploi. Mon père m'a conté une foule d'histoires de gens qui ont perdu des occasions de carrière parce qu'ils ne parlaient pas anglais. Je n'aurais jamais imaginé pouvoir travailler en français. Je n'ai même pas appris à

écrire en français à l'école parce que j'étais certaine que ça ne serait jamais utile et que la langue disparaîtrait.

Au début des années 1900, le frère de mon grand-père est parti aux États-Unis, comme un million d'autres travailleurs canadiens français, pour trouver de meilleures conditions de vie. Ils ont été accueillis à bras ouverts par ceux qui avaient besoin de main d'œuvre dans les champs de coton ou les usines de textile. Ils étaient vus comme de vaillants travailleurs faciles à contrôler. Quand mon grand-père est allé visiter son frère avec ma tante, il était si fier que sa fille puisse parler anglais. Son frère n'a pas enseigné à ses enfants à parler français. Mon grand-père n'arrêtait pas de dénigrer les francophones, les traitant de petits moutons qui ne savaient pas comment se prendre en main. Ils auraient dû faire comme les Anglais. Ma mère et sa sœur ont intériorisé cette oppression et continuent de la perpétuer à l'endroit des Canadiens francophones unilingues. Elles les traitent de paresseux et de stupides. Comme enfant, je me suis sentie fière et supérieure parce que je parlais anglais. Il m'a fallu du temps pour me débarrasser de la honte et réclamer mon essence et mon héritage francophone.



Anik Marie Jacques
Montréal, Québec, Canada

Depuis l'atelier, lorsque je parle à une nouvelle personne et que j'identifie qu'elle est anglophone, j'ai moins tendance à passer à l'anglais. Je laisse la personne chercher ses mots, je peux l'aider mais en restant en français. Je me dis qu'il est correct que ce ne soit pas toujours moi qui fasse l'effort de m'exprimer dans une autre langue. Même si je suis très à l'aise en anglais, il demeure que je pense en français, écris en français et vis majoritairement en français.



Evencia Emilus
Montréal, Québec, Canada

Pour moi, c'est le rapprochement qui a été le plus fort. Je peux comparer ça au party des fêtes à une l'époque où tous les oncles, tantes, cousins, cousines se rassemblaient. Avec le recul, il y avait de l'amour dans l'air

Yvon Traversy
Montréal, Québec, Canada



À l'atelier, il y avait des francophones venus d'aussi loin que la Louisiane. Nous, les Québécois, on va à des ateliers aux États-Unis, mais c'est plus rare que des États-uniens viennent ici, surtout pour parler français. C'était beau d'entendre leur accent.

Comme homme de la classe ouvrière, d'origine rurale, catholique et unilingue francophone, j'ai beaucoup aimé partager des expressions de mon coin de pays, comme « né pour un petit pain ⁷ ». J'ai pris du temps là-dessus en séance.

Pour moi, l'atelier a été l'occasion de renouer avec notre histoire qui inclut celle des Amérindiens. Après l'atelier, je suis allé visiter une exposition sur les Amérindiens et je pouvais être plus attentif que d'habitude à ce que le guide nous expliquait. Les Hurons, près de Québec, sont passés de 800 000 à 80 000 après l'arrivée des Européens.

L'atelier m'a fait réaliser que le français, c'est mon origine, mon départ dans la vie. Il faut que je porte attention à cette identité-là. Nos racines viennent de là. Il ne faut pas que je l'oublie.



Roger Roy
North Hatley, Québec, Canada

J'ai pu travailler sur mes différentes identités: J'immigrant (et donc Québécois d'adoption, avec les défis que cela implique), Français d'origine (avec des automatismes liés à la domination qu'exerce la langue française de France dans la francophonie), mais aussi comme Bressan (originaire d'une région de France où la domination du français a entraîné la presque disparition d'une langue très ancienne, le bressan). J'ai aimé travailler sur la diversité des francophones dans le monde, sur l'histoire complexe qui les relie.



Manuel
Montréal, Québec, Canada

*Traduction des orateurs
anglophones par Benoit G.*

⁷ Expression qui signifie « N'attends pas beaucoup de la vie ».

English version of the preceding article:

A Francophone Liberation Workshop

The following are reports on the Francophone Liberation Workshop, led by Anne-Marie Bellemare,¹ in Quebec, Canada, in June 2011.

For generations the survival of the French language—the language of my people, the French Canadians—has been important in my family.

A language is much more than just words. It is a culture that has its roots in centuries of history: the history of people, with their hurts and their benign realities. It is related to our identities and deepest intimacies, to our very essence. It is tied to our early sexual memories, to many of our frozen needs,² to our chronic material.³ From our conception, our hurts occurred in a particular language and in a context of oppressed-oppressor.

¹ Anne-Marie Bellemare is an RC leader in Montreal, Quebec, Canada.

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 a person to keep trying to fill the need in the present, but the frozen need cannot be filled; it can only be discharged.

³ Material means distress.

Language oppression is tightly linked to a multitude of other oppressions: colonialism, classism, racism, young people's oppression, "mental health" oppression. Though often invisible, it is vicious and can cause confusions, doubt, and shame about our inherent goodness such that many of us carry around a sense of hopelessness and a message that says, "I and my people are better dead than alive."

Language liberation, and French language liberation in particular, have become important for many of us Francophone Co-Counsellors in North America. Because of our context, we have had to work on it in both oppressed and oppressor roles. Working on the elimination of racism has been complicated, because of confused and complex feelings about our cultural and linguistic identity as a minority group. However, with the direction Tim⁴ has offered to "never again feel bad about ourselves," it has become clear that we must liberate ourselves on a linguistic and cultural

⁴ Tim Jackins

level and proudly reclaim who we are in order to truly and rigorously work on eliminating racism.

In June 2011, in Quebec, Canada, I led a workshop on the liberation of North American Francophones. Attending were more than twenty-six people, of various Francophone heritages. They came from Quebec and Ontario, Canada; Haiti; France; and Louisiana and the East Coast of the United States. Nine allies came from Canada and the United States.

We got close, shared knowledge, and worked for liberation. The directions "never again alone" and "never again silent" guided our work. A class on the liberation of First Nations people helped us to reclaim our own version (as opposed to the Anglophone version) of the genocide and to decide to place the liberation of First Nations people at the heart of our collective re-emergence.

Anne-Marie Bellemare
Montreal, Quebec, Canada



WATERCOLOR • KATIE KAUFFMAN

Anne-Marie and I worked together for more than three years to bring about this workshop. The isolation of Francophones in North America required that we Francophones be together to move forward.

I am a Cajun⁵ woman from Louisiana, in the United States. Even though I have been able to read and write French fluently for many years, it was a profound experience being at a workshop with French as the dominant language.

⁵ The Cajuns are a French-speaking people in Louisiana, USA, partly descended from immigrants from Acadia, the general region of present-day Nova Scotia (Canada).

French was the mother tongue of seven of my eight great-grandparents. I am the only person in my entire family who currently speaks French. The oppression was so strong that my maternal great-grandmother and I never even thought of speaking to each other in French. When she was dying, at age ninety-seven, she began speaking French at the hospital. People didn't realize she was speaking French; they thought she was suffering from dementia.

In New Orleans (Louisiana, USA) people were not kind to the Cadiens (Francophones). They saw them as stupid, and incapable of speaking either good French or good English, in part because the Cadiens were from the country and poor.

The family on my mother's side were often called "coonasses"—a pejorative word for the Cajuns (Cadiens) of Louisiana and eastern Texas, USA. In New Orleans, Cajuns and black people were called "bougalies."⁶ My father's brothers asked why I was proud to be a bougalie. It was difficult for them to see me visible as a Francophone.

I am a U.S. citizen. The message I receive is that I don't have a right to have feelings about the oppression of Francophones. It took me ten years of discharge to become aware that the oppression really exists.

It is a miracle that French is still spoken in the United States. After the racial desegregation of the schools, I was in school with children of African heritage. I am convinced that that is why I was capable of deciding to reclaim my French.

The United States is British-heritage. The British colonies rushed to identify as American to avoid the pain of being at

war with their own people. The fact of their being British, as well as the conflict between the French and the British, were lost after the war and with the creation of a new country. The oppression of Francophones was rendered invisible and institutionalized—along with other oppressions, such as the racism against First Nations people.



YOSEMITE, CALIFORNIA, USA • LYNNE SHIVERS

People are made to believe that they are either white or black, and that white people are all alike and black people are all alike. It is difficult for white people to think of the oppression of other white people. We Francophones tell ourselves, "Compared to racism, what do we have to complain about?"

As the majority of Francophones are Catholic, the liberation of Francophones in North America is intimately connected to Catholic liberation. Additionally, because of colonization, some Francophones in North America are of African or Native American heritage.

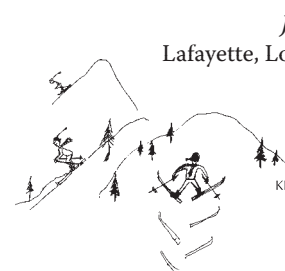
My Acadian and Mi'kmaq (First Nations) ancestors had close relationships with each other, even though they were driven apart by the genocide. The Francophones in Louisiana, including my family, also became oppressors of Native American and African-heritage people and were involved in the enslavement of Africans. At the same time, a large part of the Cajun culture is African.

This was more than a workshop for me. It was as if I finally found a place where I could breathe.



Elaine Clement
Lafayette, Louisiana, USA

Since the workshop I am more confident when I speak in Louisiana French. Because of assimilation, the principal language of my childhood was English. I have recently been discharging more heavily because of doing my sessions in French.



Jolene Adam
Lafayette, Louisiana, USA

continued . . .

⁶ The term bougalie probably came from the expression "bougre à louer," meaning man for hire. It became associated with the Francophones who moved from the country to the city as well as black people living in the city.

LIBERATION

... continued

My mom grew up in Louisiana. Her grandmother spoke only French, but my mother was never taught to speak it.

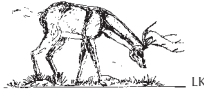
I liked that at the workshop people spoke French in a lot of different ways, and I felt good speaking French (not usually my experience). The sensation was of coming home to a place I never got to know, and somehow new possibilities now occur to me.



Dennis LeFils
Tallahassee, Florida, USA

To be welcomed as a normal human being and as an Acadian was, and still is, a contradiction to my internalised oppression. A great part of our distress as Francophones is from the colonisation that has dominated the history of North America since the arrival of the first Europeans. Some of our ancestors and the lands they lived on were lost by the “motherland.” Some were given to other countries (Louisiana was given to Spain and then to the United States). People got

classified into categories of losers or winners. The descendants of those who were “winners” in the “game” of colonisation think of themselves as normal, capable, and better. The descendants of the “losers” are seen as not normal, not capable, and lesser in some way.



Bob Romero
Houston, Texas, USA

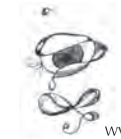
As my brother and I crossed the border into Canada, I became acutely aware of the scenery and that we were entering the soil of our ancestors, who left Canada during a time of economic hardship with the hope of finding economic opportunities working in the mills of the United States.

At the workshop I felt at first in the role of oppressor, because French-speaking people who wanted to communicate with me had to speak to me in English. Sometimes an ally would translate. I later learned that, in regard to language, I was not in the oppressor role. Rather I had faced humiliation and struggled

with my limited ability to speak French because something was done to me—systematically, through language oppression. The workshop was the first place I learned about language oppression—which is vicious, a form of violence. Taking a language away from a people diminishes them, takes away their power, and makes their lives smaller. They lose a significant part of their essence, their people, and their culture. This has indeed been true in my life.

Anne-Marie reminded us that because many of our earliest hurts occurred in our primary language, it is helpful to consider discharging in our first language. Many of my early relationships, conversations, victories, defeats, and traumas were experienced in French.

I now have a passion to reclaim my French heritage and language, and provide others with correct information about Francophone people. I have dreamt in French, and one night many childhood phrases came back to me!



Marie-Claire Roy
Falmouth, Maine, USA

I realized that I am not the only person with a Francophone heritage who has difficulty reclaiming her language and heritage—that this is the oppression, not my personal failing.

Anne Piche
Peterborough, New Hampshire, USA

In my town almost everyone is Anglophone. Straight after the workshop I started speaking in French to strangers on the street or in the stores, and it was surprising how much effort they put into responding to me in French, even when it was obviously hard.

Antoine Beaudet
Ottawa, Ontario, Canada



SUE EDWARDS

I was raised fully Francophone. All of my family (immediate and extended) spoke French and are proud to be Francophone. I went to French school all through grade school and high school and never questioned my heritage. Yet, over time, I forgot that it was a part of me.

Christine Delay
Toronto, Ontario, Canada



YUKO HIBINO

This workshop was a constant challenge for me, and my patterns and brain. I could not do anything but discharge constantly. I did not want to leave the workshop—rare for me.



Jennifer Ferrari
Toronto, Ontario, Canada

From the introductions on Friday evening, tears flowed like rain. Some struggled to find French words to tell the group who they were. Others apologised for not mastering a language that was nevertheless precious to them. I saw in their fight the fight my ancestors must have waged against assimilation, against the patterns of those who wanted to see their language and culture disappear from the continent. We are waging the same battle.

In our history, the French lost the war against the English.⁷ The Francophones of Canada were then targeted by language oppression. They were largely from the working class, exploited by those who held

⁷ In 1760 the troops of the French colony of New France lost the war against the troops of the British colonies. That war is often referred to by Anglo-Saxons as the “French and Indian War” and by French Canadians as the “War of the Conquest.” In 1763 the territory became a British colony.

power and had money. As Anglophones imposed English on conversations, Francophones were left feeling diminished, vulnerable, and less intelligent. They internalised a sense of low self-esteem. Language, that wonder that allows humans to communicate with each other, can also be used as a weapon for maintaining the subjugation of a people.

Today we Francophones, after hard struggles, have taken our place in Canada, principally in Quebec, but Anglophones often still impose their language. They do it as if it were the most natural thing in the world. They talk to us in English without even asking if we speak it. The least they could do is to ask our permission and apologise.

It is difficult for me to be relaxed about language. When I work on it in sessions, it’s as if I am working on my very survival. Discharge helps me distinguish between my survival and the survival of my culture, but I still have work to do.

The oppression gets in my way of thinking well about racism. Many immigrants who arrive in Quebec favour English rather

than French. This is restimulating. I feel easily threatened and have difficulty getting close to them. As I discharge on this, I manage better and better. Today one of my best friends is an immigrant who does not speak French. I am getting closer to a broader group of humans. I am also getting better at understanding how French has been used to oppress other people—in Africa, for example.



Benoit G.
Montreal, Quebec, Canada

I was born to upwardly-mobile working-class Catholic parents. My mother was the only one who knew English. I was never introduced to my culture even though it was everywhere around me. As a child I refused to watch Francophone TV shows, thinking they were mediocre compared to the U.S. ones. My mom taught me English at almost the same time as she taught me French. I went to English school from kindergarten to university and watched English TV with my father and grandmother, who didn’t understand English. I was raised with clear messages that English was way more important than French, that it would guarantee me a future and a job. My father told me countless stories about lost career opportunities because of not

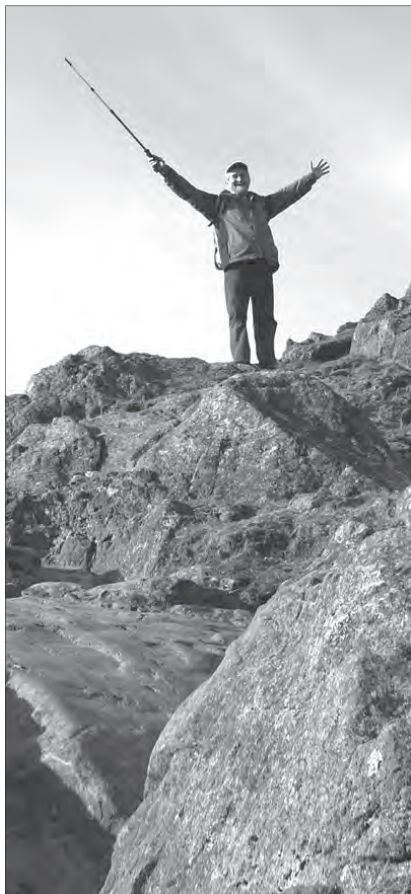
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LIBERATION

... continued

knowing English. I never imagined I would ever work in French. I never bothered to learn written French in school, because I was sure it would never be useful anywhere and would disappear.

In the early 1900s my grandfather's brother left for the United States, along with a million other French Canadian workers, for better living conditions. They were greeted with open arms by those who needed workers in the cotton fields and textile mills. They were seen as valiant workers who were easily controlled. When my grandfather visited his brother with my aunt, he was so proud that his daughter spoke English. My grandfather's brother did not teach French to his children. My grandfather ranted endlessly about how Francophones were like sheep, followers who didn't know how to govern themselves, and how they should be more like the English. My mom and



HELM CRAG, ENGLAND • SANDRA CARTER

her sisters internalised this oppression and still act it out at unilingual French Canadians, treating them as stupid and lazy. As a child I felt proud and superior because I knew English, and ashamed to be Francophone. I was proud that I didn't have an accent when I spoke English. It took a long time to shed the shame and reclaim my Francophone essence and heritage.



LK

Anik Marie Jacques

Montreal, Quebec, Canada

Since the workshop, when I speak to a new person whom I identify as Anglophone, I am less likely to switch to English. I help the person find his or her words, and I stay in French. I say to myself that it's right that it isn't always I who makes the effort to speak in another language. Even if I am comfortable in English, I still think in French, write in French, and live predominantly in French.



KK

Evencia Emilus

Montreal, Quebec, Canada

For me it was the closeness at the workshop that was most powerful. I would compare it to those times when my uncles, aunts, and cousins all got together for a holiday party. Looking back, there was love in the air.



JV

Yvon Traversy

Montreal, Quebec, Canada

At the workshop were Francophones who had come from as far away as Louisiana. We in Quebec go to workshops in the United States, but it is rare that USers come here, especially in order to speak French. It was great to hear their accent.

As a man from the working class who is also rural, Catholic, and a unilingual Francophone, I loved sharing the expressions from my corner of the country, like "*Né pour un petit pain*."⁸ I took time on this in a session.

The workshop was a chance to pick up the threads of our history, which includes that of First Nations people. After the workshop I visited an exhibition about the First Nations and was able to take in more than usual of what the guide was explaining. The population of the Hurons near Quebec City dropped from eight hundred thousand to eighty thousand after the arrival of the Europeans.

The workshop reminded me that French is my place of origin, my departure point in life, and that I must put more attention on this identity. My roots are there, and I must not forget this.

Roger Roy

North Hatley, Quebec, Canada



AM

I was able to work on my different identities: immigrant (Quebecker by adoption), originally French from France (with patterns linked to the dominance, in the rest of the Francophone world, of the French-from-France language), and Bressan (from a region of France, Bresse, where the domination of French has caused the near disappearance of a very old language, Bressan). I loved working on the diversity of Francophones in the world and the complex history that links them.



AB

Manuel

Montreal, Quebec, Canada

Translation of French speakers by Annie Potter

⁸ Don't expect much out of life.

Not Your Personal Failing

The undoing of racism, especially the racism acted out by white people, especially against people of African heritage, is the key struggle of this period.

I think we can take it on.¹ I think you can do it. But for most of us it's still a hard battle. You know the feel of it—you don't feel like you've gotten somewhere you can be proud of, that you've accomplished something that will stay there if you don't keep your attention on it.

This is not your personal failing. We have all been hammered with racism—again and again, every day, with little contradiction available to any of us. Racism has been installed through centuries of mistreatment. All of us were born into societies in which this mistreatment and confusion were the norm.²

Tim Jackins

From a transcript of DVD No. 226,
Eliminating White Racism Now

¹ Take it on means undertake it.

² The norm means what was considered normal.



NATHANIEL LIPPERT

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 105 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, and 2011 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.

*For ordering information,
see page 109.*

La vida de una sola persona tiene millones de veces mas valor que todas las propiedades del hombre mas rico del mundo.

English translation:

The life of a single human being is worth millions of times more than all of the property of the richest man on earth.

Che Guevara



Facing and Organizing to End Classism and Class Oppression



A letter to middle-class leaders from Seán Ruth, the International Liberation Reference Person for Middle-Class People

Hi everyone,

I want to raise some questions with you and invite your thinking about them. I've been trying to think about some of the areas we need to focus on as we do middle-class liberation work. In particular, I've been thinking about three different processes that we sometimes confuse with one another: class oppression, classism, and internalised oppression.

We've done well at clarifying the nature of internalised middle-class oppression and figuring out ways to work on it. Most of the work we have done has been in this area.

We have done much less work on classism in the sense of the oppressive ways we think and act around working-class people and people who were raised poor. A challenge here is being completely honest with ourselves about what goes on¹ for us, discharging the feelings connected to our relationships with people who have a different class identity, and deciding to build close relationships and support working-class and raised-poor leaders.

¹ Goes on means happens.

I think we sometimes assume that working on internalised oppression is the same as working on classism, when the two are not the same. A challenge we face is to do much more work on how classism enters into and interferes with our relationships.

I think we can also confuse working on classism and internalised oppression with eliminating class oppression. For example, I can be comfortable with and committed to a decision to eliminate classism from my relationships. At the same time, I can have mixed feelings about ending the systematic exploitation and oppression of working people and, as part of that, replacing the capitalist economic system with a non-oppressive one.

There is a danger of slipping into a pretence of commitment to eliminating class oppression when we have never actually discharged how we feel about that or what it might involve.

Given the current global financial crisis and the desperate attempts to prop up capitalism by transferring money from the less well-off² to the

² Well-off means affluent.

wealthy, it makes sense to tackle all the confusion, fears, anger, disappointment, and other feelings we struggle with. Doing this makes even more sense when we also consider the damage being done to the environment by the pursuit of economic growth and profit.

It is possible to get our minds back in relation to the bigger picture. We can think about the economic system. We can look at what it would mean and how it would feel to eliminate the system of class oppression. We can look at the possibility of the collapse of the capitalist economic system and all of our feelings connected to that. We can think about the implications for our lifestyles of eliminating class oppression and caring for the environment. We can look at what we would have to discharge to be able to think about all this and play some kind of leadership role.

I think the next stage of our work is to focus much more on the twin areas of eliminating classism and ending class oppression. Working on classism and our oppressor material³ may not, to begin with at least, feel as satisfying as discharging the internalised oppression. Working on ending class oppression may not feel as easy or as immediately relevant as tackling either internalised oppression or classism. However, I think we would be selling ourselves and working-class people short⁴ if we ignored this third area.

³ Material means distress.

⁴ Selling ourselves and working-class people short means not doing all we could for ourselves and working-class people.



FLORIDA, USA • AMY LEOS-URBEL

Let's encourage people to start looking at their feelings about the collapse of capitalism and its replacement with a non-oppressive economic system, about giving up organising their lives around comfort and security, about settling for having enough, about climate change and the degradation of the environment in the pursuit of economic growth and profit.

Running through all of this is the challenge to be more strategic about this work and to *organise* to take charge of what is happening in the world around us. It is not enough that individually we feel better or that our immediate relationships are in good shape.⁵ We have to figure out how we, individually and as a group, can organise to support working-class people to

⁵ Shape means condition.

bring about⁶ the ending of class oppression.

This is easy enough to point to, but what does it actually mean to organise? We haven't talked much about this. I think it would be useful to try to spell out what it might mean.

It might include getting more people doing and taking leadership in this work, increasing the number of middle-class support groups, developing a clear and comprehensive theory about class oppression and our part in it, setting clear goals, spreading our work beyond RC and having an influence in the wider world, backing⁷ working-class leaders and being clear about what that means in practical terms.

⁶ Bring about means make happen.

⁷ Backing means supporting.

What else does it mean to organise? I would like to hear what you think. How should we organise? What direction do you think we should move in? What should our priorities be in the coming years?

Stillorgan, County Dublin, Ireland
Reprinted from the RC e-mail discussion list for leaders of middle-class people



HELEN PARKIN

RC Speak-Outs

We have been particularly lucky in RC in some of our initial experiences in liberation work. God must have had her eye on us or something. At Liberation I and II, for example, some correct decisions were made of white people keeping their mouths shut until the Third Worlders¹ all had spoken fully. Once it had happened, we realized what a powerful tool we had stumbled on. Now we systematically move toward providing a forum of people outside the particular oppression for people in the particular oppression to speak to.

. . . The people spoken to, if it's understood that they will just listen, are likely to hear the fourth speaker say, "Please get off my foot!" instead of what they thought they heard the first three speakers say, which was blame and reproach. That wasn't what was said, but they're likely to hear that the first three times. If they keep quiet and listen, about the fourth time they're likely to hear—understandably emotionally, but reasonably—a request to "get off my air lines, quit shutting off my air." You know that story about the emphysema patient?

¹ An earlier term for people targeted by racism

The doctor came to visit the emphysema patient who was breathing through an oxygen tube. As the doctor stood there talking, the patient became very agitated and began to struggle, and the doctor said, "What's wrong? What's wrong? Tell me, tell me. I'll do anything, but tell me, tell me. . . ." Obviously on the verge of collapse, the patient finally reached out for a pencil and paper and scribbled something and fell unconscious. The doctor picked up the scribbling and it said, "You're standing on my oxygen line."

This is often what the message of the person in the oppressed group comes down to²: "Quit making my life so difficult when it's so completely unnecessary and doesn't do you any good. Just move your heavy foot to the left two inches, please!"



KK

Harvey Jackins

June 1980

From *The Benign Reality*,
pages 293 to 294

² Comes down to means essentially is.

Changing the World for Generations to Come

Excerpts from a letter that Marya Axner, the International Liberation Reference Person for Parents, recently wrote to her constituency

Congratulations!

Congratulations that you are a parent. The deep connection we parents have with our children strengthens our awareness of the magnificence of life and the loveliness of the universe. We have the awesome job of guiding and caring for our young ones as they grow from babies into children and then into teens and eventually adults.

Our children remind us every moment of the nature of reality. They love with all their hearts. They are eager, ready to play, creative, and curious. Their access to the discharge process demonstrates to us every day the basics of Co-Counseling. And we get to love *them* with all our hearts. It is okay that we love them as much as we do. It's helpful to have lots of Co-Counseling sessions on how much we love them. We will be working on our early struggles at the same time, and that's just right.

PARENTS' OPPRESSION

As parents we are the folks who care about, protect, teach, love, guide, and shepherd the next generation of human beings. No work is more important, yet parenting is an unpaid job. To survive, we have to put a lot of time into earning a living and meeting other challenges. We have to squeeze our parenting in between our work and sleep. Patty Wipfler¹ has often stated that parenting is given the same economic status as having a hobby or owning a pet. This lack of recognition and support for parents is one of the main ways that parents are oppressed.

Parents are part of a larger community of workers, paid and unpaid, all of whom are being squeezed to keep the system going. Our liberation is tied to the liberation of all other workers.

PARENTING, AND THE FALL OF CAPITALISM

The current economic system is not neutral to families. It sucks resources from families. Defenders of capitalism rationalize its existence with a set of values and assumptions, such as, human beings need to function at all costs; children need to become "independent" from their parents; some children have "chemical imbalances"; children need to be "taught" to be good; people need a lot of material goods to be happy; if people work hard, they will make enough money; if a child has a problem, it is the parent's fault; and so on. These assumptions, built into our economic system,

are founded in distress. They are in opposition to what we know in RC to be true.

It's helpful to understand what we are up against in the current period, so that we don't blame ourselves for how tough our job is and how inadequate we feel as we try to create a culture based on connection and meeting real human needs.

As capitalism takes its last breaths, it becomes harsher toward human beings. Families have to work harder to get basic needs met. Some parents don't have jobs, and some families have lost their homes. Schools are becoming more disciplinary, less flexible, and have fewer resources. Racism, sexism, and all the oppressions have a sharper edge. People are more insecure and frightened. Even those of us who have jobs and places to live are impacted by watching friends, relatives, and neighbors struggle. No one is immune.

In RC we understand that nothing is more important than cherishing, respecting, and caring for human beings; meeting everyone's basic needs; and prioritizing connection, intelligence, and cooperation. We understand that it is a priority to build communities that stand against racism, classism, and all the other oppressions. We understand that we need to fight to have sessions and build support groups so that we have the attention we would like to have.

The society today will tell us at every turn that our work is not important or that we are doing it wrong. (These messages are often built into the society's structure and are therefore hard to notice.) It won't applaud us for fighting for what we know is right. We have to figure out how to fight for it using the tools of RC and building support around ourselves.

The RC work we are doing in our families, extended families, neighborhoods, and beyond is creating the infrastructure for a new culture and a new system. As our current economic system falls, people are more eager for help and more open to the ideas we have to offer. As parents we are lucky to be in the position we are in today.

DISCHARGE, AND SUPPORT GROUPS

Our relationships are our greatest resource. The more we can contradict isolation by reaching to get help, the better. Sometimes it is hard to prioritize discharge and connection, but they are key to having the kinds of lives we want for ourselves, our children, and our partners. We can't do this project by ourselves. Reaching to pick up the phone and call one of our Co-Counselors, or leading a parents' support

¹ Patty Wipfler is the former International Liberation Reference Person for Parents.

group, is a quick way to get the help we need to be able to think about our children, partners, and allies.

Each of us parents hits rough spots with our children. When that happens, we need to get the help necessary to shift things and find a new perspective. Doing this is truly revolutionary!

In our support groups we get to show what's going on² in our families—the good, the bad, and the ugly. It's great to cheer each other on for our heroic journey as parents and what a great job we are doing. It's also great to be able to talk about what's going on at home. Go ahead and paint a detailed picture. You get to tell all the gory details about your day. What is wake-up really like at your house? Who is yelling at whom? What kinds of struggles do your children show that you'd like to hide? Do you worry that they are self-centered or bullies? Are you and your spouse having a particularly difficult time? What is nighttime in your family like? Who has addictions?

When we know that others have a picture of the reality of our lives, we have more safety to go after³ the early hurts that are at the root of what gets hard for us. Go ahead and use your job as a parent to re-emerge completely from those hard spots. Why not? Your love for your child is going to shovel up all those yucky feelings that you hoped never to look at again. What a great opportunity. Don't be bashful or hesitant about having lots of sessions and mini-sessions.

PARENTS, AND WIDE WORLD CHANGE

Luckily for us, almost everything we do as parents has wide-world impact. Every time you let your child discharge, you are making a profound difference. People around you take note.⁴ When you give instructions to your babysitter, listen to the parents of your child's friend, give your perspective to your child's doctor, or talk to your child on the bus or at the grocery store, you are teaching others RC.

The more you are able to fight for yourself and your family and be confident in what you believe, the more people will want to follow you. This may happen when you stand up for your child in the principal's office, or on the playground or the soccer field. If it makes sense for you to take on⁵ bigger challenges, you can lead a group of the other parents you've listened to over the years, take a stand against racism in your school system, or fight in your religious institution, or on your school board or city council, for correct policies for all families.

² Going on means happening.

³ Go after means pursue discharging.

⁴ Take note means notice.

⁵ Take on means undertake.

Many people will get interested in your thinking and ask questions and follow you. Others will not immediately be pleased with you. They may disagree with, criticize, or attack you. That's okay. They will still notice what you are doing and will chew on what you have to say.

I recommend that you counsel on people criticizing you for your parenting. I will lend you my confidence that you are doing an heroic job. You can remind each other that you are good parents every day. Also, whatever you are doing, it is enough. No need to heap guilt on yourself for not doing more.

Eliminating racism is the first goal of the RC Communities. It is also central to parents' liberation. Whether we and our children are targeted by racism or are in the oppressor role, it doesn't take long to understand how racism impacts our precious children and ourselves. We can notice this heartbreak, discharge on it, and support each other to stand against racism.

APPRECIATING OURSELVES AND EACH OTHER

It is okay to notice daily how fabulous you are. The reality is that you are that fabulous. You are important. Your children love you deeply—and their love is steady and forever. Even during the teen years when they may not express their love in the way they used to, they love you deeply, and trust you to know that.

We are changing the world for generations to come. There is a trajectory of change that begins with each of us loving our children with all our hearts, and it spreads out forever. Please remind each other of this when you doubt yourselves.

Parents' liberation is a movement, and we need every one of us to be as powerful as we can be. We are going to change everything.

Somerville, Massachusetts, USA



BRIAN LAVENDEL

An Effective Look at Male Domination

This is a report on a topic group at an owning-class workshop near Washington, D.C., USA. A dozen owning-class men—young and old; Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish—met to discharge about sexism and male domination. The leader of the group, Mike Markovits,¹ gave a succinct and cogent talk consisting of three main points:

1. As young males we were dominated. (He repeated this several times so that the information sank in. Then he asked us to counsel on who dominated us and how.)

2. Consequently, we have dominated others: men, and also women. Our domination of women is sexism. (Mike presented this simple yet profound point slowly, allowing time for unsolicited humorous comments and lots of group discharge.)

¹ Mike Markovits is an RC leader in Greenwich, Connecticut, USA.

3. While it's important to work on how we have been dominated as males, we must also, in order to have a chance at ending sexism, work on how we have dominated women. That is, we must work directly on our oppressor patterns.

Here are some of the comments from the participants after we met in small discharge groups:

- I have had to face how mean I was.

- I have had to recognize that my patterns of male domination wrecked a relationship and that I can get mad at those patterns.

- I find it confusing: I was mean but didn't recognize it at the time as domination. It just seemed like what was necessary or expected.

- When we work on oppressor material,² it's essential to work from a position of goodness.

² Material means distress.

- It's a relief to finally work on our oppressor material and to discharge shame and embarrassment.

- It was important that the theory talk be slow and simple, so that we could take in the information.

- A light tone from the leader and lots of group laughter are important in working on big heavy distresses.

- I was raised with the myth that everything was okay, yet now I can see how incessant the domination was.

- We really want to work on this issue, but don't really know how.

- We don't always notice when we are dominating, and if we do notice, we may not always feel like we want to fix the problem.

- To keep from dominating women, I often have to hold back my urge to take over and offer the "answer."

- So much effort is spent keeping a lid on anger and the urge to dominate. It's important to have a safe place to show these feelings fully as a client.

- We sometimes blame women for our domination of them, as if they needed us to dominate.

We were pleased to have a chance to work on this material—and to do it together, with Mike's relaxed leadership. It was a good step, and there's much more to do!

John Ravenal
Richmond, Virginia, USA
Reprinted from the RC e-mail
discussion list for leaders
of owning-class people



ALAN SPRUNG

Facing the Impact of My Actions

Men's patterns can be hard on other people. I know that much of my behaviour is disrespectful and that I benefit unjustly every day from being a man. I think that I have justified some of my patterns as being reasonable or understandable, which has meant that I've never really had to look at their impact.

An example is that when I get tired, I get grumpy. The exhaustion is a mass of undischarged feelings for which I have failed to take responsibility. The resulting pattern is grumpiness, which I usually direct at my family, because they are where I feel the safest. Usually I can see this happening, and my family has told me often enough that they find it difficult, yet I still fail to register the effect my behaviour is having on them because all I can see is the tiredness. I work night shift, so "of course I am going to be tired, of course I am going to be grumpy." In my misguided "thinking," my pattern of grumpiness becomes normalized and without consequence.

All of us men are good. We are innocent and we are blameless. This does not mean, however, that all my actions are without impact.

Bruce Clezy

Northcote, Victoria, Australia

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



"SHORELINE" • SIMONE RENDON



CHINATOWN, VICTORIA, BRITISH COLUMBIA, CANADA • BETH CRUISE

Complete Power

You, too, have complete power. To reclaim it is, apparently, only going to take discharge.

Harvey Jackins

From *The Rest of Our Lives*, page 10

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 103 and 109).

Middle-Class Women

*From a discussion at the Middle-Class Leaders' Conference,
in October 2010, near Seattle, Washington, USA*

Seán Ruth¹: Most RC middle-class leaders are women. However, when we were putting together the middle-class policy, it was hard to get anyone to say much about middle-class women; that section is short. Why isn't this a bigger issue?

Various women:

- As middle-class women, we are not supposed to make a fuss. That's why women's oppression is not a bigger issue in the policy.

- Being middle-class meant that I was told that nothing bad was going on,² so I couldn't see sexism.

- There were eight females at the LGBTQ³ table tonight. Our constituency has a hard time looking at sexism; we more often focus on Gay oppression.

- Both women's oppression and middle-class oppression are trivialised.

- Jewish women have fought for all of us women. It is time for

us Protestant women to step up to the plate,⁴ work on humiliation and embarrassment, and claim our thinking.

- I regret having let other women down⁵ because of feeling scared. I serve women, but I haven't stood up for them⁶ because I haven't stood up for myself.

- For a long time people took on⁷ middle-class liberation work just because it needed to be done. It was not glamorous, so obviously women would do it.

¹ Seán Ruth is the International Liberation Reference Person for Middle-Class People and was the leader of the Middle-Class Leaders' Conference.

² Going on means happening.

³ Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer

⁴ Step up to the plate (a baseball term) means take responsibility and do something.

⁵ Let other women down means failed, disappointed, other women.

⁶ Stood up for them means fought on their behalf.

⁷ Took on means undertook.

A Love Poem In Search of Me

A girl who once climbed trees
Seeking company and a new way of seeing things

Creating imaginary worlds with childhood companions
Liberating selves from orphanages and mean stepparents
Fighting some fight that could not be named
But doing it together, and winning every time

Now a woman with lofty visions tucked somewhere inside
A nascent desire to see the sky's expanse anew

A soulful voice
At first tentative and quiet
But growing with fierceness and with knowing
Feeling at home and alive and at one when singing

Falling in love
First and last and always
Listening, remembering, wanting, reaching for
A quiet but convincing way to have a revolution

Longing for those imaginary worlds once again
A fight completed
A world at rest, bursting with possibility
A sigh, a laugh, an infant's cry

Returning to the tree
I find her
Sitting on a branch, waiting
Beckoning to me

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

Min ungerska härkomst och min koppling till rasismen

När Barbara Love* kom till Sverige i oktober, pratade hon om att när man jobbar på rasism är det svårt att gå tillbaka till ett enskilt tillfälle eller minne—som när man jobbar på tidiga sexuella minnen, till exempel. Istället behöver man berätta sitt livs historia. Detta eftersom när vi kom till världen så var rasismen redan en del av vår kultur.

Jag föddes i Ungern, på ett sjukhus i en stad med asfalterade gator. I landet där jag föddes fanns en väl fungerade infrastruktur och en nedteknad historia som sträcker sig ca två tusen år tillbaka i tiden. Just där jag bodde, i en förort till Budapest, ute på landet, var inte alla gator asfalterade och då jag föddes bodde vi, mormor, morfar, mamma, pappa och jag, i en fuktig källare till det hus vi höll på att bygga. I detta land kunde människor bli misshandlade, bli av med jobbet och försvinna om de sa vad de tyckte högt, ända fram till 70- och 80-talen.

Ungrarna har varit självstyrande ca. 30 år av 500. Olika imperialistiska (stater som vill breda ut sig och lägga andra stater under sig) makter har avlöst varandra under historien, från det mongoliska väldet med Djingis Khan i spetsen till det Ottomanska riket och det Österrikiska kejsardömet. Då jag föddes 1975 var det Sovjetunionen som i allt väsentligt styrde Ungern som hade en Sovjetstyrd marionettregering vid makten.

Västerländsk imperialism byggdes på rasism. I en artikel av Barbara Love berättade hon att samtidigt som idéer om frihet, jämlikhet och broderskap började växa fram i Europa började även det kapitalistiska systemet växa fram. Kapitalismen fungerar så att den ständigt måste breda ut sig, erövra nya marknader kallas det, för att överleva. Alltså kunde denna frihet, jämlikhet och broderskap (systerskapet hade vi inte kommit till ännu...) inte gälla alla människor. För att kunna utnyttja människor utanför Europa hittades rasismen på. Den spreds som en vetenskap fast den bygger på en lögn om att det finns olika mänskliga raser. Det finns endast en "ras".

* Den internationella befrielseferenspersonen för människor av afrikansk härkomst.



YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK, CALIFORNIA, USA
• LISA VOSS

Vita europeiska stater har hävdad att de har rätt att ta människors länder och resurser, förslava dem, utplåna dem, "civilisera" dem eller rädda deras själar (missionera för dem och omvända dem) eftersom de inte har varit vita, som sagt. Sovjetimperialismen byggde inte på rasism. I alla fall inte i mot de människor som bodde i Östeuropa. Istället handlade det om materiell utsugning och ett politiskt förtryck.

I slutet av 70-talet flyttade min familj till Sverige. Sverige som hade det första rasbiologiska institutet i världen och där de "riktiga arierna" kommer ifrån.

Jag tillhör de finsk-ugriska folken. Svenskar har under historiens lopp talat om sina grannar, finländarna, i rasistiska termer. Detta har att göra med

Sveriges imperialistiska historia. På det rasbiologiska institutet i Uppsala fanns många bilder på finländare. För människor utanför den nordiska sfären är det i själva verket väldigt svårt att se skillnad på en svensk och en finländare. Detta är ett bra exempel på att rasismen är en uppfinning för att möjliggöra ekonomisk utsugning.

Människor av afrikansk härkomst, till exempel, får aldrig räknas som svenskar, även fast de är uppväxta i Sverige, har mammor som heter Birgitta och har svenska som förstaspråk. Vithet är normen, men det finns också en vitare vithet. Människor som är vitare än jag, som inte har så mörkt hår och mörka ögon samt lite mer rosaaktig hud är "bättre". Dessutom fungerar "mentalhälso"-förtrycket i Sverige genom att ingen ska "tro att de är något" och agera väldigt nedtonat. Därför blir det svårt även för en blond ungrare, som i fallet med min mamma, att passa in. Denna nedtoning är ett av huvuddragen i definitionen av vitheten. Assimilering innebär att man ska utplåna sin identitet, sitt språk och sin kultur. Detta har en väldigt skadlig inverkan på människor.

Vi som har blivit förtryckta genom assimilering har lätt att vända våra offermönster till förtryckarmönster eftersom vi har förväntats att "passera som vita" (även om vi inte alltid har lyckats hur mycket vi än har försökt) och det är så plågsamt att bli påmind om hur det är att vara annorlunda.

fortsätter ...

LIBERATION

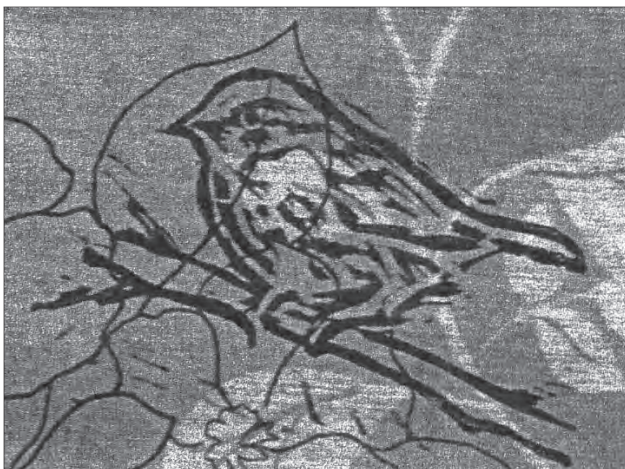
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Spanien är en gammal imperialiststat som har lagt hela Sydamerika, förutom Brasilien, under sig, med i högsta grad rasistiska förevändningar för detta. Ändå kan en spanjor kallas för svartskalle och andra rasistiska tillmälen när den personen kommer till Sverige.

Man pratar mycket om ursprung i Ungern eftersom befolkningen är så heterogen. Ungrarna anses komma från någonstans vid Uralbergen i Asien. Människor som ser ut som min pappa härstammar från Asien, menar man. Min mamma, som är en "vit" ungrare med tyskt påbrå, pratade häromåret om mig och min syster som sina "asiatiska flickor" i samspråk med en arbetskamrat.

Den senaste tiden har jag tagit del av forskning som säger att ungrarna inte alls är från Asien, utan är något slags ureuropéer. Även om denna forskning kanske stämmer så finns det skäl att vara kritisk till anledningen att den får så mycket utrymme just nu. Nu när Ungern präglas av ekonomisk kris. Det nationalistiska sökandet efter ungrarnas rötter och drömmar om ett Störungern har kommit upp på tapeten. På detta viset används nationalismen: för att trösta, ena/utesluta och vända bort uppmärksamheten från de verkliga problemen. Och tyvärr också från de verkliga lösningarna.

I det senaste valet fick ett högerextremt parti 11 % av rösterna. Detta parti är öppet rasistiskt mot den romska minoriteten. Det som sker i Ungern krossar mitt hjärta. Rasismen mot romer är fruktansvärd. Vi ser med all önskvärd tydlighet hur farliga offermönster kan bli i kombination med vita rasistiska mönster. Däremot är det fel att Ungern framhålls som ett rasistiskt och "dåligt" land. Genom detta utpekande blir Öststaterna till syndabockar. Att utgå ifrån att vita väststater är felfria och "goda" är en del av en rasistisk dikotomi.



BIRD ON FABRIC • ANNE BARTON

Alla väststaters rikedom beror på att de har sugit ut och fortsätter att suga ut resten av världen. Man pratar inte alls om länder som Holland och Norge, där rasistiska partier har ungefär lika många mandat i parlamentet som i Ungern, på liknande sätt. Man pratar sällan om hur hårt livet är i östeuropeiska länder som först har blivit exploaterade av Sovjetunionen och därefter har använts som nyliberala laboratorier där man har monterat ned hela välfärdssystemet och fattigdomen har växt.

När jag var 13 år flyttade vi från Rinkeby till Åkermyntan i Hässelby Villastad. Det var ett nybyggt område där det i princip bara bodde invandrare. Vi var omgivna av radhus—och villaområden där det bara bodde svenskar och några få adopterade. I Rinkeby hade jag träffat på klassförtryck, kan jag se nu i efterhand. Men det som hände min familj när vi flyttade till Arabdalen, som det kallas, tror jag delvis var rasism. Eller rättare sagt; Det var flera massiva förtryck samtidigt, varav rasismen var ett.

Mina föräldrar jobbade stenhårt och hade därför inte så mycket tid till oss (klassförtryck). Min bror som dittills hade varit en mjukis blev en slagskämpe och började missbruka (klassförtryck och mansförtryck) och började identifiera sig som kriminell, jag började matmissbruka (kvinnoförtryck). Att jag helt plötsligt kände jag mig smutsig hela tiden, att min syster som dittills hade haft bra skolresultat fick väldigt få rätt på proven och att min bror började identifiera sig som kriminell tror jag hade med rasism att göra. Min syster har blivit mer utsatt för rasism än jag och det tror jag är av den enkla anledningen att hon identifierade sig mer som "blatte" och inte gick med på assimileringen. Jag däremot blev så förvirrad av den här extremt svåra situationen att jag trodde att jag var tvungen att fly in armarna på medelklassen och svenskheten, dvs. jag assimilerade mig. En sak till, min syster har bruna ögon och jag blå. Det är en till synes försvinnande liten skillnad men jag anser att det visar på de små marginalerna i rasismen i sin svenska form.

Eftersom min grupp, vita immigranter, riskerar att hamna mellan stolarna är det jätteviktigt för mig att få säga att jag kommer från Ungern i olika parsamtalssammanhang.

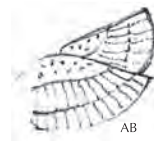
Parsamtalsteorin är inte något statiskt. Genom att jag skrev ner min historia blev jag återigen påmind om hur viktigt det är att vi delar med oss av våra livshistorier.

Monika Dolfin
Stockholm, Sverige

English translation of the preceding article:



My History as a Hungarian, and Its Connection to Racism



When Barbara Love¹ came to Sweden in October, she talked about how when working on racism, it's hard to go back to one single moment or memory—like when working on early sexual memories, for example. Instead what's needed is telling our life story. This is because when we came into the world, racism was already so embedded in our cultures.

I was born in Hungary, in a hospital in a city with paved streets. In Hungary there was a functioning infrastructure and a written history that went back two thousand years. In the suburb where I lived, all the streets weren't paved and Grandma, Grandpa, Mom, Dad, and I lived in a damp basement of the house we were building. In my country people could be beaten, lose their job, or disappear if they said what they thought out loud, right up until the 1970s and '80s.

Hungarians have been self-governing for approximately thirty years out of five hundred. Various imperialist empires have succeeded each other—from the Mongol empire to the Ottoman and Austrian Empires. When I was born, in 1975, a Soviet-controlled puppet government was in power.

Western imperialism was built on racism. Barbara spoke of how while the ideas of liberty, equality, and fraternity began to emerge in Europe, the capitalist system also began to emerge there. Capitalism has to constantly spread. It is an economic system that has to conquer new markets in order to survive. So the freedom, equality, and brotherhood (they hadn't come

to sisterhood yet) could not apply to all peoples. To be able to exploit people outside of Europe, racism was invented. It was spread as "science" but was based on the lie that humanity consists of different human races. In fact, there is only one human "race."

Western European states have argued that they have the right to take people's countries and resources—and enslave the people, suppress them, "civilize" them, or save their souls (convert them) because they are not white. Soviet imperialism was not based on racism, at least not in Eastern Europe. Instead it consisted of political oppression and the exploitation of resources.

In the late 1970s my family moved to Sweden. Sweden was the first country in the world to have a racial institute.² It is where "the real Aryans" come from.

I belong to the Finno-Ugric peoples. Swedes have historically been racist toward the Finns, the people of a neighboring country. This has to do with Sweden's imperialist past. Many people outside the Nordic countries would find it difficult to see any difference between Swedes and Finnish people. They are both equally light. In the racial institute there were plenty of pictures of Finnish people. I don't think that anyone can really tell³ a Finnish person from a Swedish person based on looks. This is a good example of how

² In the beginning of the 1900s, a racial institute was founded in Sweden because politicians and scientists were concerned that the Swedes would "degenerate" (become a worse "race") if they were mixed with other inferior "races."

³ Tell means differentiate.

racism is an invention for economic exploitation.

For example, people of African origin are never seen as Swedes—even if they were born in Sweden, have mothers with names like Birgitta, and speak Swedish as their first language. Whiteness is the norm,⁴ though there is also a whiter whiteness. People who are whiter than I am, who don't have as dark hair or eyes and who have a more pinkish skin, are "better," and the message is that I should try to be like them. Also, in Sweden "mental health" oppression operates in such a way that everybody is supposed to "not think they are somebody" and to behave very moderately, so even if you're a blond Hungarian, like my mom, it's hard to fit in. The toning down of oneself is one of the core elements of whiteness. If you can pass for white—that is, assimilate—you're obliged to do so, and that means wiping out your identity, language, and culture. This hurts people very badly.

The way those of us targeted by assimilation are treated makes us feel like victims, and therefore we take on⁵ an oppressor role toward people targeted by racism. We were obliged to "pass as white" (although we couldn't all the time, however hard we tried), and it is painful for us to be reminded of how it is to be different.

Spain is an old imperialist state that conquered the whole of South America except Brazil. Still, someone from Spain who moves to Sweden is called derogatory names

continued . . .

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

⁴ The norm means what is considered normal.

⁵ Take on means assume.

LIBERATION

... continued

that have to do with race and whiteness and is not considered as white as a Swede.

People speak a lot about origin in Hungary, because the population is so diverse. Hungarians are thought to have come from somewhere around the Ural Mountains in Asia. People who look like my dad are considered the Asian Hungarians. My mother is seen as a "white" Hungarian, of German descent. A couple of years ago I overheard my mom speaking in a conversation with a colleague about my sister and me as her "Asian girls."

Recently I read some research that said that Hungarians are not from Asia but are some kind of original Europeans. Although this might be true, there are reasons to be critical. Why is it so important to hold this idea out now, when Hungary is in a great economic crisis? The quest for Hungarian roots and the dreams of a Great Hungary have come up to turn attention away from the real problems, and the real solutions.

In the last Hungarian election an extreme right-wing⁶ party that is openly racist against the Roma⁷ minority got eleven percent of the votes. This breaks my heart. The oppression of Roma people is vicious and terrible. It shows us how dangerous victim patterns are in combination with white racist patterns. However, it is wrong that Hungary is held up as a racist and "bad" country. By this designation, it becomes a scapegoat. That white Western states are regarded as faultless and "good" is a racist dichotomy. The Netherlands and Norway have the same number of extremely right-wing members

⁶ Right-wing means politically reactionary.

⁷ The Roma people are a sub-group of the Romani people, an ethnic group with origins in northern India who are widely dispersed with their largest concentrations being in Europe, especially Central and Eastern Europe.

of parliament as Hungary does. When talking about Hungary, this is rarely mentioned. People seldom talk about how hard life is in the Eastern European countries, that they were exploited by the Soviet Union and then subsequently used as a neoliberal laboratory in which the welfare system was dismantled and poverty increased.

When I was thirteen we moved to Åkermyntan (Sweden)—a brand-new area where immigrants lived that was surrounded by houses and villas in which there were only Swedes, and some adopted non-Swedish children. Where we lived before moving, Rinkeby, I encountered class oppression—I can see that in hindsight. But what happened to my family when we moved, I think in part was racism—or rather several oppressions of which racism was one.

My parents worked hard and didn't have much time to be with us (class oppression). My brother, who until then had been a soft kind of boy, turned into a fighter,

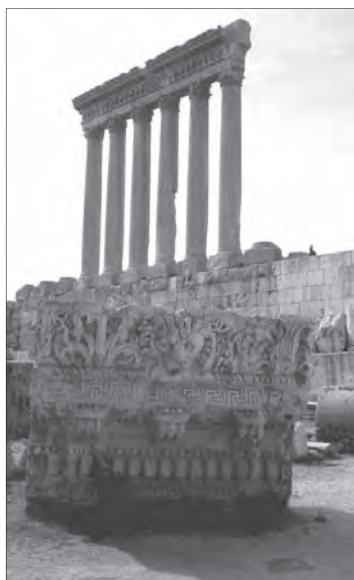
soon became an addict (class and male oppression), and began to identify as a criminal. My food addiction started (sexism), and all of a sudden I felt dirty all the time. My sister, who had previously gotten good grades in school, got few correct answers on tests. She was targeted more than I was because I fled into the arms of the middle class and a Swedish lifestyle—that is, I assimilated. Also, she has brown eyes and I blue. That says something about how small the margins are in the Swedish version of racism.

Because of assimilation, it is important for me to say that I am Hungarian, in RC gatherings and also outside of RC.

Writing down my own story reminds me that RC theory isn't static and how important it is that we all share our life stories.



Monika Dolfin
Stockholm, Sweden
Translated into English
by the author



MAURA FALLON

Please take a look at the lists in the back of this *Present Time* and let us know if you find any inaccuracies. You can send corrections to <publications@rc.org> or to Rational Island Publishers, 719 2nd Avenue North, Seattle, Washington 98109, USA.

Thanks very much!

Rational Island Publishers

The following six articles are taken from a discussion, on the RC e-mail discussion list for leaders of women, in which women targeted by racism answered a number of questions about the effects on them of male domination, sexism, and racism.

From an African-Heritage English Woman

What is going well in your fight against sexism and male domination?

I set myself a goal to remain in a technical role at work (as a computer programmer) and not be moved into a management role, where women in the information technology industry seem to be encouraged to flourish.

I'm less afraid of feeling humiliated when I make mistakes in front of men and so have been able to learn from my experiences better and grow. I'm better able to continue asking the questions I need to ask to understand things fully, in the face of male patterns acting irritated with me, ignoring me, or making me feel as though I'm stupid or not quick enough to understand.

I have worked hard, on a one-to-one basis, to make better relationships with the men I work with so that we are able to understand more about each other. I support them when they are leading, help them when they need it, and aim not to humiliate them when they don't know things. The result is that I have a little more room to share my ideas and be listened to and supported. When I am on a team with these men, they can remember that I exist and they include me and ask for my opinion more.

Where do you continue to struggle with sexism and male domination and its effects?

Men behave as though their concerns, opinions, and struggles are more important than mine. There are many ways I am put in second place, and I stay passive and unable to notice it when it happens.

Often I am seen as a troublemaker, whether I am staying quiet or speaking my mind. I am expected to be disruptive and automatically disapproving of white people or men, and whatever I say or do is misinterpreted as that. I've been referred to as a "problem child" in a "joking way" just for asking that something be corrected so that I can do my work well. I have to work hard to be seen as I really am.

Racism and male domination have made it hard for me to think when I'm around other people and to remember what my opinions are and who I am.

It is easy for oppressors to blame me for this and see me as awkward and uncooperative or secretive and untrustworthy. I am scared a lot of the time.

To hold on to my own thoughts and have things the way I want them in my life, I have tended to isolate myself as much as possible. I limit my contact with family and friends (for example, by living alone and only meeting up with people for short periods of time) in order to not take on¹ too much, feel overwhelmed, or encounter situations I feel I am not prepared for. Although I actively set myself goals and challenges, they are mostly within the bounds of what I can already see, so I'm missing out on more spontaneous opportunities to grow.

What do you want the rest of us to understand about sexism and racism as they affect you and the lives of black women?

We are always battling other people's interpretations of us and our actions. A lot of our time and attention is spent defending ourselves or making space for ourselves.

Racist and male domination patterns have tended to render me completely invisible. I am seen as useless or considered competent and available and then piled up with work that other people do not want to do. I am given little support or appreciation when I take the work on and am considered lazy when I do not.

continued . . .

¹ Take on means undertake.



GOLDEN GARDENS, SEATTLE, WASHINGTON, USA • ALISA LEMIRE BROOKS

LIBERATION

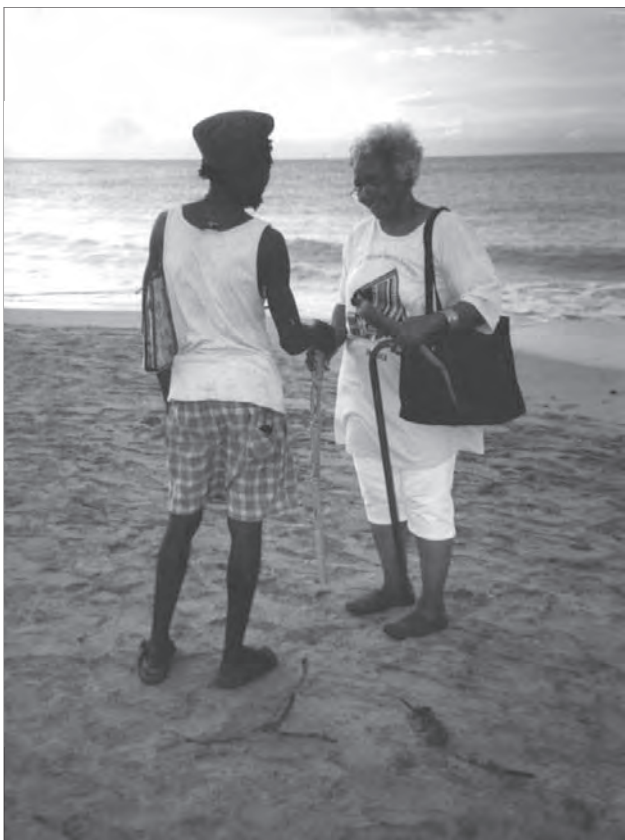
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When I am in a group of black women, I laugh a lot and feel confident that they will laugh with me. Laughing is discharge and something I need to do to think better. I find that in white groups white patterns tend to limit laughter and males get to decide what is funny.

I would like you white women and men to try to understand what is going on² when I am quiet around you; that I am working hard to stay visible in conversations. I would like you to notice when you are dominating conversations and that it can be tiring for me to have to listen a lot and not be listened to. I'd like you to notice when you direct your conversation to the people in the group who make you feel comfortable.

Notice when you are talking about things that are considered normal in white society—things I know about because I am surrounded by them but that I may not relate to in the same way you do. More silence may be needed for me to gather my thoughts. It may be hard for me to initiate conversation and say things

² Going on means happening.



MARION OUPHOUET

from my experience that are different from what others in the group currently understand. When I do reach out to you with my thoughts, understand that I have to be prepared to counsel you afterward and to deal with my own feelings of invalidation.

If you are interacting by asking questions, notice if you are only leaving room for me to answer in a short way, usually yes or no. Unless you have discharged, and listened to a lot of black women, your questions will tend to come from your own viewpoint, which will limit the answers I can give without taking a lot of time to reframe the questions in my mind and relate them to what is important to me.

How does your oppression as a black woman affect your gender identity?

It can appear that the only way for me to be noticed as a black woman alongside white women is to be beautiful, glamorous, and sexy. I never wanted to be objectified and struggled to come to terms with puberty. A few people have implied that I am not making an effort with my appearance because I keep my hair in an afro³ and have rough skin on my palms. I have been treated as less female or interesting than women of other races.

In my family, because we desperately wanted each other to survive and do well in society, we could seem harsh or uncaring about each other's struggles. This can make me feel as though I am not as caring or emotional as white women are. My attention has been on surviving and making a living independent of a man. I have not been able to see myself as competent, compared to white women, in the roles of mother, nurturer, and home builder. I often feel out of place and quiet among white women, as their concerns seem different from mine.

We black women are openly criticised for how we raise our families and live our lives. Many of our ways are different and excellent. I love people a lot and enjoy making things go well for them, but this can go unnoticed if I am not caring in a particular way—for example, by sending cards, being good at buying gifts, doing things for people all the time and making sure they do not feel bad.

Alima Adams
Cambridge, Cambridgeshire, England

³ An afro is a hairstyle worn by people with kinky hair texture, created by combing hair away from the scalp so that it extends out from the head in a large, rounded shape.

A Big Deal to Put Ourselves First

What is going well in your fight against sexism and male domination?

I work in the Washington State (USA) community and technical college system as deputy director of the system's state board. Most of the people I lead at work are men. I am well respected by them, and generally they follow my lead. I have good relationships with the women I work with. I use my position to recommend or appoint women to leadership roles, especially women targeted by racism. There are two Asian women community college presidents in our state. I've made friends with both of them, and we support each other with frank conversations about system politics.

Where do you continue to struggle with the effects of sexism and male domination?

As a Japanese oldest daughter, I was taught to take responsibility for my family and other people around me and to think about others rather than myself. I work too hard, mostly because I don't have a sense of my inherent worth as a human being and because I got the idea that I had to do good things for others to earn worthiness. I am working to discharge these hurts. They are bad for me, and could be a model for my daughter that I do not want her to follow (so far, things are looking good).

I struggle with how racism gets in my way of looking at sexism and male domination. My father, brothers, and husband are Asian men. I grew up seeing, and still see, the effects of racism on them. I know how the racism in this society attacks the masculinity of our men. I love our men, and it is hard for me in the face of the external oppression to be angry about how I was treated by them.

What do you want the rest of us to understand/know about how sexism, racism, and imperialism affect you as a Japanese-heritage woman?

The women of my people are taught to look pleasant and competent all the time; to not complain, show their struggles, or otherwise make people around them uncomfortable; to be useful and pitch in when there is work to be done. These things that we are taught are not inherently bad. The rigidity of the lessons is. Most white people around us can't tell* when we are having a hard time and take advantage of our competence and willingness to do work on their behalf. We get used up as volunteers, and people wonder why we disappear.

It is a big deal for us Asian women to want something, especially for ourselves. It is a big deal for us to put ourselves first. It is a big deal for us to fight on our own behalf.

Jan Yoshiwara
Olympia, Washington, USA

* Tell means notice.



SEATTLE, WASHINGTON, USA • AMANDA MARTINEZ

All Despair Is Nonsense

All despair is nonsense—understandable nonsense, but nonsense. No present-time situation is ever bad enough to justify despair.

Harvey Jackins
From "Quotes," page 37

“I Will Not Tolerate the Role of Inferiority”

My birth was my introduction to male domination and sexism. I was born in 1951, the fifth daughter of parents who desperately wanted a son. They never got a son and ended up with eight daughters. My birth story as told by my parents goes something like this: The nurse brought you out and said, “Mr. X—, so sorry it’s another girl.” My father asked if I had all my fingers and toes. Fortunately I did, so they kept me. And my mother went on to have three more girls.

My mother is now eighty-nine years old. Just yesterday during our breakfast conversation she said, “As much as I love all my girls, your father wanted a big family and I only wanted one child.”

My parents totally bought in to¹ the “American dream.” They told us race did not matter while pointing out instances in which race was a factor. It was very confusing. Internalized racism was often the language spoken in our home.

My mother was a stay-at-home mother raising eight girls, some of them not a year apart. She worshipped my father and continually reminded me and my sisters that we would be lucky to find a good man like him. She took her job as a wife, mother, and homemaker very seriously.

My mother, my sisters, and I were totally dependent on my father for all our physical needs. He earned money, which he gave to my mother to run our household. My mother did not drive and stayed home unless my father took us someplace, which was mostly shopping, visiting family, or to church. My mother was the primary disciplinarian (although I think she was carrying out my father’s

agenda). This set me up² to think my dad was a nice guy and my mother the mean one. My mother worked hard—cooking, cleaning, and doing laundry daily. When I think of my early years, I always see her in these roles. She rarely did anything for herself. The dreams my parents had for me and my sisters were to find a good man to marry and to become a good wife, mother, and homemaker, like my mother.

I did not have brothers, and my parents kept me and my sisters isolated from men. My father would have male friends over to play cards, and my parents would warn us girls to stay away from them. I grew up thinking that, other than my father, men were not to be trusted. One of my older sisters was sexually harassed by our minister when she

² Set me up means predisposed me.



BANGALORE, INDIA • TIM JACKINS

was a teenager. She told my parents, and I don’t remember my father ever being so mad. He told the minister off.³ I thought he was going to beat him up.⁴

My mother talked a lot about boys being messy and dirty, nothing like girls. I heard a rhyme growing up: “Girls are made of sugar and spice and all that is nice, but boys are made of snakes and snails and puppy-dog tails.” Two boys lived next door and proved that to be true.

I am a large, strong woman who participated in sports while growing up. Dating was a disaster for me. As a young woman I was sought out for sex, not marriage. Anytime a man appeared to be telling me what to do, I would rebel. I remember one time when my brother-in-law told my boyfriend he needed to beat my ass. My boyfriend slapped me, and I fractured his ribs. I was labeled as the woman who didn’t know when to give up.

I never married but got pregnant twice. I am a single parent of a girl and a boy. I raised my children with a female partner. I thought I could protect myself and my children from male domination and was determined not to be a victim of it in my home. I always enjoyed the company of women, so after several unsuccessful close relationships with men I entered into close relationships with women. I have been a Lesbian for thirty-six years.

I worked for a government organization and experienced male domination daily, fought it valiantly for thirty-six years, and retired worn out. I will not tolerate the role of

³ Told the minister off means angrily reprimanded the minister.

⁴ Beat him up means attack him physically.

¹ Bought in to means believed in.

inferiority that many men expect of women in our present society.

I did not want to end up like my mother, serving others while losing myself in the process. I continue to struggle with putting myself first. I struggle with believing a man can think about me on any level. My biggest struggle as a black woman is believing there is nothing wrong with me.

I would like you to know that black women are not as angry as you think. Our facial expressions and confident voices are normal for many of us. We are not white women in color. When you expect us to act, think, and behave like you, it is racism. The fact that we have made it this far and are talking with you means that you have nothing to fear. Discharge your

fear of us. It comes across⁵ as racism. We want you to accept us as we are, and remember step zero⁶ any time you think otherwise.

“Barbara Jordan”
USA

⁵ Comes across means is experienced.

⁶ Harvey Jackins outlined four steps in counseling that can be helpful for counselors, the first being Step 0, which includes the counselor reminding himself or herself that the client is inherently a person of great intelligence, value, decisiveness, and power and is capable, treasurable, and already functioning, or close to functioning, elegantly and well.



From a Korean Immigrant

It was good to be at the Filipina, Pacific Islander, and Southeast and East Asian Women's Workshop.¹ It was good to be around other Korean women and Asian women. I felt like I could show what it was like in my family without worrying that people would judge my culture.

What is going well in your fight against sexism and male domination?

I have been fighting hard to get my mind back.

When I was born, my parents did not seem to value me because they wanted a boy. My dad is an oldest son and was expected to have a boy. Because I was the eldest and a female, I was trained to serve. When we immigrated to the United States, my mom started working outside the home and I helped take care of my younger siblings. Everything we did was focused on what my dad wanted. He wanted to study, so he didn't do much child-raising, we tiptoed around him, my mom got a job, and so on.

As a result, I have struggled with feeling resentful, powerless, and like I don't matter. I was trained to make other people central in my life, and lately I've realized that I still act like this and how that must look strange now that I'm grown up. I go around a big invisible center, as if I don't matter. I've gotten to a point where I am more aware of this, and all the accommodating I do, and am able to fight it more consciously.

I am also pleased that in my adult life (I'm forty years old) I have figured out not to automatically get married to a man,

have children, and do what I was supposed to do. I have tried hard at every step to figure out what makes sense for me.

Where do you continue to struggle with the effects of sexism and male domination?

I still don't trust my thinking all the time. It feels hard to think precisely, and to know what I want. I feel bad about not knowing what I want, but given how I was hurt, it probably is a miracle that I can tell² anything at all about anything I want. I feel angry and resentful around white men, and I forget that it's not because something is wrong with me, that there really is something going on³—in other words, racism and sexism. It's hard to challenge men directly on sexism. It's hard to have high expectations of anyone. I am trying to not give up.

What do you want the rest of us to understand about how sexism, racism, and imperialism affect you as a Korean woman?

I don't want any woman to pity me for the kind of sexism I experienced. In some ways I feel fortunate that sexism was as direct and blatant as it was in my family and cultural background. It wasn't hidden, so it wasn't confusing. I think it's more confusing in the United States, where people act like it doesn't exist. As Diane⁴ said at the workshop, when Asian and Pacific Islander women are seen as being the greatest victims of sexism, it confuses everyone into believing that somehow it's better somewhere else. All sexism sucks,⁵ and no one escapes.

continued . . .

¹ A workshop led by Diane Balsler, the International Liberation Reference Person for Women, in Washington, USA, in December 2011

² Tell means notice.

³ Going on means happening.

⁴ Diane Balsler, the International Liberation Reference Person for Women

⁵ Sucks means is awful.

LIBERATION

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I was taught to value brevity, that actions speak louder than words, and that you don't brag about yourself. As an immigrant to the United States, I learned to hide myself, stay on the edges, and stay quiet, because any moment of visibility was potentially humiliating. I saw my parents and other Korean immigrants being treated as stupid just because they had an accent speaking English. Other people were not willing to make an effort to see their intelligence and humanity. In the United States there is an emphasis on knowing things and being cool.⁶ As an immigrant, I was very un-cool.

From all of this I learned to stay quiet. I would like people to understand this and give me a lot of space and time to talk and show myself. It would also help if everyone discharged more on humiliation. It is a potent tool of oppression.

I want people to know that many of us Korean/Asian women have been trained to think about the group before the individual. This is rational in many ways—our people have survived because they've cooperated and made sure that everyone got thought about. But it can make it harder to fight for ourselves, especially as women. Also, I feel like people in the United States don't understand it and often take advantage of it. It makes sense in Korea, where everyone thinks about the group, but in the United States people just take and take and don't understand that we operate under a

code of mutual giving. Because I am female, people seem to think it is natural and okay for me to put others first.

We are seen as capable and competent but not as leaders. I feel like my ability to get things done—a Korean female survival skill—is taken advantage of, including in RC. I organize and coordinate and make things happen, and people see me as smart, but they don't realize that it's more of a contradiction⁷ for me to be visible, talk, and lead. I am realizing that it's good for everyone when I lead. I can see things that other people don't, I have perspective when other people don't.

Because of racism, sexism, and imperialism many people view Asian women as sexually available. Around many U.S. military bases in Korea, as well as Japan and other parts of Asia, Asian women still work in sex industries. I don't often let myself feel this, but it's terrifying knowing that there are men (and some women) with distresses that target Asian women sexually.

My goal is to be *completely powerful* in every situation. Thank you, Diane, for your persistence in helping us fight for ourselves.

Jee Yeun Lee
Chicago, Illinois, USA

⁶ Cool means sophisticated.

⁷ Contradiction to distress



Male Domination Shaped Every Oppression that Followed



I'm a thirty-two-year-old, currently and raised working-class, African American female. What's going well in my fight against sexism and male domination? Well—I say those words much more. Sexism and male domination!

As a high school teacher I try in ways, both big and small, to make my co-workers and students aware of male domination. Girls are sometimes outnumbered three to one in classes. This doesn't make sense at all! I fight the pull to pay more attention to the guys, and I encourage the girls to speak, to take up space. I remember that they have been up against sexism and male domination all day. They have me in their minds as someone who loves, is clear about, and wants to be around women and sees them as central.

The ongoing Co-Counseling class I'm teaching is—with the exception of my assistant, who is also a black woman—made up of white women and men targeted by racism. I recently decided to focus for the next stretch on sexism and male domination. I'm having to fight internalized sexism to have and communicate consistent expectations of the group and to not be concerned with whether or not they like me.

I've led a couple of good classes in which I've spoken about the dynamics of the class and how early terror, as a result of identities and oppression, has the women going quiet and the men (unintentionally) taking up lots of space. I have also talked about the need to work on our mothers and have clarified that though they oppressed us as children, they were up against tremendous sexism.

Outside of RC I generally feel that I'm competing with the sexism and racism of being labeled a bitch just because I am a black female. We black women have been targeted in all sorts of ways because of where we haven't been able to assimilate and because of how the oppression looks on us. (For many other groups of women, the terror of sexism may look like a smile or being slender.) I feel like I fight the "bitch" label constantly—even in my relationship with my partner, who is a white Jewish man.

Because of the racism that says that black people are "not fully human," and the sexism says that black women are "not fully female," I operate on top of enormous amounts of rage, terror, and despair and I struggle with making that visible to those I'm close to, mostly because I can easily skip over it. I think for survival black women have figured out to not be preoccupied with that part of the oppression, but I feel it beneath my interactions with most people, including my partner and people I'm close to who are not black women. (I feel a safety with black women that is partly about my having sisters but also patterned in that I think they are the only ones who "get¹ this." I want that to shift.) Virtually all the sexism and internalized sexism I've battled as a black woman has had that part of the oppression at the root. Whether it's at my job with male teachers, or on the Internet, there's a way that it seems okay for people to mistreat us black women, no matter who we are (Michelle Obama² faces the same stuff).

I struggle to openly make noise about daily sexism and male domination. I am aware of them but still scared because of two things: my father's domination of my mother and sisters, and early sexual abuse by a male relative, which profoundly shaped how I operated and saw myself in the world as a girl.

Male domination shaped every other oppression that followed. I grew up in a predominantly black section of a big U.S. city and never experienced a majority white culture until I was in college. When I discharge rage about racism, the terror that comes up is at the thought of defying my dad, who (as far as I can tell³) was my first and most obvious physical oppressor.

I'd love for us women to work on male domination, and its impact on every other oppression.

Tokumbo Bodunde
Brooklyn, New York, USA

¹ Get means understand.

² Michelle Obama is married to Barack Obama, the current president of the United States.

³ Tell means perceive.

I Matter, I Matter, I Matter

As a professional, college-educated, mixed-heritage (white) middle-class black woman, I have stood up to significant attacks and maintained my solid professional and personal networks, professional credibility, and dignity. The latest of these attacks involved a black man whom I stood up to when he began repeatedly disrespecting me. I am proud of how I fought for myself and my well-being. I also continue to be outraged at the double standard applied to how he and I were treated during the attack and its outcome.

Starting with my father, my battle has always been to take my own fight seriously enough to stand up to the sexism and male domination of black men. Somehow the racism they experience always seems "worse." They have told me that it is, throughout my life. But the truth is that their fight is not more important than my fight, their lives are not "harder" than my life. I matter, I matter, I matter.



Of course I have experienced sexism and male domination with all kinds of men. I am choosing to write here about black men not because their patterns are worse than those of any other men, but because of my struggle to claim the space to show this battle for myself as a black woman. I am scared to even write this, for fear that my beloved sister allies will think that black men are somehow "worse." Just know that it is a battle to even show this to you, or counsel about it with you.

continued . . .

LIBERATION

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I want you, my sisters, to understand how big a battle it is to live every day as a black woman, to show my mind and be taken seriously. When I do this, I am told that I am being mean or unfriendly, or that I am "too much." Barbara* told me long ago that as a black woman all you have

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

to be is competent, and people will have feelings about it. So true.

It is also hard how much people stay away from me. I am constantly hearing from my RC Community that they don't call or write because they know that I am "so busy." I remind them that this a way their racism is affecting our ability to be close. To assume that I should have a smaller

life, or stay home by the phone waiting for their call so that they can feel like they can call, is just racism, plain and simple. So I invite all of them, and all of you, to be in my life and to know how much I welcome you and love you and want you with me—even as I live this big, full, busy, demanding life.

Alysia Tate
Chicago, Illinois, USA



SUE EDWARDS

Committed to Wiping Out Racism

The Communities as a whole, as an official policy, are committed to wiping out* racism and oppressive attitudes, not only inside the Re-evaluation Counseling Communities but in society at large as well.

Harvey Jackins
From *The Upward Trend*, page 348

* Wiping out means eliminating.

These, My Working-Class People

A year or two ago, a Jewish working-class Co-Counselor mentioned that one aspect of her family's oppression was that she was not close to her family and did not know anything about them. I asked her if she knew of the genealogy web sites where one can search historical records, and she said she didn't. I thought that it might be helpful if I did some research for her.

When I got home, I started with her mother's name and a guess at her birth date and within an hour and a half found on U.S. census forms nearly thirty of her ancestors. The search became a good vehicle for my discharging on anti-Jewish and class oppression.

Most moving was a U.S. census sheet of a neighborhood in a working-class factory town near Boston, Massachusetts, USA. The census was done street by street and building by building. It was a great snapshot of life in one place at one time in U.S. history. The sheets I remember were from an apartment building. I could see that large families had lived there;

where and when the occupants, and their parents, were born; and the occupants' and their parents' occupation, place of birth, language, and year of immigration.

All of the occupants were stitchers, shoemakers, factory workers, tradespeople in a wide variety of trades, and clearly Jewish. Nearly all of them and certainly their parents were born in Russia or another Central or Eastern European country. Many spoke Yiddish or another European language.

I had many sessions crying about these, my working-class people. I had worked as a hand-sewer of shoes in a factory, and because many of the older hand-sewers there had worked in factories in the town I was reading about, I felt like I "knew" the place. And knowing about the anti-Jewish oppression I grew up with, as a Gentile working-class boy, just to the north of there, I could see all too clearly how the lives of these working-class people would be separated from the Gentile working class by anti-Jewish oppression.

Following one ancestor through several census forms and finding that person's birthplace listed differently on each one—as either Russia, Prussia, or Poland—I realized that it was not a mistake. Depending on the year of the census, that piece of land was claimed by one of three different “nations.” From subsequent reading on the Holocaust, I learned that Jews, in particular, were targeted during all the political and military invasions.

One ancestor who was listed as a passenger on a boat going from Hamburg, Germany, to Liverpool, England, was from Vilnya. I did some Internet research on Vilnya, which led to further discharge on the events in that place and period of history in which the targeting of Jews played such a large role. I learned that the route this person took, which ended in the United States, was taken by tens of thousands of Jews from Europe, and I then felt like I “knew” all of them.

I, unlike many Gentiles in the United States, grew up around Jews. I remember those whose parents still spoke with an accent, those who had left money in an envelope in their mailbox when I collected payment on Fridays for my paper route. No one ever told me about the Jewish Sabbath¹ and the prohibitions against handling money on that day. I have discharged on how many doors I went to on Friday nights not knowing that behind them Shabbat² was being celebrated.

I am grateful for the workshops for Jews and allies led by Cherie Brown³ and for the leadership of other RC Jews in revealing reality. I am grateful for having been able to appreciate the richness of the Jewish culture and experience and for having an explanation for things that I never understood and no one ever talked about.

The question for those of us who are Gentile is, How can we keep this awareness alive? How can working-class workshops, or workshops on class in general, be inclusive of the Jewish working-class experience? How can we better understand the impact of anti-Jewish oppression on our lives as Gentiles? How can we better love Jews? How can we free our own people from the confusions of anti-Jewish oppression?

As a working-class Gentile who was beaten up on the school grounds for being friends with Jews, it is

¹ The Jewish Sabbath starts at sundown on Friday and continues until sundown on Saturday.

² Shabbat is the Jewish Sabbath.

³ Cherie Brown is the International Liberation Reference Person for Jews.

clear to me that anti-Jewish oppression is a vehicle for weakening the power of the working class. It exploits and manipulates the outrage we working-class people feel about our oppression and sends it in the wrong direction.

It is clear also how portrayals of Israel as the “ultimate oppressor,” and distortions of the realities of imperialism and its role in world politics, come out of anti-Jewish oppression. Anything we can do to fight anti-Jewish oppression will remove a huge confusion in world politics and make the world a safer place for everyone.



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



GREENSBORO, NORTH CAROLINA, USA • LESLIE KAUSCH

Divinely Good

I know that every human being is divinely good, doing not one bad thing except in the grip of hurt that was put on them when they couldn't fight it off.

Harvey Jackins
From *The Rest of Our Lives*,
page 274

When You Go to Southern Liberation . . .

When you go to Southern¹ Liberation (the Southern Liberation Workshop),² you go to Covington, Georgia (USA), nestled into gentle red hills by a little river dammed up to make a great swimming place. If you are my dear husband Ernie and I, you drive over eight hundred miles to get there, down the interstate highway that runs the length of the Atlantic coast of the North American continent. You drive through the increasing lushness of that countryside—delighting at the redbud trees along the roadside and watching the dogwoods show up more and more, until they take your breath away—barreling steadily, ever deeper, into the beauty of the U.S. Southland.

When you go to Southern Liberation, you are led by Barbara Love. You are welcomed by those warm arms, that inescapable authenticity and authority, that irresistible voice she

¹ Southern refers to the states in the United States that seceded from the union in 1860 and 1861, leading to the U.S. Civil War.

² A workshop led by Barbara Love, the International Liberation Reference Person for People of African Heritage, from March 30 to April 1, 2012

uses shamelessly as she sings, chuckles, challenges, and enlightens. Barbara pours all over you with that voice what she understands about being human, about our history as humans on this continent, about the truth that racism is not “ours” but a horrendous oil-spill of human suffering, brutality, and ignorance. She helps you see how it was invented by patterns of greed and domination rooted in eons of humans harming humans. You are given inescapable proof of your own goodness in the face of this. You are given the support and grounding to be able to open up and feel what being engulfed in that oil spill did to you, and to let it go—to cry and scream and shake it out and let the healing take over.

When you go to Southern Liberation, you are challenged to go back out into the world and bring your love, grounding, mind, and Southern voice to the reclaiming of the goodness of all (and I do mean *all*) Southerners. You are ready to discharge what you have to in order to turn the fear-mongering tide of lies that exploit the stereotypes of Southern USers.

And by the end of the weekend, no matter how unique or different or “outsider” you have been made to feel in your daily life, you know that you are home. You understand what “family” means. You have celebrated an hour-long litany of responses to “You know you are in the South when . . .” (When you get a wave back every time you wave—and you always wave. When you know what to do with “pot likker”—the liquid, or “liquor” that you cook greens in. When you say “holler”—to mean call out as loud as you want. And on and on.) If you have let your true speech, your “accent,” change because so many people outside the South make fun of it, you have gotten your native way of talking back. Your tongue and mouth and neck and throat have relaxed and you can say things the way you learned to as a child, and revel in the sound of your and others’ voices.

When you go to Southern Liberation, you are not only part of a support group but you are told to keep that group going for the next three years until you are back at the workshop again, and you feel in your bones that you want to do that, and will do that.

When you go to Southern Liberation, you watch demonstration after demonstration of people who are invited to simply “use the attention of the group”; who show their struggles with delicacy, boldness, honesty, and raw or quiet courage; who open up your eyes to what has been done to us and how we can get completely free of it when we stick together and do our work.

When you go to Southern Liberation, you are home.

Ellen Deacon

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA
Reprinted from the e-mail discussion list for RC Community members



SHRINE IN THE SNOW, YAMAGATA, JAPAN • EMMA PARKER

Racism Manipulates and Distorts

At the Southern¹ Liberation Workshop, Barbara² talked about how racism is used as a tool to manipulate people into acting against their own best interests while protecting the interests of the few. For example, instead of talking about national health care, politicians and others have coined the term “Obamacare,” replacing the word “health” with the last name of our black President, Barack Obama. This makes people stop thinking about health care and causes their thinking to be supplanted by patterns of racism. Calling forth unaware (and aware) racism has confused our minds and divided us.

I realized that this explains part of why people blame President Obama for problems our country had before he was elected. If people are restimulated and manipulated by racism, their patterns can make them forget. That’s what patterns do—they make us forget. Not even a year into Obama’s presidency people were blaming him for the war, the stock market crash, and other things that occurred before he was elected. A relative of mine put on her Facebook³ page a photo of a road sign that said something like “No job, no money, no Obama.” I wondered how she could think that President Obama was responsible for this so early in his presidency. Racism manipulates people into some kind of amnesia. Then history can be more easily distorted.

Another big point Barbara made was that the South did not invent racism or slavery. They were national phenomena. It has been challenging to get a clear picture of this because so much of our U.S. history is distorted. Ships that were used to transport humans from Africa to be sold in the Americas were built in Rhode Island⁴ and other northern states. Well after slavery was illegal, these human cargo ships set sail from New York⁵ and lied about the purpose of their voyage. When the ships returned, they were frequently burned to hide the fact that they had transported people captured from Africa.



LK

Betsy Hobkirk

Knoxville, Tennessee, USA

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

¹ Southern refers to the states in the United States that seceded from the union in 1860 and 1861, leading to the U.S. Civil War.

² Barbara Love, the International Liberation Reference Person for People of African Heritage and the leader of the workshop

³ Facebook is a social networking site on the Internet.

⁴ Rhode Island is one of the northern states of the United States.

⁵ New York is another northern U.S. state.

A New Understanding of Racism

At the Southern¹ Liberation Workshop Barbara² laid a solid foundation, with classes on the unfolding of European and world history and how it shaped racism. She answered questions like “How do you get white people to go along with the plantation system?” Fear.

The workshop changed my understanding of racism. Hearing from people of the global majority about their experiences of racism and discharging heavily throughout moved my world. Reality demands my coming to terms with the existence of racism. As a white person, the history of enslavement is my history.

We who are white are on the road to reclaiming the truth about us. Figuring out what to do means not holding back and not being afraid of making mistakes.

Dreama Frisk

Arlington, Virginia, USA

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

¹ Southern refers to the states in the United States that seceded from the union in 1860 and 1861, leading to the U.S. Civil War.

² Barbara Love, the International Liberation Reference Person for People of African Heritage and the leader of the workshop



CHUCK ESSER

The Owing Class

A report given at a gathering in San Jose, California, USA, in September 2011, at which the International Liberation and Commonality Reference Persons talked about their work

My name is Jo Saunders, and I am the International Liberation Reference Person for the Owing Class.

When I last stood here, I said that my constituency was comprised of people like George W. Bush¹ and Saddam Hussein.² This year I claim Rupert Murdoch³ and Colonel Gadhafi.⁴

¹ George W. Bush was the president of the United States from 2001 to 2009.

² Saddam Hussein was president of Iraq from 1979 to 2003, when a coalition of countries, led by the United States and England, invaded Iraq and deposed him. He was executed in 2006.

³ Rupert Murdoch is an Australian American business magnate and the founder and Chief Executive Officer of News Corporation, the world's second-largest media conglomerate. He and his companies have been accused of bribery, corruption, and other illegal activity.

⁴ Colonel Muammar Gadhafi was the ruler of Libya from 1969 until 2011, when his government was overthrown in a popular uprising and he was killed.



RANDI FREUNDLICH

The West has demonised members of the Arab owning class, but the most powerful of the owning class are nameless thousands of white Christians who head up the banks and the multinational corporations—people with inherited wealth that always originated in stolen land, other stolen resources, or stolen lives.

Within my constituency are people who amass billions of dollars for themselves and have neither concern for nor interest in the suffering they cause—people who will go to any lengths of violence, untruth, and manipulation to defend their positions and their wealth.

My people are responsible for the arms trade that depends on the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and every other war on the planet.

They are responsible for the vast swirling continent of waste that is being collected by the currents of the Pacific and that some have estimated as twice the size of the North American continent and up to thirty metres deep.

They are responsible for the sex trafficking of Eastern Europe and East Asia and indeed for any human suffering or planetary damage that is caused by someone making a profit.

How can I stand here with pride and say these are my people?

Because we who are owning-class were born just as good as you were—innocent, loving, intelligent, and cooperative. What happened to us was the same as what happened to you. We were hurt, and our intelligence was no longer available.

What is specific to us is that the hurt, systematic and deliberate, involved a particularly cruel disconnection from ourselves and others, coupled with pernicious distortions of the truth about humanity and society.

Then came the conditioning to build a carapace⁵ over our terror, insecurity, and not knowing we were good. We were forced to put on an armour of denial, pretence, assuredness, and arrogance, and assert that we were right and knew best.

Above all we had to believe that we needed to and could control what happened in the world so that our wealth could be protected.

⁵ A carapace is a dorsal (upper) section of the exoskeleton or shell found in certain animal groups including arthropods, such as crustaceans, and some vertebrates, like turtles.

Barbara Love⁶ and Diane Balser⁷ have pioneered the work of the oppressed reaching for and leading their oppressors. Harvey⁸ did that for me. You who are raised-poor, working-class, and middle-class can do that for the owning class.

Why should you?

I think it is worth building a Trojan horse⁹ that could help open the gates to transforming society!

Already we have in RC owning-class people who are leading young inheritors of wealth and teaching them what we know; we have those who are union activists and those who have divested themselves of inherited wealth; we have those who are using all their privileges and skills to back¹⁰ those who will transform society.

⁶ Barbara Love is the International Liberation Reference Person for People of African Heritage.

⁷ Diane Balser is the International Liberation Reference Person for Women.

⁸ Harvey Jackins

⁹ Trojan horse refers to a tale from the Trojan War about a strategem that allowed the ancient Greeks to enter the city of Troy. After a fruitless ten-year siege, the Greeks constructed a huge wooden horse and hid a select force of men inside. The Greeks pretended to sail away, and the Trojans pulled the horse into their city as a victory trophy. That night the Greek force crept out of the horse and opened the gates for the rest of the Greek army, which had sailed back under cover of night. The Greeks entered and destroyed the city of Troy, decisively ending the war.

¹⁰ Back means support.

Why should you want to lead us and have us with you? Because we are as precious as you are, we are reachable, and we can make very useful allies!

Harvey once said, "I think when the issues are joined and the battle is fiercely contested, the sudden appearance of a regiment of owning-class people on the side of the working class is just going to raise hell with the opposition."

I am proud to lead that unexpected regiment.



JAPAN • DIANE SHISK



Giving Up Owning-Class Privilege



KK

I remember hearing, fifteen years ago, Harvey's¹ direction for raised-owning-class people—that they give up their privilege and stand shoulder to shoulder with the working class. As a raised-owning-class person with a raised-poor Native American dad, that direction made me cry and cry. I knew it was right. I knew that I had to act on it in some way, but I wasn't sure how.

I was raised in a wealthy suburb of Los Angeles (California, USA). I spent my childhood in heavy isolation in a big house. My parents often left me for long periods of time. The one beacon in the darkness of harshness and isolation was my nanny, who took care of me from the time I was

born. She was from Mexico and had entered California illegally in hopes of a better life. My fondest childhood memories are of her and the love she showed me while doing the basic tasks of parenting. I was with her most of the time, and I spoke Spanish with her. In Spanish I could communicate with her in a gentle way.

As I grew up, my life became more privileged and isolated. I went to private schools, where the children were harsh with each other. I went to an owning-class college. Although I had friends, I struggled with meaningful connections. Because I was labeled "pretty," I started modeling and got overpaid for having a certain body type. I was still lonely and separate from society.

I was rarely touched, except in an objectifying way by men who just wanted to sleep with someone who was on the cover of a magazine. I remember being so lonely for touch that I once offered a pedicurist fifty more dollars to rub my feet twenty minutes longer. Meanwhile, most people thought I had a glamorous life. I was young. I was pretty. I had money. What could be wrong? In truth, everything was wrong. I had few real friends. I was disconnected from my family. I did meaningless work. I was in an abusive relationship with an owning-class man. And I was seeing a therapist who was threatening to put me on drugs.

continued . . .

¹ Harvey Jackins'

LIBERATION

... continued

There was one thing that made my life full of purpose—my art. I began doing art at a young age and held on to it my entire life. I would fill journals with scripts. I would dance, paint, draw, and act. As long as I was doing my art, I was able to survive. It also brought me powerful relationships with people of all different backgrounds.

By some small miracle I got into RC—at age twenty-seven while I was pursuing a graduate degree in theater and creative writing. It was what I had been waiting for my whole life.

After several years of RC, I heard the direction of standing shoulder to shoulder with working-class people. Many leaders were also holding out the direction of ending racism. I wanted to do that work, but I wasn't sure how someone from my background would go about it.² So I decided to give up being owning-class and let the cards fall where they may.³ I wasn't sure how it would turn out,⁴ but I thought I would have a real life with more connections and deeper meaning.

I did several things to resign from the owning class. My parents had always encouraged me to marry a wealthy man, but I married a man who was raised working-class. We had children. We bought a house together in a working-class neighborhood (generally considered a bad financial investment).

We are happily married. Money is a constant struggle. Our street is full of life—potlucks, play dates. A day does not go by when I am not in contact with at least one of my neighbors. Our family is one of only two white families on the street.

I found that the more I went against upward mobility, the happier I became.

² Go about it means do it.

³ Let the cards fall where they may means accept whatever happened.

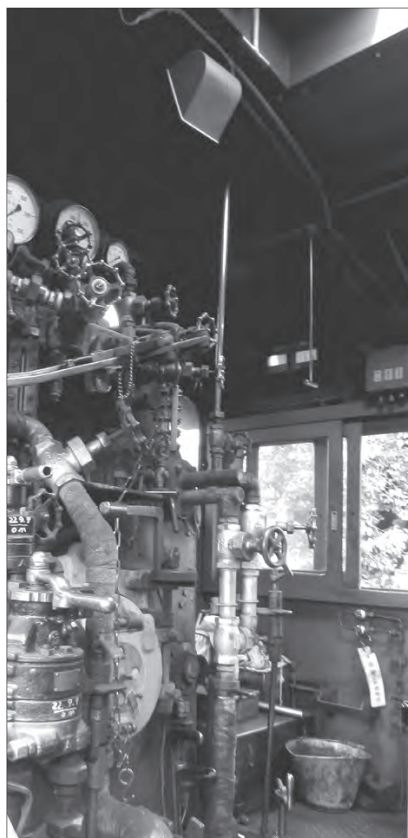
⁴ How it would turn out means what the results would be.

I am hardly ever lonely anymore. I have so many people in my life who are affectionate and close that I sometimes struggle to get any alone time.

I was still in touch with my nanny from childhood, and I decided that I wanted to write a movie script about my relationship with her. I felt that by going back and reclaiming the relationship I'd had with her since childhood, I would be on a path to my re-emergence and would be in better shape⁵ to end racism. I spent three years writing the script, in which I also reclaimed some of the Spanish I had lost.

After sending the script out to many people, a Latina woman offered to have her Latino/a theater company perform it as a play. I agreed. I became more and more terrified as the first rehearsal approached. Probably the scariest day of my life was the day of the first read-through. Here I was, a white playwright,

⁵ In better shape means in a better state.



JAPAN • YUKO HIBINO

sitting in a room full of Latino/a actors, listening to them perform my story in English and Spanish. The point at which I was most scared was when a Mexican actress read a monologue about how she loved the white babies she took care of and then watched as the oppression took them away from her. I was scared that all the actors were going to hate me. When they finished the script, they all looked at me. I looked at them and started to cry. I told them about my nanny and how much I loved her. They said it was a beautiful script and that they were honored to work on it. Then an actor commented on the monologue: "I cried in that section; I also think I now understand why white people act so weird."

The play got written up in *The Los Angeles Times*. When the paper came out, I was again terrified. It was so much exposure. I was glad that I had built solid relationships with other owning-class Co-Counselors whom I could call and who understood how scary something like this could be. Jo Saunders⁶ direction to get back our brothers and sisters was vitally important.

On closing night, the theater's artistic director called me up on stage after the cast had taken their final curtain calls. She said, "This woman gave a beautiful tribute to people who don't have a voice." As hard as it was to do, I took a look around. I saw some of my owning-class friends from childhood—in the front row, with their expensive handbags, in a neighborhood they would never have come to had it not been for my work. I saw a packed house. But what I really noticed was that not only was I standing shoulder to shoulder with the working class, I was standing arm in arm with them.

J.B.
USA

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

⁶ Jo Saunders is the International Liberation Reference Person for Owing-Class People.

Preparing for the Transformation of Society

From a talk by Tim Jackins at the Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA,
Teachers' and Leaders' Workshop, February 2012

The economic system is collapsing. You know it. It's scary, it's destructive—and it has to happen. It's a good thing. It's a hard, good thing. It will be quite damaging, but the system is damaging all the time to millions of people. The fact that this is coming out in the open is just fine.

Whether those supporting the system will be able to prop it up a little longer, for another swing or two through the cycle, is not clear. It's right on the edge. Greece is barely going to be allowed to have any autonomy as a country. The question being asked is "Will they put in enough austerity programs?" not "Who should be paying for this?" It isn't the working class. Working people don't need to be pulverized one more time. They're not where the financial resource is. The question of who should be paying for it can't yet be asked very openly or explicitly, though it's beginning to creep out in the Occupy and other movements. It's not as widely asked yet as it needs to be, but that's coming.

At some point the system is simply not going to work. Banks are not going to lend money, people will start pulling back, and all of the relationships that have kept the system flowing aren't going to work. Then what?

Well, then we get to try again. What do you want to head for? What basic principles do you want to put out and get people to agree to? I want a society in which it is unacceptable for anyone to exploit anyone else on any basis at all, period. Implementing that will be a lot of work—figuring it out, undoing lots of things—but it's important to get a principle like that stated, to say that it's what we're aiming for.

It's clear that we humans know how to handle the material world well enough that everybody in existence could have a good life, without messing up the environment. We know enough, we've mastered enough things, we've built enough resource, to be able to do that. Our problem is that we're stuck in old forms of exploiting each other and the environment.

Exploitation may have played a useful role historically. Some usefulness has come out of every oppressive society, including capitalism. Capitalism

is producing an immense amount of information. It's coming out in odd little gadgets maybe, but they're wonderful little gadgets. They show ingenuity, an understanding of the way things work, and a certain level of elegance.

Historically, society exploited people and took part of what they earned and gave it to someone who then got the leisure and slack time to figure out things, things that weren't necessary for survival but that made bigger things possible later. That resource wasn't there, didn't exist, until exploitation happened. So you could say that the exploitation played a useful role. But we've developed past the point where it's needed. We don't need to exploit anybody to have the resources necessary for minds to go on and expand.

So, how do we figure out a society afresh? How do we get through the period of great uncertainty that's coming? Well, I think we all need to think about what we want, and counsel on what we're afraid of, and think about the relationships we'd like to have with each other.

All of our relationships are determined and twisted by capitalism. They're wrapped around survival in some way, because under capitalism survival is an individual struggle. Say we have a society in which it isn't an individual struggle—in which we don't have to fight for ourselves against others; in which if we want things better, we agree that we're going to make them better for everybody, not just ourselves; in which we have that common agreement. What are our relationships going to be like? They're going to be different—so different, in the way that we trust and rely on each other, that I think we'll get to some of the real meaning of security. Security is not having large piles of gold or something else that we can sell, it's having a collection of people who will think well about us and who have committed themselves to our existence as much as their own. In order to get that in place, we have a lot of discharging to do on how we've been isolated from each other.

And then, we need to know a lot that we don't yet know—individually and collectively. Part of the reason for making the Communities bigger is to spread RC ideas. That's the basic reason. But a side benefit—

continued . . .

WIDE WORLD CHANGING

... continued

especially if we reach into more of the working class and get more diverse in where we reach—is getting to know more about how society functions. Then we can better help reshape its functioning.

For example, who here knows about the distribution of food? I go to the store and I buy it. But how does it get there, what are all the networks, and how do they function? And how will they function if the goal is not to make an individual profit? How can that be organized? It will be best, of course, if people who are working in those fields get through all their distresses about having to fight for their individual positions and then can think about organizing it for the benefit of everybody. We want to get RC ideas out into every sector of the economy, so that people who know about each sector can help figure it out and get support for figuring it out.

The Co-Counseling Community is not in shape¹ to play a leading role in the transformation of society. We don't know enough, we're not diverse enough. We can play a good supportive role. We can support the people who are in the positions to lead the transformation, but at this point we're not, by far, in that position. We're just not. We're working in that direction. One question is, do we have time? (*Laughter*) Do we have time to get there as things start to shake more and more drastically? And that's not clear at all.

¹ In shape means in a state.



DIANE SHISK

How well do we use the opportunities that come our way? That's always the big question. We can wish for bigger opportunities, but that doesn't do anything. It will be interesting to see how far we can get out of our timidities and put our own individual thinking forward, and how diverse we can become so that we have input from many different sectors before things collapse.

It used to look like the collapse wouldn't happen in our lifetimes and now it looks like it has to. There's so little slack left in the system. There's very little national independence left. The economic forces are destroying Greece because there's money to be made in doing so. And then it will be Spain, Ireland, Portugal—there's a whole list. "In trouble" means a government has less power than the economic forces do. Government has been a restraining force, it has tried to keep things together in spite of the economic forces, but those forces have become so powerful and desperate that the fight is being lost.

The economic forces have no ability to look after² each other. They're too involved in tearing at each other, trying to be the last one standing. I don't see that anything is going to be able to keep the collapse from accelerating, and we'll get to see what happens. I think it's hopeful, but it's going to be a lot of work.

² Look after means take care of.

What Society Is

Society deserves simply to be evaluated and understood for exactly what it is: an irrational creature not yet evolved to the intelligent behavior of its most rational members. It is not an all-powerful despot.

Harvey Jackins
From "The Flexible Human
in the Rigid Society"
in *The Human Situation*

A Call to Action on Climate Change

Thirty-one years ago Harvey Jackins wrote in his Preliminary Report to the 1981 World Conference, “I place before the World Conference and the entire International Community the priority of counseling away every distress that has kept us from promptly, decisively, and effectively eliminating nuclear weapons.” He felt that doing that should “take precedence in our thinking and must receive concentrated attention in this current period regardless of how little we feel ready to deal with it” and that “it is plain at this point that we will solve all other problems, given our present state of emergence, if we are permitted enough time to do so. Nuclear weapons threaten to deny us that time.”

I remember well how many of us got to work discharging and went on to become advocates for nuclear disarmament. Times have changed, and the threat has lessened, although the goal of eliminating nuclear weapons is not accomplished.

I would like to suggest to the RC Communities that we face a similar situation now with climate change. We will run out of time to solve the problem of racism and every other form of oppression and human irrationality if we continue to pump carbon dioxide into the atmosphere and set in motion physical forces of warming that cannot be stopped.

There are many indications that the situation is urgent, and I believe that the leadership of RCers is greatly needed. I could cite many examples of extreme weather events. Here in the United States we had an unprecedented heat wave for much of the month of March in which 15,232 high-temperature records were broken. In the last couple of years the state of Vermont and the Mississippi River (in the United States) have experienced the worst

flooding on record, as have parts of Pakistan, Australia, Thailand, and Central America. In Pakistan twenty million people had to relocate. Human emissions have warmed the planet enough already that the air is holding more moisture and the moisture is feeding more extreme storms that lead to flooding.

Nevertheless, human emissions from fossil fuels continue to increase faster than the worst-case scenarios envisioned by the International Panel on Climate Change. The International Energy Agency has found that global fossil fuel development planned for the next five years alone, if carried out, would put Earth at carbon dioxide levels that would be catastrophic. It may already be too late to avoid the climate tipping points that would make human emissions irrelevant and perhaps lead to a massive extinction of life on Earth. But there is also a chance that decisive action could pull us back from the brink.

A few countries, including Denmark and Mexico, have made tremendous commitments to cutting their emissions. In every country people are mobilizing in creative ways. Yet the task of converting to a different energy system is complex, enormous, and hindered by entrenched patterns of greed and oppression. It will take a huge amount of human initiative and cooperation to halt and perhaps eventually undo the damage caused by the large-scale burning of fossil fuels that has taken place since the Industrial Revolution.

We RCers have the potential to make a huge difference. We have in our Communities terrific leadership training, clear policies, and a way to support ourselves and others to face the threat and step out of powerlessness. We can discharge our fear and grief, and learn what we need to learn. We can

do this “regardless of how little we feel ready to deal with it,” as Harvey said.

I’ve made this a priority in my life because I think it is the most important decision I can make. I’ve founded and led local chapters of the two best climate change organizations I could find in the United States (Citizens’ Climate Lobby and 350.org). I was arrested in front of the White House¹ during the Keystone XL Pipeline² protests, and I’ve cut my job to half-time so that I can put more time into organizing. The work has been challenging and meaningful, and I’m pleased to be doing it. And as I say to everyone around me, if I can be a leader on climate change, so can you—in your own way and your own community.

What we do in the next few years could determine the future of humanity in the rest of this century and beyond. This is not the time to hold back.

Madeleine Para
Madison, Wisconsin, USA

¹ The White House is the residence of the acting president of the United States and his or her family.

² The Keystone XL Pipeline would pipe oil extracted from Canadian tar sands 1,700 miles to refineries on the Gulf of Mexico in the United States. After being refined there, the oil would be exported to other countries. The project would be environmentally hazardous in a number of ways.



ENGLAND • DOTTIE CURRY

Catholic Women at an Interfaith Passover Seder KG

This spring forty-five women from my Catholic church participated with Jewish women in an Interfaith Passover Seder¹ at a synagogue in Los Angeles, California, USA.

It was our second annual Seder. Last year twelve of us participated. This year my organizing team and I reached out to many more women from our various parish ministries, and the women who participated last year shared their testimonies of how meaningful the experience had been for them. The word got out that this was something good not to miss.

By the smiles on our Jewish sisters' faces at seeing us triple our participation, it seemed like we created a good contradiction to anti-Jewish oppression. And it was lovely to see so many women from our Latina immigrant church, who are mostly Spanish speakers (mostly from Mexico and Central America), want to learn more about Jewish faith, culture, and traditions and want to continue developing friendships with their Jewish sisters.

I served as the interpreter for the woman rabbi who led the Seder. This gave us the opportunity to form a good connection as we collaborated to make the Seder understandable to everyone.

The Seder was focused on Jewish women's essential contributions to the liberation of their people. The rabbi invited each woman to share at her table about a woman who'd had a significant impact on her life. Most women talked about their mother or another female relative. At my table the rabbi talked about a Christian woman who had made a meaningful difference in her life. Moved by her decision to talk about a Christian woman, I talked about a Jewish friend I had during my college years who convinced me to take a women's studies class with her and who taught me a lot about listening to women's life stories, including my own, and introduced me to Co-Counseling.

The weekend before the Seder, Rachel Noble² led our southern California (USA) Region³ in an RC allies-to-Jews workshop. She talked about our needing to take the initiative as allies and not just wait to follow Jews and expect them to do all the thinking. I thought about that in relation to the Seder and asked the rabbi if I could say a few words at the beginning to create a good context for the Latina women for why we were gathering together as Jewish and Catholic women. I reviewed with the rabbi what I wanted to say, and she seemed pleased to hear my thinking.

What I shared with the group was that we were there to celebrate our faith in one God; that even though we might have different beliefs from our different traditions, we could celebrate our one God who cared about all of us. I talked about Jesus and his parents, Mary and Joseph, being an observant Jewish family and how they would have celebrated Passover each year. I said that in learning about this Jewish celebration we were also deepening our knowledge of our own faith roots. I talked about how women from both traditions had played pivotal roles in the struggles for their people's liberation by ensuring the well-being of their families as well as the larger group. Finally, I said that we had come together in friendship and to continue developing our friendships with our Jewish sisters.

We had so much fun at this Seder meal. Our Jewish sisters had prepared copies of a Haggadah⁴ in Spanish that our Catholic group loved and got to take home. We found the significance behind the rituals to be very meaningful and enjoyed the songs. We were inspired by the stories of Jewish women in ancient times struggling courageously for liberation. We liked feeling pride in our own significance as women.

At the end of the meal we went outside and took a group picture, and then published it on the front cover of our Catholic parish bulletin—a wonderful reminder that it is possible for Jewish and Catholic women to gather together to celebrate their common sisterhood.



Ellie Hidalgo
Los Angeles, California, USA
Reprinted from the RC e-mail
discussion list for leaders of women

¹ A Passover Seder is a ritual feast that marks the beginning of the Jewish holiday of Passover.

² Rachel Noble is the Regional Reference Person for Oregon, USA.

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

⁴ A Haggadah is the text recited at a Passover Seder.

Steps Toward a Rational Society

In past years in the northern United States, logs were often cut in the woods in winter and sent to market by floating them down river in the spring. Lumberjacks would shepherd and guide vast quantities of timber down the fresheted* rivers. On occasion the mass of logs would jam at some point in the river and great pile-ups would develop. It became a crucial skill to find the “key log” in the jam, the removal of which—with peavey, pry bar, or dynamite—would free the whole mass of logs to continue on their course downstream.

The progress of events and the development of movements are subject to similar obstacles. The untangling of “key difficulties” which are holding up progress on a broad front can be compared to the freeing of the “key log” in a log jam on a river. If a person playing an important role in a movement becomes non-functional through accident, illness, preoccupation with distress, or unforeseen circumstances, to restore that person to functioning or to replace that person in the role with a functioning person is a key activity that releases the development of many other activities.

Creation of pre-conditions for events which one desires to take place has a similar effect.

If one wishes to produce a motor car, for example, it will be necessary to find (or even construct) an iron mining operation, smelting of the iron, mills to produce steel, and the casting or forging or machining of parts in order that the manufacture of an automobile can proceed. In other kinds of manufacturing, the transportation, warehousing, and sub-assembling of materials are pre-conditions that must be met for the desired product to be attained.

Leading a large number of people in a world-class community, organized around one’s self, to achieve mass re-emergence, eliminate nuclear hazards, and construct a rational society will certainly have analogous pre-conditions at every stage.

Harvey Jackins

From *The Longer View*, pages 35 to 36

* Fresheted means overflowing from a heavy rain or a thaw.



KK

A Spontaneous Listening Project

I was in downtown Seattle, Washington (USA), at Westlake Park, which was looking more and more like an igloo tent city.¹ I went up to people who were standing by the street, waving at folks driving by, and asked what their particular issue was and let them tell me what they felt was important. When they seemed to be finished talking, I said something like, “I agree with you, ” or “Good work,” or “This is going to be fun for you, I think”—whatever seemed appropriate for the interchange—although mostly I just listened until it seemed like a good time to let them get back to the job at hand.²

It wasn’t until later that I realized I had done a listening project³ without actually planning to. I had just put myself in front of folks and asked them something, and they’d pretty much taken it from there.⁴

Cheryl Banks

Seattle, Washington, USA

Reprinted from the RC e-mail discussion list for leaders of wide world change

¹ The tents had been set up as part of an occupation of the park in protest against economic injustice.

² Job at hand means job they were doing.

³ In an RC listening project, several Co-Counselors go to a public place and offer to listen to passersby about some important issue, such as racism or a current war. They may hold signs that invite people to share their thinking about that issue.

⁴ Pretty much taken it from there means mostly done all the talking after that.



TOGO • MARION OUPHOUET

Reflections on Wide World Change

Excerpts from a letter that Julian Weissglass, the International Commonality Reference Person for Wide World Change, recently wrote to his constituency

DISCOURAGEMENT

I suspect that everyone struggles with discouragement and hopelessness recordings,* including people who seem to be hopeful and cheerful all the time. In recent weeks I have returned to discharging discouragement, and I'm becoming more aware of the early sources of it. I looked for a commitment against discouragement but could not find one. So I wrote one. It works well for me and has worked for a few others who have tried it. Let me know if it works for you.

My discouragement is an old distress recording. I am an adult now. I have access to discharge and to relationships with people who care about me and share my vision for the future. I am part of an International Community committed to transforming our society and acting with integrity. There is every reason to be hopeful. I REFUSE to be discouraged!

* Distress recordings



EUCALYPTUS • BETH SHORTER

CLASS, AND WIDE WORLD CHANGE

Wide world changers need to continue to discharge on how growing up in their socio-economic class affects them. Our class background influences our values, relationships, and actions. It affects the way we view others and ourselves. It influences our goals and the methods we use to achieve them.

None of us is excluded from being a wide world changer because of our class background, but we need to discharge any distress recordings that interfere with our full commitment to the transformation of society into one that is good for all humans. People in every class have work to do here, but those of us raised in the middle or owning class have more work to do because we have been lied to more about the benefits of capitalism. Since we are not always aware of the depth of class distress, we should be prepared for extensive work in this area.

USERS AND U.S. IMPERIALISM

U.S. liberation and ending U.S. imperialism are important for ending war and transforming society. The United States of America is one of the strongest imperial powers the world has ever seen. The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute estimates that the United States is responsible for forty-three percent of the world's military expenditures. It has military bases in countries all over the world. All of this is because the owning class in the United States makes huge profits from imperialism. The citizens of the United States must be severely oppressed to allow this to happen. We U.S. Co-Counselors need to discharge on U.S. liberation. Most

of us have had some U.S. patterns installed on us (for example, feelings that we are better than other people, patterns of dominating discussions) even though we may also be in many oppressed groups.

VETERANS AND ALLIES

The "for-profit" society uses war to keep people afraid and passive and to make huge profits for corporations. An important part of ending war is developing alliances between veterans and people who have not seen military service. Veterans who have experienced combat rarely tell anyone about their experiences or discharge about them. The main reason is that people who have not experienced combat have little attention to listen to their stories. Even if we are committed to being an ally, the distress may show on our face. It is similar to what happens with other oppressions. Allies need to discharge their distress about war and about what is most difficult for them to listen to.

EL SALVADOR

I recently led a workshop in El Salvador on healing from the hurts of the Civil War. El Salvador has a long history of genocide, oppression, and suffering, from both Spanish and U.S. imperialism, from the time of the Spanish conquest in the sixteenth century. All El Salvadorians have been affected by this history and most recently by the twelve-year Civil War (1980 to 1992) in which approximately seventy-five thousand (of 6.2 million) people were killed. Almost everyone I met in El Salvador had a relative killed in the Civil War. At the workshop I saw evidence of the power of discharge in people's faces. Since my being there two years before, people had more

attention for each other and for the demonstrations. I saw much more joy and lightness.

I also led a public presentation, "Healing from the Hurts of War Without Forgetting Our History: An Introduction to Re-evaluation Counseling." Over eighty people attended. There were nursing mothers, young people, young adults, and elders, and a good number of Indigenous people. I talked about the effects of war and how the theory and process of RC help us heal. I did a demonstration with a man who had seen much death, and another with a young adult on how the war had affected her. I asked a mother about her young baby discharging. And I spoke to the young people about the importance of listening to the stories of their grandparents and parents. Perhaps that is why after the talk two elderly women hugged me, with tears in their eyes, and said *gracias* (thank you).

SOME THINGS I THINK I KNOW ABOUT WIDE WORLD CHANGE

In preparation for a wide world change workshop, I made the following list of things I think I know about wide world change:

- The for-profit society (many people call it a capitalistic society) we are living in is unworkable in the long run, and harmful to people and the environment, and will end.
- The nature of the society that replaces it will depend on how well human beings can think about each other and how effectively people can lead with integrity.
- If the exploitation of some people for the material profit of others is eliminated, there will be enough resources in the world to meet everyone's rational needs.

- We Co-Counselors are in a good position to provide leadership, because we have access to discharge and to the thinking of an international network that is committed to acting with integrity and to achieving a world in which human beings do not hurt other human beings.

- Reform programs will not end oppression. They can be useful for organizing and educating, but reforms can also be misused. We must commit ourselves to the ending of any form of oppression.

- Our goal is to transform the institutions of society so that society is good for all people, rather than to require individuals to adjust to an oppressive society.

- Teaching an RC fundamentals class and organizing wide world changers, both in RC support groups and in the wide world, are among the most revolutionary things a Co-Counselor can do. It is important to bring the full power of RC to large numbers of people.

- The socio-economic class in which a person is raised affects all of her or his thinking and actions. But any obstacles caused by class background can be discharged, and the person can take leadership for wide world change.

- There are some widespread distress patterns that have a negative effect on our wide world change work—for example, discouragement, conformity, fear of taking initiative,

and feeling unvalued, unlovable, isolated, and like no one understands or has enough attention for us. We can discharge these patterns.

- It will be helpful for us to think of ourselves as counselors for humanity. We can identify distresses that continue to hurt people, hold out a vision of a rational society, and provide contradictions to societal and individual distress recordings. We can set goals for individuals and institutions and ensure that humanity decides, discharges, and acts to eliminate humans hurting humans. Each wide world changer can welcome everyone to participate in making the world a better place for all.

- It will help if we (1) have complete respect for everyone's intelligence and act respectfully at all times, (2) communicate confidence that we will succeed, (3) aim to influence but not try to be famous, and (4) model acting with integrity.

- It is useful to "stand on two legs"—with one leg in social action and the other in re-emergence activity (for ourselves and others).

Planning and thinking about our re-emergence as it relates to wide world change is important. Setting goals is helpful. We can review our goals periodically in sessions. We can organize contradictions to recordings of powerlessness, discouragement, and passivity so that our discharge and re-emergence continue between sessions.

Santa Barbara, California, USA

We must not be ashamed that we are capable of love, friendship, solidarity, sympathy and tolerance, but just the opposite: we must set these fundamental dimensions of our humanity free from their "private" exile and accept them as the only genuine starting point of meaningful human community.

Vaclav Havel

❁ ❁ ❁ ❁ ❁ **Bringing RC to “Mental Health” Settings** ❁ ❁ ❁ ❁ ❁

LK

I am a practicing psychotherapist, and I often feel frustrated at the many ways I can't replicate what we do in RC when I'm in my "mental health" settings. Missing are a peer structure, the relationships and community-building to support each person, and the slow, steady draining of patterns from holding directions and staying with discharge. I have an even greater appreciation of what we do in RC because of what I try to do with people within the confines of the "mental health" system.

I do give fifteen-minute mini-lectures on the content of *The Human Side of Human Beings*¹ soon after I start seeing most clients, to help explain why they, or others, can think one thing but be drawn to feeling another way. Throughout therapy I often use words that we use in RC, like patterns, recordings, oppression, directions, contradictions, and being allies. I also use naturalized words, like "baggage" for distress, "triggered" for restimulated, "appreciations" for validations. I talk about the goal of being able to think relaxedly in the midst of whatever is going on.² Mostly I make close relationships with my clients, by listening, and help them put words to many feelings and thoughts.

At the start of therapy I give a short talk on the value of each form of discharge, and we stop as I encourage the person to cry from his or her belly or yawn as much as possible. People sometimes come in after a week saying, "You'd be so proud of me, Holly. I sat and cried for a long time!" But mostly they tell me how bad the week was because they cried—and then I cheerfully praise them

and they smile. I consistently reinforce their daring to feel uncomfortable, since the pressure in U.S. society to ignore uncomfortable feelings is monumental.

Because I mostly counsel people about their relationships, I help them distinguish dramatizing from reaching for the person. I also teach them, step by step, how to identify conclusions they've reached from their past that may not be true now, and how to more awarely notice what's happening in the present. I usually provide "reality" perspectives, since they're often hard for people to come up with.³

Sometimes I have each member of a couple draw up a list of what he or she thinks the other's strengths (human qualities) and old recordings are. Then we come up with ways that each can effectively help the other with the recordings. This requires us to talk about people having pockets of feelings that are old, that appear at unexpected times and are full of more "charge" (like electrical charge) than the current situation alone would produce. I ask, "What's your earliest memory of that feeling?" and "What did you learn in your family about dealing with your feelings?"

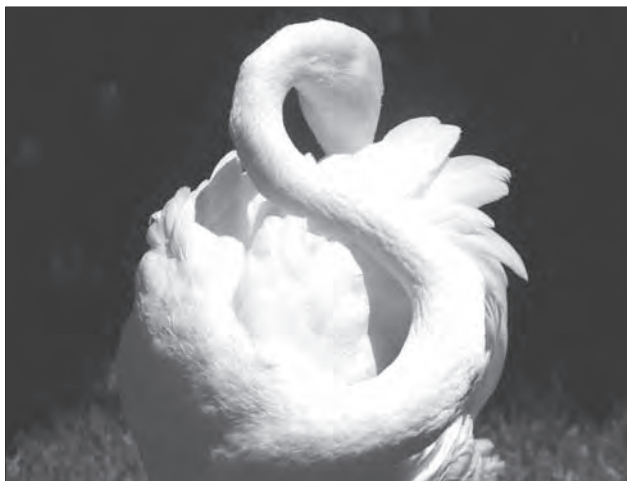
I love the challenge of giving clients the most RC that I can.

Holly Jorgenson
Madison, Wisconsin, USA
Reprinted from the e-mail discussion
list for RC Community members

¹ A book, by Harvey Jackins, introducing the theory of Re-evaluation Counseling

² Going on means happening.

³ Come up with means think of.



HELEN PARKIN

All Our Situations Are New

The great liberation theoreticians of the past are useful inspirations and models to liberation workers today in many ways, but their theories cannot be applied except in the most general way to a current situation. Of most use is their method of concretely examining the real situation they were confronting, making sure they had the facts, and then thinking fresh and hard for new solutions to that particular situation. All our situations are new.

Harvey Jackins
From "Propositions About Human Liberation"
in *Logical Thinking About a Future Society*

Speaking Up, with a Smile

I live in a part of England where there are few Jews. This afternoon I was walking home, and as I turned into my street, a few yards in front of me was a group of boys returning from school. They were all about twelve years old—a year or so younger than my son.

I heard one of them call another “Jew-boy” a couple of times. The boy replied that he wasn’t a Jew. I wanted to say something but didn’t want them to feel like an angry adult was telling them off,* so in a happy tone I said, “I’m a Jew.”

They all turned to look at me, and one started laughing. That set the others off laughing, too. The boy who had called his friend a Jew went red, and I gave him a big smile.

One boy recognised me, asking if I was the man who was at last summer’s scout camp running an activity. Although I didn’t recognise him, I did help out at that camp and it was good he made the connection.

I walked a little way with them, and they kept laughing and I kept smiling. I was not frightened of them and they didn’t seem frightened of me.

I was pleased that I found a way to not lecture them about name-calling but also to speak up and not be invisible.

Neil Shashoua (Shash)
Morpeth, Northumberland, England
Reprinted from the RC e-mail
discussion list for leaders of Jews

* Telling them off means reprimanding them.

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

Reach Out to All

RC outreach possibilities are everywhere. Seminars on bullying, gang violence, racism, and so on, are fertile ground for spreading the principles, if not the name, of RC. Each of us can strike up¹ conversations with the parent of a testy² child on the playground or in the store. When buying boxes of tissues for a class, we can share with the clerk that we use lots of them, as we do lots of crying and it feels so good. As people hear these messages, awareness of discharge will increase and resistance to it soften.

We are in critical need of open dialogues with people of many different views. Some of us may need to express less hostility toward capitalism. It can be challenging enough to reach out to conservatives without battling their defense of free enterprise. We would be doing well if people discarded the “bad seed” theory of why people do bad things.

Earl Shoop
Silver Spring, Maryland, USA

¹ Strike up means initiate.

² Testy means irritated, impatient, exasperated.



AMANDA MARTINEZ

The Role of Demonstrations

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

Harvey* wrote that one-to-one friendships are key to organizing for social change, and I agree with that. I also think that for some people, having thousands of people in the streets protesting injustice is important. At least it was for me.

As a young person, no one in my family agreed with my "radical" ideas, and I was told over and over again, "This is just a phase you're going through." Seeing that hundreds of thousands of people agreed with me that the Vietnam War was unjust made a tremendous difference in my life, and I'm quite sure it helped me become a leader in RC.

It would be good if people shared what they think about mass demonstrations and if and how they've been affected by them.

I admire all the brave people who are courageous enough to demonstrate and say publicly that injustice is wrong.

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

* Harvey Jackins

Es muy importante ahora mismo y he estado pensando mucho en esto durante los últimos meses, porque las demostraciones que hemos tenido aquí en España me han impactado mucho y también a la mayoría de las personas que conozco.

Aunque las personas que participan se sienten bien al estar en las demostraciones, yo tengo dudas sobre que tan eficaces son a largo plazo en engendrar cambio verdadero. Me hace pensar mucho en las masas de aficionados de fútbol, un recordatorio que lo popular a menudo no es nada revolucionario, en nuestra cultura consumista.

Entonces tengo muchos pensamientos cínicos (que podrían ser causados en parte por mis pasadas y no-desahogadas decepciones) sobre eso como un nuevo estilo de entretenimiento de masa, manteniendo las personas distraídas y sintiendo que están haciendo algo importante mientras no hacen mucho en la práctica. Ojalá que yo esté equivocada.

Hay una gran énfasis en la protesta visible más que en acción constructiva, y lo que pienso ver es simplemente un patrón atrapado de quejarse contra la autoridad (dramatizando enfado con los padres) que se encuentran típicamente en

personas 'alternativas' post-modernas en los países más 'desarrollados' (demasiado-ricos).

Por el lado positivo, también veo mucha esperanza, mucha rabia desahogando-se y bastante concienciación que está sucediendo también, mientras más y más personas se dan cuenta por primera vez que algo está realmente y estructuralmente mal con el sistema. Lo que todavía no veo (pero ¡tal vez solo tengo impaciencia!) es la comprensión que culpar a cualquier grupo de personas es bastante inútil; tenemos simplemente que ponernos manos a la obra de cambiar las estructuras subyacentes.

*Stella Strega Scoz
La Palma, Islas Canarias, España*

English translation of the above:

I've been wondering about this a lot during the last few months, as the demonstrations here in Spain have had a great impact on me and on most of the people I know.

Although the people who participate seem to feel good about being in the demonstrations, I have doubts about how effective they are longer term in achieving actual change. Passionate football crowds come to mind—a reminder that what's popular, in our consumer culture, is often not that revolutionary.

I have many cynical thoughts (which could be due in part to my undischarged past disappointments) about this being a new kind of mass entertainment, keeping people distracted and feeling they are doing something important whilst not achieving much in practice. I hope I am wrong.



MAURA FALLON

There is a big emphasis on showy protest rather than constructive action. I think I see a stuck pattern of complaining at authority (dramatizing anger at parents) often found in post-modern “alternative” people in the more “developed” (overly-rich) countries.

On the positive side, I also see a lot of hope, much discharging, and a great deal of consciousness-raising, as more and more people realize for the first time that something is structurally wrong with the system. What I don’t see yet (but maybe I’m just impatient) is the realization that blaming any set of people is fairly useless; we just have to get to work to change the underlying structures.

Stella Strega Scoz
La Palma, Canary Islands, Spain
Translated by the author



As someone who has participated and led mass demonstrations, I think they can be useful on a number of fronts.

They often are inspirational and can play an important role in contradicting isolation and individual powerlessness. I remember the songs we chanted, the hands we held, and the tears we shed when we stood up to authorities. It was a way of visibly fighting back with others against the injustices and oppressions that had a grip on people’s lives.

I also think that hearing about demonstrations throughout the world can help people stand up to local injustice.

To build real and permanent organization, one needs individual relationships—they are the core of sustained and real change. Demonstrations are secondary to that. In RC, the people who have stayed have done so in large part

because there was at least one person who could counsel them well. The individual relationships, and closeness, have been paramount. I have been an activist since I was fourteen, and the success of every organization and movement I’ve been part of has been a direct result (not exclusively, but primarily) of the strength of relationships.

Diane Balsler
Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts, USA



Along with participating in mass demonstrations, I have also organised small demonstrations and bits of direct action (also called civil disobedience), such as occupying a building or barring the entrance to somewhere. Direct action can be a contradiction to people’s isolation and

their hopelessness about oppression and social change. It can give them the courage to do all of the other more tedious things, such as writing letters, signing petitions, creating new policies, meeting officials, and so on. And it brings up so much fear for discharge—there is nothing like it!

The success of any campaign I’ve been involved with has also included tiny meetings with ministers or politicians, sometimes one-to-one, in which we have made a proposal to improve something and then listened to them think through the arguments for and against. Campaigning for something is always better than campaigning against something, I think.

Micheline Mason
London, England



BRIAN LAVENDEL

Why Oppressive Societies Continue

Oppressive societies can continue to exist because they hurt every person so badly—so badly that almost everyone feels like he or she would not survive one more blow. People are afraid to move for fear that there would be one more, and that that would be the end.

Society can continue to exist if it can push almost all of us to that edge and balance us there, so that we are isolated and afraid to move and it feels like our existence is at stake.* That is what happens to us. We are getting a clearer picture that each one of us is pushed to that edge.

In RC we have to be hopeful—and we should be, because we understand how to get off that edge—but we still have to fight that fight.

Tim Jackins

From a transcript of DVD No. 226,
Eliminating White Racism Now

* At stake means in question, in jeopardy.



IPSWICH, MASSACHUSETTS, USA • TIM JACKINS

Social Activism and Middle-Class Fears

I would suggest that you counsel hard for a while on your attitude toward the reactionary social forces before you burst into print to many people. I think you are caught in the familiar middle-class fear of the strength of the reactionary forces. It is not justified by reality, but you're hardly likely to realize this on the basis of my saying it, or any discussion, until you get rid of some of your fear.

Actually, the reactionary forces are not in the ascendant; they are threatening, but they are rapidly weakening. Your social activism should not just point out with alarm the existence of exploitation and oppression, as if it were a brand-new threatening discovery (the great masses of the people know all about oppression and exploitation, from the facts of their daily lives). Instead, insist on the possibility of social change, and confidently point the way toward cooperative, loving relationships between people that will lead to joint activity to bring about social change.

Until you get rid of your fear, I think you'll do a disservice to your readers, who will mostly be middle-class people with similar fears. You'll simply jangle them. One should never point with alarm without in addition proposing an alternative, and offering the confidence and reassurance that the problem can be solved—which is the common need of all of us who are victims of negative recordings.*

Harvey Jackins

From a letter written in 1973

* Distress recordings

Appreciating RC Literature

Thank you for the Teachers' Packet. I always look forward to seeing the new literature.



JL

Xian Lai
Honolulu, Hawaii, USA

As each issue of PRESENT TIME comes out, I read it avidly. But looking through some back issues this morning, it was as if I had never opened the pages. Some distress here making me forget? Maybe. The lesson for me is not just to read, but also to *re-read*.

I have come to the conclusion that, as part of the SETI (search for extraterrestrial intelligence) project, a digitalized copy of PRESENT TIME should be beamed out into the cosmos to inform other intelligences about the true state of human nature and endeavour.

John David Simnett
Whitley Bay, North Tyneside, Tyne and Wear, England

A big thank you for publishing such a great resource.



KK

Carmela Salomon
Sydney, New South Wales, Australia

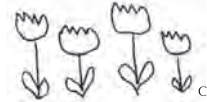
I am happy to report that I've received my big fat gorgeous PRESENT TIME journal—my first. It is so packed full of inspiration and hints and clues and stories and tools.



LK

Lynda Day Martin
Thetford Center, Vermont, USA

Thank you, thank you, thank you for the literature. It's making a great difference in my life. After reading an article in THE RC TEACHER, I knew what I wanted to say, in addition to my plan, to help others be more committed.



CS

Joan Danes
Cleveland, Ohio, USA



UTAH, USA • ANNE MACKIE

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
- 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 1974-1993)
- 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.

Electronic Mailing Lists

The RC Community maintains a number of electronic mailing lists for particular categories of RCers. These lists are for active members of the RC Community, and most of them are for active leaders only. (If English is your first language, part of being an active member of the Community is subscribing to *Present Time*.) If you would like to subscribe to a list, first e-mail the person in charge of the list, then forward that person's approval, your request, your contact information (phone number, mailing address, city, state, postal code, country), and whether or not you have a subscription to *Present Time*, directly to the International Reference Person at <ircc@rc.org>. Read the information below for the various lists and whom you need to contact for approval to subscribe to them.

RC Community Members: <community@mail.rc.org>.

Contact any Area, Regional, or Liberation Reference Person.

RC Community Members Involved in Eliminating

Racism: <uer@mail.rc.org>. Contact any Area, Regional, or Liberation Reference Person. (This list is for trading information on the theory and practice of using RC in the fight to eliminate racism, both inside and outside of the RC Community.)

Regional Reference Persons: <rrp@mail.rc.org>.

Contact the International Reference Person at <ircc@rc.org>.

Area Reference Persons: <arp@mail.rc.org>.

Contact the International Reference Person at <ircc@rc.org>.

International Liberation and Commonality Reference

Persons: <ilrp@mail.rc.org>. Contact the International Reference Person at <ircc@rc.org>.

RC Teachers: <teachers@mail.rc.org>. Contact the

International Reference Person at <ircc@rc.org>.

Editors of RC or non-RC publications:

<editors@mail.rc.org>. Contact the International Reference Person at <ircc@rc.org>.

Translators of RC Literature:

<translators@mail.rc.org>. Contact Truus Jansen, Rational Island Publishers Translation Coordinator, at <ircc@rc.org>.

Activists for the Liberation of "People Targeted for Destruction by Society Because of the Patterns Imposed Upon Them":

<access@mail.rc.org>. Contact the International Reference Person at <ircc@rc.org>.

Leaders of African-Heritage People:

<black@mail.rc.org>. Contact Barbara Love, International Liberation Reference Person for African-Heritage People, at <bjlove413@gmail.com>.

Leaders of Artists: <artists@mail.rc.org>.

Contact John Fehringer, International Liberation Reference Person for Visual Artists, at <rc@fehninger.com>.

Leaders of Asians: <asian@mail.rc.org>.

Contact Francie Chew, International Liberation Reference Person for Chinese-Heritage People, at <fchew@tufts.edu>.

Leaders in the Care of the Environment:

<environment@mail.rc.org>. Contact Wytke Visser, International Commonality Reference Person for the Care of the Environment, at <wytkevisser.coe@gmail.com>.

Leaders of Catholics: <catholic@mail.rc.org>.

Contact Joanne Bray, International Liberation Reference Person for Catholics, at <jmbray@aol.com>.

Leaders of College and University Faculty:

<colleagues@mail.rc.org>. Contact Pam Roby, International Liberation Reference Person for College and University Faculty, at <roby@ucsc.edu>.

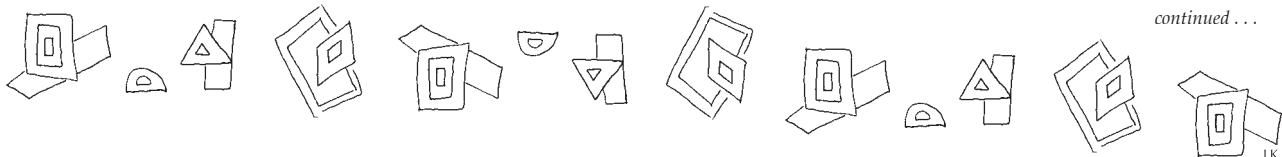
Leaders on Disability, Chronic Illness, and Health:

<health-disability@mail.rc.org>. Contact Marsha Saxton at <marsax@wid.org>.

Leaders of Educational Change:

<education@mail.rc.org>. Contact Marilyn Robb, International Commonality Reference Person for Educational Change, at <joyfulplace@yahoo.com>.

continued ...



RC ON THE INTERNET

... continued

Leaders of **Elders:** <elders@mail.rc.org>.

Contact the International Reference Person at <ircc@rc.org>.

Leaders of **Family Work:** <family-work@mail.rc.org>.

Contact Chuck Esser, International Commonality Reference Person for Family Work, at <ckesser@verizon.net>.

Leaders of **Irish-Heritage People:** <irish@mail.rc.org>.

Contact Sheila Fairon at <fairon@fastmail.fm>.

Leaders of **Jews:** <jewish@mail.rc.org>.

Contact Cherie Brown, International Liberation Reference Person for Jews, at <ncciinc@aol.com>.

Leaders of **Latinos/as and Chicanos/as:**

<latino@mail.rc.org>. Contact Lorenzo Garcia, International Liberation Reference Person for Chicanos/as, at <lgrc@aol.com>.

Leaders of **Men:** <men@mail.rc.org>.

Contact the International Reference Person at <ircc@rc.org>.

Leaders of **“Mental Health” Liberation:**

<mental-health@mail.rc.org>. Contact Janet Foner, International Liberation Reference Person for “Mental Health” Liberation, at <jbfoner@verizon.net>.

Leaders of **Middle-Class People:**

<middle-class@mail.rc.org>. Contact Seán Ruth, International Liberation Reference Person for Middle-Class People, at <seangruth@gmail.com>.

Leaders of **Native Americans:** <natives@mail.rc.org>.

Contact Marcie Rendon, International Liberation Reference Person for Native Americans, at <mrendon703@aol.com>.

Leaders of **Owning-Class People:**

<owning-class@mail.rc.org>. Contact Jo Saunders, International Liberation Reference Person for Owning-Class People, at <jo.saunders@btinternet.com>.

Leaders of **Parents:** <parents@mail.rc.org>.

Contact Marya Axner, International Liberation Reference Person for Parents, at <maryaaxner@gmail.com>.

Leaders of **Raised-Poor People:**

<raised-poor@mail.rc.org>. Contact Gwen Brown, International Liberation Reference Person for Raised-Poor People, at <gbbrown@udel.edu>.

Leaders of **Trade Unionists:** <unions@mail.rc.org>.

Contact Joanie Parker, International Liberation Reference Person for Trade Unionists, at <jep7ok@aol.com>.

Leaders of **Wide World Change:** <wwc@mail.rc.org>.

Contact Julian Weissglass, International Commonality Reference Person for Wide World Change, at <weissglass@education.ucsb.edu>.

Leaders of **Women:** <women@mail.rc.org>.

Contact Diane Balsler, International Liberation Reference Person for Women, at <dibalsler@comcast.net>.

Leaders of **Working-Class People:**

<working-class@mail.rc.org>. Contact Dan Nickerson, International Liberation Reference Person for Working-Class People, at <dnickerson122@comcast.net>.

Leaders of **Young Adults:** <young-adults@mail.rc.org>.

Contact Anna van Heeswijk, International Liberation Reference Person for Young Adults, at <annavanheeswijk@hotmail.com>.

Leaders of **Young People:** <young@mail.rc.org>.

Contact Mari Piggott, International Liberation Reference Person for Young People, at <marikathleenp@yahoo.ca>.



INDIA • MAURA FALLON

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DAVID MARTIN

Re-evaluation Counseling

Re-evaluation Counseling is a process whereby people of all ages and of all backgrounds can learn how to exchange effective help with each other in order to free themselves from the effects of past distress experiences.

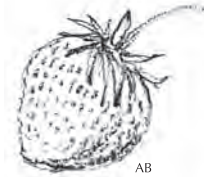
Re-evaluation Counseling theory provides a model of what a human being can be like in the area of his/her interaction with other human beings and his/her environment. The theory assumes that everyone is born with tremendous intellectual potential, natural zest, and lovingness, but that these qualities have become blocked and obscured in adults as the result of accumulated distress experiences (fear, hurt, loss, pain, anger, embarrassment, etc.) which begin early in our lives.

Any young person would recover from such distress spontaneously by use of the natural process of emotional discharge (crying, trembling, raging, laughing, etc.). However, this natural process is usually interfered with by well-meaning people ("Don't cry," "Be a big boy," etc.) who erroneously equate the emotional discharge (the healing of the hurt) with the hurt itself.

When adequate emotional discharge can take place, the person is freed from the rigid pattern of behavior and feeling left by the hurt. The basic loving, cooperative, intelligent, and zestful nature is then free to operate. Such a person will tend to be more effective in looking out for his or her own interests and the interests of others, and will be more capable of acting successfully against injustice.

In recovering and using the natural discharge process, two people take turns counseling and being counseled. The one acting as the counselor listens, draws the other out, and permits, encourages, and assists emotional discharge. The one acting as client talks and discharges and re-evaluates. With experience and increased confidence and trust in each other, the process works better and better.

For more information, you can go to the web site: <http://www.rc.org/>.



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