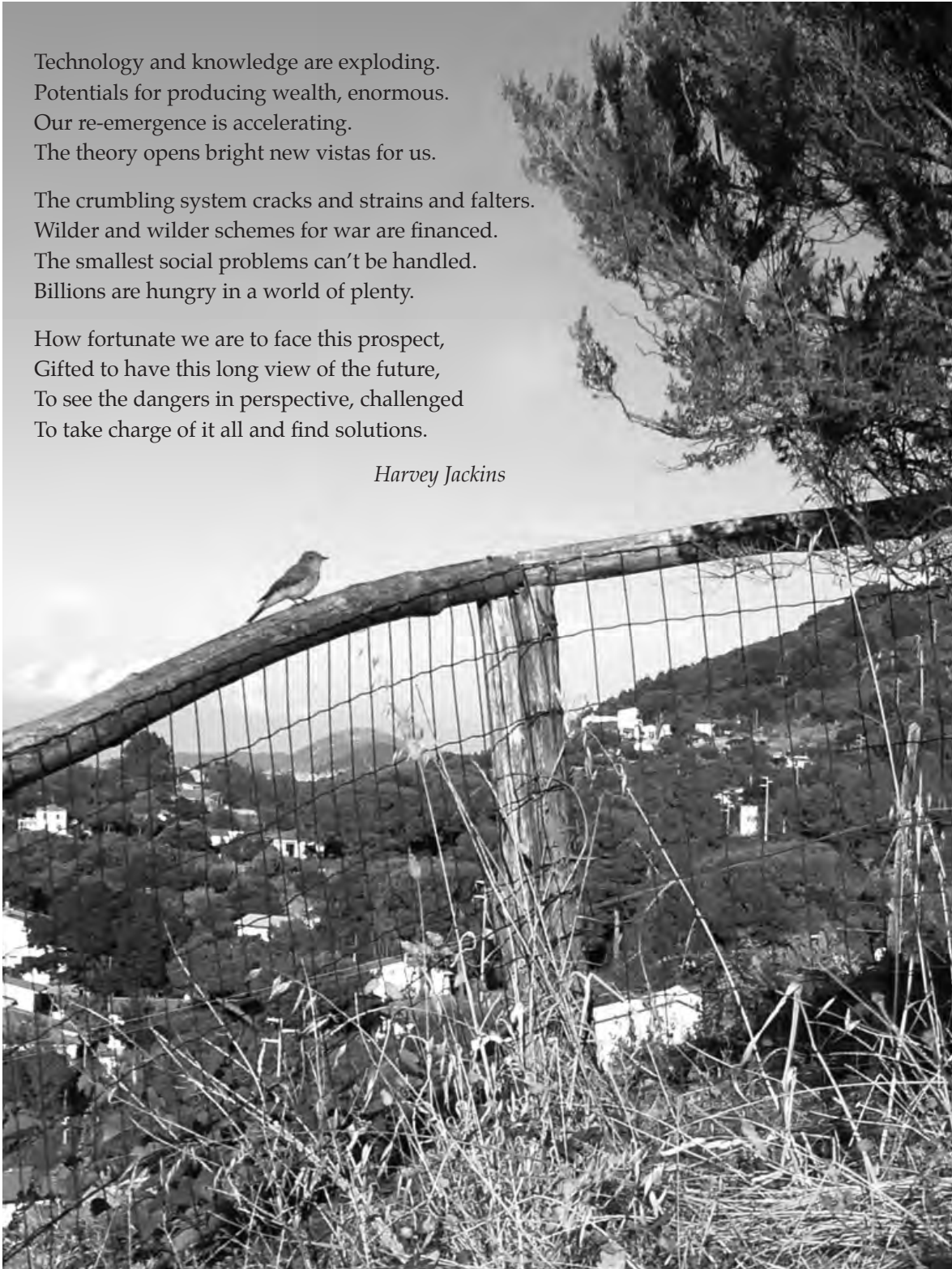


Technology and knowledge are exploding.
Potentials for producing wealth, enormous.
Our re-emergence is accelerating.
The theory opens bright new vistas for us.

The crumbling system cracks and strains and falters.
Wilder and wilder schemes for war are financed.
The smallest social problems can't be handled.
Billions are hungry in a world of plenty.

How fortunate we are to face this prospect,
Gifted to have this long view of the future,
To see the dangers in perspective, challenged
To take charge of it all and find solutions.

Harvey Jackins



Present Time No. 179 (Vol. 47, No. 2) April 2015

This *Present Time* starts out with a report on the No Limits for Women project at the non-governmental organization Women's Forum associated with the United Nations Committee on the Status of Women (more coming in the July *Present Time*). Following that are many wonderful articles and a larger than usual number of poems. We welcome your articles and poetry too! For the July *Present Time*, they'll need to reach us by Monday, May 18 (see below for where to send them). And we'll need changes to the back-pages lists by Tuesday, May 26.

Lisa Kauffman, editor

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No Limits, at the Beijing+20 Women's Forum

Twenty years ago, a delegation of three hundred RC women (and a few men) attended the Fourth United Nations World Conference on Women, in Beijing, China. It was the largest women's liberation conference in the history of the world, and ours was one of the largest delegations. We came away with a new understanding of global women's oppression and liberation. It was a time we will never forget.

In March of this year, an awesome and diverse No Limits for Women¹ delegation, of women and men, attended the non-governmental organization Women's Forum held in conjunction with the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women Beijing+20, in New York City, New York, USA. It was first time since 1995 that RC women's liberation had gone public on a large scale.

Our delegation included young women, young adult women and men, women and men targeted by racism, and several women and men from outside of the United States. Our goal was to help update and re-energize the global women's movement and support the newly launched United Nations effort to build a men's movement allied to women. We wanted to bring RC tools and RC women's liberation to the wide-world women's liberation activists at the forum. We also wanted to learn from their experience and expertise.

Women's lives have changed greatly since 1995, as a result of the globalization of capitalism, the expanded militarization of the planet, the environmental crisis, increasing poverty and economic inequality, and the growth of oppressive global industries like the sex industry. Sexual violence has increased and is now recognized as a global crisis. It was one of the twelve areas of concern in the Beijing+20 Platform of Action. (Challenging and ending the sexual exploitation of women has become a key part of RC women's liberation work as well.) Also, women's movements have been fiercely targeted, and "sexism" is no longer a widely used term. Meanwhile, women in the developing nations—the economic South—continue to fight against the forms of sexism, racism, and poverty they experience. My impression is that the majority of the women attending the 2015 Forum were women from these countries.

From 1995 to the present, RC women's liberation activists have struggled to meet the new challenges

¹ No Limits for Women is a project of the Re-evaluation Counseling Communities.

presented by the contemporary forms of sexism, racism, and male domination. Our progress was evident at this forum. Our diverse team worked together elegantly and collaboratively, and we shared effectively our growing picture of the role RC can and does play in the ending of sexism and male domination.

We handed out a description of No Limits for Women:

"No Limits for Women is an international organization of women (with men as allies) dedicated to eliminating sexism throughout the world. Using the tools of Re-evaluation Counseling, No Limits offers a system of ongoing mutual support in which women can help free each other from the emotional harm done by sexism.

"No Limits for Women also provides perspectives on issues facing women worldwide, such as violence against women, young women and girls in leadership, women ending racism, and women in partnership with men. Ending racism is integral to the work of No Limits, as is developing women leaders from every walk of life.² Women's perspectives are crucial to solving the enormous challenges facing the world today.

"No Limits also encourages and assists men to become strong and independent allies. Men are much needed as allies in the work to end sexism."

In four days of the forum, we presented seven workshops. The topics included young women ending sexism, with young men as allies; women ending racism; men

continued . . .

² "Every walk of life" means every background.



PAM ROBY

... continued

ending sexism and male domination; women ending sexual violence toward women, with men as allies; women and men in partnership to end sexism and male domination; and women and leadership. They were extremely well received.

In some of the venues we had enough space to do support groups and Co-Counseling sessions after the workshops. Interesting conversations took place, and we met many exciting female and male leaders.

Our delegation met together in the morning and evening of each day. We worked on what we needed to do to reach people and to stay in contact with them, during the forum and after. Contacts, contacts, contacts! Making them was a top priority.

The following were some of the unique and interesting happenings:

- We were one of the few groups, perhaps the only one, that consistently used the words “sexism” and “male domination.”
- We were the only group that had a workshop on women eliminating racism.
- The partnership that we modeled and emphasized—women and men together in eliminating sexism—was unique. Someone who had come to one of our workshops said (at a non-RC workshop) that No Limits for Women was the only group that specifically had men as allies.
- We RC women modeled speaking up for ourselves; it was clear how much work we had done on challenging internalized oppression.
- The RC men showed how much work they had done in facing oppressor material (we did not use that term).



TIM JACKINS

- We experienced in practice why “female first” and “African-heritage female first” (and “Latina female first,” and so on) were such a big contradiction to oppression, for ourselves and at our workshops.

- We reached out to people in a variety of ways. For example, we had listening projects³ in Spanish and English with signs that said things like “What would it be like for you to have a world without sexism and male domination? We would love to listen to you.” We passed out fliers for our workshops. Many of us went to other people’s workshops.

- One of our young adult leaders initiated “tweeting.” We also used newer forms of communication in our successful campaigns to raise money for the project.

- We explained language liberation at our workshops and had a minute of silence every twenty minutes, so that people for whom English was a second language could get a break from listening and speaking in English. That made a difference.

- K Webster, a local RC leader, and other volunteers mainly from the New York City area, organized us, hosted us, and loved us as we did the work. Their goal was for us to feel loved—and we did. It was a big highlight for many of us.

- On the Sunday before the forum, International Women’s Day, there was a United Nations Women’s March through parts of Manhattan (New York City). We carried a banner that said, “No Limits for Women, No Limits for Girls.” Many people, both RCers and others, had brought their daughters, who, for the first time, saw women and men standing up for girls.

These were all significant events, both for us and for RC women’s liberation. Many others who participated will be sharing their experiences, too. We are formulating goals for the future. There are NO LIMITS!

(For more information on the No Limits project at Beijing+20, including photos and the No Limits pamphlet and flyers, go to <www.rc.org/tile/nolimits>, on the RC website.)

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

³ In an RC listening project, several Co-Counselors go to a public place and offer to listen to passersby about some important issue. They may hold signs that invite people to share their thinking about that issue.

Family Work for People of the Global Majority

The following is a report on the *People of the Global Majority East Coast North America Family Work Leaders' Conference*, led by Fela Barclift, Teresa Enrico, and Chuck Esser¹ in October 2014. The conference met for a day and a half with allies only, before the families joined.

It's interesting how family work² can bring up different emotions depending upon who is thinking about it. In my conversations and sessions with People of the Global Majority (PoGM), I have found that they often have negative feelings and harbor a number of restimulations about family work. For them, family work often brings up heavy recordings³ related to servitude, imperialism, colonialism, white privilege, racism, and violence. When PoGM Co-Counselors have not had adequate time to fully distinguish between the recorded feelings and the present moment, and discharge the feelings, and then are faced with the speed, action, and intensity of happenings at a family workshop, it can be easy for them to believe that the recordings are true. This results in many leaders of PoGM avoiding participating in family work at all.

The sweet thing about the PoGM Family Work Leaders' Conference was that we slowed things down. We took time to discharge and talk with

¹ Fela Barclift is the Regional Reference Person for North Brooklyn, New York, USA; Teresa Enrico is the International Liberation Reference Person for Pacific Islander and Pilipino/a-Heritage People; and Chuck Esser is the International Commonality Reference Person for Family Work and the Regional Reference Person for New Jersey, USA.

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

³ Distress recordings

each other about why we were doing this, what we were thinking about, our goals for ourselves, and how we would go about achieving those goals. Also, because we were ninety-nine percent PoGM, there was a limit on how much racism and restimulations from racism we had to negotiate.

Another great thing was discharging and thinking about the effect that racism and internalized racism had had on us, particularly as young ones in our own families. We thought and discharged about

- how racism and classism had kept our parents from having time with us, showing respect to us, and showing their unconditional love for us
- how racism, internalized racism, and the legacies of slavery and colonialism had forced our parents to believe in many cases that they had to spank or whip or otherwise harshly punish us in an effort to teach us good manners and keep us from being killed by police
- how an oppressive society had forced our parents to deny or downplay our abilities, beauty, and other positive attributes for the sake of our survival; it was important that we not be too big, too vain, or too full of ourselves

- how our families were forced by racism and classism to teach us to expect, and ask for, little or nothing.

These are some of the things we allies had to look at and discharge on together before we could in all honesty offer the opposite of them to the young people who would be coming. We would be offering something, through discharge and decision, that we ourselves had rarely if ever received as young people. We had been rigorously



LYNDALL KATZ

indoctrinated to believe that the harsh ways we were raised were the only correct ways, and we would be offering something very different. After we'd had time to think and discharge, it was as if a light went on, and other possibilities became much more available to us.

We were then able to do some adult-adult special time,⁴ in which we could

continued . . .

⁴ "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. Adults can also give "special time" to each other, following these general guidelines.

COUNSELING PRACTICE

... continued

build our “special time muscle” while at the same time having lots of fun. It was quite good to practice adult-adult special time, since it’s typically much more polite and predictable than special time with young people, while still being interesting and a big contradiction to powerlessness. It can be lovely to have someone follow our mind and pay close attention while fully supporting our effort to want something, try something, achieve some goal of our own. That can be quite rare in life. It’s also great practice for following the exploring, adventurous, often fearless minds of most young people. After our adult-adult special time, and much more discharge and discussion, we felt a good deal more prepared to be great allies to the young people and parents who would soon be joining us.

We all sat together for a long allies-only lunch and did one more special thing in preparation for the young ones and their families. We shared stories about our individual connections and relationships with each of the young people and the parents who would be coming. It was reassuring to note that every ally had a close connection with one or more of the young people, and every young person was connected to a minimum of one ally and in some cases several.

By the time the families arrived, we were prepared to welcome them into a warm, loving, and thoughtful community of adults who’d had almost enough discharge to keep up with the young people. To be able to warmly love, respect, and follow the minds of all the delightful young people of color was a wonderful contradiction to the effects of slavery, racism, colonialism, classism, and genocide. And the parents had challenged their own fear, trepidation, and internalized oppression to bring their children, so we could try our best on their behalf.

We did it! We ran, jumped, climbed, sang, talked, played and played,

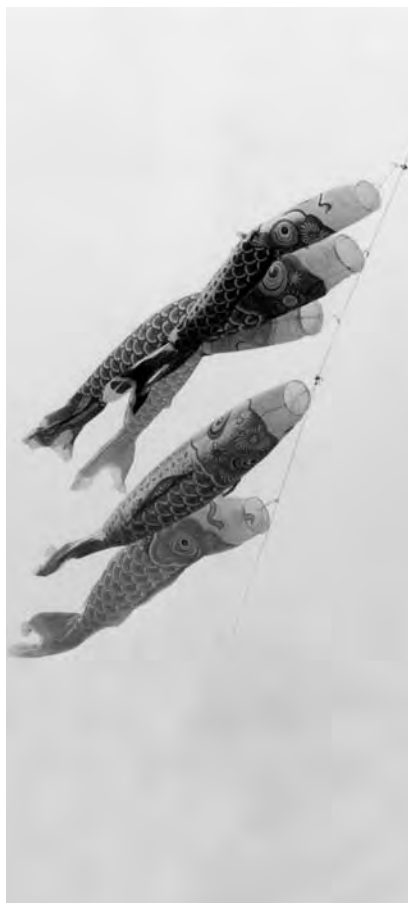
laughed a lot, discharged in other ways, and had lots and lots of fun!

The workshop had to end, of course, but none of the young people or their parents wanted to leave us, which was totally understandable. There are few if any places where they would receive the care, attention, and blast of fun we had offered them from our hearts.

After they left, we allies got together again and discharged and debriefed on what we had worked to accomplish together. Once again we were able to slow things down and reflect, process, and think together. We were able to review our victories and strategize where we noted weaknesses. And we were able to arrive at a proposed date for this special workshop to happen again just two years from now!

Fela Barclift

Brooklyn, New York, USA



DIANE SHISK

I recently wrote a poem that came out of the transition of a hurtful experience into a greater perspective:

I now remember the forest,
waving with friendly presence,
trees gently nodding my way.
Walking on that trail
of her own choosing,
I was that little girl
too scared to enjoy her freedom,
too discouraged to look up
and see
the August sun, green
through canopies of leaves,
too sad to hear birdsong
breathing through the rich
earthy air of a summer day.
Had she known how,
she would have broken
through
this silence of heart
and dared dancing
to the tunes of
carefree
insects humming
through their afternoon.

She did not know that
they hummed for her,
that she had no choice
but to breathe in birdsong
with the air.
She did not know that the forest
kissed the soles of her feet
every step of the way.

Gudrun Onkels

Seattle, Washington, USA

Revisiting Family Work

After being an ally to young people and parents in family work¹ for many years, things started to feel difficult for me. I think some of this was because of racism. I realized I felt like I had to “take care of” white families. (I am mixed heritage, with one African-heritage and one white parent, and have had a lot of patterns of pleasing white people and assimilating into their world.) So I stopped doing family work for a while and discharged a lot on racism and internalized racism.

The growing leadership of Fela, Teresa, Chuck,² and others in family work for people of the global majority has helped me find my way back to family work. I can enjoy myself

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

² Fela Barclift, the Regional Reference Person for Brooklyn and Greater New York City, New York, USA; Teresa Enrico, the International Liberation Reference Person for Pacific Islander and Pilipino/a-Heritage People; and Chuck Esser, the International Commonality Reference Person for Family Work and the Regional Reference Person for New Jersey, USA

more as an ally when I can see that I don't have to be a caretaker for children, or worry about making their parents feel better.

At a recent family work leaders' workshop I had the chance to spend time with a young person whose language I didn't speak. He understood some English. It was the first time I had been in that situation at an RC family workshop. He had been shy and quiet, not playing much. We rolled on the mats together a lot, and he laughed and laughed at me when I used funny voices to try to repeat words in his language. After we did this for a long time, he started to cry. Even though I didn't know what he was saying, and he tried to get away from me at first, he kept coming back to be close to me and cry some more. Later, as he played with his parents, I could see he was having more fun. It was one of the sweetest times I had ever had with a young person at a workshop.

If there had been white families there, I think they would have been louder or demanded more of my attention. I probably would have spent more time with them and ignored this shy little boy. Instead I

got to know this wonderful boy and he got to know me. I think we will always remember each other.

It also made a difference to have other global-majority allies there. I felt like I could be honest with them about how sad I sometimes feel that I am not a parent and how difficult it can feel (as an ally) to have young people close in my life outside of RC workshops. I think it would have felt too humiliating to share that with white people. I would have worried about “looking good” and probably just told them that nothing was wrong and I felt fine.

Being around Fela at family workshops has helped me learn that it is significant to just stay close to a little one, without doing anything in particular. This has helped me remember that I am enough for young people, and others, just how I am. She also shows us, as allies, that we can show whatever feelings we have as we do this work. We do not have to pretend about anything.

Alysia Tate
Regional Reference
Person for Illinois, USA
Chicago, Illinois, USA

More Trout Than Clams

The nature of the human being is progress. The addictive pulls that pervade our culture, that claw at us in thousands of recorded messages, lie to us when they urge us to find some quiet backwater of “peace.” Our real nature is to swim in the current. We are much more trout than we are clams.

*Harvey Jackins**
From *The Upward Trend*, page 185

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



STEVE BANBURY

Sharing the Hard Stuff

In a class at a recent workshop, Tim¹ encouraged us to work on incidents in our life that we “protect” from sharing or working on in our sessions. He reminded us that we have resource now, unlike back there. He encouraged us to decide before the session that we would work on this material.²

I knew there were three situations that from time to time would “float” to the surface of my mind with the thought that it would be good to work on them, but no condition seemed right or I could not remember in session.

After Tim’s talk, I decided that in my next three-way³ I would work on these incidents. I could work on two more easily and started with them. The third incident seemed harder to look at, and with not much time left I decided to not mention it and keep discharging on the others. But then my counselor said, “What is the third one?” The material was hard to talk about. I could feel both my counselors’ steady, loving presence. I felt enveloped in a sense of love and warmth and safety, and with five minutes left I could shake and tell the story.

A few hours later I noticed a sense of lightness and joy and a feeling that I could tell⁴ I was loved by people. It was as if an invisible shield around me had dissolved. I had known and been able to feel that I loved people, but taking in love and caring from others I think had hit that barrier. The sense of warmth and love continued. The next morning I woke up feeling the air was more relaxed around me and there

was more space in my mind, and I continued feeling the sense of relaxed connection to people.

I continued in most of my other sessions discharging on what I was doing, referring to these stories that had felt too hard to look at. Each time, I pushed through some feelings of embarrassment, shame, humiliation, and blame. It felt like the conveyor belt these incidents were on was moving once again at long last, and in each session some of the material was being dumped (discharged). I know there are other things I hold back on looking at, and they are moving closer to being shared and discharged on.

I’ve noticed that when I talk about Tim’s encouragement to work on the material we “protect” and I share my stories, the clients tend to work similarly.

Marion Ouphouet
Seattle, Washington, USA

There Has to Be a Place

There has to be a place in RC (and outside, too, as we do better work) where we make it safe enough that people can look at the distresses they feel so bad about that they hide them. There has to be a place where we can get them out in the open, where we can admit to each other that we have horrible distresses that no person should ever have had thrust upon them. But we all did, and we are waiting for somebody to remember it and say, “So what? You are still here. It doesn’t matter to me what happened to you, or how confused you are, or what battles you have to take on.* *You* matter to me. Let’s begin those battles. Tell me how scared you get. Tell me how distant you feel. Tell me how helpless. Tell me the mistakes you can’t forget. I don’t care. It will not change my picture of you. I know who you are and will not forget, in any struggle you have to take on.”

Tim Jackins
From DVD No. 226

* “Take on” means undertake.

¹ Tim Jackins, the International Reference person of the Re-evaluation Counseling Communities

² “Material” means distress.

³ A “three-way” is a Co-Counseling session with two other people.

⁴ “Tell” means notice.



Recovering from a Bicycle Accident

Five weeks after turning thirty, during the summer of 2008, I was in a serious bicycle accident. It landed me in my region's trauma hospital for eleven days, took many months to actively recover from, and required several years of oral surgeries. My injuries included two broken and mangled hands; a lacerated liver; damaged and broken teeth, including a front tooth that was knocked out; and head trauma that put me at risk for having seizures and going into a coma. One side of my face was so badly scraped up that a Co-Counselor fainted when she saw me in the hospital soon after the accident.

I decided from the very beginning to use everything I knew about RC to recover. It was an incredible opportunity to have such a clean, straight shot at fighting for myself, and I decided to throw my whole being at the project. Though it was an immensely challenging time, it was also transformative and filled with triumph after triumph. The triumphs were the direct result of my decision to fight for myself and of the discharge process, my RC Community, and my community of friends and family.

AVOIDING PAINKILLERS, NUMBING AGENTS, AND GENERAL ANESTHESIA

Re-evaluation Counseling has gained important insights into physical injuries, distress, and healing—for instance, that pain is simply pain. That's all it is. In my culture, an immense amount of fear is attached to pain, but pain is a way our bodies tell us that we need to pay attention to an injury in order to assist it in healing. As Tim¹ has said, "Our bodies can repair a tremendous number of things if distresses don't get in the way." (*Present Time* No. 135, page 13).



HARRIS HAWK • CAROL WILBURN

When we get physically damaged, the injury is part of present-time reality and it hurts. If we can feel the pain and discharge it, our bodies heal optimally because they're not being slowed down by the physical and emotional distresses of the injury. (Old injuries require a different approach, because the pain is no longer part of present time; it is recorded.)

Masking and numbing the pain doesn't make the damage and the distresses associated with the damage go away; they're still there, needing to be worked on. Numbing the pain just makes it harder to feel the pain and access our discharge about the injury. And the numbing agents also lay in² their own distress recordings.

My body was already going through enough trauma; I certainly didn't want to give it more hurt to handle by taking painkillers. I also didn't want to rob myself of the chance to feel and get rid of the pain and other accumulated distresses. So except for two milligrams of morphine on the first and second nights I was in the hospital (the only nights someone couldn't stay with me), I did not take any pain medication at the hospital or during my recovery, including no lighter pain medications like Tylenol or aspirin. I had two root canals without anesthesia. (The roots were dead due to the accident but

² "Lay in" means create.

were still painful.) And four pins that had been surgically implanted in the broken bones in my hands were taken out without any painkillers or anesthesia. These experiences were transformative. I learned a lot not only about the discharge process and healing but also about reclaiming power and reclaiming my true self.

I was able to successfully navigate the medical system and fight hard (in sessions and out) for how I wanted my hand surgery to go. I didn't want general anesthesia, because of what I'd read in *Well-Being*³ about others' experiences with it. Nor did I want an amnesiac cocktail of sedatives that would make me forget the surgery. At several points I was told that they wouldn't be able to do the surgery unless I agreed to general anesthesia. With persistence, and a bit of luck (one of the nurses turned out to be⁴ a Co-Counselor I knew!), I had the surgery with local anesthesia and no cocktail sedative. Lying on the operating table, fully alert, I felt incredibly happy and pleased and safe. I had fought a big battle—with my distress to be able to feel this way, and with the medical system to have local anesthesia—and won! And unlike other patients in the recovery room, who were groggy and out of it,⁵ I was fully alert and beaming with happiness because of what I'd just accomplished.

MORE SUCCESSES

Other triumphs included taking charge and handling my life in ways I previously hadn't been able to. I

continued . . .

³ *Well-Being* is the RC journal for exchange of information and ideas about health.

⁴ "Turned out to be" means ended up being.

⁵ "Out of it" means not present.

¹ Tim Jackins



FRIESLAND, THE NETHERLANDS • WYTSKE VISSER

... continued

had to handle everything from my medical insurance, to figuring out what specialists to see, to deciding what procedures made sense, to doing my occupational therapy, to organizing friends to bring food and help me with bathing, to my own early material⁶ that was restimulated. There was no time to wallow in my distress. Giving in to discouragement and despair was not an option if I wanted the full recovery that I was committed to. The accident allowed me to see the reality of who I was: a loving warrior. It showed me that I was fierce, determined, powerful, and unstoppable. I was fighting for myself and for a one-hundred-percent recovery. Period. I got to see that I was capable of doing seemingly impossible things, in concert and community with others.

The accident and my recovery allowed me to become closer with other people. There were many things I could not do—like cook, shop for groceries, or feed myself—without help from friends and family. Because my culture has shifted away from community and connection toward individuality and isolation, asking people for help was a way to get closer to them. Because I had almost died, we were able to notice our significance to each other and how much we mattered to and cared about one another.

⁶ "Material" means distress.

The closeness I was able to reach for and feel in my Co-Counseling relationships also increased. Fighting full-out⁷ for myself repeatedly over many months made it possible to be completely, a hundred percent, on the side of others. I gave some of the most powerful sessions I'd ever given, because of the quality of my attention. I didn't say much; often I would just look at my client, and he or she would discharge heavily. My attention was like steel. I had learned to be a loving warrior for myself and as a result could be that for others. My Co-Counselors could work heavily on early distress but with attention off of it, remembering that they were good and that things were possible.

I noticed an important shift in how I counseled. The way I was living my life was a huge contradiction to early material that had had me feeling bad and not trusting other people's minds. Because I'd been so thoroughly and consistently contradicting it, I was able to trust other people's minds much more. In the past I would worry if someone seemed stuck on an idea I thought was rooted in distress. Out of my own fear I would interrupt and try to "help" them by offering a direction to "steer them back." During this time I found myself just deeply listening, unworried, and believing in the power of my client's mind and the discharge process.

The accident coincided with a breakup with someone I considered the love of my life at the time. I cried buckets⁸ and moved a ton⁹ on my ESM,¹⁰ and disconnection and

⁷ "Full-out" means fully.

⁸ "Buckets" means large amounts.

⁹ "Moved a ton" means made a great deal of progress.

¹⁰ "ESM" stands for early sexual memories. In sessions clients can be asked, "What is your earliest memory connected to sex in any way at all? First thought?" and encouraged to discharge whatever feelings the thought has brought up. People's thoughts are not necessarily about sex; they are often related to early disconnection and the origins of chronic patterns. Counseling in this way is often referred to as "ESM work."

heartbreak. I also ended a particularly heavy and compulsive addiction. I knew I couldn't fight for myself and completely recover the way I wanted to without stopping it. It made me feel too bad about myself and confused me too much about reality.

Because of the physical limitations of my broken hands and because of my appearance (a battered face and a missing front tooth), I faced some disability oppression. Being on that side of disability oppression was useful for me (something I realized even while I was experiencing it). It helped me think about an oppression that I, as an able-bodied person, normally didn't have to. I gained new awareness about the oppression, and compassion for people with disabilities.

About three months after the accident I was able to use both the flexibility I'd gained from all the discharge and my newfound ability to fight for myself in a domain that for most of my life I had felt discouraged about ever figuring out: what to do for a career. I had always hated my jobs but couldn't figure out how to change my relationship to work. I remember realizing in a session, "If I can do all the things I've been doing to recover from my accident, I can definitely figure out what I want to do for money!" As a result, I went to graduate school to pursue some of my passions and interests, and I now have a career that I enjoy, that is re-emergent and forward moving, and that has more than tripled my income.

In a similar vein, I was able to effectively keep perspective on old humiliation and feeling bad about myself and challenge my racism. At a teachers' and leaders' workshop, Tim¹¹ challenged us white people to go after¹² a person of color at the workshop whom we liked from afar but

¹¹ Tim Jackins

¹² "Go after" means reach out to.

were afraid to show it to. I felt scared, but I didn't honor my fear and treat it as real, as I had in the past. I made contact with a person I liked in a way that I hadn't been able to before.

PAST EXPERIENCE DISCHARGING ON INJURIES AND PROCEDURES

Prior to my bicycle accident, I had discharged on other injuries. When I was sixteen, a year before learning Co-Counseling, I was in a serious car accident in which I broke my neck and collarbone. I came into Co-Counseling eager to learn about recovering from injuries, because I had a lot of recorded pain. I studied people's experiences in *Present Time* and *Well-Being* and became inspired by what others had done and figured out. I also experimented with discharging fear before medical procedures, so that I wouldn't have to use numbing agents. In one sitting I had ten fillings removed and replaced without any anesthetic. I also had two moles removed from my back without any numbing agent. I'd had sessions laughing and sweating while a Co-Counselor pretended to cut the moles off my back with a spoon. Though I felt pain when the doctor cut them out, it didn't "hurt" the way past injuries had, because of how I'd drained my fear of the pain. At one point a nurse mistakenly injected my back with a numbing agent, and it hurt much worse and for longer than simply getting the mole removed. These experiences prepared me well for handling my bike accident. I already understood how interlocked pain and fear could be.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES OF RECOVERY: LOVE AND COURAGE

After regaining consciousness on the side of the road where I crashed, I knew something bad and life threatening had happened, and my first thought was, "I'm alive." The second: "I've been given a second chance to love." This last thought resonated deeply within me. I

felt incredibly lucky and fortunate to have been given that chance. I realized that my distress had held me back from loving as openly and completely as I wanted to. The gift of a second chance to love guided me throughout my recovery. When I'd have tough decisions to make and my early material would rear its head, I'd decide to go toward love and courage, rather than disconnection and powerlessness.

During the first two weeks, while I was in the hospital, my RC Community gave me an hour of one-way time every day. Due to his early hurts, my regular Co-Counselor, "Greg," did not come, or call or text me. I love Greg, am committed to him, and take our relationship as regular Co-Counselors seriously. I felt deeply hurt. Some of my hardest, earliest material got restimulated. I felt that I was trash, worthless, bad, unlovable, and that I deserved to have the people closest to me treat me badly.

In the past I would have decided then and there to cut Greg out of my life forever (the way I had cut my father out of my heart when I was young), but I realized that was not compatible with my decision to go toward love and courage. So I called Greg (something I did not want to do) and asked him when he could come to the hospital. He said he didn't know because he was going swimming with his new girlfriend. I was stunned and upset, but instead of giving up and cutting him out of my life, I told him, "Showing up¹³ at times like this is when it really matters. How can I possibly trust you to go back early with me¹⁴ in my sessions if you can't show up now?" I said that I was saying this because I loved him—that I felt like cutting him out of my life but was refusing to because our relationship meant so much to me. Because of how much my early material had its grip on

me, that reaching toward him has been one of the biggest acts of love in my relationship with him to this day. A week later Greg counseled me on this upset in the RC class I'd been teaching in which he'd been my assistant. It was not an easy thing for him to do and showed his love and courage. I was confused enough that I couldn't work on my upset as an early hurt and mostly worked on it from the standpoint of how wronged I felt by him. He stayed with me during my session, and with me, committed to our relationship, afterward. Our relationship is one of the most significant in my life. It used to feel tentative and like I couldn't quite count on it, but I no longer question that we are permanently in each other's lives. He is one of my most cherished, trusted, and fierce allies.

HOW I SPENT MY DAYS

My days were full during the first three months of recovering from the accident. I remember being the most in charge and productive I'd ever been. Having two sessions a day took about five hours. Often another two to three hours were taken up with calling my medical insurance company and sorting out billing information with my various doctors. I had occupational therapy appointments twice a week and often other appointments with dentists and oral surgeons. I also spent time organizing friends to bring me food (I had nineteen people rotate bringing me food so that no one would be overwhelmed) and organizing the many sessions I was having each week. The rest of the time I did attention-out activities with friends and family members. I was with people most of the time, which contradicted my early isolation and kept my attention out.

COUNSELING SESSIONS

Having sessions was key to my recovery, and I prioritized them. I had two a day for the first three months

continued . . .

¹³ "Showing up" means engaging, being there.

¹⁴ "Go back early with me" means be with me when I work on early hurts.

COUNSELING PRACTICE

... continued

and one a day for the following three and a half months. They were mostly sixty and almost never less than fifty minutes each way.

My Area Reference Person organized the one-way counseling for the two weeks I was first in the hospital. After that I organized my own sessions and began doing two-way sessions. At first I felt overwhelmed by and desperate about the prospect of doing this—I had to figure out so many things related to doctors and insurance, and my body was still actively recovering—but my Area Reference Person told me that our Community didn't have unlimited resource and that it made sense for me to begin doing it. With more discharge I realized that I was feeling overwhelmed and desperate due to my early distress.

I usually spent one session a day doing occupational therapy exercises for my hands. It was difficult to put attention on the therapy by myself, because feeling the pain was scary. It also brought up feelings of hopelessness. With attention I was able to push a little farther than I would have by myself, celebrate my success, and exuberantly appreciate my body. I discharged a lot of fear through laughing and sweating.

I spent the other session discharging on painful emotion and preparing for upcoming surgeries or procedures. Discharging fear was paramount, but I also discharged on everything from frustration with my insurance company, to feelings about navigating the medical system, to making big decisions about how I wanted the procedures to go. And I discharged on physical pain and the heartbreak over my recent breakup.

I learned that I could use the attention of each of my counselors fully and well no matter what silly feelings I'd had about them in the past. To have that many sessions, I *had* to counsel with people whom my restimulations would

have kept me away from. I didn't have the luxury of waiting for a counselor I wasn't restimulated by. Each session, no matter whom it was with, I treated as a gift and enjoyed and treasured each person I was with. I used every session to fight for myself as fully as I could. There was no more waiting for the "perfect counselor." It was empowering to take on¹⁵ my re-emergence in this way and to realize that connecting with and using the attention of a counselor had everything to do with me; it was not about whatever chronic distress happened to show on his or her face.

A question I came up against was when to make the transition from working on the pain as a new hurt to working on it as an old, recorded hurt. Unlike with a new physical hurt, when an injury or illness is old and has become a recording, it is best not to counsel on the pain or other physical manifestations of it because they can get restimulated. It's most useful to discharge the emotional feelings about the injury and whatever was happening at the time it occurred. As the months went on, I experimented with treating the injury as old, but it never became clear when to start the transition.

DISCHARGING FEAR AND SAYING NO TO DISCOURAGEMENT

RC literature and my previous experience working on physical injuries (particularly the relationship between fear and pain) gave me a solid foundation for how I navigated the medical system and used my sessions. I knew that discharging fear was key. Most of my sessions were on fear in some way or another. What I learned was that almost all (maybe all) of my fear was old. Of course it didn't feel like that at the time, and yes, there were many things to handle in the present, but it was old fear that kept me from being able to think about the present.

¹⁵ "Take on" means take responsibility for and undertake.

In the hospital my Area Reference Person gave me a simple yet important direction: "Shake." I'd been doing a lot of crying but hardly any shaking. I told him that I didn't feel like shaking and that it felt forced or fake to do it. He said, "Try it anyway." From then on I decided to shake and prioritize discharging fear. Unlike other forms of discharge, like crying or light laughter, discharging heavy fear is hard for me to keep bringing myself back to and to stay with for fifty- to sixty-minute sessions. But I determinedly kept doing it over and over again, session after session. I think it's important to make the decision to keep working on fear.

I also had to decide not to give in to discouragement. About three weeks after the accident, my doctor unwrapped my hands from the gauze they were in. I looked at them and immediately felt disheartened. They looked like alien hands to me: swollen on top, with tiny fingers. I remember thinking, "I've been discharging so much and working so hard, and they still hurt!" Then I realized how ridiculous that feeling was. My hands had been doing an incredible job of healing from the severe trauma they'd experienced. Of course they still hurt. So what? At that moment I realized that I could go in two directions in thinking about my body: one was antagonistic—"me against my body"—and the other was that I could be on the same side as my body, fiercely loving it no matter what. I chose the latter and came up with¹⁶ the phrase, "Good hands! Good healing!" which I would say aloud and then follow by kissing each hand.

MEDICAL PROCEDURES AND DISCHARGING FEAR

Most of my discharging about medical procedures was on how scared I was of them before they happened. Once they were over, I wasn't bothered

¹⁶ "Came up with" means thought of.

by them and my attention was pulled toward working on the next one I was terrified of. I spent relatively little time going back and discharging on the actual procedures. While I didn't figure out doing this, I recommend it.



JIM MADDRY

I got a lot of mileage out of YouTube videos. In preparation for an upcoming root canal that I planned to have without any numbing agents, I found a video of a dentist drilling. I didn't actually watch the video. The sound was what terrified me, so I listened to it over and over again in sessions, sweating and shaking the whole time. The first time I tried this, I was absolutely drenched with sweat. I didn't remember ever having sweated so much in my life, even after running or doing other strenuous exercise.

I had the option to get either a bridge or a dental implant to fix the hole in my mouth where my tooth had been. The bridge wouldn't require additional surgery but would put strain on my other teeth that had been fractured. Numerous dentists and oral surgeons didn't recommend a bridge for someone as young as I was. The dental implant would require two invasive surgeries: first a bone-grafting surgery, because the bone above the missing tooth had disintegrated, and then a surgery to implant a titanium rod into the new bone to serve as a "root" for the new tooth. One prestigious surgeon said he would only do the bone-grafting surgery if he used bone from another part of my mouth. He also wanted to give me a sedative that would make me "forget" the surgery. Because my mouth had so recently suffered trauma from the accident, I was not keen on inflicting it with more. I also was against anything that would make it harder for me to remember the procedure. I decided to discharge so that I could get more access to my thinking and make the best long-term decision for my body.

To access my fear, I watched videos of oral bone-grafting surgeries. They absolutely terrified me. I would watch just a tiny bit of a video and then pause it and laugh hard, shake, and sweat. I wouldn't watch them outside of sessions. I knew I didn't have the attention and wouldn't be able to discharge without a counselor there.

I ended up getting the dental implant but chose another prominent surgeon who was willing to use cadaver and cow bone for the bone graft and didn't require a sedative of any kind.

I also had to discharge a ton of fear about getting the four three-and-a-half-centimeter steel pins, which looked like nails, removed from my hands. (They'd been implanted to help mend my broken bones.) I decided I wanted to try an experiment and get them extracted without any local anesthesia. This seemed like an interesting (if scary!) challenge, and I knew I couldn't do it without discharge.

I decided that I needed at least six hours of solid discharge on fear to be able to pull it off.¹⁷ I used my sessions to tell my counselors what was going to happen to me: "They're going to cut into my skin and then pull the pins out from my bone!" Some medical people had told me that getting something pulled out of bone can be extraordinarily painful, so I was much more afraid of the pins being pulled out than I was of my hands being cut open. I also talked directly to my hands. I told them exactly what was going to happen and that they were safe. I said, "Once the knife goes into

¹⁷ "Pull it off" means successfully accomplish it.

your skin and cuts it, a signal will be sent to our brain registering that as pain, but it's only pain, and you're going to be okay!"

When it was time to get the pins removed, I felt scared but also ready, confident, and powerful. I knew I could do it, and I had a Co-Counselor with me. (I'd given her time¹⁸ before we left for the hospital and agreed to accompany her to an upcoming surgery to get her wisdom teeth removed.)

The surgeons were surprised and a bit unnerved when I told them I didn't want to have any numbing agent. There was an undertone of "mental health" oppression in the way they reacted. Though they didn't explicitly say, "That's crazy! You're crazy!" their tone and reaction communicated it. The head surgeon, who had a team of resident surgeons with him, said, "Well, we'll be back with our instruments of torture then!" That was a thoughtless thing to say, and it also restimulated some of my early hurts. But instead of shrinking into a fearful, worried posture, I did the opposite. Once they had left and closed the door, I turned to my counselor, gave her a "can you believe that" look, and made a "come here" gesture toward the door, saying, "Bring it on! Bring it on!"¹⁹ laughing and shaking the whole time.

When one of the surgeons came back and started the procedure, I was calm and relaxed. I gave him good attention, asked how he was doing, and appreciated and thanked him for what he was doing. When he made the actual incision, I did feel what would technically be considered pain, but it didn't "hurt" the way most things hurt. It was fine. I had already talked to my hands about what to expect, and we

continued . . .

¹⁸ "Given her time" means given her a session.

¹⁹ "Bring it on" means go ahead and do it to me.

COUNSELING PRACTICE

... continued

did great. At one point he apologized and said he would need to cut farther down to have enough room to grip the pins. I relaxedly said, "Sure, no problem. Please do whatever you need to do—I'm fine," and then appreciated him again for what a good job he was doing. After some trial and error in trying to get a firm grip on the first pin, he pulled it out. The thing I had been most afraid of didn't hurt at all!

When I tell people I got pins removed from my bones without anesthesia, they look at me as if it was a horrible experience. That couldn't be further from the truth. It was fun! It was also one of the most empowering, triumphant experiences of my life.

CLOSING

During the first month or two of my recovery, I experienced something that

had never happened to me before: I got a break from my chronic patterns and a window into the real me. For a brief moment—I don't know if it was thirty seconds, one minute, five minutes, or ten—I felt like everything was completely okay. I was by myself when it happened, but I remember liking everyone, even people I don't normally like. It felt truly amazing to be alive, there in that moment, as myself. It was a glorious, happy moment.

As months and years passed and different patches of early distress crowded and confused me, I could always remember that moment. That moment, and everything I had accomplished during my recovery, including how thoroughly and persistently I had fought for myself, served as a wonderful reference point. I could think back on it and

remember who I really am—my true self. The direction of Harvey's²⁰ comes to mind: "From now on, the *real* Emily Cunningham."

Three years following my accident, I turned a big, life-changing corner in my re-emergence: I became unprecendentedly happy and productive. Before, my chronic patterns had me feeling that my life was a tortuous, impossible struggle. It's been over two years since the shift happened, and while my early distress still trips me up,²¹ I am now a happy person—more connected and in charge of my life than I've ever been.

Emily Cunningham
Seattle, Washington, USA

²⁰ Harvey Jackins'

²¹ "Trips me up" means gets in my way.



LISA VOSS

More Counselor Awareness

If a counselor is not receiving effective counseling regularly, his or her ability to elicit and assist discharge from a client will stay limited or even regress as restimulation adds to his or her own tensions. The counselor who is having counseling regularly, however, has more awareness, more slack, to turn to the client each time they work together.

Harvey Jackins
From *The Human Situation*, page 22

Action in Sessions

I'd like to hear people's experience with action in sessions. When I say action, I mean moving the body and doing things other than sitting, lying down, or standing. Here are a few examples:

- People who do family work¹ do "special time"² with the young people and sometimes with each other. These sessions tend to be active.
- Some of us use the "decide, act, discharge" direction (though the action is often outside of the session).

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

² "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. Adults can also give "special time" to each other, following these general guidelines.

- People's workshop highlights are often the playing and the singing.

- At Tim Jackins' workshops, there is always a chunk of time for hanging out³ and throwing X-Zylos.⁴

- When there's enough resource, we sometimes do "physical sessions"⁵ in which we get to fight hard for something.

I have noticed that most of my sessions do not involve action. I think it might be good for me to change that. What have you figured out?

Yoni Kallai
Nev Ilan, Israel

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

³ "Hanging out" means spending relaxed, unstructured time.

⁴ An "X-Zylo" is a type of flying toy.

⁵ A "physical session" is a session in which a counselor, who has been trained to do it, provides aware and thoughtful physical resistance for a client to push and fight against.

Moving in Sessions Leaves Us More Powerful

I was excited to read Yoni Kallai's posting asking for people's experience in consistently using action in sessions.* Yoni says, "I have noticed that most of my sessions do not involve action." I think this is true for the majority of Co-Counselors.

I have been Co-Counseling for almost thirty-five years. Because of my particular patterns, that has meant many hours of sitting—a factor in my sedentary life. Sitting is not a built-in aspect of RC; it is the way I allowed patterns to slip in. The more I insist on moving and being active in sessions, the more flexible

and agile I am. I also have significantly fewer pains and discomfort in my lower body. My body, mind, and emotions are a unit, one affecting the other. Moving my body in sessions brings up the tiredness for discharge, and it needs to be discharged.

A few years ago, because of an injury, I began sitting even in demonstrations. As a result, most people in our Community followed my lead. We became what I refer to as a "lazy" Community. I have been trying to change that.

Coming into sessions and assuming the position and attitude of relaxation and "relief" ("finally I can

sit down, finally I don't have to do anything, finally things are on my terms") can prevent us from deciding and acting to arrange for more relaxation and free time in the rest of our lives. And moving in sessions (when it doesn't restimulate exhaustion) seems to put most of us in touch with a sense of power that doesn't often come in inactive sessions. I've noticed that we leave such sessions more alive and more determined to keep our attention on our goals. There is a sense of having recharged our batteries.

Margie Doyle-Papadopoulou
Kantza, Greece

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

* See previous article.

Exercise, Then Discharge

I find that physical work and exercise are a gate to working on the feelings that are attached to them, like discouragement, powerlessness, or fear of death or injury—feelings that stop us from putting the time and effort into exercising.

I've worked a bit on physical activity and noticed that what is most effective is "decide, do, discharge." After I exercise, I can discharge all the hopelessness I had before I started, how difficult the exercising felt, how much my body hurts, and so on. I can do that until I reclaim enjoying using my body, enjoying the exertion.

Clients can exercise with their counselors and then discharge on the experience. I did a young adult class in Jerusalem (Israel) on a climbing wall. It was so great. We discharged before, during, and after about the physical challenge, using our bodies, being seen, competitiveness, and so on. I very much recommend doing something like that.

Timna Raz

Jerusalem, Israel

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

Discharging on Exercise and Fitness

I would like to dedicate the next meeting of our "Health and Well-Being" RC class to physical exercise and fitness. We were all quite rational with regard to physical activity when our lives began, were we not? Surely we can regain that rationality with enough discharge and re-evaluation.

I would want questions for mini-sessions that would encourage rational thinking and not restimulate people who were hurt in the area to a point where their discharge was disabled. Here are some questions I have thought of:

- What are physical activities that you enjoy?
- What physical activities did you enjoy as a young person?
- How was physical activity regarded by adults when you grew up?
- How were gym classes and competitive sports?
- In what ways could you benefit from physical activities?
- How much of your time would you want to dedicate to physical activity? What days, what time of day?

Please add other questions you have found useful on this topic, and share any experience you may have in leading discharge groups on it.

Yohai Ben Ami
Raana, Israel

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

The battles that count aren't the ones for gold medals. The struggles within yourself—the invisible, inevitable battles inside all of us—that's where it's at.

Jesse Owens

Four-time Olympic gold medalist



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Explaining Children's Heavy Sessions to Non-Co-Counselors

I would love to know what parents have figured out about talking with non-Co-Counselors about children's heavy sessions.

I live in an apartment building, and another woman lives directly above me. I know she can hear noise from our apartment. I would like to talk with her about what is happening when she hears my child's sessions, but I'm not sure how to do that.

My daughter, who is seven, has big sessions at least once or twice a week. She and I have a lot of laughter, play, and special time¹ in our relationship; we are close; and she has easy access to big, hard feelings. I have done a lot of family work² and feel pretty³ confident about counseling her on some of her early material⁴—which generally comes up as great waves of panic and terror.

My daughter's birth was particularly hard. When she has heavy sessions, it looks like she goes right to the biggest, scariest feelings related to that time. They generally come up as panicking

about needing help, begging for me to "stop," and showing real terror that she is being strangled or dying. (She was born Caesarian section after being stuck for some hours in the birth canal, and I think she probably felt like she was dying for at least part



LEO LAZO

of the experience.) All the while during these sessions she has her hands gently on my face or keeps her cheek against mine, and afterward she is tucked in close and is very connected with and loving toward me. Her behavior indicates that the sessions are good, and she never seems confused by them afterward. I want to be able to continue offering them to her.

However, I am not at all sure how to explain to non-RCers what is going on⁵ when my child is screaming at me not to kill, strangle, choke, or generally hurt her. And usually the sessions happen at night (after a long afternoon of play and connection), when everyone in the building is at home and settled in for the evening! Sometimes I am able to help make them happen during the day, but the issue is still the same, as my neighbors tend to work a variety of shifts and are home at unpredictable times.

I am certain it would be useful to check in with my neighbor and offer some perspective. But although I did that fairly easily with other neighbors when my child was younger, I am at a loss about⁶ what to say now that my daughter is so big and sounds so convincing when she is working hard in sessions.

Does anyone have success stories to share of talking with non-Co-Counselors about what is going on when children (or anyone) work in sessions on feeling like they are dying? I would love to hear what you have figured out!

Anonymous

¹ "Special time" is an activity, developed in RC family work (see footnote 2), 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.

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

³ "Pretty" means quite.

⁴ "Material" means distress.

⁵ "Going on" means happening.

⁶ "I am at a loss about" means I have no idea.



SHAWNEE NATIONAL FOREST, ILLINOIS, USA • NIKHIL TRIVEDI

The Power of the Timer

October was my three-year anniversary of being in RC. I want to share the story of the first gift that RC gave me—the power of the timer.

I was on psychiatric drugs for about eleven years (from when I was fourteen). In late 2010 I decided to get off them because I realized there might be nothing wrong with me—that perhaps what was really “wrong” was living disconnected and passive in an oppressive society. I slowly lowered my dosages. At one point the psychiatrist I was seeing told me I could stop taking the remaining drug all at once, without tapering down like I had with the others. So I just stopped “cold turkey.”¹

Within a month I was crying uncontrollably for at least four hours every day. My partner and I had learned some non-RC emotional-processing techniques, so he would sit and give me unconditional, loving attention for as long as he could. However, that was completely unsustainable and became less and less workable. He stopped being able to give me good attention, and I kept trying to take care of him while I was crying. I couldn’t discharge fully because we were both so preoccupied with how long it was taking!

Then we remembered that a friend of ours had mentioned a Co-Counseling practice, and we decided to get more resource for ourselves. We joined a fundamentals class together. The timer was magical! My partner could decide ahead of time how many minutes he wanted to offer me, and then we could both relax and work efficiently. My sessions became much more effective. We turned the worry about the time over to the timer.² He could stay fully present with me, and I could discharge fully all the hurts that the psychiatric drugs had suppressed.

Using a timer allowed us to stay connected through the remaining few months of my heavy daily discharge. Thank you to all those Co-Counselors who held out the perspective that there was nothing wrong with my mind, nothing wrong with my crying, and nothing wrong with my partner for not having infinite resource. I am so glad to be part of this hopeful, supportive, visionary Community.

“Bobby Tamara”

¹ “Cold turkey” means abruptly and completely.

² “We turned the worry about the time over to the timer” means we let the timer take charge of the time and stopped worrying about it.

The Direction

What are our tools? Well, one is the direction.¹ The direction can be expressed in words. It can be expressed in lipstick on your shaving mirror. It can be expressed in your posture, in your attitude. As counselor, you don’t have to say, “Take this phrase,”² though sometimes that’s not a bad idea. You can say, “Ah, L—! There you are!” There’s an attitude being expressed there, there’s a direction.

Harvey Jackins
From the July 1986 Peace and
Disarmament Activists’ Workshop

¹ The direction against distress—the thing that contradicts the distress

² “Take this phrase” means say this phrase.





Reclaiming Our Minds

Re-evaluation Counseling takes the radical step of trusting in human minds, all human minds, more than any other endeavor of which I am aware.

Our minds work well and specifically. Your mind is the expert on your life. I cannot hope to understand your life well enough to make choices for you. Only you have that total grasp on your life. Regrettably, our minds have not been respected throughout our lives, so it can be difficult for us to fully appreciate how smart we are or how smart others are.

Our minds are always recording our experiences. In each moment, when we are thinking, we compare the current situation to the past and also contrast it. We then use all that information to come up with¹ a way to act in the current situation that makes sense to us.

Sometimes we are rigidly constrained by our past rather than informed by it; we feel as if we have no choice about how to behave. Our minds can become confused or be made to forget by painful things that have happened to us. Imagine what your life would be like if you did not have to struggle with forgetting. Bigger than not misplacing your keys, you could remember your decisions, remember your passions, remember your truths, and remember learning Spanish in high school. We are vastly lucky to be able to use the discharge process, inherent but underdeveloped, to reclaim our minds from confusion and forgetting.

When we were young, even though our minds were relatively accessible to us, we did not have a lot of information about the world. Further, our discharge process was interrupted so that we could not completely use our minds to understand what had happened to us. So we developed rigid behaviors and ways of thinking to help us survive—patterns to protect us from dogs (because some are dangerous), patterns to keep us from ever feeling humiliated again, patterns that made us trade bits of our humanity for not getting hurt the way we were hurt back then or for getting some advantage (oppressor material,² I'm looking at you). All those patterns helped us survive; they were the best solution we could come up with, and they worked well enough.

¹ "Come up with" means think of.

² "Material" means distress.

Our situation is different now, and expressing that to the client is part of the role of the counselor. We have information we did not have before, both from life experience and from RC theory. For example, if we forget now that people are always doing the best they can, we can remember RC theory and be sure of it.

Also different now is that we in RC have been reclaiming the ability to connect with one another. When I am connected with my counselor, I do not feel alone. We have recently begun to hypothesize that nothing can overwhelm or defeat us or be too much for our minds to handle if we can notice that another human intelligence is on our side. Humiliation, terror, and grief can be survived if we have someone in there with us. (When we were new, we looked out in the world to see if someone like us was there to connect with; initially we suspected there was, but mostly we were defeated.)

One of my learnings from my Intensive³ was that I had thought my patterns protected me. Now I know that I can use my mind to keep me safer than my patterns can. I can notice what is going on.⁴ I can then take specific actions to protect myself and bring other minds along with me to face the hard parts. This means that I can protect myself from dog attacks not by holding back from all dogs (the patterned way) but by using my mind to notice when it is appropriate to hold back, and I can embrace and enjoy dogs the rest of the time. I can form deep, committed relationships with others and not let my patterned fears of being humiliated or overwhelmed by inhuman irrationality hold me back. My mind can keep me safe. My mind can help me recruit others for joint survival. And I get to use my mind all the time to decide how I want to live my life.

We get to be pleased with our minds. We get to be pleased with others' minds. We do not need to control others' minds or worry about them trying to control ours. So we can be free.

Jim Cummings
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA

³ An Intensive is twenty hours of one-way Re-evaluation Counseling, for a fee, at Re-evaluation Counseling Community Resources in Seattle, Washington, USA.

⁴ "Going on" means happening.

In this world, you must be a bit too kind to be kind enough.

Pierre Carlet de Chamblain de Marivaux

Choosing a Perspective on General Anesthesia

One of my favorite things about RC is the encouragement we are given to choose perspectives that are separate and distinct from our feelings. And after several decades of RC, I've concluded that developing, and holding, correct perspectives is among our most important tools for re-emergence. History is full of individuals who have played good and important roles by organizing around accurate-enough perspectives about critical issues of their historical time. But in RC we are in an even better position. It is an incredible gift to regularly combine discharge with accurate perspectives about a growing range of issues.

I remember being fifteen years old and trying hard to make sense of an upsetting event. In a moment of great clarity it suddenly occurred to me that my feelings of the moment were in no way an accurate representation of the total situation. At that point in my life I didn't have any idea about the importance of discharge (which probably wasn't an option in my circumstances anyway), but I realized that I wanted to reach for something much bigger than how I felt: I wanted to have an accurate perspective outside my feelings that I could use to "ground" myself, to stay connected to reality.

That was an exciting and important insight. In my mind I began cycling through all the possible perspectives I could think of on the situation (probably eight to ten), intuitively dismiss-

ing each one as "not quite right" until I finally landed on one that rang true (seemed correct). I still had plenty of



MARJORIE SMITH

upset feelings about the situation but was relieved to no longer feel confused about it. That was enormously helpful in deciding what to do next—so helpful, in fact, that from that moment on I used the same approach as broadly as I could. I'm sure it was the best way I could figure out to manage a life that was mostly cut off from discharge.

Less than a decade later it was life changing to be introduced to RC and finally have the opportunity to add systematic discharge to the muscle I'd begun building in developing and holding perspective. I've found that discharge makes accurate perspectives easier to achieve and so much easier to hold on to when distresses make things feel confusing. But as I counsel with more and more people, I've grown to appreciate even more the critical importance of developing and holding accurate perspectives. Accurate perspectives allow us to more easily see our distress as distress, not reality.

APPLYING PERSPECTIVE TO GENERAL ANESTHESIA

About two years ago I had a meaningful opportunity to experiment with what is possible when undergoing general anesthesia. I was scheduled for a surgery to have my gall bladder removed (also called a "cholecystectomy"), and my doctor advised me that this surgery must be done under general anesthesia. I had experienced some very negative effects from general anesthesia three times previously—at birth, during a tonsillectomy at age four, and with minor surgery at age nineteen. After each experience I'd been left with significant distress recordings, and I was concerned about adding one more incident to the chain of hurts.

Is general anesthesia *inherently* a significant new hurt? As I carefully thought about it, I began to seriously question the assumption that general anesthesia would inevitably restimulate me, or worse, cause a significant new hurt that would require countless hours of discharge to recover from. Was it possible that I could develop a perspective and make decisions *before* the surgery so I would experience the fewest possible negative effects from it? That seemed like an interesting thing to try.

Reviewing Previous Anesthesia Experiences

I started by reviewing the counseling work I had done on previous anesthesia experiences. In particular, over the years I had discharged a

significant amount on my birth. (My mother had received general anesthesia during my birth, which greatly affected me too.) I had also done a number of sessions on later anesthesia experiences and experiences with drugs in general. I'm not close to fully cleaning up these incidents, but I now have a good understanding of the major content of the hurts I got from them.

As I thought about my upcoming surgery, I asked myself, where was I now most vulnerable to restimulation? And was it possible for me to decide in advance not to be restimulated? I decided to put a lot of attention on how my brain and body had reacted in the past to drugs and anesthesia. What key distresses were attached to these experiences?

In my case (this is likely to vary somewhat, depending on the person) the two most significant effects seemed to be that (1) my mind fiercely fought the effects of drugs, to the point that painkillers sometimes didn't have much effect on me, and (2) I had a feeling of defeat from when the drugs had overtaken my mind anyway—that is, when I had tried to fight the anesthesia but hadn't been successful. I decided that a successful approach would require that I address these issues in particular.

Thinking About Accurate Perspectives, and Restimulation

Restimulation seems to be a decision, either aware or unaware, to use the present as a pretext for working on the past. Once restimulated, I've generally needed to either (a) discharge on the distresses related to the restimulation or (b) find a way to pull my attention back into the present. This isn't always easy to do; it's much easier to handle situations when I'm not restimulated in the first place.

This led me some years ago to an interesting question: Is it possible to *decide* in advance not to be restimulated? I've become entirely confident that it is possible, at least some of the time. I've had a few notable successes with it, even in challenging situations. Having regular, frequent, and effective sessions seems to be important to my ability to do it. Because I have lots of good sessions, my subconscious mind knows I will have plenty of opportunities to work on all kinds of hurts without having to use restimulation to bring them up.

Deciding not to be restimulated by something seems to be a little different from deciding to have, and holding, an accurate perspective about it. Deciding not to get restimulated probably requires that we *start* with an accurate perspective. (How else can we distinguish between reality and our feelings?) On the other hand, having an accurate perspective doesn't necessarily require that we not get restimulated—it just requires that we not believe the content of our restimulated feelings. In other words, it's easier to hold an accurate perspective about something than to decide not to get restimulated by it at all, but both are extremely important skills we can develop.

Actively Deciding Against Restimulation About General Anesthesia

In the case of my gall bladder surgery, my overall perspective was that the procedure was being done for my long-term health and well-being, even if individual components of it introduced new hurts and restimulations. There are many components to something as complex as surgery, and I hadn't worked on every piece of my past medical experiences. I therefore wasn't sure it was realistic to assume I could choose not to be restimulated by every one of the components at the same time. I suspected, however, that it would be extremely useful to decide to at least not be restimulated by the general anesthesia component. In other words, I could actively decide to not try to use the new surgery as a pretext for working on my earlier incidents of general anesthesia. I don't know that this would have been possible had I not already discharged for several hundred hours on the earlier incidents. The years of work on this material¹ had cleared room in my mind.

continued . . .

¹ "Material" means distress.



GRAND TETON NATIONAL PARK, WYOMING, USA • HOLLY JORGENSON

... continued

To implement the decision not to get restimulated I decided to see whether I could keep the new anesthesia experience from being recorded (stored in my brain) as a defeat, which was the most troublesome recording from my earlier experiences. In preparation, I had as many sessions as I could on adopting a clean perspective about my surgery—things I wish I had understood while I was being born.

In and out of session I “talked” to myself, telling my brain that drugs would be introduced into my system and would cause my mind not to function normally. I told it that I did not need to fight the drugs at all—that I could know in advance that their effect was temporary, the situation was benign, and my survival and well-being did not require that I fight their effects. I also told my brain that I did not even have to struggle to remember afterward what had happened. If I did remember, that was fine, but if the memories were gone, that was okay too; it didn’t mean something bad had happened.

I discharged steadily (mostly yawning) as I talked about the near certainty that the anesthesia and surgery would be hard in some ways but also completely okay and, most important, that they were intended to support my long-term well-being. “This is at its core a benign experience,” I told myself.

Gathering Detailed Information About the Upcoming Surgical Procedure

I also suspected it would be hurtful if, while under the effects of the drugs, my mind were also trying to process anesthetized and unfamiliar physical sensations. So I gathered in advance as much information as I could about the surgical procedure to increase the chances that my mind would correctly interpret these sen-

sations. To do this, I watched (and discharged about) five different YouTube videos of actual gall bladder surgeries.

Meeting with the Surgeon and the Anesthesiologist

Just before the surgery, I had a brief meeting with my surgeon, whom I had liked very much at our first and only previous appointment. It was good to reconnect with him just before the surgery. Also, I enjoyed observing his friendly interactions with the anesthesiologist, who came into the room just after him; the two men clearly liked and respected each other, and I found that reassuring.

Next I met briefly for the first time with the anesthesiologist, who explained how the process of anesthesia and recovery would work. When he asked if I had any questions, I said, “You know, I’m not afraid of pain—it doesn’t bother me all that much. The hardest thing for me to deal with is the mental confusion caused by some drugs. Are there things you can do to leave my mind as clear as possible, even if it means I experience more physical pain?”

He looked at me closely for a few seconds and said, “Well, I can tell² you aren’t anxious about your surgery, and that is one of the biggest issues we typically have to address with patients. So here’s what I will do: I will reduce to a minimum the amount of sedative I give you, and that will reduce to some extent the amount of confusion you experience. But we have to block pain, because it’s important that your abdominal muscles be relaxed for this procedure. And the narcotic painkillers we use do cause some confusion. That’s just the unfortunate state of our current pharmaceutical technology, but I’ll use as little as I can. Are you okay with that?” He was respectful, and

² “Tell” means see.

had listened well to my goals and agreed to accommodate my wishes as best he could, so I said it would be fine and sincerely thanked him.

Preparing Myself on the Operating Table

As I lay on the operating table before the anesthesia was administered, I reminded myself of my decision not to try to fight the drugs. I also reminded myself that this was a temporarily difficult but basically benign situation being undertaken by a team of good people for my long-term health and well-being.

As I watched the friendly, mutually respectful interactions among all of the operating room staff, I thought about how much I enjoy interactions with my colleagues in my own workplace. So in the last minute or two before the anesthesia was administered, I further decided that I could choose to enjoy hearing these people working around me and that *no matter what they actually said*, I could choose to find the friendly tone of their banter reassuring. These thoughts about being in a completely benign situation were in my mind as I “went under” (was anesthetized).

Doing Well After the Surgery

About ninety minutes later, I “woke up” with no residual confusion and no feeling of being groggy or drugged. In fact, the sensation was almost identical to waking up in the morning after sleeping through the night. I had an immediate awareness that my body had experienced a major and serious event, but it did not feel upsetting or traumatic, just serious. I was content to lie in bed while my body recovered strength. I was quite alert and found it pleasant to listen to the interactions between the recovery room staff and the other patients around me.

After an hour or two in the recovery room, I was finally ready to dress and prepare for departure. Again, I had great awareness that my body had been through a deeply significant event and, although I was relaxedly looking forward to having a session to process everything, the events did not feel particularly upsetting.

More striking, on the way home from the hospital I noticed that I had more present-time attention than the person who was driving me home. She was driving an unfamiliar car in a strange city and was clearly nervous about traffic and directions, but I was able to easily pay attention to traffic and navigate our way home.

In my sessions after the surgery, I talked about everything I remembered, everything I found interesting, and all of my physical sensations. I talked, cried, shook, and yawned in every session that afternoon and in every session in the weeks afterward. I continue to avoid the temptation to “try to remember” events of the surgery that occurred while I was “under” the anesthesia. Prior to the surgery I had given my mind permission not to try to process or store

what happened during the surgery, and it seemed important not to undermine that.

The anesthesiologist had told me it would take about twenty-four hours for my system to eliminate all of the drugs, and I could definitely feel their effects throughout the first day. After my last counselor left that evening, I set to work on a simple jigsaw-puzzle game on my cell phone, and my brain instantly felt more alert and alive than when I had been trying to talk or listen to speech. I concluded that the drugs had more deeply affected the speech centers of my brain than the visual centers. That effect was gone the next day.

Even immediately after the surgery, I did not experience residual anxiety, memory loss (apart from the time I had been under general anesthesia), confusion, or my other usual signs of a big new hurt. And far from feeling like I had experienced a new defeat, for several days I felt surprisingly triumphant. I don’t know exactly what to think about that but strongly suspect it was because I had been successful in my decision not to be restimulated—even in the face of general anesthesia.

CONCLUSION

I imagine that the exact effects we experience from general anesthesia depend greatly on a number of factors, including how much previous discharging we’ve done on anesthesia and other physical hurts, the exact mix of anesthesia drugs administered, the length of time we are anesthetized, and what happens to our bodies during the surgery. I have no illusions that every surgical experience will be as easy as this one seemed to be or that everyone will (or even should) find general anesthesia easy to handle. But no matter what else is true, I suspect it always makes sense for us to deliberately try to develop accurate perspectives about every major challenge we face. And I suspect it similarly makes sense, where possible, to actively decide in advance not to be restimulated by the things we know we are going to confront. It has to be okay if we don’t always succeed in this endeavor, but I think it’s important that we keep trying—and discharging fully on our efforts along the way.

Barbara Boring
Seattle, Washington, USA

Thinking in Interaction

We have a need to think in interaction with someone else’s thinking—to know that another intelligence is hearing us or is trying to hear us and to think back. It is delightful, the interchange of sparkling fresh ideas from each other.

Harvey Jackins
From *The Upward Trend*,
pages 125 to 126



AMANDA MARTINEZ



STEVE RICHMOND

Shift Due to Discharge, “Magical”

Discharge is an amazing “magic.” It’s wonderful to notice the kind of shift it brings about in our material¹ and thereby in our perspective.

A couple of years ago, I started discharging on the distresses related to my mom and my being the elder daughter. Initially I discharged a lot of anger and grief. I thought I hated my mom. Later it shifted to hating the oppression, because of which she has been oppressive. Now it has reached a state in which I want to be an ally to her and fight against the oppressions on her behalf. This shift occurred because of discharge only. It has strengthened the belief I have in the RC process.

I have noticed a similar kind of shift with my Co-Counselors. It’s interesting to witness and understand these shifts. They give me lots of hope about the discharge process and in turn² about life.

S.J. Shashikala (Shashi)
Bangalore, India

¹ “Material” means distress.

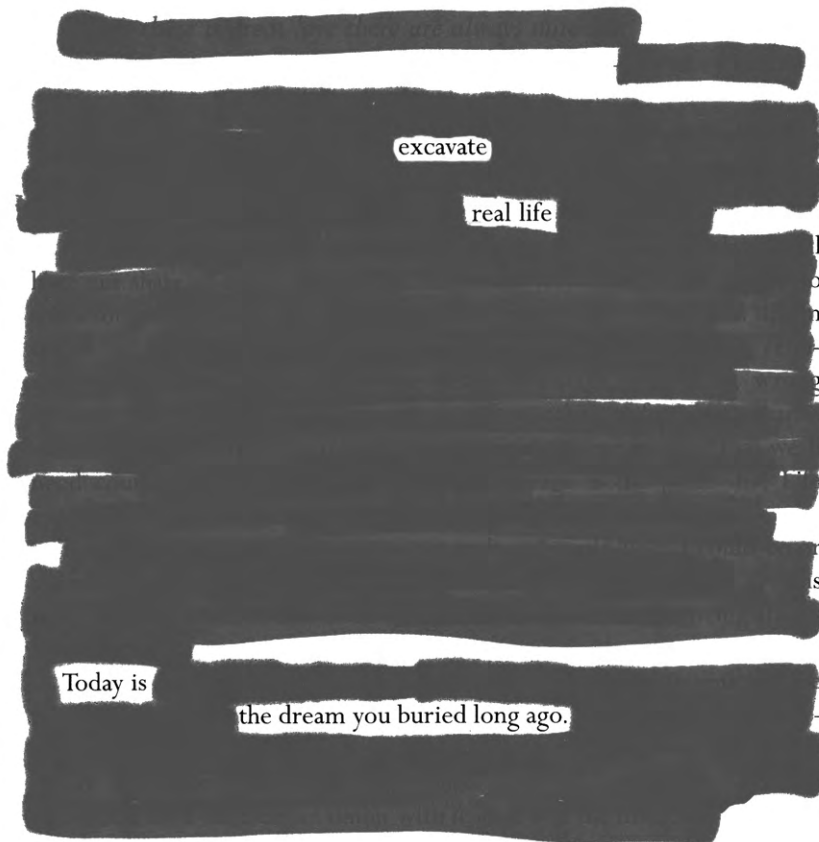
² “In turn” means in a related way.

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Buried Dreams



Jim DuBois
Northampton, Massachusetts, USA

All Human Life Is Sacred

I have a lot of thoughts about the events in Paris (France)¹ and the response to them around the world. I am sure that my thoughts have a lot of reactivity and restimulation attached to them. But I have decided to go ahead and share my thoughts anyway, resisting the urge to hold on to them until I am sure that I have cleaned them up.

All human life is sacred. I hold sacred the lives of people who do things that I find abhorrent. I fight for a society and a world that hold human life as sacred. No one, including the State (or the police in cities in the United States), has a right to take a human life (I oppose capital punishment!). I hold all human life as sacred, including the lives of those who have themselves taken a life. Alas, I must also include people who say things that I don't like.

Freedom is a precious thing, worth fighting for. Freedom is well worth the wrestle in our own minds and among our varied minds to determine what freedom means. We are in agreement that there are limits inherent in the exercise of freedom. I have a right to swing my fist, and your nose has a right to not be hit. This brings me to the questions with which I want to wrestle:

- Does our freedom of speech include the right to hate speech? Or only to hate speech spoken by members of specific groups?
- Does freedom of the press include the right to publish hatred toward any group, or only hatred of certain groups toward certain others?
- All human life is sacred. But are artists' (cartoonists') lives more sacred than other lives? The Islamic militant group Boko Haram² killed upwards of two thousand people in Nigeria during the week of the horrific events in Paris—two thousand children, women, and men. Are those lives less important than the lives of the twelve cartoonists who were killed in Paris? Is the loss

of those two thousand lives less significant and deserving of less attention, mourning, outrage, commentary, because it happened in Nigeria, not in Paris, and not in a magazine office, and the victims might not be artists (cartoonists)?

- Everybody makes decisions with an understanding of the potential consequences of those decisions. And we often make decisions to do what we consider the right thing even when the potential outcomes can be terrifying. Are we then responsible for those terrifying outcomes because we made the decisions that triggered them? Specifically, since the editors at *Charlie Hebdo* decided to publish cartoons that had the possibility—even the probability—of ending in violence, do they share any responsibility for the murder of their colleagues?

The French Prime Minister has declared, "We are at war against radical Islam." Can you imagine the President of the United States, after the Oklahoma City bombing³ in which 168 people were killed, or after the killings at Sandy Hook⁴ in which twenty children and six adults were killed, declaring, "We are at war against angry white men"? Or should such a declaration have been made after Columbine⁵ or any one of many mass murders, including the shooting of Kent State students by U.S. National Guardsmen?⁶

continued . . .

³ A terrorist bomb attack in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, USA, on April 19, 1995, by two white men, Timothy McVeigh and Terry Nichols

⁴ The Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting on December 14, 2012, in Newtown, Connecticut, USA, in which the perpetrator was Adam Lanza, a young white man

⁵ The Columbine High School shooting, on April 20, 1999, in Columbine, Colorado, USA, in which two white students, Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold, murdered twelve other students and a teacher

⁶ On May 4, 1970, at Kent State University, in Ohio, USA, National Guardsmen, all white men, shot and killed four university students at a protest against the U.S. invasion of Cambodia.

¹ On January 7, 2015, in Paris, France, two Islamic militants killed twelve people in the offices of the French satirical newspaper *Charlie Hebdo*, which had published a number of disrespectful cartoons of the Prophet Muhammad. In the following two days, another Islamic militant killed five more people in Paris, including four whom he had taken hostage in a kosher supermarket.

² From January 3 to 7, 2015, members of Boko Haram, a militant group in Nigeria that wishes to establish Sharia law (the religious laws based on the Koran), killed over two thousand people in the Nigerian town of Baga.



DAN NICKERSON

WIDE WORLD CHANGING

... continued

Thirteen people were shot and killed at the University of Texas (USA) by a former U.S. Marine. Should we declare war on former U.S. Marines?

I mourn for women whose lives are taken by Islamic fundamentalists because they decide to drive a car, or get an education, or divorce their husbands. I mourn for lives lost because of poverty and disease and because Western governments ignore and fail to respond to threats that are made to those outside the Western world.

I gag at the racialized, hypocritical hyperbole following the events at the offices of *Charlie Hebdo*, spoken by world leaders and other people who have seized on the events as a way to push their own narrow, oppression-riddled agenda.

I am wearied by the responses of people who consider the murders at *Charlie Hebdo* in a pitifully narrow frame, without the larger global context in which they occurred.

I remind others and myself that this is a good time to listen. All sorts of people want and need to be listened to as they share their fears, their trauma (indeed their impulse to gag), and their grief, along with their hopes for a better world.

Barbara Love

International Liberation Reference

Person for African-Heritage People

Amherst, Massachusetts, USA

Reprinted from the RC e-mail discussion list for leaders of wide world change



STAN EICHNER

“Freedom of Speech” Can Distract Us from Ending Racism

I so appreciate the questions that Barbara is raising.* For many years I worked as a journalist in the United States. In my experience, “freedom of speech” is often used to prevent us from facing racism and other oppressions that are fully expressed in the media. It distracts us from the real conversations and work that must happen to end racism and other oppressions in that industry.

I appreciate that RC is an organization committed to ending racism. I appreciate that we offer our perspective on racism to people in many situations. I hope we will also offer it in regard to issues of “freedom of speech,” including a recent example in the United States in which this “freedom” was used to defend a comedy film about attempting to kill an actual world leader. As Barbara so eloquently wrote, all human life is sacred.

One thing I often encourage people to do is appreciate the journalists and media makers who do excellent work to expose racism every day. A small appreciation to them—or to their bosses—can go a long way in promoting policies that encourage their institutions to continue to fight against racism (for example, by hiring and promoting more people of the global majority and by publishing more stories of the successes people are having in their work to end racism).

Alysia Tate

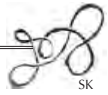
Chicago, Illinois, USA

Reprinted from the RC e-mail discussion list for leaders of wide world change

* See previous article.



Art, and Racism



I appreciate the postings.¹ Along with the events of the last few days, they have made me think.

I would encourage people to discharge not only on the taking of human life but also on the oppression of Muslims. Unfortunately, these killings are being used to demonize Muslims, to attribute the fears of us in the Western world to Muslims, and our problems to “Muslim terrorism.” This is similar to how after the September 11, 2001, attacks in the United States, the Bush² administration used the events to harden and make more oppressive U.S. foreign policy.

¹ See previous two articles.

² George W. Bush, President of the United States from 2001 to 2009

Particularly in the Western world, when people identify with the cartoonists, they seem to be identifying with the so-called “right” of a for-profit business to publish anything that its writers and cartoonists wish to say about anything—including their drawing pictures that have a racist or sexist content—on the basis of freedom of speech.

The cartoonists are not to blame for their deaths; nor are they to blame for the destructive forces in society. But sometimes cartoonists are agents of distorted ideas that can create a racist climate. (I have heard people defend their right to their cartoons in a way that resembles how some people de-

fend pornographers’ right to publish pornography.)

Hopefully intelligent ideas will be offered, rather than a rigid nationalism or other reactive responses. I do find it interesting to look at what re-emergent liberation art is all about—for example, the way Harvey Jackins describes it in *The Good and the Great in Art*—and how good art portrays humans. What does good art look like today?

Diane Balseer

Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts, USA

Reprinted from the RC e-mail discussion list for leaders of wide world change

“I’m Not Going to Let You Do That”

I am far from having a clear or full perspective here, but I have a couple of thoughts and questions—not so much about this situation in particular¹ but more generally about freedom of expression.

I remember hearing a young man once say, “It’s a free country. I can do whatever I want.” Something about that smelled of license rather than the kind of freedom I’m interested in protecting.

I think of family work,² in which we are sometimes able to get to the point of putting our arms around a beloved

¹ See previous three articles.

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

child who has been taken over by³ distress and saying, “No, I’m not going to let you do that. You’re not going to like it, and I’m glad to listen to you be upset, but I’m just not going to let you do it.” I believe there are freedoms that need to be protected tenaciously, artistic freedoms among them, but is there a point where testing the boundaries of freedom of expression calls for the kind of response described above?



Pamela Haines

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA

Reprinted from the RC e-mail discussion list for leaders of wide world change

³ “Taken over by” means overcome by, made subservient to.

TAKING POWER OVER SOCIETY

Against this dead, unable-to-be-reasoned-with inertia and momentum of the less-than-human, less-than-intelligent society stands only the intelligence of humans. How can the power of the individual, which we have presumed exists and conjectured will function in the absence of distress patterns, emerge and make itself felt?

Harvey Jackins

From *The Reclaiming of Power*

“We Need Allies”

Yesterday I sat in on a talk about anti-Semitism in Europe. I am on the board of the organization that the speaker, X—, was from. During the question-and-answer period someone asked, “What can we do? What can be done?” X— (the executive director of the organization) seemed a bit taken aback because he had been talking about what the organization does. So I held up my hand and said, “What we all need to do is recognize that we need allies. We cannot do this alone. And the mission of X—’s organization is just that. They are doing a lot toward that end.” Everyone (much to my surprise) applauded loudly! The tone changed.

Pam Geyer

Bellaire, Texas, USA

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

Jews Making Allies Locally

I work for a Jewish community organisation in Scotland. I am currently carrying out a Scottish-government-funded research project that involves me listening to Jewish people all over Scotland about how it feels to be Jewish at this moment. I managed to get my organization to agree to me pretty much¹ asking the RC panel questions—“What’s good about being Jewish in Scotland? What’s not so good?” and so on—which meant that today I was the go-to person² to speak on Scottish national radio in response to Netanyahu³ saying that all European Jews should go to Israel.

So thank you to this list⁴ for helping me make my response. It was entirely about needing to make allies locally, building connections and community, and giving people a chance to voice their feelings of terror but also reminding them of how safe they are in this country where they are *entirely* at home. And local people need to know that we are *not* about to leave to go to Israel. And yes, I was shaking all afternoon, but I managed to say what I wanted to say.

Fiona Frank

Lancaster, Lancashire, England

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

¹ “Pretty much” means mostly.

² “Go-to person” means expert.

³ Benjamin Netanyahu, the Prime Minister of Israel

⁴ The RC e-mail discussion list for leaders of Jews



A New Poster

Rational Island Publishers has produced a lovely 20-inch by 27-inch color poster with our RC goal on the environment.* I would like us all to have it in our daily lives as a reminder of our commitment to changing our economic system and our relationship to the environment.

Please consider ordering one (or more) for yourself. The price is \$8.00, plus postage and handling. (For ordering information, see page 110.)

Thank you,
Tim Jackins

* A goal adopted by the 2013 World Conference of the Re-evaluation Counseling Communities



That members of the RC Community work to become fully aware of the rapid and unceasing destruction of the living environment of the Earth. That we discharge on any distress that inhibits our becoming fully aware of this situation and taking all necessary actions to restore and preserve our environment.

Distresses have driven people to use oppression against each other and carry out destructive policies against all of the world. A full solution will require the ending of divisions between people and therefore the ending of all oppressions.

The restoration and preservation of the environment must take precedence over any group of humans having material advantage over others. We can and must recover from any distress that drives us to destroy the environment in our attempts to escape from never-ending feelings of needing more resource.

“A Step into the Unknown”

*Hej!*¹ My wide-world peace group did a listening project² today. The questions were “How does racism affect your life?” “When does non-violence work?” and “Who is your neighbour (from ‘love thy neighbour’ in the Bible)?”

It was a big thing for me. It was the first time I had full-out³ pursued an unconventional peace project in this group (unconventional = based on RC ideas). When I first presented the idea of it, I could see one person’s eyes light up, so I continued. I explained it something like, “These are important issues that people rarely get a chance to talk about. We can offer to listen, to give space to people to think about important things. We mostly talk to people whose ideas we know, who share our view of the world and have experiences similar to ours. This is limiting the effectiveness of our work. We need to learn a lot of new things.” I didn’t say it as succinctly as that, but over a couple of meetings I covered those points. And it made sense to people.

In preparing for the event, three of us had a lovely meeting in which we talked about what would make sense to ask people, and what we wanted to hear their thoughts about. I was able to listen and also continue to put my own thoughts forward uncompromised.

Today six of us prepared the placards with the questions. All of us were white and young adult to elderly. Before we went out, I said that in order to be able to listen to people and not just want to talk ourselves, it would be a good idea to listen to each other’s responses to the questions. We had a go-round



MARIAN FREDAL

answering “How does racism affect your life?” I talked about how it affects my relationships both with people targeted by racism and with white people and how having racism in the world makes me less happy and less hopeful. Other people shared a lot, including things I didn’t know about them. I loved listening to them, and I felt so proud of them.

Four of us took the tram to a square in a mainly working-class area where both white and global-majority people live and started listening. First I listened to a white middle-class woman who was hurrying to the tram but wanted to talk about how racism hurts black people. Then I approached three young people, maybe ten or twelve years old. They were embarrassed at first, but we talked for a long time. They

had been targeted by racism and were really troubled by it.

We listened to many people, sometimes by ourselves and sometimes with two of us together. Most people wanted to talk. We also took time to talk to each other about how we were doing. I cried a little about what one of the young people had told me about the racism his mother encounters at work.

After maybe forty minutes we ate some sandwiches and shared more about how it was going.

Then three of us took the tram to a suburb where almost everyone is of the global majority. In the tram my friends got into conversations with several people. One person of the global majority said loudly that he had voted for *Sverigedemokraterna*, a party whose main political goal is to reduce immigration. My peace friend listened but also argued with him. I kept looking at the other people in the tram, most of whom were of the global majority. When one of them got up to get off the tram, he thanked my friend for what he’d said, heatedly explaining that “some people are so eager to become Swedes that they do strange things.”

When we got to our destination it had started raining, so we stayed at the tram stop under a roof and listened to people there.

During the day we listened and talked to about forty people: women and men, of many ages; people of the global majority and white people; children. We got to hear

continued . . .

¹ *Hej* means hi in Swedish.

² A non-RC adaptation of an RC listening project, which involves several Co-Counselors going to a public place and offering to listen to passersby about some important issue, such as racism or a current war, and perhaps holding signs that invite people to share their thinking about that issue

³ “Full-out” means fully.

WIDE WORLD CHANGING

... continued

many things: accounts of racism from people targeted by it, white people passionately hating racism, targeted people stating that they didn't let racism get to them,⁴ stories of people interrupting racism and standing up for themselves, and people unsure of their voices and thoughts but picking up confidence and sharing more and more. One of the young people told me to ask more people what to do about racism. The member of our group who was holding the placard that had the question about nonviolence on

it reported that people were eager to talk about the subject and that most of them were not at all into⁵ violence and wanted to learn how to use nonviolence.

My peace friends are excited and want to do it again. One expressed relief at not handing out leaflets. Another asked in a surprised voice why we had not done this before. On the way home, two of us talked about sin and forgiveness. (It's a Christian peace group.) I said, "I don't like the idea of sin, but I do like forgiveness." Seemingly from the bottom

of his heart, my friend burst out with something like, "I'm desperate for forgiveness!" So I got to see that, too—a white person struggling with the heavy burden of oppressor material,⁶ desperate to be forgiven.

It was a step into the unknown to suggest a listening project with this group of non-RCers. It turned out to be⁷ a success!

Lotta Kronlid
Göteborg, Sweden

Reprinted from the RC e-mail discussion list for leaders of wide world change

⁴ "Get to them" means bother them.

⁵ "Into" means positive about.

⁶ "Material" means distress.

⁷ "Turned out to be" means resulted in being.



LANCE CABLK

Reclaiming Our Minds and Sharing Our Thinking

Dear artists,

One of my goals is to be able to problem-solve and come up with¹ fresh solutions to each new situation that I am confronted with.

Over the years of leading artists' liberation, I have worked on having been interfered with when attempting to use my mind creatively. Reclaiming my mind by discharging on these early incidents has made room for me to think and act more creatively and powerfully in the present. Given the complexity of our current world issues, it seems useful to take up² that work again.

Most of us were interfered with in our early attempts to show our creative ideas. We were humiliated, our attempts were trivialized, and we were silenced and kept from sharing our thinking broadly. Discharging on where that happened will move things along for us. We will clean up feelings that we might otherwise act on, and reclaim our good thinking to share more widely.

Cynthia Johnston
Melbourne, Victoria, Australia
Reprinted from the RC e-mail discussion list for leaders of artists

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 111).

¹ "Come up with" means think of.

² "Take up" means begin doing.

Uncomfortable, but Marching

On December 13, 2014, people all across the United States marched against police violence, especially the violence against black men, and for justice for all people. I participated in the march in Boston, Massachusetts, USA. I marched for racial justice. I marched in memory of black men killed by white men who remain free. I marched because our governing systems are, in so many ways, not “of the people, by the people, and for the people.” I marched for an inclusive, nonviolent democracy.

Several thousand people gathered at the Massachusetts State House. After a few speeches, the march began. There were young and old people, black and white people, families and single people, and groups of friends. I saw close to a dozen Co-Counselors. I felt powerful being part of a group that was taking over the streets, using the streets of Boston to say together, “Black lives matter.” One of my favorite times was joining a small group of young people singing “We Shall Overcome.”

Since there was no pre-set march route, the police closed off streets to keep traffic away from us while massing in force to keep us off the highway ramps. Otherwise they seemed content to let us go wherever our leaders wanted.

The march was one of many, in cities across the United States, billed as “Day of Anger: Millions March.” It’s not surprising that the chanting was strident: “What do we want? JUSTICE. When do we want it? NOW. If we don’t get it? SHUT IT DOWN!” and “No justice, no peace. No racist police!” As a white middle-class Protestant, I was uncomfortable with the anger these chants expressed. (Being white, I don’t have to contend with racist attitudes day in and day out.*) I chose to participate in solidarity with our black citizens, who do have to confront racism every day.

What I was most uncomfortable about was the targeting of police. Of course, the killing of unarmed black men by police was a major motivation for the march. So was the grand jury system that has given police officers a free pass. On the other hand, I don’t think shouting slogans about racist police helps us distinguish between the good policing that every community needs and the bad policing that targets people of color. Nor was attention placed on the systemic racism that underlies the violence.

Eventually we found ourselves in front of the Suffolk County Jail. Masses of police blocked the way forward to avoid shutting down traffic. The march leaders had two options: turn back or challenge the police lines. There was a

* “Day in and day out” means every day.



MACHU PICCHU, PERU • DIANE SHISK

call to link arms and move toward the police. I moved away, scared by the confrontation. A Co-Counselor who had been up close to the police sought me out, giving us both a few minutes to shake off our fear. The police lines were clearly impenetrable, but a couple dozen demonstrators chose to push into them. They were quickly arrested. The rest of us turned around and retraced our steps, continuing the march in a new direction.

It was much later that I realized how isolated I had felt during the march. I had been unsuccessful in linking up with friends or Co-Counselors beforehand and did not stay long with the Co-Counselors I saw at the march. I could have talked with other marchers, asked them what they thought about the march and about recent events. I could have asked for their thoughts about racism and about creating a more just society. I didn’t think to do any of those things. I wish I had gone with a group, or stayed with a group once I found one, or talked to strangers.

The business of building a better society is difficult. It challenges us to change ourselves, to be uncomfortable, to try new things. We can’t do this well alone. We need to talk with the people like ourselves and the people who are different from us. Sometimes we need to seek out the ones who are different. We need to break through our isolation patterns if we hope to really make a difference.

Bill Holland
West Newton, Massachusetts, USA

Parents, Hope, and the Environment

I've been reading Naomi Klein's book *This Changes Everything*, which is about the need to address the unworkability of our economic system in order to address global warming. As I've read it, I've thought about our role as parents.

Parents of every class love their children. Every parent or grandparent, or anyone with a close connection to a child, understands on some level the consequences of climate change for the coming generations. This is true of parents

of every political perspective and every class. All parents have a motivation to take action.

Most of us parents (like everyone) are so frightened by global warming and its future implications that we have a difficult time facing it, thinking about it, and taking action to address it. Many of the headlines we read are dire and scare us into a frozen, hopeless state. They suggest that it is already too late to make any difference. Yet from what I have read, this is not true.

I think we need to offer hope in order to reach parents (and everyone). To be able to do that, we need to discharge our own hopelessness and face both the tough realities before us as well as the opportunities this problem presents us with.

I would like to hear from other parents about this. Below are some suggested questions. Answering one is enough. You can also answer your own questions.

How have you counseled about the environment? What contradictions* have allowed you to face your fears? How does being a parent help? What have you learned about talking with other parents about the environment? How do you talk about changing our economic system and the relationship of that to addressing climate change? How have you reached parents from different political perspectives than your own? What strengths and challenges do you have as a mother or a father in reaching out to other parents about the environment?



BRIAN LAVENDEL

A Classless Society

A classless society, in which no one exploits anyone else but people live from the value they produce themselves, will be necessary in all countries of the world. And I think it won't be too long before people come to recognize this, because the problems of the class society are so severe that they cannot be propagandized away or concealed much longer.

Harvey Jackins
From a letter written in 1992

I'd like to invite global majority parents to write first. (Others can write now and save it for a few days. I will say when it is time for others to post.)

Writing a few sentences or a few paragraphs is fine. Remember, each one of you has something to say.

Marya Axner
International Liberation
Reference Person for Parents
Somerville, Massachusetts, USA
Reprinted from the RC e-mail
discussion list for leaders of parents

* Contradictions to distress

Young People Regaining Power

I am Arlo, a young person going to college in Bar Harbor, Maine (USA). I have been thinking a lot lately about conservation work, national and state parks, and how we can empower young people (in RC and out) in the direction of care of the environment.



NORWAY • KAISLI SYRJÄNEN

When I was fifteen, sixteen, and seventeen I spent my summers at the Conservation Corps in Minnesota and Vermont (USA), working hard on building hiking trails and staircases, removing invasive species, and doing other cool* projects. This last summer I was a crew leader for two four-week work sessions full of awesome young people. There are many different opportunities like this all over the United States and the world. These kinds of programs are super great—they bring young people outside, they foster great communities—but they are still part of an oppressive system. Patterns of young people's oppression, sexism, and racism (along with other oppressions) still appear lots and often go unaddressed. These patterns make it hard for people to think about young people very well.

As babies we all understand our true power, but because of young people's oppression we often feel quite discouraged and frightened and it's hard to act boldly in the face of interesting and restimulating problems. So to most effectively solve problems such as global climate change and capitalism, young people's liberation has got to be deeply involved in the process! I personally find that exciting.

* "Cool" means great, wonderful.

Recently I've been learning how to blacksmith. It has brought up all sorts of feelings for me to work on. Working with tools to change the environment around me has been a critical part of my re-emergence. It's given me a space to understand that despite the oppression, I am powerful after all! We are powerful!

After a project at the Conservation Corps, the crews say things like, "Look at that trail! We built a good trail! Let's do this again!" Projects like these have been particularly helpful for me because I have been able to discharge old discouragements *and* take action in a present-time situation. This combination of discharge and action has been a springboard for me.

During a session last night I was able to connect human liberation to my experience and passion for tool building. I left with this commitment: "From now on, I am deciding to live my life with no tolerance for oppression of any kind. My tool of choice is love, which I will use thoughtfully, effectively, and efficiently, while working toward building a world where humans are not separated from each other."

This work gets me so excited. I'd love to hear thoughts, ideas, directions that have worked for you, things this posting made you think of, appreciations, or anything else!

Arlo Cristofaro-Hark
Bar Harbor, Maine, and

Northfield, Minnesota, USA

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

Mailing Address for Rational Island Publishers

Please note that Rational Island Publishers is permanently discontinuing its post office box. The correct mailing address for Rational Island Publishers is now

719 2nd Avenue North
Seattle, Washington 98109
USA

Please make the change wherever you keep such records and with your electronic bill payment service, if you use one.

Thank you in advance for your kind cooperation!

Rational Island Publishers

Teaching RC to Climate Activists

In February 2014, in Los Angeles (California, USA), I helped train three dozen climate activists as they prepared to walk across the United States, from Los Angeles to Washington, D.C., to call attention to the threat of climate change. The training included a basic RC introductory lecture, topic-group discussions, Wygelian leaders' meetings,¹ and an hour on racism (all but two of the marchers were white). I ended it with a panel of two local environmental justice leaders and a marcher of the global majority.

As the march progressed across country, I used telephone and Internet for three briefings and to help organize a local environmental-justice demonstration outside Chicago (Illinois). I was also able to meet the march in Colorado and do two hour-long follow-up sessions, on Co-Counseling and on racism.

The march succeeded. Over thirty of the original group made it all the

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

way to D.C., having been joined at times along the way by several hundred other marchers. They spoke with thousands and brought attention to climate change in dozens of small and large communities. Many of them got arrested multiple times while protesting extreme forms of fossil-fuel extraction. These folks have made a major commitment to stopping climate change. On the march they developed strong personal connections that will sustain them in this work.

I debriefed a few of them here in D.C. at the end of the march on the impact of the initial training. They emphasized the importance of addressing environmental justice and racism at the start of the march and persisting with that in follow-up events. (Before the training most of them had not been exposed to the idea of environmental justice.) An eliminating-white-racism support group had met several times along the way.

The introductory lectures had set a tone of simply listening to each other rather than giving advice. Support groups had met for the first month and a half, and many supportive one-on-one listening relationships had persisted throughout the march. The women had met frequently as a group.

The impact of the different parts of the training reflected the amount of time I had devoted to them. Demonstrating topic-group discussions and Wygelian leaders' meetings only once had not led to their continued use, though they had lent support to participatory discussions and decision making. In general, the marchers thought that all the practices I'd presented needed more follow-up during the march.

As I regularly comment, the older I get, the smarter Harvey² gets. I'm seeing that the best way to spread RC ideas is one-on-one, in ongoing, committed personal relationships. This was hard to do with the marchers, given that they were always tired from walking twenty-plus miles a day and were often without cell-phone or Internet connection. It is easier for me to maintain one-on-one relationships with the activists I teach here in D.C. Indeed, I am more and more focusing locally.

Jim Driscoll

Washington, D.C., USA

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

² Harvey Jackins



BURMA • MAURA FALLON

Why Changing Society Is Important

It seems to me that once a human being is alive, that person is infinitely precious. I think the big problem is that under the class societies only profit, based on long-installed and long-perpetuated greed, is important and no other factors are allowed to take precedence over it. This is why changing society is so important. As long as profit motivation runs first, we will have a continuing series of growing disasters.

Harvey Jackins

From a letter written in 1992

I Love This Planet More Than You Know . . .

I love this planet more than you know
Even while crying 'cause¹ I stump² my toe
On the roots of the old oak tree.

I love this planet more than you know
Even when young and drawing water from the well
Worried I'd surely fall in and down to hell.

Poke Sally³ berry mud pies for free.
Terrified mom thinks it's blood she sees.
(Didn't do that again!)

So many trees—pecan, apple, pear and peach.
Grandparents left all within reach.

Wasps cruise looking for a place to land.
Why oh why was it on my hand?

Dad quickly applies leaves and grass.
No more pain. Surprise! I went on with my task.

I love this planet more than you know.
I remember when a tree was my beau.⁴

Strange you may think but keep in mind
Love one tree and you love all mankind.

I love the drumbeat on the roof of rain
And that anything can become a game.

Race you to the farthest stand of trees?
Who can count the most bumblebees?

What's your favorite cloud in the sky?
Guess the berries mom puts in the pie.

Follow the ant that leaves this hill.
How long can you lie completely still
With a fly on your nose?

I love this planet more than you know.
I awake with a sense of eagerness to roam
Far and wide on this planet that's our home.

Marion Ouphouet
Seattle, Washington, USA

¹ "'Cause" means because.

² "Stump" means stubbed, accidentally struck against something.

³ Poke sallet

⁴ "Beau" means boyfriend.



OVERLAND TRACK, TASMANIA • LYNDALL KATZ

Climate Change, and Ideas for Action

In this article I have attempted to summarize some of the best thinking about climate change done by environmental scientists and social change activists. I have also included my own ideas, and proposals for action.

We human beings developed from small bands of primates surviving by gathering plants and hunting a few animals to larger bands using tools and fire, to developing languages, to domesticating animals and growing crops, to creating written languages, to inventing the wheel, to smelting metals, to inventing complex machinery, to understanding the causes of many diseases, to inventing the computer and other electronic technology. We overcame near extinction about seventy thousand years ago, when our total population was about two thousand individuals, to become the dominant species on the earth today. We are creative, caring, cuddly, and fun!

We have made good use of many accidental discoveries, including in recent times the discovery that if we listen to each other carefully and provide each other with contradictions to our distresses, our inherent intelligence and cooperativeness shine through.

Unfortunately, our success in “taming” nature has led to serious environmental problems that threaten our future. We have the capacity to solve these problems, but it is challenging to look at them without becoming so restimulated that we cannot think well about the solutions. Our restimulation can make it easy for us to fall into one of two traps: either turning away from the problems because it is too uncomfortable to look at them, or crying out for and pursuing action based on feelings of desperation. With discharge, we can move forward logically and powerfully without falling into either of these traps. We can play a significant role in building a powerful social movement to halt environmental degradation and to make the planet a much better place for all of us.



JAYE ALPER

FACTS ABOUT CLIMATE CHANGE

Here are some facts about climate change agreed upon by ecologists and climate scientists:

- Carbon dioxide levels in the atmosphere are increasing as a result of humans burning fossil fuels (coal, oil, and natural gas/methane) and clearing vast areas of forested land that previously stored huge amounts of carbon.
- Carbon dioxide traps heat that would otherwise escape into space, just as the glass in a greenhouse roof traps heat within a greenhouse. Increases of carbon dioxide and other “greenhouse gases” in the atmosphere have already caused the average temperature of the earth to rise by 0.8 degrees Celsius (1.4 degrees Fahrenheit) above pre-industrial average temperatures. Increases in carbon dioxide also cause the oceans to become both warmer and more acidic. This is particularly destructive to coral reefs, which are the nurseries for large numbers of fish and other marine life.
- During the last ten thousand years, after we humans had learned how to grow crops instead of mainly hunting and gathering our food, the climate was fairly stable, never rising or falling more than a half of a degree Celsius on average. In general, it was not difficult to figure out when and where to grow successful crops.
- An increase of two degrees Celsius (3.6 degrees Fahrenheit) above pre-industrial levels would create serious problems, sometimes called climate chaos:
 - * Reduced crop yields in the major grain-producing nations
 - * An eventual rise in sea levels of approximately twenty-five meters (eighty-one feet), due to the melting of ice in Greenland and Antarctica
 - * The extinction of thousands of species of plants and animals
 - * The melting of mountain glaciers that supply water to billions of people in Asia and South America

- If the current rates of carbon dioxide production continue, the amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere would, within a few decades, lead nearly inevitably to a temperature increase of at least two degrees Celsius.
- About a billion people live within twenty-five meters of sea level. A temperature increase of two degrees Celsius would force these people to move inland and force the world's population to be fed from a smaller amount of arable land.
- The extinction of plants and animals caused by a temperature increase of two degrees Celsius would threaten the stability of the earth's ecosystems. Topsoil would be lost, deserts would spread, and the oceans would become more acidified.

THE UNDERMINING OF LIFE AS WE KNOW IT

The roughly ten thousand generations of *Homo sapiens* have survived under many conditions—have survived the ice ages, have survived in deserts. But even if we survived continuing climate change, life as we know it now would be seriously undermined:

- The decreased amount of arable land would make it significantly harder to produce enough food for the eight billion human beings that could be living on earth in the next ten years.
- Soil infertility, pollution of water and air, and acidification of the ocean would lead to even more intense competition for food, fresh water, and other resources.
- There would be even more widespread poverty, starvation, war, lawlessness, and increases in communicable diseases, leading to unstable governments.
- Access to weapons of mass destruction would make it easy for desperate, irrational individuals, organizations, and nations to wage extremely destructive wars.

We are approaching an unprecedented crisis in the coming decades unless we replace our exploitative, already-collapsing capitalist system with a fair and sensible system. And we need to do this in the next decade!



KATIE KAUFFMAN

WHY THE CLIMATE CRISIS DOESN'T LOOK LIKE A CRISIS

Most U.S. people do not yet see climate change as a crisis. In the 2012 U.S. presidential election, climate change was barely mentioned. Many other people around the world also do not connect their immediate problems—for example, increasing floods and droughts and lack of food—to climate change. Reasons for this include the following:

- *Lack of information about the causes and serious effects of climate change:* Conservative sections of the owning class, and the mainstream media, have systematically distorted the facts.
- *How humans notice changes:* Human beings are quick to notice sudden changes but tune out more gradual change. For example, if we gradually increase the temperature of the water in a bathtub, we can tolerate temperatures that would seem much too hot if we suddenly immersed ourselves in water at those temperatures. Similarly, small changes in the earth's temperature over many years do not register with many of us, even though the effects of these gradual changes could affect the lives of hundreds of millions of people.

continued . . .

WIDE WORLD CHANGING

... continued

- *Our distresses interfering:* Our distresses can make us feel powerless and unable to face the crisis.

STEPS TO AVOID CLIMATE DISASTER

Technology can help us solve our environmental problems, but the main question is whether we humans can cooperate effectively enough to solve them—and do this before the problems get out of control. We will need to unite and insist on new policies as a society (not just improve individual behavior). Policies we'll need to insist on include the following:

- Massively developing solar power, wind power, and other renewable sources of power, and conserving energy. In World War II the U.S. automobile industry rapidly converted from consumer products to military products. We have the ability to make such a change—this time converting from military production to renewable energy production.
- Sharply reducing the burning of fossil fuels (coal, oil, and natural gas/methane)
- Restoring ecosystems—protecting and increasing forests, conserving and rebuilding soils, conserving water, regenerating fisheries, protecting plant and animal diversity
- Eating lower on the food chain—a great deal of energy is wasted by feeding grain to cattle and hogs
- Eliminating poverty, stabilizing the human population, and providing each person with a basic education, basic health care, access to family planning, and a productive job (if the person is able)



MARGO HITTLEMAN

The only humane way to limit population is to eliminate poverty. People of all cultures tend to have fewer children when they aren't struggling economically, particularly when women and girls have access to basic education, health care, and family planning.

The rich nations of the world have been the main contributors to greenhouse gases and other environmental degradation. They have also created the poverty in the poor nations, by exploiting those nations' labor and natural resources. Rich nations need to reverse course and use their (ill-gotten) wealth to eliminate poverty and spread renewable energy. Therefore, the movement to halt climate change must be integrally linked to the movements to stop the rich nations from exploiting the poor nations and to require them to compensate for their past exploitation.

Continuing climate change would be devastating for all of us, but it would hurt people targeted by racism first and worst. It is hurting them now. When flooding, droughts, and forest fires occur, people targeted by racism generally lack the resources with which to escape, survive, and recover. African Americans living in Los Angeles (California, USA) are more than twice as likely to die in a heat wave than other residents of the city. People in coastal regions are overwhelmingly people targeted by racism. Many of them depend on subsistence farming or fishing, and their way of life is already being dramatically damaged by climate change. Therefore, the movement to halt climate change must be integrally linked to the movements to eliminate racism. (Many organizations are now working to bridge the gap between what have often been seen as separate issues—poverty and racism on the one hand, and environmental destruction on the other.)

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CLIMATE CHANGE, POVERTY, RACISM, AND WAR

Continued population growth would increasingly degrade the environment and lead to socio-economic conditions conducive to terrorism and economic wars.

The rich nations of the world, particularly the United States, have enough money to fund the policy steps listed above. Ecologist Lester Brown estimates that an earth restoration budget, based on those policy steps, would cost about a third of what the United States spends on its military, or about a sixth of the world's military expenditures. Using this money to protect

the environment is a far better defense of people and the planet than using it for military purposes. But the U.S. “military-industrial complex” is completely intertwined with the largest corporate interests, and both will unceasingly fight these measures. The capitalist system will continue to resist changes that are in the real human interests of everyone. This is because under capitalism decisions are based on profits rather than human needs.

A SHIFT IN POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC POWER

We will have to overcome the resistance of corporate interests in order to halt climate change. This will involve a profound political and economic power shift in the United States and other industrialized nations—a shift that will require the active support of the majority of the population. A broad coalition will be necessary, including the environmental movement; the movements to end racism, poverty, and war; and a movement to replace capitalism with an economic system that puts people and the planet above corporate profits.

In our favor is that the need for such a mass movement has never been greater. And the movements against war, poverty, classism, sexism, racism, and environmental destruction are now converging more powerfully than ever before. We also have better models: the past century has produced a large number of successful nonviolent direct-action movements that have been free of many of the problems in the revolutionary movements that have used violence as a main tactic.

TAKING ACTION

We can’t wait until we have discharged enough to feel comfortable with taking action. Harvey Jackins urged us to decide, act, and then discharge any distresses that interfere with deciding and acting. As he said in *The List* (on page 27), “Choosing and deciding against the pattern, and the permanent removal of the pattern through exhaustive discharge . . . support each other . . . neither process must be postponed for or ‘wait for’ the other.”

Harvey realized that “powerlessness . . . has to be *the* distress that we have gone on¹ respecting and treating as if it were reality. . . . What is holding us up from² decisive action, from speaking out clearly

enough about the things that we know well so that large numbers of people will hear us and will act in a rational, human direction? . . . The name of this unchallenged distress is powerlessness.” (See “Powerlessness Is a Fraud,” on pages 87 to 98 of *The Upward Trend*.)

We in RC have valuable information to share with social change activists. We need to engage with the people who have already decided to take action and share our tools with them, while learning what they have figured out. With the perspective of our new

continued . . .



DIANE SHISK

¹ “Gone on” means continued.

² “Holding us up from” means preventing us from taking.



LAURIE RHODES

... continued

goal,³ we can build relationships with environmental and social and economic justice activists.

See Madeleine Para's "Call to Action," on page 75 of the July 2012 *Present Time*, and the article by Morag Carmichael, "Prioritising Action," on page 80 of the January 2013 *Present Time*. See also the March 8, 2013, article by Wytse Visser and Diane Shisk, "Our Work on Racism Is Key to our Work on the Environment," on the e-mail discussion list for RC Community mem-

³ A goal adopted by the 2013 World Conference of the Re-evaluation Counseling Communities:

That members of the RC Community work to become fully aware of the rapid and unceasing destruction of the living environment of the Earth. That we discharge on any distress that inhibits our becoming fully aware of this situation and taking all necessary actions to restore and preserve our environment.

Distresses have driven people to use oppression against each other and carry out destructive policies against all of the world. A full solution will require the ending of divisions between people and therefore the ending of all oppressions.

The restoration and preservation of the environment must take precedence over any group of humans having material advantage over others. We can and must recover from any distress that drives us to destroy the environment in our attempts to escape from never-ending feelings of needing more resource.

bers. It is a crucial reminder that people targeted by racism have often been left out of the discussion on care of the environment—a critical mistake that we have begun to address.

We don't need to take giant steps at first, and care of the environment doesn't have to become *the* primary focus for each of us. However, we can all support the people who are already challenging oppression and working to limit climate change.

Seán Ruth's⁴ perspective (on page 53 of the July 2014 *Present Time*) is also important: "Some of us have assumed that as capitalism collapses, RCers will step forward and provide clear perspectives and leadership. This is not yet happening. . . . I believe that we can decide to do it and become a huge resource. However, it will take decision to make this happen."

We can all decide and act. We can oppose the mistaken policies and support the new good ones. A direction to try in Co-Counseling sessions might be, "If I do my part to change the policies that lead to climate disruption, civilization will not collapse. Doing my part means"

We will make mistakes, but with discharge we can understand and correct them. Waiting for sufficient discharge before we take action is probably a bigger mistake than any other.

John Braxton
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA

Some of the sources of information used in this article:

Lester Brown, *Plan B 2.0: Rescuing a Planet Under Stress and a Civilization in Trouble*, 2006

Lester Brown, "Could Food Shortages Bring Down Civilization?" *Scientific American*, May 2009

Lester Brown, *World on the Edge*, 2011

Fred Magdoff and John Bellamy Foster, "What Every Environmentalist Needs to Know About Capitalism," *Monthly Review*, March 2010

Bill McKibben, "Global Warming's Terrifying New Math," *Rolling Stone*, July 19, 2012

⁴ Seán Ruth is the International Liberation Reference Person for Middle-Class People.

Goodbye to Cold?

Hello to you in 3004*
From me, a thousand years before
Welcoming this frosty morning
Contemplating global warming

Cold's become my great delight
Fields of sparkles in the light
I love the cold and mourn its death
Mornings of billowing misty breath

Of sparkling frost on car and lawn
Diamond-white on grass at dawn
Fingers cold on bicycle bars
Sweaters, wool socks, cozy scarves

Can it be that you are yearning
For the cold that I've been learning
May soon be beyond returning?
Do you look back on today
To long ago and far away

As often I do to earlier times
Of natural places, natural climes?

The full moon, white like winter snow,
Casts its light on the world below
And seems to say, detached and clear,
That hearts for whom the earth is dear
And minds that built so much so fast
Can stop and think . . . and let cold last

And so are you, way up ahead,
In the future that I dread?
Or did we turn the other way
And make our precious winters stay?

Katie Kauffman
Seattle, Washington, USA

* This poem was written in 2004 and is about weather in the northwest United States.



ARIZONA, USA • LISA VOSS

Fighting for My “Different” Son

I am the parent of a child in “special education” and also work in a preschool for children with “special needs” (in the United States). It has been invaluable to discharge about my own child being “different” (not “typical”). This always gets to the heart of my own early hurts, where I feel on my own¹ and not okay about myself. It has also been helpful to connect with other parents of children who have disabilities and who are in the “special education” system. This has reduced my feelings of isolation.

Every child and every situation calls for unique efforts—there is never a “one size fits all” approach that works. I ask myself, “How can I assist teachers and clinicians to see my son as the unique, intelligent, and precious human being that he is? How can I obtain for him the resources that might be available to him in school?”

¹ “On my own” means by myself, without help.

Recently my son was placed in a class with teachers who seemed particularly rigid and punitive. They were both first-time parents. I decided to meet with them. They talked negatively and harshly about my son. I let myself cry in front of them and recounted some of my son’s early struggles. I also acknowledged how hard it must be for them to leave their own young children at home to come to work. My goal was for them to feel empathy for my son, to see him more fully and appreciate him. I had a sense that the only way I could reach them was by making myself vulnerable and speaking to them parent to parent. It’s not an approach I’d generally recommend, but in this case it had a good effect.

A month later, in a parent-teacher conference, they had nothing but positive things to say about my son. He had been better able to learn and be part of the class. He was also expressing less anger and frustration at home. We had started

doing special time² again, because I’d gathered some slack from having successfully handled what had felt like an impossible situation.

I keep in mind that people are better able to learn when they feel liked. I’ve also found that when young people are given even a little bit of good information about “differences” in other children, they can be curious without being unkind to their peers.

Disability oppression is real, and the educational system is seriously flawed or broken, but many positive things can still happen for us when we fight for our children.

Anonymous
New York, New York, USA

² “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.

Power, and Effective Policies

The reclaiming of power is at the heart of our re-emergence. . . . [This] means reaching for influence in existing organizations. It means furnishing effective leadership and encouragement to the people around us.

The great majority of the populations among whom we live are being forced by the worsening of their lives into facing the need to struggle for themselves. Such struggles can be successful if the people involved are helped to reach effective policies.

Harvey Jackins
From *The Kind, Friendly Universe*, pages 248 to 249

My Talk on Sexism

Last year I was looking to¹ get involved with projects related to ending all oppression. I met an African woman, F—, a survivor of domestic violence, who had started a project empowering vulnerable women. She wanted me to be the host for her first event. The majority of her audience was African, African-heritage, and Asian.

Previously at an unrelated gathering of activists discussing the misuse of technology, a group of women decided to address some of the sexism at the gathering. Male opinions had dominated the majority of the discussions. I joined some of the women on a panel in which each of us talked for a short time on women, sexism, and technology. It was the first time I had ever spoken at a public event. Karl Lam² was also at the gathering and noticed during the questions-and-answers part of the women's panel how hard it was for the men to engage. He stood up and spoke "as an ally to women," saying what he saw was happening and what the men needed to do to respect the women.

(Back to my conversation with F—) I explained to F— that I was interested in the relationship between sexism and the economic system and that I would at some time like to give a talk on that subject. F— was enthusiastic for me to do that at her event. She was pleasantly surprised when I proposed that I bring with me a man (Karl) who would be able to talk about how men can be allies to women.

Karl agreed to do the talk, and we both worked on our speeches. Because of internalised sexism and racism, it was a huge struggle for me to write the talk. It seemed hard to get started, and when I did start, it was difficult to express clearly the points I wanted to make. I felt like giving up on doing it and instead concentrating on my role as host of the event, which was also new and challenging for me. But Karl said that he would only speak at the event if I did.

In the end my talk wasn't perfect, but I did the best I could at the time. I spoke first, and then Karl followed with his talk. I spoke from my viewpoint as an African, middle-class,

raised-Muslim female. I'm glad I did it and gained some experience in public speaking and thinking about sexism. I got some good feedback from both females and males. I've included my talk below.

MY TALK

I would say that wherever we see women not fulfilling our potential, there is a reason for it (and it's not because we are the inferior sex).



NEW YORK CITY, NEW YORK, USA • AMANDA MARTINEZ

Sexism is the treatment of women as lesser human beings than men. The harshest end of sexism is the violence and emotional abuse that women are subjected to. The sex industry exploits individual vulnerable women to make huge profits while at the same time devaluing all women and trivialising us as sexual objects.

But there are also many ideas and messages we hear in everyday life that "justify" sexism. These ideas are taken to be³ normal or obvious. For example, that women are inherently "crazy," emotional, and irrational; that by nature we are weak, unintelligent, and lack confidence.

There are many other forms of discrimination that work in similar ways to devalue one set of humans compared to another. And they have similar everyday messages that work to justify them, for example, that white people are better than people of colour, that adults should be more respected than children, that able-bodied people are more valuable than people with disabilities, that middle-class people are smarter than working-class people.

What is true about females? Sexism tells us a lot of lies about women. And our current and historic achievements are devalued or just not mentioned at all.

If it is true that women are inherently irrational and unintelligent, what does it mean if I can name Maggie Aderin-Pocock, who is a top black woman physicist?

If it is true that women are by nature weak, then what does it mean if I can name Beryl Burton, a white woman cyclist

continued . . .

¹ "Looking to" means intending to.

² Karl Lam is the Regional Reference Person for Cambridge, Herts, Beds, Bucks, and Norfolk, in England.

³ "Taken to be" means considered.

WIDE WORLD CHANGING

... continued

who in the 1960s held the world record for cycling the most miles in twelve hours? It took two years before a man could beat her record.

If it is true that women lack confidence, what does it mean if I can tell you about Jayaben Desai, the Asian woman who in 1976 led a fight for better working conditions at the Grunwick Film Processing Labs in London?

Men's achievements are celebrated! Their achievements are held up to say something good about all men. This encourages all men to keep trying to be the best when in fact only a few actual men can make it to⁴ the top of any area of society—politics, science, business. There is a reason for this, too, and I would say that it's not that those men who don't make it to the "top" are stupid. That is what class discrimination might try to say about them.

But if most men can't be at the very "top of society," well at least they can settle for being "better than women," right?

Where any of us human beings are not fulfilling our true potential (as intelligent, powerful, courageous, and respectful toward others), I would say that it is a measure of the extent to which we have been confused by the messages of sexism, racism, classism, and other oppressions.

Little girls are confident. They will fight against the lies that sexism tells them about themselves. But I'd say that it's such a tough battle that we females mostly lose and our confidence is gradually knocked down. And then we do our best to achieve and grow within the limits society presents to us.

We women risk humiliation and mistreatment if we do anything that might make us be seen as unattractive. We are generally treated as "not quite normal" (or a "tomboy") if we like traditional boys' activities.

We tend to be told to be careful or more ladylike if we spend time improving our spatial awareness and developing our physical strength through hard physical play. Boys generally do this for hours on end⁵—and it does take many hours of practice to develop any skill to a good level (the author Malcolm Gladwell writes about the research behind this).

The same is true of expressing ourselves and developing our thinking and ideas; this takes solid hours of good-quality practice. But as women our practice tends to be limited when we grow up noticing that a man's opinion is generally more valued than a woman's.

When women try things that society doesn't expect us to do well, our mistakes are more likely to be seen as proof

that we can't do them, while a man's mistakes are more likely to be seen as his learning curve toward success.

I think most women have had the experience of being in a group and expressing an idea that nobody acknowledges, and then a few minutes later a man repeats the same idea and gets congratulated on how brilliant the idea was. When we women talk about these experiences with each other, I think it helps us understand that these things aren't personal attacks on us. There is nothing wrong with us. They are part of a system of discrimination that affects everyone.

Sexism, like other forms of discrimination, has several roles within our current economic system. One is for businesses to make money out of the insecurities we have because of sexism. The cosmetic industry thrives by providing "solutions" to women's lack of self-esteem because of sexism—our breasts aren't the right size; we need make-up, the right clothes, special diet products, and wrinkle removers.

The pharmaceutical industry thrives by selling pills to provide "solutions" to women's apparent inability to cope and think clearly under the stress of sexism. The symptoms we display, like crying, which any counsellor might tell you is part of a healing process, are treated as proof of our emotional irrationality.

A role that all discrimination plays is putting us all in competition with each other for paid work. Where there is not full employment, we are all pitted against each other to gain the money we need to provide for ourselves and our families.

In the race to get and keep jobs, we can unknowingly come to depend on those messages that say that one of us is more deserving than another. And unthinkingly we treat each other badly. Women fare badly—we are not valued and are left with low-paid work or lower rates of pay for doing the same work as men.

Over the last twenty years the computing industry, in which I work, has developed many methods of reuniting people and helping them to respect each other and work together cooperatively. This is because these things have been proven to produce higher quality work. It's a struggle as we learn about each other, but it's more enjoyable and inclusive. We share knowledge, listen to each other, and inspire each other. We learn and grow together.

Some say it is the way we would have always treated each other had we been raised in a society in which there was room for everyone to flourish. I have decided to put my mind to creating such a society.

Alima Adams

Cambridge, Cambridgeshire, England
Reprinted from the RC e-mail discussion
list for leaders of wide world change

⁴ "Make it to" means reach.

⁵ "Hours on end" means many hours.

“This Is Where I Grew Up”

I was invited to lead a small-group session at an event about pesticides and herbicides and their disproportionate effects on poor people and people of color.

A hundred of us traveled to a small Oregon (USA) community where a long fight has been underway against the spraying of herbicides and the resulting health effects, including miscarriage and cancer.

The speakers at the event were mostly working-class residents of rural communities. They had been personally affected by and were waging fights in their communities against the aerial spraying of herbicides (a huge component of clear-cutting¹). A few people came to defend the use of spraying on their land. There were ten breakout sessions on a range of great topics related to organizing.

¹ “Clear-cutting” is a way of logging a forest in which every tree in a large area is cut down. Herbicides are sprayed in the clear-cut areas after new trees are planted, to keep all the other plant species from competing with the newly planted trees. Biodiversity, soil quality, water quality, and habitat are vastly reduced in clear-cut areas.

I had been asked to do something on listening, in part as an antidote to despair. I led two forty-five-minute sessions—introductions to RC, called “Listening Partnerships: A Key Resource for Social Change.”

The first one was lovely. Four people attended—including two students of color and a woman who teaches theater arts. They were great, loved it, and said they’d like to pursue it further. In such a brief time they got a picture of RC, our thinking about humans and society, and a taste of our listening process and how helpful it might be to them and the larger effort.

Just one woman came to the next session. She loved it and asked me to come out and teach the same thing to her women’s group in her small rural community, which I might do.

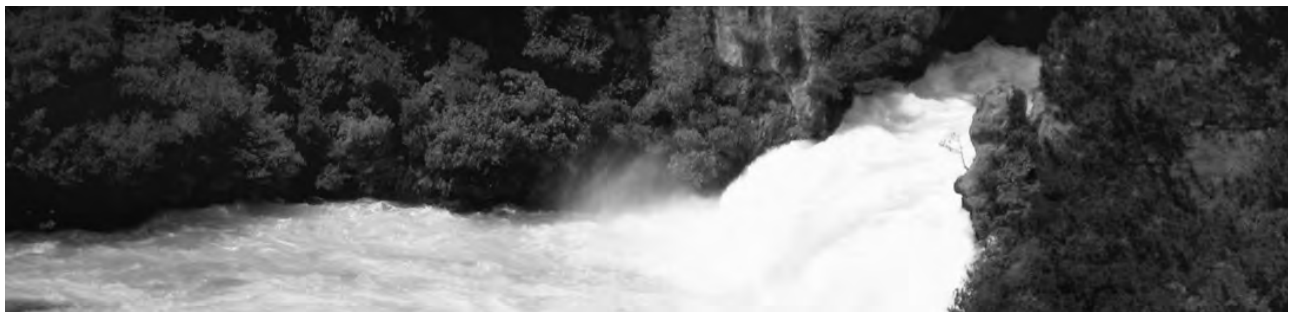
Powerful for me was noticing *how personal* the issue of herbicides is for those of us who grew up here. During a bus tour, we drove through west Eugene, where poor people live and the big polluting industries are. A man talked at length about forest

practices. A woman wondered why people working in the forestry industry don’t get it,² when their children are also being exposed to herbicides. I stood up and said, “People have pride in their work. Tremendous skill is involved in this industry, and people need to be appreciated for what they do.” I also wanted to say that the industry is part of the culture here, has been the life here, and is the work that has been available. I had a lot of feelings about it. Later I got to cry hard, noticing that this is where I grew up; this is the industry I grew up with. My dad was a forester, and my classmates’ dads worked in the mills.

I’m inspired to have more conversations with people from here and listen to how deep this goes for them. Facing environmental issues and changing our practices mean facing how important forestry work has been, and everything about our connection to this place.

Cameron Hubbe
Eugene, Oregon, USA

² “Get it” means understand the issue.



NEW ZEALAND • ELLIE PUTNAM

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

We live in capitalism. Its power seems inescapable. So did the divine right of kings. Any human power can be resisted and changed by human beings.

Ursula Le Guin

No More Public Remembrance Day Ceremonies

In order to create peace and end humans harming humans, we need fresh thinking about how we publicly remember war. I have been discharging on my memories of Remembrance Day ceremonies.

In Canada on November 11, in all three territories and six of our ten provinces, Remembrance Day is a public holiday. It commemorates November 11, 1918, when the First World War ended. Many shops and services and all schools are closed. Many people attend Remembrance Day ceremonies—often with their families, including the young people.

When I was a young person, my schools held Remembrance Day ceremonies. I was required to attend along with all the other students and teachers. I noticed how bad all the adults felt, and there was some kind of unspoken requirement that the young people feel bad, too. The adults wanted us to act and feel solemn, serious, and sorrowful along with them. This was confusing, because I knew that wars were actually happening in other places in the world and I wondered why the adults were feeling so bad about war but not putting an end to it. The Remembrance Day ceremony became a ritual of adults rehearsing their bad feelings and passing them on to the young people. And because the adults were feeling so bad, they were less playful and less interesting and accessible to me.

At the same time that my rational mind was questioning the entire ceremony, a part of my mind that had been hurt by young people's oppression was telling me, "There might be something good and useful going on¹ here that I am too young to understand." (I had been told repeatedly at home that I was too young to understand the world and the motivations and intelligence of adults, and this had made it difficult to trust my thinking.) Another tension in my young mind was, "The adults don't seem to make any sense sometimes, yet I am forced to follow their lead for my survival." This was extremely scary to face as a young person.

Sexism also fed my inability to trust my thinking. War and Remembrance Day were presented as an entirely male realm. The dead soldiers we were supposed to feel bad about were always male. War was shown to be something that men did to other men. The apparently important (because they were publicly recognized every year in a ritualistic ceremony) subjects of war and the military were male arenas. I wrongly perceived that they were subjects beyond my intelligence as a young female.

¹ "Going on" means happening.

War is the ultimate failure of human intelligence and is completely irrational and hurtful. Informing young people about war, and other irrational human behaviour, needs to be done thoughtfully, by giving tiny bits of information over long periods of time (weeks or years sometimes) and providing lots of opportunities for the young people to ask questions, share their thinking, and possibly discharge. (A lot of good thinking has been done in RC about sharing information with young people about the *Shoah*.²)

As an adult I now have more accurate information about the world and know that vast numbers of women and children are casualties of modern war. I also know that war is used by corporations to make money off of armaments and is a tool of the owning class to have control over resources. Male-dominated Remembrance Day ceremonies that focus on the military and the loss of (almost always male) soldiers show us only a small picture of what war is and how it affects the world. And they restimulate and distract us, preventing us from looking honestly at a bigger picture that could help us untangle war. The incongruence with reality and the lack of truth are confusing and hurtful.

Soldiers are precious human beings, just like every single one of us, and war takes these precious humans (mostly male) and uses them as living fuel to be chewed up in the machinery of our class society. Without the men's oppression that convinces us that men are disposable, there would be no more war. Discharging on and ending men's oppression and classism are the keys to ending war.

Instead of public Remembrance Day ceremonies, I would like to see gatherings for adults only in which actual healing can happen (in which discharge is openly explained and encouraged). In addition, the active creation of peace should be part of these gatherings. Relaxed intelligence, emotional awareness, and communication skills are what will keep us safe from violence. We also need to share accurate information with each other about the full impacts of war. We need to think, act, and discharge. None of those crucial three steps are happening at the public Remembrance Day ceremonies where I live.

Kerri Wall

Fernie, British Columbia, Canada
Reprinted from the RC e-mail discussion
list for leaders of wide world change



² The *Shoah* is the Holocaust.

Bringing Fathers Together

I was working as a community development facilitator in a project that aimed to bring families together and connect them with school and community services; the goal was to help prepare children to achieve at school. The project was based in a primary school with a diverse, largely migrant and refugee population and mostly attracted mothers. Fathers would sometimes turn up,¹ but they never sustained their involvement.

Then I learned of an approach the Family Action Centre at Newcastle University (in New South Wales, Australia) used for involving working-class and Aboriginal fathers. They engaged the children by offering a Play Night, and then the children would bring their fathers (uncles, grandfathers) along. After learning about that, for ten years I ran “Kids’ and Dads’ Play Nights” in several schools in Western Sydney (New South Wales). Other schools picked up the idea, and we are now building teams to run the events in inner-city schools. Because many children don’t have fathers at home, some of them invite other male mentors. Thus we have changed the name of the play night to “Kids’ and Blokes”² Playzone.” This is how it works:

After hearing about the event in class, each child takes home a letter of invitation, signed by him or her. A return slip is sent back to the school if the child and his or her father (or ally) is planning to come. The children’s anticipation of an evening of play helps get the fathers (allies) to attend.

On the play night, the children turn up with their dad (or ally) for a two-and-a-half-hour gathering in the school hall. Team members welcome the families as they arrive and get

them playing with beanbags and balls. Then we do a short welcome, identify the team members, talk about how to make the play go well, and go over the schedule for the evening.



DESERT VIEW WATCHTOWER, ARIZONA, USA • JOSHUA FEYEN

After that, a facilitator runs play activities for up to an hour. We encourage people to make some new friends. We talk about the importance of having fun in the play. We say that children like a challenge but that they also love it when they get to beat³ grown-ups and that this kind of play builds confidence and resilience. Some of the activities involve the child and father (or ally) working together—like the “Dress-up Relay,” in which each child gets to dress his or her father (ally) in funny gear and race children on the other team in doing the same.

The children get very animated, so it helps to have a grounding activity before dinner. One that has worked well is a short, guided shoulder massage in which the men give a massage to their children and vice versa.

After dinner the fathers (allies) leave for a separate meeting, and the children have ice cream and play some more with team members. In the fathers’ (allies’) meeting, a facilitator appreciates the men for making the effort and taking the time to come,

draws attention to the young people’s enthusiasm for the playtime, and says that this part of the evening is for the men to think and talk with each other about their relationships with their children. Then there’s a warm-up activity in which they each share with the man next to them a memory of their own father. The turns aren’t timed, though when I facilitate I usually ask them to take about six minutes each. After that, I open up space for them to share their reflections with the others. I usually ask a few questions: What do you want in this important relationship? What would you like to hear from others here? Occasionally I add information if it’s relevant to the sharing or steer the conversation back to their relationships with their children if it starts to go off track.

The men talk about being “time poor” and how the expectations on them are different from those on their own fathers. They talk about the playing they do with their children, how they share parenting decisions with partners, and their challenges with discipline. Some of them talk about having considerable struggles in their parenting. There is little advice-giving. They seem to appreciate and be helped by having the space to talk and by hearing from each other. Some of them don’t say much but look completely focused on the discussion.

Play in community with a supportive team breaks down isolation. It is active, and though many of the men are shy when they arrive, they manage to get involved in it with a little structure and support. Men who have little English can take part.⁴ That the evening begins with “hands on” play in a supportive setting contributes to “talking real.” Sometimes the men joke about talking so openly and personally “without a

continued . . .

¹ “Turn up” means come.

² “Blokes” is a friendly term for men.

³ “Beat” means prevail over.

⁴ “Take part” means participate.

WIDE WORLD CHANGING

... continued

beer.” At the end of the evening when they rejoin the children, they are often intently engaged with each other and slow to leave. And the children show increased connection by climbing on their fathers’ (or allies’) shoulders or swinging on their arms.

The men often say they would like to meet more often. They have stopped me in the street to tell me what a good program it is. One rearranged his work schedule to be able to attend. Some

have told me that they call on each other to pick up their children when they can’t make it⁵ to school on time. Some have asked for assistance with difficulties with their children.

We hear from mothers that the get-togethers have a good effect. The young people are keen to come. Some of the men tell how their children ring

⁵ “Make it” means get.

them up⁶ at work on the day of the play night to say, “Don’t be late home,” or put out the clothes their fathers have to wear. School principals are pleased to see the men at school. Students and community workers who are part of the team find the events interesting and enjoyable.

Sandy Wilder
Moruya, New South Wales, Australia
Reprinted from the RC e-mail
discussion list for leaders of parents

⁶ “Ring them up” means call them on the telephone.

Creating Alternatives to Capitalism

At a recent workshop, I reminded people of something that Harvey Jackins had pointed out. He said that the new system always develops within the existing system. This means that as we witness the collapse of this economic system, we may also see elements of an alternative system developing alongside the collapse.

I mentioned some exciting and hopeful things that are happening in Greece, Spain, Chiapas (Mexico), Bolivia, and other parts of the world. It was clear that some people were not familiar with at least some of these. They asked for more details.

I talked a bit about Chiapas, where Indigenous people are practising direct democracy and self-management on a large scale. I quoted someone from Chiapas who described it as similar to the Paris Commune* but on a much larger scale and over a much longer period of time. People at the workshop found this very hopeful.

At a time when lots of things could cause us to feel hopeless, I think it makes sense for us to learn about the various signs of hope that are also present in the world. I would like to invite you to search for examples of attempts to resist, or to build alternatives to, this economic system. The examples could be at a local, national or international level.

Seán Ruth
International Liberation Reference
Person for Middle-Class People
Stillorgan, County Dublin, Ireland

* The Paris Commune was a revolutionary socialist government that ruled Paris (France) from March 18 to May 28, 1871.

Thanks for this important perspective, Seán, and the reminder to seek out the good news from around the world. I accept your invitation to share stories of success.

I would refer people to my article “Leading Is Just a Job You Learn How to Do” in the pamphlet *A New Kind of Communicator*. It tells how we used the four organizational forms of RC—the session, the support group, the class, and the leaders’ group—to organize our group of hand sewers of shoes, and other workers.

For years at workshops I have been saying that our work is to build within the oppressive system the structures that will remain in place after the current oppressive structure has collapsed. You can see people doing this in every dysfunctional and collapsing society, and in times of war. People are resilient. I am reading an article about how ordinary people in Sierra Leone and Liberia are creating their own organization in response to the Ebola epidemic, as the international community’s aid has been too inadequate and too late in many instances. What is exciting is that we could do this in a more deliberate and organized way in a time of relative peace, not just when the situation forces us to. That was my goal in going to work in the factory, and I am pleased with what I was able to do.

At workshops, after I’ve talked about the inevitable collapse of capitalism, people have asked me, “What do you think the rational classless society of the future will look like?” Many have asked for a picture of an alternative economy. I do not think that that’s the key issue. I think that the economy, and all other issues, will sort themselves out once we have figured out how to relate to each other in a human way. (I don’t mean that we should not be experimenting with new models. I’m just

saying that the best models fail under the force of human patterns and that it is key that we learn to keep the patterns in check until we can discharge them.) I think the most significant transformation will not be in the economic structure but in the way that humans relate to each other. When asked the question, "What will the future classless society look like?" I say, "Well, very much like this workshop:

- Everyone has a job.
- Lots of work gets done. People do it willingly, without a lot of supervision.
- There is lots of room for initiative and creativity.
- Leadership is encouraged. Anyone can propose and lead a group on any topic, and there are also many designated leaders.
- People are listened to with respect. People agree to listen to things that are upsetting and may challenge them to change the way they act and think. People have agreed to welcome the upset in the interest of ending oppression.
- Lots of concrete problems get solved relatively easily. We do a lot of significant things in a short amount of time.
- We try to face everything that humans struggle with.
- Despite the hard work, we usually come away inspired and energized."

Using the organizational forms of RC, without a union or visible organization, my co-workers and I were able to encourage initiatives such as the following:

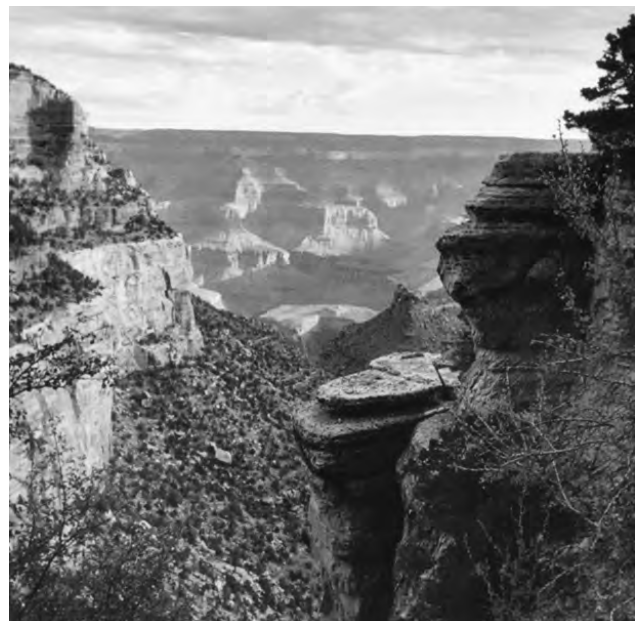
- We held strikes that increased our pay and met our demands for being treated respectfully.
- Sections of the factory were turned over to me and our "organization" while supervisors went on leave.
- We got one of our workers on the management and engineering team that reorganized the whole factory to use a better and safer production process. It was based on a method our team had invented and used secretly during a very oppressive time and that had then spread secretly through most of the factory. (One day our very oppressive vice president "took a session" in front of a meeting of all the workers. He said that he could not understand why every good plan he had [for making things more oppressive] died when it came to our building.)

- We eliminated many manifestations of sexism and racism. Forty-seven of us white working-class hand sewers went to management and proposed that we work only four days a week to save the jobs of the three Korean-immigrant hand sewers who were the last hired. The management agreed, and those people kept their jobs.
- I organized a sports league in the factory, and we played every day on breaks and during lunch. We used it to organize ourselves in a visible way that would not scare management. I had won people's agreement for a handicap system that would allow each team to play as equals to the other. This allowed women and immigrants who had never played the game to participate as equals. At the end-of-season tournament my partner, another white man, and I were playing against two women—one an immigrant from Taiwan, the other from Korea. Lots of workers came out to watch the game, and everyone was cheering for the two women. A young man who had been a drug dealer but had cleaned himself up came up to me almost in tears saying he had never been in a place where working-class people were appreciating each other—even when competing in games.

The transformation of the relationships, the ending of sexism and racism, and the ways that people related to each other were the significant change from which all the other successes followed.

Factory Worker
USA

Reprinted from an RC
e-mail discussion list



GRAND CANYON, ARIZONA, USA • VICTOR NICASSIO

Important RC Resources!

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 pages 105 and 106 of this *Present Time*.

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

The entire 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, and 2014 four-CD sets are also available to anyone, for \$25 per set, while supplies last.

The 12-CD sets for 2006, 2007, and 2008; for 2009, 2010, and 2011; and for 2012, 2013, and 2014 are each available to anyone for \$40 per set.

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. If you are not a certified RC teacher, you can subscribe for \$35 a year. Anyone can order up to three years at a time.

Fundamentals Teaching Guide Updated, and Readings Now on Website

The *Fundamentals Teaching Guide and Class Outline—Part I*, which now contains twenty-eight class outlines for teaching the fundamentals of RC, was recently updated in the following ways:

- A new topic was added: “Discouragement and Fighting for Ourselves.” (In 2013, the original version was updated to include the new topic “Care of the Environment.”)

- Additions were made to Topic 6, “The Early Roots of Distress Recordings”; Topic 7, “Counseling Techniques”; and Topic 23, “The Re-evaluation Counseling Community.”



- Additional readings (articles by Tim Jackins) for both teachers and students were added to many of the other topics.

- References to the *Guidelines of the Re-evaluation Counseling Communities* were updated to be consistent with the 2013 *Guidelines*.

Future purchases of the *Fundamentals Teaching Guide and Class Outline—Part I* will include these updates. In addition, the updates and all of the readings can be found on the RC website at <www.rc.org/page/ftg1readings>. Instead of making copies of articles for their students, teachers can now refer their students to the website.

Readings referred to in the *Fundamentals Teaching Guide and Class Outline (Liberation)—Part II* are also now available on the website at <www.rc.org/page/ftg2readings>.

For ordering information, see page 110.

RC Muslims: Don't Go Quiet

Dear all, *Salam Alekom*,¹

The recent events in France² have been heartbreaking, scary, and infuriating for me. I am outraged at the depths of the effects of oppression on all of us. I am outraged at the brutality and horrors of colonization and racism and how they've damaged both the colonized and the colonizer.

I am also encouraged and hopeful. Our humanness continues to show itself in such hard times. I am moved by the courageous and kind stands that so many people have taken in the face of so much hurt and confusion.

I love Muslim people. I love every one of us. I know how good every one of us is and how much we want to set the world right. Each one of us is good to our core. We are intelligent and loving people. In the face of much hurt, we have always done our best.

All of us are vulnerable to the outrageous messages about Muslims circulated over the last many decades

¹ *Salam Alekom* means "peace to you" in Arabic and is a traditional greeting among Muslims.

² On January 7, 2015, in Paris, France, two Islamic militants killed twelve people in the offices of the French satirical newspaper *Charlie Hebdo*, which had published a number of disrespectful cartoons of the Prophet Muhammad. In the following two days, another Islamic militant killed five more people in Paris, including four whom he had taken hostage in a kosher supermarket.

and especially during the recent period. A good many of us³ who live in Western capitalist nations that have waged wars against Muslims are scared. Internalized oppression makes us want to be invisible as Muslims and go quiet with our feelings and thinking, to not attract further attacks. We are also scared (for good reason) that especially during these times of crisis we are more watched and scrutinized by surveillance systems. We don't talk on the phone and are careful about what we write on social media or even on RC lists.

I encourage all Muslims in RC to not go quiet. Have at least one session about the recent events. How do you feel about them? What is it like for you as a Muslim where you live in the aftermath of these events? I want us to discharge the hurts so that we can be clearer and clearer about our own goodness and what we think. I would like our allies to reach out to us proactively and listen to us.

Azi Khalili

*International Liberation Reference Person for South, Central, and West Asian-Heritage People
Brooklyn, New York, USA*

Reprinted from the RC e-mail discussion lists for leaders of Asians; for leaders of South, Central, and West Asians; and for RC Community members

³ "A good many of us" means a large number of us.

Urgent Work

My heart is heavy with the news of the police beating yesterday, in Alabama (USA), of an Indian grandfather until he became partially paralyzed, and the horrific killing of the Muslim youth in North Carolina (USA).

Figuring out how to get our RC Communities better informed about South, Central, and West Asians and taking a stand against xenophobia and Islamophobia are urgent work. I would love to keep thinking together about how to discharge, work collectively, and not get discouraged and immobilized by anger in the face of these awful events that seem to be happening with all too much frequency.

Monisha Bajaj

Berkeley, California, USA

Reprinted from the RC e-mail discussion list for leaders of South, Central, and West Asian-heritage people



JO PERRY

A Class on South Asian Liberation

I want to teach a class on South Asian liberation for my RC class. My main goal is to show more about myself so I can get closer with my Co-Counselors. I want to share information about our religions, histories, and liberation movements in South Asia. I will talk about the racism we experience here as well as how we are set up to be middle agents and against African-heritage people and Latinos/as. I will talk about how most USers only get information about South Asians that is filtered by whom they meet here (which is often limited by whom the United States lets in) or by media that make us seem exotic, dangerous, and spiritual in dehumanizing ways.

Dipti Baranwal

Los Angeles, California, USA

Reprinted from the e-mail discussion list for leaders of South, Central, and West Asian-heritage people



KATIE KAUFFMAN

“I Can Hold Out a Hand of Unity”

I have been privileged to have some perspective on the relationship between the struggles of South, Central, and West Asian-heritage people and the struggles of Black Americans. For many years I and my African-heritage collaborator and best friend have worked together on projects centered on the elimination of all forms of oppression. We have had many conversations. We have deepened our understanding of white supremacy and how it has spread misinformation about both our groups and pitted us against each other.

We South, Central, and West Asians can discharge together and look at where we have been forced to swallow anti-Black views and misinformation, where our people and families have been forced to believe the hype in order to “survive.”

As I get clearer about the effect of anti-Black oppression on my life and on my mind, I can work more closely to build understanding and solidarity with Black communities and show how our struggles are one. I can do this

without being massively restimulated when folks of color repeat misinformation to me about my people. I can hold out a hand of unity in the struggle. I hold out my hand to all of you. Let’s do mini-sessions! Call me!

Kayhan Irani

Jackson Heights, New York, USA

Reprinted from the RC e-mail discussion list for leaders of South, Central, and West Asian-heritage people



BISH BASH FALLS, MASSACHUSETTS, USA • STEVE BANBURY

Training Allies to South Asians

We recently had a great South Asian conference call for North America. Eleven lovely RCers joined. Part of what we looked at was victimization, and where we can work to clean that up. Training our allies is one way that I am trying to do just that.

This Saturday I will be leading my first daylong workshop—South Asian Liberation and Allies—for my Region.* We have thirty people signed up—wowza!

Amisha Patel

Chicago, Illinois, USA

Reprinted from the RC e-mail discussion list for leaders of South, Central, and West Asian-heritage people

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

The Systematic Targeting of Black Men

Rudy Nickens¹ led a Men and Allies gather-in for our Region.² Rudy lives in St. Louis, Missouri (USA), and has been actively involved in the citizen protests against the killing of Michael Brown and the failure of the grand jury to bring the policeman who killed him to trial.³

He explained that most U.S. criminal cases that include any evidence at all are sent by grand juries to trial court. There, evidence and testimony, weighed by a jury, become public. However, police officers and armed federal officials (including from the Federal Bureau of Investigation [FBI], the Border Patrol, and the Drug Enforcement Administration) are rarely brought to trial, or convicted or punished. Over eighteen years FBI agents have shot about a hundred and fifty people, of whom nearly half have been killed.

¹ Rudy Nickens is the Regional Reference Person for Missouri, Kansas, Nebraska, and Iowa, USA.

² A Region is a subdivision of the International RC Community, usually consisting of several Areas (local RC Communities).

³ On August 9, 2014, a white police officer shot and killed an unarmed black teenager in Ferguson, Missouri, USA. This led to many protests in Ferguson and around the country, against that killing as well as the ongoing police brutality directed at Black people. On November 24, 2014, a county grand jury decided not to indict the officer, which led to further protests.

Eighty-five percent of the victims have been African-heritage or Latino men. The FBI resolves these cases itself, and only three times have the agents involved been tried and only once convicted—and instead of jail time the agent did community service while on parole.

Many police departments do not report police shootings, so the public may never hear about them.

Rudy told us that in the hundred years following the U.S. Civil War, a Black man was killed on average every three days. In recent years it's jumped to every twenty-eight hours. These are sons, brothers, fathers, friends. They are human beings, every one of them precious.

Rudy did two beautiful demonstrations—one with a man on how much he loved another man, his friend, who was there in the room, and another with a young man of the global majority on how racism enraged him.

Jane Zones

San Francisco, California, USA

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

“It Will Need to Be the Women”

Dear Women,

This morning I am thinking of the African-heritage mothers who fear for their children's lives here in the United States. I am thinking about the Black mothers of sons shot down in the streets of the United States. I am thinking about the militarization of the U.S. police forces at the local and state level. As women, as mothers, as aunties, as grandmothers, what do we need to discharge, what do we need to face, in order to take a stand to realize our Goal 1¹—the

¹ A goal adopted by the 2001 World Conference of the Re-evaluation Counseling Community and reaffirmed by subsequent World Conferences: That the elimination of racism, in particular the racism aimed at people of African heritage, be actively made an ongoing, central piece of the work of the Re-evaluation Counseling Community.

elimination of racism, in particular the racism aimed at people of African heritage?

For me personally, I am enraged and having sessions about what is happening in the streets of America. I get incensed when I read about “over there”—news reports of terrorism overseas, of genocide of children overseas—when children are being gunned down here on our own streets, in our own neighborhoods, and the police are responding to peaceful civilians with militarized force.

I am a mother and a grandmother. My heart breaks; I rage and cry in sessions. I listen to my daughters who have African-heritage sons. I listen to my friends and neighbors

who have African-heritage sons. I attend community events. I back² the leadership of my community-activist friends by listening, by standing with them, by sharing meals and talking.

People spend so much time grieving the loss of celebrity lives, but it is our children who are dying daily, often violently, and I think that if anyone can stop the violence, it will need to be the women.

With love,

Marcie Rendon

International Liberation Reference

Person for Native Americans
Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA

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

² “Back” means support.

boy got lost. Instead of seeing a young boy struggling to come to grips with his father's irrational and oppressive behaviour, I saw a young person hurt by his parents' fighting and ultimate divorce. Instead of seeing a woman fleeing for her life, I saw a young person abandoned by his mother. In both cases, the male domination was "written out" of the picture.

This has begun to change, thanks to the latest series of men's classes. In each class, Tony lovingly reminds us that we, too, as boys, experienced male domination. However, because as men we have the position of privilege in society, we adopt male domination and, often unknowingly, pass it on. To make matters worse, this behaviour is rewarded and upheld by the society and culture. We are the agents of oppression.

Tony has done an excellent job of maintaining the fine balance between our embracing the goodness of all men and not going victim to the material.⁷ One of the things I have found particularly helpful is thinking about men in my life who made a difference to the world, and really noticing that they were men: that groovy⁸ third-grade teacher who wore platform shoes, my great uncles who lived together until the day they died. It's really great to be a man working to end male domination.

Bruce Clezy
Northcote, Victoria, Australia

⁷ "Material" means distress.

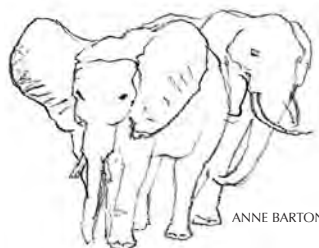
⁸ "Groovy" means wonderful.

A group of us men have been meeting once a fortnight to discharge, build brotherhood, and learn how to be effective for each other's re-emergence. It's a huge contradiction to our training.

One of my struggles has been to see that all men are good, that I am good, that as a man I am good. Each week we have been spending time noticing men in our lives, or men we know of, past or present, who have made a difference in the world. I have a long list now, and it's growing.

Noticing men's goodness, their humanity, has enabled me to see with a greater clarity the set-up of men's conditioning. As a consequence I am more able to discharge on male domination as an unavoidable set-up that happens to all men rather than as a personal and isolated attack on my masculinity and me. I am more able to take responsibility for my oppressor material. I am more able to articulate how I learned to be a "man." I notice just how hurtful those lessons were, for everyone involved, and I discharge. It is very encouraging.

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



"The Toughest, Meanest Leader There Ever Was"

If elders do get themselves organized and come up with¹ a good program and start being active, they can play a decisive role in many struggles that are going on.² I think because of their greater experience, they can bring some clarity in places where people in other movements might tend to get confused.

There's a problem in that both inside RC and outside, the elders' movement is dominated by middle-class retirees who are concerned with their standard of living and having good vacations and leisure time. The great mass of elders who are living in intense poverty, which gets deeper and deeper as the years go by, are not thought about well yet.

In my opinion . . . [elders] should be leading everything. . . . Take it on yourself to be the toughest, meanest leader there ever was.

Harvey Jackins
From *The Kind, Friendly Universe*,
pages 235, 236, and 240

¹ "Come up with" means think of, create.

² "Going on" means happening.

The Usefulness of Counseling White People on Racism

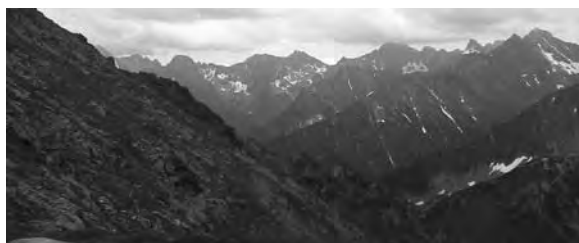
I'm a biracial Black woman from the United States, and I've been in RC for sixteen years. Over the last couple of years, I've done some experimenting with counseling white people I'm close to on racism. It's been useful for me and for them. I've even found it fun and inspiring!

For a long time I was pretty¹ opposed to the idea of counseling white people on racism. I have a Black father and a white mother, and I was raised by two white parents after the age of five. They were well meaning and politically liberal but not able to be much of a resource to my brother and me in the area of racism. And like many children, I was a frequent counselor to my parents. By the time I found RC, I felt pretty well² done with paying attention to white people's feelings about racism.

I have certainly given permission over the years to white Co-Counselors, who I know will work on it thoughtfully, to work on racism with me—in particular in mixed situations in which we have been working on racism as a group. At other times, white Co-Counselors have started working on racism, either directly or indirectly, without asking and have shown things that were hard on me. I have then struggled to speak up, and we have fumbled through.

I've worked on addressing those moments more often and more quickly—expecting my counselors to be more effective allies and not

to be careless with my resource. But lately, I have begun experimenting with intentionally counseling white people on racism and the chronic material that holds it in place for them. And it's been going well.



THE TATRA MOUNTAINS, POLAND • KAISLI SYRJÄNEN

I had a white regular Co-Counselor for ten years whom I would occasionally listen to about her heartbreak related to racism in her childhood. That was my first try at what has recently become my more concerted effort, and it went well. It was easy to remember how good she was, and is, and she worked really honestly on how the racism had impacted her.

About two years ago, I challenged a white Co-Counselor of mine, while I was client, on where she holds back in our relationship. It led to her unoccluding some early memories related to racism, and to realizing more deeply how her chronic material,³ racism, and our relationship are connected. We were about to be at a couple of workshops together, and both at and between those workshops we did several more sessions in which we went back and forth working on racism and our relationship. This was the first time I had explicitly *decided* to counsel a white person directly on racism. She and I both discharged hard, and got a lot closer quickly, by taking this

on⁴ together. We made a commitment to each other that it would be a shared long-term project.

Last fall, I was at a workshop with another white Co-Counselor whom I love, and who I've been getting a lot closer to over the last year and a half. Since we first connected about a decade ago, it has been clear to me that this white man has some perspective about racism that has a noteworthy level of integrity. This has been a big contradiction⁵ to me as a Black female, and it was a key part of why I wanted a relationship with him. At this recent workshop we spent a lot of time together, and during one of our longer sessions, a childhood memory related to racism came up for him and he asked if it was okay with me to work on it. I said yes, and it went well. I could so clearly see the reality of who he was, and it wasn't hard on me to listen to him fight for himself while he faced what it's like to be in the oppressor role.

I decided later that I wanted another chance to counsel him in that spot, and to offer some additional perspective based on our relationship, so we did that in a mini-session near the end of the workshop. Another success! I drew his attention to the integrity I'd noticed, and what a difference it had made to me and to other Black women I knew, and he discharged hard and fought to take on⁶ the perspective I had about him. After counseling him, I discharged hard on the

¹ "Pretty" means quite.

² "Pretty well" means mostly.

³ "Material" means distress.

⁴ In this context, "taking this on" means undertaking this.

⁵ Contradiction to distress

⁶ In this context, "take on" means adopt.

hope I felt that maybe we really could end this oppression. Once I got home, I decided I wasn't done, and so I proposed that some of our phone sessions be ones in which I counsel him on racism. He agreed; we've done some already, and it's gone well. I'm excited to keep experimenting!

This experiment has been really useful for me and for the people I've decided to counsel. Here are some ways it's been useful and some strategies that have made it work well.

What's been useful for me:

I've been able to have sessions in which I more easily look directly at racism—both before and after counseling these white people, and generally over time.

Counseling white people on racism vaults me out of the victim position. I have a stronger sense of my power and my mind, and I feel more powerful about ending racism in particular.

I can see the difference I am making to the person, and I can tell⁷ it's a significant contribution to the larger effort to end racism.

I feel so much closer to the person I'm counseling. Making this choice requires me to open my heart even wider. And for my white Co-Counselors, showing me this material requires them to be more vulnerable as clients.

I feel more hopeful about the long-term project of ending racism. This has been a really important effect. Counseling these clients has given me another glimpse of hope every time I do it.

I get reminded of the humanity of white people. Given the bru-

⁷ "Tell" means see.

tality of racism, it can be easy for all of us to confuse white *people* with the patterns that keep racism in place. When I've decided to counsel white people here, I have a clearer path to seeing past those patterns and finding the person underneath.

I gain confidence about interrupting people who begin to client on oppressor material *without* my permission, and I have higher expectations of my Co-Counselors that they be thoughtful about me in this area.

What looks useful to my white clients:

My clients are reminded of their goodness because I am so clear about it, and I have a perspective on them that is so outside of their own.

They can discharge hard when faced with how much I love them, and how I've decided to take on this challenge to back⁸ their re-emergence and to get closer to them.

It provides a live contradiction to the common confusion that we are fighting this battle separately.

⁸ "Back" means support.

They are taking a more powerful position when they rise to my expectation that they face the distresses of racism head-on,⁹ and not use my attention to dramatize how bad they feel.

I think they move faster through the oppressor material when they do face it head-on, and don't get distracted by the pull to pay attention to how bad they feel about it.

Where the patterns of racism make white people hold back from people of the global majority, doing this kind of project together is clearly a major contradiction—it requires them to take big steps toward me, with their full selves.

My taking a stand against my own powerlessness means they have more of the real me in front of them, and I think this contributes to their being able to have big sessions.

Strategies that have made it go well:

It's been important for me to choose white people to counsel who have already done a lot of work on racism and their oppressor role, as

continued . . .

⁹ "Head-on" means in a very direct way.



NEW YORK CITY, NEW YORK, USA • AMANDA MARTINEZ

LIBERATION

... continued

they have probably developed a sense of what their material looks like and how to be thoughtful about what they work on with people of the global majority.

It's also been important that I have done a lot of work on racism and internalized racism myself before trying this experiment.

It's made a difference to counsel them on racism for a short turn the first time, or first several times, so I can see how it goes and what comes up for me. Sometimes, if we have a long time to work with, we have gone back and forth so that I can discharge on what gets restimulating as we go. And whether we're doing a mini or something longer, I almost always take my turn second, so that I have a chance to discharge hard on any restimulations that have come up while counseling them.

Assisting and expecting them to face the oppressor distresses directly has been critical to their working openly on the chronic recordings¹⁰ that are the foundation and to their not using my attention to dramatize how bad they feel about racism.

It has also worked best so far for them to use these sessions to work on the feelings and chronic patterns that propel them in their oppressor role, without spelling out the content of their racism.

Being open and direct when things get hard has been really important, though it is not always easy. I have so far found that it is *always* better for me to say something when things get hard in relationship to this project, rather than to go quiet—even if it's uncomfortable or I feel like I don't know the "best" way to bring it up. It brings

us closer together, and we both usually discharge hard on whatever early distresses get restimulated in those moments.

Using the added resource of workshops to do these experiments is really what made them possible in the first place. When I can get the daily restimulations about racism cleared out of my way, get my feet under me more solidly, and feel more closely connected than I might on an average weekday at home, I have much more to offer as counselor, of both my heart and my mind. And at a workshop I can have some confidence that there will be resource and time to discharge thoroughly if it doesn't go as well as I hoped, though so far it always has. It's been fun to leverage those moments, and sometimes also the extra attention I have post-workshop, to take another leap forward in this work.

I get into agreement with my clients that they'll work on racism with me when we've made a plan, or I've offered, or they've asked me—that our doing this project doesn't mean they should automatically feel free to work on it anytime it's up for them.¹¹ That's important to me, because some-

times I don't have the slack and sometimes I do. I'm quite close with each of these people, and I want to do this project with them. Even so, sometimes the internalized racism makes it hard for me to speak up if they start working on racism without my permission at a moment when I don't have the slack to be their counselor. So continuing to be clear about when it's okay with me has been important.

Some of my most forward-moving sessions on racism have been after counseling these beloved white Co-Counselors on their oppressor material. I'm finding that there's a big contradiction in taking charge of moving my oppressor forward—in opening my heart and daring to move closer not *in spite of* the oppression, but in the face of it.

I would encourage any people of the global majority who have a close relationship with a white person who you think can client strategically to try this for yourselves. And I'd love to hear what you have tried and learned in this area.

Shani Fletcher
Roslindale, Massachusetts, USA

¹¹ "It's up for them" means they're feeling it.

When Racist Patterns Are Gone

All of us who are white need to hear and know, over and over again, that there will be a time when we no longer have racist patterns, that we get to choose that future for ourselves. And this means more than we can imagine. It means a change in our perspectives, in our relationships. It means being more at ease in the world than we've ever been. It means having a real sense that we belong here.

Tim Jackins
From DVD No. 226

¹⁰ Distress recordings

The following eight articles are about the Older Women's Workshop held in June 2014, near Washington, D.C., USA.

Pushed Beyond the Limits

I was delighted that Diane Balser¹ asked Pam Geyer² and me to assist her in leading the Older Women's Workshop.

I am an African-heritage seventy-three-year-old woman from Arkansas (USA). I went into the workshop with a sense that *sexism* and *male domination* were powerful words that had major significance in my life but that I was not able to grab on to in a real way. I felt a bit like a fish trying hard to notice water. As a child, I was so focused on the racism coming at me that the sexism slipped in the back door. For much of my life I was totally controlled by it and totally unaware of it.

Diane's light and playful tone was a great contradiction to the heaviness of elder women's oppression.

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

² Pam Geyer is the International Liberation Reference Person for Elders.

(We can feel defeated by the sheer magnitude of it.) She pointed out that we are the generation of women who created the greatest women's liberation movement in the history of the world. We may feel a great pull to slow down now, to rest. However, sexism and male domination are alive and well and our work is not done.

I left the workshop very different from how I came into it. I am ready to discharge the hurts that misdefined me to myself, that created the fears that I was not the right person to assist at the workshop—that I did not have a brilliant mind, that I was not a big enough person to lead in that way. I came away with a greater sense of myself. I was delighted to have been pushed beyond the limits that are handed to old black women in the southern United States.

Dorothy Marcy

Fayetteville, Arkansas, USA

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

"Complete, Whole, Beautiful, Powerful Women"

This was a great, fun, challenging, provoking, enriching, connecting, energizing workshop. We are learning to discharge everything that gets in our way of rejecting sexism and male domination as normal and ordinary and of keeping in our minds the goal of completely eliminating them in our lifetime.

We have stopped dying our hair. We now consider, accept, and appreciate that we are beautiful just as we are. We know this, despite the enormous pressures from a capitalist society to make us feel bad about ourselves, including how the beautification industry makes huge profits by exploiting those feelings.

We are "sexy as hell," despite living in a time when the pornography industry

is experiencing explosive growth and influence, the trend to treat women as objects is ever growing, and efforts (economic, political, and social) to make us feel that we do not have control over our own bodies are increasing. We remember that "No" is a complete sentence, even in marriage, and that we are complete, whole, beautiful, powerful women—whether we are married or not, and no matter to whom we are married.

We built and led the most powerful women's movement in the Western world and one of the most powerful liberation movements in the United States. We had many victories and are learning to acknowledge the defeats. We are recognizing that the defeats are not permanent—we will never give up our vision of the world we want and

our intention to have it. We know that while the victories are embattled, the effect of those victories on our lives is unmistakable and unalterable. We will never be the same as our mothers or any previous generation of women. And no matter how much or how little women of younger ages recognize the significance of our battles and victories, their lives are forever improved because we persevered.

We have also helped to build other liberation movements, including RC. Our presence and influence is pervasive. Our thinking has changed things and made a better world.

The "nuclear" families required by capitalism have forced grandmothers and aunts from the family home and

continued . . .

LIBERATION

... continued

into the sidelines.* We get to find our way back to each other and not capitulate to the manipulations and exploitation of the capitalist society.

At the workshop we loved each other well across language and nationality, race and ethnicity, religion and

* "Into the sidelines" means into not being actively involved.

spiritual beliefs, ability and disability, and all sorts of other differences. We loved the "baby elders," fully including them as "older" women. We could see our connections to each other and use those connections to run, jump, and swing. We got to be, see, and celebrate our full selves.

Diane reminded us that our dreams are still available to us, the best of our lives can still be in front of us, and we owe it to ourselves and to history to make and hold our own centrality.

Barbara Love
International Liberation Reference
Person for African-Heritage People
Amherst, Massachusetts, USA
Reprinted from the RC e-mail
discussion list for leaders of women

We Can Sustain Our Big Lives

The take-away message of the workshop was that old age is no excuse for backing off from our youthful dreams, including of completely eliminating sexism and all the other oppressions.



SEASHELL • PAM ROBY

I was in a support group of five raised-poor and working-class Jewish women in our seventies. It included Holocaust and breast-cancer survivors. The safety in that group was heartening and impressive. We were able to face the well of discouragement we had accumulated since we were young people. The women were so powerful, good humored, and sisterly. I think we each left knowing that we can sustain our big lives.

Jane Zones
San Francisco, California, USA
Reprinted from the RC e-mail
discussion list for leaders of women

Grandmothers—A Complex Reality

Diane summarized a complex reality when she talked about grandmothers at the Older Women's Workshop. Since becoming a grandmother four years ago, I have struggled to get a big enough perspective on it. So many oppressions come together here—women's, elders', economic, parents', young people's—and I have not found *any* useful thinking about grandmothers in the wider world.

I encourage us grandmothers to be in support groups and to use Diane's writing as a starting place for discharge and thinking. What do we think about being grandmothers? Where do we go from here? I plan to get together with other grandmothers in my

Region* and set up some phone groups. We need to understand how the oppressions come together and operate. We need to understand the power that our position gives us and continue to *make* the changes we want in the world! I'd love to be in touch with others who are leading groups for grandmothers and share what we are figuring out.

Jerry Ann Yoder
Yarmouth, Maine, USA
Reprinted from the RC e-mail
discussion list for leaders of elders

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

Highlights from the Workshop

Diane talked about how discouragement slows us down. Several of the women leaders noticed it in themselves and decided to be more active against sexism and male domination. I have been active in a wide-world women's organization and have felt like I wanted to "move on." I decided to work on the discouragement instead.

I had not previously considered that the unpaid childcare grandmothers do takes jobs away from women who could get paid for that work. Also, the time grandmothers spend on childcare means that they spend less time working on sexism and male domination.

I led an early-morning class on health. Health is important to women's liberation! We older women have accumulated physical distresses that limit our functioning. We can regain control of our bodies. One way is by discharging on what has happened to us physically.

I also led a topic group on death and dying. Many of us get preoccupied with death and don't take the feelings to sessions, and thus become less able to live life fully right now.

Pam Geyer
International Liberation
Reference Person for Elders
Bellaire, Texas, USA
Reprinted from the RC e-mail
discussion list for leaders of women



ANNE BARTON

A Big and Important Victory

I am a fifty-three-year-old Italian Catholic raised-working-class female. My presence at the workshop immediately restimulated the internalized oppression of some of the women who were older than me. They questioned whether I should be there because I was at the younger end of the constituency and had only just begun to see the physical results of aging on my body. I felt like I didn't belong there and like I didn't want those physical effects to ever happen to me. With sessions I noticed that it all comes down to* not wanting to die, because there is so much more I want to do and because I also feel terrified of dying. It is a relief to look at this and work on it.

I have had to face the fact that the women in my family were so hurt by sexism, male domination, classism, and

* "It all comes down to" means the main feeling is actually.

Catholic oppression that they could never figure out how to fight for themselves as women—or for me or anyone else. When I was younger, I yearned to have female role models who would teach me how to fight for myself and for the elimination of all oppressions. There before me at the workshop were some of the women who had done that! And in spite of defeats from sexism, male domination, and other oppressions, these courageous women were back to fight again.

Now I have a gang of women to be engaged in the fight with. What a big and important victory that is! We will never give up until every last remnant of sexism, male domination, racism, and every other oppression is ended.

Jeannette Armentano
Portland, Oregon, USA
Reprinted from the RC e-mail
discussion list for leaders of women

Older Women in Partnerships with Men

I led a topic group on marriage and partnerships. We looked at the impact of sexism and male domination on us older women who are taking on¹ men as partners and at what it means to be in charge of those relationships. We discharged on being in charge of our sexual relationships and on finding the balance between pursuing the life of our dreams and maintaining a primary partnership. We challenged lingering internalized oppression: looking for "prince charming"; expecting men to be bigger, smarter, and stronger than they are and being disappointed when they're not. We scorned fears of living the big, significant, independent, "outside of the box"² lives we are capable of. We held up to the light of discharge any "hiding behind" mothering or grand-mothering. (Living big, significant lives is not inherently in contradiction to having children or grandchildren in our lives.)

Randi Wolfe
Pasadena, California, USA
Reprinted from the RC e-mail
discussion list for leaders of women

¹ "Taking on" means engaged in having.

² "Out of the box" means outside-of-the-usual.

“Perhaps I Will Take Chemistry Again”

When I heard there was going to be an older women’s workshop, I knew that I was going to go. I had been struggling with “not giving up.” I knew that I wanted to live vitally the rest of my life, but I didn’t know how.

At the workshop it became clear that the intersection of sexism (the trivialization of women) and ageism (the marginalization of older people) make it a huge fight to continue to live a big, bold life. Having a hundred and twenty magnificent women in one place, not marginalized but as the central focus, was a huge contradiction.¹ It was startling, exciting, and exhilarating to be central as an older female and to see my cohorts, who had led women’s liberation at a critical time, in their true magnificence, brilliance, and power.

Here we are, with great wisdom and years of experience, yet we are marginalized and pushed by capitalism to give up and go for² pseudo comfort. Now that many of us have more time, we can instead do major liberation work.

Diane talked about how not having resolved early defeats from sexism can get restimulated as we experience ageism. I started thinking about the dreams I had as a young female, one of which was to be a doctor. When I was growing up, there were few female doctors. I really wanted to be one, but I didn’t believe that I could learn math or science. (This pervasive belief about girls has changed dramatically. Thank you, women’s liberation movement!)

I decided at age sixteen to try learning chemistry. I was struggling mightily and barely hanging on.³ I could not understand the teacher’s explanations. At one point the teacher started yelling at me, saying that I would never learn anything if I didn’t stop asking questions. I remember putting my head down on my desk and sobbing, and deciding to give up my dream of becoming a doctor. That was a defining moment—after years of battling sexism. Now I am thinking that perhaps I will take chemistry again, just so I can use my brain there.

Susan Seibel

Oxford, Massachusetts, USA


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

³ “Barely hanging on” means almost failing.


² “Go for” means pursue.

¹ Contradiction to the distress

New Practice/More Alive



We sit and listen,
really
Listen.
We fold hands together,
tuck tissues away into pockets and
sleeves,
stand with each other
facing the fires.
We do not cradle,
stroke,
to soothe;
We hear the message,
affirm its present and past.
We solve problems
by letting them fully be,
so that we can Fully Be
in this new world that has always
been
here.



We open up.
We share chairs,
a couch,
blankets,
our sadnesses,
dreams.
We walk into the wide open night
a bit more fearless
than the hour before.
We stride into
the bright blooming dawn
just a bit
clearer,
lighter,
Alive.

Carly Frintner
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA

AB

Fully Reclaiming My Past

I recently attended an invitational workshop for “Formerlies,” led by Tim Jackins and assisted by “Jeanne D’Arc.”¹ Formerlies are folks who have at one time claimed the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, or Queer identity and who now either claim a heterosexual identity or are looking beyond identity.

I claimed a Gay identity in my early twenties. I was struggling with my sexism and male domination patterns and did not want to act them out in a close relationship with a woman. I also wanted to build closer relationships and be less isolated. It seemed sensible to claim a Gay identity under those circumstances, and I did. I became a Gay activist, attended “fairie” gatherings (meetings of pro-feminist Gay men), and built a committed partnership (including sex) with another Gay man.

When I joined RC, I identified as a Gay man and eagerly attended Gay support groups and workshops. I maintained a Gay identity for about twenty months. I had the same challenges (inhibitions and fears) with closeness and sex with a man that I’d previously had with women. While a Gay man, I began building a friendship with a woman whom I eventually married. She was the first woman I had ever met who I thought could handle my sexism and male domination patterns.

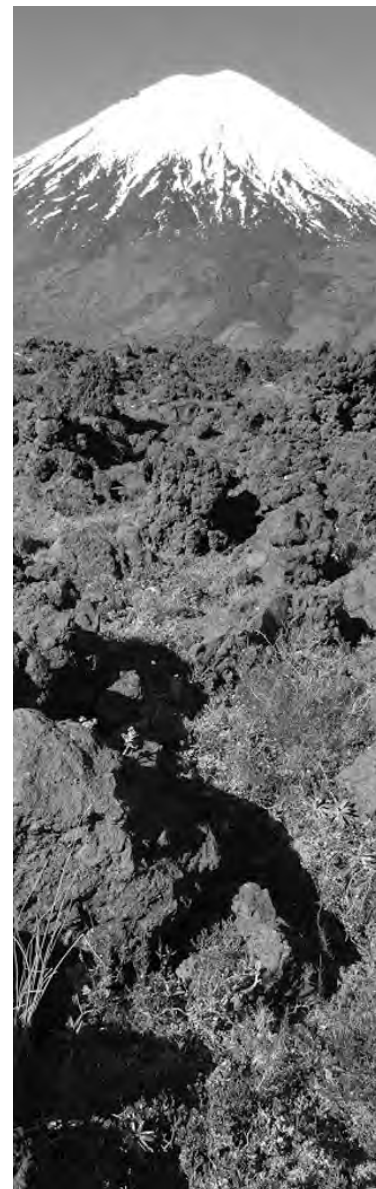
I have now been in RC for over thirty years. I have moved and changed jobs multiple times. People I meet see me as a heterosexual married man (and I am). It’s easy for me to deny my past and forget that I ever identified as a Gay man. At the workshop I took the direction that I refuse to let my past be erased, that erasing people’s pasts is oppression and that I would not stand for it.² I have already started to act on the implications of this direction, for example, by telling some RCers that I was at the Formerlies workshop (I could easily have never mentioned it) and by writing this posting. Part of Gay oppression is being made to hide. And to not fully claim and take pride in everything in my past is to internalize and collude with that oppression.

Those twenty months were a wonderful part of my life. I do not regret the decisions I made then (even though I now better understand how my distresses interfered with my thinking). Being a Gay man at that time was the smartest thing I could figure out to do to have the life that I wanted. I’m proud that I had the courage to act on my best thinking—and I’m proud to say now that I am a Formerly.

Anonymous
USA

¹ “Jeanne D’Arc” is the International Liberation Reference Person for Lesbians and Gay Men.

² “Would not stand for it” means would not tolerate it.



LANCE CABLK

We Must Do This

We *must* play a decisive role, *must* assume lives of great meaning, *must* tackle the biggest job and the most influential roles that humans have ever been called on to tackle and play. We *must* live lives of loving closeness to other humans.

Harvey Jackins
From *The Kind, Friendly
Universe*, pages 8 to 9

◇◇◇◇◇◇◇◇◇◇ **An Exciting Time for Asian Liberation** ◇◇◇◇◇◇◇◇◇◇

I want to write about our Asian Leaders' Workshop, led by Tim Jackins in California, USA, in August 2014. Over a hundred of us gathered on the University of California campus.

Our constituencies came in so connected to each other. Good work has been done in the last several years. Thank you, Azi,¹ for helping us South, Central, and West Asians come together, build good relationships, and work toward our common liberation. I've noticed that our liberation has become much more visible. We are speaking out more about the oppression we face, and other Asians are learning how to back² us. We are also learning more about other Asian constituencies.

The Muslims at the workshop were a powerful group. They led a number of tables and topic groups for Muslims and allies and were visible in other ways, like at creativity. Muslim liberation is moving forward. It was

¹ Azi Khalili, the International Liberation Reference Person for South, Central, and West Asian-Heritage People

² "Back" means support.



AMSTERDAM, THE NETHERLANDS • DIANE SHISK

exciting for me, someone with Jewish heritage, to back Muslim liberation and also to be thought about so well by the Muslims at the workshop. I can see more clearly how Jewish liberation needs Muslim liberation to move forward and vice versa. I got a bigger picture of the work we can do together. Azi led a fantastic Shabbat celebration.³ We got to sing a lot and have fun together as Asians. We sang a song used in the Israeli peace movement. It was nice to be together in a struggle against all oppression.

There were three young people at the workshop and about fifteen young adults. I led a support group for us, and we had fun together playing and learning about each other. We are central to Asian liberation work. We bring laughter, connection, and new ideas. I liked seeing so many of us taking this work on⁴ for ourselves. That is what we need to move forward.

Overall I am just so excited. The discharging Tim is having us do on early discouragement and isolation is working! I came back from the workshop more hopeful and thinking more about what I wanted for myself and the world. I could see how powerful we Asians are. As the majority of the world's population, our liberation is essential to all liberation. We are moving in the direction of being more visible, and the entire RC Community is beginning to understand how much our liberation matters. Congratulations to us!

Malana Rogers-Bursen
Hartford, Connecticut, USA
Reprinted from the RC e-mail discussion list for leaders of South, Central, and West Asian-heritage people

³ Shabbat is the Jewish Sabbath. It is a tradition at RC workshops to celebrate Shabbat on Friday evening as a way to contradict anti-Jewish oppression.

⁴ "Taking this work on" means undertaking this work.

**Working Together
to End Racism**

A pamphlet introducing RC from the perspective of ending racism

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

Ordering information on page 110

I often forget that if I am harsh with myself or others, I am colluding with a society that is oppressive and will keep me isolated.

Cynthia Johnston
Frankston, Victoria, Australia
Reprinted from the newsletter of the Melbourne, Victoria, Australia, RC Community

Allies to Young People

I attended the East Coast and Midwest USA, and Caribbean, Allies to Young People Workshop. I'd had an RC relationship with Jenny Sazama,¹ the leader of the workshop, when I was a young person (and she was an adult). I love still being close to her and thinking and discharging with her about being allies to young people now that we are both adults. I trust her deeply as a leader because I know from personal experience that "she puts her money where her mouth is"² as an ally to young people.

She pushed us to be passionate and full in our use of RC, including in every session. She said something like, "How can we expect young people to

discharge the heavy things we want them to unless we adults are *at war* with our own distresses?"

I appreciated a story about some young children playing at a funeral after a sudden death in their family. Most of the adults around assumed that the young people didn't understand what had happened. When hard or tragic things happen, adults often assume that being despairing or somber is the appropriate response. The children's response—discharging heavily when there was time and attention and then living fully in between—seemed to me the epitome of RC theory. In sessions I cried saying, "Those children were right," and "Harvey³ was right."

Both of my parents and my sister attended the workshop. We are all in this work together. I also loved being there with Charlie Tebbets,⁴ who was a steadfast ally to me when I was a young person. He and I had sessions almost every week from when I was thirteen to when I moved away from my hometown at eighteen. Despite lots of awkwardness as two Protestant white guys, we built a committed, caring relationship. I grew up in an RC family, and having him, from outside the family, in my life made a big difference in my developing my own relationship with RC and interest in leading RC.

Andy Vernon-Jones

Brooklyn, New York, USA

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

¹ Jenny Sazama is the International Liberation Reference Person for Allies to Young People.

² "She puts her money where her mouth is" means the things she talks about she actually does.

³ Harvey Jackins

⁴ Charlie Tebbets is a Co-Counselor in Amherst, Massachusetts, USA.

If you move . . .

and don't tell us in advance of your address change, it causes a surprising waste of resources. The post office does not forward bulk mail; instead it destroys the undelivered journals. Then we usually receive a notice from the post office saying that you have moved, and we are charged postage due for the notice. This need not happen if you will kindly let us know of your address change with as much advance notice as possible.

Thank you!

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Giving Up Individualism, Taking Responsibility

The following are reflections on an Eliminating White Racism Workshop, led by Anne Barton, in Melbourne, Victoria, Australia.

We paid particular attention to the tone of the workshop, with a direction of “we get to be happy.” This contradicted the heavy feelings from our inherited white identities and gave us room to look at some tough topics. Anne invited us to give up our attachment to Western individualism and instead practice “social thinking,” in and out of Co-Counselling sessions. This is a way to free ourselves and enable us to dismantle the institutionalized racism around us.

Rowan White
Fitzroy, Victoria, Australia

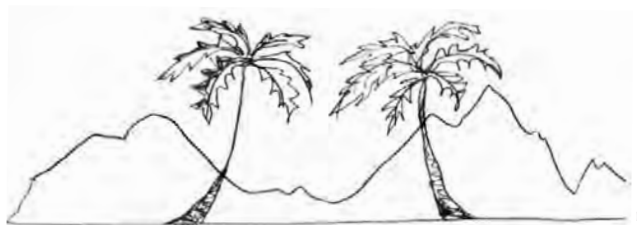
I kept reminding myself that I am free to choose how I look at my past, present, and future. This lets me counsel on early hurts from the perspective of a powerful, creative, playful, flexible mind. The actions I choose can be new, not based on any stories. Research and relationships become inviting from this perspective.

Hanna Jenkin
Melbourne, Victoria, Australia

Australians have patterns of silence and vicious harshness, a legacy of the genocide of the Indigenous people and our harsh beginnings. Capitalism has us thinking that we, and our individual actions, don't matter. This is a massive discouragement to act and results in racism. We do matter, and everything we do matters. I can be in the world and ask questions, make relationships, and say what I think, because I matter.

At the same time, capitalism has us thinking that we are defined by our individuality. Individuals “make choices,” so when the system excludes or marginalizes some, it is “their own fault” because they have “made the wrong choices.” This is another lie.

Victoria Kemp
Thornbury, Victoria, Australia



I have been reminded that I have all the necessary tools (relationships and discharge) to be a big threat to oppressive institutions.

Kelsey Dalton
North Carlton, Victoria, Australia

Anne spoke about how embedded in late capitalism is the focus on self-critique, rather than social critique. This keeps people looking inward to try to solve what are largely structural problems.

I will take away from this weekend a decision not to let a false perspective take up any of my time and will put more attention on acting strategically for change—ignoring what Anne described as our “Australian propensity for silence.”

Lisa Rasmussen
Northcote, Victoria, Australia

My learned whiteness is a limited, constricted way of being human. I can make new decisions, find new allies, and challenge racism.

The theft of the discharge process from me as a young boy left me confused about feelings. That was the key to my learning to blame other people for my feelings, and their feelings, and becoming an oppressor. Blaming people for their feelings is part of the armoury of oppression. Capitalism gave me the right to blame people for their feelings. I relinquish that right!

Stephen Costello
Thornbury, Victoria, Australia

Hearing Anne talk about my white identity and the systematic way I was raised gave me the *big picture*. What a relief to know that it is not my fault, that I haven't made *bad* choices—it is how our society is purposely structured!

I've gotten into the habit of looking at where I need to “improve” instead of boldly going into my world, with all of

the people around me, for how I want things to change. I can work with people who restimulate me! I now decide to move forward with this.

Cynthia Johnston
Frankston, Victoria, Australia

If anyone or any part of the world is suffering or degraded, I am diminished. Discharging feelings and pursuing a life connected to other minds is what I am after.¹ This is a great, fun puzzle and task of joy that I can put my mind to, well connected with other minds.

Capitalism has us looking inward, convinced that it's our fault as individuals if we fail to keep ourselves or our families thriving. If we look out and take responsibility for our world, we can put ourselves² to setting up systems and connections that nurture our world.

Christine Marnane
Kew, Victoria, Australia

I have come to notice more deeply the importance of relationships and being connected. It involves noticing that I actually have relationships and discharging the feeling that tells me I don't.

It occurs to me that white racism is contingent on people in the oppressor role not being able to notice the good, solid relationships they have (or the possibility of them) and build upon them with more and more people. Things go better for me, and the tangles I get in with people unravel more easily, when I am able to notice that I am connected with people.

Tony Smith
Melbourne, Victoria, Australia

Anne gave us the direction, "I choose to forgo my rights as an individual." This is a challenge! Individualism is a "sacred" tenet of Western culture. The dominant Western economic paradigm has at its centre "homo economicus"—the "rational" individual decision maker. Individualism shapes our economic policies and our institutions, while the majority of the world has more communal cultures, in which the needs of the group outrank the needs of the individual.

¹ "After" means pursuing.

² "Put ourselves" means apply ourselves.

I come from a long tradition of individualism. I am so immersed in it that it's hard for me to see its extent. (It's like a fish's knowledge of water.) This "works well" for me, because I live in a culture that adheres to individualistic values and in a world that is dominated by that culture. I can take advantage of my individualism and not have to feel anything about it!

Dennis Wollersheim
Rosanna, Victoria, Australia

I was reminded how important it is to live a life like a "real human," with love and kindness. This is our true nature before the hurts go in.

Yehudit Koadlow
Caulfield North, Victoria, Australia

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



BETH CRUISE

Complete Elimination of Oppression

Attempts to end oppression are often or usually directed by the oppressive society and its agents into "reformist" channels, that is, to adopt as a goal to ameliorate or justify the oppressions but *not to eliminate them*. "Reformism" such as this needs to be exposed as a disguised *persistence* of the oppression. *Complete elimination* of oppression is the only adequate goal.

Harvey Jackins
From *The List*, page 166



INDIA • MAURA FALLON

Grateful for Getting to Fight for Our Liberation

I attended a recent Young Adult Workshop led by Emily Bloch.¹ It was powerful to keep discharging about racism. We worked on our relationships with each other and discharged about the current situation in the world. I had space to think about actions I want to take.

A highlight was wrestling and “sock wrestling” (group wrestling with the “objective” of taking off each other’s socks). Another was thinking about how to both set up good lives for ourselves and transform the world.

I’m aging out² soon. It was powerful to have two minutes in front of the group to notice how important fighting for our liberation has been to me over the past decade. I am so grateful to have gotten to do this work.

Sarah Brodbar-Nemzer
Boston, Massachusetts, USA
and Toronto, Ontario, Canada
Reprinted from the RC e-mail discussion
list for leaders of young adults

¹ Emily Bloch is the International Liberation Reference Person for Young Adults.

² “Aging out” means becoming thirty-one, when I will no longer be an RC young adult.

“Today Is My Thirty-First Birthday”

Today is my thirty-first birthday, which means that I’m no longer a young adult in Co-Counseling. Somehow the outside world doesn’t seem to understand why I care so much about my thirty-first birthday!

I’ve gotten some sweet sessions in the last period about how much it has meant to me to do young adult liberation work over the last ten years. It has been the place in Co-Counseling where I’ve been most able to tell¹ that together we will change everything. We will end oppression, we will create the conditions to fully heal from our biggest early hurts, we will use our minds together to tackle the world’s challenges, and we will sing

¹ “Tell” means see.

and dance while we do it. Because of young adult liberation work, I don’t plan to give up on any of my dreams for my life or for the world. And some of the people I feel closest to are other Co-Counselors with whom I’ve gotten to do this work. I’m grateful to have them in my life.

I’m also grateful for three amazing women who led RC young adults worldwide during my time: Ellie Brown, Anna Van Heeswijk, and Emily Bloch.² Their leadership and example were important to me as I tried to construct a picture of reality that made any sense to me as a young adult in this world.

² Ellie Brown and Anna Van Heeswijk are former International Liberation Reference Persons for Young Adults, and Emily Bloch is the current International Liberation Reference Person.

I’m looking forward to backing³ you, Emily and other young adult leaders, as you take on⁴ the biggest challenges you can imagine, in RC and in the world. I wish you all the very best as you build the most powerful group of young adults the world has ever known. And if you ever doubt yourselves or feel tempted to settle or give up, even just a little bit, call me and others who are aging out.⁵ We are with you!

Nat Lippert
Portland, Maine, USA
Reprinted from the RC
e-mail discussion list for
leaders of young adults

³ “Backing” means supporting.

⁴ “Take on” means undertake.

⁵ “Aging out” means becoming thirty-one, when they will no longer be RC young adults.

**To all my beloved, strong, brave,
smart, playful, and powerful
young people and young adults
around the world**

I thought about you today. I was waiting for the subway. It was half past nine at night and I was listening to some of my favorite music.

I was dancing a little to the music and feeling happiness bubble inside and not feeling in the least odd. And I thought of you.

I thought of all of us living in different parts of the world, creating change wherever we are. I thought of us all being connected and knowing that we are not alone in this changing.

I thought of myself as the strong, brave, smart, playful and powerful young adult woman that I am. I thought of myself in my role of leading the world toward the liberation of all younger people and of all people, and I thought about the people I had with me in that leading role.

You People.

You inspire me.

You give me power.

You make me smile to the stranger with a tired face on the street.

You make me try to sort out what are my patterns and what would be smart, creative and contradicting¹ to do. I can feel you all, wherever you are, doing the same as I constantly decide how I want my life, go after it,² fail and succeed, re-decide and go after it.

As I discover and learn new things about myself, like an ever-growing puzzle.

I simply can't think of anything more powerful than young people truly having each other. Young people working together, knowing their potential, gently taking the adults by the hand and leading the way into a society free of oppression.

With love always,
and the highest regards,

Aurora Sofia Palm
Stockholm, Sweden

¹ Contradicting of distress

² "Go after it" means pursue it.



PORTOFERRAIO, ITALY • HOLLY JORGENSEN

Re-emerging from an Oppressor Family History

My ancestors played a role in colonizing both India and North America. My grandfather was born in India—his father was English and was a magistrate (judge) for the East Indian Railway Company. My mom’s mom’s family allegedly came to North America on the Mayflower.¹ I’m not sure if they really did, but in any case they’ve been in North America for a long time, at least since the 1600s.

My grandfather was an architect and designed one of the two towns where the Manhattan Project² took place. We have a plaque at home thanking him for helping develop the atomic bomb. That, plus my family’s role in the colonization of India and North America, gives me lots to work on in relation to genocide. My family has a long history of killing lots of people. We even developed new and improved ways to kill people. It’s terrifying.

At workshops I’ve led small groups for white people who have colonizer ancestry. The participants mostly do lots of laughing—as they start to feel their fear in facing their family histories. I say rude things and they laugh. I’m never funnier than when I lead these groups. Almost always the whole group gets a session off of each person’s turn. I say things like, “Yeah, my family helped wipe out³ the Native people around here,” and the fear comes rolling off. Saying the true history in a delighted, “guess what I just found out!” tone seems to bring the discharge unfailingly.



INSIDE A DAM ON THE UPPER SKAGIT RIVER, IN WASHINGTON, USA • TIM JACKINS

Every one of my own sessions on this subject is so fruitful. The first few years I did this work, I did it in three-ways, because they provided enough attention, especially if my counselors had chosen to work on the same thing. Lately I’ve been able to do the work in two-ways and still have a good balance of attention.⁴

After a few years of working on this, I’m just starting to get to the grief under the terror. I’m just starting to be able to cry. Most recently I’ve been working on what would have had to already be in place for the “Pilgrims”⁵ to decide that the Native people weren’t really people and it was okay to kill them. I can cry and cry about that.

I’ve done sessions apologizing for the actions of my ancestors. I found I had to do a couple of those before my mastectomy, because I was getting so much help and I felt so guilty for getting it when so many people don’t get the most basic help they need.

Guilt is not something I’ve had a lot of guidance on how to work on. It seems like a version of feeling bad about oneself. When it’s related to actual perpetrator patterns, what to do then? I haven’t figured it out yet, but there’s something important there—something about facing things. I’d love to hear how other people work on or think about the thing we call “guilt.”

I feel like a huge part of my intelligence is tied up in terror and feeling bad about this history. I’ve been Co-Counseling for over twenty years, and I had no idea all this was there until relatively recently. I can’t believe how much attention I’ve freed up by just the small amount of work I’ve done so far. My relationships have improved. I’m less scared around friends and co-workers of the global majority. I’m more able to act like myself and to like them for real, not as a direction. I’m more able to joke around with them.

I have owning-class heritage, but as I lead these groups I find that not everyone with colonizer ancestry has owning-class ancestry. People ask me who should come, and I give a pretty⁶ broad answer: any white person who has lived in the United States (we’re colonizing Iraq right now) or has English, French, Italian, Spanish, pretty much⁷ any

¹ The Mayflower was the ship the Pilgrims (see footnote 5) sailed on.

² The Manhattan Project was the U.S. government project that built the world’s first atomic bomb.

³ “Wipe out” means destroy.

⁴ “A good balance of attention” means enough attention on good reality to be able to discharge.

⁵ The Pilgrims were a group of English people, many of them seeking religious freedom, who in 1620 sailed from England to what is now the state of Massachusetts (USA), where they formed a permanent settlement.

⁶ “Pretty” means quite.

⁷ “Pretty much” means nearly.

European ancestry. I ask them why they are interested in joining, and they usually add another ancestry to the list of colonizers I know about.

An unexpected side effect of this work is that I'm more able to be proud of the good things I know my ancestors did. One of my ancestors was Clinton B. Fisk. When he was a child, his family was active in the Underground Railroad,⁸ and later he was a general for the North

⁸ The Underground Railroad was a network of people who helped African-heritage people enslaved in the southern United States escape to Canada or to the northern U.S. states where slavery was illegal.

in the Civil War.⁹ After the war he helped found Fisk University, a historically Black college in Nashville (Tennessee, USA). I've always felt embarrassed to talk about these things, and still do, but now I feel more pride in what he and his family did. Before I did the work on my family's oppressor history, I felt that

⁹ The U.S. Civil War, fought from 1861 to 1865

talking about him was somehow being defensive, like I was trying to "prove" my family wasn't racist. Now I feel like it's a cool¹⁰ piece of history.

This work is incredibly fruitful—every time I do it.

E—
USA

¹⁰ "Cool" means good and interesting.



KATIE KAUFFMAN

Some Thoughts for Allies to Jews

Here are some things Cherie Brown¹ said at a recent Jews and Allies Workshop in Sydney (New South Wales, Australia):

- To ask, "Was that behaviour anti-Jewish?" is to ask the wrong question. Ask instead, "What was the impact of my behaviour?"
- Making mistakes can be evolutionary. We know from the theory of evolution that mistakes can be good for the survival of the species.
- Don't confuse anti-Jewish oppression with other kinds of oppression. It is a mistaken belief that Gentiles reciting Jewish prayers or singing Jewish songs is somehow appropriating Jewish culture and therefore oppressive. It is a huge contradiction² for Jews when Gentiles can understand and articulate Jewish culture. This is because of the enforced invisibility of Jews, Jewish culture, and anti-Jewish oppression.
- The biggest thing one can do as an ally to Jews is to just show up.³ It is only when we, the allies, show up that the work of ending anti-Jewish oppression can really begin.

Bruce Clezy

Northcote, Victoria, Australia

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

Care of the Environment, and the Treatment of Boys

Thinking and discharging about male domination, the treatment of boys, and the messages boys are given help me understand men's role in the destruction of the environment. Boys can be systematically desensitized to violence toward humans, other living beings, and the environment as part of their preparation to be soldiers, miners, land clearers, pesticide manufacturers, abattoir¹ workers, and so on. Boys who show interest in or compassion for the environment are often put down² as being overly sensitive or "feminine."

Damien Cooke

Castlemaine, Victoria, Australia

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

¹ Cherie Brown is the International Liberation Reference Person for Jews.

² Contradiction to distress

³ "Show up" means be present.



¹ Abattoir means slaughterhouse.

² "Put down" means criticized, disparaged.

An Inspiring Workshop for Young Women

Hey there wonderful women! This weekend Diane Balser¹ and I led a workshop for young women (ages twenty-one and under). It was great to have so many women I love together—young women, Diane, and other young adult and adult women allies.

There hasn't been a visible women's movement in young women's lives, and we are told that since women have the right to vote, are able to have careers, and are sexually "free," sexism doesn't affect our generation. This makes it challenging to remember that the messages from sexism aren't our fault or something wrong with us. It also makes it hard to remember that we are important and that fighting sexism for ourselves and other young women is important.

I appreciate how Diane kept reminding us to use the words *female* (a word that doesn't divide women from girls) and *sexism* to keep our battle against sexism central in a world that tries to make us forget.

She and I did demonstrations with all the young women and heard about the sexism they experience and how they are challenging it. We heard from women of the global majority about the intersection of racism and sexism. It was clear how real the sexism is that we young women face and also how powerful we are together. The workshop left me inspired to fight for my mind as a young woman and take on² challenging sexism as a central part of life!

I loved leading with Diane, such a strong women's leader who has been a solid model for me (and so many others) of an older woman fighting sexism. I appreciate how she has consistently remembered that it's important for young women to be central to the women's liberation movement and how much she supports and shows respect to me and other young women. I also appreciate Esteniolla Maitre's³ organizing. She put brilliant thought and love into getting young women to the workshop, making the workshop go well, and supporting me.

Mari Piggott
International Liberation Reference
Person for Young People
Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada

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

² "Take on" means undertake.

³ Esteniolla Maitre is a Co-Counselor in Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania, USA.

I was so pleased to lead a young women's workshop with Mari. She was the primary leader, and I learnt a lot in following her mind.

We tackled many issues, including the effects of racism and sexism on young women; putting sexism at the forefront of young people's liberation; the sexual exploitation of young women, including the effects of pornography; taking charge of one's reproductive life, when the birth control pill and other hormonal regulation are the birth control of "choice"; and challenging liberalism surrounding women's issues. The young women were powerful and brilliant. I am proud to be their sister.

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

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



ALAN SPRUNG

Learn and Discharge

It is crucial for the full re-emergence of every group to acquaint itself with *all* aspects of its history and to discharge thoroughly on them.

Harvey Jackins
From *The Kind, Friendly Universe*, page 209

A Liberation Workshop for Owing-Class Jews

From January 29 to February 1 of this year, Jo Saunders, the International Liberation Reference Person for Owing-Class People, and I led a workshop for sixty-four owning-class Jews from the United States, Canada, and England.

I thought it would be one of the more challenging workshops for me to lead. It did push me to keep thinking afresh about many issues—class, oppressor patterns, money, rich Jews, security, assimilation and upward mobility, anti-Jewish oppression, leading with an owning-class English Gentile, and more. But in the end it was one of my all-time favorite workshops and a place for me to be myself and at home.

I put out at the beginning that it was not an owning-class workshop for Jews, or a Jewish liberation workshop for people raised or currently owning class, but a liberation workshop for owning-class Jews. A key challenge in all Jewish liberation work has been to fully grab hold of and discharge on *both* the oppressed and the oppressor patterns—particularly the oppressor patterns—and not slip into the comfortable role of being the victim. Owing-class Jews, because they have been set up to be out front taking the heat,¹ are a perfect group of Jews to find the courage to do this dual work.

One overall direction that Jo and I repeatedly put out, from each of our unique perspectives, was to reclaim the unity of the Jewish people and not have any one group of Jews get divided from any other.

The following are a few of my highlights from the workshop:

Jo has put decades of work into owning-class issues—capitalism, how



the accumulation of money and wealth robs people of their humanity, oppressor material,² the role of anti-Jewish oppression in setting up owning-class Jews to be on the front line to take the “hits” and be blamed. It was a joy to work with her and learn from her. Her fierce commitment to Jews, and to assisting them to place the blame for anti-Jewish oppression where it belongs, on the Gentile world, created great safety for everyone.

I loved seeing what can happen when a brave and courageous group of owning-class Jews try and face everything—with their Jewish, raised-working-class, currently middle-class International Liberation Reference Person (me) and their Gentile, English, owning-class International Liberation Reference Person (Jo) working together with them side by side.

There were large numbers of mixed-heritage Jews (over half the workshop), young adult Jews, and LGBTQ³ Jews. The Jewish community is increasingly upwardly mobile, and owning-class Jews are increasingly pulled to assimilate, so it made sense that there were so many mixed-heritage and young adult owning-class Jews.

We set up support groups based on wealth—Jewish millionaires, Jewish multi-millionaires, mixed-heritage millionaires, young-adult rich Jews, owning-class Jews who no longer have money, Jews with “merely” thousands, and so on. With the safety of being in these groups, and the clear direction that everyone is totally good and blameless, people could courageously face the huge terror attached to money and security.

Jo put out clear directions: to discharge toward giving away wealth, and to remember that our relationships with each other (and not money) are our only true security.

Being rich Jews and having been set up to be the most hated and ashamed, the often humiliated, and the sometimes killed had left this gang with a ton of terror, humiliation, self-disgust, and patterns of trying to hide. I worked with⁴ folks on facing these things. We also worked on “mental health” oppression. The terror underlying the accumulation of wealth has left many owning-class Jews afraid that if they really feel how terrified they are, they will go “crazy.”

We did intergenerational work on Israel and Palestine. I worked with a young adult who wanted to scream at us Jewish elders to get out of the way and stop telling him what to do. I had him discharge side by side with a Jewish elder who wanted to shout at this young adult Jew, “Read your history more, and don’t ignore all that we Jewish elders have learned in doing this work.” I got excited about doing dual work side by side on the oppressions of young people and elders. Both these oppressions are impacting our ability to do effective Jewish organizing.

continued . . .

² “Material” means distress.

³ LGBTQ stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer.

⁴ “Worked with” means counseled.

¹ “Taking the heat” means being the targets of blame.

LIBERATION

... continued

Jo and I met with the Israeli Palestinian peace activists at a meal table. We looked at how as owning-class Jews they might take what we were doing at the workshop—loving and being totally proud of owning-class Jews, while at the same time working on the oppressor patterns—into Middle East peace work. Three U.S. owning-class Jewish families paid for almost the entire campaign of Netanyahu⁵; U.S. owning-class Jews foot⁶ much of the bill for the settlements,⁷ and so on. And anti-Jewish oppression gets totally enmeshed in the Middle East conflict to keep everyone confused and blaming Israel and missing the actual sources of the oppression. Someone asked, “How do we never blame owning-class Jews in our organizing work, and love them deeply, while at the same time help them face how they are totally terrified and then set up by the Gentile imperialist world to play these awful anti-Palestinian oppressor roles?”

Key work was done with the mixed-heritage owning-class Jews. I worked with someone who had made a strong commitment to owning-class liberation but not to Jewish liberation. To commit to Jewish liberation, and being a full part of the Jewish people, had felt to her like a betrayal of her Gentile parent. The whole workshop welcomed her home to the Jewish people with a resounding recitation of the *Shehecheyanu* prayer⁸ (being thankful for this new, powerful moment).

⁵ Benjamin Netanyahu, the Prime Minister of Israel

⁶ “Foot” means pay.

⁷ Since 1967, Israel has established over a hundred settlements in the West Bank, along with dozens more settlement outposts not officially recognized by the authorities, on land taken from the Palestinians in breach of international humanitarian law. This has violated Palestinian human rights and prevented a viable Palestinian state.

⁸ The *Shehecheyanu* prayer is a Jewish prayer recited when doing something for the first time in a given year.

We had people translating up in front into Hebrew and Russian and shared lots of Yiddish songs and words. We also had a celebratory, full-of-singing-and-dancing unassimilated *Kabbalat Shabbat*.⁹

At the beginning of the workshop, the group looked like one of the more assimilated Jewish groups I had worked with. But after a few days of discharge, it became clear that this gang of owning-class Jews was actually deeply connected to Jewish culture. The connection had just gotten hidden until they knew they were safe and welcomed to be fully themselves and also fully Jewish in every way.

⁹ *Shabbat* is the Jewish day of rest—on the seventh day of the week, from Friday sundown to Saturday sundown—on which religious Jews remember the Biblical creation of the heavens and the earth in six days, and the Exodus of the Hebrews, and look forward to a future Messianic Age. Observing *Shabbat* entails refraining from work activities, often with great rigor, and engaging in restful activities to honor the day. *Kabbalat Shabbat* is the part of the Friday evening service that precedes the regular evening prayer.

The young adults asked to hang out¹⁰ with me late at night, and for two nights almost thirty people were packed into my bedroom—laughing raucously, telling stories, and playing games.

I love owning-class Jews. I was honored to work with Jo Saunders. She is a powerful ally to the Jewish people. I am proud of all that we did. My thanks to the organizers and the non-owning-class Jewish allies. I look forward to bringing all that I learned, particularly about work on oppressor patterns and Jews and money, into all of the rest of our Jewish liberation work. *Yeshet Koach*,¹¹ owning-class Jews. You are mine forever, from strength to strength.

Cherie Brown
International Liberation
Reference Person for Jews
Silver Spring, Maryland, USA
Reprinted from the RC e-mail
discussion list for leaders of Jews

¹⁰ “Hang out” means spend relaxed, unstructured time.

¹¹ *Yeshet Koach* is an idiom meaning “Good job!”



BURGOS, SPAIN • JUAN MANUEL FEITO

More on the Owing-Class Jews Workshop

Almost two weeks have passed since the Owing-Class Jews Workshop.¹ There have been ten report-backs on the RC e-mail discussion list for leaders of Jews but only two on the discussion list for leaders of owning-class people. I posted to the Jewish list, but some good old² terror came up about posting to the owning-class list. Writing now on this list, I am more than a bit terrified to be this visible to y'all³ as an owning-class Jew. But I will act against the distress and do it anyway.

Our strong Gentile ally, Jo, used her first classes at the workshop to remind us that choosing the pattern of assimilation, the path of Jewish survival, was not our fault. Neither was it the fault of our parents, grandparents, or great-grandparents.

Money, wealth, excess, and profit all serve to double the terror that already comes with being a Jew. The more wealth we acquired, the more we got picked on.⁴ And while we gained financial riches, we assimilated and left behind the cultural treasures of being Jews.

Jo also reminded us how tricky it is for owning-class Jews to look at their owning-class oppressor material⁵ when they also have a history of being oppressed. Before heading into taking responsibility for the oppressor patterns, it helps to know how they got installed. What happened to make anything less than human come out of you or me? Mean Jewish patterns reflect meanness that came from the outside. And when we needed to escape, whether it was from ancient Egypt, czarist Russia, Nazi Germany, or anywhere else, wealth became a means. When we needed to survive in a new country, we figured out how to keep our families safe through material gains.

Jews acquiring wealth is a symptom of stark terror. Denying that we are afraid is an owning-class pretense. Generosity, open-heartedness, and mercy (which historically have not been directed at owning-class Jews) are part of benign reality. Benign reality is what we can recover with discharge.

**Money, wealth, excess, and profit
all serve to double the terror
that already comes with being a Jew. . . .
And while we gained financial riches, we
assimilated and left behind the cultural
treasures of being Jews.**

It is also the contradiction to the oppressor patterns. We (and all owning-class RCers) need to discharge on where we exploit people, where we act greedy and dishonest, and it's safe to go there because none of us are bad people.

Jo offered a direction she has given owning-class RCers for a long time: "Discharge, and make your decision to give away the wealth." Then she added, with characteristic love and lightness, "Don't treat this as serious. It's just money, and these are just patterns." She also said that our

next step is to look outside of the owning class and notice how much others want us back.

At many workshops I have observed other RCers getting restimulated and wanting to leave the workshop. At the Owing-Class Jews Workshop, I found myself engulfed in such a swirl of feelings for the first time. The workshop started on Thursday evening, and on Friday at 4:00 AM, I awoke with the words "I want to leave now" already formed in my mind. Feeling on the periphery was a restimulation of early family hurts and internalized anti-Jewish oppression.

A joyous Shabbat⁶ celebration pulled me in Friday evening, and I began feeling that I belonged in the center. When the feeling of marginalization started again on Saturday afternoon, I noticed it was similar to feelings I'd had in early grade school of wanting to be close to and favored by my teachers, since warmth and attention were lacking at home. In the future I will be able to recognize such emotional discomfort as an indication that a boatload of feelings are ready and waiting to be discharged.

I cherish Jo for guiding me to rediscover my love for and pride in my financially successful maternal grandfather. I had been showing shame and embarrassment about him for fear of being attacked for my owning-class Jewish affiliation. The workshop was a safe place to begin to discharge that fear.

I was thrilled that Cherie included a class on the intersection of owning-class Jewish identity and "mental health" oppression. At a lunchtime "mental health" liberation topic table, I shared my "mental health" story—showing myself as I usually do only with other "mental health" system

continued . . .

¹ A workshop led by Cherie Brown, the International Liberation Reference Person for Jews, and Jo Saunders, the International Liberation Reference Person for Owing-Class People, from January 29 to February 1, 2015, in Washington, D.C., USA

² "Good old" is an idiom that conveys a sense of affection for something.

³ "Y'all" means you all.

⁴ "Picked on" means singled out for mistreatment.

⁵ "Material" means distress.

⁶ Shabbat is the Jewish Sabbath, which begins on Friday at sundown and ends at sundown on Saturday.



RAINBOW FALLS, WASHINGTON, USA • LISA KAUFFMAN

... continued

survivors, suicide survivors, and psych⁷ hospital ex-inmates. I know from the appreciations I received that it was a good way to lead the sixteen participants, many of whom had not previously had sessions in which they'd told their "mental health" stories. At the table they had the opportunity to tell them, keeping in mind how Jewish identity and anti-Jewish oppression play out⁸ with an owning-class identity.

Our Jewish "mental health" stories are often tied to our Holocaust stories. During my first eight years in RC, I was certain that I didn't have a Holocaust story. After all, my relatives had come to the United States between 1856 and 1905. Then I started wondering how I had chosen hanging as a suicide method. It didn't take many sessions to remember that my earliest, most vivid images of hanging had come from Elie Wiesel's *Night*,⁹ which my father had given me to read when I was ten years old. No wonder I chose hanging the three times I attempted suicide as a young adult. I survived

⁷ Psychiatric

⁸ "Play out" means are manifested.

⁹ *Night*, by Elie Wiesel, is about the author's experience as a teenager in the Nazi German concentration camps.

an eleven-day coma only to survive hanging myself twice more. This sometimes strikes me as being as miraculous as any Holocaust survivor's story.

Jo reminded us that class exploitation and oppression underlie all other oppressions. I also agree with Janet Foner¹⁰ that "mental health" oppression holds all other oppressions, including class oppression, in place—with its threat of drugging and incarceration should one step outside of the "norm."¹¹

In the summer of 2014 I received some e-mails from a previously unknown-to-me distant cousin on my father's side of the family who had done extensive genealogical research. One e-mail included about 150 names of relatives who had died in the camps.¹² They were only the family members lost on my paternal grandmother's side of the family. But although I only have a quarter of my family's Holocaust history documented, I now have a family Holocaust history, which is more than I had before. I've felt confused about how to begin discharging this new yet old hurt. However, since the *Owning Class Jews Workshop* I have opened a door and found heavy discharge of grief with this statement: "I will never be able to meet any of my cousins whose grandparents and parents were murdered in the camps."

Answering Cherie's questions about degrees of assimilation was challenging, for I have practiced different degrees of assimilation at different times in my life. Regarding unassimilating oneself, I remember a family Passover seder¹³ when I was a teen. My beloved maternal grandpa, then in his eighties, had always clung fiercely to his acquired place in the owning class. I had never seen him "acting Jewish." Suddenly he departed from the seder "order" and began chanting from memory in Hebrew. Everyone at the seder table was surprised and a bit embarrassed. This son of immigrants who had become a millionaire before 1929, lost it all in the Great Depression, worked to regain wealth, and joined a "no Jews allowed" businessmen's club in the 1940s was a Jewy-Jew¹⁴ after all!

Diana Lieb

Asheville, North Carolina, USA

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

¹⁰ Janet Foner is the International Liberation Reference Person for "Mental Health" Liberation.

¹¹ "The "norm" means what is considered normal.

¹² Nazi concentration camps

¹³ Passover is a Jewish festival that commemorates of the liberation of the Jews from slavery in Egypt in about 1300 BCE. It takes place in early spring, beginning on the fifteenth day of the Hebrew month of Nisan and lasting for seven days (in Israel) or eight (in the diaspora). A seder is the ritual feast at the beginning of Passover.

¹⁴ "Jewy-Jew" means unassimilated Jew.

A Children's Class at Unifat School

A few years ago my grandmother, Abitimo Rebecca Odongkara, created a children's RC class at Unifat School here in Northern Uganda. She also invited the teachers at the school to talk and share with each other. With or without her presence, the teachers had their sessions. Some decided to join an RC class outside of school. Others also managed to attend a workshop with Pamela Haines and Chuck Esser.¹

Abitimo carried on² with her children's class every Saturday afternoon. She would always talk with me about it. On learning that she would be away for a long period of time, she introduced me to her class. Because of the love she had, she wouldn't call it off³ because of her absence. There was a teacher who had always been with her. That teacher and I learnt how Abitimo dealt with the class and the various activities, like taking turns and demonstrating discharging distress. We continued with the class from the time she left in the summer until the last week of October, when I had to say farewell and wish the children success in their exams.

¹ Pamela Haines is the Area Reference Person for the Schuylkill I Area in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA. Chuck Esser is the Regional Reference Person for New Jersey, USA, and the International Commonality Reference Person for Family Work.

² "Carried on" means continued.

³ "Call it off" means cancel it.

I had never known children to be good RCers, but these children were good clients—honest and flexible. I enjoyed how they would express their distresses and come out with a suitable solution without being told what to do. Guiding questions, like "How do you feel about this particular step you want to take?" and "Is this the best way to handle that?" helped them distinguish the good from the bad in the decision they wished to make.

They discharged fear of exams, on how to deal with anger in class and outside the school environment, about education and social life outside the Unifat⁴ community, and more. On our last Saturday, the topic was "How prepared are you for your examinations?" We had mini-sessions and support groups and took a lot of photos.

A big thanks to Grandma for initiating such a wonderful class at the school—so exceptional and different from all the other RC classes—and to all RCers for their support.

Atunu Naume

Gulu District, Uganda

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

⁴ Unifat School

To All Before and After



We now carry the torch
of trust in humanity and reason.
We now carry the torch
of protecting earth and all its creatures.
We now carry the torch
of hope and actions to benefit all humankind,
and
we will
pass it on,
as have all those sung
and so many countless unsung torch bearers before us,
with our deepest appreciation
for their endless caring so well and so much.



Sojourner Truth
Seattle, Washington, USA



BURMA • MAURA FALLON

Being “Regular” and Being a Leader

News flash: Raised-poor girl realizes, “Hey, I am a leader!”

I’m someone who was never “supposed to be” a leader by the oppressive society’s standards. I come from people who have been treated like and told that they are stupid, that they don’t matter, that they are insignificant, and that they don’t have minds worth anything more than serving others. You don’t need a mind of your own if you are doing the bidding of, the cleaning for, rich people, right?

I’m a female who was raised poor, working class, and Catholic. I am mixed heritage—a Filipina/Native/white daughter of an immigrant father and a mother born and raised in the Southern United States. I didn’t come from the “right kind of people” to be and think of myself as a leader.

I am proud of my parents. With what the world presented to them, what they were able to do is amazing. My parents didn’t graduate from high school; my father didn’t even make it out of the third grade. He immigrated to the United States from the Philippines. He spoke four languages: Ilocano (his first language, the language of our people in the northern part of the Philippines), Tagalog (the national Filipino language), and two languages that are the direct result of the colonization of Pilipinos—Spanish (which he learned from the priests and nuns during his little bit of school) and English (everyone in the Philippines was and is required to learn English in school).

My father wasn’t considered smart. He “talked funny”¹ (as racism and anti-immigrant oppression would say). He was strong, athletic, and short in stature. He was a boxer. He was brown-skinned. He could work very hard, but he felt stupid. He felt way less than

anyone else around him, especially white people. He apologized a lot, held his head low.

He did lots of kinds of work when he came to the United States, including working as a farmworker, a “house boy” in hotels, and a busboy and cook in restaurants. He also worked on the fish boats and in the canneries in Alaska (USA), where many immigrant Filipino men used to work. He was both proud and defeated at the same time.

My mom is a solid, “salt-of-the-earth”² white/Native woman, born in the Southern United States, who worked incredibly hard while feeling stupid. She wanted to sing, to perform—be in opera even—but she was told she was not beautiful, not talented. She struggled with spelling, with math. She was told she was “slow.” She knew she was solid on “practical” things—if something needed to be done, my mom was the person to do it. Her body was strong but got used up and discarded by classism, sexism, male domination, and the attempted genocide of our people.

My parents had thirteen children. They lost one in a miscarriage and gave

² “Salt-of-the-earth” means good, reliable, and honest.



MARION OUPHOUET

birth to a dozen, five of whom died at or near birth. One son was killed in the U.S.-Vietnam War. I was born into this struggling family, number five of the seven that lived past infancy. My parents were wonderful people who didn’t have the resources necessary for themselves or their offspring. I was a younger sibling—not “leadership material,” or so I was told.

I have been trying to reconcile in my head (with my distress confusing me) my picture of myself as a small, stupid younger sibling—not of any significance, coming from people targeted for destruction—with the picture of who leaders are “supposed to be.” The oppressive society says that certain people can think and lead. I haven’t felt like one of them.

What I can tell³ is that I am a regular person—really a person off the street. That is what raised-poor and working-class people are for the most part—nothing special, at least no more special than anyone else. I don’t have any particular qualities that make me more capable than anyone else. I’m regular.

I didn’t go to the “right” schools. I don’t talk the “right” way. I don’t use big words. I’m not flashy. I don’t know how to dress fancy. I am not super smart. I don’t do things in the world that make a lot of money—things that society says are “successful” and worthwhile.

But Co-Counseling has given me an opportunity to understand better what a leader actually is and does. I have had many opportunities to try leading and then discharge about what it was like to lead. As Harvey⁴ said, every one of us is a leader. Without oppression to confuse us, all of us would, without question, set about⁵ to see

³ “Tell” means see, notice.

⁴ Harvey Jackins

⁵ “Set about” means move with intention.

¹ “Funny” means strangely, oddly.

that things go well around us and organize other people to do the same. It turns out that⁶ this is what I have been doing my whole life, in my family and beyond, and that this is what a leader does.

I can see what I have that everyone else does, too—no matter what their class background is, or ethnicity or gender: I have an intelligent mind, a good mind. I have my own mind. I also decided (well before I was in Co-Counseling) that I wanted things to be different for the people around me and that I would see to it⁷ that it happened. So I have a mind, and I decided something. And I'm willing to face whatever I have to face to make it happen.

Tim⁸ once told me that what I need to do is set my sights on the biggest vision and goal I have for the world. If I can keep my eyes on that prize, and move toward it, I can make it happen. I don't have to know everything. I don't have to be not afraid. I get to try. And importantly, I have a Community of people supporting me, believing in me, where my distress confuses me about these things. My chronic material⁹ (the result of oppression) has obscured to me that I can be, am, and will always be a leader. Others have believed in me long before I could believe in myself. Apparently I'm the last person to know that I can think and that I am a leader!

Leaders are regular people with an intelligent mind who have decided something about the world around them—sometimes in spite of how things feel. Regular people are leaders. Leadership isn't about a title or anything like that. It is about how you think about people and the world around you—how you influence things, decide to see that they go well. Raised-poor

people, women, people of the global majority take this kind of leadership of the world every day. It is part of our way of being to see that things go well; it comes from our inherent power as humans.

Re-evaluation Counseling theory and the RC Communities are great leadership-development tools. We have been a leadership-development organization from the start. I think of leadership development as concentric circles going out from ourselves, with a growing awareness. This means that to start with we must see that things go well in our own lives. This means thinking about ourselves, taking responsibility for what has happened to us, seeing the reality of who we are. It means having Co-Counseling sessions! We each get to take responsibility for how we have been hurt and decide to clear those things up.

The next ring out is deciding to see that someone else's life goes well, assisting another person to think about his or her own life. We get to think about someone outside of ourselves. This is part of taking responsibility: assisting someone else in his or her re-emergence, in moving out of distress.

From there we can decide to take growing circles of "responsibility" for things going well around us. In RC this includes being a Community member, having a job in our class, assisting a leader, organizing, teaching, and so on. We get to think about our local Community as well as learn about, think about, and be a part of the International RC Community. Each of these requires that we take charge of ourselves and then think outside of ourselves in bigger and bigger spheres of influence, in which we remember and act on the basis of our human qualities.

Of course we can go farther and farther out with our spheres of influence—as Harvey said, to the farthest reaches of the universe. There is nothing that we can't take responsibility for! We can think about all things, all people, so that all of them are taken into account.

Regular people are the leaders we have, that we need. And we need leadership every place in our societies. There is so much room for *lots* of leadership and initiative in the world.

Teresa Enrico
International Liberation Reference
Person for Pacific Islander and
Pilipino/a-Heritage People
Seattle, Washington, USA

Teach After the First Class

It has worked well to encourage students to begin teaching someone else in the wide world after the *first* class session. They are likely to teach well when their enthusiasm is fresh and while they are busy evaluating their own new insights. Teaching this way also has a marked effect in improving the learning of the "teacher."

Harvey Jackins
From *The List*, page 93



⁶ "It turns out that" means what has been shown to be true is that.

⁷ "See to it" means make sure.

⁸ Tim Jackins

⁹ "Material" means distress.

Take Charge

Re-evaluation Counseling is a workable concept. Anybody can mess it up so it doesn't work, anybody can be honestly confused for a while (all of us have been), but it isn't up to* anybody to straighten you out, or make your life perfect, or model perfectly for you.

Take charge of things instead of complaining about other people or finding excuses not to do what you know well you should be doing. You don't need a title to do it. All you need is a firm decision and some notion of how to get somebody else to listen to you.

Harvey Jackins

From a letter written in 1991

* Up to means the responsibility of.



SIERRA NATIONAL PARK, CALIFORNIA, USA • LISA VOSS

FIVE-YEAR SUBSCRIPTION TO *PRESENT TIME*

Rational Island Publishers is offering a five-year subscription to *Present Time*, at the request of many people who would like to not have to re-subscribe every one or two years. The cost is \$84 in the United States, outside of Washington State; \$92 in Washington State; and \$124 (U.S.) outside the United States. (A couple of dollars have been added to partially cover the anticipated increase in costs over the next five years.) To order a *Present Time* subscription, see page 111.

Activists Discharging Together

I attended the recent Healing from War Workshop in Poland and ended up leading the activists' group.

I said that our being together was a special and dear opportunity to look at material¹ we don't often get a chance to look at. I also said the following: We are already activists—we don't need to be any different to be "real" activists. What we do makes a lot of difference. We hold out hopefulness for other people. We try to be encouraging and positive. We are awesome and cool.² We dare to care so much. We also often do more than makes sense and burn out³ as a result, even with all the sessions we have. We need to learn how to take good care of ourselves and have good lives while being activists. We need places where we can show how helpless and discouraged we often feel, without worrying that others will get confused. We often hold back from showing our fears to others, including other activists, because we don't want to scare them and because they rarely have good attention to listen to our fears.

We split the time,⁴ and everyone looked straight at where they were struggling, taking the group with them. I could notice and feel how much I love activists, how excited I am about us, and how much I respect us and our work. Loving each and every person set the tone and helped people discharge deeply.

With love and appreciation to all past, current, and potential activists,

"Rooi Teve"

¹ "Material" means distress.

² "Cool" means great, wonderful.

³ "Burn out" means become completely exhausted from overwork.

⁴ "Split the time" means took equal turns having the group's attention.

Discharging About Muslims, in My Jewish Support Group

I am a light-skinned Jewish Arab first-generation-USer female with a father from Morocco, and I lead a Jewish support group.

A few years ago at an Arab workshop, Azi¹ counseled us on our earliest memories of Muslims. We had little attention for each other (falling asleep, getting impatient). I decided that to end the wars we are engaged in and to have the life I want, Arabs need to develop more slack for each other in this area. And my own Jewish support group is a place I have influence!

I have been leading the group for several years. A few weeks ago I led it on ending Islamophobia and being close with Muslims. As usual, we began by saying a completely and totally Jewish “new and good.” (As Midwestern U.S. Jews, we often feel we are not the right kind of Jew. I use the “new and good” as a contradiction,² to remind us that everything we do in our life is exactly a beautifully perfect Jewish thing for a great Jewish person to do.)

Then we did a go-around on “Where do you feel at home (either a person or a place)?” Then we did a mini-session. When we returned, I briefly alluded to things going on³ in the world that could be an excuse to feel that we do not have homes. Many of us carry that chronic feeling, which gets manipulat-

¹ Azi Khalili, the International Liberation Reference Person for South, Central, and West Asian-Heritage People

² Contradiction to the distress

³ “Going on” means happening.



LINCOLN WOODS STATE PARK, LINCOLN, RHODE ISLAND, USA • MARJORIE SMITH

ed to serve the causes of nationalism, colonialism, and imperialism. I said I wanted us to be solid in our minds that we have homes, that we are at home in our relationships, and that there are no natural limits on whom we get to have as close friends and allies. I talked about one of my favorite quotes from Harvey⁴—that if a Jew calls out, Gentiles must leap over mountains to come to his or her aid. By modeling this kind of ally, we can be confident that the Inquisition or the Holocaust will not happen again.

The cool⁵ thing about reality and connection is that they don’t wait for us to be able to feel they are reality. They persist, so it’s okay if we can’t tell⁶ that we are home, or safe. It’s still true.

I did the mini-session with a young Puerto Rican Jewish woman and discharged on counseling people on their earliest memories of Muslims. I wanted to be thoughtful that I didn’t sink my-

⁴ Harvey Jackins

⁵ “Cool” means good, wonderful.

⁶ “Tell” means notice, feel.

self⁷ or martyr myself for the white people’s re-emergence but instead moved my own liberation agenda forward. I also wanted us to be honest that we don’t yet have a lot of attention here, as either client or counselor. We don’t need any pretense.

In the closing, many people said that they were surprised at how few sessions they’d taken on being allies to Muslims. Their excitement, hopefulness, and relief were palpable.

I used to get migraines after leading this group, which is almost always all white, because I was terrified of people’s racism toward Arabs, their Islamophobia, and the genocide we’ve internalized as Jews. Then I started to have someone come before and stay after to counsel me on the early distresses and how I want to continue leading white Jewish people. I continue to successfully lead the group—now without migraines!

Jna Shelomith
St. Paul, Minnesota, USA

⁷ “Sink myself” means submerge myself in distress.

What We Are Doing

We are reassuring each person that their cherished, though often occluded, concept of the world and what they are like, and what things between them and other people should be like, and the ways things can be, is accurate.

Harvey Jackins
From *The Benign Reality*, page 143

Resolution

Emerging from a cocoon of loneliness,
Your wings are still sticky in the fresh air.

Afraid that the breeze warmed by the proximity of others
might distract you from your newfound freedom,
You get caught in desperate old struggles.
They push you toward: seeking comfort, attacking those
closest to you, or making you feel ugly, small, unseen.

You make the decision it is safe to feel but not believe these feelings.
You point your head into what feels like a gale.
You find the freeing wind of perspective gets stronger.

Your new wings dry.
The surprising joy of newfound flight insists: all is now well,
closeness is desirable and possible,
your heart can now be safely fully opened.

After all* you are a gorgeous butterfly now.

Chuck Esser
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA

* "After all" means despite what has occurred or been assumed previously.



FINLAND • KAISLI SYRJÄNEN

Ending the Year with a Bang!

Over 2014 I enjoyed wonderful Co-Counseling moments with my ongoing RC group in Enugu, Nigeria. On Friday, 19 December, we had an end-of-year class meeting with leaders from outside our Area.¹ It was indeed a bang!² These leaders brought a fresh perceptiveness to what we had been learning. Marshall³ handled the topic "Understanding and Appreciating RC for Beginners," while Chineze⁴ spoke on "Building Better Relationships Using RC as a Tool."

This end-of-year event offered me an opportunity to review our progress. As Harvey Jackins observed,⁵ "I don't think you can be a good counselor and think of only 'giving someone a good session.' By now, I think in terms of the future of this person." Based on this premise we all agreed to give and receive good sessions, even outside the regular RC classes.

A highlight for me was leading a four-way leaders' session on "Building a Sustainable RC Community." We reviewed what was standing in our way of building RC Communities and seeing that they develop well. I feel assured that the Communities in Enugu and Awka will enjoy sustainable growth in 2015. I recommend such a deliberate session for every leader as this year comes to an end and in the early days of 2015. We are coming out re-emerged!

Kingsley Ibekwe
Enugu, Nigeria

¹ An Area is a local RC Community.

² "Bang" means spectacular event.

³ Marshall Ifeanyi Chinaka, an RC leader in Enugu, Nigeria

⁴ Chineze Obi-Okoye, an RC leader in Awka, Nigeria

⁵ See "Being a Good Counselor" on page 18 of the January 2014 *Present Time*.

Jokes of the proper kind, properly told, can do more to enlighten questions of politics, philosophy, and literature than any number of dull arguments.

Isaac Asimov

Creative Care of the Environment at Workshops

At Southern California (USA) RC workshops, care of the environment is one of the workshop jobs. It is also mentioned in the welcome letter. I am seeing more cloth handkerchiefs and less Kleenex at every workshop, as well as more of us bringing our own nametags from home. (Recycled nametags are often from our non-RC activities, and it's great to get to know each other better as we ask about them.)

The care-of-the-environment job includes organizing people to conserve energy and water, recycle, compost, minimize use of disposable products, and so on. It includes helping them conform to the recycling protocols of the workshop site, or organizing recycling (and possibly composting) if the workshop site doesn't do it. It also includes working with the final-cleanup committee to make sure that cleanup activities include recycling.

For me, a big part of the challenge and fun of doing the job has been figuring out signs to post around the workshop (in bathrooms, the dining room, and meeting rooms) that tie RC's care-of-the-environment goal¹ to the reality of climate change, and doing this in ways that are approachable, memorable, and informative. I use big facts for context and small actions phrased as "tips" to encourage participation. (I figure that small actions prepare us to take bigger steps. That's how my own wide-world leadership on climate change is pro-

¹ A goal adopted by the 2013 World Conference of the Re-evaluation Counseling Communities:

That members of the RC Community work to become fully aware of the rapid and unceasing destruction of the living environment of the Earth. That we discharge on any distress that inhibits our becoming fully aware of this situation and taking all necessary actions to restore and preserve our environment.

Distresses have driven people to use oppression against each other and carry out destructive policies against all of the world. A full solution will require the ending of divisions between people and therefore the ending of all oppressions.

The restoration and preservation of the environment must take precedence over any group of humans having material advantage over others. We can and must recover from any distress that drives us to destroy the environment in our attempts to escape from never-ending feelings of needing more resource.



GOLDEN GATE BRIDGE, SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA, USA • GREG GRASS

gressing, while discharge keeps me from being overwhelmed by the scale of the challenge.) Here is the content of some of the signs I've made:

FACT: North Americans consume more paper per capita than anyone else on earth. The toxins from paper mills affect the water and health of some of the most economically strapped² communities. TIP: Use only one paper towel to dry your hands, and a minimum of toilet paper.

FACT: When threatened by scarce resources, people have a tendency to see neighbors and others as less than human—

even dispensable. Environmental crises can lead to the creation of "out groups," distinguished by their differences and assumed inferiority. TIP: Discharge on your fears about climate change. Stay mindful and help others remember that humans can choose to respond to crises with flexibility, empathy, and compassion.

FACT: Water wars are real. The historic drought across the western United States has drained the water table in California, devastated rivers and reservoirs in Arizona, and intensified a growing water dispute along the Texas border with Mexico. TIP: Turn off the water while soaping up.

FACT: Air pollution, water pollution, toxic landscapes, and climate change are human-rights issues. Low-income communities and people of the global majority, in the United States and around the world, get hit the hardest and by the most immediate damage. TIP: If we broaden our concerns about the environment to include concern for people, we can get more constituencies doing something about the serious environmental problems we face today.



Suvan Geer
Santa Ana, California, USA
Reprinted from the RC e-mail discussion list
for leaders in the care of the environment

² "Strapped" means suffering.

Girls, and Female Family Workers

*From a discussion at the East Coast USA and Canada Leaders' Workshop
in Warwick, New York, USA, December 2014*

*Diane Balser*¹: The worldwide oppression of girl children hugely affects their lives, as well as the lives of boys and adult females and males. Key issues are abortion and infanticide, the sexualization and sexual exploitation of girls, illiteracy, and poverty. There is a worldwide preference for boy children, which results in the invalidation and mistreatment of girls.

Family work² is set up to contradict young people's oppression. It also contradicts the powerlessness, passivity, and patterned girl activity of young females.

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

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

We still have a lot to learn to make it possible for young girls and boys to fight effectively against sexism and male domination. Girls need to hear the women in their lives talking about sexism, including girls' struggles with sexism.

Other women at the workshop answered the question, What are the strengths and struggles of family work as related to sexism and male domination?

The following thoughts are from the women family workers of the global majority:

• At a family workshop, African-heritage women led a group for the African-heritage girls. • I'd like to be able to talk about sexism, along with talking about racism. • I'm seeing that RC is ours, and I'm enjoying it. • The

meanness among girls gets to me.³ • It's challenging to keep girls' liberation at the fore. • It's hard for me to talk to the girls about sexism and male domination. • I get worried about the boys and how hard it is for them to hold on to the discharge process. • We haven't been doing enough work with women leaders on these issues. • I've figured out how to get girls discharging on the beautification industry. • It's easy to not pay attention to being female. • I tend to put all my focus on racism; I need to put more attention on sexism. • I notice where girls don't want to use their bodies and I try to interrupt this. • It scares me when boys take up space and get aggressive.

These thoughts are from the white women family workers:

• We push active play and view less active play as part of sexism. • It doesn't work to get the boys to slow down; rather, we need to get the girls to be "bigger." • How do I talk about sexism with three-year-olds? • We have been wrestling with the moms to get them to be more active with their daughters. • Our own internalized sexism lets us "forget" to talk about the sexism experienced by girls. • I help the girls have each other. • I don't know how to interrupt boys' sexism without being harsh. • We coach the moms to really listen to the girls rather than aim for big sessions. • I need to work on being a visible leader. • I stay close to the one girl in my class and don't worry about her being "big." • I much prefer to play with boys and have to look at that. • Boys are not pushed to play the valuable girl games. • I talk to boys about girls' struggles. • We are creating a space for girls to have opinions.

*Submitted by Caryn Davis
Staten Island, New York, USA*

³ "Gets to me" means upsets me.

The Importance of Policy

People are responding to the publications by sending in excellent writing because they are responding to a policy. If you do not have a policy, you get either nothing or mostly nonsense.



NANCY LEMON

We are continually moving into new fields, and a tentative policy needs to be sketched out all the time or the distress recordings take over. I think if you check back on your own life, you will see that the failure to move is, over and over, linked with a lack of policy—a policy that you can respond to by accepting, modifying, or rejecting it, but which is at least something that would call forth a response.

Harvey Jackins
From a letter written in 1976

Emphasizing Play

In November I attended the East Coast USA Allies to Young People Workshop led by Jenny Sazama.¹ Jenny was both funny and completely serious as she led a fabulous workshop.

She reminded us how important play is for young people and for *all* of us. We use play to make contact with each other, build safety and trust, have light sessions on fear and embarrassment, and pave the way for deeper sessions. To challenge where we adults forget this, Jenny put play in prominent places on the schedule. For example, before introductions we had a rousing game of partner tag, before support groups we got to do special time,² on Saturday afternoon the entire workshop had physical counsel-

ing³/wrestling sessions, and on Saturday evening we had a dance party before we met in topic groups and had open questions.

The emphasis on play and Jenny's challenge to use counseling to its fullest meant that we played hard and discharged hard. We arrived at topic groups and open questions feeling connected and well discharged. We were able to have excellent conversations. We thought about challenging topics—building RC Communities with young people at the center, the environment, pornography, technology, homework, schools—with lightness, laughter, and intelligence.

Tresa Elguera

Brooklyn, New York, USA

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

¹ Jenny Sazama is the International Liberation Reference Person for Allies to Young People.

² "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. Adults can also give "special time" to each other, following these general guidelines.

³ "Physical counseling" is counseling in which a Co-Counselor, who has been trained to do it, provides aware and thoughtful physical resistance for his or her client to push and fight against.



Men Working on Reproductive Issues

Inspired by the work that RC women have been doing on reproductive issues, I decided that we men needed to join them in thinking about the topic. So I led a one-day men's workshop on it.

In the morning we worked on men's oppression, withdrawal of closeness, prohibitions on discharge, and the installation and manipulation by an oppressive society of distresses related to sex.

In the afternoon we worked on sex and reproduction, birth control, decision-making, and more. We talked about our use or non-use of birth control and about abortion, infertility, thinking about these topics with our children, choosing not to have children, and being raised in RC and facing these things.

Each man spoke briefly about an aspect of all this that he would like to have a session on. Then I did three sessions up-front—one on infertility, one on abortion, and one on birth control and heterosexual sex. We had mini-sessions in between. Everyone was pleased that we had started this work.

Dan Nickerson

Freeport, Maine, USA

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

The RC Website

There is a website for Re-evaluation Counseling at <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*, *The Human Side of Human Beings*, and the RC postulates)
- Introductory talks (in audio) by Harvey Jackins (1986) and Tim Jackins (2008)
- RC practice (how to start RC, what to do in a session, counseling techniques, how to lead support groups)
- The *Guidelines for the Re-evaluation Counseling Communities*, 2013 edition, and forms
- Updates to the *Fundamentals Teaching Guides*
- Translations of articles into many languages, and language liberation information
- Articles from recent journals and *Present Time*
- Resources for workshop organizers
- Contact information for ordering literature from Rational Island Publishers
- An online fundamentals of Co-Counseling class
- Outlines for teaching fundamentals classes, in English and Spanish, and articles about teaching RC
- An ever-growing collection of back issues of *Present Time* (currently 1974 to 1998)
- "Today's Thought"—a short daily thought from a Re-evaluation Counseling perspective
- International Reference Person Perspectives
- And more

How to Contact Us Online

- 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 website 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

Online Fundamentals Class

An online 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.

Please see the RC website at <www.rc.org/page/onlineclass> for more information about how to sign up for membership in the online 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 <www.rc.org/publication/uer/contents>. 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.

No Limits for Women

No Limits for Women, a project of the RC Communities, is sending a delegation to Beijing Plus Twenty, the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women NGO Forum, in New York City, USA, March 6 to 12, 2015. No Limits will present workshops, lead support groups, and hold listening projects as part of the work on ending sexism and male domination. For more information, see <www.rc.org/tile/nolimits>.